

## Decolonizing Early Childhood Education: Tracing Ancestral Disruptions and Advocating for African/Black Indigenous Knowledge Reclamation

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*This paper explores the lived experiences of African/Black people, particularly within the context of a tri-citizen Ghanaian Nigerian, and Canadian scholar. Employing the concept of “wake work” inspired by Christina Sharpe’s notion of “sitting with” and gathering phenomena disproportionately affecting African/Black people, it utilizes archival methods to trace the ancestral disruptions, resistances, and ruptures in various spaces. Challenging Eurocentric narratives, it examines the colonization of Indigenous knowledge systems and the erasure of African spirituality. The research advocates for mandatory integration of African Indigenous education in early childhood programs, urging educators to support the heterogeneous journeys of African/Black Indigenous communities to reclaim space, resist hegemonic discourses, and center African ways of knowing to foster empowerment, healing, and decolonization.*

**Key words:** early childhood education, African/Black Indigenous knowledge, decolonization, wake work, archival research

This scholarly work is informed by a profound acknowledgement of the historical and ancestral legacies that have shaped the perspective and provided the ethical and intellectual grounding for this work. This includes recognition of my Creator and the guidance received from both my ancestors and present-day community members. The empirical piece draws strength from the resilience and contributions of Black individuals who have paved the way for their endeavours. In situating myself within the field of early childhood education, the piece acknowledges my departure from traditional disciplinary boundaries, a perspective illuminated by Christina Sharpe’s seminal work *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016). This departure reflects the commitment to engaging with interdisciplinary frameworks, including critical disability studies, transnational studies, African Indigenous child development, early childhood studies, critical international development studies, and African history for this piece. Central to the approach for this paper a commitment to disruption, employing an anticolonial, critical pan-African lens to interrogate the experiences and narratives of African/Black bodies that have endured centuries of marginalization and oppression. Through this lens, the paper seeks to engage in conversations that challenge dominant narratives and center the agency and dignity of Black communities, particularly within the context of early childhood development and education.

The scholarly endeavour undertaken is framed within the conceptual framework of “wake work,” a methodology grounded in the retelling and reclamation of ancestral and Black lived experiences through archival research. This approach, as articulated by Sharpe (2016), involves a methodological practice characterized by a profound engagement with phenomena that have disproportionately impacted Black individuals throughout history. The wake work entails a meticulous process of plotting, mapping, and collecting from archival sources to illuminate how their ancestors disrupted, resisted, and navigated various societal spaces. This archival excavation serves to uncover and interrogate historical structures and legacies that continue to shape contemporary realities. Central

to this inquiry is a focus on how African/Black Indigenous peoples conceptualize existence and knowledge production, as well as their spiritual interconnectedness. This exploration is situated within a broader project of decolonization and resistance, aiming to dismantle oppressive structures and create spaces of empowerment and safety for Black communities. Drawing on the insights of scholars such as George Sefa Dei, the paper emphasizes the importance of historical contextualization in anticolonial endeavours.

Wake work embodies a form of resistance manifested through archival research of epistemological collections, enabling a transition “from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject” (Stoler, 2002, p. 87). This methodology reconceptualizes the archive as a producer of knowledge, a concept underscored by Ann Stoler (2002) as “a supreme technology” serving as a repository of codified beliefs that encapsulate connections between secrecy, the law, and power (p. 87). By recognizing the archive as a subject of inquiry, this approach provides a spatial framework for bearing witness to untangle the codified beliefs and messages that have historically shaped the humanity of African/Black individuals, prompting ongoing interrogations of their existential realities. Moreover, this methodology serves the dual purpose of “undisciplining” established modes and methods of research and teaching (Sharpe, 2016, p. 13). Drawing on Hartman’s insights (2008), it facilitates novel approaches to engaging with archival materials, particularly those about the legacies of slavery and the entrenchment of racial and political hierarchies. Through the medium of storytelling, wake work seeks to disrupt the enduring narratives and power dynamics that have perpetuated historical injustices. By centering African/Black narratives, this methodology offers alternative pathways for understanding and challenging dominant discourses, ultimately contributing to broader efforts aimed at social transformation and justice.

To comprehensively contextualize the contemporary circumstances of Indigenous Africans/Blacks on a global scale, it is imperative to historicize the enduring legacies of Eurocentric dominance. These legacies have been characterized by the erasure, imposition, and normalization of Eurocentric ways of being and knowing diverse peoples and communities worldwide. In the present paper, the historical trajectory through an exploration of pivotal events that have shaped and perpetuated the prevailing ideologies that permeate various aspects of African/Black family dynamics, child-rearing practices, educational systems, and spiritual traditions were explored (Kissi, 2020; Kissi & Ewan, 2023). Central to this analysis is an examination of how these Eurocentric ideologies have become hegemonic, defined as entrenched within the social structure to such an extent that they are perceived as natural, normal, and inevitable (Collins, 2002, p. 22). By unpacking the historical processes through which these ideologies have been disseminated and institutionalized, this paper seeks to elucidate the enduring impact of Eurocentric domination on the lived experiences and collective consciousness of Indigenous African/Black communities.

Therefore, the wake work that is employed in this conversation maps and plots the archives to create a “door of return” (Kissi, 2020) through the told and untold Eurocentric stories of African/Black people from 1600 and to set the stage for decolonization while reclaiming African Indigenous ways of being and knowing in the early childhood education curriculum and field in general. Dei (2006) recognizes that “to understand the knowledge and resistance of the past as it relates to contemporary politics of resistance, one has to know and learn about the past” (p. 1). It is this past in relation to the contemporary politics of “spatial, legal, psychic, material and other dimensions of Black non/being as well as in Black modes of resistance” (Sharpe, 2016, p. 14) that this paper outlines. Another reason why wake work is particularly important is the suppression that results from paying constant lip service to the need for inclusion and diversity in the field but changing little about the policies, institutions, and structures in general (Collins, 2002, p. 23).

## Relevance of cited books

The paper discusses two books that are pivotal in understanding the decolonization of early childhood education (ECE). These books were chosen for their critical examination of the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism on African/Black communities. They provide essential frameworks for analyzing how these legacies affect educational practices and knowledge systems, making them relevant to the paper's focus on reclaiming African/Black Indigenous knowledge. The books are significant as they analyze the implications of Eurocentric ideologies within educational curricula. They challenge the dominant narratives that have historically marginalized African/Black perspectives, advocating for a more inclusive approach to ECE that recognizes and integrates these perspectives. While the specific ECE curricula analyzed in the cited books are not explicitly mentioned, the overarching theme suggests a critique of existing curricula that often overlook African Indigenous knowledge. This critique is vital for developing equitable educational frameworks that reflect diverse experiences. Although the paper does not specify that the analysis is confined to the Canadian context, the themes discussed are applicable to ECE discussions in various settings, including the USA, where Eurocentric frameworks frequently dominate educational practices. These analyses support the paper's call for transformative changes in ECE, emphasizing the need for curricula that reflect the lived experiences and knowledge of African/Black Indigenous communities.

## Understanding the exclusion of other scholars in decolonizing ECE

The paper does not engage with other scholars advocating for decolonizing ECE, for several reasons. The first reason is the paper's emphasis on a unique theoretical framework centered on anticolonial discourse and the concept of wake work. This focus may limit the inclusion of other scholars' perspectives, as the author aims to carve out a distinct narrative that highlights specific methodologies and insights. Another reason is the paper's tracing of historical narratives and disruptions dating back to 1600, which may not align with the frameworks or timelines proposed by other scholars. This historical specificity could lead to a selective engagement with literature that directly supports their arguments.

Additionally, the author prioritizes dismantling Eurocentric ideologies and addressing the systemic erasure of African/Black Indigenous knowledge. This critical stance may result in a deliberate choice to focus on her findings rather than integrating a broader range of scholarly voices. Lastly, the paper advocates for a transformative approach to ECE that necessitates new paradigms and policies. This ambition may overshadow existing scholarship, as the authors seek to establish a fresh discourse that challenges conventional narratives. The exclusion of other scholars therefore stems from a desire to maintain a focused narrative that aligns with the paper's specific goals and theoretical underpinnings.

## Setting the stage

Until a lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter. (African proverb)

This proverb encapsulates the *raison d'être* behind the inception of this discourse; today, both the lion and lioness have acquired the means to articulate their thoughts and sentiments, whether in the languages of their European colonizers or through their own African Indigenous modes of cognition. This articulation serves to convey to colonial powers the exhaustion felt by African/Black communities in perpetuating singular narratives that have systematically dehumanized their ways of existence. The normalization of Eurocentric paradigms as hegemonic not only resulted in the erasure of African/Black identities but also engendered a disruption in the Elder-child relationship, reverberating across Indigenous communities worldwide (Tom et al., 2019).

In the context of the knowledge presented in this paper, contemporary forms of political resistance necessitate the intertwining of personal and political dimensions, as individuals grapple with the ongoing trauma of inhabiting and confronting the realities of the wake (Sharpe, 2016). Understanding the African/Black individual as inherently political entails a perpetual negotiation of the retraumatization inherent in the meticulously constructed colonial structures within the realm of early childhood education. It requires a critical interrogation and deconstruction of the “racial calculus and political arithmetic” embedded within the production and dissemination of knowledge concerning African/Black communities (Sharpe, 2016). As articulated by Dei (1997), this endeavour demands a rigorous examination and comprehension of phenomena grounded in African-centered values. Thus, the process of unravelling and challenging colonial epistemologies necessitates a holistic engagement with African/Black perspectives and experiences, underpinned by a commitment to decolonization and the restoration of agency and dignity to marginalized communities.

### **Theoretical underpinning: Anticolonial discourse**

In the pursuit of elucidating the historical narratives of African/Black children and families within the domain of early childhood education, this paper endeavours to carve out a space for the awakening of consciousness, employing the terms *Indigenous* and *traditional* interchangeably, as per the insights of Wane (2005, p. 28; also see Kissi, 2018, 2020). Here, traditional is employed to denote the continuity of cultural values derived from past experiences, while Indigenous serves to encompass identities and spaces historically marginalized and stigmatized within Western or Euro-American ideologies (Wane, 2005, p. 29). Adopting a more affirming perspective, Dei (1999) posits the concept of Indigenous knowledge as an everyday rationalization that enriches the lives of individuals rooted in specific localities (p. 1). Furthermore, Dei (2012a) underscores the significance of viewing African heritage knowledge as a cultural reservoir encompassing both individual and collective wisdom within African communities (p. 104). This cultural reservoir not only politicizes the heritage knowledge of the individual but also imbues it with profound significance within broader socio-political contexts.

The theoretical framework underpinning this paper (anticolonialism) is aimed at providing a foundation for challenging the prevailing Euro-American narratives that have historically dominated and misrepresented the original African heritage knowledge of colonized peoples (Wane, 2011, p. 128). Against the backdrop of the current global outcry against anti-Blackness, there arises a pressing need to scrutinize the enduring colonial structures within the realm of early childhood education, given its profound implications for the development and well-being of African/Black children and families. Engaging in critical discourse facilitates the disruption of the normalized ideologies surrounding African/Black children and families, which have perpetuated comfort and complacency within conventional approaches to knowledge production, interrogation, validation, and dissemination within Euro-American educational institutions and early childhood spaces (Dei, 2000, pp. 111–112).

This endeavour is crucial as narratives of colonial knowledge and colonial powers are not simply reducible to conquest or resistance but must be situated within broader historical contexts of economic, social, cultural, and political exploitation and coercion (Wane, 2011, p. 281; also see Dei, 2012a; Dei & Simmons, 2009). Adopting an anticolonial perspective offers avenues for dismantling both visible and invisible systems, thereby enabling educators to address and support families in coping with “psychological traumas that have no name” (Wane, 2011) and confront colonial rhetoric that perpetuates erasure and disablement (Timothy, 2009).

To embark on such work is akin to the proverbial Sankofa, urging a return to the source to reexamine and reaffirm narratives while critically interrogating how colonialism, as a theory, project, praxis, and discourse, continues to reproduce itself politically, socially, culturally, materially, and ideologically (Wane, 2011, p. 281; also see Quan-

Baffour, 2008; Dei, 2012a; Dei & Simmons, 2009; Kissi, 2020). Asking these questions necessitates a shift towards top-down decolonized policies, the development of decolonized curricula for ECE programs, and the cultivation of reflexive educators who provide healing spaces grounded in the ontological and epistemological foundations of African Indigenous knowledge.

Moving towards decolonization entails revisiting past narratives through an anticolonial lens, as the subsequent sections offer glimpses into archival events and accounts dating back to 1600, which logically precede the longstanding antiracist pandemics, curricula, and spaces and the retraumatization of African/Black individuals. While these accounts do not purport to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to the current anti-Black pandemic, they catalyze breaking the silences within the ECE field (Kissi & Ewan, 2023).

### **European histories (plotting the accounts of the Europeans)**

[For] colonized peoples decolonization involves a reclamation of the past, previously excluded in the history of the colonial and colonized nations. They must identify the colonial historical period from the perspectives of their places and their peoples. Knowledge of the past is also relevant in so far as we as people must use that knowledge responsibly. (Dei, 2006, p. 1)

In the epigraph above, Dei (2006) underscores the imperative for decolonized peoples to reclaim their marginalized pasts, previously excluded, erased, or distorted within historical narratives. This section aims to elucidate some of the historical contradictions inherent in colonial projects vis-à-vis African/Black Indigenous peoples. As articulated by Frantz Fanon (2004), colonization fundamentally entails the systematic negation of the other, a concerted effort to deprive them of any attributes of humanity, thereby compelling the colonized to grapple incessantly with questions of self-identity amid spaces of terror (pp. 181–182). Thus, it becomes paramount to interrogate the construction of humanity, beginning from early childhood education, to gain deeper insights into the dynamics of the field, families, and the structures they inhabit and to explore the possibilities of safe occupancy within these spaces.

#### *Education*

The utilization of European education as a tool for social erasure was a prevailing phenomenon witnessed by Indigenous peoples. Historical accounts such as that of Bowdich (1819) reveal the strategic implementation of education to advance European superiority, with proposals for Indigenous children to be educated in European schools as a means of civilizing them for European purposes (Bowdich, 1819, p. 6, 84). Cruickshank's (1853) documentation validates this narrative, highlighting the establishment of schools aimed at "improving the moral, social, and political condition" of Indigenous peoples (p. 129). The Eurocentric education system entrenched during the precolonial era served as a catalyst for the erasure of Africanness within Indigenous communities, a legacy still evident in contemporary African and diasporic educational systems. This perpetuation of Eurocentric education reflects a stagnation rooted in denying the African continent the opportunity to cultivate its philosophical arsenal from the environment and lived experiences of its people.

### **Postcolonial critique of child development and its nexus to the dehumanizing portrayal of African/Black childhoods**

Critical and postcolonial literature play a crucial role in providing a nuanced critique of child development, particularly in the context of African/Black childhoods (Irele, 2001). Iruka, Musa, and Allen (2023) argue that integrating African cultural artifacts into early childhood education makes literature a potent means to challenge

dehumanizing depictions of African/Black childhoods and to promote an antiracist atmosphere where children experience representation and appreciation. Postcolonial perspectives emphasize the importance of incorporating African history and culture in children's literature to legitimize the voices of marginalized cultures (McGillis, 2013). Additionally, African literature rooted in postcolonial theory highlights the need to revive the dignity, care, and respect for African children, countering the challenges they face in contemporary society (Eze, 2011; Kissi & Ewan, 2023). This critical approach not only challenges biased attitudes and measures of poverty in child development research but also offers insights into the political and psychological dimensions of child mental health, prompting interventions that address systemic oppression and marginalization (McLoyd, 2019).

### *Child development / childhood*

African methods of nurturing and facilitating child development were often disparaged, with nature-based and independent play deemed detrimental to children's cognitive and physical growth. Such practices were characterized as indicative of neglect rather than nurturing. Despite the contemporary valorization of nature-based play in Western contexts, African Indigenous contributions to this approach remain largely unrecognized (Kissi, 2020; Kissi & Ewan, 2023).

de Marees (1602/1987) critiqued the practice of allowing children to independently explore their natural environment from a tender age:

They grow up as savages running about together, Boys and Girls, beating and fighting one another and stealing one another's food, beginning right from their youth to be very jealous of one another ... the Parents not teaching their children any virtues or allowing them to be taught anything, leaving them to walk around as naked as they were brought into the world by their Mother, Girls as well as Boys, walking with their private parts exposed and without any sense of shame. They also thrash and chastise their children terribly, striking their loins with sticks ... they easily forget, because they do not receive good training from their Parents but grow up like wild trees. (de Marees, 1602/1987, p. 26)

Interestingly, contemporary discourse on child development acknowledges such practices as conducive to fostering independence, resilience, emotional maturation, speech and language acquisition, and the refinement of fine and gross motor skills. Western theorists, including Piaget and Vygotsky, embraced these approaches as effective means of raising and assessing the "normal/typical" child. In the following excerpt from Bosman's account, a contrasting portrayal emerges, wherein children are breastfed until the age of three. This contradicts the earlier depiction by de Marees, wherein mothers were portrayed as lacking in nurturance. Such disparities underscore the complexity inherent in historical narratives of child-rearing practices, highlighting the need for nuanced interpretation within the broader context of cultural and societal norms.

Let us see how they educate their Children; with which the Men never trouble themselves in the least, nor the Women much indeed: The Mother gives the Infant Suck for two or three years; which over, and they able to go, then 'tis, turn out Brutes; if it be hungry she gives it a piece of dry bread, and sends it abroad where ever it pleases, either to the Market, or to the Sea-side to learn to swim, or anywhere else; no Body looks after it; nor is it any Bodies business to hinder its Progress.... When, on the other side, if our Children can but go alone, we are continually perplexed with Thousands of Fears of some or other ill Accidents befalling them. (Bosman, 1704/1907, p. 121)

Indigenous methods of child rearing and development are juxtaposed with European standards, revealing a stark contrast wherein European adults express apprehension and fear at the prospect of their children engaging in unsupervised play in natural settings. This underscores the intrinsic value placed on play within Indigenous cultures, a concept that has been lauded and attributed to prominent approaches in early childhood education,

such as Reggio Emilia, Montessori education, and that of the renowned Swiss theorist Piaget. Thus, the notion of play, inherent to African cultures, calls into question the role of men/fathers in their children's lives, while simultaneously condemning children who freely explore and navigate their environments as "brutes" (Kissi, 2020; also see Kissi & Ewan, 2023).

Despite the dehumanizing portrayal of the African/Black child in accounts like that of de Marees, Bosman's narrative offers glimpses of nurturing parental figures and self-directed children, highlighting the integral role of nature play in the upbringing of African/Black children. It underscores the innate propensity of African/Black children to engage with and be nurtured by their natural surroundings (Kissi, 2020). Hence, play emerges as an intrinsic component of African Indigenous child-rearing practices (Kissi, 2020).

Ironically, the concept of play, including nature play, rough and tumble play, associative play, cooperative play, solitary play, and exploratory play, among others, was introduced by international development organizations like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) during colonial rule as a means of supporting child development. However, the indigenization of African child development must transcend Western influences, such as Montessori schools or Euro-American curriculum systems prevalent in the Western world today. Educators must prioritize centering the Black/African child without imposing Western pathologizing frameworks on their modes of existence. This approach to indigenizing the curriculum not only complicates the concept of play but also creates space for African/Black children to discover their identities and reconnect with their ancestral heritage. It encourages them to pose critical questions as they embark on a journey to rediscover their ties to the past and their ancestors as they navigate their current world while imagining their future.

Childbearing is here as little troublesome as the Men.... I once happened to be near the place where a Negroe Woman was delivered of two Children in the space of one quarter of an Hour; and when she seemed most unease I found 'twas not sufficient to urge any Shrieks or Cries from her; but the very same Day I saw her go to the Sea-side to wash herself without ever thinking of returning to her Bed.... Here is no Provisions made for Linnen or any Necessaries for the New-born Infant; and yet its Limbs grows Vigorous and Proportionate as in Holland; except only that they have larger Navels than ordinary with us: But this is the Mother's fault. (Bosman, 1704/1907, p. 122)

The attribution of a child's growth of a larger than "normal" navel to the mother reflects the European imposition of a predetermined norm for the ideal child, perpetuating a cultural hegemony that continues to dictate societal standards (Kissi, 2020; Timothy, 2018). Moreover, this quote underscores the subjugation of African/Black women, depicting them as inherently inferior beings who, immediately after childbirth, are expected to undertake physically demanding tasks such as fetching water from the river (Kissi, 2020). Such representations have facilitated the pervasive inequities in healthcare services experienced by African/Black women, contributing to their detriment and exacerbating existing health disparities, including the lack of access to mental health services and culturally sensitive pre- and postnatal care (Timothy, 2019b). This stereotype, deeply ingrained in historical exclusionary practices, persists in shaping popular culture and informing public policies, thereby perpetuating the oppression of Black women (Collins, 2002, Timothy, 2019a).

Roberta Timothy's advocacy for health reparations assumes heightened significance in light of prevailing data revealing pronounced disparities in Canadian and global healthcare systems, underscoring the urgent need for redress (Timothy, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). Regarding spirituality, Indigenous knowledge encompasses the cultural and spiritual realities of local communities, encompassing their epistemic connections to their spiritual beliefs, ancestors, and land. African spirituality, characterized by its dynamic nature and vulnerability to change, is deeply ingrained in the fabric of African cultures, shaping their worldview and social structures (Abraham, 1962; Mbiti,

1990).

This form of knowledge, passed down through generations via oral traditions, storytelling, symbols, and traditional practices, serves as the bedrock of Indigenous communities, informing their cognitive, social, and physical development (Dei, 1999). An exemplar of such heterogeneity is the Akan epistemic framework, which delineates the material and immaterial aspects of personhood. According to Gyekye (1995; also see Kissi, 2020), Akan conceptualizations view humans as complex beings, comprising both spiritual and physical components interconnected with the cosmos. The immaterial realm encompasses the Okra (soul) and Sunsum (spirit), which are believed to maintain a spiritual connection with the Supreme Being / Creator (Onyame). The material realm, represented by the Honam (body), coalesces with the spiritual realm to form the holistic essence of personhood. This interconnectedness underscores the Akan belief in the continuity of ancestral spirits that permeates the spiritual fabric of African Indigenous societies (Gyekye, 1995; Kissi, 2020).

Understanding these Indigenous epistemologies enables educators to create culturally responsive learning environments that honour the spiritual and cultural traditions of African/Black children and families. It necessitates active engagement with subjective experiences, social interpretations, and holistic understandings of Indigenous life, fostering a deeper appreciation for the metaphysical dimensions of existence (Dei, 1999, 2012b).

The following quote from de Marees dating back to the 1600s vividly illustrates the perception of Indigenous peoples' worship practices, portraying them as childish, foolish, and devilish:

Others have great faith in certain Trees; and if they want to know something, they go to their Trees, where the [devil] often appears to them in a form of a black [dog] or suchlike, often also in invisible form, and answers what they ask.... If the Dutch see them observing such customs and laugh and mock them because they look so foolish, they are much ashamed and no longer dare to make their Fetisso in our presence. (de Marees, 1602/1987, p. 71)

The quote reflects a disdainful attitude towards African spiritual beliefs and cultural practices, causing shame and embarrassment among the Indigenous communities. As a result, many retreated to worship in private, feeling compelled to abandon their traditional ways of knowing and being (Kissi, 2020). Claridge's 1915 account, chronicling a transatlantic trading journey, offers a harrowing depiction of the brutal treatment endured by African/Black individuals who sought to maintain their spiritual connection to their people, land, and ancestors. The narrative underscores the immense suffering inflicted on those who dared to resist transatlantic journey and preserve their cultural heritage.

Captain Harding considered the two chief actors in this scene to be of greater value on account of their courage and strength and sentenced them to be flogged and scarified, but, with utmost barbarity, caused the women to be hoisted up by her thumbs and flogged and slashed with knives until she died.... The slaves are said to have believed that mutilation would [create] a bar to their entry into the spirit world, and some inhuman captains of ships did not hesitate to amputate the limbs of a few in order to terrorize the remainder. (Claridge, 1915, p. 175)

To inflict hopelessness, stripping another human being of their humanness, forcing them to die without dignity, and breaking their connecting path to the spirit world, their ancestors, and their land is a barbaric act. Christian missionaries established transformative Indigenous missions that eventually became detrimental due to misunderstandings in teachings and promises of eternal life.

They (the Indigenous) heard the teachings of the missionaries which, to them, were so novel and strange that it is not surprising that they were the cause of a great deal of misconception and induced

the people to believe that by adopting this new faith they would derive many important temporal benefits ... vast majority ... adopted Christianity in all sincerity and their numbers slowly increased. (Claridge, 1915, pp. 465–467)

This foreign teaching was easily accepted by the Indigenous due to the name calling and the constant mockery and taunting of their ways of being as a limitation, of needing a white saviour through the indoctrination of a foreign faith leaving them to still ask the question “Who am I in reality?” The question now is, where do we go from here?

## The way forward

There is an urgent need for the implementation of mandatory African Indigenous education, which would provide educators with a comprehensive understanding of the histories, struggles, and ongoing experiences of African/Black communities worldwide. This call to action goes beyond mere gestures of diversity and inclusion; it demands a fundamental system shift in policies, institutions, and societal structures (Kissi & Ewan, 2023). This imperative should be recognized as an urgent priority. Integration of African Indigenous education into early childhood programs at colleges and universities is essential. As numerous scholars have emphasized, the lived experiences of African/Black communities serve as a rich source of knowledge and theory, obviating the need for continued colonization of our ways of knowing through hegemonic Euro-American frameworks of the “normal” (Collins, 2002).

Drawing on African Indigenous knowledge offers alternative paradigms for education and community solidarity (Dei, 2012a; Wane, 2005). As Wane (2005) asserts, this form of knowledge enables individuals of African descent to weave together strands of indigeneity into the objectives and practices of social, intellectual, and emotional development for children, youth, families, and communities. Furthermore, Malidoma Somé (1994) reminds us that

each one of us possessed a center.... The center is both within and without. It is everywhere. But we must realize it exists, find it, and be with it, for without the center we cannot tell who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. (p. 198)

With this call to action, this review advocates for the reclamation of the forgotten and erased path and centre of the African/Black child and families through the findings of the research. As educators, we hold the responsibility to support the diverse journeys of rediscovery and empowerment. This journey commences with the assertion of space, the revival of traditional ways of being and knowledge generation, the defiance of hegemonic educational structures, and the challenging of discourses that have marginalized African/Black Indigenous communities. This call is beyond diversity, equity, and inclusion; it requires the wake work of African/Black Indigenous children to be intentionally centered.

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