"What Shall She Bring Forth from Her Travail?" A Conversation About Anti-Racist Pedagogy

AFUA COOPER and JODY STARK

As part of this special issue on anti-racist pedagogy, white music education scholar Jody Stark (University of Manitoba) interviews Dr. Afua Cooper (Dalhousie), professor of Black studies, historian of Black women and stories, former Poet Laureate of Halifax, and Canadian dub poetry pioneer. Cooper and Stark discuss the ways that Cooper's work functions as anti-racist pedagogy by centring the experiences, knowledge, stories, and power of Black women from various times and places; insisting on the vernacular and aurality; resisting the essentialization of Blackness by confronting the reader with a multitude of Black experiences and worldviews; and intentionally collapsing the past and present. Through an examination of Cooper's work, they explore what an anti-racist pedagogy might mean for teaching music in the academy.

Jody Stark [JS]: Afua, I am grateful to have the chance to dialogue today. I want to acknowledge that I'm here in snowy Winnipeg, in the homeland of the Métis nation, and on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples. And through the marvels of technology, I can be with you virtually in Mi'kma'ki where you live in Halifax. I want to start by acknowledging the land where we both are, as a way of reminding myself and others of the colonial mythologies in the Canadian imagination. And also, to remind myself of the ways that I benefit from the reconception of land as property — another topic for another time. But I am mindful that the system that we live in impacts Indigenous peoples, but also Black and Brown people, who are subject to colonial violence, both historically and on a daily basis. When I first began to explore what decolonizing music education might mean, as somebody who works with future music educators in Manitoba, to be honest, I didn't connect the dots between Indigenous and Black experiences in the colonial project. The stories that I knew about, of course, were stories of

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slavery and violence, but I'm coming to understand that the economic project of settler colonialism requires certain bodies to be dehumanized to justify taking land and resources. Now, I'm seeing that racialization and racism are an important instruments of settler colonialism. Your work helps me connect some of those dots and I'm grateful to you for that.

Afua Cooper [AF]: Thank you, Jody.

JS: I also want to thank you for the gift of your collection *Copper Woman and Other Poems*. It has been an amazing experience to read your words, hearing your voice in my head after spending a few days together, and also after having had the experience of hearing you read and perform several of these poems. I'm struck by the way that your poetry and your dub poems are art, and music, and literature, and, I would say, pedagogy. Of course, I'm thinking about pedagogy because of my worldview and my place in the world. But I'm curious, do you see your artistic work as being pedagogical?

AC: I do. Definitely. Because the medium of, say, nonfiction, or historical writing just doesn't seem to fit, or doesn't seem to share the moment, to capture the immediacy of something in a way that a poem does. So, sharing in terms of teaching, sharing, in terms of passing on information. So, if you write an article of, I don't know, twenty-two pages, someone has to wade through all that. You can make the same point, or a similar one, with one verse, or two or three. So, there is pedagogy built in my work.

You know, I come from a postcolonial society. I don't even know about "post," but that's what they say. Because I would still say it's a colonial society in so many ways. And I'm saying that to say that all these concerns, all these issues are built within the everyday, built within people's lives. If you go on a bus or you attempt to register your kid in school, the shadow of colonialism is always there. That is reflected in my poetry, it has to be. When you look at poets from that particular place in the world, I'm from Jamaica, or when you look at a poem from Chile — I'm thinking of Pablo Neruda, for example, or you know, a Mexican poet — we all have the same concern: the colonial violence of the kind of society that created slavery and colonization. So, the movements of people, the creation of diasporas, racial hierarchy — that's the "New World," right from Canada to Argentina. It's not new in terms of geology, but new in terms of certain social processes, and social formations and racial formation. A huge thing happened here. So, we are by default teachers, as poets.

JS: In that vein, I'm wondering if you could share a little bit about dub poetry, where it comes from, and the ideology and practice of that particular poetic practice.

AC: The poetry comes out of Jamaican musical-cultural forms. It's rooted in history, it privileges a national language, Creole languages, in my case, Jamaican Creole. So, it came almost as a counter to colonial, Standard English poetry, even though you can do dub in Standard English. So, it's a Jamaican cultural poetic form that has its roots in reggae music — and reggae music is also rebel music. So, dub by itself, we can say, is rebel poetry. So, the spoken word, voice, and language are privileged, and there are certain themes, certain topics that we all use, that every dub poet will work with: liberation from colonial lives, from colonialism, from slavery. I would also add another line to this definition, the use of the vernacular, not only in terms of Creole languages, but vernacular in terms of the everyday, of respecting people's everyday — the privileging of vernacular culture.

JS: Yes, as I read through your collection, there were so many elements that I interpreted as challenges to the colonial, so it's interesting to hear that that's the ethos of dub and of reggae. In particular, I was noticing the way that you centre Black women's experiences, the way that you ascribe power to Black women, as I wrote in my notes, "a woman whose tread was a thunderous buffalo." There's lots of imagery and stories of incredible power and sexuality, a strong and creative power to bring life into the world that you centre in a way that is really remarkable to me as somebody who is a white settler, who has never encountered dub poetry or your work before. I also wondered, in relation to vernacular language and themes, about the role of orality — especially because I was hearing your voice, performing, reciting, singing your dub poems.

AC: Oh, yes. A big part of dub poetry is this orality. Because, you know, all poetic forms, all global poetic forms, began with the word and began with song. Those are its roots. It's the orality. You're quite right that in Western literary culture it's all about the written word. And if it's not written down, then it's not poetry. But so many of us come from oral traditions, in my own case, like being born in rural Jamaica. My relatives, they all told stories, and so I see my poetry also as a form of storytelling. My grandmother told stories, my uncle, people are always telling all kinds of stories, whether they were full tales or horror stories, like ghost stories. My uncle, my father's brother, that was his thing. He loved telling ghost stories. Of course, we were all scared. And then when I moved to Kingston, living in an urban environment, there was just music everywhere; it

was a musical kind of culture — there were sound systems, there were dances, people would put up a big sound system at the street corner or in a park, and they would have dub to them and play music. So that's the context out of which I came. So, I think I had to be the way I am.

And then my mother has a very large extended family — she has seven sisters. So, you talk about the feminine element, I was also partially raised by my aunts; I just have all these women in my life, my mother's sisters. And they were like mothers to me. They embodied for me what I call an efficient womanhood. They were married, they all had children, they all had jobs, and they all were insistent on one thing. Their mantra when I was a little girl was that every woman should have a trade, every woman should have a profession. And they meant, do not depend on men. It could be anything. You could be a dressmaker or baker or cook, or an office worker or whatever. It's a whole ideology, I just hear the voice in my head, that every woman should have a trade; do not depend on men. And so for us, for my generation, my sibling's generation, it meant going beyond what they had attained educationally. All of them just went to grade 9 or so, and then they went out to learn a trade, which in my mother's case was dressmaking. One of my aunts who migrated to England, she was apprenticed in a household as an assistant domestic. She learned how to clean, she learned how to cook, she learned how to bake, she learned how to set a table, she could set a table. That was a skill, setting a table, knowing where certain forks should go on certain spoons and which dish holds the soup. So, my generation went beyond; they sent us. We finished high school, we went to university — and that was their dream. That's what I see every time I excel in something, or I accomplish something. It's almost like I'm living their dream because that's what they wanted for themselves but couldn't have; families were poor. In their time, you had to pay to go to high school. They just couldn't go. It was the African American poet Maya Angelou who said [in her poem "Still I Rise"], "I am the dream and the hope of the slave." And that's how I am with my parents, my aunts and uncles. I am their dream, and I am their hope. But now I can't cook like my mom. I think that's not good. I can't bake, I can't bake! I can't sew. I remember as an adult saying to my mom, "Mom, how come you didn't teach us to sew?" My mother made her own wedding dress, that's how much of a good seamstress she is.

JS: Wow — amazing!

AC: And she sewed for us when we were growing up. So, I said, "Well, I can't!" She said, "Oh, no, no, no, because I thought you guys were gonna go to school and get an office job." [Laughs] You know, she said, "No, you're not meant for

this, you're meant for higher things." In my mind, I'm thinking that seamstress is really a high thing. But it's the whole idea of working with pen and paper, working with the intellect, that they privileged; they thought of when you work with intellect, your rise in society, so they made sure we went to school, because they couldn't. All their stories, all their learning, all the teachings, it was amazing.

JS: That's another thing that I really enjoyed about your work and that I see as another challenge to the colonial. You tell the stories of women, but not just one woman, multiple women, from different points in history. You weave back and forth between your own experience in history, and then the contemporary moment. And also between what I'll call colonial histories and then the contemporary moment, the experience that Black women have now. It seems to me that in music, the social sciences, and in society in general that when a people group is othered, there's a real essentialization that occurs, something that you talked about with the erasure of Black experience in Canada. I think it was in relation to the stories that you've been telling and the research that you've done about slavery in the Canadian context. There are so many ways that you challenge the racial hierarchy, and centre Black experience, actually multiple Black experiences. Can you say something about how, as a teacher and scholar at a Canadian university, that commitment translates into your work with students?

AC: Yes, yes. The first thing is that I am patient with students. I teach at Dalhousie University, so it's a very white institution, whether it's the student body or the teaching body. So, when I say *patient*, I mean students are coming into my class not knowing anything about Black history, or very little. And so, I'm not saying, "Oh, my God, oh, oh, you're in your third year or fourth year. How come you don't know that?" — because I know the project is one of erasure, and hopefully one of my courses is a form of intervention. But some of them will finish university and not have any knowledge of Black history for the four years that they are on campus. They can study Canadian history, now there's a bit of a change, there's more attention paid to Indigenous history since the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission], and the whole Indigenizing of the academy, but still not as much as I think it should be. So, this is what I teach: courses on Black history, a women's history course, a civil rights course. So, everybody who comes into my class knows that that's what they're going to be exposed to.

I also used to teach a Canadian history survey, which is a good course to teach, because it can really be about diversity. It's an EDI [equity, diversity,

and inclusion] core course, it's a multiculturalism course, right? You know, traditionally, like when I did undergraduate work, the Canadian history survey began at first contact and went through different temporal periods which centre white people; it's really all white history. And then, you know, Indigenous nations may come into the story but only with respect to which European colonizing side they are aligned with. For example, like the Huron, who supported Champlain and the French, and the Five-Nation Confederacy (the Iroquois) who were aligned with the Dutch and later the English. So, it's basically white history writ large. But I liked doing the survey, because it gave me the opportunity to bring in as many voices as I can. And also to begin with the students where they are, where they were coming from.

So, I enjoy teaching. It's also hard, though. I've been reflecting lately on that because what I teach is hard stuff. Once I was so, if I may use the word, sad about what I teach, that I thought, well, I'm going to design a course on food. That's a fun course. Oh, it can be fun. We can talk about recipes, and so on and so forth. Because instead, I teach slavery, I teach civil rights, these are hard. These are topics that really reveal the hardships that Black people have gone through. And just the brutalization of their bodies. I look at the civil rights movement in both Canada and the United States. Two iconic figures of the American civil rights movement, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, they were shot dead, they were assassinated. It's pretty sad. You know, when Malcolm X was shot, his wife was pregnant and all his children were small. Martin Luther King left a baby. Those men didn't want to die, to leave their families, their children, you know. In Canada, in 1969 at what is now Concordia University, a group of black students were arrested and deported and jailed because they dared to say that racism existed at the school and demonstrated about it, so the university brought in the cops and brutalized the students. So, it's hard history. Sometimes I feel it in my body and I don't want to take that home. I don't want it to linger in my body. It's almost like at the end of every semester I have to detox or go for long walks.

JS: Right!

AC: Because I can't be detached from the subject matter. I really can't be detached from it. It's about me, it's about my life. It's about the community from which I come. So, I've been thinking about that — how to go on year after year doing this, as you mentioned at the beginning of our talk. And it's not something that's only in the past. You turn on the news every day and there's some other horror story. It's just constant, it's relentless. So, what do you do with that? Oh, how do you live? How do you live with your pedagogy?

JS: Well, I find it exhausting. But I'm white. It's not my ancestors' story or my everyday experience. The only way that I'm ever marginalized is because I'm female, and only in certain settings. So, I've been noticing the ways that I can just step out. I'm glad that you're thinking about caring for yourself and your soul and your body. I'm grateful to you for doing this work, and I can hear in what you're saying that you can't not do this work. It's part of who you are.

To change gears a little, I have been thinking about how, in the academy shaped by Western ideas, there's what I might call a "scientific" view of music, that somehow music can be value neutral, that can just be a phenomenon, instead of being *somebody's* music, or implying culture or power differentials. I feel that music is late coming to the table in being able to look at these sorts of issues and at the racialization and hierarchy that is part of what an anti-racist pedagogy would be responding to.

Another way that I feel like your work challenges a colonial worldview is that it isn't easily put into a box. We have a faculty of music in the academy, right? As though music is separate from movement, and language, and poetry, and history and all of those things. And your dub poetry can't be confined to the level of poetry, there's music, there's theatre, there's all of these other things. And I was thinking about that, in this Eurocentric mindset we live in, which is at the root of universities, there's this pretending that things are neutral, and they're just … they just *are*, instead of being social constructs. I guess the thing that I'm wrestling with, and I don't know if you have thoughts about this, but I'm wrestling for myself with what an anti-racist pedagogy might look like, in music, and in the humanities and social sciences. Is it content? Is it telling different stories in order to centre other peoples, or is it their actual ways of teaching? I'm not sure.

AC: When the new social history movement started, after the Second World War but certainly in the sixties, gathering momentum with the civil rights movement, people started to look at different topics, like Black history. It was about different storytelling, other stories, bringing them to the fore, and it saw the creation of Black studies departments, or Black studies programs from the sixties onward. It really was about that, bringing in different stories, bringing different epistemologies to the table.

Of course, there was and still is a big backlash against that. I was told by a white historian who did Black history that while he was doing his PhD thesis, his supervisor told him to turn in his thesis, and after that get back to doing "real" history. Well, thankfully, he continued doing Black history, but what he was doing wasn't seen as real history, it wasn't in national history. It wasn't the narrative that those in power wanted to hear or to be broadcast. So doing anti-

racist pedagogy, for me, means bringing different stories, and not just bringing them, but centring them. Certain stories need to be centred. The feminist historian Deborah King talks about pivoting the centre, so that different people can come at the centre in terms of teaching. In a circle, sometimes some people are at the edge, then they move to the centre, so that it doesn't have to be this one narrative all the time, at the centre: we can pivot the centre. So that's one way of thinking about it.

But it's not only having different stories or different epistemologies. We want to see the bodies in the classroom. As I said, I teach mainly white students, and I'm thinking, where are the Black kids? I drive up and down in Halifax or walk and I see a lot of the Black guys; they are doing road work. Nothing is wrong with doing roadwork. But I look at them — they're young, right? Maybe late teens or early twenties. They're on the road, doing construction, or many of them are in jail, too. So why are we not seeing them in the classroom? But you also need Black staff and Black faculty. Now I see some universities doing cluster hires for Black faculty, so that's one way to extend equity. What's tremendously important for me is the commitment on the side of the university, so that when this fad passes, or when people stop talking about EDI or DEI, that the commitment is still there to equity, to centre certain voices, to hire certain bodies, as faculty and staff and also in administration.

So, in music education, many music programs have a jazz program or a jazz course. Who is teaching that? I don't know, but I would suspect that a lot of the instructors are white. So, jazz has now become respectable. But is it taught as springing from a Black source? Everybody loves jazz, it's an international music, but are the Black roots of jazz talked about? So, it's about looking at the curriculum, too, Jody. What are we sending out our teachers to teach? We also like visual art, painting. We talk a lot about the European masters; do we talk about how African artistic traditions have also influenced European art? I'm thinking of someone like Picasso, about cubism, and so on. Is that taught in art academies? When I look at it through an equity lens, we have to bring all the various forms of music to the table, not just bring them to the table, but ensure that the students that we're training can teach this when they go to the classroom, can save lives through music when they go to the classroom, as opposed to always teaching Bach and Vivaldi and Mozart. Nothing's wrong with those people but teach others. Teach the other stuff, teach other cultures.

JS: The hierarchy is really present. I had the opportunity recently to co-teach a course about cultural perspectives for future music educators with a local Indigenous powwow singer. And as we were preparing to teach together, I got the impression that he felt insecure, musically speaking, maybe because he couldn't

read Western music notation. But I can't do what he does. Experiences like that connect for me with what you're saying, and with this idea of hierarchy. And I'm also noticing how we tell the European hero stories, but in isolation from the historical things that were going on in the moment. If we look at the times of composers like those you mentioned, at what was going on in the world, at colonization, at other places outside of Europe, those beautiful cathedrals that students in Canadian universities might get to sing in on a tour of Europe, the gold that paid for them came from somewhere — it was *taken* from somewhere, often through the unpaid labour of Black or Indigenous bodies. That's the way I've been thinking about an anti-racist pedagogy for myself — connecting all of those dots, helping students to see the context around music or art.

AC: I absolutely agree with you. It makes me think of the art of the Dutch Golden Age, of Rembrandt — so many magnificent paintings. But the Dutch Golden Age came about because of the colonizers. The Netherlands reigned supreme on the ocean for a while. They were expert businessmen and investors. They were huge slave traders. They ran the slave trade, and all that money poured into Amsterdam and Rotterdam. They could hire all these painters, and had beautiful art created. In Amsterdam, you see Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* in all its glory — beautiful. It's just there and you make a beeline for it because it dominates the wall. Slave trade, slave trade. They don't tell that story. I know that story.

JS: One of the things that I found really challenging about reading your poetry — and I hope this makes you smile — is that you access a different axiology and a different mythology. The story of the world that we're told in the West starts with the Greeks and the Romans. And so, we know the stories, and we see that in music: the operas are about the Greek gods and goddesses. And so that's the mythology we know. And it's the only mythology that we know. So then, you make reference to all sorts of African mythologies, so I spent a lot of time online looking things up, trying to understand the images and references. I'm grateful for that because I actually want different worldviews. I'm noticing the ways that I only have one way to frame things.

So, you mentioned jazz. The university where I work has both a classical stream and a jazz stream. And I've been thinking about this in relation to our program and music in general. Black cultural productions just get subsumed in music. So, it wouldn't be surprising to be flipping through a book and see an African American spiritual called an American folk song, or to say, jazz is American music, or the blues is American music — even though almost

every popular music in the West comes from Africa and people of the African diaspora. I guess that's the classic example of cultural appropriation and music.

AC: Appropriation and then erasing Black people and culture. An erasure, yes. Thank you for that. The Black roots. African American singer Erykah Badu said, "They want Black music but they don't want Black people."

JS: "They want Black music and they don't want Black people." I love it. Wow, that's a really insightful comment.

There's been enormous controversy in the education system in the United States with the attack on critical race theory, as the white nationalist movement objects to certain stories being told or to new perspectives, or even new analytical tools.

AC: I don't think they know what critical race theory is, because nobody's teaching it to a grade 7 class. Be that as it may, we know what they're talking about. We get the point. There are some schools where they ban the teacher, some states, where they banned the teaching of slavery. There was a textbook that had more words on Harriet Tubman than Andrew Jackson, and they found that problematic. How can she have more words written about her than a president? But in some school districts, you can't teach slavery, you can't teach any kind of novel that deals with racism, because of white fragility, because parents worry that their kids are going to feel embarrassed and ashamed and guilty. So, you can't teach it. That's the reason they give.

JS: In my own experience, both teaching and also just as a white person, when you start to see the systems and the inequities, you do have some negative feelings, as one should. It's just that the lack of ability to stay with that discomfort, that's a huge problem.

AC: It is huge. And, you know, we say we're in 2022. That is frightening. I mean, Black people have been uncomfortable. So (white people are) saying they're uncomfortable with critical race theory, right? Well, Black people have been uncomfortable for centuries, we've been born in the discomfort. And we're asking white people to be uncomfortable for maybe two weeks out of the academic year. But it's more than that. The vision of the country is being splintered in a way that they don't want it to be. So, it's about holding on to their power and making the lives of teachers and educators and parents and even children very uncomfortable if they engage in a more inclusive pedagogy. So, it is scary. It's like someone saying to me, "Don't you dare! — we like our

country the way it is. We don't want you to comment or spout off. Even if it's true, we don't want to hear it."

You know, a friend of mine taught the Western Civ course at a university. Every history department for some reason back then seemed to think that they should have a Western Civ course, it was standard fare, like the Canadian survey core. So, she taught Western Civ in a way in an anticolonial way. So, with Columbus running out there, or Samuel de Champlain or Napoleon or whomever, with whichever one of those white heroes, she talked about colonialism, the conquest of Mexico, slavery. So, she was threatened by three male students who said, we pay money, we pay good money. We don't want to hear that shit. That's not what we paid for. And her chair didn't support her. She was on mental health leave for an entire semester, because those boys threatened her and her chair said something like, "well, maybe you shouldn't teach those things." She was a white woman.

JS: Again, that's something that I appreciated about your book: it's the story of women. And I'm noticing how part of the system of Western white supremacy is to centre, well, dead white guys, frankly. And we do it in music, too: Beethoven was a genius. Men, male experience, and male history constitutes history as a discipline — the wars and the generals instead of people's cultures and experiences and families.

AC: The cultures that were destroyed; they don't want to hear it. I had a similar experience when I taught Caribbean history at Rice University. It was a big, elective survey course open to everybody, from every discipline. After about the third or fourth class, some students came up to me, all male engineering students. They said, "this course seems like it's going to be hard. We have to take an elective as engineers, but this one looks like it's gonna be hard." So, I said, I don't know about hard, but you have to work. You have to read the books, you have to read the text, you have to write your research essay. "But when we saw it was Caribbean history, we thought it would be easy." I kid you not. They thought I'd be talking more about Calypso, and you know, the reggae and the Caribbean that they see on TV.

JS: Right, right. Sun, sand, sex, perhaps? Music, no problem. Have some rum.

AC: That's how it is on the commercials: a man bringing glasses of rum to some white couple sitting there. Usually a Black waiter. They weren't rude, but I thought, I'm glad you guys told me this. I imagined them: what's she doing, she's talking about real stuff. And, you know, we have to read the Holy

Scriptures about slavery. So, it's hard. We thought it would be about music, dancing.

JS: Yeah, I can hear what they're saying. It's the colonial narrative of the "happy Black person" that was used to justify slavery in the blackface performances in the United States and maybe other places.

AC: Yeah, so is it serious? They're [i.e., Black people] not serious thinkers. It's not a serious culture then let's learn to dance and have fun, drink up the rum, man [laughs].

JS: I admit that I don't know a lot about the musical practice, but I love introducing students who are going to be music teachers to steel pans. The story of how steel pan music came to be in Trinidad and Tobago, where the colonizers forbade the former slaves in the colony to play African percussion instruments so they created instruments from bamboo, frying pans, brake drums, and eventually the lids of steel drums. And the innovation and the resilience and the resistance involved in this musical practice, that's a story that I want them to think about for sure.

AC: That's fantastic. Because, whoa, talk about resistance.

JS: So, thank you. This has been an amazing opportunity. I'm grateful to have been able to spend an hour with you.

AC: I think I should read a poem.

JS: I would love that.

AC: Just a short one. This one is called "Congo Songs." It's the last poem in my book *Black Matters*. So, the Congo, you know, is in the middle of Africa. There's the Democratic Republic of Congo, (DRC). And there were two other Congos. But when I think of Congo, it's just a central part of Africa. Because all the cutting up and renaming, one is French, one is Belgian — the whole colonial thing. But a lot of people from Congo also went to Jamaica and the Caribbean as enslaved people. On my mother's side, I have that genealogy. But also think of the current DRC, which was formerly called Zaire, which is probably the richest country on the planet and also the poorest. One of the poorest, and Western nations just go there and dig it out, including Canada. There are children working in the mines. Congo seems to have been at war for

the past thirty or forty years, but the mines still operate, the planes still come and take all the uranium and what have you. But here is the poem:

We're gonna sing Congo songs
inna Babylon this morning

Congo songs
Congo songs

And they won't be songs of grief and exile
won't be songs of pain and sorrow
Congo songs

Congo songs inna Babylon this morning
Congo songs

They won't be songs of trouble and trial
Congo songs
won't be songs of heartbreak and misery
Congo songs
But songs of joy and laughter
Congo songs
songs of strength and sunshine
Congo songs

Songs of children bawning
Congo songs
songs of mother's birthing
Congo songs

Songs of grandmothers living
and of fathers breathing
Congo songs

No more songs of agony and anguish
No more songs of war and calamity

We gonna sing Congo songs

Songs of brothers striding
songs of sisters striving
songs of grandfathers dancing

We gonna sing Congo songs

No more songs of children dying
but of the song arising
Congo songs

Songs of the certainty of us living
songs of certainty of us living
songs of mothers birthing
songs of children singing

We gonna sing Congo songs
inna Babylon this morning
Congo songs
Congo songs (Cooper 2020)

JS: Oh, thank you. Amazing. Thank you.

AC: You're welcome, Jody. This is for when I say my teaching the content, it's so hard. So, it's no, no more hard. This is gonna be joy and triumph. Grandfathers dancing, telling us to praise.

JS: I love it. You know, I wanted to share this. In your poem, "Woman a Wail," I was thinking of you. You write:

What shall she bring forth from her travail?
A new way of thinking
A new way of living
A new way of understanding
A new way fi see tings
A new way fi do tings
And a new new new creation

And I think, Afua, that's what you're doing in the world, and I'm grateful for your work. Thank you for who you are.

AC: Thank you! I love that.

JS: Well, thank you. Thank you so much for spending this time with me. I'm grateful and honoured.

AC: Likewise, Jody, it was my pleasure.

Reference

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