IN PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS: CURRICULAR PERSPECTIVES OF BLACK AMERICAN MUSLIMS IN MEDINA BAYE, SENEGAL

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye, Senegal. Over a period of three months, I conducted interviews with community members in Medina Baye and led a 10-week Black history program with students at the African American Islamic Institute Legacy Academy (AAIILA). Analysis of interviews and student produced artifacts resulted in three major findings. First, the community's curricular perspectives are situated in the intellectual traditions of African centered education, yet Islam is their main source of sense-making. Second, the perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are connected to the Islamic principle of interconnectedness. Third, youth at the AAIILA expressed their perspectives on their purposes, dreams and goals, and thoughts on freedom through multiple modes in their journal entries. Drawing on Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit), this study examines the orientations of a community of Black American Muslims who migrated to Medina Baye. This study contributes to existing scholarship on curriculum studies, particularly Black curricular perspectives.

Dedicated to my children: Imani, Mohamed-Ayyub, and Hassan

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INTRODUCTION

On April 16, 2024, a group of 14 Black Americans boarded Gare Maritime de Dakar, a ferry that takes passengers on a thirty-minute journey from Senegal's Port Dakar to Gorée Island. Positioned at the westernmost point of Africa, the island was a place of significance in the transatlantic slave trade (TST) and served as a holding place for enslaved Africans during the 18th and 19th centuries. The island is home to the infamous *Maison des Esclaves* (House of Slaves) and Door of No Return, a narrow opening in the dungeon's structure that leads to the Atlantic Ocean and represents a point of departure for captured Africans and their progeny. Upon approach, the colonial presence of the Portuguese, Dutch, and French were evident in the architecture and shades of red, ochre, pastel, and cream-colored buildings that lined the coast (see Figure A1). The island, a former trading post for European colonial powers, was thoughtfully dotted with acacia, baobab, and palm trees. As I disembarked the ferry with my group of 10 teenagers and three adults, I became acutely aware of the vastness that surrounded the island. The TST, which lasted about 400 years, continues to shape our world and its influence on my life and the lives of the people in my group was too heavy to be ignored. The people who came before me and will come after me fluttered into my consciousness. In *Lose Your Mother*, Saidiya Hartman (2006) interweaved her personal experiences with her role as a researcher on a trip to Ghana. She described negotiating her experiences, tensions, and intersecting identities as a Black American woman on the continent of Africa. The tensions of getting to know oneself and others are inevitable as a Black person in movement, crossing borders, and changing spaces. As I stepped foot on the island, I couldn't help but wonder how we got there. The story of how our group, 14 Black Americans, traveled to Gorée Island is unique in that, while on an educational field trip, we were not visitors from the United States in the way fellow tourists had

assumed. The island is a UNESCO world heritage site and an increasingly popular international destination for student groups from all over. When I explained to a curious tourist that the people in our group were American, but we had come from Medina Baye, a rural city about 120 miles from Port Dakar, she paused for a while and asked, “How did you end up in Medina Baye?”

CHAPTER 1

Background

Located in the Kaolack region of Senegal, about 100 miles from the capital city Dakar, Medina Baye is a place of significance for members of the *tariqa tijani* (tijani path), a branch of *Sufism*, or Islamic mysticism. Distinct in its ethnically diverse residents and visitors, Medina Baye is a place of knowledge and respite for the Muslims who go there. Described by residents as a spiritual hospital, it has been a destination for educational and spiritual migration since the 1930s. The significance of Medina Baye is evident in its name. In Arabic, *Medina* means city and *Baye* means father. In this context, father refers to Sheik Ibrahim Niass (1900-1975), a religious scholar who founded the city in 1930. For Black American Muslims who live or travel there, Medina Baye has been a place of significance mainly because of Sheik Ibrahim's grandson, Sheik Hassan Cisse (1945-2008) who was also a scholar and humanitarian. In the 1970's, Sheik Hassan traveled to the United States and connected with Black Americans, mostly from urban cities. Throughout his subsequent travels to the United States, including his time at Northwestern University to work on a PhD in Islamic Studies, he continued to nurture those connections. These relationships eventually lead to the founding of the African American Islamic Institute (AAII) in 1988 in Medina Baye. One of the purposes of the school was to reconnect Black Americans to their ancestral and Islamic culture through education (Wright, 2013). Since its founding, the institute has received and graduated students from all over, including dozens of Black youths from across the United States (AAII, 2008; AAIILA, 2020). The institution-building between Sheik Hassan and Black Americans in Medina Baye has had a significant influence on the lives of community members and shaped their ideas on leadership, education, and community responsibility performed through social and spiritual acts (Rahman, 2020). Since Sheik Hassan's death in 2008, his brothers Sheik Tijani Ali Cisse (b. 1955) and

Sheik Mouhamadou Mahy Cisse (b.1966) have worked to maintain the relationships that have been cultivated through knowledge and diasporic exchange. In 2018, a Black American woman from Atlanta, GA an alumna of AAII, founded the African American Islamic Institute Legacy Academy (AAIILA). Kubra Askari-Cisse, referred to by most people as *Seyda* (a title of respect given to a teacher or professor) is a *hafiz* (a Muslim who has memorized the Quran in its entirety) and has lived in Medina Baye since the age of 13. An offshoot of the AAII, the AAIILA is a Quran memorization school for local and international students including a cohort of Americans, a dormitory for boarding students, and Medina Baye's first preschool. In this study, I examine the curricular perspectives of a community of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye and how Black Muslim express themselves during a 10-week Black history program at the AAIILA.

Statement of Problem

Because of and within a racial capitalist structure, public schools in the United States sustain anti-Blackness through curriculum that does attempt to address the needs of students. Within this hierarchy in which race is the foremost determiner of position, Black students, most of the time, find it difficult to get what they need at public schools. The curricular violence in schools caused by anti-Blackness has already been established in existing literature. For example, ross & Givens (2023) assert that anti-Blackness is "the literary and curricular foundations of Western education that justified and sustained racialized domination of Black people during slavery and the racial regimes that have followed" (p. 470). Although there is no single definition across literature, *curriculum* encompasses objectives, subjects, content, methods, activities, organizations and the unwritten or unspoken lessons that are transmitted through relationships and interactions (Jackson, 1968; Schubert, 1986). To be clear, by

curriculum I mean the totality of students' experiences, relationships, and interactions within a learning environment or educational space. Through revealed and hidden curriculum, anti-Blackness in schools is reinforced through attitudes, materials, interactions, language, and dispositions. In this study, I aim to first, bring special attention to this problem by arguing that anti-Blackness in schools has, for the most part, worked to largely ignore the holistic (mental, physical, intellectual, and spiritual) needs of students. I address this issue by uplifting the intellectual traditions, perspectives, and expressions of Black American Muslims who have migrated to Medina Baye, Senegal in the pursuit of their well-being. I also address this issue by facilitating a 10-week student centered Black History program at the AAIILA.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to better understand how the perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are aligned with the intellectual traditions of African centered education (ACE), how they draw on Islam to inform their perspectives on education, and the ways in which Black American Muslim youth express themselves in a student centered Black history program at the AAIILA.

The following research questions guide this study:

Research Question 1 (RQ 1): How are the curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye aligned with the intellectual traditions of African centered education?

Research Question 2 (RQ 2): How do Black American Muslims in Medina Baye draw on Islamic principles to inform their perspectives?

Research Question 3 (RQ 3): How are the perspectives of Black American students at the African American Islamic Institute Legacy Academy (AAIILA) expressed in a 10-week co-created Black History program?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I problematize curriculum that does not attempt to address the needs of Black students through a lens of Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit). I chose to use BlackCrit as a theoretical framework because of its utility to speak to the specificity of Blackness while positioning anti-Blackness as a launchpad for hope. To understand the development of BlackCrit as a theoretical framework, a general understanding of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is useful. CRT assumes that racism and power, so deeply entrenched in U.S. systems, are both permanent and self-sustaining (Delgado & Stefanic, 2023). CRT assumes that racism is a feature of our societal structure and through one of its tenets, *racism is normal*, asserts that racism is baked into the very fibers of U.S. society. Earlier CRT scholarship made clear a misalignment of law in *theory* and law in *practice* in the U.S. legal system, particularly when it came to people of color. They put forth the assertion that the Civil Rights Movement was, to a degree, unsuccessful. For example, Bell (1980) argued that the outcome of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case served white interests more than it helped Black students and educators, an argument in which one of CRT's tenets, *interest convergence*, is based. Another tenet of CRT, *intersectionality*, urges scholars to look at the ways in which race and other identities may be operating simultaneously; for example, at the intersection of race, gender, and religion (Crenshaw, 1991). CRT was first brought to the education field by Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) who nodded to early 20th century scholarship such as Dubois's *double consciousness* and Woodson's *Miseducation of the Negro* that centered race in analyses of school experiences in the United States. Birthed from CRT, BlackCrit was put forth by Dumas and ross (2016) and also assumes the endemic nature of racism while speaking to the specificity and particular harshness of anti-Black racism. The term anti-Blackness has origins in *Afropessimism*, a term used to describe a

pessimistic or negative view of Africa and its people. Historically, Africa and the people of the diaspora have been depicted as poor, uneducated, savage, fungible, and enslave-able. These misrepresentations have served the interests of capitalists, colonizers, and enslavers who used such depictions to form their philosophies and justify their actions. Dumas (2016) argued that in schools, Blackness is often positioned as problematic, evident in educational policy and everyday practice. For example, under the guise of meritocracy, students are denied their ways of knowing and being and held to a Eurocentric perspective of success. Another example, the model minority myth, which also harms other racialized communities, weaponizes exceptionalism and meritocracy to prove that there must be something wrong with Black students. When students are denied their ways of knowing and being, how can they get what they need from school? How can their needs be recognized in such a system? If we consider one of the assumptions of BlackCrit, that anti-Blackness is endemic, how can anyone be asked to imagine something different? BlackCrit scholars draw on Afropessimism to speak to the degraded status of Black people in institutions while also disrupting anti-Black perspectives and promoting Black liberation (Woodson, 2020). Within a BlackCrit framework, there is indeed an acknowledgment of the specificity of anti-Black racism and the endemic nature of anti-Blackness. For those with hope, this knowing, awareness, or consciousness is the basis on which resistance is built. The specificity of Blackness assumed in BlackCrit allows more nuanced insight into the experiences and perspectives of Black Americans and the intellectual traditions birthed from them. The hopeful imagination in which BlackCrit accommodates is apropos for this study because in the purist of one's purpose, there must be hope, somewhere, that it can be attained.

Significance

This study expands existing scholarship by examining how the perspectives of Black

American Muslims in Medina Baye, Senegal are aligned with the intellectual traditions of ACE, how community members draw on Islam to form and inform their perspectives, and how youth at the AAIILA engage in self-expression. This study is significant because it frames the intellectual traditions of ACE in a context outside of the United States and highlights the curricular perspectives of Black Muslims who have engaged in transnational educational migration. This study contributes to existing scholarship on curriculum studies, particularly Black curricular perspectives and is the first systematic study with Black American Muslim youth at the AAIILA.

Organization

Chapter 1 begins by providing some background on Medina Baye, a geographical focal point of this study. In Chapter 1, I present the problem, purpose, and research questions that guided this study. I also introduce BlackCrit, the theoretical framework in which my findings rest. I highlight the significance of this study and conclude by providing a list of relevant terms. Chapter 2 provides historical background and a review of relevant literature. Section 1 offers a brief explanation of the tariqa tijani and some of the ways in which Black Americans have negotiated and expressed a Muslim identity. Section 2 is a literature review that examines relevant scholarship on curriculum and curricular perspectives, ACE, and Black American Muslim engagement with transnational education, specifically in Medina Baye. In Chapter 3, I explain and justify my research design and methods. I begin this chapter by examining my own positionality and connection to the community. I describe key research sites, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. I close out this chapter by discussing ethical considerations. Chapter 4 is organized by research question and presents three key findings: 1) The curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are situated within the intellectual traditions of ACE, yet Islam is their main source of sense-making. 2) The

perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are connected to the Islamic principle of interconnectedness. 3) During a 10-week Black history program, students at the AAIILA expressed their perspectives on their purposes, dreams and goals, and thoughts on freedom through journal entries. In Chapter 5, I discuss and synthesize major findings. Next, I identify the study's boundaries and discuss implications. I end the final chapter by making recommendations for future research and offering a concluding reflection.

Terms

Allah: the Arabic word for God. It is a term used by Arabic speakers both Muslim and non-Muslim

Adab: an Arabic word for manners; disposition

Anti-Blackness: describes a universal antagonistic relationship with Blackness

Curricular perspective: the views, thoughts, and assumptions one holds about knowledge, teaching, learning, and purposes in educational spaces

Curriculum: the totality of materials, experiences, ideas, and interactions in an educational space

Hafiz: an Arabic word that describes a Muslim who has memorized the entire Quran

Islam: a monotheistic religion based on five pillars: 1) declaration of faith 2) five daily prayers 3) fasting during the month of Ramadan 4) giving charity and 5) pilgrimage to Makkah

Khidma: an Arabic word meaning service

Marifa: an Arabic word that means knowledge; divine knowledge, or gnosis

Murid: an Arabic word for a person progressing through their stages of spiritual development; a student, literally means "one who seeks"

Muqaddam: an Arabic word that describes an authorized representative of the tariqa tijani

Quran: the central text for Muslims; also called *Al-Furqan* in Arabic which means "the criterion"

Seyda: an Arabic word, a title given to a female religious teacher or professor

Sheik: an Arabic word, in the context of West Africa, it is a title given to a male Islamic scholar

Shuyukh: plural form of sheik

Sufism: an Islamic science wherein the objective is *ihsan,* or spiritual excellence. It is also called *tasawwuf*. The tariqa tijani is a form of tasawwuf.

Tarbiya: an Arabic word that means training, nurturing, upbringing, or education

Tariqa: one's path; from the Arabic word *tariq* meaning road

Tasawwuf: see Sufism

Thikr: an Arabic word that means the remembrance of God through embodied litanies and actions

Tijaniyaa: a global Sufi path founded by Ahmad al-Tijani in Algeria in the 18th century

Wolof: the most widely spoken indigenous language in Senegal; the largest ethnic group in Senegal

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into two sections. In Section 1, I provide historical background on Islam in Senegal, specifically *tasawwuf,* or Sufism, as a spiritual path and a brief discussion on how a Muslim identity has been linked to a global identify and, in some ways, reclamation for Black Americans. In Section 2, I review existing literature on curriculum studies, African centered education (ACE), and Black American Muslim engagement with transnational education, specifically in Medina Baye, Senegal.

Section 1: Historical Background

Islam in Senegal

Islam is a monotheistic religion with about two billion adherents across the globe. The primary text of Islam is the Quran, revealed in the seventh century to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) over a period of 23 years in the cities of Makkah and Madinah in present-day Saudi Arabia. The five pillars of Islam are 1) *shahada*: declaration of faith 2) *salah*: the five daily prayers 3) *sawm*: fasting during the month of Ramadan 4) *zakat*: giving a portion of wealth to charity and 5) *hajj*: pilgrimage to Makkah. Islam has been present in the Senegambia region since around the ninth century and became its official religion prior to being colonized by France in the mid 1600s. West African populations were mainly introduced to Islam through trans-Saharan trade and commerce which occurred from the eight to sixteenth century. Islam eventually spread through the *Sahel*, the region that encompasses present-day Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria (Abdullah, 2008). In the mid to late 1600s, France took possession of Gorée Island and began a 300-year period of colonization in Senegal. In the early 1900s, France made Dakar the capital of French West Africa and it remained so until Senegal's independence in 1960.

Tasawwuf in Senegal

Even while under French colonial rule in the 1800s and 1900s, tasawwuf in West Africa played a remarkable role in the spread of Islamic knowledge and French colonial resistance (Wright, 2015). Tasawwuf, also called Sufism, was described by Sheik Ibrahim Niass as a vigilant awareness of God (Niass et al., 2010). The goal of tasawwuf for the person under *tarbiya* (spiritual training) is *ihsan* (spiritual excellence) and a state of *maraqaba* (complete awareness of God). *Marifa* (divine knowledge or gnosis) is gained through experimental knowledge from the people who have it. Sufism has been described as a science of Islam, a way to know God, Islamic mysticism, Islamic esoterism, and the heart of Islam (Nasr, 2004). There are various iterations of tasawwuf across the globe, but the three main *tariqas* (paths) in Senegal are the *Qadiriyya*, the *Muridiyya*, and the *Tijaniyaa*. The Qadiriyya movement was one of the earliest Sufi movements in the region, led by Abdul Qadir Jilani, a Persian who established an early center of learning in Baghdad between the eleventh and twelfth century. The Muridiyya movement was founded by Sheik Ahmadu Bambu, a poet, pedagogue, and freedom fighter during the early 1900's who applied principles of Sufism to resist French colonial powers through dissemination of literature, teaching his followers resistance prayers, and through modeling acts of worship (Seesemann, 2010). Although non-violent, French colonial powers were concerned about his influence. Hailed among his followers as a friend of God, Bamba's legacy is one of resistance through God-consciousness and has remained a symbol for colonial resistance among Senegalese youth (Babou, 2007). The Tijaniyaa movement was founded by Islamic scholar Ahmad al-Tijani in the late 1700s. His birthplace, Algeria, and where he died, Morocco, are located in an area known as the *Maghreb*, well-known for centuries for its production of Islamic scholarship. Scholars generally agree that the tariqa tijani was most likely

introduced to Senegal in the mid 1800s by Hajj Umar Tal, a tribal leader who was initiated into the tariqa by authorized representatives of the order, or *muqaddams,* of Sheik Ahmad al-Tijani. As tribal chief, Tal responded to French colonial forces with resistance and drew attention to the tariqa tijani, which eventually became, and remains, the largest Sufi order in West Africa (Ware et al., 2018). The tariqa tijani movement spread among the literate throughout the Sahel in the 1800s through Islamic literature, poetry, and other writings that were written in multiple languages including Arabic and Hausa (Brigaglia, 2014). The Tijaniyaa was spread mostly in the Wolof region of Senegambia by El-Hajj Malick Sy, a Senegalese scholar from a Fulani tribe who established an early *zawiya* (religious center) there. Over time, through muqaddams, people began to join the movement including, Hadji Abdullahi Niass in 1875, the father of Sheik Ibrahim Niass.

The Tariqa Tijani and Sheik Ibrahim Niass

While there are several branches of the tariqa tijani, the focus of this study is on the branch most prominent in West Africa, Sheik Ibrahim's branch often referred to as the *Fayda* (flood), the flood referring to one of divine knowledge (Wright, 2022). Sheik Ibrahim was born in 1900 in Tayba, Senegal and was taught by his father, Hadji Abdullahi (1840-1922), an Islamic scholar known for his scholarship and anti-colonial sentiment. Hadji Abdullahi viewed French schools a tool of colonization and assimilation and refused to send his children. Despite colonial pressure and surveillance, Abdullahi built a mosque and schools, dug wells, and increased agricultural production during the period of French colonization in the region (Dioum, 2023). Under his father's tutelage, Sheik Ibrahim became one of the most prominent West African Islamic scholars of the 20th century. In the 1950s, he traveled the African continent and to Muslim-majority countries, garnering students, exchanging knowledge, and making transnational

connections. In the 1960s Sheik Ibrahim's global perspective that Africa could be united through Islam influenced his interactions with African leaders like Senegal's first president Leopold Senghor and Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah (Wright, 2022). Although Sheik Ibrahim did not push for an Islamic state in Senegal, he was still met with tensions from both colonial and post-colonial governments in Senegal and was one of the most surveilled West African scholars of the time. During his campaign to remove anti-Islamic materials from French schools in Senegal, he stated, "As for the hand that would separate me from my mosque, my school or my fields; I will cut it off, even if I have to pay a high price" (Wright, 2013, p. 225). The presence of Islam in West Africa has been critiqued by decolonial scholars who maintain that Islam was a colonial religion for people in the region. However, Sheik Ibrahim challenged colonial powers and other forms of oppression. For example, he taught his followers liberation prayers and like his father, refused to send his children to French schools. In *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*, Senegalese scholar Kane (2016) asserted that West Africa continued its development of Islamic scholarship during French colonization as they had prior to. He argued that although Islam was not an indigenous West African religion, it was mostly, since the ninth century, spread in the region peacefully and the region has been a core site in the production of Islamic knowledge and scholarship.

Islam as Global Identity for Black Americans

Transatlantic Slave Trade

From the 1500's to 1800's, millions of people were kidnapped from the continent of Africa and taken to America and the Caribbean in what has come to be known as the Transatlantic Slave Trade (TST). In seminal work on Muslims in America, Gomez (1994) illustrated how people were taken from places in West Africa that had been known as education

hubs or knowledge centers. Historians have already established that there were literate enslaved Africans who had attended Quran schools in Senegambia before their capture. For instance, Omar Ibn Said (1770-1864) was a Muslim from Senegal who wrote his autobiography in Arabic while he was enslaved in the mid 1800s. In an autobiographical text, Said wrote about his homeplace, kidnapping, and negotiation of a Muslim identity as an enslaved man in Charleston, South Carolina (Willis, 2023). Another enslaved Muslim from West Africa was Ayuba Suleiman Diallo (1701–1773), a student of the Quran and Arabic who was enslaved in Maryland then later released. His portrait, painted in London in the mid 1700s, is supposedly the first known portrait to date of an enslaved Muslim who had been released (Turner, 2020). It is challenging for historians to pinpoint the number of Muslims who entered America through the TST as formal record keeping held little regard for the religions or names of the enslaved. Though slavery was not new to the time or continent, this form of chattel slavery was particularly cruel in that it denied the humanity of those enslaved. Moreover, to what extent enslaved Africans were Muslim and to what extent ruling class West Africans played in the trade has been contented, but scholars know it was of significance (Diouf, 2003; Lovejoy, 2002; Rodney, 1967).

Moorish Science Temple

Although denied access to their cultural and spiritual ways of being and knowing throughout and after the TST, there is evidence that the descendants of the enslaved, in the early 1900s, claimed, or reclaimed a Muslim identity. One example is the formation of the Moorish Science Temple (MST) founded in 1913. For Noble Drew Ali, born Timothy Drew, the purpose of the MST was to reclaim a lost identity and to uplift a fallen humanity. Moors refused to call themselves Black or negro, and members of the MST claimed a Moorish nationality, human race, and Islamic religious creed. Although the Moors did not follow *Sunni* Islam, members of

the MST were often referred to as *Moslems*, and some of them added the Arabic suffix *El* or *Bey* to their names to signify their (re)clamation of an Islamic religious identity (Gomez, 2005). Moreover, the organization drew on Islamic principles to form a religious doctrine to both reclaim an identity and resist Euro-American epistemologies and ontologies (Abdullah, 2024; Curtis, 2009). The MST might be described as an organization created by Black Americans who were interested in nation building and linked themselves to something beyond their current condition. Their presence in developing Black communities in Northern cities like Chicago, Detroit, DC, and Philadelphia during the early 1900s was a cradle for what was to come, particularly subsequent movements of nation building.

Nation of Islam

In 1930, at the outset of America's Great Depression, Wallace Fard Muhammad (also known as W.D. Fard) came to Detroit, Michigan and began preaching a message of Black nationalism to communities of Black Americans who were facing deplorable conditions in Northern ghettos established during the Great Migration. Fard preached that Black Americans were a nation of people who had lost their original way and referred to them as the lost tribe of Shabazz (Berg, 2005). W.D. Fard brought a message and movement of liberation, reclamation, and Black nationalism that came to be known as The Nation of Islam (NOI). Around 1934, W.D. Fard left Detroit and the NOI under the leadership of Elijah Poole, a former preacher who had migrated from Georgia and later renamed Elijah Muhammad. Before Fard's departure, he, Elijah Muhammad, and Sister Clara Muhammad founded the University of Islam. Established in 1930, the private school offered school-aged children courses in Islamic studies, science, math, and language arts (Rashid & Muhammad, 1992). According to Colley (2014), during the 1950-1960's, the NOI saw a rapid increase in membership. One of the most notable members was

Malcolm X who joined the Nation in 1952 after he served six and a half years in prison. It was in prison that Malcom Little learned about the teachings of the NOI. According to Lincoln's (1994) seminal work *The Black Muslims in America*, Malcolm's attraction to Islam while imprisoned was shared by other incarcerated Black men. The NOI was known for its prison advocacy work. They advocated for religious rights such as the right to pray and have religious services and for civil rights such as access to mail and court services. The precedent set by of the NOI resulted in an influx of civil rights cases filed by individuals who were imprisoned. Not free from any of the problematic issues that faced other organizations, abuse of power, misogyny, and infiltrations of agents are all issues that crept up in the NOI over the years. Still, membership may have provided a safety net during tumultuous times. With significant financial resources, the NOI provided jobs for members and encouraged the financial literacy and independence of Black communities. Women in the Nation drew on Islamic principles to raise their families and carry out their roles as Muslim women and developed bonds of sisterhood among other women in the organization (Taylor, 2017). For the most part, the Nation's women were held with respectful regard in public spaces and felt a sense of protection. In 1971, Sonia Sanchez, who had joined the NOI briefly and later left citing a misalignment with some of the organization's views, released an album *A Sun Lady for All Seasons* that contained a poem called "I'm talken bout the Nation of Islam." The following in an excerpt:

> ima talken bout THE NATION OF ISLAM
> this poem is about a Messenger
> about his blk/truth
> thumpen like drums
> against the skins of blk/people…

about black stars

propellen themselves into the abandonment of a raderless universe…

maken harmony with our twilight thoughts

to do for self, do for self,

do for self-BLACK MAN

ima talken about Muslim men and women on the move

like a fire travellen down a fuse…

The NOI saw its most significant shift in the 1970s when Wallace Deen Muhammad made the decision to, in the footsteps of Malcolm X, convert to Sunni Islam taking most of the NOI's members with him. As a result, the Sister Clara Muhammad schools were renamed Muhammad Schools, members replaced the surname X for Arabic ones, temples were called masjids, and the organization denounced exclusion based on race (Gibson & Karim, 2014).

Transnational Muslim Communities

In response to increased migration from Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East and South Asia in the early part of the 20th century, Muslim associations and organizations began to crop up to attend to the needs of growing pocket Muslim communities. After the 1965 Immigration Act, the United States saw a significant increase in the number of Muslim immigrants. Those communities brought with them their cultural and spiritual traditions and through exchange and movement, Black Americans continued to evolve and vary in the ways in which they expressed their Muslim identity (Khabeer, 2017; McCloud, 2006). In the 1990's, an increase in continental African and Caribbean populations provide a historical backdrop to movements that cultivated and facilitated relationships between Black American and continental African Muslims (Abdullah, 2009). For some, Islamic movements from West Africa such as the

tariqa tijani was an invitation for Black American Muslims, brought forth through movement and shared faith. Black American Muslims exist within various contexts and cultures and for some, a Muslim identity has been an ancestral and spiritual reclamation. Still, scholars point out that Black expressions of Islam are sometimes not seen as legitimate by some non-Black communities and often ignored in broader conversations on Islam and academic research (Curtis, 2013).

Section 2: Literature Review

Curriculum

While it may be often understood as the content students are taught or materials teachers use to teach, it is clear that across the literature, there are various definitions and levels of curriculum. Seminal voices in the field of curriculum studies have considered curriculum to also encompass the experiences, interactions, objectives, methods, and organization of a place. They also contend that curriculum exists beyond schools and classrooms (Jackson 1968; Schubert, 1986). At the institutional (school) level, some scholars have described *curriculum as a process* between teachers, students, and the other stakeholders and includes the content, organization, and purposes of a space. That curriculum exists at the societal, state, institutional, program, and individual level is an important understanding because while curriculum is a site of possibility for educators at the individual or classroom level, curriculum at the macro level (state, institutional, societal, etc.), according to Young (2014), may create boundaries and restraints that do not hold space for such possibility or imaginings. Although there are varying explanations and understandings of curriculum as a process, scholars generally agree that the process begins with a philosophy, perspective, or thought (Van den Akker et al., 2004). To be clear, in schools, curriculum includes not only objectives, content, and actions but also the structure, organization,

and purposes in which they are carried out. Therefore, contemporary curriculum studies have examined institutional phenomena and the structural systems in which they occur. Laberee's (1997) seminal article outlined the purposes of U.S. public schools from the following prevailing perspectives: 1) social mobility, or individual advancement 2) social efficiency, or gaining skills that later contribute to the workforce and 3) democratic equality, or the preparation of students for citizenry. While these perspectives are exclusive, overlap, accompany, and are in tension with each other, they have offered a good starting point for a discussion on contemporary *curricular perspectives*.

Curricular Perspectives

In the field of curriculum studies, curriculum has been identified and examined as a product, process, practice, and theory. Pinar (2004) described *curriculum theory* as a series of complicated conversations focused on educational experiences that are communicated through academic knowledge and scholarly inquiry. The definition and functions of curriculum are contested as varying perspectives, philosophies, and purposes of education interact, intersect, and compete. Curriculum, with its various definitions and interpretations, plays a significant role in how individuals perceive and interact with school. In this study, a curricular perspective may be described as the views, thoughts, and assumptions one holds about knowledge, teaching, learning, and purposes in educational spaces. Debates on education as a *public vs. private good* played out as early as the 1900s as theorists in the field of education held various perspectives on the purposes of school (Labaree, 1997). Protestant values that dominated most American public curriculum during the mid to late 1800s sought to moralize, spiritualize, and civilize students through transmissions of stories, lessons, and planned activities (Kaestle, 1983; Katznelson & Weir, 1985). From the perspective that school was for the purpose of social efficiency,

curriculum theorists who held the perspective of *curriculum as product* suggested objective-focused approaches to curriculum in schools wherein learners are incentivized to demonstrate mastery of objectives through predetermined measures of success (Bobbit, 1918; Tyler, 1949). Critiques of this approach argued that a hyperfocus on objectives and standardization presented a barrier to some learners. Like Freire's (1970) concept of a *banking model* in education wherein teachers deposit information into passive students, some argue that a curriculum as product perspective ignores the epistemological diversity of students. Scholars have continued to examine contemporary implications of a curriculum as product perspective in schools and assert that the practices that arise from this perspective have proven to be harmful for marginalized students (Tyson, 2013). During the early 1900s, a *curriculum as process* perspective pushed back on the idea that curriculum is a product to be consumed or as a set of blanket objectives to be met. The intellectual vein within this scholarship discouraged a hyper focus on standards, objectives, and testing as the starting point for curriculum development and maintained that curriculum is constructed primarily through experiences (Dewey, 1938; Stenhouse, 1975). An intellectual push towards a curriculum as process perspective positioned knowledge as generated within everyday interactions. In seminal scholarship on curriculum development, Taba (1962) suggested that curriculum, as a process, begins by identifying the needs of students. In other words, curriculum begins with a student centered purpose followed by a course or plan of action. In relation to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory, curriculum as process means that curriculum is built, destroyed, and made again. From this perspective, curriculum is understood to be constructed, or made, through experiences and interactions. Existing scholarship in the field of curriculum studies have also put forth models of curriculum that are intended to position teachers and students as curriculum makers. Critical scholars such as Yosso (2002) have

described curriculum as an assemblage of processes that potentially grant and deny access. Combining theory and practice, a *curriculum as praxis* perspective emphasizes connections between knowledge and the learner *in theory* and the learner *in practice* (Grundy, 1987; Habermas, 1972). Scholars who have described curriculum in this way argued that knowledge is generated as students and teachers learn together. Overall, the presentation of various curricular perspectives unearths critical discourse within curriculum studies as scholars have wrestled with the meaning of curriculum in context, its role in schools, and assumptions about what is worth knowing, preserving, and teaching to others (Cornbleth, 1990). If curriculum consists of the totality of an educational space, identifying the *purpose* of that space may be an appropriate starting point for the curriculum process. In other words, the *who, what, when, where,* and *how* of curriculum in an educational setting begins with *why*. In their study of curricula in Islamic education, Memon et al. (2021) assert that every educational institution has a purpose that drives its focus, and that explicit articulation of its purpose may help align theory with practice in educational spaces.

Black Curricular Perspectives

For Black Americans, the early 1900s proved to be a time of pronounced violence, and many Black Southerners moved North to escape the terror of the South. Both push and pull factors prompted a three-part mass exodus of Black Southerners that began around 1910 and by 1970 totaled over six million. In the greatest domestic migration in American history, Black people found themselves disconnected once again. Separation of families, en masse, created another situation in which Black Americans, and subsequently Black scholars, had to re(think) what the purposes of school was for them. Overall, scholars agree mostly that the curricular perspectives held by Black philosophers of the early 1900s, although varied and dynamic, were

commonly rooted in their racialized experiences. Scholars have examined the perspectives of educational theorists such as Booker T. Washington who endorsed vocational and industrial schools as an avenue for Black progress. They have also studied the orientations of educational theorists like Carter G. Woodson, who viewed education as a means to social mobility. Also, studies on the perspectives of W.E.B. Dubois found that he questioned whether philosophies that justified Black subjugation could be used to progress education in America and pushed back on mainstream educational philosophers for not challenging white supremacy structures in their scholarship (Givens, 2021). Existing literature demonstrates that some proponents of school integration during the early 1900's who saw education as a way for social mobility for Black Americans, like Dubois, later shifted their views because of negative experiences of racialized experiences in schools and society in general (Aldridge, 2015). As Black curricular perspectives continued to be examined, across literature exists a common call to generate new knowledge, necessary because of the anti-Black racism reproduced in schools (Watkins, 1993). It has already been established that in what Saidiya Hartman (2006) calls the afterlife of slavery, experiences in public schools have often been characterized by racialized curricular violence (Love 2016; ross & Givens, 2023). Multiple studies have demonstrated how anti-Black sentiment manifests in the behaviors, dispositions, and language of school curriculum. Scholarship has positioned language as a tool of separation and as a significant feature of anti-Blackness reinforced in curricular choices such as books, vocabulary, and teachers' words, tone, and body language. Scholars such as Baker-Bell (2020) and Smitherman (2017) assert that through the positioning of white mainstream English as standard, language is used to ostracize Black students and control curriculum. Not limited to oral language, past studies have demonstrated that Black people who are deaf or hard of hearing have developed Black American Sign Language (BASL) out of

necessity and in response to their alienation from mainstream American Sign Language (Lucas et al., 2015). Covered in a film of slavery and settler coloniality that rejects anything other than itself, critical scholars have also pointed out reproductions of anti-Blackness in school curriculum that deny multiple ways of knowing (Cherry-McDaniel, 2016). Moreover, Busey & Dowie-Chin (2021) argued that how children are taught in most public schools; for example, in social studies, reinforce gendered global anti-Blackness and denial of citizenship. Furthermore, Coles (2020) referred to curriculum as a site of anti-Blackness and argued curriculum studies and curricular spaces have silenced Black educational experiences and perspectives. Overall, questions of *what*, *how*, and *why* seek to examine the needs of Black student in curriculum studies. Recently, examinations of Black life and Black education are illuminated in the scholarship of ross & Givens (2023) who propose *Black education studies* as a field of study. Their proposal, which they described as a merging of Black studies and education studies, is founded on the intellectual traditions of Black scholarship and calls for analyses of anti-Blackness and the centering of Black life, hope, and imagination.

Responsive Curriculum

Curriculum scholars generally agree that curriculum exists within the structures of places and spaces (Grumet & Stone, 2000). Under this assumption, educational research has pushed for more culturally relevant, sustaining, and responsive curriculum and pedagogies (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2017). For example, the scholarship of bell hooks (1994) puts forth an *engaged pedagogy* which requires engagement of both teacher and students. In this method of teaching, education is an act of resistance against oppression. African American history scholar Pero Dagbovie (2010) suggested approaches that reconnect students to African diasporic knowledge through shared language, for example, hip hop pedagogies. The scholarship

of Alim & Smitherman (2012) and Muhammad (2020) also remind us of the significance of language in curriculum studies. They suggest culturally responsive and historically grounded approaches to selecting texts that build strong literacy environments. Johnson & Nicol (2020) employed BlackCrit as a framework to promote curricular and pedagogical resuscitation (CPR) as a holistic approach, particularly in social studies curriculum. They define a holistic approach in curriculum as one that recognizes the mind, body, and spirit of students. Moreover, Coles (2020) argued that U.S. school curriculum was created and continues to function in a structure of anti-Blackness. He conducted a one-year critical ethnography to examine curriculum making of Black urban youth through a BlackCrit framework. In this study, he analyzed interviews and student artifacts and described their curriculum as a process that both built Black ethos and deconstructed anti-Black curriculum. Although varying in approaches, existing literature reveals that Black curricular perspectives commonly seek to repair students' experiences with school and are grounded in resistance, reclamation, reconnection, reimagination, and re-examination (Asante, 1991; Dillard & Neal, 2020; Givens, 2021). Overall, a push toward *consciousness raising* across literature illuminates the importance of developing curriculum that respond to the needs of all students.

African Centered Education

While independent Black schools have existed in the United States since at least the 1700s (Horton & Horton, 1998), here I focus on the intellectual traditions of ACE that arose during the Black Power era of the 1960s. Providing historical context for the formation of ACE is aligned with recent scholarship that calls for historical context in studies on Black educational spaces (Rahman & Johnson, 2025). How the philosophy of pan Africanism was materialized into the voices of Black youth into the 1960s and 1970s including the Student Nonviolent

Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other Black Power movements that arose around the same time as anti-colonial and Pan African movements in continental Africa has been well established in the literature (Wilkins, 2007). While there is no single definition of Pan-Africanism, it has been described as a philosophy that assumes a connection between people of the African diaspora. Across its multiple definitions exist a promotion of connection, solidarity, and unity among people of African descent. Scholars who study pan Africanism have examined the ways in which the African diaspora is connected culturally, economically, geographically, spiritually, historically, genetically, politically, and socially (Shockley, 2023; Strong & Nafziger, 2021; Walter, 1997). Overall, the philosophy of pan Africanism is undergirded by an *African worldview*, a *worldview* that centers Africa and assumes a connection to other people, nature, the Creator, and the immaterial (Azibo, 1996). According to Koltko-Rivera (2004), although named and defined variously, a person's worldview encompasses all kinds of beliefs and may be thought of as a set of assumptions they hold about reality. He asserted that one's worldview plays a significant role in behavior, cognition, and culture. According to Carroll (2008), an African worldview is based on interconnectedness, interdependence, and spirituality and is grounded in the cultural and historical experiences of African people. He argued that the main difference between a Eurocentric, or Euro-American worldview is the assumed interconnected relationship between the self and others. According to Azibo (2012), the "Black" in Black Studies stems from an African worldview and examinations of the epistemologies of African diasporic people are key in sustaining Black and African Studies. Scholarship that linked Black intellectual traditions such as pan Africanism, Afrocentricity, or an African worldview to education movements have examined the connections between them (Sanford, 2022). In this study, I focus on ACE, sometimes used interchangeably with *Afrocentricity* in education, a term

that centers Africa and the people of its wide diaspora. While there are multiple interpretations of ACE, according to Lee (1992), Lomotey (1990), and Shujaa (1992), an ACE is concerned with deepening students' cultural, academic, and social literacies and calls for a readjustment of cultural and communal understanding characterized by an encouraging, supportive, and understanding environment wherein students are viewed as educable.

Intellectual Traditions of African Centered Education

Undergirded by an African worldview, an ACE looks at Africa as a source of knowledge, is community based, promotes indigenous African languages, and prioritizes connections with the self, other people, and the environment. In an ACE, there is also an emphasis on criticality, identity, Black history, and futurity (Asante, 1991; Karenga 1988). Scholars assert that curriculum-making through an African worldview promotes and values Black culture and requires a shift from mainstream public education that standardize a Eurocentric worldview (Shujaa, 1992). Centering the African diaspora, according to African centered scholars such as Lomotey (1992), requires and results in a reorientation of epistemology and ontology. Decolonial scholars have described Afrocentricity as counter to hegemonic systems of knowledge because it is shaped by the histories and experiences of the African diaspora (Dei, 1994). Existing literature on ACE reveals that African centered schools (ACS) across the United States throughout the 1980s and 1990s developed their own curriculum, professional development, and training materials (Rickford, 2016). The schools set high academic standards, instilled character development, and provided nutrition and physical education. There was also usually an emphasis on rituals rooted in mainly West African traditions including rites of passage programs, drum circles, and ceremonies (Chike, 2012). Studies that have examined the intellectual underpinnings of ACE in urban cities such as Detroit

found that an ACE promotes epistemological and ontological expansion (Halvorsen, 2012). Moreover, scholarship has examined how Afrocentric, or African centered curriculum is multidimensional and works to expand the worldview of students (Berry, 2015). An African worldview in African centered curriculum is an example of Sankofa in practice, a Ghanaian philosophy meaning to go back and get it. Scholars have looked at the ways in which to go back and get something(s) require a critical understanding of the past and present and found that acts of remembering help make sense of the past, present, and one's position in it (Dillard, 2021; Telda, 1995; Vaught, 2015). Sankofa as a methodology has been put forth for its attendance to multiple ways of knowing, literacies, and Black genius in African diasporic contexts (Ball 2022; Wynter-Hoyte & Smith, 2020). Through increased examinations of curriculum and pedagogies, scholars have continued to map the intellectual traditions of ACE, underpinned by an African worldview (Grills, 2004; Shockley, 2023). George (2021) conducted a transnational study on an ACS in South Africa and found that the school was inspired by Black American intellectual traditions and drew on their own spiritual traditions to inform the school's purpose and pedagogies.

Scholars have put forth that through an African worldview, an ACE intends to offer a holistic education, a philosophy in education that centers spirituality and is rooted in the idea of educating the *whole* child (Rudge, 2016). According to Durden (2007), an ACE is holistic in that it helps navigate students towards a path of physical, intellectual, and spiritual wellness. In social sciences outside of but related to education, anti-Blackness, African centeredness, and holistic wellness have also been examined together. In the field of social work, Lateef et al. (2022) systematically examined perceptions of African centered interventions for Black youth and found that they contributed to positive social, emotional, and mental shifts in students.

Bartholomew et al. (2018) argued that since anti-Blackness is a catalyst for a variety of issues within institutions, the pursuit of holistic wellness for Black people may be thought of as a political act that prioritizes collective healing, liberation, and movement. Overall, from a holistic perspective the necessity of balance, or harmony with self, others, and the environment is assumed (Mahmoudi et al., 2012). While there are varying applications and iterations of holistic approaches in education, its foundation is based on an amalgamation of principles that assume that people, places, and things are *interconnected.*

Transnational education

While there is no single meaning of Black intellectual traditions, their histories, underpinnings, and various iterations have been examined by scholars seeking their historical and contemporary renditions (Aldridge et al., 2021). The intellectual traditions of Black Americans engaged in transnational migration have already been surveyed. Scholarship that mapped intellectual and physical diasporic routes of Back Muslims such as that of Abdullah (2012), Bangura (2015), and McCloud (2006) have examined the underpinnings of transnational migrations and networks among Muslims in the African diaspora. Gaines (2012) examined how Black intellectual of the Civil Rights movement helped inform the perspectives of Black Americans who expatriated to Ghana in the 1960s. Scholarship that positioned Muslims in Black history has examined the religious, cultural, and political exchanges of Muslims who situate themselves in a global brotherhood or sisterhood (Abdullah, 2009; Curtis, 2002; Daulatzai, 2012). Existing scholarship on Black American Muslims has made clear that continental Africa continues to be a site of identity formation because, for some, it is a reclamation of an African past and situates them within an intellectual tradition that affirms their identities as Black Muslims. Literature on Black American Muslims highlight how their engagement with

transnational educational migration are aligned within the Black intellectual tradition of developing an African worldview because of their experiences as American descendants, or what Okpalaoka & Dillard (2012) called *ascendents*, of enslaved people. This reclamation is critical for Black American Muslims who face anti-Blackness in some non-Black Islamic settings (González-Doğan, 2021,2023; Khabeer, 2017). In regard to the perspectives of Black American Muslims, Khalifa & Gooden (2010) examined how Black American Muslims shaped their attitudes on education and transnationalism. They found that some of the worldviews expressed by their participants stand in contrast to some popular interpretations of Black intellectual traditions, mainly that success in the U.S. school system is liberatory or a vehicle to social mobility. For example, some of their participants prioritized an Islamic education over a U.S. public school education and saw transnational migration as something to be admired. Overall, the literature reveals that the intellectual traditions of Black American Muslims who engage in transnational educational migration to the continent of Africa.

Black American Tijanis and Medina Baye

Ethnographic studies have examined tasawwuf, or Sufism, as a vehicle of knowledge preservation and transmission throughout West Africa. Put forth as an *embodied knowledge* of Islamic epistemologies and practices preserved through *daras* (Quran schools) in the Senegambia region, the practice of tasawwuf has facilitated diasporic exchanges between Black Muslims in the United States and West Africa (Güner, 2023; Ware, 2014**)**. Beverly Mack's (2018) study on American Muslims in Pittsburg, PA who follow the Qadiriyya path and are connected to the Fodio family in Northern Nigeria found that they adopt and sustain West African Islamic traditions by looking to the continent of Africa as a site of identity reformation and reclamation. Carter (2023) studied the transatlantic migrations of Black American Muslims

who adhere to the *Mustafawiyya* branch of Sufism. Although in significantly smaller numbers than the tariqa tijani, he found that there is transnational connection and movement between the Senegalese and Americans within that community. Regarding Sheik Ibrahim's community, scholars of the tariqa tijani have described the educational curriculum in Medina Baye as holistic in that it works to foster more than intellectual or scholarly success and focuses on overall well-being (Wright, 2012). Other literature on Medina Baye demonstrated some of the exchange that takes place between the Senegalese and Americans who migrate there. For example, how Sister Khadija, Seyda Kubra's mother and a medical doctor, introduced a modern surgical technique to circumcise boys with the support of Sheik Hassan Cisse despite facing some opposition as a woman. Regarding Black American Muslims' direct connection to Medina Baye as a site of learning, according to oral history, when a class of Sheik Ibrahim's students was asked who would one day go to America, his grandson, Hassan, indicated that he would. This declaration came into fruition in 1976 when Sheik Hassan Cisse first traveled to the United States and met Black Americans through Ghanaian tijanis in New York who would eventually become his students, representatives, companions, and family. According to Miller (2020,2024) who examined the oral histories of some of the first American tijanis through firsthand interviews, what Sheik Hassan brought to them was an extension of their Islamic faith. He found that the community's engagement with transnationalism challenged the racial hierarchy espoused by U.S. institutions and that within a relatively short period, diasporic exchanges between Sheik Hassan and Black Americans were materialized. For the first American tijanis, Sheik Hassan facilitated their visits to Medina Baye and through traveling back and forth, letters, and phone correspondences, relationships were fortified. Rahman (2021) conducted a 14-month ethnographic study at the AAII and surrounding community to examine educational justice via

transnational migration, Black Muslim youth's educational experiences in both the United States and in Medina Baye, and the pedagogies of the AAII. The framing of Sheik Hassan's mission, particularly the establishment of the AAII as a form of reparations, offers nuance in discourse regarding transnational education broadly and American tijanis' connection to Medina Baye more specifically. Scholarship on transnational education in Medina Baye has begun to make its way into mainstream U.S. academic discourse. As demonstrated by Rahman (2023), Medina Baye is a site of diasporic connection and exchange that counter act hegemonic social constructions through education and spiritual pursuits. Rahman (2025) describes Medina Baye as a *liberatory geography of possibility*, "a robust landscape that centered, nurtured, and deepened Black Muslims' multi-layered ways of being and belonging in the world" (p. 6). In her study, she found that in sending their children to study at the AAII, Black American Muslim parents saw Medina Baye as such a space and situated themselves as members of a transnational community. Recent scholarship has argued that this kind of forward-thinking has continued to play a part in the proliferation of the tariqa tijani. Studies found that through social media, virtual platforms, and digital spaces, the transnational community is also sustained through virtual connections, especially among youth. Technological advancements have not been without tensions, though. For example, public dissemination of documents and access to knowledge typically guarded by sheiks have raised questions concerning how to handle the esoteric nature of the tariqa tijani in a digital world (de Diego González 2025; Niang, 2021).

To conclude, existing literature highlights the various interpretations and iterations of curriculum and curricular perspectives. The literature suggests that curriculum encompasses the various components of an educational space, and curricular perspectives are as multifaceted and complex as their holders. This study fills a gap in curriculum studies by centering the

perspectives of a community of Black American Muslims in Senegal and foregrounding Islam as central to the formation of their perspectives. While ACE and ACS have been examined in the literature, it has mostly been within a U.S. context. This study moves the needle on ACE discourse by examining how the perspectives of Black Americans outside of the United States align with and diverge from the intellectual traditions of an ACE. Existing literature on engagement with transnational education is relevant to this study because it examines Africa as a site of sense making and knowledge. Centering the community in Medina Baye addresses a critical gap in curriculum studies literature by unearthing the curricular perspectives of Black Americans who migrated to the continent of Africa. By foregrounding Islam and transnationalism in the lives of Black people, this study adds to conversations on transnational migration. Furthermore, this study adds to the developing academic literature on the tariqa tijani and Medina Baye, which is limited in the English language and offers an initial systematic study of students at the AAIILA. At the end, this contributes to the field of curriculum studies broadly, particularly in its presentation of Black curricular perspectives.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Positionality

I approached this study as a Black Muslim *motherscholar* and educator from Detroit, Michigan. I was introduced to the tariqa tijani community after converting to Islam in 2004. Imam Hanif Abdulrahman, a student of Sheik Hassan Cisse and one of the interviewees in this study, gave me shahada, declaration of Islamic faith, at the Wayne State University Islamic Center in Detroit. As I integrated into the Muslim community in Detroit, I developed close relationships with students of Sheik Hassan. In 2018, I joined the tariqa tijani in Makkah, Saudi Arabia through Sheik Mahy Cisse. In Fall 2022, I traveled to New York for the eleventh annual commemoration of Sheik Hassan hosted by Nasrul Ilm America. During this trip, Sheik Mahy granted me permission to carry out research in Medina Baye. In Spring 2023, I received the Ruth Simms Hamilton award, a research grant that supports doctoral students at Michigan State University (MSU) whose dissertation research is related to the African diaspora. This funding provided me with the financial resources to carry out data collection in Senegal. Since there had not been previous Black American Muslim women to engage in systematic educational research in Medina Baye, I wanted to make sure that I was carrying out this work with the upmost care. Throughout the research process, I drew on existing scholarship in conjunction with my own lived experiences to help frame the ways in which I made sense of experiences, made research decisions, and approached data collection and interpretation.

Research Design

In qualitative research, case studies are seen as a holistic approach in that the researcher does not separate phenomena from their contexts (Yazan, 2015). Because of this, I employed a case study methodology to examine the research questions raised in this study. Although there

are various methods in case study research, in order to maintain feasibility and focus, Merriam (1998) insisted that case studies be bounded by a defined place, time, or group. In this study, boundedness is achieved through the selection criteria of participants, that is, their racial identity, religion, citizenship, and residency. Therefore, I sought out participants who were Black, American, Muslim and lived in Medina Baye. The goal of case study is not to generalize or present a universal truth about the experiences or views of any group. Rather the purpose is to gain insight into the particularities of a phenomenon (curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims) in context (Medina Baye). According to Stake (1995, 2006), a primary objective of an instrumental case study is to provide insight into an issue (curriculum that doesn't recognize the needs of Black students) and to elaborate on a theory (BlackCrit). I traveled to Senegal from February 3, 2024 until May 2, 2024. During my three-month stay, I engaged in qualitative data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews with community members and facilitating weekly program sessions with AAIILA students. The transnational nature of this study called for an intersectional approach. An intersectional approach in research examines both the researcher's relationship with the topic and participants. It also takes into consideration how people's perspectives are influenced by the past and present (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021). My centering of race and religion made an intersectional approach appropriate for examining the research questions and fulfilling the study's purpose. Criticality, or "the ability and practice of naming, researching, understanding, interrogating, and ultimately disrupting oppression" (Muhammad, 2023, p.12) was an important component of my methodological approach. Throughout the research process, I intended to challenge dominant narratives, understand participants' perspectives at the intersection of race and religion, and disrupt anti-Black curriculum through engagement with youth at the AAIILA. Overall, a case study was appropriate

because it provided a sense of flexibility while maintaining the focus of the research questions.

Key Research Sites

Medina Baye City

Since its founding in 1930, Medina Baye has been a diverse city and spiritual respite for Muslims, especially members of the tariqa tijani. Also known as the *city of the Fayda* (city of the flood of divine knowledge), it is a place where people come to perform khidma (service), for *taribiya* (spiritual training), and to be in the presence of *shuyukh* (scholars). After driving from Detroit to New York, then flying to Dakar with a 12-hour layover in Lisbon, I landed in Dakar with my family excitedly awaiting our three-month sojourn. On our way to Medina Baye, a fellow American from D.C., 79-year-old Mansur, joined our caravan. Mansur had heard we were in Dakar and arranged to ride with us to Medina Baye where he had lived for several decades with his family. This man, whom I had never met felt like an uncle or grandfather and was my introduction to the network that exists between the Americans in Medina Baye. After about three and a half hours, we approached a roundabout, and I knew we had arrived. In the center of the busy roundabout was a structure that replicated a minaret, ornamented with brocade and images of Sheik Ibrahim Niass with the following inscription:

> *By the grace of Allah, sending blessings to his messenger peace be upon him. Medina Baye to be a harbor of peace for the family, the companions, and the believers* (see Figure A2).

Another marker that made it clear we were in Medina Baye was an archway located in a central area of the city. A welcome sign, in both English and French, accompanied images of notable shuyukh of the tariqa tijani including Sheiks Ibrahim Niass, Seydi Ali Cisse, and Ahmed al-Tijani. At the top left of the archway, the words of Sheik Ibrahim Niass read:

In my mission of propagating Islam as the reference for the new generation. I did travel across oceans, villages, cities, mountains. In my purpose of Almighty God's reward (see Figure A3).

The spiritual essence of Medina Baye was evident as men, women, and children passed prayer beads through their fingers and reverently moved their lips in *thikr* (remembrance of God through litanies). Pictures of shuyukh adorned shop walls, taxis, and billboards, and colorful fabrics contrasted against tan buildings and sandy roads. We had arranged to stay at Seyda Kubra's house the first week so that we could orient ourselves to the environment and prepare our more permanent housing. Staying at Seyda Kubra's house first proved to be beneficial as we were welcomed as guests by residents. For the remainder of our time there, we stayed at a house technically located outside of the city limits of Medina Baye. The house belonged to an American family with decades long ties to Medina Baye as students of Sheik Hassan Cisse. The house was located about one mile from the grand mosque (see Figure A4), the AAIILA (see Figure A5), and Seyda Kubra's house. Since we visited during the dry season (November-May), the walk to either of those places was about 10-15 minutes. According to residents, during the rainy season (June-October), the walk takes more than 45 minutes due to flooding. Living near key research sites provided me with opportunities to engage with community members regularly and AAIILA students outside of school during communal acts of worship and social engagements. Described by Seyda Kubra as "coming in waves" Americans tend to come, go, and return to Medina Baye for various lengths of time. It is difficult to quantify an exact number of Black Americans who have visited or lived in Medina Baye, but residents estimated there were approximately 40-50 Americans living in Medina Baye at the time of data collection.

The African American Islamic Institute Legacy Academy

The African American Islamic Institute Legacy Academy (AAIILA) was founded in 2018 by Seyda Kubra Askari-Cisse. After finishing Quran memorization under the guidance of Sheik Hassan, Seyda Kubra remained in Medina Baye and became a key player in nurturing diasporic exchange between the Americans and Senegalese. The building in which the AAIILA is located was initially established as a dormitory for American students who had outgrown the AAII building. Prior to building the AAIILA, Seyda Kubra housed and taught American students at her house which they eventually outgrew as well. During the building process, the developer included classrooms in the design plans which although not a part of the original plans, she ultimately kept. At the time of this study, AAIILA students were from the United States, Senegal, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, and Nigeria. Teachers and other school employees were mostly Senegalese, and some were from neighboring countries. Since a few of the American students' families lived in Medina Baye, not all of them boarded at the school. Those students attended during the day and returned home for lunch and at the end of the day. In Medina Baye, American students are not limited to the AAIILA. There are other schools in which they can enroll including Sheik Mahy's school, known as the *markaz* (an Arabic term meaning center). At the markaz, students study Quran, Arabic, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and *hadith* (narrations of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him). American students also study at the AAII, including two of the community members I interviewed. There is also the option to not enroll in a formal school and opt for a private tutor. Students who chose this option boarded in the homes of either Senegalese or American families. I chose the AAIILA as a focal point in this study because it was founded by and ran by a Black American woman who had spent a significant portion of her life facilitating Islamic education and diasporic exchange. The

AAIILA was the main site for our weekly Black history program and where I interviewed the AAIILA students.

Medina Baye Residence

Medina Baye Residence (MBR), locally known as "the American hotel" was opened by a group of Black American real estate investors. At the time of data collection, the hotel was operated by a family from Atlanta, GA. During my time there, the hotel was in a soft opening phase and employed Americans, Senegalese, and individuals from neighboring countries. As a meeting space for community members, the hotel hosted business meetings, religious talks, dinners, and *tarawih* (a nightly prayer performed during the month of Ramadan). Although it was not a part of my original plan, the hotel became a central place for this study mainly because of Sanaa, a Black American woman from Atlanta who was in Medina Baye assisting her family in the operation of the hotel. I met Sanaa on my first visit to the AAIILA. She walked into Seyda Kubra's office with her family as we were discussing the program. Seyda Kubra introduced me to the family and told them what I was doing there. Sanaa immediately expressed interest in working with me on the program. She had majored in African American Studies and was an educator in Atlanta prior to her move to Senegal and was looking for ways to contribute to the community. As an act of service, the family gave me access to the hotel's business center. MBR became a site where I recruited participants, co-planned program sessions with Sanaa, and interviewed community members.

Participants

Prior to my departure, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at MSU. Adult interviewees gave informed consent while interviewees under the age of 17 were given assent forms. Parents of AAIILA students were also given a consent form that explained

the study. Additionally, Seyda Kubra added me to an existing group chat consisting of Americans in Medina Baye and introduced me, the purpose of my visit, and confirmed that I had received Sheik Mahy's permission to conduct my dissertation research there. Because I sought to understand the perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye, I purposively sought out participants based on race, citizenship, religious identity, and residency. Out of the 24 interviewees, 22 of them lived in Medina Baye and two of them were visiting their children who were AAIILA students. Table B1 lists everyone who was interviewed for this study.

Table B1
Interview Participants

Name	**Sex**	**Age**	**Hometown**	**Student status**
Adam	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Amina*	F	14	Maryland	Yes
Amir	M	14	New Jersey	Yes
Amna	F	16	Atlanta	No
Asad	M	17	Detroit	Yes
Bilal	M	74	Detroit	No
Dawoud	M	40s	Atlanta	No
Hamza	M	57	New York	No
Haniya	F	20	Detroit	No
Huzaifa	M	66	Texas	No
Mansur	M	79	DC	No
Mariam	F	30	Atlanta	No

Table B1 (cont'd)

Ibrahim	M	40	Atlanta	No
Musa	M	30	New York	Yes
Noor*	F	14	San Jacinto	Yes
Rayan	M	20	New York	Yes
Saad*	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Salem*	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Sanaa	F	30	Atlanta	No
Seyda Kubra	F	40	Atlanta	No
Sumaya	F	30	New York	No
Tasneem	F	17	Detroit	No
Zainab*	F	16	Maryland	Yes
Zubair	M	16	Detroit	No

*Participated in program sessions

Because of my connection to the American tijani community, I went to Medina Baye already knowing some of the adult participants. However, I did not know any of the students at the AAIILA prior to my arrival. I had met Sheik Mahy years before and had been around him several times in person over the years in Saudi Arabia, New York, and Chicago. Because of her work with American youth, mutual acquaintances, and marriage to Sheik Mahy, I knew who Seyda Kubra was but had not met her in person. Participants for the youth program were identified by Seyda Kubra during our initial meeting at the school. She identified eight American students enrolled at the AAIILA ages 13-16. While there were other American students enrolled at the school at the time, we agreed that program sessions would be geared towards students

within that age range. Table B2 is a list of AAIILA students who participated in program sessions.

Table B2
AAIILA Students: Program Session Participants

Name	**Sex**	**Age**	**Hometown**	**Interviewed**
Abu Bakr	M	15	Atlanta	No
Alia	F	13	New York	No
Amina	F	14	Maryland	Yes
Ayyub**	M	16	Detroit	No
Hassan**	M	12	Detroit	No
Imani**	F	18	Detroit	No
Noor	F	14	San Jacinto	Yes
Saad	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Sakina	F	15	Atlanta	No
Saleem	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Zainab	F	16	Maryland	Yes

** My child

Data collection

According to Patton (1999), the use of multiple data sources in qualitative research provides a more contextual understanding of phenomena. The primary data sources that I used to examine RQ 1 and RQ 2 were participant interviews. In qualitative research, semi-structured interviews provide a rich source of data because of their malleability and focus on the participant's perspective. For RQ 3, the main sources of data were interviews with AAIILA students and student produced artifacts from our weekly program sessions. According to (Ray &

Smith, 2012), examination of artifacts generated by youth provide rich data that are useful in both data collection and analysis.

Interviews

Conducting interviews as a form of data collection is generative in case study research because interviews provide rich, thick descriptions that arise over time (Hartley, 2004). Over a three-month period, I conducted a total of 24 semi-structured interviews using an interview protocol that consisted of open ended and follow up questions. I interviewed a total of 24 people comprised of 14 males and 10 females. The interviewees' ages ranged from 14 to 79, and I categorized interview participants into two groups and labeled them as students and non-students. For this study, I assigned student status to anyone I interviewed who was, at the time of the interview, enrolled as a student at either the AAIIILA, the AAII, the markaz, other schools, or those with private tutors. Out of the 24 individuals, 10 of them (ages 14-30) were assigned student status. Out of the 10 individuals interviewed with student status, five of them were AAIIILA students. Interview participants who were not AAIIILA students, independent of their student status, received Protocol A (see Figure C1). Interview questions elicited participants' thoughts on their past school experiences and current curriculum perspectives. I developed Interview Protocol B (see Figure C2) for AAIIILA students because I wanted to get a better understanding of their day-to-day lives as students at the school. I also wanted to get their opinions on program sessions so, I formulated some of questions to elicit their feedback. Interviews took place over a period of three months at several locations including the AAIIILA (n=5), MBR (n=6), and in homes (n=13). Interview participants received the questions in advance and gave informed consent or assent either prior to or at the time of their interview. Interview times ranged from 30 minutes to over three hours.

Program Sessions

During my first week in Medina Baye, I met with Seyda Kubra to discuss potential program participants and how the program would fit into the school schedule. My goal was to be helpful while not impeding on what was already happening, so we discussed how I could work around their existing routine. At the AAIILA, Quran students attended school from *fajr* (early morning prayer) until *isha* (night prayer). The school day was broken into four sessions. Session 1 was from *fajr* until 9:00am. From 9:00am-10:30am students had a break for breakfast until the second session which ran from 10:30am-1:00pm. From 1:00pm-3:00pm students took a break for a communal lunch. Session 3 ran from 3:00pm-6:00pm, and the final session ran from 6:00pm to isha. Breaks were taken during obligatory prayer times, *thur* (around noon), *asr* (midday), and *magrib* (evening) which fluctuate based on the lunar Islamic calendar. Because students were dismissed early on Wednesdays and did not have school on Thursdays, we agreed that my schedule would be Wednesdays and Thursdays 3:30pm-6:00pm and include a break for midday prayer. Prior to my arrival, I knew that I wanted to work with youth. However, I did not want to make assumptions about what was needed, wanted, or feasible, so during our initial meeting, I explicitly asked Seyda Kubra what I should focus on with students during my stay. We chatted for a while and eventually established that Black history would be the foundation of the sessions. In collaboration with a cohort of 11 American students (five males and six females) whose ages ranged from 12-18 in one of the classrooms at the AAIILA, we met weekly with a focus on Black history. Table B2 displays participants' name, sex, age, stated hometown, and whether they were interviewed. My three children attended some Quran memorization sessions at the AAIILA and participated in all of our program sessions. However, I decided not to interview my children for this study because they were in Medina Baye to accompany me, not necessarily to

attend the school. I also wanted to mitigate potential bias during analysis. Each program session lasted two and a half hours, including a 20-minute break for midday prayer. Sessions were recorded except for Week 1, Week 8, Week 9, and Week 10. Students engaged in a variety of activities including reading, writing, discussions, presentations, social events, and a charity event over the 10-week period. Before arriving, I knew that I wanted our group to have a name and each student to have a journal, so I brought journals and basic school supplies from home. Other than that, I let the students, program sessions, and co-planning sessions with Sanaa inform me on the direction of subsequent sessions. Each week built off the ideas students expressed in class, tasks we didn't complete, themes that came up either in our discussions or journal entries, feedback from exit tickets, co-planning sessions with Sanaa, and interview responses. Facilitating sessions required a level of uncertainty because the structure, content, and mood of the sessions depended on student feedback, daily activities, holidays, and whatever was happening around us at the time. Below is a summary of each week's session in chronological order.

Week 1: February 14-15

Initial sessions were geared towards understanding intended desires and outcomes of the program. Based on my conversations with Seyda Kubra, I planned Week 1 as an orientation in which students, Sanaa, and I would get to know each other. At our first program session, students arrived accompanied by Seyda Kubra. Following introductions, she told me that although previously discussed, students were not totally comfortable being recorded. Therefore, I made the decision to not record until they were comfortable. During the first week, I explained the purpose of the study and our program sessions. I told them that Seyda Kubra and I had come to the consensus that the content of our sessions would focus on Black American history. Students

agreed and expressed interest in program participation. Students brainstormed and voted on a group name, BAMS, which stands for Black American Muslim Students and designed a program logo (see Figure A6). Throughout the program, Sanaa, the students, and I used the term BAMS to refer to the program itself and to ourselves as a group. As a collective, students developed community agreements that we agreed were malleable and could be modified at any time (see Figure A7). At the end of the first week's session, as an exit ticket, I asked them to write down some topics and activities they would be interested in during sessions.

Week 2: February 21-22

By the second week, students expressed their comfort with my audio and video camera, so I began recording. I assigned different students to be in charge of archiving which included ensuring the audio and video recorders were functioning as well as the overhead projector. At the beginning of Week 2, I introduced students to two poems: "Dreams" and "Harlem" by Langston Hughes (Hughes, 1994). I decided to introduce those poems to discuss the term *renaissance*. This word came up during Week 1 when we discussed a potential field trip to Dakar that would include a trip to the Renaissance Monument and Gorée Island. Building off the first week's sessions, we talked about the meaning of renaissance in different contexts, including the monument and during the Harlem Renaissance era in the United States. After sharing our interpretations of Hughes's poems, students listed some dreams and goals they had for themselves in their journals. In alignment with the purpose of this study, I asked them to consider their mental, physical, and spiritual needs. Students presented their ideas as we engaged in collective sense-making about what it meant to dream. For continued feedback, I asked students to complete exit tickets. That week, exit tickets were open ended, and I asked students to write down any questions or comments they had and requested they respond anonymously. I also

began scheduling interviews with program participants by creating a sign-up sheet that students could fill out based on their availability. During my co-planning meeting with Sanaa, at the suggestion of my 18-year-old daughter, Imani, we decided to create a Google classroom account to increase accessibility. At the AAIILA, students were allowed to have their electronic devices during the weekend. Since BAMS met on Wednesdays and Thursdays, students would be able to access our virtual classroom on the weekends if they wanted to. There, we uploaded our weekly agendas, meeting notes, class slides, and schedules. Seyda Kubra and all BAMS participants were given access.

Week 3: February 28-29

Since students had access to our virtual classroom and were allowed to have their devices during Thursday sessions, I began Week 3 by asking students to find three pictures, either their own or from the internet, that captured the people, places, things, or ideas they valued. Building on our previous interpretations of poems about dreams, we dove into creating digital dream boards. Each student projected their images on the board and gave a presentation. Through journal entries, exit tickets, and interview responses, I learned that several of the students were interested in art. So, we painted canvases that represented the emerging theme of *dreams* (see Figure A8). I continued asking students to submit exit tickets as they provided valuable feedback, and Sanaa, Imani, and I continued to meet once or twice a week at MBR for planning purposes.

Week 4: March 6-7

Since we had been studying poetry, I prompted students to consider the notion that their thoughts, interpretations, dreams, goals, and values were, in part, informed by and within their environment. For example, we discussed how Hughes's poem, "I Too" could have been in

response to something or someone and "Dreams" perhaps communicated a message based on what the author had observed in his environment. Using the Harlem Renaissance as an organic starting point based on the first three weeks, I provided explicit instruction on some of the events that were happening in the United States preceding the Harlem Renaissance. Overall, Week 4 was an introduction to the era of Reconstruction in the South. Learning about Reconstruction, we identified the ways in which policies and practices, like Black Codes, were implemented and how legal movements such as the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments shaped our current lives. Drawing on my background as an elementary classroom teacher, I used instructional tools such as KWL charts (What I know, What I want to know, What I learned), Venn diagrams, Think-Pair-Share, guided discussions, and implemented a variety of instructional strategies during program sessions. I also began to prepare slideshow presentations on Google classroom so that our time together had more structure and so that I could provide explicit instruction with pictures, videos, and other media. Each week, I set up a projector and portable screen for this purpose (see Figure A9). The group expressed interest in learning more poems, so I introduced them to poems about freedom such as "Caged Bird" (Angelou, 1994) and "Sympathy" (Dunbar, 2016) and asked them to reflect on what freedom meant to them.

Week 5: March 13-14

During Week 5, I continued to co-plan, create slideshows, and provide direct instruction. After four weeks with students, I realized that they could benefit from learning more about the history of their school and how the presence of Americans in Medina Baye came to be. We shared our existing knowledge, conducted collaborative research, discussed the meaning of *legacy*, and students completed a graphic organizer in their journals. The following week was Ramadan, so we spent time coming to a consensus on how we would modify our meeting times

for the remainder of the month. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar in which according to Islamic tradition, the Quran was revealed. For residents of Medina Baye and Muslims in general, Ramadan is an enhanced time of worship and spirit-work, so we agreed that BAMS would meet once a week on Thursdays. To maintain community and cohesiveness, the students, Sanaa, and I came up with a plan to host a BAMS game night *iftar* (fast-breaking meal) at MBR.

Week 6: March 21

Week 6 proved to be most challenging because it was during the first days of Ramadan. We were tired and hot. With temperatures rising to 115 degrees, I decided to lessen direct instruction that day. By that time, I had already conducted several interviews and learned that not everyone at the AAIILA had a personal goal of memorizing the Quran. For example, one of the students said that their goal while in Medina Baye was to improve their social skills. Another participant, one of the parents, had mentioned in their interview that they sent their child to Medina Baye to be in an Islamic environment with other Black American children, not necessarily to memorize the entire Quran. With this knowledge, I asked students to reflect on the reasons they came to Medina Baye and what they hoped to get from it. We discussed migration and the various reasons people migrate. I asked them to think about the meaning of home and to write down their thoughts based on my prompts (see Figure A10). One of the goals of this activity was to zoom in on the multiple definitions of home and to zoom out on groups of people who have migrated either out of force, necessity, or desire.

Week 7: March 28

Considering the first week of Ramadan can be mentally, physically, and spiritually tough, I figured remembering and imagining home might mitigate the homesickness some of students

had expressed in their interviews. We continued discussing the Great Migration as a period following Reconstruction and delved into some of the push and pull factors that led people to migrate. Using graphic organizers as an instructional tool, the focus of this session was for students to consider the reasons they migrated to Medina Baye. Students completed Venn diagrams to compare their experiences in Medina Baye and their homeplace (see Figure A11). After this week's session, the students and I walked from the school to MBR for the iftar game night we had planned. This community-building event, which took place on the hotel's enclosed rooftop, proved to be rewarding as we invited other Americans to join us including youth whose parents I knew from Detroit. At this event, I recruited interview participants, and several of the youth that attended ended up going to Gorée Island with our group during the last week of the program.

Week 8: April 4

Based on some of the feedback that I received from students, Week 8 focused on mental wellness. We shared breathing techniques, stretching exercises, and practices of affirmation that we could engage in. Drawing on Hughes's poems, which remained posted in the classroom through the program, I asked students to write and share a self-affirmation poem using "I, Too" as a mentor text. A discussion on self-care evolved into discourse on how we also cared for our communities. Gearing up for the culminating trip to Dakar, we planned to host a charity event for people in the local community.

Week 9: April 7

We did not have a program session during Week 9 because of Eid al-Fitr, a three-day Islamic holiday that follows Ramadan. Eid al-Fitr fell on April 10, 2024, and students at the AAIILA were on break from April 7 until April 18. Under the guidance of Seyda Kubra, on the

first day of the break, Sanaa, the students, school employees, other community members, and I prepared and delivered food packages to families that lived around the school.

Week 10: April 16

As a culminative activity, all program participants were offered an all-expense paid trip to Dakar to visit Gorée Island and the Renaissance Monument. This included entry fees, transportation, and meals. The details of the trip were communicated to parents via a permission slip they were required to sign (see Figure A12). Out of the 11 original BAMS program participants, five of them attended the field trip. Out of the six students who did not attend, one was on vacation in the U.S., one un-enrolled and returned to the US, and four students did not obtain parental consent to travel with the group. I extended the invitation to interviewees with student status and received written consent from their parents. On the morning of the trip, all attendees, 14 in total, met at Seyda Kubra's house where Sanaa and I explained what we had been doing in BAMS and the purpose of the study, program, and trip. In our group, only one student had previously been to Gorée. After a three-hour bus trip to Dakar followed by a 20-minute ferry ride, we landed on the island and joined other tourists from all over the world. We took a guided tour which included a tour of The House of Slaves and the Door of No Return (see Figure A13). Afterwards, we took a trip to the Renaissance Monument (see Figure A14). Thanks to the generous donations from community members in the United States, each student was also given an allowance to spend at the "American Store" in Dakar.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data collected through interviews and program sessions by utilizing a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a process that involves identifying patterns in data and generating themes based on those patterns. To examine RQ 1 and RQ 2, I analyzed

transcripts from participant interviews (see Table 1). To examine RQ 3, I mainly analyzed student-produced artifacts from program sessions. I also analyzed the interviews I conducted with AAIILA students to gain more insight into the third research question. Rooted in constructivism, which considers knowledge to be generated by researchers' experiences, positionality, and interpretations, thematic analysis is appropriate for the data collected because it encourages flexibility and promotes reflexivity during analysis (Braun & Clarke 2022; Terry et al., 2017). Flexibility and reflexivity in analysis were methodological priorities in this study because I wanted to generate themes revealed during analysis. Particularly, I wanted to consider the specificity of Black American Muslims' curricular perspectives through a lens of BlackCrit.

Interviews

Each interview was recorded with a hand-held digital audio recorder. Because it requires a two-step passcode, after each interview, I transferred the audio file from the recorder to MSU's OneDrive on my personal laptop. Upon my return to the United States, I assigned each participant a pseudonym and organized the interviews by date. Next, I downloaded and transcribed the audio files by running each one through a transcription software tool, Otter. Once transcriptions were generated, I listened to every interview and corrected the transcripts. Participants' use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Arabic, and Wolof was a contributing factor to the amount of time spent on transcript corrections. Actively listening to each interview, not just reading the transcript, proved to be useful because I was able to recall certain moments of the interviews that could not be conveyed through a transcript alone. For example, participants' verbal inflections, pauses, and tones contributed to my interpretations. Then I uploaded the transcripts to Dedoose, a qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software tool. Once I uploaded all of the interview transcripts, I re-read each transcript line by

line and began assigning codes to words and/or key phrases related to the research questions. I conducted the first round of coding by assigning codes broadly related to the research questions. For example, as I listened to the interviews, I coded words or phrases related to ACE because I wanted to gain insight on how the perspectives of participants aligned and didn't align with its intellectual traditions. Another example, whenever participants mentioned ideas or phrases related to Islamic principles and curricular perspectives, I coded it as interconnected because analysis suggested a relationship between them. For the second round of coding, I continued to create new codes that I didn't catch the first round and assigned new words and phrases to existing codes. After the first and second round, I was left with a lot of codes. Some of the codes were: diasporic exchange, tariqa tijani, worldview, challenges, U.S. school experiences, racialized experiences, gendered experiences, identity, and futurity. I merged codes and conducted a third round of coding which proved to be useful because as I re-read the transcripts, I was able to code key words and phrases that I overlooked or mis-coded the first two rounds. For example, during the first round, it was clear that an African worldview was a major thread across participant interviews. Subsequent rounds of coding revealed nuance. For example, that participants drew on Islam to make sense of themselves and the world. Another nuance that multiple rounds of coding revealed was the apparent relationship between diasporic exchange and khidma. Before I traveled to Medina Baye, I understood service to be a key principle of the tariqa tijani based on existing literature and my own lived experiences. However, I did not realize the extent to which diasporic exchange played out in Medina Baye until I observed it first-hand and followed up with analysis. After multiple rounds of coding the interview transcripts, I generated the following themes related to RQ1 and RQ 2: African worldview as foundation, Islam as sense-making, interconnectedness and holistic needs, and service for the

purpose of spiritual training and elevation.

Program Session Artifacts

My initial plan was to use transcripts from recorded program sessions as the main source of data analysis, so from the beginning, I developed the practice of recording our sessions when possible. At the end, six out of the 10 sessions were recorded. In addition to Week 1, I also decided not to record Week 8 due to the sensitive nature of the topic which was mental health and well-being. Before the session, I knew that I would ask students to share personal stories, and I wanted to protect their privacy. Week 9 was not recorded because we hosted a charity event, and Week 10 was our field trip to Dakar. Because my initial plan was to code program session transcripts, after each recorded session, I transferred the files to MSU's OneDrive on my personal laptop. I used OneDrive through MSU because it required a two-step passcode. When I returned to Detroit and began organizing the data for the purpose of analysis, I realized the rich data that students produced in their BAMS program journals and made the methodological decision to examine RQ3 using student produced artifacts as the main source and their interviews as an additional source of analysis. The journals proved to be a useful data source in two major ways. First, at the end of each program session, at the students' request, I collected their journals. After each session, I read students' journal entries, exit tickets, and other productions; thereby, interpreting data in real time, which I used to guide subsequent sessions. Second, the journals provided a rich source of data during data analysis by providing insight into the perspectives of program participants. Although my plan was to use the program session transcripts as the primary source of analysis, I wanted to make sure students were okay with me publishing or presenting their written work. I had initially thought the journals might be useful for subsequent papers or during the slideshow portion of this study's defense. Therefore, at the beginning of

Week 1, I informed students that at the end of the program they could either keep their journals or turn them in to me for possible future publication. I explained to them that I would publish what they wrote in their journals, but all entries would be de-identified. At the end of the program, seven out of the nine remaining students gave their consent by giving their journals to me. Two students requested to keep their journals, thereby not granting consent to have their journals published. The content of their journals is not presented in the findings section nor in the appendices. In case study research, researchers are not limited to collecting and analyzing predetermined data but are also open to opportunistic data that emerge at research sites (Hartley, 2004). As such, once I realized the rich data from the journals, I took the opportunity to use student productions as the main source of analysis for RQ3. I scanned each journal and uploaded them on Dedoose. I examined each journal entry and developed initial codes based on broad patterns across them using thematic analysis. Some of the initial codes were: identity, purpose, and goals. As with the interviews, I conducted a second round and developed more refined codes such as: affirmation, self-expression, and self-valuation. During a third round of coding, I merged some of the existing codes and re-assigned some of the entries. After three rounds of coding, I generated the following themes related to RQ 3: purposes and goals, critical inquiry, and thoughts on freedom.

Ethical Considerations

Criticality during data analysis requires an acknowledgement of not only potential bias, but also an acute awareness of how positionality influences research design, findings, and recommendations (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018; Macbeth, 2001). My positionality as an American citizen presented an issue of power, particularly as I entered research sites as a doctoral student researcher funded by an RI institution. Issues around mobility, movement, economic power, and

citizenship may have impacted the ways in which people engaged. For example, my ability to conduct funded research in Senegal and American citizens' ability to travel to Senegal without a visa is not to go unmentioned. I attempted to address potential issues by focusing on Black Americans who shared my American citizenship and ability to travel and/or move transnationally. Because of my connection to the community, during data collection and analysis, I felt a responsibility to handle information with care. Some of the interview participants, at times, seemed to share an inclination to protect the image and reputation of people and places. I had to take the same care for other participants, who on the other hand, spoke surprisingly freely. Also, I was careful in my approach because I did not take for granted that the people who agreed to be interviewed, or who allowed me access to their children did so because they trusted me to a degree. Another consideration that should be mentioned because of my positionality is the fact that my three children accompanied me to Senegal. My children's voices are present in the findings of this study because of their participation in program sessions. However, I chose not to interview them because I did not want to risk bias. Finally, because it was my first time in Medina Baye, and the fact that most of the Americans there at the time did not know me or my family, to some of them, I may have been perceived as an outsider, an assumption that I did not fully consider going in.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter 4 presents key findings organized by research question, and findings are supported by excerpts from interview transcripts and artifacts students produced during program sessions. While my time in Senegal provided many lessons related to this study, for the sake of focus, in this concluding chapter, I present three key findings: 1) The curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are situated in the intellectual traditions of African centered education (ACE), yet Islam is their main source of sense-making. 2) The perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are connected to the Islamic principle of interconnectedness. 3) During a 10-week Black history program, students at the AAIILA expressed their perspectives on their purposes, dreams and goals, and thoughts on freedom through journal entries.

Finding 1. The perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are situated in the intellectual traditions of ACE, yet Islam is their main source of sense-making.

An African Worldview

Our first evening in Medina Baye happened to correspond with Sheik Mahy's *Ruhul Adab* (Spirit of Good Morals) class, a weekly lecture delivered in English on Zoom. As we waited in the sitting room for him to arrive, we were greeted and welcomed by other guests, students, and visitors. As he made his way to the front of the room to take his seat, he momentarily broke stride to greet us with a smile and said, "*Asalamalaikum"* (peace be unto you). After the class, one of his students told us that Sheik Mahy wanted to see us in his room. After exchanging customary greetings and a brief conversation, he ended with a prayer and said to us, "Welcome home." For Black Americans, in the afterlife of slavery, there is an assumed

ancestral connection to West Africa. For the Americans who go there, Medina Baye, Senegal is also a spiritual homeland and a place to act out a global Muslim identity. Either through their upbringing or consciousness that developed in adulthood, a reoccurring theme among participants was that they viewed Africa as a site of knowledge before moving to Senegal. During interviews, participants consistently expressed an African worldview by looking to Africa and its diaspora for knowledge, being community oriented, and centering spirituality in their lives. For example, Seyda Kubra, spoke about growing up with what she described as pan African parents:

> We grew up very conscious. My parents were in the African People's Revolutionary Party. They were very much pan Africanist. So, when the word came that there's an Islamic scholar from West Africa, she was like, "I get all of these in one: Africa, Islam, and [he was] Black." That is how our trajectory here came about.

30-year-old Musa, an AAII student from New York, spoke to me about his upbringing and also described his parents as pan African: "I grew up with my parents who were very much Black consciousness, pan Africanist type. Like, we celebrated Kwanzaa, and my dad was big on teaching me about the Black Panthers and Malcolm X. I grew up in that." Throughout interviews, participants demonstrated the passing on of an African worldview through knowledge transmission that endures in Black families. Holding an African worldview is a pillar of Black intellectual traditions and for participants in this study, undergird their decisions to identify themselves or their upbringings as "pan African" or to seek out opportunities to act out a diasporic identity. Looking to the continent of Africa and its diaspora to make sense of their identities as Black Americans is one way that participants demonstrated an African worldview, a worldview that assumes interconnectedness, interdependence, and spirituality and is grounded in

the cultural and historical experiences of African people (Carroll, 2008). Dawoud, the father of several AAIILA students, shared that he felt a connection with the continent of Africa before joining the tariqa tijani and sending his daughters to Medina Baye to study, stating: “I took the tariqa and that was an opening for me to send my kids to Africa.” Looking to Africa for knowledge was not necessarily a novel idea for the Americans who moved to Medina Baye. Neither was the idea of Black institution building. Across interviews, participants described themselves and/or their parents as “pan African” or “conscious”. During his interview, Ibrahim also the father of several AAIILA students, described how he, from his perspective, fits into the diasporic exchange that takes place in Medina Baye as a Black American man from Atlanta, GA:

> When I think about being in America and I think about being in Africa, particularly in Senegal, I see it as always one breath. Because inside of breathing, you inhale, and you exhale. So, this is the dual part of our identity. There's Africa and there's America. But the way I see it, it's just gravitating towards the sweetness and bounty of Allah, and I don't see this as being separate from the American experience. It's just the other side of it.

Overall, analysis of the 24 interviews suggested that looking to Africa and its diaspora as sites of knowledge was an intellectual point of departure for participants in their decision to either move their children or move themselves to Medina Baye. This finding echoes Miller (2020) who pointed out that many of the first Americans to join the tariqa tijani were already socially conscious and community centered. Analysis of interviews suggest that what Medina Baye has offered is a place for a community of Black American Muslims to embody knowledge through diasporic exchange in a welcoming environment that affirms both their Black and Muslim identities.

Diasporic exchange in Medina Baye

Analysis of participant interviews further suggests that Medina Baye and the AAIILA are sites to act out an African worldview held by participants through the diasporic exchange that takes place in Medina Baye. For participants in this study, Medina Baye has been a place to embody an African worldview through diasporic exchange with fellow Muslims in a deeply spiritual setting. Ibrahim shared that he moved his family to Medina Baye at the suggestion of his wife who wanted their children to live in a place that affirmed their Black and Muslim identities:

> I was okay with my wife wanting to come here first because of the Blackness because I feel like the first kind of underpinning for things here is love. And I didn't want my kids to experience a basic type of rejection [in other communities or places]. My kids grew up around the Atlanta masjid, so for me, coming here, it was important that they have an even more affirming experience. The Quran is very important, but the Blackness for me, I think that's the first thing and then being Muslim. I mean maybe not first and second, but those two things together have to be there for me.

During interviews, participants demonstrated how an African worldview played out through engagement with Wolof, an African indigenous language and the language most spoken in Medina Baye. In Medina Baye, French, the official language of Senegal, is hardly ever spoken. Many of the participants, although with varying degrees of fluency, spoke or was trying to learn Wolof at the time of their interview. Musa, who was in Medina Baye studying for the second time, talked about how speaking Wolof is an act of resistance and reconnection for Black Americans:

> Even during the first few months of me living here, I felt a very strong connection to this

> place. I saw people who looked like people from the block. I was like, "Yo' you look like my mans from Brooklyn." I know we came from here so to be able to reconnect with this place, to be able to speak the language just a little bit, that's resistance. It's resisting the tongue that our slave masters gave us. Reconnecting with our mother tongue reconnects us with the land that we were taken from, where we reconnect with a part of our culture that has been taken away from us.

Holding an African worldview is a pillar of Black intellectual traditions and for participants in this study, undergird their decisions to identify themselves or their upbringings as "pan African" or to seek out opportunities to act out their identity. Mariam who is a resident of Medina Baye and has multiple children enrolled at the AAIILA, shared how the Wolof language and her daily interactions with the Senegalese community have expanded her perspective of community:

> The similarities between Black vernacular and traditional African languages are astounding to me, especially the repetition and the call and response. Like, how [in Wolof] they greet you with, "*Ana sa waaker? Ana sa maam*?" It's like how we ask, "How's your mama and 'em?" I just learned this in Wolof: *Yaangi toog*? It means literally are you sitting, like are you chilling? And even though you know the person is, even if you already know, people come in and say, "*Yaangi lekk?*" Are you eating? Yes, it's obvious what they're doing, but it's the jovialness and this shared way that we speak. So, Wolof is expanding my idea of community in that if you can be in a space where there is this sincere and consistent remembrance of God, then you can possibly transcend the barriers that have been placed upon you. Even the barriers of facing your own Blackness.

This finding addresses RQ 1 by highlighting how participants' perspectives are situated within

the intellectual traditions of an ACE, mainly through an African worldview, and embodied through diasporic exchange in Medina Baye. In addition to engagement with an African indigenous language, another way in which their perspectives are situated in the intellectual traditions of an ACE and embody an African worldview is through knowledge sharing. Because people go back and forth from Medina Baye to their various U.S. cities "in waves", they bring and take back knowledge, culture, behaviors, and perspectives. While in Medina Baye, participants generate knowledge through exchange between continental Africans and themselves, for instance, by communicating in an indigenous African language. One of the insights that emerged from the data is that diasporic exchange not only occurs between continental Africans and Americans, but also among Americans in Medina Baye and their communities in the United States. Interviews with participants revealed that within this exchange, for people who go back and forth, there is a sense of responsibility to serve. I asked Musa if he planned to stay in Medina Baye long-term or if he planned to move back to his community in New York:

> That was the whole purpose of Sheik Hassan calling us here in the first place. We're not just to come here, build our houses, marry Senegalese, and become Senegalese. No, it was so that we can take this knowledge, take the good of it, that the Senegalese have to offer, take Islamic knowledge, tasawwuf, and bring it back to America and share it with those people who don't have the opportunity to come here.

Dawoud also expressed how he felt a sense of responsibility to share the knowledge he received from Medina Baye with people at home. He stated, "My teacher told me that what I receive here, the knowledge I'm receiving, I have to share it with others when I leave." Analysis suggests that participants embody an African worldview in Medina Baye by centering community and positioning themselves as in community with continental Africans. Having a sense of

responsibility to their communities at home is also in alignment with an African worldview. Across age groups, participants articulated a sense of community in both Medina Baye and in the United States. Participants embody an African worldview through diasporic exchange while in Medina Baye and as they go back and forth between their communities in the United States and Senegal.

Diasporic exchange at the AAIILA

One of the things that surprised me when I got to the AAIILA was the fact that the Americans made up a relatively small portion of the student population. Out of the 280 students enrolled at the time of data collection, 19 of them were American. Most of the students were Senegalese or from other West African countries. The same is true for school employees, most, if not all were from Senegal or somewhere in continental Africa. Seyda Kubra, who is in her forties, has lived in Medina Baye since the age of 13. Her interview was one of the last I conducted, and retrospectively, I'm glad I made that choice. We had several conversations and meetings throughout my time there, but I did not formally interview her until towards the end of my stay. Interviewing her towards the end gave me an opportunity to ask her questions about things that I had noticed, the students, the formation of the school, and the diasporic exchange I had observed. In Seyda Kubra's office, where our interview took place, one of the plaques on the wall presented to her by the Senegalese government named her "mother of the Quran students." I was curious about her decision to establish her own school in Medina Baye and whose legacy she was referring to when she named the school the African American Islamic Institute Legacy Academy. During our interview, she stated:

> It's Sheik Hassan's legacy I'm referring to. So, I started the preschool at my home in the garage. When I started it, I went to Sheik Hassan for his blessing. He said, "You have my

> blessing, and I will pray for [your success]. But I think you should come to the school [the AAII]." He said, "Take as many classrooms as you need. Take a whole structure if you need, and we'll take the other. It's the African American Islamic Institute. The Americans take half, and we take half." He said it jokingly but not jokingly. And he said again to me, "We have to grow our community. Everybody in their corner doing their own thing makes it harder for us to grow and be a strong entity."

Throughout interviews, participants spoke about Sheik Hassan's legacy, one of unification through Islam and education, and how they felt the school was, in some ways, working to fulfill his legacy. For example, Sumaya, an AAIILA mother, who identifies as Black Caribbean from New York expressed that she sent her daughter to the AAIILA to be nurtured by the community in Medina Baye:

> [My daughter] never really had a chance to experience this comprehensive Black American Muslim experience where we've lived, and I feel like that's what Medina Baye offers very uniquely. This opportunity to experience life abroad, within the containment of a very deeply rooted spiritual community that has extended itself to Black Americans for decades and that there's this ongoing relationship between Black American Muslims and Medina Baye, so there was a lot of comfort sending her. I felt like she can be with people that she can relate to, that understand, generally, the culture that she's coming from. Then to also really be molded by people who have a common spiritual vision and aim, like to be nurtured by that community.

Out of the parents interviewed, those with students at the AAIILA said they felt comfortable sending their children to the school mainly because of Seyda Kubra. In the community, Seyda Kubra is known as an *othermother* and has served as a model for the children at the AAIILA and

in the larger community. During my interview with Mariam, she said that Seyda Kubra was a great role model for her children and described her as "a great example of a woman in leadership who is graceful and kind, kind of the opposite of how female bosses are portrayed in the United States." Throughout the interviews, participants shared stories that illuminated the role of Seyda Kubra and other women at the school, in nurturing positive relationships and exchange between Americans and continental Africans. Before the AAIILA building was constructed, 17-year-old Tasneem from Detroit, MI studied and lived at Seyda Kubra's house:

> In America, I always used to wake up in the middle of the night and go sleep in my mother's bed. So [when I came here], for a long time, I would wake up and be like, "I can't. I miss my mom." I would wake up and cry. One of the ladies that worked at the school heard me one day. She got up and said, "You can sleep in my room." I was sleeping in her room for a minute until it got better, but I finally got over it. It was one of the ladies that worked for Auntie Kubra and still does. And you know, they're just nice. The people that work for her at the school were more like our second mothers. Auntie Kubra was like a second mother. They were like othermothers that we didn't have here. They treated us like that.

Data gathered from interviews in connection with existing scholarship suggest that Medina Baye, and by extension the AAIILA, provides a physical space to embody an African worldview through the diasporic exchange of Muslims.

The Role of Sheik Hassan Cisse

The perspectives of the people I interviewed, reminiscent of an African worldview, was an interesting but not surprising finding. Remember, Medina Baye was founded by Sheik Ibrahim Niass who was pan African oriented and, like his father, refused to send his children to

French colonial schools (Wright, 2015). Under the direction of Sheik Ibrahim and facilitated by his grandson, Sheik Hassan, Medina Baye has offered a physical space and a spiritual and ancestral point of origin that could be claimed by Black American Muslim seeking (re)connections. Bringing with him an offering of spiritual elevation, reclamation, and mutual aid, the role of Sheik Hassan in facilitating diasporic exchange between Senegalese and American Muslims should not be understated. I spoke to the elders in the community about Sheik Hassan and his role in bringing the first Americans to Medina Baye. 74-year-old Bilal from Detroit and a muqaddam of the tariqa tijani explained how it was that Sheik Hassan came to the United States and described his disposition with the American community:

> This is the way the story came to me. Some people say Sheik Ibrahim said it and some people say his assistant said it. He asked the young kids among his students, "Who will go to America and get my people?" Sheik Hassan raised his hand and said, "I will" and he did. He was prepared specifically to deal with the African Americans because he had this certain kind of preparedness. He had this warm, motherly overseeing of people who really needed love, affection, easy treatment, and all that kind of stuff. He was just as soft and just as nice. And when he passed, Oooooooh (places hands on forehead).

66-year-old Huzaifa from Texas, also a muqaddam of the tariqa tijani spoke about an experience he had with Sheik Hassan at JFK airport in the 1990s:

> Muslims in America don't understand nobody like Sheik Hassan or Sheikh Ibrahim. It's not that they even against it. It's just so beyond concept to put they trust and understanding in a Black man like that. You know, here's a man black as this couch right here (pats the couch he's sitting on), come get off the airplane and come to New York. That man go to get on a plane to come back over here to Africa and everybody standing

> up in the airport crying. You never seen nothing like that before. A bunch of men crying behind a Black man getting ready to get on a plane to go back to Africa. See, they never experienced nothing like that in America.

In American Muslim communities where people are socialized to invalidate the validity and authority of Black people, expressions of Islam perceived as Black or African are marginalized (Karim, 2005; Khabeer, 2017; Wheeler, 2020). Huzaifa's comment that "It's just so beyond concept to put they trust and understanding in a Black man like that" highlights the marginalization experienced by Black or African scholars of Islamic knowledge in some Muslim communities and in mainstream academic discourse. In contrast, Sheik Hassan was an embodiment of Islamic knowledge and facilitated the transnational migration of a community of Black American Muslims for the purpose of ancestral and spiritual (re)connection. His offering was welcomed by communities who were marginalized by their race and religion and, as Bilal stated, "really needed love, affection, and easy treatment." Characteristic of an African worldview perspective, participants were used to looking at Black people and Black places as sites of knowledge in their educational lives and during their interviews, stated they felt a connection to the continent of Africa or the African diaspora before moving to Medina Baye. As Miller (2000) has already pointed out, Sheik Hassan was the bearer of a spiritual path that enhanced a Muslim identity already present in the lives of Black American Muslims. Regarding their previous school experiences, I learned that several of the participants in this study had either attended or sent their children to private Islamic schools in various U.S. cities. Several of the participants, at some point, were homeschooled or homeschooled their children. As I reflected on participants' responses during interviews, I wondered what it was that Sheik Hassan brought to them if several of his initial students were already Muslim and already oriented

towards an African worldview, those who claimed an Afrocentric or "pan African" background. I learned that in addition to being Black and Muslim, Sheik Hassan had something else in common with the Americans. He too believed that education was essential in the development of a *whole* person. Like newly freed Black Americans who made education their first order of business post-enslavement, Sheik Hassan and his American students also did in establishing, early on, the AAII which led to the subsequent forming of the AAIILA. Analysis of participant interviews revealed that Sheik Hassan played a significant role in establishing and sustaining diasporic connections between Muslims in Senegal and the United States. In addition to bringing the tariqa tijani to those communities, Sheik Hassan also brought with him the possibility of transnational educational migration to the continent of Africa.

Islam as Sense-making

Participants' curricular perspectives are situated in ACE mainly through an African worldview, that is one that looks to Africa and its people for knowledge and assumes the interconnectedness of self, others, and the environment. Medina Baye and by extension, the AAIILA are sites to, from the perspectives of participants, carry on Sheik Hassan's legacy and to develop spiritually. Overall, participants believed they could develop their spiritualty in any place, but agreed that "It's easier to be Muslim in Medina Baye." In interviews, participants demonstrated how their perspectives were situated within the intellectual tradition of ACE, that is, through an African worldview. However, community members were clear that spirituality, Islam specifically, was their main source of sense-making. In other words, Islam is the main framework in which they understand themselves and the world. During my interview with Seyda Kubra, I mentioned a pattern that had emerged across interviews, that participants seemed to have an African worldview, that is, they looked to Africa and its people as sites of knowledge. I

asked her if she thought migrating to Medina Baye was an act of liberation for Black Americans. She stated:

> There's something else that draws people to this place, and I think that the only liberation that a person can have is a spiritual liberation. Identity is important, yes, but it's not the end of the journey. It's just what helps you to navigate yourself. Ultimately, you want to get to the point where [having a Black identity] it's not in the forefront of influence. You want to get to the point where your connection to Allah and your relationship with Allah, and how you relate to all of Allah's creation is what's most important. And so, you can be in Africa, you can be anywhere in the world, and home in on that part of your development. Africa is important but not as important as the spirituality.

57-year-old Hamza, whose three younger siblings are AAII alumni and was living in Medina Baye for the second time in his life, echoed a similar sentiment. Hamza's father was a close friend to Sheik Hassan and pivotal in the formation of the AAII. During our interview, he stated that he prioritized his Muslim identity over his racial identity:

> I've got a strong understanding of Blackness and pan Africanism and all that kind of stuff. [Our imam] used to tell us to be Black is necessary but it's not sufficient.
> It don't mean nothing in the presence of Allah. Being a Muslim is on a higher agenda than being Black.

During my interview with 66-year-old Huzaifa, I invited my 12-year-old and 16-year-old sons, 14-year-old Adam, and 17-year-old Asad who were frequent guests of ours because of their closeness in age to my children, to ask him questions. I knew that the boys viewed Huzaifa as knowledgeable and as an "Unc", and they expressed an eagerness to participate in his interview. One of my sons asked Huzaifa how he could honor his ancestors while in Senegal:

> Which ancestors? You got the enslaved and the children of the enslaved, those are our ancestors. And you got the Prophet peace be upon him and his companions and the Muslims and the scholars, those your ancestors too. Sometimes they focus too much on physical ancestors. I prefer to follow my spiritual ancestors because how do you know your physical ancestors were good? I know what kind of people my spiritual ancestors were tho'. Your spiritual ancestors exist through a chain, called a *sisla,* that's what connects all of us to the Prophet peace be upon him. You get a better result honoring your spiritual ancestors.

During my interview with 17-year-old Asad from Detroit, MI, he stated, "I'm prouder to be Muslim because that's a genuine individual choice I decided to make." Moreover, 20-year-old Hakim from New York also talked about how, for him, being a Muslim in the United States is a choice of resistance. He stated, "Being black in America is a resistance, just being Black. Then making a choice to be a Black Muslim that's a double resistance." As I considered how the perspectives of participants were aligned with the intellectual traditions of an ACE, one of the assumptions that I made going into this study was that all participants would self-identify as Black or African American. 79-year-old Mansur, a member of the tariqa tijani since the late 1980s was introduced to Islam through his association with the Moorish Science Temple in the 1960s. At the beginning of the interview, he made clear his views on being identified as Black:

> Everybody here in Africa, no one calls themselves African. They identify with they tribe. But they all Africans, right? It's the same way. But you know, Black, white, that's a status. When somebody call me Black, you know, I understand where they coming from, but Black does not identify me. That's not my identity. You understand? That's the thing that drove me to the tariqa tijani because they say when you come into the [thikr] circle,

you come strictly for Allah. Ain't no politics.

The first research question aimed to examine the curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims who live in Medina Baye. I wanted to understand how their perspectives aligned with and diverged from the intellectual traditions of an ACE. Analysis showed that the perspectives of participants were aligned with the intellectual traditions of ACE, mainly through an African worldview that plays out in Medina Baye in general and at the AAIILA specifically. For the participants in this study, Medina Baye has been a spiritual homeland and a way to engage in and act out an African worldview, yet Islam, something they agree they have chosen for themselves, is the main framework in which they make sense of themselves and the world.

Finding 2. The perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are connected to the Islamic principle of interconnectedness.

Interconnectedness

In this study, I wanted to understand participants' curricular perspectives as situated within the intellectual traditions of ACE and gain more insight into their perspectives on students' needs. This line of inquiry was appropriate because first, it has already been established in the literature that for the most part, the needs of Black students are not being in met in U.S public schools. Second, as revealed through the literature review, an ACE recognizes the holistic nature of students through an African worldview, and this recognition is communicated in curriculum that works to support and affirm the spiritual, intellectual, and character development of students (Durden 2007; Halvorsen, 2012; Lomotey, 1992). Because of this, understanding how community members drew on Islam to form and inform their perspectives was important to examine RQ2. The concept of *interconnectedness* is one that is emphasized in Islam and one of the themes that emerged during data analysis. The idea of interconnectedness, interdependence,

or harmony with oneself and creation, is not unique to Islam as it is found across spiritual, religious, and cultural traditions. In various knowledge systems, the concept of interconnectedness assumes that any disconnections or imbalances within an individual are seen as problematic and require intervention. There is also an emphasis on the interconnectedness of a person's mind, body, and spirit. For example, from a Native Science perspective, knowledge and truth is gained through interactions of the body, mind, sprit with all aspects of nature (Cajete, 2004). Another example is Ubuntu, a concept that means *I am because we are*. It is a philosophy that originated on continental Africa and emphasizes interconnectedness with self, others, and the physical world (Dillard & Neal, 2000). In the tradition of the tariqa tijani, there is also an emphasis on the interconnectedness of people and the rest of creation. According to Niass et al., (2010), the benefits of practicing tasawwuf are "generosity of the self, serenity of the breast, and good disposition with every created entity" (p. 22). In this study, most of the interviewees were members of the tariqa tijani but not all of them. It is not to be assumed that all of the American Muslims who migrate to or visit Medina Baye practice tasawwuf. Some of them follow other Sufi orders and some of them don't practice Sufism at all. Still, because of the tariqa tijani and the constant thikr that penetrates the atmosphere, Medina Baye is a deeply spiritual environment and Islamic principles can't help but inform the perspectives of the people in it.

Interconnected to Self

Using Interview Protocol A (see Figure C1), I asked adult interview participants if they believed public schools in the United States could attend to the holistic needs of Black American students (one that attends to the mind, body, spirit). This was an appropriate question because Muslims have a shared belief that human beings have a *ruh* (spirit or soul), that human beings are made up of flesh and spirit. This is evident in the Quran Chapter 32 verse 9 regarding God's

creation of man, “But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding) (Ali, 2022).” During interviews, every one of the participants stated that they believed students could not get their holistic needs met at public schools in the United States. Using Protocol A, I asked participants to imagine an educational space that recognized the holistic needs of Black American Muslim students. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts revealed that the Islamic principle of interconnectedness informed participants’ perspectives on the holistic needs of students. Participants across age groups emphasized the need for and expressed a desire for education that considers students’ holistic needs. During my conversation with Musa, he elaborated on the holistic nature of humankind from an Islamic perspective. When I asked him to imagine an educational space that attended to the holistic needs of students, he started by saying, “Before we can talk about that, we need to understand what makes a human being whole.” He went on to explain how, according to an Islamic tradition, human beings are made up of interconnected parts:

> Humankind is made up of three things: flesh, intellect, and spirit. And in order to sustain these three things, they require different forms of sustenance. The flesh is from the Earth, so it requires the nutrients of the Earth. It requires vegetables and fruits and the flesh of animals to sustain itself. To sustain and grow the intellect, it requires knowledge and seeking knowledge, which is why we study for so long. The soul was breathed into Adam and the sons of Adam, from the ruh, the spirit of Allah. So, to sustain your soul, you must remember Allah plenty. That's how the soul is sustained. You need these three to function properly as a whole human being. In Muhammadiyah teachings it’s a chart that says that man is divided into four parts in order to be a complete human being. According to the

> teachings of this Sufi order, there is the spirit, the body, morals and ethics, and vocation. At the top right-hand corner of the chart is a spirit focus, an emphasis on strengthening one's spirit, cleaning one's spirit, so that everything you do is in accordance with Quran and Sunnah and is pleasing to Allah. At the top left-hand corner, there is a focus on strengthening the body, making sure you're physically strong as well so that you can do the work. At the bottom right-hand corner, is morals and ethics, making sure that your morals and ethics are in check and in accordance with Allah and His Prophet. And then at the bottom left-hand corner is vocation, having a vocation in order so that you can live this life and take care of your family.

Regarding the interconnected parts that make a person whole, or complete, Islam assumes the holistic nature of humankind. That means that human beings are made up of, from an Islamic perspective as Musa stated, “flesh, intellect, and spirit”. In this study, I use the term mind, body, spirit to indicate the same concept. Understanding the holistic nature of human beings, that is comprised of mind, body, spirit, is a shared belief among participants in this study and is expressed in the ways in which community members, like Musa for example, described and imagined themselves as complete, or whole.

Interconnected to Each Other

Members of the tariqa tijani are required to keep the five pillars of Islam, honor one’s parents, and pronounce daily litanies (oral repetitions of prayers) (Niass, 2013, 2nd ed.). One of the distinct features of Medina Baye is the constant performance of thikr (remembrance of God). Initially, I observed more obvious forms of thikr. For example, people reciting prayers, daily communal thikr circles at mosques, people reciting the Quran, the use of prayer beads, etc. Over time, I observed more subtle acts of remembrance, or worship, embodied in the everyday actions

of people. I observed it in how people greeted each other, how they prayed for each other out loud and on the spot, how people competed in acts of service, in the extension of resources, and in the assumed good intent of people who passed you on the street. Whether or not under the direct instruction of a sheik, whether they held a student status or not, all of the participants in this study expressed they felt that were under some sort of training or receiving some type of education by being in Medina Baye. Through my conversations with participants, I found that at least a portion of the knowledge they generated and embodied came from performing khidma, or being in service to others. On the day we arrived to Medina Baye, the day that corresponded with his Spirit of Good Morals class, Sheik Mahy gave a lecture on the importance of *adab* (manners and dispositions) in interactions with all creation. In Islamic tradition, there is a heavy emphasis placed on adab and with it, is an assumed interconnectedness and responsibility to other people. During my interview with Seyda Kubra, we spoke about some of the early Americans in Medina Baye and how they engaged in khidma, or acts of service:

> We were raised to know that it is important for you, wherever you are in the world, to be a positive impact on that place. My mother [a medical doctor] with the clinic here, along with some other people, helped that come into fruition. On our very first visits, we were all helping [my mother and other medical professionals] at the free clinic. When they first came, they set up on the roof of Sheik Hassan's house. He had a tent up there. We never came here with luggage for ourselves. It would be one bag for all our clothes and every other bag was medicine and supplies for the free clinic. So, we never came here without being a part of some massive conduit in the community.

Service to others, or khidma, refers to acts of service to the community and is a pillar of tasawwuf (Kane, 2011). Like memorizing the Quran, performing khidma is also a way to obtain

spiritual elevation and according to the tijani path, one of the greatest secrets of spiritual development (Seesemann, 2015). 17-year-old Tasneem, a former student whose parents and siblings are AAII alumni spoke to me about khidma and how her views on the concept shifted over time:

> When I was living at Seyda Kubra's house, Sheik Mahy would come over and they would have guests. I would help, preparing, making stuff, you know. At first, I didn't really like doing it. But after some time, I started to look forward to it. I was like, "I want to do these types of things." I guess I didn't see the benefit of serving others, but now, I be like "Oh Allah, allow me to do my best to make sure they have the best experience." So yeah. I learned that mostly being at Auntie Kubra's house.

Being of service to the community is a willing dedication of time and resources. In terms of distribution, people may serve the people around them directly while some give material resources directly to sheiks to redistribute to those in need (Carter, 2021). Rahman (2023) described how sheiks serve as models for the collective care present in Medina Baye. As social workers, financers, and teachers, the sheiks extend themselves to their communities it seems without exhaustion. In their role as teachers, there is also an assumed responsibility that sheiks have for the state of their students. For participants in this study, the Islamic principle of interconnectedness and being in Medina Baye shaped their perspectives on their responsibilities to each other. For example, Dawoud spoke about being a member of the tariqa tijani, under the guidance of his sheik, and what pulls him to Medina Baye:

> It's a path of loving Allah and loving His creation and serving His creation. It makes you want to be nice. It makes you want to do things for other people without expecting anything in return. And so that's what pulls me here.

When I asked Seyda Kubra what she wanted her legacy in Medina Baye to be, she expressed that she wanted it to be "one of service" followed by "because with an open heart and patience you can navigate pretty much anywhere." In the Removal of Confusion, Sheik Ibrahim wrote "this science we mention is not mere wagging of the tongues but lies in the heart" (Niass et al., 2010, p. 22). For participants, performing khidma has been one way to cultivate ontological refinement through embodied knowledge. A kind of knowledge that is not generated in the mind only but in the mind, body, and heart of the people (Ware, 2014; Wright, 2013). When I asked 74-year-old Mansur to imagine an educational that was holistic (one that recognized and attended to the mind, body, spirit of students) he emphasized the importance of having positive interactions and relationships with other people.

> See they have taken education and broke it up. That goes back to holistic education that we don't learn about in school, that the whole is all connected. I would like them to be exposed to the truth about themselves. They need to know about the whole nine yards. It's levels, but you always have a beginning, and it starts with how we see ourselves and how we treat each other.

All participants shared a similar sentiment, that one of the major keys to meeting students' needs is understanding their connection to and developing positive relationships with other people. Like other AAIILA parents, Sumaya expressed that it was important that her 13-year-old daughter, Alia, be in an environment that poured into her social and emotional well-being. This was something that she said her daughter would "most likely never get in a public school in the United States". When I asked her to elaborate on her daughter's experiences in Medina Baye, she stated:

> I see her expanding and flourishing and being surrounded with other Black American

> Muslim girls who are praying, practicing, and studying. I see this raising of the standard or expectation of what she can do. She talks about her older roommates and students being like big sisters to her. And I think that's something she needs at her age. She really needs peer mentorship, like nonparent mentorship, that is encouraging. So, when she tells me about some of the ways that the older girls look out for her or remind her, or advise her or care for her, it's really endearing to her.

Interconnected to the Natural World

Across interviews, participants expressed an absolute need for the holistic wellness of students, particularly the need to foster positive relationships with themselves, other people, and the natural world. In regard to school experiences, participants across age groups explicitly stated that they did not believe public schools recognized or attended to the holistic needs of students. For the most part, participants stated that they did not trust public schools in the United States. Across the board, when I asked participants to imagine an educational space that catered to the holistic needs of students, they identified nature, or the natural world as a key element. The following excerpts explicate some of the ways in which participants drew on the concept of interconnectedness to imagine the role of nature in education. For example, Sumaya spoke about the role of nature in an ideal Islamic educational setting. She described nature as a co-regulator, calibrator, and teacher. She stated:

> What would enhance the experience of deepening their [students'] Islamic knowledge is nature immersion. It definitely has to be a significant part of holistic education because when immersed in nature, you're directly reflecting on the science of Allah. It's also a very needed co-regulation and calibration with our *fitra*, our natural state, so opportunities to work, play, cultivate, and be in the natural world. I feel like nature is a

> huge teacher especially since many of us coming from the U.S. have grown up in toxic environments where we lack a relationship with nature. I have bigger, bigger dreams but in the short term, making sure there's access to wholesome food, to wholesome living that regular schools don't provide.

During my sit-down with 74-year-old Bilal from Detroit, also a muqaddam, I asked him to imagine an educational space that attended to the holistic needs of students. Like others, he imagined nature as an important element in educational settings, particularly for Muslim students. He gave specific examples during his imagining:

> So, my thing about holistic education, a person should open the Quran and in each *ayat* (Quranic verse) that it says to look at something, they should go get a book on it at their level and read it. If the ayat say, "Look at the ant" then they should get a book at their level and study the ants. They have a society that's perfect. If the human being patented their society after the society of the ant, they would be invincible. And if you look at the pyramids, you'll see it's an ant hill. The Quran say, "Look at the bees, look at the birds, look at the sky, how Allah has created them." So, they should look at the sun, look at the moon, look at the stars, and study them. Look at the science that's in the Quran. It say, "Look how cow milk comes between blood and urine". I don't know how milk is produced between blood and urine, but a medical doctor might know what that ayat is talking about. It say, "Everything is created from water and how the water is sucked up and forms into a cloud. And then He brings the clouds together and it rains down". It says in the Quran, "Look at the bird, how we hold the bird up in the air". It doesn't have to flap its wings. If a person really look at a bird and study it, they will see

> the dynamics of an airplane. They will see the reason this bird stay up without flapping its wings is because of the construction of the wings. All inventions come from observing the creation. A submarine is a turtle or a fish and a boat is, I don't know what, but it's there. So, Allah is telling us to look at the creation because ayat means evidence or sign. But an ayat is a scientific sign and a theological sign. And if you only learn half, it's like a bird with one wing. You see, the African American people are some of the most learned people on the face of the planet Earth, even though they think they dumb just by being in their environment or just going to the regular schools.

A distinguishing feature of the tariqa tijani is its emphasis on exterior knowledge (Islamic law, or *sharia* law) and an equal emphasis on interior knowledge, that is the knowledge of tasawwuf that is supposed to lead to refinement of the heart. Bilal's "bird with one wing" comment refers to those two kinds of knowledges in Islamic education and scholarship. He meant that a person needs exterior and interior knowledge for spiritual refinement and complete understanding. Suggesting the use of nature as teacher in educational settings is one way that Sumaya, Bilal, and other community members drew on Islamic principles when articulating their perspectives on the needs of students. 66-year-old Huzaifa also emphasized the importance of having a connection with and learning from the natural world in the pursuit of overall wellness:

> They got a whole bunch of knowledge over here that they don't got in other places, and God gave them that. They more spiritually close to the Earth here. In a holistic education you need time to just sit by yourself and just cool out and contemplate creation. Thikr is not always having beads and [repeating litanies or prayers] sometimes you can just sit down in nature and just be grateful and think about Allah and His creation. That's how

you get well.

Spirituality in Euro-American societies are often regulated to individual conceptions of Creator and creation. In other knowledge systems, spirituality and/or religion may be thought of as a collective endeavor or as a methodology of navigating or making sense of self, others, and life in general (Wane, 2019). In this study, community members drew on their religion, Islam, to inform their perspectives on how educational spaces should attend to students' needs. Across interviews, participants imagined an educational setting that catered to the holistic needs of students through the Islamic concept of interconnectedness. It is a concept that assumes the holistic nature of human beings. That is, that humankind was created with a mind, body, and spirit, and that they are interconnected to and have a responsibility to other creation. Emphasizing connections, relationships, and a positive disposition with self, others, and the natural world are some of the ways participants drew on this concept while articulating the holistic needs of students. Overall, analysis of interviews points to interconnectedness as a key principle that formed and informed community members' perspectives.

Finding 3. During a 10-week Black History program, students at the AAIILA expressed their perspectives on their purposes, dreams and goals, and thoughts on freedom through journal entries.

Before going to Medina Baye, I knew that I wanted to work with youth during my time there. As a former classroom teacher, I was looking for ways to connect with and work with students. Since I was gathering the curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye, I sought out to understand how these perspectives were expressed by youth while using my skills as an educator to be of service to the community. After meeting with Seyda Kubra, as detailed in Chapter 3, I began meeting with a group of students in one of the

classrooms at the AAIILA on a weekly basis for program sessions that focused on Black history. According to Dagbovie (2015), Black history, or African American history was brought into the mainstream through Black freedom struggles, earlier Black movements, and the Black Power era. To examine RQ 3, I analyzed artifacts from our Black history program sessions which were a source of rich data generated by the students themselves. I also analyzed the interviews I conducted with AAIILA students which provided additional insight into students' perspectives and expressions. As illuminated in samples of their journal entries, students expressed their own purposes of studying in Medina Baye, shared their dreams and goals, and articulated their thoughts on freedom. Data analysis revealed that students expressed their perspectives in their journals through written responses, art, and critical inquiry.

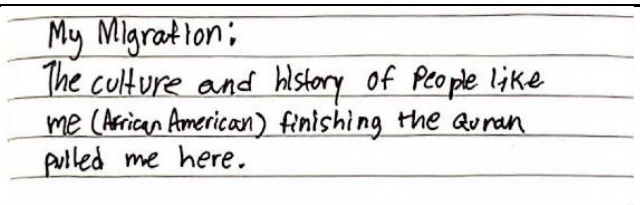
Expressing Purpose

At the suggestion of the school's founder and principal, Seyda Kubra, the content focus of our program was Black history. Since one my intentions was for students to see themselves as *living* Black history, I often asked students to relate Black history of the past to their current lives. For example, during sessions that covered the Great Migration, I asked students to consider the reasons they migrated to Medina Baye. While most of the students said they moved at the suggestion of their parents, all of them stated that being there was their choice, and they were not forced to be there. Each of the students I interviewed expressed that they could take a break from studying or leave Medina Baye if they wanted to. During sessions, we often had discussions about our reasons for being in Medina Baye. In their journals, students communicated their purposes of being in Medina Baye, and while students had some of the same goals, analysis revealed that students also had personal reasons for agreeing to study at the AAIILA. Each of the students expressed that they were enrolled at the AAIILA to either memorize or learn more

Quran. Students also articulated some of the other reasons they chose to migrate, reasons that were individualized or personal to them. Below are two examples of student journal entries that highlight students' main purpose of attending the AAIILA, that is to study or memorize the Quran (see Samples 1 and 2).

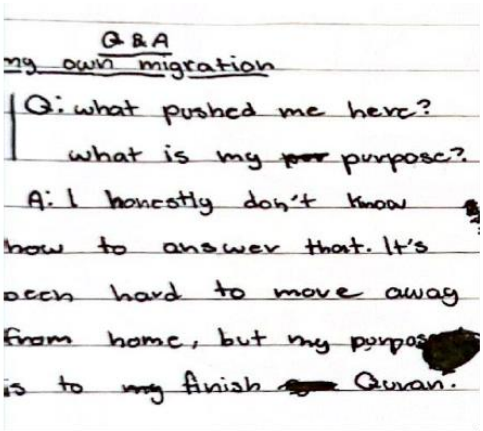
Sample 1

15-year-old Abu Bakr wrote that he moved to Medina Baye to memorize the Quran

	My Migration: The culture and history of people like me (African Americans) finishing the Quran pulled me here.

Sample 2

14-year-old Noor expressed that she enrolled at the AAIILA to memorize the Quran

	Q&A My Own Migration Q: What pushed me here? A: I honestly don't know how to answer that. It's been hard to move away from home, but my purpose is to finish the Quran.

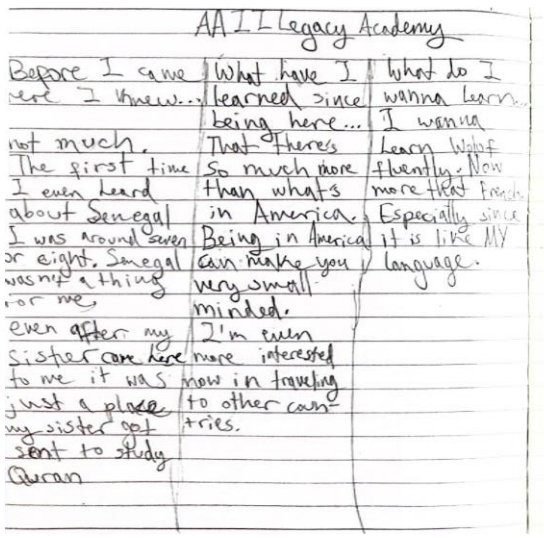
Most of the students who participated in the program stated their main purpose for living in Medina Baye was to be a hafiz, or one who memorizes the entire Quran. Since Medina Baye has been a hub of Islamic knowledge since its inception in 1930, being there for the purpose of increasing Islamic knowledge was not a surprising finding. During our interview at the school, I asked 14-year-old Salim his purpose for being in Medina Baye, specifically at the AAIILA. He

stated that he was there to memorize the Quran adding, “My dad studied in Medina Baye too. He was very close with Sheik Hassan like the way we are with Auntie Kubra.” Analysis of interviews with AAIILA students revealed that each of them had the shared purpose of studying the Quran, yet a few of them stated that they were there to increase their knowledge of the Quran, not necessarily to memorize it in its entirety. One of the AAIILA students interviewed stated, “I want to learn Quran, but I don’t have to finish [memorize] it”. Another student stated, “My parents didn’t necessarily send me here to finish but to learn more of it. They also really wanted me to experience living in a Muslim country, a predominantly Black Muslim country.” In interviews, students also expressed that their purpose of being in Medina Baye was to study Quran and to gain other experiences. For example, one of the students expressed that she agreed to study at the AAIILA at the suggestion of her parents because she wanted to experience life in another country. Another student said, “I agreed to come here because I wanted to study Quran. And I wanted to come out of my shell and learn to be more social. That’s another reason why I wanted to come here.” Because I wanted students to situate themselves in a line of Islamic education in West Africa and as living Black history, I spent Week 5 discussing the founding and history of the AAII and the AAIILA. To get a clear understanding of what students already knew about the schools and Medina Baye in general, I asked students to complete a modified version of a KWL chart. Before we began, I asked students to complete the first column of the chart to indicate what they already knew about Medina Baye or the school before their arrival. Along with direct instruction and collective discourse, I asked students to use the second column to indicate what they had learned since migrating to Medina Baye. In the third column, I asked students to either write down what they wanted to learn during their remaining time at the school or any remaining questions they had about the AAII, the AAIILA, or Medina Baye. Samples

from two different student journals show that students had some existing knowledge about Medina Baye before migrating there. They also show that while students were there mainly to study the Quran, they also expressed how being in Medina Baye has provided them with more than that. It has also expanded their worldview and sense of purpose. For example, 16-year-old Zainab (see Sample 3) wrote that being in America can make one small minded and that being in Medina Baye made her want to travel to other countries. She also expressed how, while in Medina Baye, she wanted to increase her engagement with an African indigenous language. In her journal she wrote that she wanted to: "Learn Wolof fluently now more than French since it is like my language." Like several of the non AAIILA students I interviewed in the community, Zainab's desire to connect with the local community by speaking Wolof is an example of how transnational migration of youth may result in a shift of worldview and give them an opportunity to situate themselves within global communities.

Sample 3

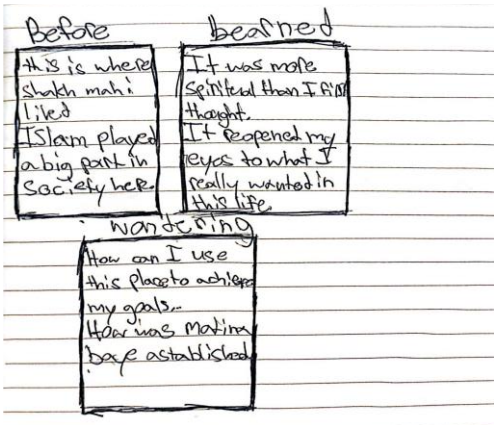
16-year-old Zainab shared how her worldview has evolved since enrolling at the AAIILA



Before I came here, I knew…	What I learned since being here…	What do I want to learn…
Not much. The first time I even heard about Senegal I was about seven or eight. Senegal wasn't a thing for me. Even after my sister came here to me it was just a place my sister got sent to study Quran.	That there's so much more than what's in America. Being in America can make you very small minded.	I want to learn Wolof fluently. Now more than French especially since it is like MY language. I'm even more interested now in traveling other countries.

Sample 4

12-year-old Hassan wondered how he could use Medina Baye to achieve his goals

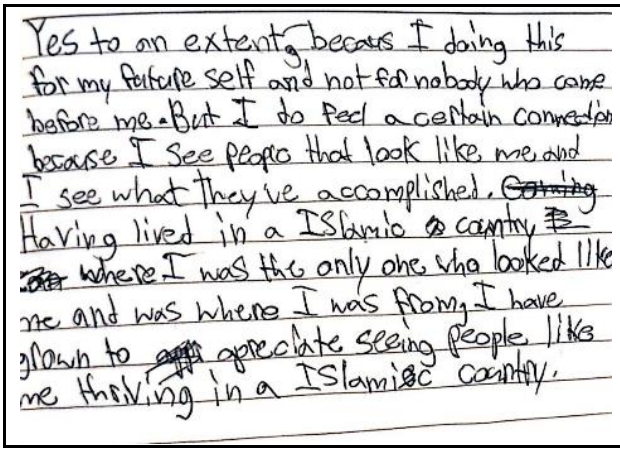


Before	Learned	Wondering
This is where Sheik Mahy lived. Islam played a big part in society here.	It was more spiritual than I first thought. It reopened my eyes to what I really wanted in this life.	How can I use this place to achieve my goals? How was Medina Baye established?

Analysis of student journal responses revealed that for the most part, students associated Medina Baye with someone they knew and that being in Medina Baye expanded their worldview. For example, Zainab's sisters had previously studied at the AAIILA, so she was familiar with the school although she wrote that she didn't know much about it. 12-year-old Hassan wrote that he knew Medina Baye was where Sheik Mahy lived, and that Islam played a significant role in the society there. As shown in one of his journal entries, Hassan also expressed that he wanted to achieve some of his goals while in Medina Baye (see Sample 3). When I asked Hassan to clarify his journal entry during one of our sessions, he stated that what he meant was his purpose of being there was to learn how to be a better Muslim. It is important to note that, like other parents in this study, I also gave my children the option to not go to Medina Baye and left the final decision to accompany me up to them. Since Hassan is my son and knew he would be there for three months, his entry indicates that he also formed some of his own purposes of being there outside of attending some Quran memorization classes at the school and outside of accompanying me as I carried out data collection for this study. In response to students' responses in their interviews and journals, I was curious as to what students thought about the legacy of the AAIILA. I asked students to respond to the following prompt in their journals: Do you feel like you are a part of a legacy by being at the AAIILA or in Medina Baye? Below are two samples of student responses that show how being in Medina Baye has shifted the way they see themselves (see Samples 5 and 6).

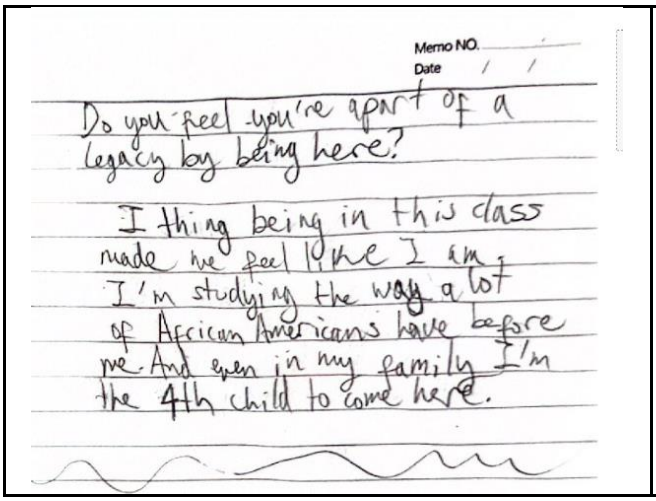
Sample 5

16-year-old Ayyub described the connection he felt to Medina Baye while being there

	Yes to an extent because I am doing this for my future self and not for nobody who came before me. But I do feel a certain connection because I see people that look like me and I see what they've accomplished. Having lived in an Islamic country where I was the only one who looked like me and was from where I was from, I have grown to appreciate seeing people like me thriving in an Islamic country.

Sample 6

16-year-old Zainab began to think of herself as within a legacy of Islamic education

	Do you feel like you're a part of a legacy by being here? I think being in this class made me feel like I am studying the way a lot of African Americans have before me. And even in my family I'm the fourth child to come here.

In educational settings, it is imperative that institutional purposes, or missions are communicated. In this study, the AAIILA has a clear mission to produce Islamic scholarship, mainly *huffaz*, Muslims who have memorized the entire Quran. Their mission is communicated in the name of the school which according to Seyda Kubra, refers to the legacy of Sheik Hasan Cisse and is fulfilled through its production of Black American huffaz. The AAIILA students in this study embody the mission, or purpose of the school by prioritizing the Quran and being committed to their Islamic education. AAIILA students agreed that the main reason they enrolled

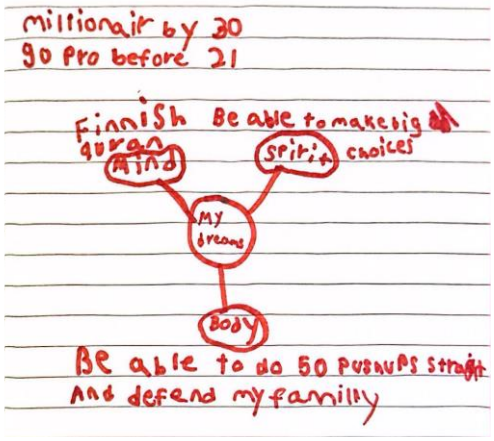
at the AAIILA was to increase their Islamic knowledge, mainly Quran memorization. Through journal entries and interviews, they also expressed additional reasons they chose to migrate to Medina Baye and were curious as to how they could fulfill those purposes.

Sharing Dreams and Goals

During one of our initial sessions, I asked students to think about their dreams and goals as it relates to their mind, body, spirit. After a discussion on holism and what it meant to attend to the interconnected parts of oneself, I asked students to participate in this activity because I was curious as to how they understood themselves. I learned that like the non AAIILA participants, students also understood themselves as holistic (made up of a mind, body, and sprit) and communicated that understanding in interviews. Analysis of student journals revealed that students had shared and personal dreams and goals for the future and expressed them in various ways. Two male students, ages 14 and 15 communicated their shared goals of Quran memorization as shown in Sample 7 and Sample 8.

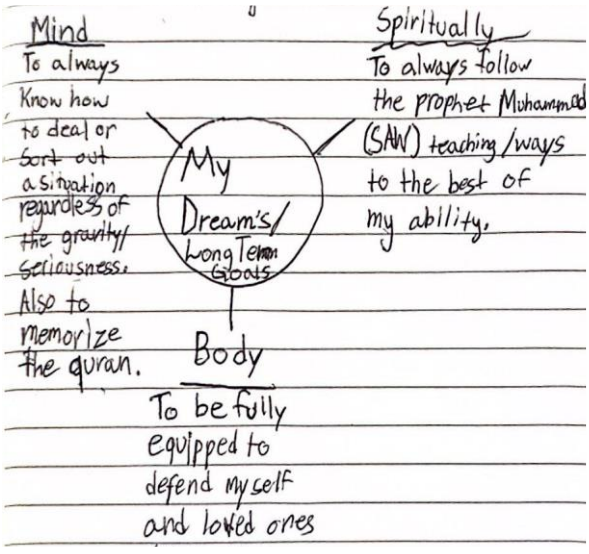
Sample 7

14-year-old Saleem listed short-term and long-term goals

	Millionaire by 30 Go pro [soccer] before 21 Mind Finish Quran Body Be able to do 50 push-ups straight and defend my family Sprit Be able to make big choices

Sample 8

14-year-old Saad listed some of his goals



Mind
To always know how to deal or sort out a situation regardless of the gravity/seriousness.
Also to memorize Quran.

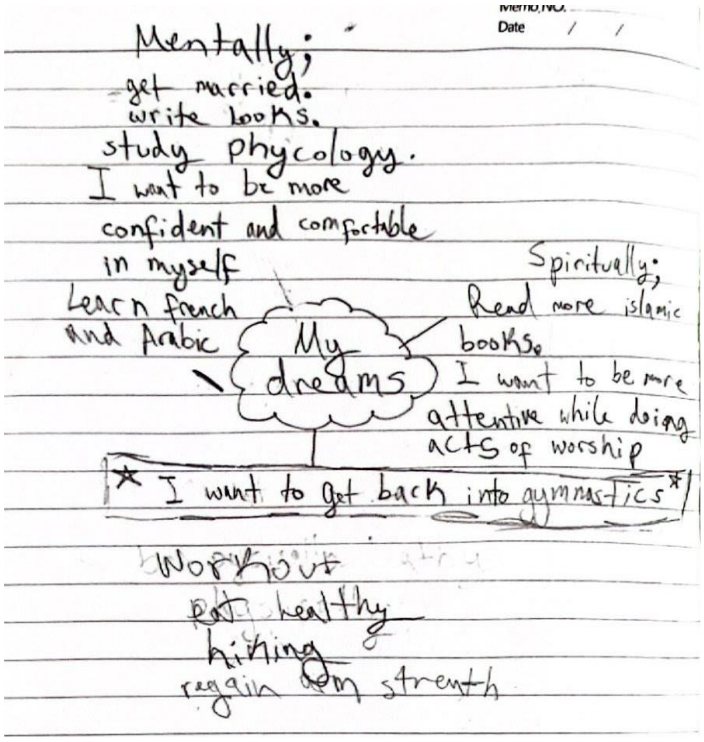
Body
To be fully equipped to defend myself and loved ones.

Spiritually
To always follow the prophet Muhammad (SAW) teaching/ways to the best of my ability.

14-year-old males, Saleem and Saad also demonstrated how some of boys in this space may think about themselves as young Muslim men. Their shared goal of being able to defend themselves and their families speak to the expectations and role of men in this community. The boys also had similar goals of applying Islam to their adult lives. For example, they both wrote that they wanted to be able to "make big choices" and "sort out situations regardless of gravity." All students were able to list goals in each of the three categories and shared specific goals they had for their time at the AAIILA and beyond. For example, 14-year-old Noor and 16-year-old Zainab both shared that they wanted to further their education after their time at the AAIILA (see Samples 9 and 10). They also shared specific examples of things they would like to incorporate in their lives to improve their overall well-being. Just as communicating purpose in educational settings is important, this finding speaks to the importance of eliciting and recognizing the multifaceted dreams and goals of youth in such settings.

Sample 9

16-year-old Zainab listed specific dreams she had for herself



My Dreams

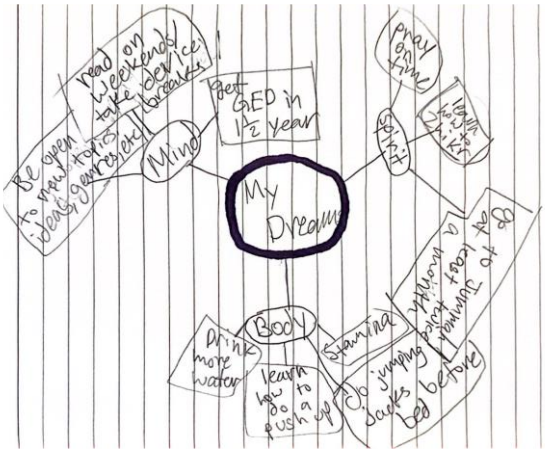
Mentally:
Get married
Write books
Study psychology
I want to be more confident and comfortable in myself.
Learn French and Arabic

Spiritually:
Read more books
I want to be attentive while doing acts of worship.

I want to get back into gymnastics
Workout
Eat healthy
Hiking
Regain arm strength

Sample 10

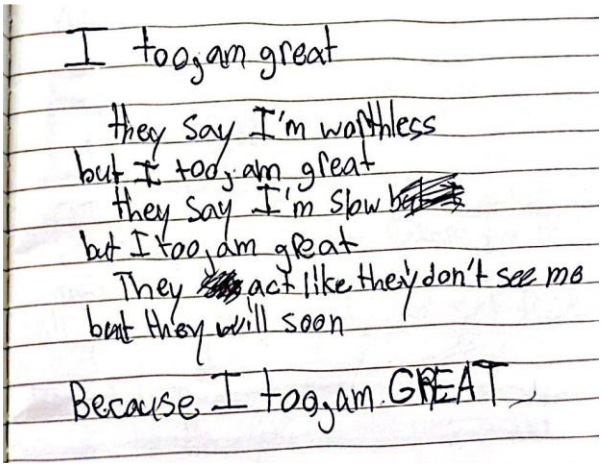
14-year-old Noor wrote down her "mind, body, spirit" dreams



During interviews, I followed up with students about what they wrote in their journals. Students communicated both short term and long term goals, and each of them had an idea of the things they wanted to work towards while in Medina Baye and when they moved back to the United States. When I asked students if they planned to stay in Medina Baye permanently, each of them, like the adults I interviewed, stated that their goal was to learn as much as they could and take it back to their communities in the United States. When I asked them if they considered Medina Baye to be home, each of the people I interviewed stated that they viewed Medina Baye as a temporary, spiritual, or second home. Some of them also stated that they had future dreams to build a house in Medina Baye so that they could go back and forth like some of the adults in the community. During program sessions, I was happy to learn that students and I shared an interest in poetry. Therefore, during sessions, we read, discussed, and wrote poetry. During one of the sessions, I asked students to write an affirmation poem using Hughes's "I, Too" as a mentor text. Samples 11 and 12 illustrate how students shared their dreams and goals through poetry.

Sample 11

16-year-old Ayyub wrote an affirmation poem using Hughes's "I, Too" as a mentor text



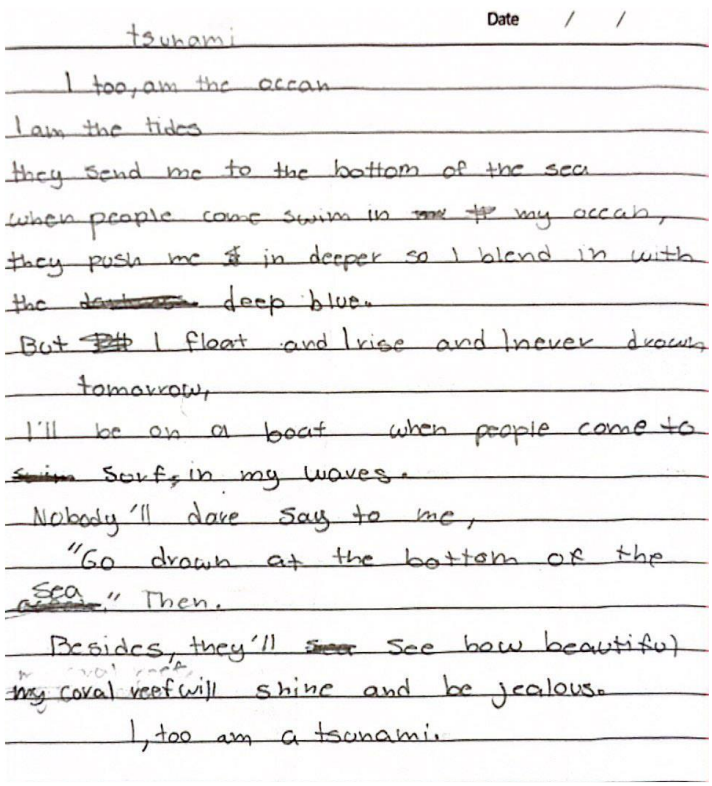
I too, am great

They say I'm worthless
But I too, am great
They say I'm slow
But I too, am great
They act like they don't see me
But they will soon

Because I too, am GREAT

Sample 12

16-year-old Noor wrote a poem using Hughes's "I, Too" as a mentor text



Date / /

tsunami

I too, am the ocean
I am the tides
they send me to the bottom of the sea
when people come swim in ~~me~~ ~~the~~ my ocean,
they push me ~~if~~ in deeper so I blend in with
the ~~darkness~~ deep blue.
But ~~Bit~~ I float and I rise and I never drown
tomorrow,
I'll be on a boat when people come to
~~swim~~ surf, in my waves.
Nobody'll dare say to me,
"Go drown at the bottom of the
~~ocean~~ sea." Then.
Besides, they'll ~~see~~ see how beautiful
~~my~~ coral reef will shine and be jealous.
I, too am a tsunami.

Tsunami

I too am the ocean.
I am the tides.

They send me to the bottom of the sea. When people come swim in my ocean, they push me in deeper, so I blend in with the deep blue.
But I float and I rise, and I never drown.

Tomorrow,
I'll be on a boat when people come to surf in my waves.

Nobody'll dare say to me,
"Go drown at the bottom of the sea." Then. Besides they'll see how beautiful my coral reef will shine and be jealous.

I too, am a tsunami.

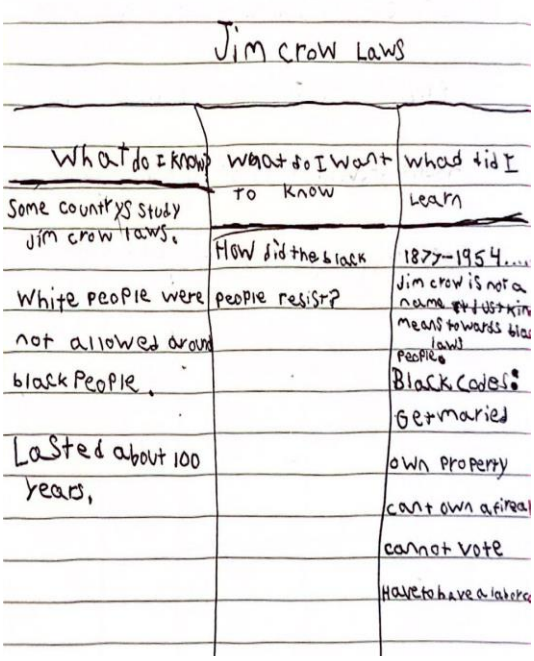
Articulating thoughts on Freedom

Since I began interviewing AAIILA students several weeks into the program, I noticed that some of them pulled on session content during interviews. For example, I asked 14-year-old Saad if he had experienced anti-Black racism at the public school he attended before moving to Medina Baye. He responded, "Yeah like we talked about in class, the Black codes. Even though it's on paper that you can do it, they make it difficult for you to actually do the thing." During interviews with other AAIILA students, when I asked them if they had experienced anti-Black racism, most of them described micro-aggressions or what they described as "indirect" racism that they have felt. Not all students attended public U.S. schools yet acknowledged the presence

of anti-Black racism in schools. For example, one of the students stated, “I went to private Islamic school, so it wasn’t like regular schools.” Another said, “We [my siblings and I] were homeschooled, so we didn’t have to deal with all that.” Over time, students grew more comfortable with asking questions during our sessions and in their journals, and I found that students often inquired about resistance. For example, during our sessions that centered life in the South prior to the Great Migration, students wanted to know, beyond migration, some of the other ways Black people resisted. They posed questions in class and in their journals (see Samples 13-15) that led to subsequent conversations on Black resistance.

Sample 13

14-year-old Saleem questioned the ways in which Black people resisted racialized laws

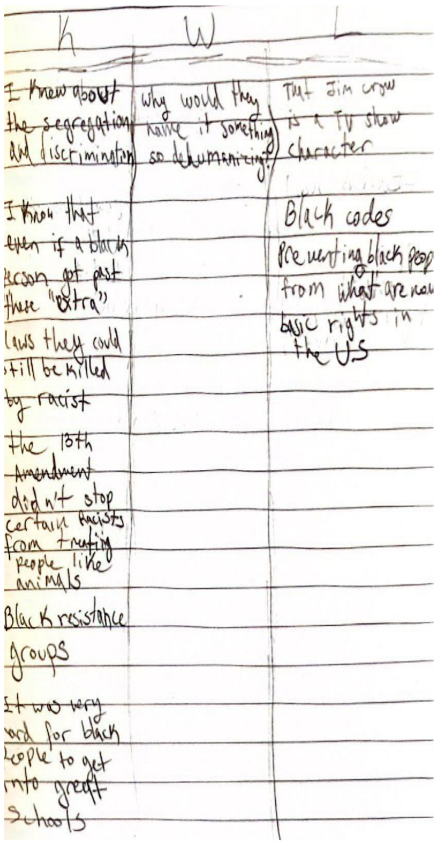


Jim Crow Laws

What do I know	What do I want to know	What did I learn
Some countries studied Jim Crow laws. White people were not allowed around Black people. Lasted about 100 years.	How did the Black people resist?	1877-1954 Jim Crow is not a name just kinda means laws towards Black people. Black codes: Get married Own property Can’t own a firearm Can’t vote Have to have a labor contract

Sample 14

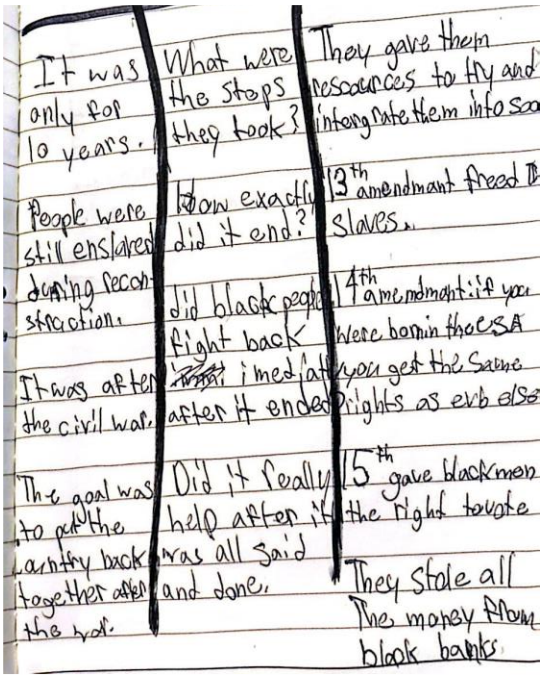
14-year-old Amina interrogated the moniker "Jim Crow"



K	W	L
I know about the segregation and discrimination. I know that even if a Black person got past those "extra" laws they could still be killed by racists. The 13th amendment didn't strop certain racists from treating people like animals. Black resistance groups It was very hard for Black people get into great schools.	Why would they name it something so dehumanizing?	That Jim Crow is a TV show character. Black codes prevented black people from what are now basic rights in the US.

Sample 15

16-year-old Ayyub asked critical questions about Reconstruction in the South



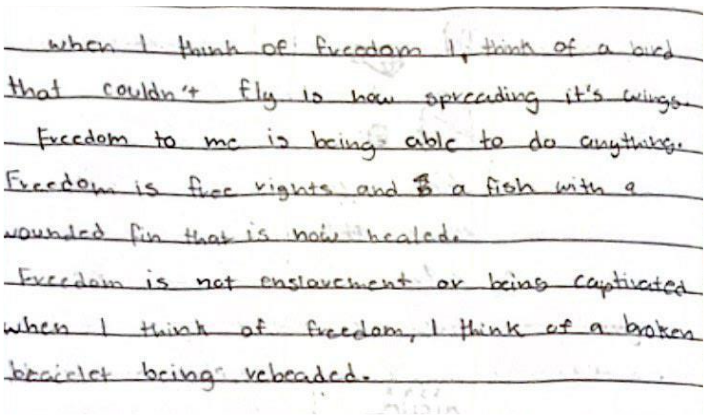
Reconstruction in the South

K	W	L
It was only for 10 years. People were still enslaved during Reconstr-uction. It was after the Civil War. The goal was to put the country back together after the war.	What were the steps they took? How exactly did it end? Did Black people fight back immediately after it ended? Did it really help after it was all said and done?	They gave them resources to try and integrate them into society. 13th amendment freed the slaves. 14th amendment if you were born in the USA, you get the same rights as everybody else. 15th gave Black men the right to vote They stole all the money from the Black banks.

Questions such as “How did Black people resist?”, “Why would they name it [Jim Crow laws] something so dehumanizing?” and “Did Black people fight back?” are some examples of how through journal entries, students in the posed critical questions. Throughout the program, students articulated their thoughts on freedom through multiple modes of expression. As presented in the following samples of their journal entries (see Samples 16-22), students articulated their thoughts on freedom through their written responses, poetry, and visual art. The

following samples also demonstrate how their perspectives are connected to movement, the natural world, and feelings of peace and joy.

Sample 16
14-year-old Noor connected freedom to nature in one of her journal entries

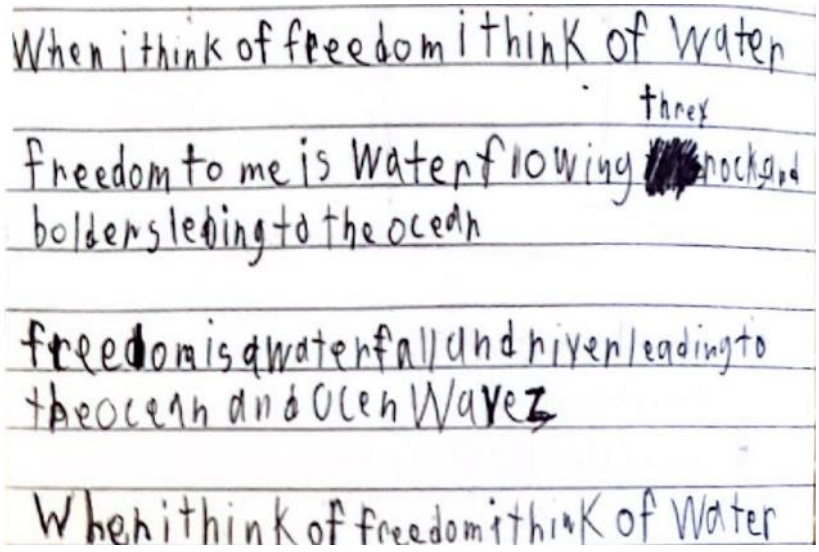

when I think of freedom I think of a bird that couldn't fly is now spreading it's wings. Freedom to me is being able to do anything. Freedom is free rights and a fish with a wounded fin that is now healed. Freedom is not enslavement or being captivated when I think of freedom, I think of a broken bracelet being rebeaded.

When I think of freedom, I think of a bird that couldn't fly and is now spreading its wings.

Freedom to me is being able to do anything. Freedom is free rights and a fish with a wounded fin that is now healed.

Freedom is not enslavement or being captive. When I think of freedom, I think of a broken bracelet being re-beaded.

Sample 17
14-year-old Saleem related freedom to water


When i think of freedom i think of Water
freedom to me is Water flowing through rocks and bolders leding to the ocean
freedom is a waterfall and river leading to the ocean and Ocen Wavez
When i think of freedom i think of Water

When I think of freedom I think of water.

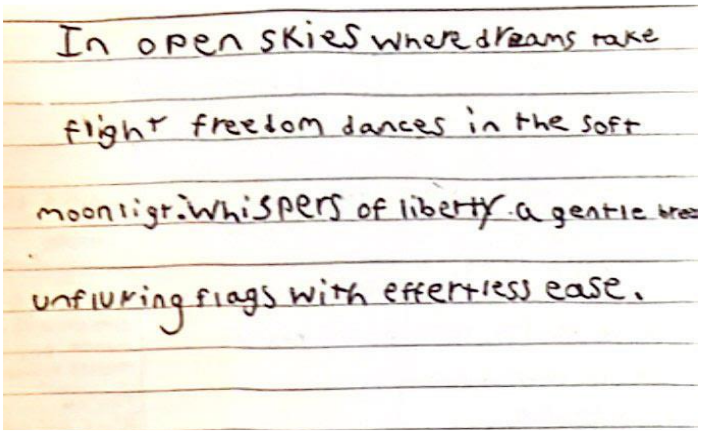
Freedom to me is water flowing through rocks and boulders leading to the ocean.

Freedom is a waterfall and river leading to the ocean and ocean waves.

When I think of freedom I think of water.

Sample 18

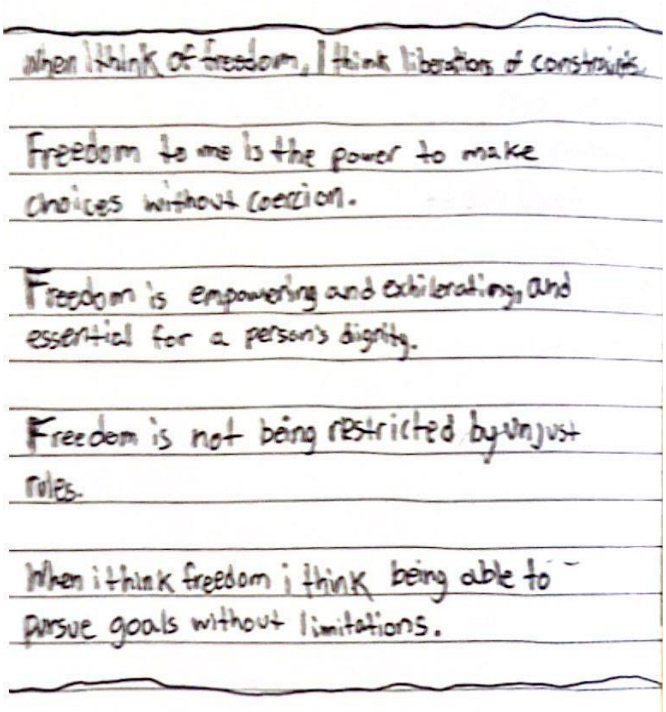
14-year-old Saleem wrote a poem about freedom related to nature and movement



In open skies where dreams take flight freedom dances in the soft moonlight. Whispers of liberty a gentle breeze fluttering flags with effortless ease.

Sample 19

15-year-old Abu Bakr wrote that freedom is empowering, exhilarating, and essential



When I think of freedom, I think of liberation of constraints.

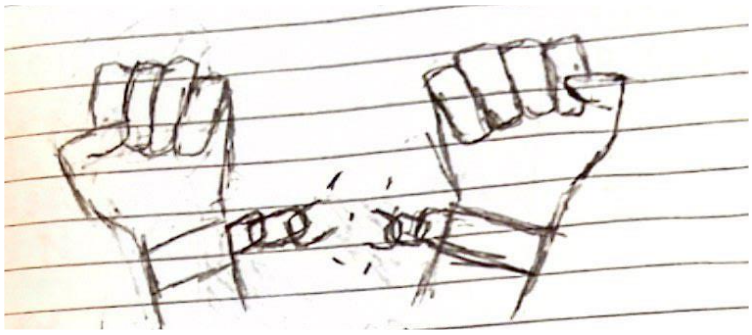
Freedom to me is the power to make choices without coercion.

Freedom is empowering and exhilarating and essential for a person's dignity.

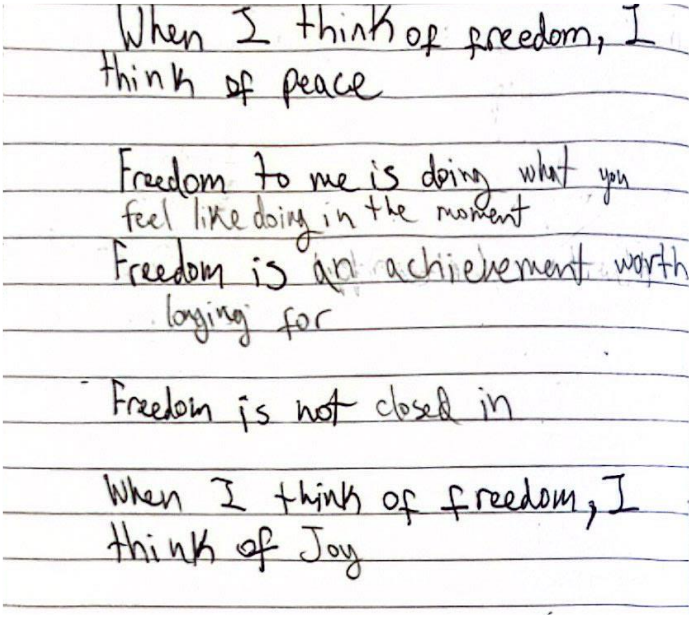
Freedom is not being restricted by unjust rules.

When I think of freedom, I think of being able to pursue goals without limitations.

Sample 20
15-year-old Sakina expressed her interpretation of freedom through visual art



Sample 21
16-year-old Zainab wrote that freedom is an achievement worth longing for



When I think of freedom, I think of peace.

Freedom to me is doing what you feel like doing in the moment.

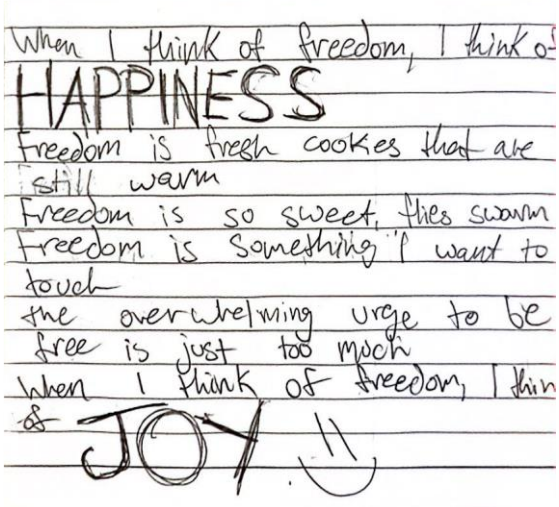
Freedom is an achievement worth longing for.

Freedom is not closed in.

When I think of freedom, I think of joy.

Sample 22

15-year-old Sakina expressed her thoughts on freedom through poetry



When I think of freedom, I think of HAPPIENSS.

Freedom is fresh cookies that are still warm.
Freedom is so sweet, flies swarm.
Freedom is something I want to touch.
The overwhelming urge to be free is just too much.

When I think of freedom, I think of JOY.

For students, freedom meant being able to make their own choices, not being confined, being able to pursue their dreams and goals, and resistance. They described freedom as a goal, an achievement, and a source of happiness. They also related freedom to movement, the natural world, and feelings of peace and joy. Before I carried out data collection at the AAIILA, I knew that I wanted to work with youth, but I didn't know in what capacity it would be doable. Before visiting the AAIILA, I had imagined that I would create a curricular product, something to hand over to school leadership for student use. Once there, students' engagement in program sessions, including their critical inquires and creativity, provided rich data that I could not have anticipated, and during the analysis process, I realized that we were constructing, or making curriculum during the program. This realization falls within the intellectual vein of Coles 's (2023) critical race ethnography at an urban high school in the United States, in which he defined Black curriculum making as "the intentional process of deconstructing anti-Black curriculum through an unapologetic centering of Black ethos" (p. 37). He also asserted that when working

with Black youth, researchers have a responsibility to provide spaces for disrupting anti-Blackness. In this study, youth were provided with an intentional space to disrupt anti-Blackness through a program that centered Black history and positioned participants as living Black history within a global community of Muslims. This finding suggests that students at the AAIILA who participated in program sessions engaged in curriculum-making through an intentional process of centering and learning with Black youth. Overall, analysis suggests that during our 10-week Black history program, students at the AAIILA articulated their perspectives on their purposes, dreams and goals, and thoughts on freedom in their journals through written response, art, and critical inquiry.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to better understand how the curricular perspectives of a community of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye, Senegal are situated in the intellectual traditions of African centered education (ACE), how community members draw on Islam to inform their perspectives, and the ways in which youth express themselves in a 10-week co-created Black history program at the AAIILA. One of the overall objectives of this study was to bring attention to the problem of reproductions of anti-Blackness in school curriculum and how because of it, students' needs are not met, or even acknowledged. By drawing on Black Crit, I argue that like glitter, anti-Blackness gets everywhere in school curriculum even when there are vigorous attempts to remove it. With a purpose of counteracting anti-Blackness present in curriculum, or overall school experiences, this study centers the curricular perspectives and self-expressions of Black Americans who engaged in transnational migration. In this study, I examined the following questions: RQ 1: How are the curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye aligned with the intellectual traditions of ACE? RQ 2: How do Black American Muslims in Medina Baye draw on Islamic principles to inform their perspectives? and RQ 3: How are the perspectives of Black American students at the AAIILA expressed in a 10-week co-created Black History program? To examine RQ 1 and RQ 2, I analyzed interviews with community members (see Table 1). For RQ 3, I analyzed interviews with AAIILA students along with artifacts from program sessions, mainly journal entries. The co-created program, which we ended up calling BAMS, was a 10-week Black history program that took place at the AAIILA with 11 Black American Muslim youth ages 12-18 (see Table 2). Multiple rounds of coding through a process of thematic data analysis revealed three main findings that I discuss at the beginning of this chapter. Next, I explain the study's research boundaries. Then I outline

implications for curriculum studies, practice, and BlackCrit. I conclude by offering recommendations for future research.

Discussion

To examine RQ 1, I analyzed 24 community member interviews who ages ranged from 14-79 over a period of three months at multiple locations in Medina Baye. Analysis of interviews revealed the first finding: The curricular perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are situated in the intellectual traditions of ACE, yet Islam is their main source of sense-making. This first finding suggests that the community's curricular perspectives, that is, their views, thoughts, and/or assumptions they hold about knowledge, teaching, learning, and the purpose(s) of education are shaped at their intersecting identities. Since most existing literature is within a U.S. context, ACE is traditionally thought of as an American phenomenon that exists in the spirit of Black unity, pride, nationalism, or pan Africanism. While they may not have been founded for the same reasons or enacted in the same way as those located in urban U.S. cities, this study moves the needle on existing research on ACE by positioning Medina Baye, and by extension the AAIILA, as African centered educational spaces. As revealed through analysis, Americans in Medina Baye were unanimous in their perspective that just by being present in Medina Baye, they were receiving some sort of education. For example, participants stated that they were actively learning lessons on patience, gratitude, and Islamic etiquette. This is in addition to the formal lessons that they were receiving through sheiks, classes, books, religious talks, and access to esoteric knowledge. For the Americans who go there, Medina Baye is a site of knowledge generation and transmission and a physical place to embody an African worldview through diasporic exchange in an Islamic environment. It is not much of a surprise that Medina Baye is a physical space in which the community embodies this worldview and that they felt

pulled there to the first place. Remember, the sheiks who formed its institutions, notably Sheik Ibrahim Niass and Sheik Hassan Cisse, have already been described as pan African by scholars of the tariqa tijani (Wright, 2013; 2022). This pan African orientation, undergirded by an African worldview, was embodied in the Senegalese and Americans who established, believed in, and worked towards the establishment of the AAII and the AAIILA. In this study, participants spoke to an African worldview as they referred to their backgrounds and upbringing as pan African, conscious, and Afrocentric. Parent participants also spoke about the tariqa tijani as an opening to send their children to Africa and Medina Baye as a space that affirmed their Black and Muslim identities simultaneously. This finding is in alignment with previous literature that revealed that when Sheik Hassan came to the United States and made connections with Black Americas, they were already ripe for the message that he brought—one that had been echoed by previous movements—one of ancestral and spiritual reclamation (Miller 2000; 2024). Seminal work on ACE early on named engagement with African indigenous languages as a key component of enacting an African worldview (Lomotey, 1992; Shujaa, 1992). During interviews, participants expressed an African worldview by naming specific ways they felt connected to the diaspora through language. Participants felt that speaking Wolof was a way to reclaim something that had been taken away from them and although with varying degrees of fluency, many of the Americans in Medina Baye speak Wolof daily. Since French is hardly ever spoken in the area, they are immersed in African indigenous language and West African Islamic culture.

As evident throughout literature, the intellectual traditions of ACE are concerned with expanding and deepening students' worldview. Educational spaces that are African centered are characterized by a supportive and understanding environment wherein students are viewed as educable and Africa and its people are sites of knowledge (Lee 1992; Lomotey 1992; Shujaa

1992). Both the AAII and the AAIILA were founded for the purpose of meeting the needs of Black American Muslims in an such an environment, and it is evident that the participants in this study view Medina Baye as an educational space whether they are formal students or not. For the first Americans tijanis who went to Medina Baye, their decision to position Africa as a site of knowledge and curate a physical space for African diasporic exchange between Muslims proved to be one that recognized the community's needs. During interviews, several AAIILA parents stated that they wanted their children to have an affirming experience, be in an Islamic environment that was Black, and be around people who understood them. Some of the mothers described how they don't worry about their children being victims of racialized violence when they are in Medina Baye and one of them described their child's racial identity as a cloak that they can remove while there. Rahman (2025), whose study included AAII parent interviews, found that parents view Medina Baye as a *liberatory geography of educational possibility* that nurtures their children's identity and holistic growth. In her study, she found that parents sent their children to Medina Baye because they believed their children could not get that nurturance where they were. Similarly in this study, each of the adults that I interviewed held the opinion that it is generally difficult for Black children to feel physically and psychologically safe in public schools where they were from. One of the participants said, "In American schools being Muslim add another layer to being Black. Being Black is an act of resistance but choosing to be Black and Muslim is double resistance."

While an African worldview shapes their curricular perspectives, that is their views, thoughts, and/or assumptions they hold about knowledge, teaching, learning, and the purposes of education, overall, participants were clear that Islam is how they make sense of their experiences and perspectives. During interviews, participants made statements such as: "I'm proud to be

Black, but I'm prouder to be Muslim because it's a genuine individual choice that I made", "Being Muslim is higher on the agenda than being Black", "I prefer to follow my spiritual ancestors", and "Ultimately, you want to get to the point where [having a Black identity] it's not in the forefront of influence. You want to get to the point where your connection to Allah and your relationship with Allah, and how you relate to all of Allah's creation is what's most important." In seminal literature on ACE, Asante (1991) argued that in African centered educational settings, individuals are not only seekers of knowledge, but also participants in its creation. As demonstrated in this study, Americans in Medina Baye generated new knowledge through transnational migration to and diasporic exchange in an Islamic environment. This may be an indication that one of the ways that Medina Baye provides respite for the community is that it gives them space to free up some of the mental strain and worry that comes from being Black in the United States. This means they can focus more on their spiritual elevation. This finding further suggests that Medina Baye is a site of physical place for community members to embody and make sense of both an identity constructed for them (Black American) and one they chose for themselves (Muslim). The AAII and the subsequent AAIILA are not excluded from discourse on ACE because they provide an Islamic education. On the contrary, the deeply spiritual essence of the place and the orientation of the people make Medina Baye a distinct African centered educational space. For this community, the tariqa tijani was an invitation to a spiritual path that transcended race and nationality. However, the designation of race and an American nationality within a global racial capitalist structure remain constructions that have material consequences for all participants. Findings demonstrate that the community's curricular perspectives, born and bred in the United States in what Hartman (2006) refers to as the afterlife of slavery, cradled in the Black Power era of the 1960s is embodied as community members that

migrated transnationally. This finding is alignment with existing literature that points to Africa as a continued site of knowledge, sense-making, exchange, and (re)imagining for Black Muslims (Khabeer, 2017; Khalifa & Gooden, 2010). Overall, an African worldview is an intellectual starting point for examining the curricular perspectives of participants. Still, participants prioritize their identities as Muslims and Islam is their main source of sense-making.

Analysis of interview transcripts to examine RQ 2 resulted in the second finding: The perspectives of Black American Muslims in Medina Baye are connected to the Islamic principle of interconnectedness. Because of their identity as Muslims and the deeply spiritual essence of Medina Baye, I wanted to gain more insight into how Islam forms and informs the community's curricular perspectives. Interconnectedness, a guiding principle that assumes that people are interconnected to other forms of creation influences how the participants in this study make sense of themselves, each other, and their connection to the natural world. For Muslims, the shared belief that the mind, body, and spirit of a person requires different types of sustenance to be *whole* is a key nuance revealed through interviews. For example, Musa laid out the parts of a human being that make a person whole according to Islamic tradition and spoke in detail about the importance of nurturing the mind, body, and spirit. Other participants pointed out the importance of attending to the mind by reading books and seeking knowledge in literature, the sciences, and math. Across the board, community members spoke about maintaining spiritual wellness through prayer, reading Quran, thikr (remembering God), and other forms of worship like khidma. Across age groups, they also spoke about the importance of strengthening their physical self though exercise, eating healthy foods, and strength-building.

The significance of serving fellow human beings in Islam is highlighted in one of the sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), that "None of you will have

faith until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 1997). In the path of the tariqa tijani, members view khidma, or acts of service, as a way to attain spiritual elevation. In this community, the Americans participate in a culture of collective care present in Medina Baye that is modeled by sheiks and sustained by everyone in the community (Rahman, 2023). By engaging in khidma in Senegal and in the United States, community members extend themselves to the community as a means to spiritual elevation. As revealed in interviews, community members believed that being in Medina Baye was a privilege that came with obligations and felt a responsibility to share their knowledge or experiences with their communities back home. In addition to the direct Islamic knowledge they learned, participants reported that by being in Medina Baye they learned how to serve the community, grew to appreciate khidma, and felt it was their duty to share either material resources or knowledge acquired. Participants who were not enrolled at a school or with a private tutor, those whom I labeled as non-students (see Table B1), still described Medina Baye as a place of knowledge, or a place they have learned from, particularly as it pertains to how they understood themselves and interacted with other people. As pointed out in existing literature, people in African centered educational spaces extend themselves to children, their community, and the one Creator (Durden, 2007). Therefore, this second finding supports my assertion that Medina Baye and the AAIILA are African centered educational spaces. In Islam, there is emphasis placed on looking to nature for signs, or evidence of the Creator's existence. Therefore, it was not surprising that when I asked participants to imagine a holistic education, they all mentioned nature, or the natural world, as a key component. Several of the participants referred to nature as a teacher and gave specific examples of how they viewed nature's role in their imaginings. Some of the participants recommended allotted time for reflection in nature. Others suggested observing nature as a form

self-care and as a wellness practice. They also proposed learning about nature through the Quran and having designated time to play and work in nature. Throughout interviews, participants agreed that the holistic needs of Black students went unacknowledged in most school curriculum. When I explicitly asked them if they thought, generally speaking, that public school curriculum in the United States attended to the holistic needs of students, each of them answered in the negative. Across the board, participants stressed the importance of educational spaces that recognize students' holistic needs. For example, one of the participants explained how it was important for children to be educated "on the whole nine yards". For parent participants, they all expressed how in sending their children to Medina Baye, they were addressing a need that, from their perspective, could not be fulfilled elsewhere. For the sake of clarity during interviews, I defined *holistic* broadly for participants. When I asked them to imagine a holistic education, I followed by, "I mean one that attends to their mind, body, and spirit." Through interviewing, I learned that participants entered the space already having an understanding of holism. When I asked participants to imagine an educational space that meets the holistic needs of Black students, not one of the participants asked me about the definition of or clarification on what I meant by the term.

Spirituality outside of Euro-American epistemologies have been described as a sense-making methodology, or the way in which communities learn, know, make sense of, and navigate their lives (Wane, 2019). For the American in Medina Baye, their identity and experiences as Black American Muslims living in Senegal have formed and informed their curricular perspectives. Regarding the spiritual particularity of Medina Baye, one of the most distinguishing environmental features that engage the senses is the incessant buzz of people engaged in worship. While I was in Medina Baye, before daybreak, all day, and throughout the

night, people engaged in prayer and remembrance of God. Being in such a place, of constant spiritual practice and remembering, results in shifts in perspectives, dispositions, and actions, or what has been referred to as an embodied knowledge (Ware, 2014). And the way individuals think, talk, and interact with creation reflects the embodied knowledge generated there. All in all, this second finding demonstrates how the community draws on the Islamic principle of interconnectedness to form their curricular perspectives by influencing how they perceive themselves, other people, and the natural world.

RQ 3 examined how students at the AAIILA expressed their perspectives during a Black history program over a period of 10 weeks. Thematic analysis of interviews and data generated during BAMS revealed that students expressed their perspectives on their purposes, dreams and goals, and thoughts on freedom through multiple modes of expression. In alignment with one of the curricular commitments of Medina Baye, that is, to provide an Islamic education, the AAIILA was also established for the purpose of Islamic education. According to Seyda Kubra and the parents interviewed, the purpose of the AAIILA was to provide a space for Islamic education, particularly memorization of Quran. Data analysis revealed that, as a site of curriculum-making, AAIILA students also generated other kinds of knowledge while there. Student artifacts show that during the BAMS program, students were not passive recipients of information. Rather they were active participants in generating knowledge about themselves, each other, and their environments. During interviews, youth participants took ownership of their presence in Medina Baye by explicitly naming their purposes for being there such as: “To get closer to Allah”, “To improve my social skills”, “To save myself and my family”, and “To prove to myself I can do it”. Like non-AAIILA participants, the AAIILA students who participated in the program also understood themselves as holistic (made up of a mind, body, and sprit) and

articulated some of the dreams and goals they had for themselves. In their journals, they wrote about their career, fitness, social, and spiritual goals. Neither during the interviews nor during program sessions did any of the participants ask me to clarify what I meant by holistic needs or holistic education which indicates program participants entered the research space already familiar with the concept, too. Across journals, participants also communicated their thoughts on freedom through visual art, poetry, and other writings. For them, freedom meant autonomy of choice in their pursuit of their dreams, resistance, and something to work towards. During interviews, one of the things most intriguing to me was how students, at their young ages, spoke about their identity. Every program participant that I interviewed said that being Black played an important role in their life but not as significant of a role as being a Muslim. This echoed the sentiment expressed in other interviews with community members. When I asked them about their racial and religious identities, they too, were clear that they prioritized their identity as Muslims and spiritual consciousness over racial or political consciousness.

This third finding demonstrates how the BAMS program at the AAIILA was a site of curriculum making. According to Coles (2020), curriculum making is a process that results in a newly created curricular space that centers Blackness and an unmaking of anti-Black curricular space. During the program, students engaged in a curriculum making process in an educational space by being active participants in their own learning. By questioning, suggesting, and critiquing, they engaged in critical inquiry through questions such as: “How did Black people resist?”, “Did they fight back immediately?”, and “Why would they name it something so dehumanizing?” Students also posed questions directly related to the functioning of the program. For example, on their exit tickets students asked me why I was interested in writing about their school, gave suggestions, and offered their opinions (see Figure A15). I found that in program

sessions, initially geared towards teaching students about Black history in the United States, we also made curriculum by generating new knowledge on our own diasporic connections to continental Africa. For example, when we discussed the Great Migration, we framed it as a second migration for Black people, the first one being the Transatlantic slave trade (TST). We then talked about our own migrations and how we felt connected to Medina Baye beyond our individual circumstances. In their journal, one of the students wrote, "I think being in this class made me feel like I am studying the way a lot of African Americans have before me." Another student wrote, "Having lived in an Islamic country where I was the only one who looked like me and was from where I was from, I have grown to appreciate seeing people like me thriving in an Islamic country." For most Americans, their sense of Black history has been shaped by media, politics, and popular culture. The same is true for Black Americans who since post-enslavement have developed a relationship with Black history as a sort of inspiration and remains a prominent part of our culture and institutions (Dagbovie, 2018). As a culminative activity, our trip to the Renaissance monument and Gorée Island was a unique opportunity for the students to learn Black history and see themselves as living Black history. Overall, it is clear that students who participated in the BAMS program arrived with cultural knowledge from their families, communities, and from their experiences in the United States and Senegal. Through visual art, poetry, and writings, students engaged in a process of curriculum-making that articulated their purposes, dreams and goals, and thoughts on freedom. At the end, the program sessions, created for the purpose of Black youth expression and to resist reproductions of anti-Blackness in curriculum, provided a space for students to express their perspectives and expand their worldview.

Boundaries

This study is a case study focused on a community of Black American Muslims who migrated to Medina Baye, Senegal. I do not attempt to generalize findings to all members of the Black American Muslim community nor the educational spaces in which they engage. The scope of this research is bounded by data collected over a three-month period and subsequent analysis of 24 participant interviews and student produced artifacts. In this study, the main boundary is related to data collection. First, interviews were limited to people who gave informed consent. There were some Black Americans living in Medina Baye at the time of the study who did not agree to be interviewed. Therefore, their perspectives are not reflected in my findings. Second, except for a husband and wife who were interviewed together, I conducted one-on-one interviews with participants. Since RQ 1 and RQ 2 relied on interviews, the implementation of focus groups would have provided an additional source of data and perhaps encouraged more dialogue. Data collected through interviews might have also been limited because I did not conduct follow up interviews which may have added more nuanced understandings as follow ups provide opportunities to clarify and go deeper on topics previously discussed. Moreover, since the Black history program was offered to students aged 13 and older, there were American students whose perspectives are not reflected in the findings. Furthermore, the level of student participation in program sessions fluctuated throughout the weeks. As a result, some of the students' perspectives are represented more than others. During the program, students engaged in a variety of topics and activities, yet there were topics that I would have liked to cover in the sessions based on feedback from students that I could not due to time constraints. For example, I would have liked to incorporate more of the activities students expressed interest in like sports, financial planning, and entrepreneurship. We also discussed inviting virtual guest speakers.

However, internet and electricity were unpredictable and made this challenging. As a group, we also proposed activities such as a research project, a culminating Black history program for the community, an open mic event, and the development of a student-created brochure for potential and/or future students of AAIILA.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for the field of curriculum studies. This study contributes to curriculum studies by examining the curricular perspectives of a multifaceted transnational community of Black American Muslims who embody an African worldview and are guided by Islamic principles. The findings in this study offer insight on African centered curriculum, curricular perspectives, and curriculum making in Black educational spaces. Taken together, the findings speak to the importance of creating room for students to express their perspectives through non-Euro-American worldviews. An expanded worldview of a Black person in a global anti-Black world is not to be underestimated, and it is clear that engagement with transnational migration affords opportunities to do so. Memon et al.'s (2021) study of curricula in Islamic education found that explicit articulation of purpose in educational spaces may help align curricular perspective, or theory, with practice. As revealed in this study, equally important are opportunities for students to communicate their own purposes of being in a space. Since identifying purpose is the starting point for the curriculum process in educational spaces, there needs to be clear articulation of goals, missions, and purposes between everyone involved. Overall, educational spaces are enriched when multiple perspectives are presented and students are supported in expanding their worldview. Therefore, interrogation of multiple perspectives and expansions of students' worldviews should be a priority in curriculum development and implementation.

Attending to the whole needs of children is related to the principle of interconnectedness, and according to existing literature, it is one of the elements of a holistic education (Mahmoudi et al., 2012). Therefore, educational researchers and practitioners may find the findings presented in this study useful in thinking about student centered responsive curriculum that recognizes the holistic needs of students. Overall, educational spaces may create more responsive curriculum by acknowledging the multifaceted and multilayered make up of human beings. In educational spaces, the principle of interconnectedness may be communicated in a variety of forms that do center any one religion, but around the concept that people, places, things, events, and ideas are connected. For school-based educators who are looking for ways to implement more student-centered curriculum, they may infuse ready-made materials with activities that bring in multiple perspectives and promote critical inquiry. Despite curricular constraints imposed by districts or states, educators can still serve as models of criticality, engagement, and responsiveness. In addition to articulation of goals, the acknowledgment of harm done in educational settings is also an important starting point for the development of this sort of curriculum. Community-based educators who may have more flexibility might want to consider the ways in which public schools reinforce anti-Black sentiment and infuse counter narratives and encourage counter stories that offset some of the harm. Community-based educators and leaders may be able to lean into these practices more than schoolteachers due to hidden constraints like school culture and temperament and more obvious ones like the banning of topics and books. For educators across contexts, scholars suggest *remembering*, by writing for example, as one way to connect memories, stories, and experiences from the past and present (Beymer, et al., 2020). Remembering through storytelling is another way that students can reconnect with themselves and the world (Banks-Wallace, 2002). Overall, written and oral storytelling are both liberatory

forms of self-expression that can be taught, modeled, and practiced in educational spaces.

By employing a case study through the lens of BlackCrit, this research contributes to a growing body of research on Black educational spaces (BES). As defined by Warren & Coles (2020), BES are spaces of possibilities that attend to the whole needs of children with clear intention to resist and heal from anti-Blackness expressed in schools. Therefore, what defines a BES from other spaces is not the obvious, that the occupants are Black but the purpose of the space. In this study, I demonstrate the need for curriculum that purposely recognizes the holistic needs of students. I do not argue that any one place can meet all of the needs of any one human being or group. Rather, the acknowledgment of students as *whole* is a starting point for curriculum development and implementation that works against anti-Blackness. When viewed through a Black Crit lens, the third finding in particular expands understandings on the specificity of Blackness and contributes to existing scholarship on the transformative nature of affirming spaces for Black youth (Coles, 2020, 2022; Rickford, 2016). Ultimately, the findings in this study speak to the continued need of developing student-centered, responsive curriculum that recognizes and works to meet the holistic needs of students. Together, findings also provide insight into how youth voices are critical in understanding how Black intellectual traditions evolve and are sustained. Because of my positionality, this study adds to existing research conducted by educational researchers such as Dillard & Neal (2020), who challenge Eurocentric epistemologies in qualitative research by recognizing the role of spirituality in Black women's work. Finally, this study adds to emerging research that examines the relationship between education and sustained anti-Blackness such as that of ross & Givens (2023) who propose Black education studies as a field of study that centers Black life, living, and hope.

Recommendations for future research

While contextualizing the specificity of Medina Baye and the particularity of Black American Muslims, the findings discussed in this chapter uplift the need for continued examination of Black intellectual traditions in curriculum studies. One area for future research may be examinations of other transnational movements that intervene the anti-Black sentiment and racism that shows up in school curriculum. This would contribute to a greater understanding of Black educational spaces in various contexts. Building on this study, researchers interested in transnational research may continue to examine the role of spirituality in places outside of the United States, particularly, in terms of how Black spiritual traditions inform educational perspectives, decisions, pedagogy, policy, or research. Before I went to Medina Baye, I underestimated the diasporic exchange that took place there. Therefore, researchers who conduct youth centered studies in Medina Baye may consider ways to integrate other English-speaking students from continental Africa to further encourage diasporic exchange. This study briefly touched on a few of the ways in which women played key roles in the development, funding, and operation of initiatives in Medina Baye such as the clinics and schools. Future studies in Medina Baye that center the women in the community may prove useful in understanding the nuances of Black Muslim women in carrying on intellectual and spiritual traditions. I also suggest longitudinal studies that include one-on-one interviews and focus groups that illuminate the role of women in Islam and challenge narratives that portray Muslim women as oppressed. This would add to existing scholarship that closely examined the experiences of Black Muslim women at the intersection of race, religion, and gender (Gibson & Karim, 2014). Moreover, further examinations of the multiple perspectives, iterations, and praxes of ACE in both transnational and U.S. educational spaces are recommended. Finally, for qualitative researchers

who work with Black youth in educational settings, future studies that draw on critical theories such as BlackCrit might include increased attention to the parallel and diverging curricular perspectives of parents, school leaders, and community members. These approaches may aid in garnering multiple perspectives and aligning institutional goals with community goals. By pursuing these recommendations, educational researchers can deepen their understanding of and contribute to scholarship on curriculum studies, particularly the curricular perspectives of marginalized communities. In conclusion, in a structure wherein Black people's humanity is constantly challenged, for this community, a Muslim identity is a universal recognition of humanity and a way to transcend constructed barriers and conditions. How American tijanis came to be in Medina Baye is a fascinating story of movement, and the transmission of knowledge from West Africa to urban cities may help our understanding of how Islam is perceived as a tool of liberation for Black American Muslims. While certainly no one place can do it all, the acknowledgment of a multifaced self and assumed connection to all creation is one of the first steps in recognizing the holistic needs of students in educational spaces. The presentation of ideas in this study is no way intended to broad stroke all public school curriculum in the United States. However, the endemic nature of anti-Blackness calls for a recognition of the harm inflicted on Black children and educators throughout American history. This recognition is not hopeless, though. It is a recognition of our resistance and hope. That despite anti-Blackness, Black families continue to find ways to make education a priority. It is a single chapter in a long story of Black American communities who migrate, sacrifice, and pursue for their (and their children's) education and overall well-being.

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APPENDIX A: FIGURES

Figure A1
Approach to Gorée Island

Figure A2
Medina Baye roundabout

Figure A3
Medina Baye's welcome sign

Figure A4
Grand Mosque of Medina Baye (courtyard)

Figure A5
The African American Islamic Institute Legacy Academy (AAIILA)

Figure A6
Student-designed BAMS logo

Figure A7
BAMS program community agreements

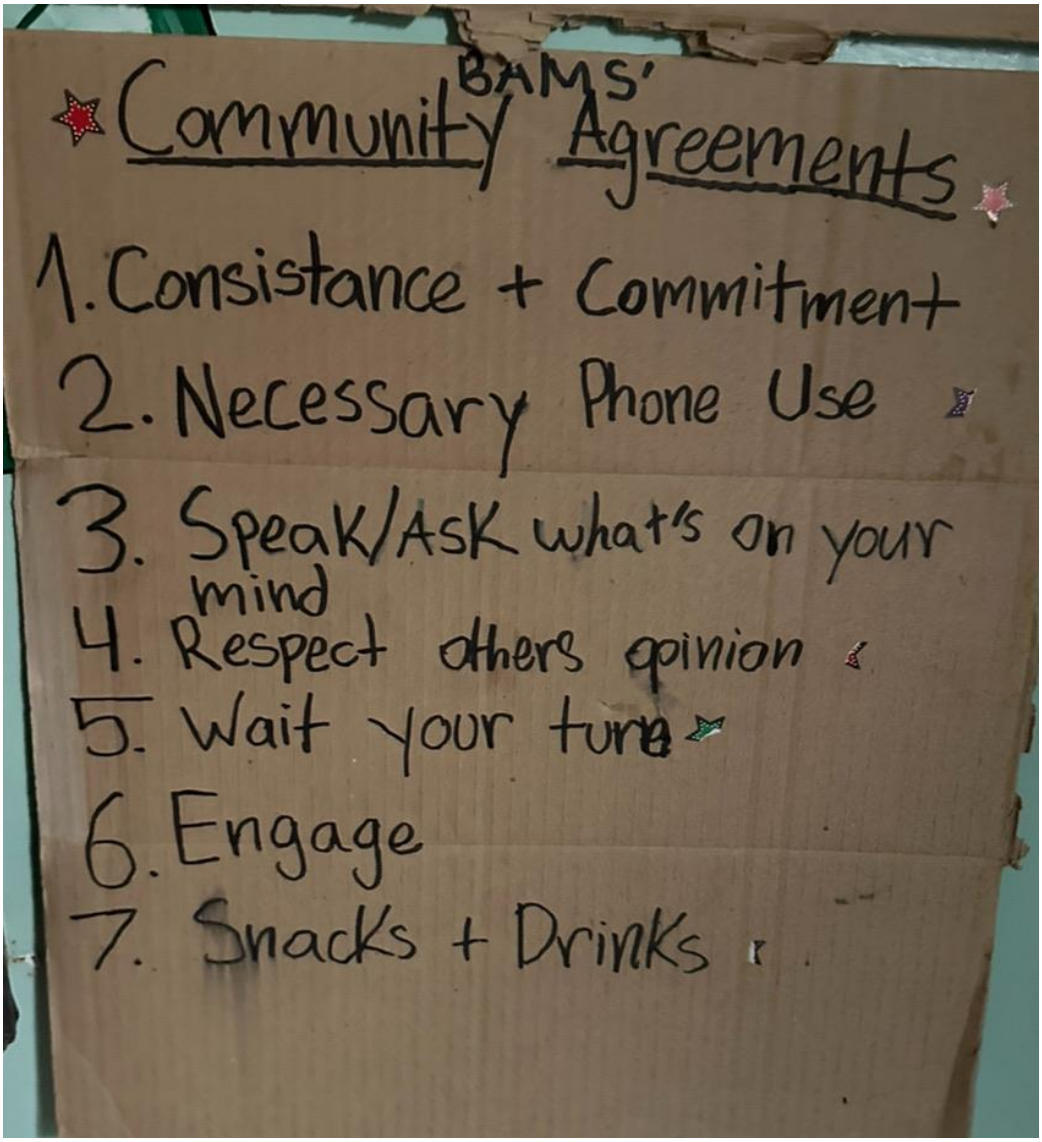


Figure A8
Student artwork hanging in the corridor of the AAIILA

Figure A9
Classroom scene

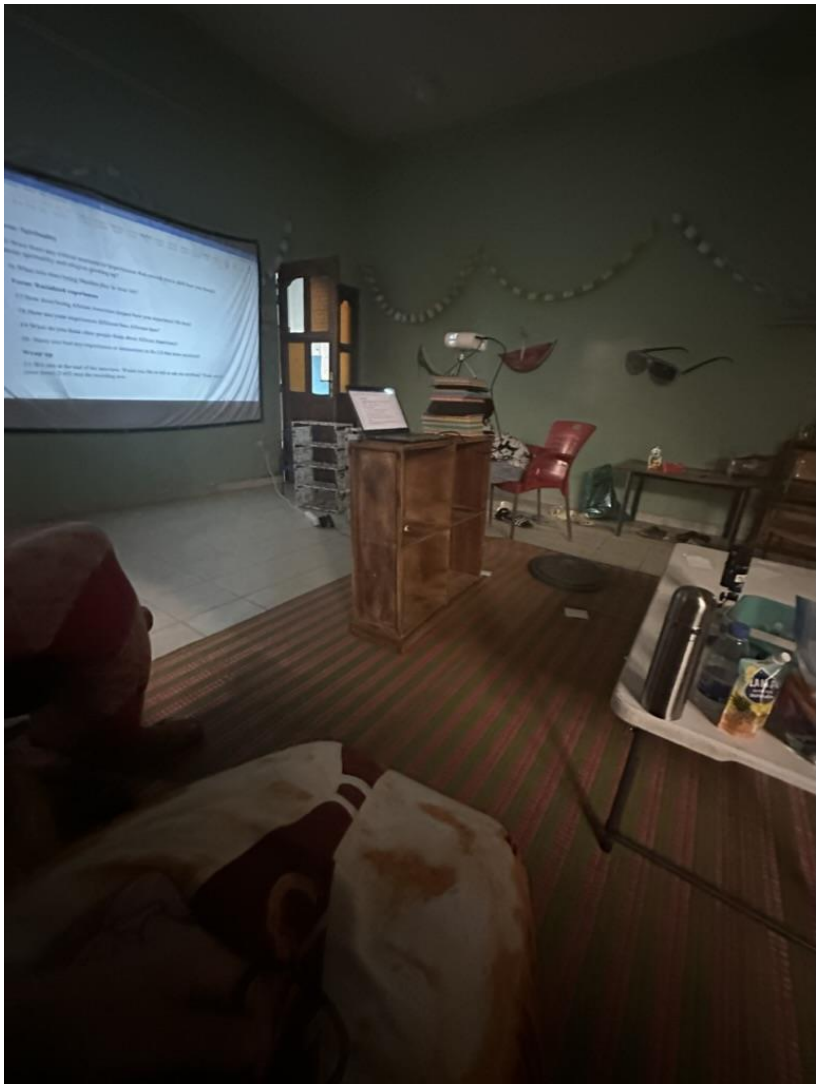


Figure A10

Student produced artifact: A student wrote about what home means to them

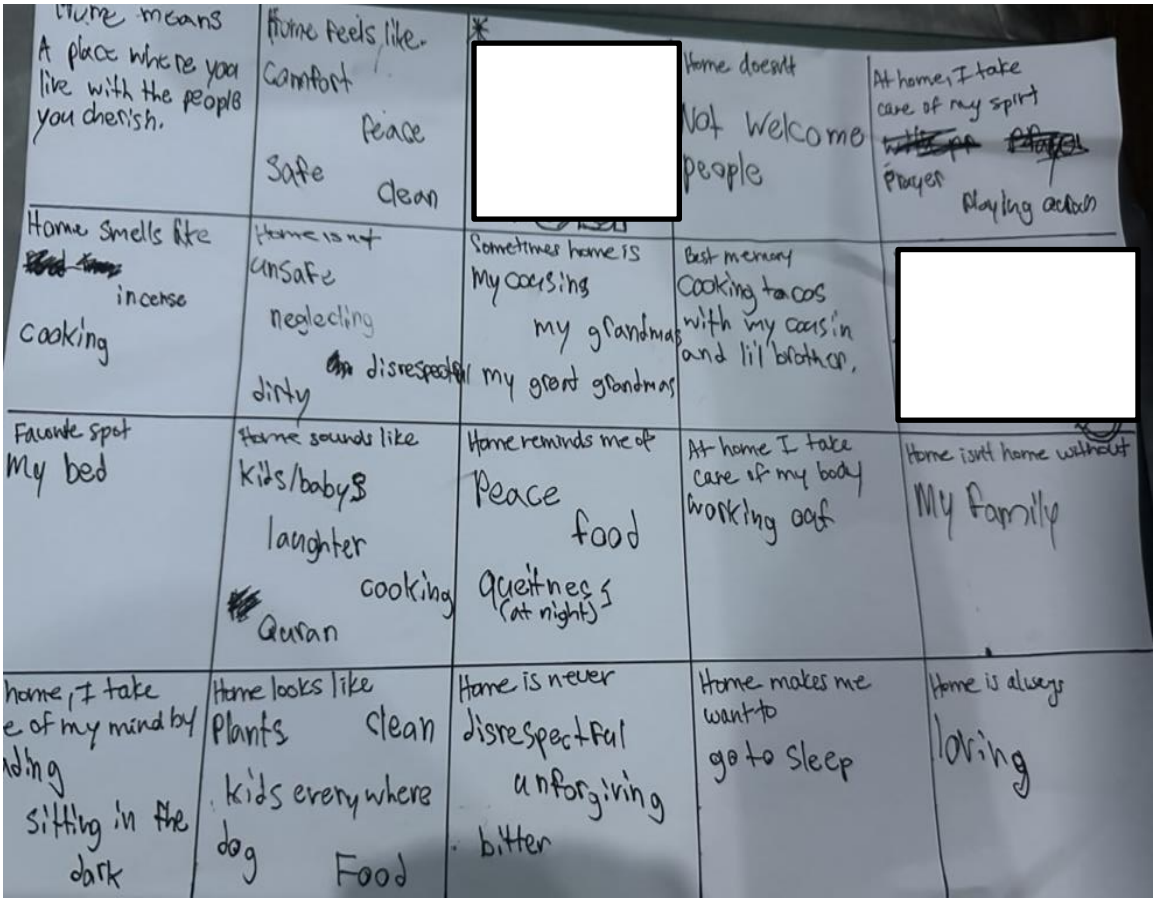


Figure A11

Student produced artifact: A student completed a Venn Diagram to compare Medina Baye to their homeplace

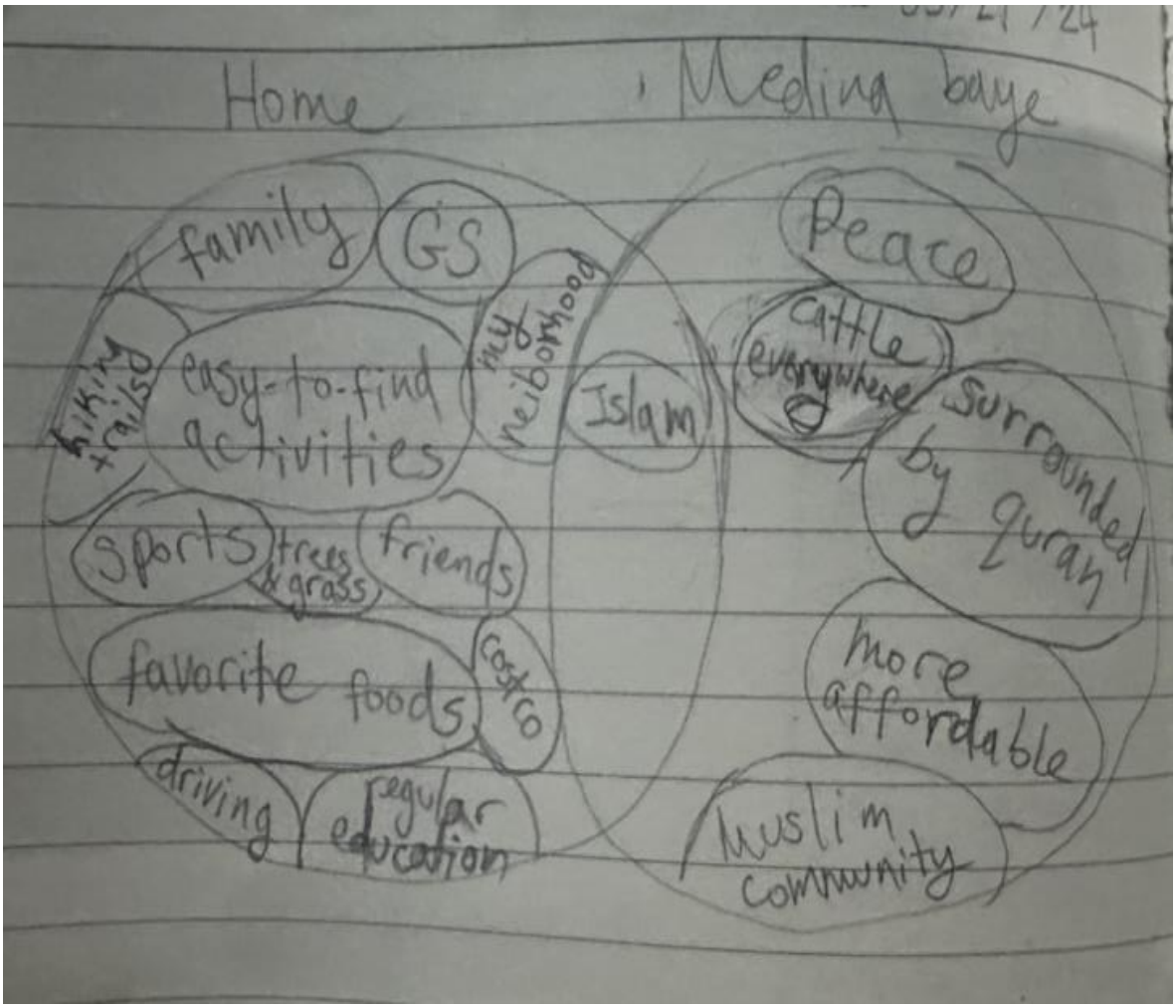


Figure A12
Field trip permission slip

B.A.M.S
BLACK AMERICAN MUSLIM STUDENTS

FIELD TRIP PERMISSION SLIP

TO THE PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

Exciting news! As we wrap up our 10-week program focused on Black American history, past and present, we are planning a trip to Dakar to visit the Renaissance Monument and Goree Island! The children are excited to attend, and we are looking forward to learning more about our shared histories through discussion, guided tours, and fellowship with one another, inshallah. If you give your student permission to attend, please sign below and return to Seyda Kubra or Sister Lakya via Whatsapp, email, or in-person no later than April 9, 2024.

Trip details:

Date: Tuesday April 16, 2024

Meeting place: Seyda Kubra's house

Departure time from Medina Baye: after Fajr

Departure time from Dakar: around Magrib

Cost:
The program will cover the following costs: private transportation to and from Medina Baye, ferry ticket, Renaissance Monument and Goree museum fees, tour guides, and program t-shirt. We will prepare an on-the-go breakfast for the bus. Also, their lunch and dinner will be covered while in Dakar.

Please provide your child(ren) with spending money for souvenirs as there are souvenirs shops/vendors near the monument and on Goree Island.

☐ I allow my child to join the field trip on the date stated above.

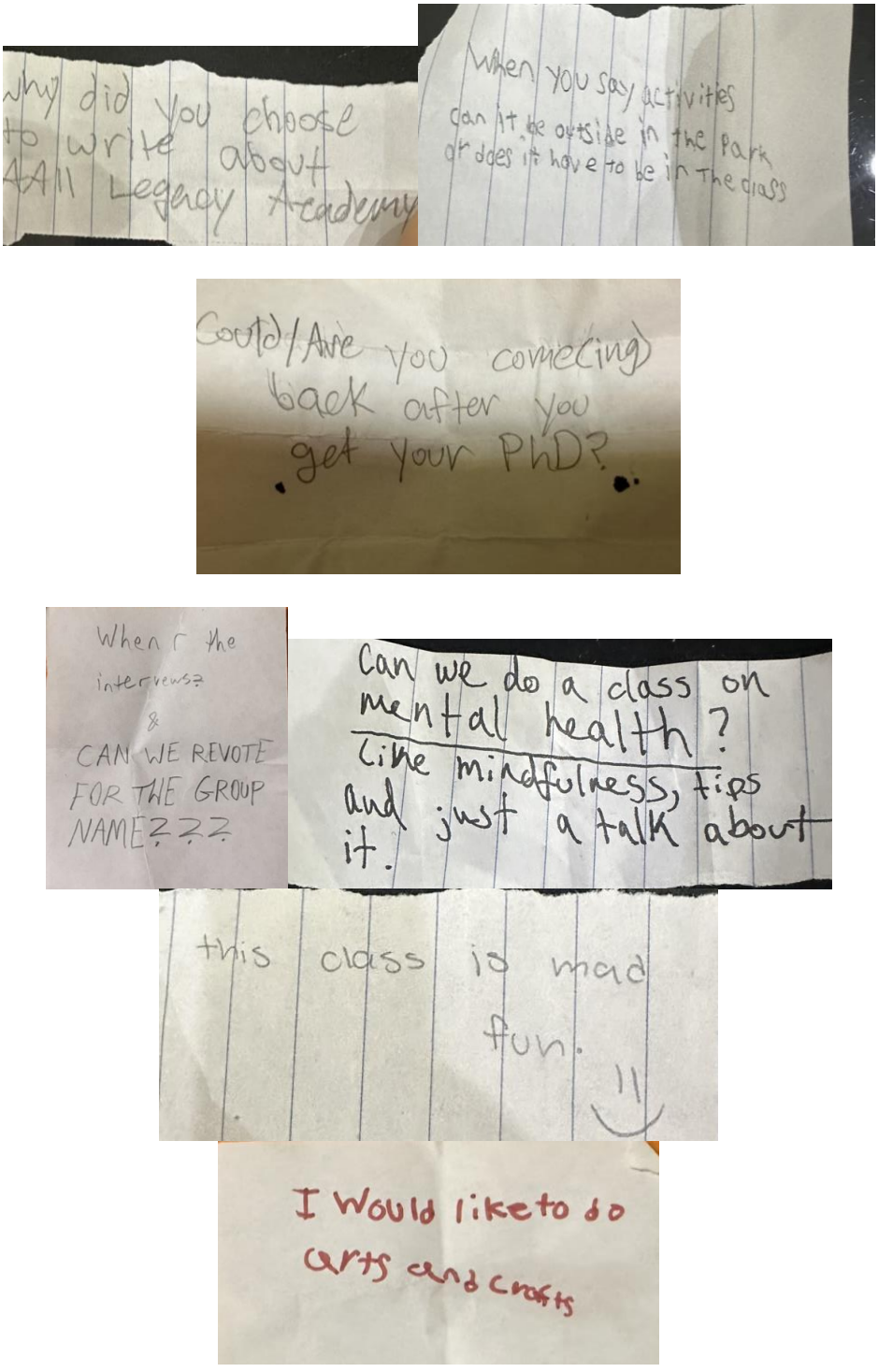
Student Name: _____

_____
PARENT/GUARDIAN
SIGNATURE+CONTACT NUMBER

Figure A13
Door of No Return on Gorée Island

Figure A14
The Renaissance monument in Dakar

Figure A15
Samples of students' exit tickets



APPENDIX B: TABLES

Table B1
Interview Participants

Name	Sex	Age	Hometown	Student status
Adam	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Amina*	F	14	Maryland	Yes
Amir	M	14	New Jersey	Yes
Amna	F	16	Atlanta	No
Asad	M	17	Detroit	Yes
Bilal	M	74	Detroit	No
Dawoud	M	40s	Atlanta	No
Hamza	M	57	New York	No
Haniya	F	20	Detroit	No
Huzaifa	M	66	Texas	No
Mansur	M	79	DC	No
Mariam	F	30	Atlanta	No
Ibrahim	M	40	Atlanta	No
Musa	M	30	New York	Yes
Noor*	F	14	San Jacinto	Yes
Rayan	M	20	New York	Yes
Saad*	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Salem*	M	14	Atlanta	Yes

Table B1 (cont'd)

Sanaa	F	30	Atlanta	No
Seyda Kubra	F	40	Atlanta	No
Sumaya	F	30	New York	No
Tasneem	F	17	Detroit	No
Zainab*	F	16	Maryland	Yes
Zubair	M	16	Detroit	No

*Participated in program sessions

Table B2
AAIILA Students: Program Session Participants

Name	**Sex**	**Age**	**Hometown**	**Interviewed**
Abu Bakr	M	15	Atlanta	No
Alia	F	13	New York	No
Amina	F	14	Maryland	Yes
Ayyub**	M	16	Detroit	No
Hassan**	M	12	Detroit	No
Imani**	F	18	Detroit	No
Noor	F	14	San Jacinto	Yes
Saad	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Sakina	F	15	Atlanta	No
Saleem	M	14	Atlanta	Yes
Zainab	F	16	Maryland	Yes

** My child

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Figure C1

Protocol A: Interview Participants

The purpose of this interview is to understand the experiences of Black American Muslims connected to Medina Baye. The overall aim of this study is to understand how Black American Muslims engage in resistance and reconstruct their mind/body/spirit through education across time and space. Your participation will provide more insight into what a holistic education looks like for Black American Muslim students. In order to transcribe our interview later, I will audio record our conversation. Anything that I share from this conversation will be de-identified. That means I will use a pseudonym so that no one will know what you or any of the other participants said. The interview should last about one hour. During this time, I will ask you questions. Feel free to pass on any of the questions that you don't want to answer. Before our interview, I will provide you with a consent form to sign.

Focus: Background

1. Tell me about how you came to be here/what lead you here...

2. What do you hope you get out of your time here? Are you getting what you came for?

3. Tell me about your communities back home. Do you feel like you have community here?

4. Do you know of any other places or institutions that exist for Black Americans/Black American Muslims? What makes Medina Baye, as a place of learning, unique?

5.Tell me about some memorable experiences/times you have had here. Is there a specific experience that stands out? If you could change anything about your experiences, what would it be?

6. How has Medina Baye/schools changed over time?

7. What is the legacy of Medina Baye. Do you see yourself as a part of this legacy or tradition?

Focus: Education

8. Are you associated with any of the schools here? If so, how?

9. What type of outside programming do you desire for the Black American Muslim students in Medina Baye? Can this be achieved in the US?

10. What is the role of education in the lives of Black American Muslims? What should students gain from education? What role does Medina Baye play in this?

11.Do you believe that mainstream education in the US can attend to the holistic needs of Black American Muslim students? If they ask to clarify, one that attends to the mind, body, spirit?

12.Imagine a holistic education for Black American Muslim students. What does that look/smell/feel/sound like?

13.Are Black American Muslim students in need of emancipatory/liberatory education? How do you imagine we give that to them?

14.Do you see yourself as following the tradition of Black liberatory education? Islamic education or both?

Focus: Resistance

15.Has being here make you more or less critical of the condition of Black American Muslims in the US?

16.How do you see coloniality showing up here (in regard to power, knowledge, being)? Do you see rejection of it? Or disruption of it?

17.Do you see Medina Baye (and/or the school) as a place where knowledge and/or theory is generated? What kind of knowledge? How?

18.Do you see your presence here as an act of resistance? Against what/who?

19.Have you experienced Anti-Blackness in the United States? Have you experienced any form of discrimination here?

20.How do you see race, racism, power, capitalism at work here? Is there rejection/disruption? How?

Focus: Spirituality

21.How do you see Sufism/the Tariqa Tijani as (re)claiming, (re)connecting, (re) constructing the Mind/Body/Spirit of Black American Muslims?

22.How do you take care of your Mind/Body/Spirit in the US? In Medina Baye?

23.How would you compare the state of your Mind/Body/Spirit from here to the US?

24.What/Who do you feel more connected to by being in Medina Baye? Do you have the same connections in the US?

Focus: Identity

25.Do you have moments where you have to reconcile blackness and Islam?

26.How does your Black Americanness show up here? At what times are you most aware of it?

27.How is Blackness/ Black American history celebrated here?

28.What do you want your legacy to be?

Figure C2
Protocol B: Program Participants

Introductory Script
The purpose of this interview is to understand the experiences of Black American Muslims at the African American Islamic Institute in Medina Baye. In order to transcribe our interview later, I will audio record our conversation. Please read and sign the release form if you agree OR You have already signed the release form. Anything that I share from this conversation will be de-identified. That means I will use a pseudonym so that no one will know what you or any of the other participants said. The interview should last no more than one hour. During this time, I will ask you questions. Feel free to pass on any of the questions that you don't want to answer. Do you have any questions or concerns before we start?

Background
1.What is your name and current age?

2.Where are you from in the US?

3.How long have you been living in Senegal?

4.Why did you come to the African American Islamic Institute? What do you hope to get from being here?

5.Tell me about your family. Describe your experiences growing up in your household. How would you describe your role in the family?

Focus: Space

6.What are your favorite spaces in the US? Why?

7. What are your favorite spaces in Medina Baye? Why?

8.Tell me about your day-to-day experiences in Medina Baye? How do you spend your down time?

9.Do you feel that people are treated differently here (in regard to race, nationality, or language)? How?

10.If you could change one thing about your experiences in Medina Baye, what would it be?

Focus: School/Education

11.Tell me about your school experiences in the US.

12.Tell me about your school experiences here.

13. Would you like to do academic or enrichment subjects?

14.What are your future goals?

15.Do you want to go to college/university?

Focus: Spirituality

16.Were there any critical moments or experiences that caused you to shift how you thought about spirituality and religion growing up?

17.What role does being a Muslim play in your life?

Focus: Racialized experiences

18.How does being African American impact how you experience life here?

19.How are your experiences different than Africans here?

20.What do you think other people think about African Americans?

21. Have you had any experiences or interactions in the US that were racialized?

22. Do you feel proud to be B/A/M?

Wrap up
We are at the end of the interview. Would you like to tell or ask me anything? Thank you for your time. I will stop the recording now.