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DECOLONIAL LESSONS FROM HISTORICAL AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY LEADERS: RECONSTRUCTING AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY AS RESISTANCE IN PRAXIS

Rhejean King-Johnson

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DECOLONIAL LESSONS FROM HISTORICAL AFRICAN AMERICAN
COMMUNITY LEADERS: RECONSTRUCTING AFRICAN AMERICAN
IDENTITY AS RESISTANCE IN PRAXIS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Communication Studies

by
Rhejean King-Johnson
August 2021

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the communication praxis for the purposes of decolonization of four community leaders, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, Ida B. Wells and Malcolm X in efforts to reconstruct African American (AA) identity by exposing the inhumane speech, behavior and thought of white supremacy. Their work employs specific communication strategies such as descriptive narrative, allegory, two-ness, anaphora, and metaphors to address the oppressive white-centric representation of AA identity and provide a decolonial shift in U.S. Eurocentric ideology. Through a close reading and textual analysis of representative works such as, Frederick Douglass's book, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" (2005), W.E.B. DuBois's book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Malcolm X's speech "The Black Man's History" (1962) and Ida B. Well's book, *Crusade for Justice* (1999) there is a clear connection to be drawn of how African Americans were treated by white supremacists and how AA identity was manipulated. Through this contested experience of Black identity in the United States, these exemplary community leaders intentionally used decolonial (anti-colonial) resistance communication tactics for the purpose of Black liberation.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the men and women who came before me and those who are working alongside me in this fight to replace the system of racism/white supremacy with a system of justice (balance between all people). In addition, to all the individuals who struggled to find an identity and those being affected everyday by a system that mistreats them

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Community leaders have been an important factor for pushing African American (AA) communities to liberation from coloniality by employing various decolonial communication strategies. Mass communication strategies such as public speeches, autobiographies, and books were used to describe the different characteristics of African Identity with the intentions of freeing them from Eurocentric (white-centric) dehumanization and manipulation. Community or grassroots leaders dedicate their time to empower and liberate their communities from the ground up by focusing on empowering them to stand up. According to Van Til et al. (2010), “Grassroots leaders serve as sources of meaning, invigoration, and the building of a better society” (p. 373). I will analyze aspects of grassroots decolonial communication strategies propagated through verbal and non-verbal media channels which address institutionalized power and the oppression of African Americans in the United States as implemented by four of the most impactful and groundbreaking historical AA community leaders: Frederick Douglass, Ida B Wells, W.E.B DuBois, and Malcom X whose work spans from the mid 19th century to mid 20th century with ongoing impact until today. To frame the decolonial communication tactics employed and passed on by AA historical community leadership, I will analyze Frederick Douglass’s speech, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass” (2005), W.E.B. DuBois’s book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Malcom X’s “The Black Man’s History”

speech (1962) and Ida B. Wells's book, *Crusade for Justice* (1999). Through this analysis, I will analyze specifically the binary strategy, but include other strategies for support.

According to *Nahigian Strategies* (2020), grassroots communication strategies can persuade people to take action and are the oldest most effective form of communication. The goal of this study is to document a genealogy of communication strategies employed by the four African American community leaders mentioned and how they were used to foment decolonial (anti-colonial) resistance for the purposes of Black liberation. I will take an analytical approach when examining the ways, they are empowering and attempting to decolonize African American communities through transmedia—with an African American perspective extended beyond multiple media forms across time and space –and how they counteract white supremacist ideology with their communication styles which are centered around pushing forth decolonial praxis and decoding of supremacist rhetoric for the purpose of liberation.

Liberation vs. Emancipation

I use the term liberation as defined versus emancipation; a differentiation made by decolonial theorist, Dussel, Martinez, and Morkovsky (1985). Liberation is used to refer to the complete decolonization of thoughts, speech, and behavior to dismantle the system of racism/white supremacy. Institutional power founded in Eurocentric coloniality, emancipation from Europe came during the revolutions across the Americas during the early 19th century. According to Dussel, Martinez

and Morkovsky (1985), the delinking from Eurocentric ideology and formulas is required for liberation, which is yet to occur. According to Freire (1970), “The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a ‘circle of certainty’ within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it” (p. 39). Coloniality is what has kept the general populace ignorant and many AA communities as well as other communities marginalized as a result of colonialism, afraid to stand up against their oppressors and mistreatment.

Colonialism vs. Coloniality

Colonialism is the practice of “domination, exploitation and conflict between whites and nonwhites... sufficiently powerful to impede the relative, although real and important, democratization of the control of the means of production and of the state” (Quijano, 2000, p. 561). Coloniality is the continuation of colonialism as the hierarchies, power systems, and ideologies imposed during colonialism that continue to strip Indigenous and AA people (identities enslaved during colonialism) from their epistemology and history in order to uphold the white supremacy ideologies established during colonialism to disempower and continue exploiting, dehumanizing, and mistreating people. For many years, there has been the constant fight between the oppressed and oppressors (those who believe they benefit from hierarchy and supremacy). The AA community leaders here discussed continuously fought for liberation of their

people through the process of de-colonization by openly stating and publicly articulating Black experience in relation to coloniality and its multiple branches. Coloniality “focuses primarily on labor, capitalism, sex, the bourgeois family, the capitalist corporation, and the nation-state, all of which fall under a model of Eurocentric rationality in light of the hegemonic system of global power” (Davis, 2018, p. 6). The primary goal for AA community leaders is to decolonize AA communities by intentionally eliminating the Eurocentric rationality that maintains systematic control. “There so-called blacks were not only the most important exploited group, since the principal part of the economy rested on their labor; they were, above all, the most important colonized race, since Indians were not part of that colonial society.” (Quijano, 2000, p. 534). Decolonization must be one area of focus for a system of justice to replace the system of racism/white supremacy.

The Problem with Charity

Freire (1970) mentions change can only be done by those who are being oppressed and those who stand in solidarity with them, but ally-ship should not be a version of false charity. “False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the “rejects of life,” to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 45).

In order to prevent falling into the myths of charity, it is important to analyze and bring awareness to the power imbalance to understand what is happening both communication and praxis-wise when leaders say they are attempting to empower and liberate their communities. Charity has been widely accepted and practiced among oppressed groups who have lost their identity through European manipulation. AA communities must remember that the main goal of historical community leaders was not charity, but to liberate communities by complexifying oversimplified white-centric representations and understandings of Black identity through mass communication. Through the process of complexifying, community leaders addressed that AA identity is not simple but more complex in nature. This was done by examining and critiquing institutionalized power for the purpose of pushing forth liberation. There must be an analysis of the representation of AA identity in relation to welfare. Welfare or charity has been a white-centric ideology placed on African Americans for decades. The goal of this analysis of welfare was proactive, offensive, and in conjunction with praxis versus one that is passive, defensive, and in conjunction with submission to coloniality or the preservation of a white-centered order of things.

A white centered order begets an AA false identity which gives further power to a Euro-centric society that longs to suppress them into submission. According to Cesaire (2000), "First we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade

him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism... all these lies that have been propagated, all these punitive expeditions that have been tolerated, all these prisoners who have been tied up and "interrogated" (p. 36). Freire description of colonization will be used as a base to see how the four community leaders used their communicative platform to rewrite the image of African Americans that the Europeans have been pushing for decades. Today's refined systems of mistreatment are continuing results of white-centered power and the manipulation that African Americans still have to endure daily. When analyzing the discourse of these leaders, we must consider what colonization did to AA people to understand how these leaders are using the decolonial communication strategies to help African Americans understand their identity versus the version manipulated by white supremacy.

A Legacy of African American Decolonial Communication Strategies Resisting Hegemony

Through a review and analysis of the communication strategies of AA community leaders in the context of coloniality, I will trace a historical lineage of decolonial communication strategies of resistance which placed awareness to the importance of the praxis of decolonization at the forefront. Specifically, I will focus on one strategy that uses binary thinking as a weapon instead of an oppressive tool. It is not every day we hear about the current ideology's white supremacy and the effects of coloniality in relation to African American communities, their lives, and experiences. "More than anything, as early as 1980

with the presidency of Ronald Reagan and currently, mainstream media have worked against the interests of everyday people and grassroots activists" (Bobo, 2009, p. 159). Lack of access to this genealogy and over exposure to white-centric representations of Black identity have had the effect of pushing African Americans into a hegemonic viewpoint of who they are as they are concurrently and sometimes unknowingly oppressed.

Through my research I will critique articles surrounding my research question:

RQ: How did outstanding and highly referenced community leaders complexify African American identity by using communication strategies within public speeches, autobiographies, and books to address institutionalized power and oppressive white-centric representations of African American identity, for the purpose of Black liberation?

Based on Decolonial theory my research will address white supremacy and coloniality, to propose to continue on the path of recovering African American identity for the purposes of liberation as presented in the legacy of historical African American community leaders.

The fact is that the so-called European civilization "Western" civilization as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of "reason" or before the bar of

"conscience"; and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive (Cesaire, 2000, p. 13).

For many years, it has been in the best interest of Europeans to never acknowledge the effects of colonization, especially in non-white communities. There has been an unspoken and learned way of thinking, speaking, and behaving that everyone must follow or will be subjugated to reprehension. Non-white communities have been suffering from colonization and some are wanting to solve this problem by decolonizing their communities through Decolonial theory. There have been numerous communities who have spoken about methods of Decolonial theory but have gone unnoticed.

For example, Dr. Ani (1994) published a textbook to help African Americans liberate themselves from control “so we can reclaim ourselves and what belongs to us, and in the process, transform the universe, thereby reestablishing primary equilibrium. This book was an African critique on European cultural thought and behavior, but this information was not taught like many other decolonial methods that have been hidden. According to Mignolo (2007), Decolonial theory examines the binarism that is found in Euro-centric ideology currently embedded within the matrix of power and its institutions. Decolonial theory aligns with the epistemology paradigm and is surrounded by questions of ethics, and what we should do. While working independently, historical AA community leaders communicated effectively with the masses due

to their empowering forms of communication which included but were not limited to unapologetically addressing history, allusion to previous racist representations and episodes, narrative, descriptive identity characteristics, and the clear affirmation of the existence of a constant war between the oppressed and their oppressors.

Ida B Wells used descriptive narratives of Black lynching to explain the power imbalance and the experiences of dichotomous living. “None of the hideous murders by butchers of Nero to make Roman holiday exceeded these burnings alive of black human beings. This was done by white men who controlled all the forces of law and order in their communities...against black men who had neither political power nor financial strength with which to evade any justly deserved fate” (Wells, 1972, p. 61). In a binary society where Blacks are seen as inferior and monsters, Wells flips the narrative by exposing European murderous behavior.

W.E.B. DuBois used what he calls two-ness to explain the identity that was created out of experiences of coloniality. The idea of two-ness was a response to binary and systematic oppression. It is the idea of being American but not feeling/treated American. There have been forceful expectations of how a Black individual should act and anything outside often times resulted in death.

To-day the young Negro of the South who would succeed cannot be frank and outspoken, honest and self-assertive, but rather he is daily tempted to be silent and wary, politic and sly; he must flatter and be pleasant, endure

petty insults with a smile, shut his eyes to wrong; in too many cases he sees positive personal advantage in deception and lying. His real thoughts, his real aspirations, must be guarded in whispers; he must not criticize, he must not complain. Patience, humility, and adroitness must, in these growing black youth, replace impulse, manliness, and courage (DuBois, 2007, p.138).

Black communities have been influenced negatively by the barriers of Eurocentric ideologies, but community leaders made an effort to provide as much knowledge surrounding historical power. It is important to bring conscious awareness to the depths of European power since that is the driving force behind this endless strive for mistreating who they deem as other. By analyzing verbal communication tactics employed by Frederick Douglass, Ida B Wells, W.E.B DuBois, and Malcom X, propagated by mass media channels, I will demonstrate how they contributed to the reformulation or recovery of African identity and self-representation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Decolonial Theory

According to decolonial theorists, the period of European Enlightenment and the idea of European exceptionalism resulted in an ideology founded in binary thinking that oversimplifies complex situations and dehumanizes non-Europeans in order to justify the spread of white supremacy around the globe and its covert presence within institutional power. In Binary or dichotomous thinking, “intersubjective and cultural relations between Western Europe and the rest of the world were codified in a strong play of new categories: East-West, primitive/civilized, magic/mythic-scientific, irrational-rational, traditional-modern, Europe and not Europe” (Quijano, 2000, p. 542). This way of thinking led decolonial theorists to analyze and critique the Eurocentric thought and ideology that has continuously imposed its narrative.

Decolonial theory is “the reclamation of sub-others in the effort to counter epistemic and ontological colonization, along with the coloniality of knowledge, being, and power” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017, p. 440). Binary thinking has created a conscious and unconscious discourse that white is central and superior, and non-white is inferior which leaves AA communities with an identity formulated from attempts to justify racial oppression which centralizes white-centered perspectives. Since Decolonial theory finds its roots in the Americas, particularly the southern cone and from Indigenous and Afro Caribbean resistance

movements against colonization and coloniality, it makes sense to analyze outstanding community leaders under its lens, particularly those leaders who have examined the complexities of African identity from representations proposed by African Americans and not outsiders to this racial identity. The Indigenous and Afro Caribbean resistance roots of the Decolonial theory are relatable to the AA communities due to the effects of colonialism. Reviewing strategies of African American historical community leaders in the context of communication and mass media will help current AA communities and their leadership to lean away from forms of charity to shift and center their “ethics and politics of knowledge” into liberation praxis (Mignolo, 2007, p. 457).

Community Leaders

Barreto (2012), critiques Eurocentrism with the intention to create a new third world discourse. He uses the context of colonialism to showcase the traditions of binary human rights and movement of resistance as a response.

The tradition of human rights that emerged in the context of colonialism incorporates events such as the Conquest of America and the wider process of colonization of the world, as well as the movements of resistance to imperialist violence and domination; the anti-slavery movements; the struggles for independence fought from the North to the South of America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the singular experience of the Haitian revolution of independence (Barreto, 2012, p.18).

While addressing human rights, Barreto mentions significant leaders who deserve recognition such as Frederick Douglass, W.E.B Dubois, and Malcom X who attempt to liberate the community. Barreto (2012) makes the analysis of AA grassroots leadership communication tactics essential. Barreto wanted to decolonize the overall dialogue of human rights from Eurocentric views to allow a new perspective of social and global justice. This is part of my process for proposing a new perspective on the processes toward liberation that the AA identity has experienced. Although Barreto used methods of decolonization to change dialogue, I am using these methods to center and further unpack the communication methods of AA leaders repurposing the binary thinking of white-supremacy to reveal the covered-up identity of African Americans. In addition, I also chose to analyze the work of Frederick Douglass, W.E.B Dubois, and Malcom X but to identify decolonial praxis for the purpose of reconstructing African Americans.

According to Salenius (2016), "Douglass was among those black leaders whose public self-representation and popularity formed a contrast to the prejudiced ideas created of Black inferiority in the United States, and he, thus, challenged the existing power asymmetries" (p. 154). There is a continuous reinforcement of modern-day Black identity that has many AA individuals confused about the inferior or oppressed role they are in. This also influences others to believe this imposed identity and perpetuate the misconceptions of Black people. As we continue to address the ideas of "Black inferiority", we must

state a new way of thinking and practicing. Douglass focused on tearing down the binary way of thinking and “walk the world unquestioned” (Salenius, 2016). My research will use the four community leaders as an avenue to expose the old colonization discourse placed upon African Americans, along with characteristics that push a colonial identity that justifies white supremacy and gives it power. According to Salenius (2016), “The white–black polarity served to validate the notion of white supremacy and justified ‘the set of rights and privileges that accompanied the classification’ of races. As Cheryl Harris (1993) contends, the construction of whiteness “defined and affirmed critical aspects of identity (who is white); of privilege (what benefits accrue to that status); and, of property (what legal entitlements arise from that status). Americans valorized whiteness and used it as a pretext to distribute power, producing inequalities that were conscious choices aimed at subjugating non-white. Whiteness endorsed a structure that relied on white domination and black subordination” (p. 153). White supremacy thrives on a system that pushes a false identity on African Americans to perpetuate the unconscious and conscious behaviors that justify white supremacy. As whiteness thrives on a system, the liberation of Black identity had to create a system that reminded them of who they truly are.

Weiner (2018) examines W.E.B DuBois, the founder of U.S. sociology in relation to Decolonial theory. DuBois was an active leader who demanded the necessity for a new way of thinking. “DuBois's decolonial thought appears most prominently in the interwar and post-WWII eras, when the globe wrestled with

rising fascism and decolonial demands for national sovereignty arose across South America, Africa, and Asia” (Weiner, p. 2). DuBois focused on articulating how Eurocentric ideas shaped the epistemology of nations and “identified the economic underpinnings of racial domination that began during enslavement and then exposed coloniality and neocoloniality perpetuating racial inequality” (Weiner, 2018, p. 6). When going in depth about decoloniality it is almost inevitable to mention white supremacy and the effects it has on how people operate today. Weiner critiques and presents the links between global capitalism, coloniality, racism, and enslavement. Weiner’s study requires a reference to how the reconstruction of Black identity occurred in the practice of the communication itself, designed and presented from the perspective of AA historical leaders.

Curry (2012) analyzes Ida B. Wells articles on the influence of white supremacists who are driven by economic gain rather than moral compassion. “The reality that continues to confront African descended people in America calls for a constructive political theory that meets the present-day challenges and the evolution of racism, neo-colonialism, and the ethos of white supremacy normalized as liberalism and racial impartiality” (Curry, p. 475). Wells made it her mission to expose white supremacy ideologies while analyzing the structural and ontology of white “justice” by exposing the false portrayals of AA people. A closer study of the ways in which all four AA leaders exemplify communicating this will further demonstrate an ongoing legacy whose continuation would require a clear contextualization in the present.

MacMillan (2020) states that, “Wells dealt with her grief by using her pen. Her perspective countered the white media’s portrayal of the three middle-class Black businessmen as crooks and troublemakers and led Wells to turn a critical eye to the white press coverage of other lynching’s” (p. 2). MacMillan’s (2020) study gets closer to the purposes of this study as they touch on Wells’ work and its goals of pushing forth a decolonial praxis-based action.

She began traveling to sites of mob violence and interviewing local witnesses. Although whites leveled the accusation against Black men of raping white women to justify lynching’s, Wells failed to find any evidence to support these charges of sexual assault. She believed whites constructed such allegations to hide their economic and political motivations (p. 2).

Wells conceptualized the world from a radical perspective which led her to think that violence against the white racist was the only way for African Americans to survive in the South. This showcases the toll and emotional effects white supremacy ideologies had on non-white individuals. The internalization of that violence and showcasing its development became a part of the process she engaged in for the purposes of liberation, even beyond the rhetorical.

Aqeeli (2020) explored Malcolm X’s speeches and his goal to mobilize by addressing institutionalized power.

Within Malcolm’s goal of bringing hope to the disenfranchised Black population, in what is described as actual excerpts from his speeches,

whose accuracy could also be called into question. However, whether these speeches were accurately reported or not, they were incorporated into the book to reflect Malcolm's desire to free the Black minds from the effects of the inferiority complex largely imposed by the oppressor (Aqeeli, 2020, p. 131).

Aqeeli described an outcome of decolonization by mentioning Frederick Douglass desire to "free the Black minds". This aligns with Malcolm's goal to connect the "American Negroes" to African history with the intention of creating self-defined group identity and a consciousness of AA oppression. In the passage below from "The Black Man's History" Malcolm X makes a distinct statement about the power dynamic between the oppressed and oppressors due to the effects of coloniality, and the need to break free. In the analysis for this present study, the reader will find Malcolm X incorporated common Bible references to explain the relationship of Eurocentric ideologies and the oppressed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Since I am addressing the power imbalance between white supremacy and non-white groups through a decolonial lens, I critique how Europeans hold most power and fundamentally control others. Although white supremacy is an ideology it is embedded in institutions that educate and form non-white people. “Qualitative data cannot be separated from an ideology – a set of doctrines, myths, and beliefs that guide and have power over individuals, groups, and societies” (Tracy, 2020, p. 52).

Critical scholars find value through research, analysis, and meaning of history. It is important that my research analyzes the communication strategies used by AA historical community leaders to expose how oppressive institutions have been counteracted. I also want to expand on the work of the scholars I included in my literature review in order to uplift the value and impact of the work of historical AA community leaders as it continues influencing leaders today and in the future. This research is led by a need to counteract an ideology rooted in coloniality that controls society through the constant tension between the oppressed and oppressors. I plan to use this textual analysis to further trace and document a genealogy that analyzes community leader’s communication tactics by looking at how they unapologetically address history, previous racist representations and episodes. In addition, analyzing narrative and descriptive identity characteristics to clearly affirm the existence of constant war between the

oppressed and the oppressors explains the complex identity of the AA population.

Textual analysis is a “method associated with rhetorical methods which refers to the description and interpretation of content, structure, purposes, and consequences of existing verbal or visual texts” (Tracy, 2020, p. 80). My data will be composed of selected references from the works of Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B DuBois, and Malcolm X where they mention/describe AA identity in relation to institutionalized power. I will analyze descriptive words and experiences used to represent a more complex AA identity. From speeches and/or books written by the four historical community leaders we can see how communication strategies proposed a decolonized AA identity. I will also demonstrate how these strategies are centered around education surrounding African history and experience for the purposes of liberation.

Data Collection

Since I plan to conduct a textual analysis, I will collect data from text written by outstanding historical community leaders and organize them according to their population focus, interest, and liberation goals. Their most significant and notable text will provide a base on what they thought and said about AA identity for the purpose of liberation. Notable sources were chosen through the following criteria: verifiable, primary source, and addresses the topic of institutionalize power. Community leaders’ messages are important due to their mass AA audiences and their knowledge which is a reaction to the imposed distorted

version of AA identity white supremacy created and broadcasted through transmedia, across varied media platforms since colonial times.

To demonstrate this, I will review instances in which each of these leaders refer/allude to previous representations of AA identity and the constant war between the oppressed and their oppressors through a critical lens. It is important to document the issues they saw impacting Black identity for a better understanding of the new way to propose African Americans should practice liberation.

These community leaders created a rhetoric that challenges AA individuals to be conscious of their identity and self in a complex, human, and righteous way. Overall, this study is intended to provide a critical view on historical communicative resistance to institutionalized power in AA communities and to reconnect community leaders with a legacy of decolonial praxis that influences individuals and groups to regain their sense of agency and empowerment. These four leaders used references to their own lived experiences of coloniality and they had acquired consciousness of its effects. They all used references that most African Americans were acquainted with and their main purpose was to create the same consciousness in them. In a recollection of their lived experiences and an analysis of their communication strategies we may begin to observe an ongoing lineage in the service of Black liberation.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

Frederick Douglass

In this section, I will be describing who Frederick Douglass was, his significance to the Black community and his experiences with institutional power. Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) was an influential writer, speaker and a community leader who focused on liberating Black people from a mindset of inferiority. He did this by attempting to communicate white-centric representation of AA identity and the tools used by the white supremacists. He is highly referenced due to his efforts in the areas of abolition, freedom, equality, women suffrage, Black migration, civil liberties, and more. Although he communicated in various facets his messages were consistent, which was to free African Americans from mental slavery. He made a conscious effort to communicate the different experiences of an AA person and a white master or someone who identified as white through his lived experiences. He knew more about the white man than he did his own family since he spent most of his youth laboring.

Although Douglass did have the opportunity to meet his mother, he was not able to curate a relationship since he was moved from one plantation to another. For Douglass and his family, there was a lot of time spent with his masters and working on the fields, so there was little time for communicating with others. The oppressors made an effort to keep the enslaved people away from who they were before being enslaved. Douglass was born into slavery only

knowing bits and pieces of his identity. "I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far a large part of the slaves knows as little about their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant" (Douglass, 2005, p. 19).

Throughout Douglass's autobiography he continuously mentioned his lack of identity and how much control the white supremacists had. According to Douglass (2005), "What every slave master feared, a smart and uppity Negro who would be content with nothing less than his freedom" (p. vii). Slaves were forced to think, speak, and act as their masters told them. They went many decades without thinking, speaking and acting entirely for themselves, so reconstructing an identity was and is still necessary. Often, slaves had to internalize their feelings about their oppressions due to the fear of mistreatment or death. This is why it is significant that Douglass spoke up. Douglass (2005) said, "found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself or done something for which I should have been killed" (p. 55). It is important to analyze what Douglass is sharing with us to understand the white supremacist role in AA Identity. His experiences with mistreatment and slavery was a prime example of how African identity has been suppressed by the white supremacy.

Douglass was a significant to the formation of the anti-slavery movement and became leader in the abolitionist movement to end the practice of slavery.

He began publishing his own abolitionist newsletter, the North Star where he expressed concerns about the conditions of Black people. He wrote extensively about his experiences with white supremacy, identity, and fighting for freedom. In one of his well-known books *My Bondage and My Freedom* (2003), Douglass states his mission was “to promote the moral, social, religious, and intellectual elevation of the free colored people . . . to advocate the great and primary work of the universal and unconditional emancipation of my entire race” (Douglass, 2003, p. 406). Douglass is highly significant to the AA community due to his activism and the experiences he described. Specifically, his first-person account of the relationships between slaves and his encounters with white supremacists is why I chose to analyze his autobiography.

Frederick Douglass – Communication Strategy

Frederick Douglass (2005) in his autobiography “Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass” addresses the loss of African identity and the inhumane acts committed against him due to the color of his skin. Douglass used a plethora of communication strategies to explain the disastrous effects of coloniality and slavery on the AA community. The one that stood out the most was his use of antonyms and his version of “double-consciousness” as a form of rhetorical construction. Double-consciousness is experiencing two different spaces simultaneously. Double consciousness is a direct response to binary thinking and coloniality which are embedded with white supremacy ideologies. This can also be understood as the consciousness of supposed binary opposites such as

master and slave, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, joy and sadness, love and hate, pessimism and optimism, and life and death. Throughout Douglass's speeches and writings, he took advantage of the ideological familiarity with binary thinking and his own double consciousness experience by using pronouns such as you and I to create a divide between the oppressed and the oppressors.

Describing one of Douglass' most famous speeches, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" (1852) Leeman (2018) wrote: "The first quarter of the speech is devoted to condemning the hypocrisy of White Americans and their oppression of Black Americans. The antithetical 'you' and 'I' summarizes that divide" (p. 284). Also, verbs such as "may" and "must" can be used in the same manner to illustrate the two contrasting experiences. The use of polar opposite words such as rejoice and mourn illustrates a clear divide between someone who is very happy and someone who is very sad. This rhetoric of binary extremes allowed for Douglass to explain how AA identities have been impacted by European power. This also exposed the contradiction that exists between what America professes and what America does. "Douglass's choice of modal verbs—that their verb is may while his verb is must— places the two-ness of choice upon them, not him" (Leeman, 2018, p. 285). Again, this demonstrated the separation of the two groups, Blacks and whites. Douglass's version of "double-consciousness" explored the effects of coloniality by describing his lived experiences being in a binary system. For that, he used antonyms, contrasting words to share his

experiences with his audiences. Douglass' use of antonyms is not purely for rhetorical purposes but an expression of the two lives he was living. He had to live in two spaces all the time, spaces of Blacks or whites, being inside the master's house or outside on the fields, in the morning or at night, and in situations of life or death. The experiences of living two lives is a result of living in a Eurocentric society, but this motivated Douglass to share decolonial praxis and use the binary tactic to their advantage.

We still live in a system governed by dichotomies, racism, and slavery so the spaces continue to be divided and separated in AA minds. Throughout Douglass' experiences it is well-defined that as a slave he must be in spaces against his will. There were instances where the characteristics of the two different spaces crossed, but there was still a conscious effort to keep them separate. For example, the spaces of master and slave were distinct but could be blended if there was something relating the two. Douglass could fit in with the master space due to his literacy, but he still related more to the slaves due to his ethnicity and appearance. The idea of navigating two spaces is similar to modern day code-switching. African Americans have to change their speech, behavior, and thought when entering into White spaces.

The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery [.....], I would at times feel

that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out (Douglass, 2005, p. 50).

Although Douglass did not use many antonyms in this passage, he made a clear separation between someone who knew how to read and someone who did not. His experience before reading was a lot different than his life reading. This was the reality for most slaves since reading was rare, this tactic was to keep African Americans from knowing more about their oppression than what they already knew.

Another instance that contributes to his antonymic communicative strategy used in his narrative was the distinction between day and night. This separation of day and night was a binary tactic of the white supremacist. The day was used for daily duties or time on the field, and activities at night were determined by the master. In addition, there was more time spent on the fields than anywhere else to keep control of the slave. Douglass (2005) wrote, “not recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She was with me in the night” (p.16). The separation between day and night was used to mentally and physically separate the slave’s activities to emulate the sociopolitical circumstances. If the individual was kept away from their family, cultural traditions are impacted and have the opportunity to be lost. In addition, with physical separation of space, the white supremacists used language as a tool for mental separation. For example, white

spaces used discourse to create fear and African Americans used discourse to show endurance. Douglass (2005) explains that one particular master “spoke but to command and commanded but to be obeyed; he dealt sparingly with his words, and bountifully with his whip, never using the former where the latter would answer as well” (p. 34). Again, this shows the difference between the master and slave mentality. Douglass used antonyms to describe the polarities that governed the AA mind but also to use this mindset to further show what it was like to live in the “lesser” side of a dichotomous society that is also hierarchical.

According to Ritchane (2019) using antonyms in a calculated manner was a way to emphasize the mental struggle of African Americans. Douglass included his personal accounts to not only share what it was like to be a slave, but to share the constant struggle to recreate an identity. For example, he shares what it means to live on two sides, the so-called side of being a free American, and the side of being a runaway slave by using a boat metaphor. Below is an example of the feelings of living in binary systems.

You are loosed from your moorings and you are free; I am fast in my chains and am a slave! You move merrily before the gentle gale, and I sadly before the bloody whip! You are freedom's swift-winged angels, that fly round the world; I am confined in bands of iron! The glad ship is gone; she hides in the dim distance. I am left in the hottest hell ... O God, save

me! God deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any God? (Douglass, 2005, p. 74).

The above quote is Douglass' connection of the effects of coloniality, using his words to allow his audience into his version of double-consciousness. This was the reality of the constant fight of what life was supposed to be and how control manipulated and twisted it into something different. The loss of African identity and genealogy was extremely beneficial to the White man because they were able to control and create new identities for the enslaved. Douglass use of antonyms exposed how power was being used to create a divide between settings, characteristics, symbols, language, and actual areas to perpetuate an oppressive representation of African Americans. In his clear demonstration of binary dichotomies, and denouncing of the stark differences, he is inviting others to question not only the circumstances but the existence of this divide as well.

W.E.B DuBois

William Edward Burghardt DuBois (W.E.B. DuBois) was born in 1868 and died in 1963. He is known for being an AA community activist, Pan Africanist, scholar, writer, educator, and for his work on civil rights. Before he died he became a naturalized citizen of Ghana. During his life, he received a bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degree, then later he taught sociology. He co-founded the Niagara movement which was made up of AA professionals and scholars. Additionally, he was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to help resurrect and rebuild Black heritage and

culture. Later, DuBois became the director of special research for the NAACP. His goal of participation in various organizations was to gain equal treatment for Black people and expose the tools of white supremacy by storytelling. His attempt to spread African history was his way to debunk white-centric representation of African Americans and spread a new narrative. He used his words to mobilize African Americans and help them navigate their lives in a system of racism/white supremacy. He used the methods of decolonization (e.g. behavior changes) to reach the AA by explicitly explaining what coloniality and slavery did to the community. According to Mohammed (2019), DuBois used different opportunities to speak about the behavior shift that was necessary to be in spaces governed by white supremacy norms. He also made an effort to share AA history, the effects of colonization, and constructive information that could be necessary to liberate the AA community. According to DuBois (1968),

With all this went the fall and disruption of the family, the deliberate attack upon the ancient African clan by missionaries... the authority and tradition of the clan disappeared; the power of the chief was transmuted into the rule of the white district commissioner. The old religion was held up to ridicule, the old culture and ethical standards were degraded or disappeared, and gradually all over Africa spread the inferiority complex, the fear of color, the worship of white skin, the imitation of white ways of doing and thinking, whether good, bad or indifferent. (p. 78)

Although W.E.B. DuBois used references of Africa this should was a prime example of the beginning of colonialism and the effects it continuous to have. It can be imagined the refinement that has occurred to keep African Americans still in the positon of the inferior other. The inferiority complex is still present today and AA people still have to sit in the complex sides of being American and not being treated as an American within binary systematic racism. Today mistreatment is more covert, refined and calculated than the period of DuBois' life. DuBois had to analyze what was happening in current states and how African Americans were being affected in different areas. African Americans had two options, (1) to build an identity that is a response to mistreatment or (2) accept the identity given from the oppressors. In the next section, I will analyze the communication strategies used by DuBois to confront the identity white supremacy forced upon African Americans.

W.E.B DuBois – Communication Strategies

In this section I will analyze W.E.B. DuBois communication strategies used in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) chapter two to show effects of institutional power on AA identity. The purpose of *The Souls of Black Folk* chapter two was to illustrate the roots of modern AA life and the impact of oppression. DuBois used the communicative strategy two-ness or double-consciousness to explain the white-centric experiences of AA individuals. He uses this theory to explain the gap between the racializing and racialized. In addition, this was used to analyze the phenomenological analysis of the African American experience. Through this

analysis DuBois' concept of two-ness could be described as the feeling of being American and a Negro. Two-ness is the idea of having two thoughts, two souls, two behaviors, etc. Often times African Americans had to unconsciously utilize two-ness in order to survive during the harsh conditions of slavery and segregation. The difference between W.E.B. DuBois' two-ness and Frederick Douglass version of double-consciousness, is the idea of living two different lives simultaneously but not entirely being in two different physical "spaces". DuBois conducted research that resulted in character behavior being a product of a person's environment, which confirms his claims surrounding race as sociological, not biological. Race was socially created as a form to categorize people for the purpose of mistreating those who were identified as the other.

According to Leeman (2018) "Double-consciousness has long been recognized as an important aspect of African American identity: in DuBois's characterization of two-ness, being of America but not part of America" (p. 296). This rhetoric was used to show the two experiences of African Americans; the experience from the viewpoint of a slave a.k.a the "other". This could be why there is constant tension between Black people. In today's society, there are at least two groups of Black people as a result of European domination. One avoids interacting/contact with Blacks and hopes to assimilate with the whites. The others avoid interacting with whites, show pride in being Black, and rejecting everything that is "white." Although there are many instances where African Americans would do their best to be what society characterized as white, this

illustrates the manipulation of white supremacy and the outcome of African Americans doing perpetuating Eurocentric ideologies. DuBois also consistently referred to the idea of the “world behind the veil; this phrase was used to describe the constant striving for AA recognitions from the oppressors and other oppressed individuals. This is the hidden motivation of what he is trying to reveal to shape the lives of African Americans and emancipate them from their current mental restraints.

To-day the two groups of Negroes, the one in the North, the other in the South, represent these divergent ethical tendencies, the first tending toward radicalism, the other toward hypocritical compromise... the white South mourns the loss of the old-time Negro, —the frank, honest, simple old servant who stood for the earlier religious age of submission and humility. (DuBois, 1903, p. 137)

In *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) DuBois describes the experience of African Americans to express the unconscious feeling of living behind the veil. The fight for an identity is present, the veil represents the invisibility of African Americans. In addition, he uses AA experiences as a way to expose what white supremacy thought, spoke, and did. There was not much difference in the treatment of those who were freed and those still enslaved. During the 1800, DuBois (1903) described the runaway slaves as “a horde of starving vagabonds, homeless, helpless, and pitiable, in their dark distress” (p. 16). Oftentimes slaves were treated inhumane and left to fend for themselves. Slaves were used for

labor and production but not considered a person of society. Although they were not viewed as people of the society from the White collective, African Americans fought for freedom and were rewarded with deceit and manipulation.

Free! The most piteous thing amid all the Black ruin of war-time, amid the broken fortunes of the masters, the blighted hopes of mothers and maidens, and the fall of an empire, —the most piteous thing amid all this was the Black freedman who threw down his hoe because the world called him free. What did such a mockery of freedom mean? Not a cent of money, not an inch of land, not a mouthful of victuals, —not even ownership of the rags on his back (DuBois, 1903, p. 100).

Freedom for African Americans came with no meaning and deceit. This led to many individuals standing up and speaking out for liberation. DuBois' descriptive narrative communication strategies has helped identify the degrading methods of white supremacy. DuBois's efforts to expose them for the purpose of Black liberation created a realization in both communities. As more people in the Black community began to stand up, the supremacist groups began to push the narrative that Blacks were incapable of speaking out, but this action led to the start of the civil right movement.

For some time, men doubted as to whether the Negro could develop such leaders; but to-day no one seriously disputes the capability of individual Negroes to assimilate the culture and common sense of modern

civilization, and to pass it on, to some extent at least, to their fellows.

(DuBois, 1903, p. 116)

The exposure of white-centric representation has showed a new contrast between the old and new behaviors of 'free slaves'. DuBois utilizes his strategy of twoness to explain the consistent pull between submission and liberation of white supremacy control. DuBois use contrasting descriptive words such as outspoken and silent, painting a picture of the two lives African Americans are forced to live. Additionally, the phrases "endure petty insults with a smile" is how African Americans not only lived during slavery but also today. African Americans were expected to take oppression with a smile and not speak out. This manipulation has been successful due to the underlying properties of instilling fear to govern the AA community.

Ida B. Wells

Ida B. Wells was an African American journalist and the leader of the anti-lynching crusade in the United States. She was a prominent community leader who was striving for AA justice. Also, she focused on self-help, education, and reform. She wrote numerous articles to shed light on the injustices endured by African Americans, was an editor for the *Evening Star*, and became the owner of the *Memphis Free Speech and Headlight* newspapers. She took it upon herself to teach AA individuals to read and write, which was against the law but was a necessary tool to fight for justice. She confronted the narrative that Black Americans are genetically inferior by writing and speaking out about the falsity of

that statement. There were numerous dehumanization acts committed by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), an American white supremacist hate group. They took it upon themselves to gather free Black men to terrorize, kill, or return to the cotton fields. The issue was large and gained attention, however the North lost interest in fighting for Black equality and the South continued to create laws that segregated and oppressed African Americans. This mistreatment encouraged Wells to write more about racism and power. Her understanding of White economics and the strategies used to oppress helped her expose white supremacy and mobilize Black people. She made it clear that she would rather die fighting for justice than to die without fighting back.

Ida B. Wells text, *Crusade for Justice* (1972), allowed her to share experiences about her anti-lynching campaign. The slave regime justified White men owning slaves' body and soul. The 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, freed the enslaved from chains, but the dehumanization and mental oppression continued. Wells' strategy was to reach out to those who were conscious of the effects of white supremacy, mobilize morale, and expose economic pressures. The press became a powerful weapon against injustice and an outlet for Wells.

She began traveling to sites of mob violence and interviewing local witnesses. Although whites leveled the accusation against Black men of raping white women to justify lynching's, Wells failed to find any evidence to support these charges of sexual assault. She believed whites

constructed such allegations to hide their economic and political motivations. (Duster, 1970, p. 1)

Well's focus on lynching was her way to confront the impact of colonization and create decolonization strategies to free African Americans from mental slavery. Although the mistreatment is continuing today, her efforts opened doors for journalists to speak out. Along with Wells' journalism journey, she implemented communicative strategies to expose the effects of white supremacy on the AA communities which was present in *Crusade for Justice*, 1972. In the next section, I will analyze Ida B. Wells communication strategies in *Crusade for Justice* (1972) to address the inhumane representation of AA identity.

Ida B. Wells – Communication Strategies

Ida B. Wells used communication strategies which consisted of simple and direct rhetoric to reach her target audience who may have had little to no schooling. Additionally, she used descriptive narratives to create an image to persuade her readers of the brutal realities of the South and the complexity of AA identity. She used a plethora of evidence such as statistics, interviews, and articles for credibility. As DuBois and Douglass shared experiences directly with the idea of binary, Wells shares the brutal experiences of acts white people committed due to living and practicing a dichotomous society. Throughout Wells' life she confronted the misrepresentations of African Americans by writing about the behaviors of White racist groups and the hidden messages that controlled them. As quoted by Duster, Wells wrote: "This is what opened my eyes to what

lynching really was. An excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized and ‘keep the Nigger down’ (1970, p. 56). She understood the strategies that the white supremacist logic used to degrade African Americans and control their well-being. Research about lynching was an avenue that Wells used to expose the acts of white supremacists. Wells compares acts of mistreatments to illustrate the terrible atrocities AA individuals faced daily. According to Wells (1970) “No torture of helpless victims by heathen savages or cruel red Indians ever exceeded the cold-blooded savagery of white devils under lynch law” (p. 61). She uses descriptive words such as “helpless victims”, “heathen savages”, and “cold-blooded savagery of white devils” to create an image of the degree of depravity. Then she continues to paint this picture by comparing and describing other murders. Wells continued legacies among generations of Black leaders who exposed how unjustifiable, inhumane white supremacy really is. She uses her words to turn discourse of European ancient glory on its head and turn it into one that should be ashamed. “None of the hideous murders by butchers of Nero to make a Roman holiday exceeded these burnings alive of Black human beings” (Wells, 1970, p. 61). The phrase “burning alive of Black human beings” showed the brutal experiences that played a role in stripping African Americans from the little to no identity they had. Although Wells did not mention white supremacy, she uses historical moments that were used to glorify white supremacy, such as ancient Rome, to say just like Rome, white supremacy is horrendous too. For

example, as described below, the accusation of rape was a tactic white supremacist used to justify mistreating Black people.

This was done by white men who controlled all the forces of law and order in their communities and who could have legally punished rapists and murders, especially Black men who had neither political power nor financial strength with which to evade any justly deserved fate. (Wells, 1970, p. 61).

It was difficult to escape control and mistreatment when the oppressors were in all positions that held power. They made a conscious effort to ensure that they held all the power and forced others into an inferior state. This inferior state is where AA identity has been buried and why it needs to be reconstructed. There were more people acknowledging the mistreatment, but white-centric representation of African Americans made it easier for many to stay silent. Wells (1970) “found that in order to justify these horrible atrocities to the world, the Negro was being branded as a race of rapists, who were especially mad after white women” (p. 62). The image of African Americans was intentionally created because it is known that Negroes who were said to be a rapist or criminals would be viewed by the public as worthless. By contrast, although African Americans were dehumanized and mistreated, they were valuable to economic growth (Wells, 1970, p. 114). As lynching surfaced in the society, the logical response would have been to stop it. Instead Americans turned a blind eye, perpetuated, and/or encouraged false accusations. According to Wells (1970) “American

people will not pay you to hear you talk about lynching” (p. 190). That did not stop Wells from sharing her information with the world and demanding change. Wells continues to use descriptive narrative to gather the community’s attention, since simple and direct did not gather the masses. It was necessary to describe the brutality African Americans experienced to understand what the community was up against.

Five hundred bullets were fired into it, some of which cut the rope, and the body dropped to the ground. Members of the mob seized hold of the rope and dragged the body up Washington Street, followed by men, women, and children, some of the women pushing baby carriages. The body was taken near to the place where the corpse of the white girl had been found. Here they cut off his head, stuck it on a fence post, built a fire around the body and burned it to a crisp. (Wells, 1970, p. 264)

Instead of Wells staying within the metaphoric divide and talking about “lynching”, she gave gruesome details to humanize the process and force oppressors to enter into the dual state in which she is in and speaking from. Wells’ descriptions are important because they disrupt anti-black perspectives and stereotypes. There have been past elected officials who looked into the false accusations against African Americans, but still had another agenda to keep African Americans under their control. Although Wells was up against a massive system, she dedicated her life to mentally liberate African Americans and reconstruct identity by address white supremacist behavior through descriptive

narrative communication strategies. Summarizing her career, Wells said: "I'd rather go down history as one lone Negro who dared to tell the government that it had done a dastardly thing than to save my skin by taking back what I have said" (1970, p. 316).

Malcolm X

Malcolm X grew up in the Midwest where his father was murdered, and mother was institutionalized. After living his experience in prison, he became a member of the Nation of Islam. This led to recognition throughout the United States and the start of his advocacy. He fought the racist oppression of Blacks and the profit-driven plunder of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In 1964, he founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) for the purpose of unifying non-Muslim African Americans. Malcolm's goal was to connect African Americans with African heritage, be self-sustaining, and self-driven. His organization wanted to "broaden the scope and even the reading habits of most of our people, who need their scope broadened and their reading habits also broadened today" (X, 1967, p. 17). He then developed a program called "The Basic Unity Program" which included the following: education, finances, self-defense, and restoration. He believed the primary means to combat racism/white supremacy was to teach African Americans their history and pan-African consciousness. Malcolm focused on the importance of words, especially the ones associated with African Americans. Although his time was cut short due to

being assassinated soon after his speech on Afro-American history on February 19, 1965.

His teaching was a direct response to white supremacy and representation of African Americans. He analyzed power structures, the white collective, and African American individuals as a way to figure out who they are with under European control. According to Malcolm, it was clear how power was the means of controlling and oppressing African Americans. The oppressors had to utilize a fear system to keep African Americans from asking questions or standing up for themselves. He said:

Now as the base of power shifts, what it is doing is bringing an end to what you and I know to have been white supremacy. Supreme means to be above others. And up until recent times, the white nations were above the dark nations. They rule supreme on this earth. They didn't call it white supremacy, but this is what it was. (X, 1967, p. 22)

The word 'white supremacy' was not widely used during this time, there still was not a clear-cut phrase or title for a racist woman and racist man. In the efforts of teaching African Americans about the white man's tricks, Malcolm taught African Americans about their African history. He believed history was a way to instill the truth about African Americans and create an identity that was not curated from false accusations. "And if you don't realize how trickery he is, he'll have you maneuvered right on back into slavery - I shouldn't say back into slavery because we're aren't out of it yet" (X, 1967, p. 25). It is important for the

AA communities to understand the tactics used to keep them away from physical and mental freedom. There was mixture of visible, invisible, and subtle tactics used by the white supremacist to keep African Americans from knowing who they really are. In response, Malcolm encouraged African Americans to go beyond what the white man tells them. Specifically, to think, speak and act as a way to liberate themselves from mental slavery. According to Malcolm X (1967) "you'll always be a slave as long as you're trying to be responsible and respectable in the eyesight of your master; you'll remain a slave" (p. 26). In the next section I will be analyzing Malcolm X's communicative strategies to expose the white-centric representation and his thoughts on AA identity.

Malcolm X – Communication Strategies

Malcolm X used his speaking opportunities to reach the masses by tailoring his messages directly to the audience. Additionally, he used the audience's needs, desire and hope to keep the community drawn to his messages. His speech "Black Man's History" is one example of his ways he put his communication strategy in use. His communication style included imagery, allegory, and anaphora. Malcolm is known for his applause worthy and audience driven speeches. He was an intentional communicator who dedicated his life to liberate and create an identity for the AA communities. Although some of his key points were hidden within stories, he still used a combination of other communication strategies such as repetition to draw in his audience.

In one example of hidden messages from my analysis of the “Black Man’s History” Malcolm referred to institutionalized power as “angels” and the Black American as “Jacob”. In addition, he uses the term "Angel" to refer to power itself, or somebody with power. When a man has his wings clipped, you say that he has lost his power, lost his position. So, wings only mean a position of power entrapped him.

So, when it says Jacob wrestled with an angel, ‘angel’ is only used as a symbol to hide the one he was really wrestling with. Jacob was wrestling with the government of that day. He made the government of that day give him everything he needed to last him and his followers for twenty years, just like The Honorable Elijah Muhammad is telling the government of this day that they've got to give us everything that we need in our own separate territory to last us for twenty to twenty-five years. (X, 1917, p. 53)

Malcolm X used allegory to address the power inequality between the powerful and the powerless. Since the governments governs the general population but has Eurocentric ideologies in embedded within it, continues to practice colonization. White supremacists’ ideologies are focused on refining and maintaining their world power. So, this was Malcolm’s opportunity to turn the dichotomy on its head by exposing Western tactics. In the next section, I will explain how analyzing these passages demonstrates the existence of decolonial communication strategies and why historical community leader’s rhetoric, and

narrative communication are necessary to inspire the masses into furthering Black liberation

Malcolm X explains how emancipation did not entirely free the slaves and how it was another avenue to dehumanize them. In addition, he uses contrasting sentences to show assumed polar opposites (e.g. cause and affects, past and present) and turns them on their head to show the length of the degradation. The excerpt below shows how Malcolm described the events that followed AA emancipation. “On the one hand, Emancipation freed Southerners from the burden of slavery, but it left the planters poor and with no method of earning a living except by exploiting Black labor on the only remaining capital they had-- their land.” (X, 1917, p. 54).

In the opening sentence Malcolm used “but” to illustrate a contrast of past and present, before emancipation and after. The idea of freedom and being enslaved was the binary experience more AA people who lived during this time. It was a fight between what was said and what they actually experienced. They were “emancipated freed Southerners”, but still “exploited Black labor” and killed for walking the streets. Although in 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation that declared all slaves to be free that did not stop the mistreatment. Those who were found wondering were captured and often times killed. As he shared horror stories, he used descriptive words to appeal to his audience, such as violence, crushed and slashed. Also, these adjectives

were used to provide a glimpse of how white supremacists viewed African Americans.

Malcolm X used anaphora to emphasize words and repeat what he thought was necessary. The excerpt below from the speech “Black Man’s History” is an example of anaphora:

The American so-called Negro is a soldier who doesn't know his history; he's a servant who doesn't know his history; he's a graduate of Columbia, or Yale, or Harvard, or Tuskegee, who doesn't know his history. He's confined, he's limited, he's held under the control and the jurisdiction of the white man who knows more about the history of the Negro than the Negro knows about himself. But when you and I wake up, as we're taught by The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and learn our history, learn the history of our kind, and the history of the white kind, then the white man will be at a disadvantage and we'll be at an advantage, the only thing that puts you and me at a disadvantage is our lack of knowledge concerning history. (X, 1971, p. 28)

Malcolm repetitively used the pronoun “he” to refer to the experience of African Americans in a society dominated by white supremacy. In addition, he used the words “who” or “who doesn’t know” to personalize the experience to a specific group. He used repetition to explain the conditions of African Americans and stress the importance of learning their history. Malcolm wanted to restore African identity by providing them with bits and pieces of their history. As he

provided a new identity he had to expose their current way of thinking that was given from the European. According to Malcolm X (1971),

Today dark mankind is waking up and is undertaking a new type of thinking, and it is this new type of thinking that is creating a new approach and new reactions that make it almost impossible to figure out what the Black man is going to do next, and by Black man we mean, as we are taught by the honorable Mohammed, we include all those who are non-white. (p. 24)

Malcolm uses allegory to explain what colonization and enslavement did for the AA populations. Along with exposing white supremacy, he uses speaking opportunities to provide pieces of the African identity. He taught that the AA must detach themselves from white ideology and decolonize their minds to gain back their identity. This will allow African Americans to liberate themselves and reconstruct their identity. He said:

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad is teaching us here in America today, is designed to undo our minds what the white man has done to us. It's to undo the type of brainwashing that we have had to undergo for four hundred of years at the hands of white man in order to bring us down to the level that we're at today. (X, 1917, p. 26)

It is important that AA communities starts to rebuild their identity by pushing away the white supremacist representations. If the AA community

continues to turn to the white man for things, they will continue to stay in physical and/or mental bondage. Elsewhere, he stated:

“Anytime you have to let another man set up a factory for you and you can’t set up a factory for yourself, you’re a child; anytime another man has to open up a business for you and you don’t know how to open up businesses for you and your people, you’re a child; anytime another man sets up schools, you’re a child. (X, 1917, p. 37)

Malcolm refers to what a childlike behavior is to paint a picture of what a child is not. This also emphasizes that African Americans need to sustain themselves and not rely on what the White man tells them. AA identity has been constructed from the Europeans or a response from European mistreatment. Malcolm uses communication strategy and his platform to decolonize the AA from European restraints and providing a new way of thinking that is not childlike.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

A white-centric and imposed thought process that has crippled African American identity for decades and it is time to remind modern-day people of how Frederick Douglass, W.E.B DuBois, Ida B. Wells, and Malcom X practiced liberation. They all bravely critiqued the oppressive version of AA identity constructed by transmedia and upheld by a white-centric ideology by exposing the functions of coloniality within these false representations of African Americans. These four leaders lived the experiences of coloniality and had to become conscious of how white supremacist ideologies affected them. This led to the sharing their personal experiences and encouraging others to decolonize their minds. They used their lived experiences to create new ways of thinking of self with the purpose of liberating AA communities, supporting their discourse through descriptive narratives, imagery, allegory, and anaphora to remind them of their identity.

After analyzing what other scholars have said about the works of these community leaders in the context of spreading a complex identity, I employed a critical lens and presented a careful review and analysis of decolonial strategies in the communication methods found in *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* (2005) by Frederick Douglass, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) by W.E.B DuBois, *Crusade for Justice* (1999) by Ida B. Wells, and “The Black Man’s

History” (1962) by Malcolm X to complicate and promote a non-dominant understanding AA identity.

All of the included leaders in this study described what it was like to live as an AA individual through forced binary experiences. Coloniality caused a division between the haves and the have nots, oppressed and oppressors, but the idea charity has caused confusion and stagnation. Frederick Douglas, used his own version of double-consciousness as a form of rhetorical construction to describe his experience of being in two different spaces simultaneously. DuBois explained his experience with two-ness to describe the constant tension between African Americans and white-centric representation. Ida B. Wells used descriptive narratives to create an image to share dual reality of the brutal South in relation to the complexity of AA identity. Malcolm X provided contrasting sentences to illustrate how polar opposite are used to degrade and dehumanize African Americans. These community leaders did what they could to expose their harsh realities and white supremacy tactics by attempting to decolonize their audience.

This research looks to provide an understanding of the complex ways in which African American community leaders pushed forth the liberation of African identity and debunk white-centric representations of African Americans through the use of the ideologically imposed idea of dichotomy and binary thinking, re-appropriating it, and turning it on its head to shift consciousness and recover meaning to the AA identity, one created by African Americans living within the experience of a white supremacist society. Through this analysis of the

decolonial strategy centered on the use of repurposing the idea of binary thinking to explain the split experience that AA individuals live every day, and expose the hierarchical backdrop to such a logic, encourages African Americans to turn this way of thinking towards white supremacy.

Our historical community leaders had their unique way of implementing this decolonial method within their communication strategies to address colonial thinking that was pushed forth by white supremacy. It is known that the strategy used has a different impact on the listener depending on the era. I would like to use this information to uncover the AA identity that has been hidden beneath white supremacy ideologies and challenge AA individuals to change their thoughts about themselves for the purpose of liberation. The process of decolonizing speech, behavior, and thoughts is the act of liberation, but this will begin with consciousness of the many different ways in which we find embedded in white-centric ideologies, and decolonial praxis.

This study is relevant because AA individuals are still being misrepresented by Eurocentric viewpoints and this has been one of the causes of mistreatment. I intend for this research to remind AA communities what their identity is an opportunity to take back what is theirs. In addition, I would like to open up spaces for conversation, change AA thought, speech and behavior to spark liberation through teaching decolonial praxis. This study is a tangible resource that could be shared among AA communities, in education, and in other areas where AA individuals are present. There is an understanding that this

research is not a one-size-fits-all project. The entire study can't be generalized for all members of AA communities, but pieces may be useful. I would suggest that all Black individuals use their time and energy researching, studying, and attempting to understand the system of racism/white supremacy. In addition, think, speak, and act in a manner that produces justice, balance between all people (Neely Fuller Jr., 2016). For example:

Studying, writing, asking questions, and/or exchanging views with others about all aspects of how to eliminate Racism and how to produce justice in all areas of activities: Economics, Education, Entertainment, Labor, Law, Politics, Religion, Sex, and War/Counter War. (Neely Fuller Jr., 2016, p. 60)

This is a start to understand the problem and how the system of racism/white supremacy is affecting Black identity today. Although this study focused on communities as a whole, it is anticipated that there will be those who don't relate to the research. Even if this limitation may arise or be present, this study is an important tool for the AA identity. It invites us to further analyze the details behind methods of resistance. It allows for African Americans to take a moment to analyze their identity and decolonize their thoughts to liberate themselves from euro-centric misrepresentation. It is encouraged those who have been affected by racism/white supremacy to take a chance to re-evaluate their identity, change the narrative, and speak up about the harm taking place in their spaces.

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