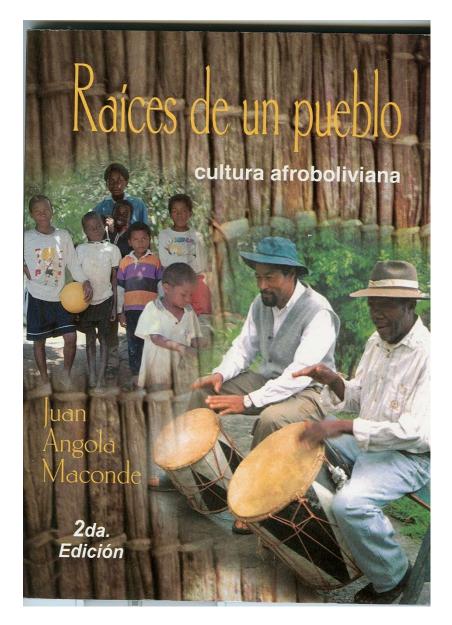
## How I "discovered" Afro-Bolivian (Afro-Yungueño) Spanish

As with some other projects, this venture began with a chance bibliographic encounter. For many years I had known that there were Afro-descendent peope in highland Bolivia, who lived alongside the Aymara and may have adopted some of their culture, but I had no specific information. During many lectures on Afro-Hispanic language I delivered at universities in the U.S., Spain, and Latin America, I always included Bolivia in the list of places that should be checked out, but no one ever followed up on this suggestion. In my spare time (in short supply during my stint as department head at Penn State), I looked for readings on Afro-Hispanic culture and language; before the Library of Congress' WorldCat database, I was using the RLIN (research library information network) account that I had requested, and through inter-library loan I received the book *Raíces de un pueblo: cultura afroboliviana* by Juan Angola Maconde.



Although the book jacket carried a photo of the author together with the indication that he was an economist, I assumed that Angola and Maconde were "neo-African" names artificially adopted by the author as an activist affirmation. The book contained a glossary of terms, many of which were of Aymara origin, others from vernacular or archaic Spanish. But what really set me on a new path was a single sentence in the introduction, purportedly representing Afro-Bolivian speech (p. 14):

#### Hasta que día nojotro va ta in fiesta, eje día que yo mia dició, yo no fue jai. Quilaya pue tia ta, andi pue ote va anda, ote va vini o no. Ote wuawuay quien pue, di tia pituca, ¿lu juamía Flore?

Wow!! Two examples of non-agreeing verbs (*nojotro va* and *yo no fue*), a non-agreeing determiner (*lu juamía*), and an archaic form *quilaya* 'why,' also found in Philippine Creole Spanish (Chabacano). These traits were documented for creole languages such as Papiamientu, Palenquero, and Chabacano, as well as for second-language spoken during colonial Spanish America times (*habla bozal*), and for the Afro-Brazilian community of Helvècia, but never for native Spanish speakers. I wanted to contact the author, but this was before the days of Google and other internet search engines (2002-2003), and I could not find any mention of the author in my rudimentary searches. The book had been co-published by the Spanish embassy in La Paz and I wrote to the embassy in hopes of getting a contact for the author, but I never received a reply. Several months later, still poking around, I came across a mention of an international event (I think sponsored by a United Nations agency), in which Juan Angola Maconde had participated. Digging a little further, I found an email address presumably belonging to him, so I wrote a long detailed email introducing myself and my research and hoping to make contact with the Afro-Bolivian communities. As with the Spanish embassy, no reply (ironically, the name of a lovely Beatles song).

Then, miraculously one day, I received an encouraging email reply from Juan! It turns out that he was living in his remote rural community of Dorado Chico with no electricity and could only access email during his occasional trips to La Paz, when he would go to an internet cafe. I asked him if people in his community actually spoke that way (I had seen literary imitations of vernacular speech that were wildly exaggerated), and he said yes. Then I asked if I managed to visit, would he take me to the communities; he also answered yes. In the meantime I contacted my friend Marvin Lewis at the University of Missouri, founder of the *Afro-Hispanic Review* and an expert on Afro-Latin American culture. He had met Juan and assured me that Juan was the real deal. My next step was getting myself to Bolivia on some official mission. I had been invited to teach a seminar at the San Marcos university in Lima, Peru in (our) summer of 2004, so I contacted José Mendoza, the one Bolivian colleague I knew from previous conference encounters, and he invited me to teach a seminar at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz. I then purchased a round trip plane ticket Lima-La Paz, and started preparing for what would be the beginning of a marvelous adventure and a lasting friendship. The La Paz airport is located in El Alto, on the rim of the valley in which La Paz is situated. The altitude is so high that the pilots have to turn off the automatic oxygen mask mechanism that deploys when the plane loses cabin pressure (to wit the demonstrations at the beginning of all flights), because the masks would come out when the plane was on the ground! I had spent time in highland Ecuador, but La Paz was even higher, and although I didn't have any altitude sickness I could definitely feel the difference. I called Juan from my hotel and he agreed to come and meet me, to organize our first trip to the Yungas. When he finally arrived at the hotel he was suprised to see a white person (he had assumed I was of the same ethnicity as Marvin Lewis and anthropologist Sheila Walker, who had also visited), but we became instant friends. Juan and I were both born in 1950 (he a few months before me), and his rural background was very much like that of my (maternal) grandmother, a Polish immigrant. And yes, Angola and Maconde were legitimate Afro-Bolivian surnames.



On our first trip, we traveled from La Paz to Coroico (No Yungas) in a tiny van along the infamous *carretera de la muerte* 'death highway,' a slippery one-lane dirt and gravel road with no guard rails, carved out along steep mountainsides. There were only a few places wide enough for a vehicle going in each direction, so several times our van had to backtrack to one of these spots in order to get past an oncoming truck. To make matters worse on several curves water poured down the mountain in miniature waterfalls, make the rocks and mud even more slippery. I sat by the window on the left side, and frequently looking down all I saw was clouds. In all but my last trip to Nor Yungas I traveled along this road (there are horrific videos on YouTube of fatal accidents when cars and buses fell off the mountain into the deep valleys below). More recently, there is a decent highway that bypasses this death trap, but the dangerous passage partially explains why Afro-Bolivian culture and language were isolated and unknown for so long.





In Coroico we were to stay in a working-class hostel, with bare rooms containing only a cot, and communal bathrooms with ice-cold showers. After leaving our gear in the hostel we took a local bus to the small town of Arapata, then from the outskirts of town took a long walk up a hill to the tiny community of Dorado Chico, Juan's birthplace and home.



There was no village structure, but rather scattered houses, since the residents occupied the land of a former hacienda that was dismantled during the agrarian reform of the 1950's.



In Dorado Chico I met and interviewed Juan's sister and other relatives, as well as other community members, all of whom exhibited at least some of the morphosyntactic traits from Juan's first book and that had prompted me to start this venture.

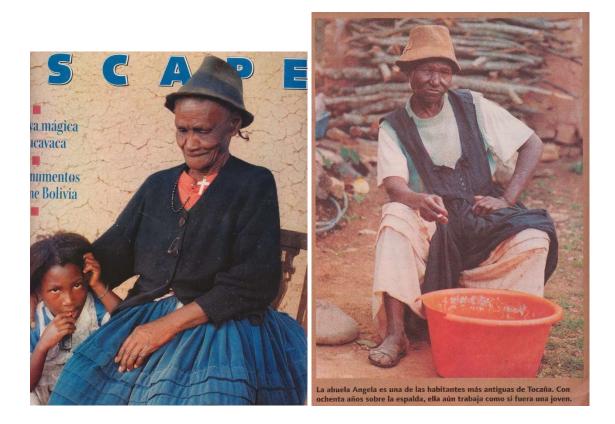


On the way back to Coroico, we ran into Carlos Pinedo (b. 1930) from the hamlet of Chijchipa. I recorded an impromptu conversation while we standing on a road outside of town, then again in several indoor settings. Carlos' speech was much more morphosyntactically restructured than anything I had heard from Juan and his relatives, and I wanted to find more examples. After

interviewing a couple other folks from that area in Coroico, on another trip we went to Tocaña, on the top of a steep hill, for more interviews.

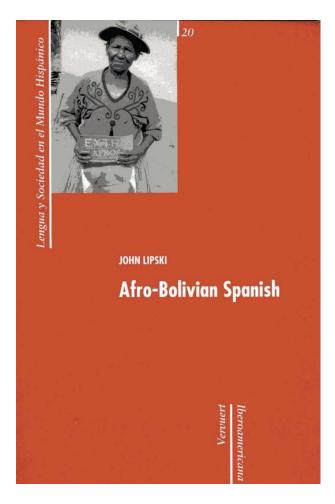


Among other interviewees we met Awicha ('grandma') Angélica Pinedo (b. 1920), an elderly *curandera* who confessed to us that she was weary but had to keep up her practice in order to survive. Shortly thereafter an interview with her appeared in the Sunday supplement of a chain of Bolivian newspapers. The article made no mention of poverty but rather described her as a carefree Black woman who just loved to help people. I told Juan that I was sure that she didn't even know that she had appeared in newspapers all around the country, much less without any compensation. We went to a newspaper office in La Pazz where they were about to discard the leftover supplements, and I bought several. On our next trip to Tocaña I gave her a copy of the paper, much to her surprise (I was right, *los desgraciados* hadn't bothered to return the favor).





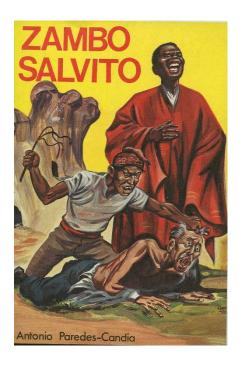
I eventually put this picture on the cover of my monograph, since it succinctly summarizes the plight of the "invisible" Afro-Bolivians.



Despite frequent assertions that there are no Afro-descendents in Bolivia, tourist postcards in La Paz tell a different story:



And the "Zambo Salvito" story is still around (Bolivia's racist parody version of "Little Black Sambo")



We also met Pedro Rey, an effectively homeless man who survived through the kindness of community members. Reporters dressed him up in a colorful garb (not his own despite the caption), and again described him with the usual euphemistic stereotypes.



lado asoma a los ojos de este anciano cuando recuerda a sus hijos, que lo abandonaron en Mururata al enviudar hace cinco años. Desempolvó su viejo traje de saya, agradeció las fotografías y pidió que no se olviden de él. Eventually we ended up staying in a house in Mururata, just up the road from Chijchipa, and owned by the marvelous couple Ramón Barra and Antonia Pinedo (who were house-sitting for an affluent family down the road).



Over the period of many days they gave me a wealth of data on the most traditional Afro-Bolivian speech, and Antonia even wrote me a spontaneous note in the dialect.

Nota: loba saso m no cliq Hagpe any no lig dipidio im ien yo insing a noke yopasa ja 140 ne allion eno est to naprendia nobre aura as meter burg la Jai ing bl Saben igana gue & CL.71746038 Intoniat shiedo mururato 23 de agosto de 2006

In Mururata we also met Julio Pinedo, descendent of the last Afro-Yungueño "king" Bonifacio and owner of a small convenience store. At the time he seemed ashamed of this legacy, but later he proudly acknowledged his heritage.

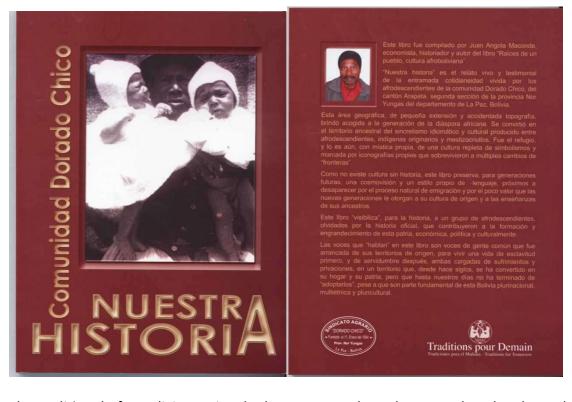


FAMILIA REAL. La reina Angélica , el rey Julio Pinedo y el sucesor, Rolando, su sobrino.





During this time period, Juan Angola wrote a second book, containing interviews with community members. By this time he fully recognized the significance of the traditional Afro-Bolivian dialect, and decided to keep all the transcriptions in the original vernacular, and asked me to write a preface.



The traditional Afro-Bolivian variety had no name, and speakers were largely ashamed of recalling the days before they were *civilizado* 'civilized,' meaning before the agrarian reform and the opportunity to attend school. To elicit the vernacular, Juan would say *nuestra manera tradicional de hablar* 'our traditional way of speaking,' which was still met with some reticence until I was able to imitate enough of the dialect myself. The novelty of this Gringo speaking in this obcure in-group manner was enough to get our participants to loosen up. In my first publications in Spanish, in addition to the generic term *afroboliviano* I "invented" the term *afroyungueño* to pinpoint this traditional speech form.

In working with Juan to increase awareness of the traditional speech, I put together a brief pdf pamphlet presenting the dialect and a basic grammatical description with examples.

# Nojotro habla así

# El habla tradicional Afro-Yungueña



The contents of this pamphlet appeared in several iterations of Juan's website, and today can be found (unacknowledged) on some Afro-Bolivian sites and YouTube videos.

# PAGINA DE JUAN ANGOLA MACC

## **OPINIÓN**

Soy Afrodescendiente ¿Dónde está mi pueblo? En la chacra de la <u>Constituyente</u> Por las rutas de la historia <u>El escamoteo de la identidad</u> <u>Un antes y un después del</u> <u>"ritmo negro"</u> <u>Cabildeando con los</u> <u>constituyentes</u> <u>Desde la trinchera de la</u> <u>historia</u> <u>¿Otro gueto?</u> La saya es ¿afro aymara?



**EL LENGUAJE** 

Nojotro habla así <u>A modo de introducción</u> <u>La importancia de una lengua</u> <u>Nuestro dialecto</u> <u>Gramática</u> <u>El nombre</u> <u>Frases útiles</u> <u>Poemas</u> <u>Poemas</u> <u>Poemas desde la piel negra</u> <u>Los Yungas con aire africano</u>

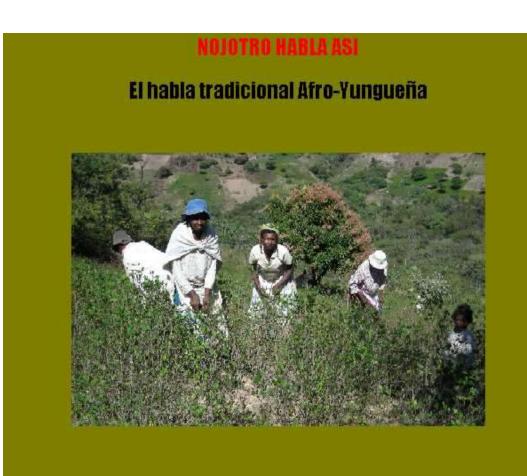
### JUAN ANGOLA MACONDE

BIOGRAFÍA

<u>RESEÑA</u> HISTÓRICA

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

NUESTRA REALIDAD



VOLVER AL INICIO

#### **EL LENGUAJE**

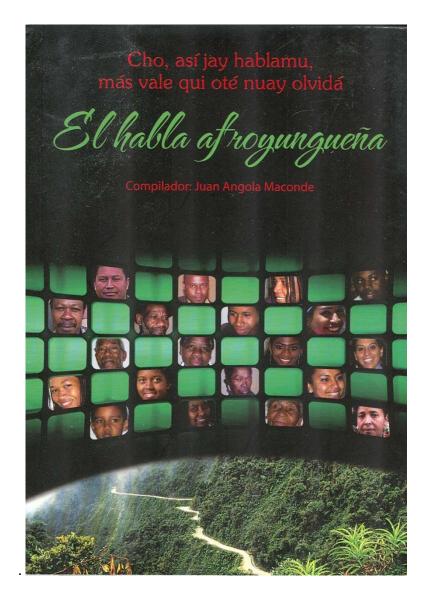


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VOLVER AL INICIO



Juan subsequently adopted the term in his excellent dictionary (also with a preface by me), and the same word now appears in several Afro-Bolivian activist web sites and YouTube videos, almost certainly with no knowledge of how this word came about.



After two years of intense fieldwork, and constant collaboration with Juan Angola, I was able to synthesize the basic facts regarding traditional Afro-Yungueño speech. I am pleased to see that Afro-Bolivian language is now the subject of research by other scholars, and is acknowledged by many Afro-Bolivian activist movements.



EL HABLA AFROBOLIVIANO: Martin Miguel Ballivian



EPISODIO 9 PODCAST: LENGUA O DIALECTO? HABLEMOS DEL HABLA AFROBOLIVIANO PUBLISHED ON March 7, 2017





Cimarronas, Asociación de Mujeres Afrobolivianas March 11 · 🕲

"Chu lu juamía, mentaremoince in lengua"

Cuando hablo en lengua Afroboliviana ratifico el orgullo por mi esencia, por los saberes de mis ancestras y ancestros, en este censo 2024 responde con orgullo, por nuestros antepasados, por nuestra historia, por nuestras luchas y resilencias, SOY AFROBOLIVIANA / SOY AFROBOLIVIANO y tengo una lengua nativa.

#CimarronasAfrobolivianas #Censo2024 #SoyAfroboliviana #SoyAfroboloviano



### Afrobolivianos, una historia de resistencia en la Bolivia Plurinacional

Lidia Iris Rodríguez Rodríguez

#### [...]

#### Desde lo lingüístico

La investigación titulada "El habla afroboliviana en el contexto de la "reafricanización" (2008), de John M. Lipski, investigador de Pennsylvania State University, se enfocó en el "afroyungueño", con el objetivo de reconocer elementos de reafricanización a través del lenguaje. El autor refiere que el afroyungueño presenta características del habla de una segunda lengua, es decir, lapsos de concordancia, léxico limitado, modificaciones fonéticas de acuerdo a las lenguas de base y morfosintaxis simplificada. En cuestiones regionales encuentra que a los africanos hablantes de español se les reconocía bajo el concepto "bozal", el cual tiene una connotación peyorativa. En la misma línea, refiere que es posible que el español pidginizado de los bozales se haya convertido en lengua criolla, similar al que se identifica como "Palenquero" del Palenque de San Basilio, Colombia y el "Papiamento" de Curazao y Aruba. El matiz lingüístico apunta a

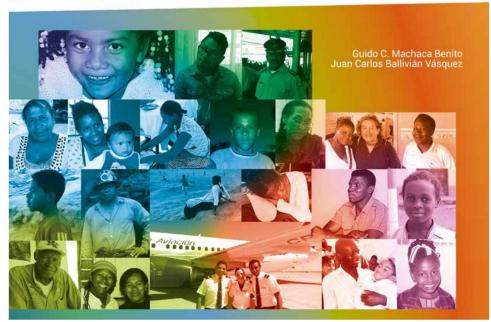


identificar elementos que denotan la incursión de esta población en la reproducción de sistemas lingüísticos ajenos y su acoplamiento que con el transcurrir de los años derivó en formas particulares de la lengua española adoptando singularidades lingüísticas africanas que ahora son identificables en las regiones habitadas por población afrodescendiente. Sumado al estudio antropogénetico, se encuentra que ambas investigaciones coinciden en identificar elementos compartidos con otras poblaciones afrodescendientes en América Latina.

# El Pueblo Afrodescendiente en Bolivia

De la clandestinidad a la visibilidad protagónica

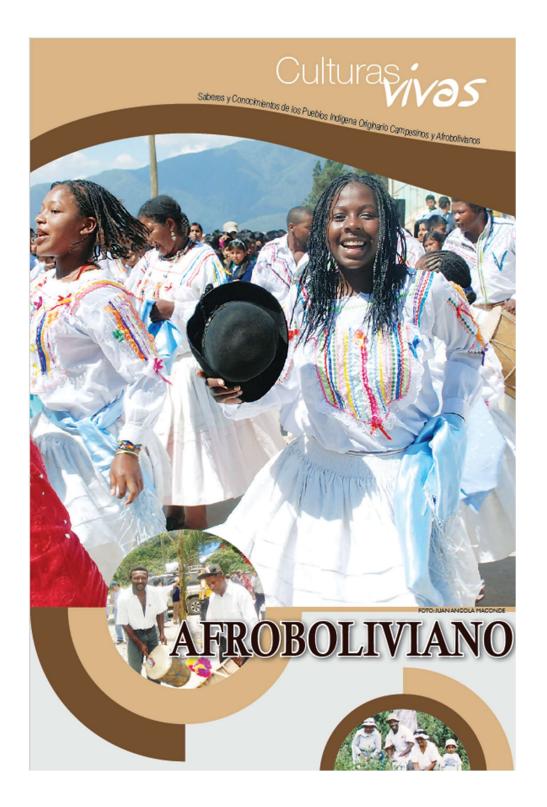
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[...]



Es menester señalar que, dado el proceso de empoderamiento político y étnico por el que atraviesan, los árodescendientes bolivianos entre sus propuestas políticas posesionaron la reivindicación de una lengua propia que, en rigor, se trata de una lengua criolla o, como denomina el investigador Juan Angola (2012: 18), el habla afroyungueña que tiene fusiones de lenguas africanas, el quechua andino, el castellano y el aimara de los yungas. Es un lenguaje tradicional muy distinto al castellano boliviano actual; se encuentra en los municipios de fuerte afrodescendencia (Coripata y Coroico); actualmente sólo se habla entre algunas personas mayores, pero antes de 1952 era la lengua nativa de amplios sectores de la población afroboliviana de Nor Yungas; y tiene diferencias de índole fonética (pronunciación), de morfosintaxis (gramática) y de léxico (vocabulario) con relación al castellano andino y paceño (Lipski 2012: 9).



#### HABLA AFRO BOLIVIANO ACTUAL EN LOS YUNGAS DE LA PAZ

Hasti gacorá bien ese oya, Nuasti yi a raspá cun cuchiyu, Al kisturá luasti aujeriá. Diay nuay habé oya pa Wakichá lu chairu. Ay ampe, alcabu yo olvido cotencia Quepechau chalona andi awicha Berta. Yo taba sentau jancunaki in ese kuchu, Yo salió jay caugau di awayu numá, Cho, volveré rápidu, No mi luandi yi a chawirá. Cho, hoy día wa caina in casa Ten qui hacé checacaha, Diay wa se khawirá unos hoja Pa gepechá esus naranja qui Ta bien khawicha.

Vas a frotar bien esa olla, No vas a raspar con el cuchillo Al hurgar lo vas agujerear. Luego no habrá olla para Preparar el chairo. Ah!, olvidé mi mantel atado chalona donde la abuela Berta. Estuve tranquilo sentada en ese rincón Me salí cargado de aguayo Oye, volveré rápido, No me lo vayan a hurgar. Oye, hoy voy a guedarme en casa Debo hacer mi fogón. Luego haré calentar unas hojas Para envolver esas naranjas que Están bien suaves.



## Más de 500 palabras serán la base de la lengua afroboliviana

El Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Afroboliviano fue inaugurado ayer en Tocaña, Nor Yungas de La Paz, para posesionar su lengua, pero académicos aseguraron que no es un idioma sino un dialecto.



SOCIAL	Tweets sobre "@ErbolDigital"
Es una mezcla de dialectos	
Lengua afroboliviana está en proceso de reconstrucción	
Foto tomada de Blogspot.	
5856 lecturas	
Viernes, 6 Enero, 2017 - 11:31 "La lengua afroboliviana es una lengua que en este momento se encuentra en un proceso de reconstrucción, revitalización", dijo Bianca Vargas, técnica del Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Afroboliviana "Andaveris-Pinedo-Barra".	

## ejv!

# Más de 500 palabras serán la base de la lengua afroboliviana

Vida

08/09/2013



El Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Afroboliviano fue inaugurado ayer en Tocaña, Nor Yungas de La Paz, para posesionar su lengua, pero académicos aseguraron que no es un idioma sino un dialecto.

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