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What does it mean to be thingified? Encountering epidermalization as an international student through the lens of critical African phenomenology

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ABSTRACT: *This paper offers a critical African phenomenological inquiry into my experiences of racism as an international student in Canada. Drawing on Husserl, Fanon, and Freire, I explore the embodied, historico-racial schema of racism through vignettes of racial slurs. These vignettes expose a systemic silence that fails to protect racialized bodies. The paper traces epidermalization, the marking of Black bodies through visible difference—and the violence that thingifies them. It also introduces the concept of the telephonic curriculum and the intergenerational transmission of racial ideologies. I connect these moments to global "geo-racism" during the 2014–2016 Ebola outbreak, arguing that the pathologization of Black bodies stems from a learned racial framework. Ultimately, the paper calls for international education to move beyond tolerance toward decolonial practices grounded in Freirean conscientization, positioning the classroom as a site for challenging racial constructs and enacting decolonial change.*

Keywords: conscientization, critical African phenomenology, epidermalization, international student, telephonic curriculum, thingification.

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INTRODUCTION

Racism, in its overt and subtle manifestations, challenges social justice and international education, inhibiting the co-constitution of Being and flourishing. Because social justice and international education aim to foster equitable global communities, the visceral reality of racial slurs must be confronted. Racism transcends intersubjective experience; it is not merely an interpersonal conflict but a crisis of humanity that denies Black people recognition and equal humanness within shared spaces shaped by whiteness. This problem is not localized; it is global and rooted in a deep historico-racial schema (Fanon, 1967), which this article demonstrates through phenomenological anecdotes. To investigate the persistent pathology of embodied racism experienced by international students in Canada, this paper analyzes lived experiences through the conceptual resources of social justice and international studies in education. Recognizing that racialization for foreign-born students is a transitional process (Burt et al., 2017), I employ a bricolage framework, Critical African phenomenology, as a strategic piecing together of analytical tools in which each lens corrects the others' blind spots. Drawing on Critical African phenomenology, I attend to the structures of consciousness and embodiment through which racialized experiences are lived and interpreted, particularly in moments of racist encounter. This lens therefore enables an examination of the felt and embodied dimensions of racism, including the question: What does racism feel like from within?

This article extends Fanon's phenomenological tradition through the scholarly perspectives of Lewis Gordon, Mabogo More, and Abraham Olivier. Their work emphasizes that the lifeworld is not neutral but shaped by colonialism, racism, and historical violence. In contrast to the risk of naive universalism within classical phenomenology, this tradition attends to the specific racialized character of the lifeworld. Fanonian social and political theory further situates felt experience within the coloniality of power and the "historico-racial schema" that, in Fanon's formulation, always already overdetermines the Black body. Critical pedagogy, following Freire, completes the triad by asking a generative question: What is to be done? It shifts the analysis from interpretation to intervention, from understanding the wound to healing it. A comparative orientation extends this bricolage, examining how racism manifests across contexts: from the Canadian care home to global food cultures, and from intimate violence to xenophobic panic. This multidisciplinary approach allows for the systematic examination of education not only as a formal institution but also as a broader social and cultural project implicated in both perpetuating and challenging racial hierarchies. A note on method and site: The empirical heart of this paper consists of two vignettes from my work as a youth worker in a Canadian residential care facility. What does a care home have to do with international education? It functions as a central site where the racialized conditions experienced by international students in classrooms and institutional policies are concentrated and rendered subject to examination. As Park and Francis (2024) argue, the violence that racialized international students face is "best understood as constitutive of the violence of White settler colonialism" (p. 3), a structure that operates across classrooms, care homes, and all spaces that students inhabit. What I experienced in care homes as an international graduate student working part-time, others experience in lecture halls, advising offices, and off-campus housing. The setting differs; the grammar remains. This paper therefore treats the care home as a key site where the broader structures of international student experience

become visible in thick descriptions. Guided by this framework, this inquiry is driven by the following research questions:

What is it like to experience racism? That is, what is it like to be the target of a racial slur, a stereotype, or exclusion in the moment of the encounter?

How do these embodied experiences reflect broader systemic, cultural, and epistemological structures?

What are the implications of this phenomenological understanding for pedagogical practice and theory in social justice and international education?

This paper's primary methodological orientation is phenomenology, a form of qualitative research focusing on an individual's lived experience. Phenomenological inquiry is vital for social justice, as it returns "to the things themselves" (Husserl, 2013), offering a structure of internal reality from the felt sense of the experiencer. This provides embodied data for analysis prior to theoretical abstraction. A detailed study of the subject is the foundation of policy-oriented research, enabling the extraction of raw data from somatic experience. This paper employs phenomenological anecdotes, the raw, in-seeing moment of a racist encounter, as essential data. I engage this somatic structure by reflecting on my experience as a graduate student in Canada, bracketing preconceived notions to arrive at the essence of these experiences: stunned silence, learned prejudice, casual joke, and systemic distrust. This method privileges the subjective, embodied knowledge of the racialized person as a valid and crucial form of understanding the world, a form often marginalized in traditional educational discourses. This approach follows van Manen's (2014) conception of phenomenology as a writing practice that uses precise, evocative descriptions to disclose meaning rather than merely reporting events. As a methodological synthesis, this paper argues that subjective experience is objective data because of its internal structure of reality.

Fanon and contemporary scholars such as Lewis Gordon (1995) and Mabogo More (2017) have shown that the transcendental subject is never neutral. It is raced, gendered, and situated, always already overdetermined by a "historico-racial schema" (Fanon, 1967). Gordon (1995) terms this "Africana phenomenology," a philosophical approach that takes seriously the lived experience of Black peoples while refusing the fiction of a universal, unraced consciousness. More (2017) extends this tradition in the South African context, analyzing how apartheid shaped Black subjectivity. My analysis employs a critical African phenomenological approach, bracketing assumptions about what racism means to attend closely to how it feels while refusing the fiction of bracketing the historical structures that make those feelings possible. The vignettes are offered not as raw experience but as experience always already shaped by the schema I seek to analyze.

VIGNETTES AND INITIAL REFLECTIONS: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL DATA

I begin by presenting two vignettes from my professional practice as a youth worker in Canada. Following the vignettes, I ground the theoretical analysis in the concrete reality of the lifeworld. These are not merely personal stories but lived instances that serve as essential data that help to crystallize the systemic "constituting grammar" of racism (Fanon, 1967). The paper therefore proceeds by revealing the visceral, dehumanizing weapon of racism and tracing the intergenerational pedagogy of its transmission.

The Somatic Violence of the Slur: "The Poop that Comes Out"

The encounter unfolds not in a shadowy alley but in the presumed safety of a professional care setting. The words, delivered with childish cruelty, land with the force of a physical blow:

> I hear Jude saying to me: "Your skin looks like the poop that comes out of my arsehole when I use the toilet." I am transfixed, numb all over, the weight of his words overwhelms me. Try to say something; just try, my inner promptings tell me. "Jude, this is un-Canadian," I said to him. He ignores me, and at once, I see him leaving my presence, going back to his sofa, and sitting quietly with fingers on the keyboard of his laptop. I remain stunned. In this moment, the world contracts to the space between two people, charged with a history that is not fully controlled. My colleague, a White Canadian woman trained in de-escalation, looks on, offering sympathy without meaningful intervention, providing no interruption to the logic unfolding before us–a mark of institutional complicity. When I greet him, he replies with a question: "Has anyone tried to flush you through the toilet like a poop?" The victim's response, however, shifts from stunned silence to a determined, almost pedagogical, resolve: "I now see a young man that needs help to be human. I turned to my colleague saying, 'I will be here again, and again, I will go nowhere. I will be the face of Canada in this house."

This narrative is a microcosm of the racist encounter: a sudden, visceral attack on one's being, followed by reckoning. Racism is minimized when it is defined like a text. Its essence manifests in everyday life; in the experience lies its true meaning. Words struggle to bring it to life. What is silence? "It is not the absence of words or language" (van Manen, 2015). In a hurtful moment, one becomes viscerally embodied with silence—silence becomes an organ that speaks. It is not a "thing" we relate with but a "thing" that embodies us when it is hit with a slur. When dehumanized, silence speaks as our advocate. "Your skin looks like the poop that comes out of my arsehole when I use the toilet." It is not race that produces racism but racism that produces race. Racism objectifies the other person by reducing them to a "thing." When Jude's words transform my skin into excrement, I experience precisely this "thingification"—I am no longer a person before him but an object onto which disgust can be projected. "Thingification" leads to the psychic phenomenon of alienation between persons by changing their very being. Thus, the Black man and woman are forced to exist in a zone of instrumental "non-being" (Fanon, 1967).

That first encounter captures the impact of racism. The second reveals its origin, showing how this logic is not spontaneously generated but is taught, inherited, and passed down. Drawing from the mother–son telephone conversation in the vignette that follows, I introduce the term "telephonic curriculum" to describe how racist ideologies are transmitted across generations—carried along family lines such as voices on a wire. The significance of this term lies in highlighting how these messages, although not passed through formal schooling, echo through family conversations, media narratives, and institutional silences.

Racism as a Learned Curriculum: "The Ebola Man"

The first vignette captures the in-seeing moment and somatic effects of racism. The following encounter shifts the focus to the intergenerational pedagogy of racism and epidermalization, demonstrating how this racist logic is not a spontaneous individual creation but a learned curriculum delivered from one generation to the next.

> I am in a residence, going about my duties, when I overhear Mark, a client, having a heated conversation with his mother in their native tongue. The words "Ebola? yes Ebola, disease yes disease Ebola" cut through the air, repeated with a disturbing intensity. Mark drops the phone, his face a mask of anger. He strides toward me and stops, his question a verbal projectile: "What is Ebola, did you have Ebola, and are you from Africa?" In that moment, I am transfixed by a speechless silence. This silence is not voluntary or meditative; it is the silence of being violently repositioned in the world. I am no longer an individual but a symbol, a continent, a disease. When I find my voice, I ask him why he is asking these questions, what his mother said to make him so angry. "That is not your business," he retorts, "but answer my question." I try to deflect, suggesting that he speak to his social worker. His response is a torrent of "Shit! Shit! Shit!" as he retreats to his room. Later, he confronts the home manager with the same question: "What is Ebola?" Upon hearing it is a disease not reported in Canada, he declares, "I do not want him to work with me; he is an African man; they have Ebola disease." The manager offers a silent, sympathetic look–a whispered cue to ignore him, not cruelty but protocol: managerial silence that manages symptoms while leaving the curriculum intact. The rejection becomes tangible. Mark refuses to eat the food I prepare, only accepting it from the manager. From the basement, his voice echoes, "Ebola man, Ebola man. Go home; I do not want you to work with me." My only recourse is to continue my work, embodying a silence that is both a shield and a form of resistance.

This encounter exemplifies instilled prejudice. The fear and anger that Mark directs at my body are not his own original creations; they are inherited emotions passed down through a telephonic curriculum from his mother. My Black body is phenomenologically transformed. It ceases to be the body of a caregiver and becomes a "vector of disease," a walking, breathing embodiment of a modern-day plague. This is a classic colonial trope resurrected. In this schema, my presence is violently problematized. The ordinary act of sharing a space becomes fraught with a pathological danger I am alleged to carry, the essence of the racist encounter as an assault on one's being-in-the-world. The question, "Are you from Africa?" is not one of geographical curiosity but of taxonomic classification,

placing me in a category that is, within Mark's learned worldview, synonymous with sickness and threat. The silence that overcomes me is the silence of this reobjectification; it is the self-struggling to recohere after being shattered by symbolic violence that reduces a person to a pathogenic stereotype.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PHENOMENOLOGY, FANON, AND FREIRE

Having presented the raw data of lived experience, a theoretical lens is required to analyze its deeper structures. To fully perceive the embodied visceral wound of a racial slur–the paralyzing dread, the stunned silence that it imposes, and the ingrained learned logic of intergenerational bigotry–move beyond exterior observation. To explore this knowledge, I integrate a tripartite approach: phenomenology, helping us to examine lived experiences (Ahmed, 2006); Fanonian and decolonial theory, which places this experience in a racial and historical context (Maldonado-Torres, 2007); and critical pedagogy, which guides us toward meaningful, reflective, and proactive action (Freire, 1970).

The Phenomenological Lens: Returning to the "Thing Itself"

The core of phenomenology is a return to the things themselves (Husserl, 2013). This method requires bracketing preconceived ideas and abstractions to describe the world as immediately given to consciousness. However, as African phenomenologists have argued, this is not the reality of our lifeworld because bracketing is never complete; the historico-racial schema is always already present and at work. This is the "disciplinary decadence" of classical phenomenology, which Gordon (1995) describes as its failure to recognize that the transcendental subject is an illusion. More (2017) also demonstrates through Steve Biko's philosophy that Black subjectivity in South Africa cannot be understood through universal categories alone; it requires attending to the specific structures of apartheid and resistance and to their embodied experience. Abraham Olivier's (2023) concept of "displacement" captures this: the generative outcome of racism that marks certain bodies as not belonging, pushing them out of the category of "human" and into preexisting pathological meanings.

The first essential Husserlian concept is intentionality: every mental process involves awareness of an object; consciousness is always consciousness of something. Our minds are constantly pointed and directed toward specific objects, people, or ideas. In the context of this study, the racist encounter creates a violent direction of consciousness. The racist stare transforms Black bodies into objects labeled "inferior," "dirty," and "animalistic". Therefore, the victim's normal sense of being, referred to as the corporeal schema, is shattered, becoming suddenly opaque, foreign, and heavy. At this moment, the corporeal schema is altogether replaced by an epidermal schema, the graphic experience of a racial slur. The lifeworld (Lebenswelt), the unanalyzed common world we share, is ruptured by racism's intrusion of hostile, dehumanizing logic into shared spaces. The core strength of phenomenology is its ability to immerse us in the lived experiences of others, asking not just what racism is but what it is like to be its target.

Applied to the encounters above, phenomenology illuminates why Jude's slur lands as a physical blow; consciousness is always embodied and always situated. The "stunned

silence" is not weakness but the corporeal schema being shattered. When Mark asks, "Are you from Africa?" the question is not a neutral inquiry but a directing of consciousness that violently repositions me within the dark side of the lifeworld, where my body carries meanings I did not choose. Ahmed (2007) names this dynamic stranger-making: I am recognized not as an individual but as the stranger, already known as a potential danger through repeated cultural associations.

Fanon and the Racialized Lifeworld

The theoretical frameworks are not neutral—while I employ Husserl, providing the qualitative method of inquiry, I engage Frantz Fanon as the praxis and tool of analysis, orienting the project's crucial racialization. Fanon recognized that for the Black subject, the lifeworld is already overdetermined by a "historico-racial schema" (Fanon, 1967, p. 84). Fanon's powerful description of being fixed by the white child's gaze—"Look, a Negro!"—captures the moment when his corporeal schema, his sense of his own body in space, is replaced by a racial epidermal schema. He is sealed into a "crushing objecthood," a condition of non-being. This insight is the foundation of Critical African phenomenology. Fanon notes how Black existence is shaped by "bad faith"—a denial of freedom that affects how people experience the world. Mabogo More (2017) expands on this by arguing that Biko's Black Consciousness philosophy constitutes a phenomenological project, providing an account of how Black South Africans come to understand themselves as subjects both despite and through oppression. More recently, Abraham Olivier's (2023) edited collection, *Phenomenology in an African Context*, brought together scholars who use phenomenological methods based on African lived experience.

Epidermalization is the internalization of inferiority embedded in the perception of one's skin. Racism is lived through a constituting grammar of everyday experience. The "thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (Fanon, 1967, as cited in Clarke, 2025)—linguistic encounters, bodily experiences, and psychological torments—are the fabric of the racialized lifeworld. The "historico-racial schema" is alive. It makes Jude's words land before he opens his mouth—a grammar of disgust linking Black skin to filth for centuries. This schema makes that comparison legible, allowing Mark to hear "Ebola" and see my body as a threat before I speak. The schema is the ghost in the room before either of us arrives, sedimented into the collective unconscious, and waiting to be activated. I did not bring it. However, I am forced to stand in it.

Freire and Critical Pedagogy: The Imperative for Conscientization

Here lies a critical question in anti-racism education: If racism is a learned ideo-epistemology, as I have argued, what becomes the critical role of education in disrupting this intergenerational miseducation? The answer lies within critical pedagogy. I argue that racism is a learned system of belief and ideology—an ideo-epistemology co-constituting white identity, which is embodied as ontology (Fanon, 1967; Mills, 1997) and sustained by global power structures (Allen, 1994; Quijano, 2000; Said, 1978). Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy offers the necessary response, contrasting the "banking concept" with "problem-posing education." The former deposits knowledge into students; the latter engages learners as co-investigators in dialogue about their world. When my colleague silently signals to me to "ignore" Mark's slurs, she enacts the banking model—managing the symptoms rather than interrogating the cause, leaving the underlying curriculum intact.

The ultimate goal of this dialogue is *conscientização* (conscientization), which is the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. Naming the telephonic curriculum, risking the presence to refuse reduction, and embodying structural interruption cultivate unlearning. This is the practical work Freire called *conscientização*. *Conscientização*, for Freire (1970), goes beyond awareness. It is collective action stemming from collective dialogue and reflection, notably to clearly perceive social, economic, and political contradictions and then take concrete actions against oppressive and unjust architectures. It is a dialectical movement of reflection, action, word, and work without verbalism. *Conscientização* is the opposite of the banking model's passive reception. It is a transition into liberatory transcendence, wherein the subject emerges into history, and the oppressed recognize themselves as makers of the world and not merely objects within it.

What does this mean for international education? If the telephonic curriculum is based on a "knowing ignorance" that targets Black bodies, then *conscientização* (Freire, 1970) offers a critical alternative. Instead of being a passive awareness of media-driven xenophobia, *conscientização* involves a process of reflection and action. Practicing *conscientização* means rejecting the "banking model" of education, where people are passive recipients of state-sanctioned fear, and working toward a society where being close to Blackness is not linked to danger or death. This is the shift I alluded to when I position critical pedagogy as a catalyst for a dialogic Black–White homeostasis—not to preserve a pathological equilibrium but to rupture it. Critical pedagogy enacts a revolt, not as chaos but to systematically cultivate critical consciousness that makes the current racial order untenable. I have established the theoretical framework, which is based on three critical scholarships: phenomenology, historico-racial schema, and critical pedagogy. Returning to the vignettes, I proceed to perform a deeper analysis through these lenses.

ANALYSIS: THEORIZING THE ENCOUNTERS

The triad of phenomenology, Fanonian critique, and critical pedagogy informs the mode of perception through which this article operates. Equipped with this tripartite framework, I now return to the two vignettes to perform a deeper analysis. Read through these lenses, these encounters cease to be isolated personal injuries and reveal themselves as exemplars of a systemic pathology. The vignette of Jude epitomizes the Fanonian moment of epidermalization. The slur "Your skin looks like the poop..." is a violent act that seeks to inscribe the Black body with a meaning of filth and abjection. It is a deliberate shattering of the corporeal schema, replacing it with what Fanon called the racial–epidermal schema. The "stunned silence" that follows is not merely a personal failure of speech but the phenomenological experience of this ontological rupture, the self being reconstituted as an object within a pre-existing racist grammar. This is not an isolated cruelty but a micro-enactment of what Mills (1997) terms the "racial contract," an agreement among whites to categorize nonwhites as subpersons, a categorization here spoken aloud by a child who has already learned its grammar. When Jude spoke, I felt not merely his words but the weight of that contract bearing down on my body, an agreement I never signed but am forced to honor. The colleague's silent sympathy and the framing of the incident as a personal peculiarity of Jude represent the "banking model" in action: a passive, managing response that fails to interrogate the historical and systemic roots of the hatred (Freire, 1970).

The vignette of Mark explicitly demonstrates racism as a learned curriculum, a direct illustration of the "historico-racial schema." The "Ebola" trope is not an invention of Mark's mind but an inherited colonial ideology passed from mother to son, a "telephonic curriculum" that pathologizes the African body as a vector of disease. My transformation from caregiver to "vector of disease" is a phenomenological objectification that links a contemporary racist slur to a centuries-old colonial justification for exploitation and segregation. Mark's association of my body with Ebola might seem to be the product of a single misinformed household. However, when I stood in that residence, hearing "Ebola man" echo from the basement, I understood, even before I had the theoretical language for it, that this was not one family's ignorance. It was a pattern. When we examine the broader landscape of the 2014–2016 outbreak, that pattern becomes unmistakable. The manager's silent cue to ignore him reflects a systemic complicity that prioritizes managing discomfort over confronting ideology, not an isolated act but a symptom of a broader epistemic system that is not intended to confront colonial logic. What we see here is a classic colonial trope resurrected, a mimicry of separation logic, one that has historically been used to justify segregation, quarantine, and the fundamental othering of African bodies as unclean and dangerous.

This pattern was global. During the 2014–2016 Ebola outbreak, xenophobia against African-descended individuals surged: Rwandan students sent home from New Jersey schools, college applicants rejected in Texas, Liberian workers forced into unpaid leave in Minnesota, and two Senegalese brothers pummeled by classmates chanting "Ebola" (Sanburn, 2014; Zurcher, 2014). Such xenophobia has been linked to declining international student enrollment (Fass-Holmes & Paniagua, 2026). As Adeyanju (2010) notes, these panics are rarely about biological pathogens alone; they are manifestations of deep-seated anxieties regarding the Black body as a permanent site of contagion. This is

the "historico-racial schema" serving as a living structure, not dead history. Apartheid functioned phenomenologically, shaping what could be seen and felt (More, 2017). The same logic operates when the meaning of the Black body is fixed before it appears. This double movement is reflected in Olivier's (2023) concept of "displacement," where the Black subject is displaced from belonging, marked as alien, and assigned within a grid of pathological meaning. This is my experience in the care home: I am displaced from the category "caregiver" and placed into the category "Ebola man."

As Kevin Thomas (2020) observed, during the crisis, African immigrants heard "racist tropes about Africans' presumed penchant for kissing corpses and their habit of consuming exotic beasts," caricatures used to stigmatize them as carriers of disease. Robin Wright (2014) captured sentiment, reporting that children of African immigrants in Dallas, with no connection to the local Ebola patient, were branded "Ebola kids" simply because of their heritage or skin color. The disease was persistently portrayed as African, reviving imagery of the "Dark Continent" and reinforcing what Harvard's Joia Mukherjee called the ease with which the world "other-ize[s]" the Ebola crisis (Wright, 2014). Mohanachandran (2019) identifies this as a media-driven process of "Othering," the systematic portrayal of the Black community as "Them" against a vulnerable White "Us," accomplished through "superfluous fear" and the racialization of the diseased body.

At all levels of global health concern, the dysconscious pleasure of racial ignorance synchronizes Black bodies with the event of threat. Mark, the young boy in my vignette, was not neutral; he was acting according to the nodes of his ontology. I think of those students, children sent home from school in New Jersey, college applicants rejected in Texas, a middle school principal put on leave after attending a funeral in Zambia, and I hear Mark's voice still echoing: "Ebola man, Ebola man." We are all being asked the same question, reduced to the same disease, regardless of the thousands of miles and national borders that separate us. What this reveals is the colonial gaze trained upon Africa, seeing it not as a tapestry of diverse cultures, languages, and geographies but as a monolithic site of contagion requiring quarantine (Ram, 2018). In the classroom, critical pedagogy serves as the necessary intervention, reclaiming the student's status as a way of thinking, feeling, and changing a human being against a world that seeks to synchronize their body with the event of a threat (Freire, 1970).

Fanon's (1967) "thingification" manifests from the acts of this phobic ontology. Students of the Texas college or the New Jersey school district were reduced to biological hazards because of their skin color. This response, however, was not based on evidence but on a conscious bias to strip them of their personhood. Geo-racism or dysconscious ignorance also surfaces from the event of the Ebola-informed racism pandemic in North America. This could be explained by lumping individuals from Africa and sometimes the African diaspora together for punishment. Students from Rwanda in East Africa were punished for an outbreak that originated in West Africa, revealing a geographic illiteracy rooted in the presumption that Africa is a singular, undifferentiated mass rather than a continent of 54 distinct nations. Ebola xenophobia is not a neutral outburst; it is a knowing ignorance constructed to create and establish supremacist euphoria. The same telephonic curriculum that wired Mark finds amplified manifestation in the media, breathing and circulating through school policies, and ratified by institutional protocols.

Thus, through these interconnections, I argue that the mother's voice on the phone and the college's rejection letter are two sides of the same coin, different nodes of the same

network. What does this tell us? Pandemic events are gas stations where racist ontologies are fueled to vectorize Black bodies, constructing and transmitting the narrative that proximity to Blackness is proximity to death. Public concern reached 44% during the 2014 Ebola crisis despite only 11 U.S. cases, a disproportionate response that Kim et al. (2016) argue reveals fear of "foreign origin" as a cover for deeper anxieties. This statistical gap reveals the telephonic curriculum in action: the constructed fear was a Blackophobic opportunity designed to validate supremacist illusions. This curriculum operates at every scale, from the intimate space of a family conversation to the bureaucratic machinery of a nation's response to crisis and across state institutions, including academia, where it is most systematically subtle, dressed in neutrality, objectivity, and protocol.

Grounded in the somatic co-constitution of body and data, a pre-reflection appears as stunned silence, the piercing echo of the "Ebola man" from the basement. Post-reflection allows us to diagnose racism's existential nature through a phenomenological return to the thing itself. A phenomenological reading of these encounters extends Freire's conceptual analysis of a dehumanized oppressor (Freire, 1970). This hermeneutic return also directs a gaze into Fanon's psychoanalytic account of epidermalization (Fanon, 1967), weaving a synthesized understanding of racism's psychosocial underpinnings from micro- to higher-order levels. Within this analytical synchronization, it becomes clear that Mark and Jude exhibit what I term dysconscious racial hedonism, the perverse pleasure derived from enacting racial hierarchy. I felt this pleasure in the room with Jude, in the way his words hung in the air after he spoke, in the satisfaction that flickered across his face before he returned to his laptop. I heard it in Mark's voice, the rhythm of "Ebola man" chanted from the basement like a song. This is not merely cruelty; it is enjoyment.

Hartman (2007) describes the "afterlife of slavery," a continuum where the logic of slavery defines the existence of Black life through corporeal non-being. This logic is echoed in the Ebola outbreak and in my own encounters. In those moments with Jude and Mark, I felt that afterlife breathe. Mark derived something from his fear: a sense of himself as healthy, belonging. The slurs were not just weaponizing but also rewards. I keep my focus on the somatic transaction, structures that engineer feeling and ideology, metabolized as perverse pleasure. Here, social structures become personal emotions. According to Ahmed (2004), a nonperformative is a speech act that appears to take action, such as saying "I apologize" or "I see your pain," but ultimately does nothing. The manager's sympathetic silence creates a context that acts as a non-performative. Her look acknowledges my pain, and her whisper to ignore him, all together ensure that no change occurs. As a result, the telephonic curriculum proceeded without interruption. The non-performative enables institutions to demonstrate awareness without taking action, maintaining the structures of racial dehumanization. This paper acknowledges this as a form of liberal complicity, where racism is openly expressed as not respectful but as the underlying conditions remain unchanged and subtly protected or tolerated.

Trained in de-escalation rather than challenge, she honored the protocol while the telephonic curriculum continued its work. Their historical schema is trapped in a tragic duality, creating a systemic condition of conscious and unconscious willingness. They are not solely motivated by explicit prejudice but are unwitting victims, confined within a system that conditions them to trade in Black suffering. Their slurs, whether they compare skin to excrement or a body to a virus, perpetuate a grammar that constructs Blackness as property, pathology, and capital. This system enforces silence, perpetuates fear, and

forecloses connection. However, as Fanon observed, this language also seals them in a "crushing objecthood," diminishing their own humanity in the very act of denying mine (Fanon, 1967). Racism is revealed here not as personal failure but as a transferable, systemic ontology. The tragedy is that in these encounters, both our worlds collapse. We both lose. Only racial extraction wins. Consequently, critical pedagogy must offer more than management; it must advocate for *conscientização*, a conscious rupture of the very grammar that turns persons into things and binds us all within it (Freire, 1970).

DISCUSSION

From the preceding page, I have traced a journey that narrates my visceral shock from Jude's racial slur and Mark's received fear and pathologizing of Black bodies through the theoretical exploration of resources that make sense of such wounds to an analysis of their place within a global "historico-racial schema." I now ask the following question: How many Marks and Judes have passed through the intergenerational pedagogy of supremacist illusions? How many Marks and Judes are currently being trained to internalize these illusions? And what does this demand of us, pedagogically? The number of globally mobile international students will reach 6.9 million in 2022 (Institute of International Education, 2024). International education has long been organized around the logic of hospitality, in which welcome, accommodation, and celebration have become the dominant ethical vocabulary by which institutions understand their responsibilities toward international students.

However, hospitality has become its inverse, challenging identity considered alien to white capital (Mittelmeier et al., 2021). In my case, caregiving curdled into an interrogation of my race. The question "Are you from Africa?" is the hospitality limit. This paper suggests moving toward refuge: not temporary shelter but permanent restructuring. The international classroom can become a site of rupture, naming the telephonic curriculum and exposing managerial silence. If racism is learned, the classroom is either a site of reproduction or of rupture. Most international education classrooms function as the former because, instead of rupturing the system of their reproduction, they teach tolerance to manage the system while leaving the grammar intact and active (Jean-Louis & Clisbee, 2023). This paper looks forward to an international education system that integrates such a pedagogy: naming the "algorithm of corporeal non-being," tracing the curriculum students bring, and risking discomfort for genuine transformation.

The analysis reveals a consistent structure: racism operates as a learned ideo-epistemology transmitted as a cultural curriculum (Boersema, 2025). If this curriculum is transmitted across generations, it can also be interrupted. This is not wish; it is the work, the gap international education needs to fill. Therefore, the role of social justice in global education must be radically reconceived. It cannot stop at teaching tolerance, the cosmetic celebration of diversity, or cultural festivals such as "Black history month" within an unchallenged structure. It must embrace its role as a site for decolonizing and relational praxis, a deliberate, dialogical process of unlearning racial ontology and rewording human relations (Mapaling & Shabalala, 2025). Critical African phenomenology has pedagogical implications. If Black existence is lived under conditions of "bad faith" that deny freedom, then education must become a practice of "teleological suspensions" (Gordon, 2000),

moments when the social order is suspended to allow new possibilities to emerge. More (2017) shows that Black consciousness is a phenomenological achievement of interrelated self-knowledge; the classroom must cultivate such achievements.

If displacement is both wound and possibility (Olivier, 2023), international education must treat students' experiences of othering as resources for critical consciousness, not merely sites of suffering. This requires cultivating critical consciousness that ruptures the social order, moving beyond managing racial binaries. Concretely, this means restructuring orientations from cultural celebration to collective inquiry into racial histories that shape host–guest encounters (Varlack-Butler, 2025) and training faculty in decolonial analysis of how their pedagogy reproduces or interrupts the supremacist curriculum (Mapaling & Shabalala, 2025).

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY OF CONSCIENTIZATION

Institutions, media, schools, universities, replicate the care home, maintaining a racial-hierarchical society as a foundational structure. Care homes are complicit in the racial interpellation of Black bodies, constructing a global colonial grammar that pathologizes Blackness, administers silence as policy, and manages rather than dismantles. This ontological attunement to racialization and displacement leads me to conclude that my experience with the "Ebola" slur and the manager's silent complicity must be understood as reflections of race constructed as property and capital. I strengthen this understanding by offering a critical African phenomenological method, serving as a diagnostic tool that reveals that racism extends beyond the interpersonal, inflicting a deep ontological wound on the subject, even before, during, and after the pre-reflective stage of the encounter. As a result, the existential structure of Black bodies is shaped by colonizing forces outside the Black body's reality (Gordon, 1995). While this "thingification" is challenging, it can become the ground for liberation, as Black consciousness transforms imposed identity into chosen subjectivity (Mabogo More, 2017).

My encounter with Jude ended with a moment of healing thought, "I shall become the face of Canada in this home," my resolve to heal myself and Jude, and revealed a phenomenon I came to call the reversible victim. Jude exhibited racist behavior, yet I could not see him as merely a perpetrator. He was also a victim: dysconsciously entangled in the ideo-epistemology of race, suffering the void of openness and relational peace, locked in unfreedom. The system had made him reversible, he caused harm, but he was also its casualty (Fanon, 1967). The task of critical African phenomenology is not merely to describe suffering but also to identify the conditions under which flourishing becomes possible (Olivier, 2023). The grammar of race enjoys mutual solidarity among its ideologues, operating across scales, as we have demonstrated: from the intimate violence of a slur to the structural evasion of a care home manager and outward to the xenophobic panic of nations, a means to invest racial capital for the pleasure of saving racial assets, making racism less interpersonal flaw but a temporal, racially coded ontology, learned and transferable across generations, which critical pedagogy must confront not with management but with *conscientização* (Freire, 1970).

I began with the moment of encounter, the slur, the silence, the question deeper than a question. I now end with what education might become. The racist encounter is a pedagogical site: it teaches the racialized their place and the racializers their pleasure. However, if racism is learned, it can be unlearned. If the "historico-racial schema" is inherited, it can be refused. The classroom, properly understood, is where that refusal might begin, not by managing the symptoms of our pathological equilibrium but by cultivating the critical consciousness that makes that equilibrium untenable. Significantly, a pedagogy of rupture would achieve the following:

Having students trace their telephonic curriculum and interrogate their racial learning, enacting self, race, and racial deconstruction.

Training professors and institutional leaders on "managerial silence," highlighting it as active complicity.

Rethinking hospitality as co-constituting with, rather than hosting, the Other, enabling collective inquiry into the racial histories that shape host–guest encounters.

Unlearning is possible because learning happened; the question is whether we will do the pedagogical work it requires. What I have done in this paper is a phenomenological analytical discourse, not a discussion of pain or offering a trauma spectacle. Instead, I am doing the slow, hard work of building it, one conversation, one confrontation, one moment of staying present at a time.

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