

Call for Tracks

Deadline September 15th, 2026

Guest Producer

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Theme: The Cost of Code-switching: Unmaskin' the racial politics of language in Black Lives

Code-switching encodes racial hierarchies. It does not innocently permit us to move from one equally regarded language into another. It involves colonial conditioning about who is barbaric and who is sanctified, who is delinquent and who is standard, who is professional and who is ratchet.

—Jamila J. Lyiscott, *The Cost of Code-switching and How We Get Free*

It goes without saying, then, that language is also a political instrument, means, and proof of power. It is the most vivid and crucial key to identity: It reveals the private identity, and connects one with, or divorces one from, the larger, public, or communal identity.

—James Baldwin, *If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?*

In Lyiscott's forthcoming book, *The Cost of Code-switching and How We Get Free*, she argues, "Black English has always been a secret meeting place. Its walls are carved of remembrance and reclamation. It is both relish and reckoning. We weave it into story and song. And yet the white world demands our duality. So we double our consciousness and shudder under the surveillance of our survival" (Lyiscott, In Press). With the argument that code-switching finds its roots in a history of racial and colonial violence, Lyiscott calls for unmasking the linguistic hierarchies and respectability politics that cast Black ways of knowing as inherently delinquent, and invites us to imagine a world where we can be "free from the surveillance of whiteness that occurs through language" (Lyiscott, In Press). Enduring the conditions and afterlives of slavery has long compelled Black people to switch between 'codes' or risk bodily, spiritual, or social death. Captured Africans were separated from tribes and by language to prevent communication in codes that felt like home. 18th and 19th century anti-literacy laws doled out corporal punishment and lynchings to control Black people's access to literacy. Contemporary racial politics have made it common knowledge that competitiveness in the workplace or school is marked by Black people's

ability to self-police their language and to adhere to the normative standards of white mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020).

This call builds on Lyiscott's work to reject the common framing of code-switching as a benign survival skill for social success and to understand how its racial politics play out in school and broader society. Recent legislation seeking to erase Black history and representation from U.S. curricula demonstrates the ways that school has been a complicit mechanism of assimilation and erasure for Black children. Though decades of research has shown that the validity and power of Black English is legit and transforms the educational lives of all children (Boutte, 2021; Makoni et al, 2023; McWhorther, 2017; Smitherman, 1977), many people still uphold the prevailing understanding that Black language is not appropriate for formal intellectual activities and settings. Code-switching then, has become a widely accepted social practice for preserving Black language practices while upholding white mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020) as more intelligible and appropriate for social success.

In the space of school, code-switching continues to function within and beyond the scope of language, including dress-codes and hair policies that frame Black aesthetics as ghetto, violent, unkempt, and unfit for formality. Mirroring colonial legacies that used school as a tool of epistemic violence, for Black students, code-switching requires an oscillation between a hierarchy of epistemologies, and an internalization of inferiority. Code-switching says, 'even if my language of nurture is valid, it must surrender to the superior "language of power" upheld in the classroom for me to survive.' Thus, rather than the everydayness of code-switching carried out by all people, the *racial* politics of code-switching attends to the impetus of shame, fear, or consequence that has historically undergirded code-switching in the lives of Black people. Unmasking the costs of code-switching then, works to unveil its fragmenting effect on Black interior worlds. For Lyiscott, this "Black fragmentation" refers to "the spiritual, mental, and emotional fissures that result from switching in and out of home languages and cultures to survive white supremacy" (Lyiscott, In Press).

Alongside this effort to unmask the normative linguistic hierarchies that prop up code-switching, this call acknowledges that Black people have always transgressed, forging fugitive literacies (Lyiscott, 2025) that abscond from the status quo in the name of our own self-definition. In a 1956 letter to a dear high school friend, James Baldwin wrote, "the place in which I'll fit will not exist until I make it." A world beyond code-switching does not yet exist for Black people, but this place—of hyper-vigilance, of self-policing, of performance, of fear-induced code-switching—is not a place where we fit. As we grapple with these tensions and questions, Lyiscott warns against the essentializing idea that Black English is a monolith or that all Black people speak Black English and instead invites us to interrogate the racial politics that frame how, when, and where Black people do language.

This call seeks fire offerings that question and disrupt the veiled racial politics of code-switching. BE producers seek tracks that unmask it as a product of anti-Black racism perpetuated by the false promise of social mobility. We invite scholarship that explores the possibilities and praxes of anti-codeswitching—"an era of Black self-integration where we have the audacity to bring our authentic selves into any space we choose" (Lyiscott, In Press)—as responsibility and refusal. We invite original

tracks, creative resources, and community works that have not yet been published or submitted on any website, journal, or book from educators, activists, scholars, and students. The topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

Code-Switching and Anti-Black Linguistic Racism

- Given the widely accepted nature of code-switching, how do we unmask its anti-Black roots?
- What are the enduring psychological, spiritual, and emotional costs of code-switching?
- What are the links to colonial legacies?

The Respectability Politics of Code-Switching

- How do internalized hierarchies manifest in Black communities?
- What are the intersections of capitalism, the class struggle, and code-switching?

Anti-Codeswitching As Possibility, Responsibility, and Praxis

- How do we transition from valid to utilized concerning Black linguistic practices?
- How do we disrupt or navigate the co-opting of Black language?
- How can we build beyond the monolith?
- What does linguistic justice look like in practice?

References

- Baker-Bell, A. (2013). "I never really knew the history behind African American language": Critical language pedagogy in an advanced placement English language arts class. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(3), 355–370.
- Boutte, G. S., King, J. E., Johnson, G. L., & King, L. J. (Eds.). (2021). *We be lovin' Black children: Learning to be literate about the African diaspora*. Myers Education Press.
- Lyiscott, J. (In Press). *The Cost of Code-switching and How We Get Free*. Beacon Press.
- Lyiscott, J. (2025). Decolonial and fugitive literacies. *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*.
- Makoni, S., Smitherman, G., Ball, A., & Spears, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Black linguistics: Language, society, and politics in Africa and the Americas*. Routledge.
- McWhorter, J. H. (2017). *Talking back, talking Black: Truths about America's lingua franca*. Bellevue Literary Press.

I. General Information and Policies

The Call for Submissions for the Black Educology 2026-2027 Mixtape invites teachers, scholars, community members, and young people wishing to participate in an ongoing conversation about the state of Black education. Black Educology and guest producer Dr. Jamilia Lyiscott invite multiple types of submissions: an individual track, creative works, notes from the community, bonus tracks, and youth speaks (submissions from students 12-21 years old).

Please note that failure to follow the procedures and policies listed below will most likely result in submissions being removed from consideration.

1. **Submissions are accepted via Google Form only at the [Submission Portal](#).**
2. **Originality of submissions.** Only tracks and creative works that have not been previously published are eligible.
3. **Submissions must arrive by the deadline.** The submission form opens on March 8th, 2026, and

II. Submission Procedures and Policies

closes on September 15th, 2026, at 11:59 PM Pacific Time.

- a. Sometimes life be lifeing though. If you have any difficulty meeting this timeframe, please let us know as soon as possible and we will do our best to support you.
4. Submissions are accepted online only at the [BE Full Track Submission Form](#).

Completeness of submissions. Only submit a complete track. All tracks must follow the [BE style guide](#). A complete track has the following:

- a. 15 words or fewer for track title
- b. A 150-word abstract
- c. A 100-word bio for each author
- d. 3000-8000 words per track (not inclusive of references)
- e. Follows APA style guidelines

Projected Timeline

- Full track due September 15th, 2026
- Peer review/Developmental editing completed by October 31st, 2026
- Notification of acceptance status and/or reviewed drafts returned with editor commentary, November 2nd, 2026
- Revised tracks with letter to editors due January 11th, 2026.
- Copyediting conducted through February.
- Final revised tracks due within ten days of receipt of the copyedited track.
- Anticipated publication in Summer 2026

For general questions, contact the BE team at producers@blackeducology.org

III. Common Mistakes and FAQs

Common Mistakes

1. Exceeding the word limit (tracks have different word limits).
2. Submitting an incomplete track. A complete track is required, even if it is preliminary.
3. Submitting a previously published or presented track.

4. Submitting the same track to more than one journal.
5. Not indicating the correct category for your submission (e.g., track, youth speaks, notes from the community, bonus track, resources)

FAQs

1. Do I need to be Black to submit?
 - a. It helps
2. Does my work need to focus on the Black community and education?
 - a. Absolutely
3. Is there a submission template?
 - a. Yes, [here it goes](#).
4. Do I need to cite previously published tracks from Black Educology?
 - a. Yes, 3-4 tracks.
5. What is the word count for a **track** submission?
 - a. 15 words or fewer for track title
 - b. A 150-word abstract
 - c. A 100-word bio for each author
 - d. 3000-8000 words per track (not inclusive of references)
 - e. Follows APA style guidelines (no footnotes)
6. What is the word count for a **youth speaks** submission?
 - a. 10 words or fewer for track title
 - b. A 100-word abstract
 - c. A 100-word bio for each author
 - d. 1000-3000 words per track (not inclusive of references)
 - e. Follows APA style guidelines (no footnotes)
7. What is the word count for a **notes from the community** submission?
 - a. 10 words or fewer for track title
 - b. A 100-word abstract
 - c. A 100-word bio for each author
 - d. 1000-5000 words per track (not inclusive of references)
 - e. Follows APA style guidelines (no footnotes)

8. What is the word count for a **bonus track** submission?
 - a. 15 words or fewer for track title
 - b. A 150-word Abstract
 - c. A 100-word bio for each author
 - d. 3000-8000 words per track (not inclusive of references)
 - e. Follows APA style guidelines (no footnotes)
9. What is the style for a **resource** submission?
 - a. 15 words or fewer for track title
 - b. A 150-word Abstract
 - c. A 100-word bio for each author
 - d. 2000-8000 words per track (not inclusive of references)

APPENDICES

TRACKS: A “track” is a work, painting, sculpture, poem, piece of music, article, or offering related to the central theme of each volume of the BE Mixtape. As a track, each work exists in conversation with other tracks. Collectively, each volume, guest-produced by an artist in the field of education, contributes to the larger collection of volumes that we refer to as mixtapes. Each volume is a full plate in our backyard project, uncovering and uplifting Black voices in educational spaces. In short, a track is work that contributes to the overall ethos of Black Educology.

BONUS TRACKS: No work ever exists in isolation. Each idea and action is a budding fruit brought to life by the seeds of another’s tree. We are all part of this sacred continuum. We’ve decided to incorporate bonus tracks to each mixtape as a nod to the amount of work and voices that we want to make space for. Bonus tracks aren’t expected to align with the call but add to the overall mixtape ethos as they are rooted in Black voices. Bonus tracks are also NOT a participation prize; they are words and sounds that demand their own publication.

YOUTH SPEAKS: Young people need to write the world, and we intend for Black Educology to be a space where they can do just that. Youth voices need to be heard. Not from the fold-up table with the plastic chairs, but from the big oak table with the white cloth. Removing the hierarchical approach to academia by incorporating youth voices is exactly the type of disruption that makes our mixtape subversive. When the youth speak, we listen with the same gravity as an ancestor. Youth Speaks is our attempt to share space and see youth perspectives as central to unpacking Blackness, Education, Ecology, and Action.

COMMUNITY VOICES: Without the communities that raised us, there would be no mixtape. We offer notes from the community for people who feel that their title of mother, cousin, brother, activist, or artist does not give them the authority to speak about the impact of education on Black people, but they do. We know nurses and dancers who think they need a PhD to join us in this space. They don’t. It is because of our community that the beautiful complexities of Black life can seed, sprout, flower, and blossom in the soils of our ancestors, kinfolk, and relatives.

RESOURCES: Items in this section are for our use, either in the classroom or at home. These materials are here to inspire us to create our own resources. Moving beyond the extractive ethos of academia, Black Educology aims to root our work in infusing our community, the Black community, with joy, healing, and restoration. We choose to do this by creating resources that further support informing, conferring, and collaborating with educational voices across the Black diaspora. Ultimately, our resources are a creative approach to building, fighting, and dreaming up new ways to disrupt, subvert, and destroy the inherent oppressiveness of educational institutions. We hope that these resources will help us understand that Black Educology is not just a concept, but a revolutionary way of being.