



Decolonising the Voice 1: Diasporic Voices

[00:00:20] INSTRUCTIONS TO BEGIN

Jane Boston: I'd like to take you through a few instructions for getting the best out of the podcast workshop. I invite you to find a specific notebook and a pen, in which to note down your reflections as you listen. Make sure the notebook and pen are within easy reach at all times.

Ensure that you find a comfortable seated position, with your feet on the ground, where you can experience a free exchange of breath – the incoming and outgoing breath – felt without effort. See if you can find pleasure in the process of breathing simply and deeply. Notice the sensation of your feet on the ground and your sit bones on the chair as they both provide you with the stability of groundedness. If you lose focus at any point, simply take your attention back to the breath and return to the broadcast.

Deelee Dubé: The music you are about to hear is a track titled 'California Dreamin', which was originally performed by the vocal group The Mamas & the Papas. It is taken from my album *The Blue Bird Sings*, which was recorded and digitally released in 2013. I've chosen this track to help you begin to enter into a relaxed and reflective state of mind in order to better access memory, set the mood and association as the workshop proceeds.

[00:02:04 to 00:04:37] 'California Dreamin' (2013) from *The Blue Bird Sings* by Deelee Dubé

[00:04:40] WRITING EXERCISE

Deelee Dubé: Welcome to this first part of the sonic podcast series, 'Diasporic Voices'.

This a writing exercise for your reflective journal.

Firstly, make yourself comfortable and write down all the voices you have grown up listening to that are closest to you. Think about each one and assign a colour and shape on page one of your reflective journal. Note down what stands out about the tone, the rhythm, the pace and the accent.

For example, in my own case, my mother's voice is the colour yellow. Her diction, phrasing, vernacular and dialect are all accented by South African and Zimbabwean English sounds that include the Multi-cultural English (MLE) and non-RP sounds. The quality, timbre, texture, and tone of her voice are all fairly high and light, gentle and slightly animated and reassuring, warm, vibrant, clear, with a consistent spoken pace, which is sometimes upbeat in rhythm (depending on her mood), but mainly calm and collected.

The common thread that I have managed to detect in my relatives' spoken voice is of a certain vocal quality that is imbued with warmth and resonance – a roundedness that is sonically quite familiar and immediately recognisable to me. The identifiable vocal tradition and sonic distinctions pertain to a certain type of texture that I would describe as warm, resounding and authoritative (with or without an accent).

Enjoy creating a vocal profile and list of the voices that have most influenced you in your immediate surroundings. Write down the answers to the following questions, and do take your time to return to your answers at any point as you begin to reflect more deeply:



1. Who are your chosen voices and what is your connection to them?
2. Are the voices mentioned heard in public, or are they more often heard in private?
3. Can you describe an identifiable vocal tradition in your background? Are you able to describe its sonic distinctions at all?

Think about features, voice qualities, rhythms, cadences; and allow yourself to reflect.

Thanks for writing down your thoughts.

Next up, we have another listening exercise called 'The Windrush Generation'.

[00:08:15] LISTENING EXERCISE – The Windrush Generation

[00:08:22 to 00:10:20] Extract from *Small Island* (2004), spoken by Angela Wynter

'Oh Hortense, when I am older...' all her dreaming began with 'when I am older' '...when I am older, Hortense, I will be leaving Jamaica and I will be going to live in England.' This is when her voice became high-class and her nose point into the air – well, as far as her round flat nose could – and she swayed as she brought the picture to her mind's eye. 'Hortense, in England I will have a big house with a bell at the front door and I will ring the bell.' And she made the sound, ding-a-ling, ding-a-ling. 'I will ring the bell in this house when I am in England. This is what will happen to me when I am older.'

I said nothing at the time. I just nodded and said, 'You surely will, Celia Langley you surely will.' I did not dare dream that it would one day be I who would go to England. It would one day be I who would sail on a ship as big as a world and feel the sun's heat on my face gradually change from roasting to caressing. But there was !! Standing at the door of a house in London and ringing the bell. Pushing my finger to hear the ding-a-ling, ding-a-ling. Oh, Celia Langley, where were you then with your big ideas and your nose in the air?

(Levy 2004:11-12)

[00:10:27] Jane Boston: Think about some of the ways in which the characters you've just heard from speak to feelings of anticipation about arrival in the UK. It was a time when, between 1948 and 1970, over half a million Caribbean people were invited to emigrate only to find a racist and unwelcoming country.

Write down any of your impressions/thoughts/feelings about the experience of listening to those words.

Clips Summary

[00:02:04 to 00:04:37] 'California Dreamin' (2013) from *The Blue Bird Sings* by Deelee Dubé

[00:08:22 to 00:10:20] Extract from *Small Island* (2004), spoken by Angela Wynter

Works Cited



Dubé, Deelee (2013) *The Blue Bird Sings*, <https://deeleedube.bandcamp.com/album/the-blue-bird-sings>.

Levy, Andrea (2004) *Small Island*, London: Headline Books.

Notes

1. ‘California Dreamin’ is a song originally written by John Phillips and Michelle Phillips and was first recorded by Barry McGuire. However, the best-known version is by the Mamas and the Papas, who sang backup on the original version and released it as a single in 1965. Originally from the Album: *If You Can Believe Your Eyes and Ears*, by the Mama & The Papas. Recorded: November 4, 1965, Western Records, Hollywood on Dunhill Records Released: December 8, 1965.
2. Thanks to Hazel Holder for the introduction to Angela Wynter.

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