

CHAPTER 15.

LETTERS ON MOVING FROM ALLY
TO ACCOMPLICE: ANTI-RACISM
AND THE TEACHING OF WRITING

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In this epistolary chapter, based on our 2018 keynote address at the International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference, we name and challenge linguistic supremacy and its fundamental relationship to white supremacy and racism. We argue that teachers of writing across the disciplines should learn about code meshing: the practice of braiding or blending languages, discourses, and rhetorical traditions within a single text—particularly those historically marginalized or excluded languages, discourses, and rhetorical traditions such as African American and Chicana/x Englishes. We argue that code meshing should not only be recognized as a legitimate writing practice, but also that it should be taught across the curriculum and in every discipline.

To begin, we would like to make the following territorial acknowledgment:¹ This address was first delivered at the International Writing Across the Curriculum conference, which convened in Auburn, Alabama on the traditional territory of the Chickasaw and Creek peoples, many of whom were forced from their lands

1 A territorial or land acknowledgment is an open recognition of the importance of the relationships between Indigenous peoples and their lands. Such an acknowledgment is aimed at foregrounding histories of these relationships that have long been denied or suppressed. A territorial acknowledgment recognizes the Indigenous peoples who continue to live in the spaces that non-Indigenous peoples have taken and now occupy and invites us to reflect carefully and critically on our own relationship to colonialism, imperialism, and their aftermaths. For more information about territorial acknowledgments, please see <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/> and <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/indigenous-land-acknowledgement-explained?verso=true>.

in the 1830s during the Trail of Tears. Those who survived the journey were relocated in what is now Oklahoma. The traditional languages of the Indigenous peoples of Alabama were Muscogee, Mvskoke, and Hitchiti-Mikasuki.

Together we have worked hard to nurture a relationship built on respect, friendship, reciprocal mentoring, and a real desire to see each other be well and do better. We have tried, in other words, not merely to be allies to one another—providing safe(r) spaces for one another—but also to do the work associated with acting as what Neisha-Anne has termed, an accomplice (2018, p. 29). We have tried—are trying—to actively stand with and for one another, to name, interrogate, and intervene in racism as compatriots, co-conspirators, friends not merely in name but in what we be and do with and for one another. The essay which follows is a testament and living example of the ways in which we support and “take care” of each other, moving through the academy in our individual ways yet coming together with commitment and constancy, even and especially in the struggle to end racism, to promote acceptance, inclusivity and diversity especially in our practice of teaching writing.

Our essay is written in the form of an exchange of letters—a genre in which Dr. Vershawn Ashanti Young (Vay) and Frankie have been composing since they crafted an epistolary chapter for Frankie’s book, *I Hope I Join the Band: Narrative, Affiliation, and Antiracist Rhetoric* (Condon, 2012). This genre enables us, we think, to both discuss and to model the honest, hard, and tender dialogue we believe is necessary to the work of anti-racism, whether that work is undertaken in our classrooms, our meeting rooms or offices, or beyond the confines of our campuses: in every community in and through which we move. We believe, further, that the epistolary genre enables us to engage anti-racism from our differing disciplinary positions—writing from where we stand as well as with an openness to change and be changed—even as we conjoin our voices in a single text. We hope you will take away from the letters that follow an understanding of the importance of storytelling as well as the necessity for deep listening that requires us to attend to one another’s stories with humility even when we are uncomfortable. We hope you will take away a sense of curiosity about what it might mean in your work of teaching writing across the curriculum to value the many Englishes and rhetorical traditions in which our students speak and write. We hope you will begin to imagine what it might mean for you to teach rather than suppress the craft of mixing, blending, and braiding languages and rhetorical traditions well. We hope you will begin to recognize, as we do, that this work is, in all our fields, the work of anti-racism. We hope that, when asked by the naysayer in your department meeting, why the work of anti-racism is important to the teaching of writing across all disciplines that you will be able to say, without a doubt, that the current and future lives of all students

of color (those who are holding onto their seat at the table for dear life and those who are waiting and hoping for some accomplice on the admissions committee to give them a shot at a seat at the table) matter—and that the work of anti-racism as it is enacted in those spaces where we teach writing is fundamental to making that matter real. We hope that you will be able to say that anti-racism also matters to the lives of white students sitting beside students of color in our classrooms and writing centers, because if we are to ever rid ourselves of racism white folk must learn how and then do the work of dismantling the racism built by their ancestors and from which they continue to benefit.

THE LETTERS

Hey Frankie,

What it do? Sorry it took me so long to check-in, but as usual it's been crazy around here. The last couple of weeks go down in the history books as "them Manhattan days." You know what I mean? You know what I mean. I mean them days when you can't wait to go home and pour a strong one and just sit still!

The writing center is busy as usual and the tutors are keeping me on my toes. Yesterday in our practicum meeting we read one of Harris' classics and then drafted our first round of individual tutor philosophy statements. We worked backwards and looked carefully at some positive comments and feedback from students written specifically after they had met with a tutor. We really examined those comments and thought long and hard about the degree of kindness and the quality of feedback the tutors must have practiced to get that kind of feedback. There were even a few comments that got us thinking about how vulnerable some students can be in their sessions with us. It got deep for a min. I swear, Frankie, it's my time with the tutors that keep me doing this work! For real for real! And that's FACTS cause Lord knows I be needing all the encouragement I can get sometimes.

Remember I told you that Vay was doing a full day of workshops at a nearby campus and he invited me to come? Well I went and I'm glad I did. It was nice to talk through some of my ideas about this anti-racist work with other people who are also thinking about what to do and how to do it. I learned a lot from the tutors there too which was good cause their perspectives and questions helped me further understand my own tutors and their journey to awareness and then to practice. I think I realized that stepping away from my own campus can help me get a clearer view of home. I think I also learned something else. But I haven't quite figured out exactly what it is that I've learned; or maybe, I'm resisting it cause it hurt. Something else happened that I need to tell you about. It's been on my mind and it's bugging the piss outta me.

I thought everything was fine, Frankie. I was excited and happy to be on a campus that was new to me. The first event of the day was cool—I find it interesting and helpful to my own thinking and research to interact with folk as they unpack the phenomenon that is code-meshing. The second event was fun but challenging. Vay made it fun and he also made it challenging. Just like that. We walk into this auditorium and the room is packed with faculty and staff from all disciplines, writing center staff and tutors. They call Vay up on stage and give him a chair to sit in. Next thing I know Vay says “Can I get another chair? I want Neisha up here with me.” Now you know me and my face. My face be telling on me. I was out there looking like Gary Coleman on some “whachu talmbout Vay?” LOL I’ll forever be grateful for his active and purposeful demonstration of mentorship—of accompliceship—cause next thing I know there’s an extra chair on stage and I can’t say no cause everybody is watching. Vay indicated to all those folks that I have things to say that need to be heard and to me that this was the time to stand with him literally and figuratively. I got up and took the stage with Vay, and I’m glad I did. What I didn’t realize though, was that he was taking a risk for me. Let me tell you how I figured it out.

So we get to the last event of the day, right. It’s early in the evening, but late in the day. The event was intimate and at the house of one of the professors. Picture a fireside chat, but Vershawn Ashanti Young style. Anyway, Vay, the organizer of the entire day’s events and myself walk into the spot. Real quick someone had organized a plate of snacks for me and had positioned a glass of wine in my hand. I’m grateful and walk over to the living room to find a place to sit. I can’t stress just how intimate the last event was. Frankie, we were sitting in someone’s living room! It was in this setting for all to hear, bare witness too, do nothing about but grimace and get red in the face that a much older woman who I hadn’t met until that day, and who by academic standards is “respected” in the field looks up at me with disgust and says “Oh, so you’re still here? Does your supervisor know that you’re still out here?”

I instantly froze. I didn’t know what to do or what to say in response. Eventually I mustered a “I was invited . . .”

Dazed and Confused,

Neisha

Dear Neisha-Anne,

I’m really glad you felt you could tell me this story and I’m so sorry that woman spoke to you that way. To tell the tale of having been treated so cannot be easy. I imagine this was one of those moments when—in the midst of your shock, embarrassment, and frustration at that attempted public humiliation—

you knew, just knew in your bones the way we do sometimes, that right there was racism. However unintentionally or dys-consciously wielded, that woman checked you. At the very least, her words were patronizing but there seems also an implied threat in them. You and I both know she wouldn't have spoken so had you been a white woman but this kind of "whiteness"—the rhetorical practices that emerge from the conviction that one is best equipped to know, to speak, to judge, and to act—comes with the benefit of plausible deniability. "I didn't mean" "I didn't intend" "That's not who I am" (Condon, 2012, p. 34).

This morning, I read a terrific essay by James Sanchez (2018). He writes about what he calls "the versatility of white supremacy rhetoric." Sanchez theorizes the ways in which white supremacists in the age of Trump speak to two audiences at once. He says that rhetorical versatility is the vehicle that creates a white supremacist subtext for a message that otherwise might seem, in terms of white supremacy, ideologically inert. So, Sanchez says, a speaker or writer may address two audiences at once—affirming on the one hand a commitment to white supremacy and appealing on the other hand to that audience likely to be persuaded by what they perceive to be an ideal to which they ought to be committed (like patriotism, for example). Anyhow, your story makes me think that perhaps 'rhetorical versatility' is also the vehicle for the racist microaggression. Maybe your lady's utterance was a less than artful example. I mean I hope the folks in the room with you heard what she was doing right there and gave her some side-eye. But it seems to me that the racist microaggression works by appearing innocuous or even justified to whitely witnesses even as the speaker reasserts the Otherness and thus the unbelongingness of her target. The utterance affirms the superiority of the speaker, sliding in underneath the assertion of the inferiority of that unbelonging Other.

I'm remembering a conversation you and I had not too long ago. We were talking about how that kindness that is so integral to the art of walking through the world as an anti-racist (the kindness that might be, in and of itself, insufficient but is, in fact, so necessary) seems to us like common sense. Your story makes me think again about how common the everyday unkindness of racism is - not only in your life, but in the lives of our students of colour too. And I'm struck by how similar the apparent underlying assumptions of deficiency and profligacy are among the everyday microaggressions that compose the stories my students tell and the one you have told. Like that lady you told me about at CCCCs. Remember? What is that story again—the one about the woman with the imaginary pearl necklace?

Anyway, I'm thinking of you and always with you in spirit.

Love,

Markie

Frankie,

Do I remember? I've got stories for days unwillingly stored up in my WTF memory bank. I swear I haven't been doing this long enough to have accumulated so many stories, but I have them.

No one ever said that any aspect of anti-racist work wouldn't be anything but hard. But it is as necessary as it is hard. Dr. King (1967) said that "in the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." That story that you're remembering became so very important to my readiness to speak up. That story broke my silence and gave rise to the public Neisha-Anne that folk have come to know. I hadn't really put these words to it before, but I see clear as day how that incident got me thinking and moving like a true accomplice and not an ally any more. Did I ever give you the full details on why things went down the way they did that day? The day before the lady clutched her nonexistent pearls Doug and I were in the audience of a panel about linguistic racism. We went because the title and aim seemed promising, but Lord did things go wrong. The presenter kept validating SRTOL while putting it in its place like an unruly child that only a mother could love. And then to make it worst, one of the most well known rhetoricians and compositionists walks into the room and folk instantly get to gawking and whispering. They do and do until he speaks, and then it happens. By the end of everything he has said, SRTOL, code-meshing, translanguaging and the whole damn barnyard it seems was yet again reduced to being equal but separate. Doug and I were annoyed by this, but we were even more annoyed at ourselves for not being brave enough, or having our wits together enough to speak up in the moment. Right then there, we decided to let that be the last time we were caught off guard. We also decided that a pledge to act was not enough. We needed to act even if there was no offensive action. There is no safe(r) space; every space we live and move in is a space where racism may flourish. We right there, in the hot Houston sun, we started drafting the ideas that led to our panel the next year at Cs. That was the panel where you and I first worked together. We called that one *Emotion and Anti-Racist Rhetorics in Writing Studies: Anger as Performance-Rhetoric* (Green & Kern, 2015).

We were ready to act. Doug and I went about the remainder of the conference with this new mindset, not knowing that it would be tested the very next day in the Q&A of Doug's own presentation. As usual when folk get to talking about code-meshing and seeing value in others' Englishes and languages someone always gets upset because they see this validation as an invalidation of the ever fluid standard. They get mad or teary or both at once because they can't or won't see that teaching anti-racist moves such as code-meshing is important regardless of what discipline we're working from because many so many students of color are writing for our lives. They make their arguments against such moves personal in a way that

they really don't have ownership of. They center themselves and what they see as their interests, needs, and "expertise" because their privilege allows it—demands it—instead of making it personal to those who of us whose lives are at stake. Let me explain what I mean. In the Q&A one person got up and started arguing not against the theory and practice of code-meshing, but against the man—Vershawn Young—and people like him, who believe in linguistic diversity and linguistic inclusion. Then Ms. Whiteness herself got up and declared that while she sees the value in linguistic diversity that she can't fully endorse it. This is when she clutched her imaginary pearls, got all octaves of high pitched and started screaming that her students of color needed her permission to use their codes in her classroom.

Frankie, my heart started pumping and I swear to you if I could be red in the face I woulda been a red delicious apple shade of red. I knew I had to say something and even though I feared the outcome my hand shot up in the air and I anxiously waited my turn. I recalled my own experience of finally being aware that there was nothing wrong with my Englishes. I recalled the confusion I experienced negotiating this new truth with what I had been taught in school. I recalled the confusion I experienced as I started thinking and writing in a way that more resembled a linguistic celebration and not a linguistic incarceration. I professed that students needed to be made aware of the linguistic choices that they actually possess. In my own octaves of high pitched I begged for students to be made aware of their natural, mother-tongue, as well as learned-in-school linguistic abilities and given the chance to make what I call savvy rhetorical choices (to "funk up" their writing, as Dr. Young might say). I finally explained that in my writing center I teach the tutors to notice differences in choice of language, register, and rhetorical strategy rather than focusing on error narrowly (and erroneously) defined, because difference leaves room for conversation and understanding. We work hard at giving students the full picture. We say, "hey there is nothing wrong with this, but we can see why someone might want you to 'correct' it." We explain the potential consequences of being bold and embracing their difference as well as the rewards—and then we leave it up to the student, to the writer to choose the direction of their piece. Ownership of writing is in the hands of the writer at the end of the day. Permission can't be given where it was never required! In full ownership of all that makes me ME,

Neisha

Neisha-Anne, you amazing woman!

Remember when you told us all back at the IWCA conference that if you said somethin it was okay to holler "Girl, you betta Preach"? Well, you just said somethin right there!

Under the heading of funny-not-funny, the similarity between the two whitely women you've been talking about is almost laughable. So, you need the permission of the first lady to attend an event to which you were invited? And the imaginary pearls lady says her students need her permission to speak and write their mother tongues! What the what!

I've been thinking of you as I read Austin Clarke's (2015) memoir, 'Membering. Clarke was a Caribbean Canadian novelist and poet. He died recently but his work has been famous here for some time and he is renowned as one of the great Canadian writers of all time. This passage in particular brings you to mind. Clarke writes about traveling to Canada for the first time from Barbados and the new kind of racism he encounters in the north. Clarke talks about writing his novel, *The Polished Hoe*, and the main character, Mary-Mathilde. In his book, Mary-Mathilde travels to the south from Buffalo with her white lover on a segregated train. Clarke writes of her experience, "To her, it was 'not normal.' She called this seating arrangement 'serrigated'" (2015, p. 19). And then he says this: "I chose the term 'serrigated' instead of the traditional spelling, because I wanted to invent a word that expressed the rawness of racism, like a wound made on the most delicate part of the body, a woman's belly, with a knife with a serrated blade" (2015, p. 20). Here, it seems to me, Clarke too is performing rhetorical versatility. But in this case his aim is to both represent in ways that affirm the visceral quality of the experience of racism for peoples of colour and make clear and plain to white readers the harm racism inflicts. Clarke was writing for his life, for sure!

Far too many of our colleagues seem to have no clue what code-meshing is. They haven't read a damn thing about it but they feel authorized somehow to be dismissive of what is now a rather large and compelling body of scholarship that explains and theorizes code-meshing both as a linguistic and a rhetorical practice and explores its pedagogical potential in the teaching of writing in every discipline.² So, they believe that code-meshing is really about ignoring "bad English" and letting "error" pass. They don't understand—or they refuse to understand—what you're saying about writing for your life, about rhetorical deliberation and the writerly practice of exercising choice. But we can see in Clarke's novel—as well as in Dr. Vay's writing and in yours—that code-meshing (the mixing, blending, braiding of multiple Englishes and rhetorical traditions) is careful, purposeful, and not in any sense a "mistake" on the part of the writer. If you're going to do it well, you have to understand so much more about both language and rhetoric than you do when you're all up in monolingual composing. Plus, if folks read a little bit they'd know cuz Young, and Young-Rivera, and Marti-

2 We've included a reading list in the appendix that lists books and articles we think are important for folks to read.

nez, and Villanueva, and Banks, and Kynard, and Richardson, and Smitherman, and Lunsford, and Horner and Lu and so many damn scholars I've lost count have told them that code-meshing is everywhere all the time. We all do it! In business and politics, in academic discourse across all the disciplines and in the public sphere, code-meshing is all around us and in us. The truth is—like Dr. Vay points out—that it's not code-meshed English that causes racism, it's racism that leads us to use the Englishes of racialized Others to justify discrimination.

Another famous Canadian writer, Tomson Highway, who is a Metis and Cree playwright and musician celebrates multilingualism and the ability to code-mesh among languages as “a suppleness of mind: a kind of intellectual and, notably, cultural dexterity” (Condon, 2018, p. 205). He says that “to learn another's language is to learn in a deep and sustained way who they are, how they have come to be, their history, their culture, their ways of seeing and of making meaning in and of the world. To speak (and we might add, to write) only one language, Highway writes, ‘is like living in a house that has but one window . . . it is like sitting at a dinner table where you do all the talking and you talk about nothing but yourself. It means you're not listening to what the other person has to say. It means you are not interested.’ And that, he notes, is ‘not good for relationships’” (as cited in Condon, 2018, p. 205). Seriously, why wouldn't we want to encourage the suppleness of mind that comes with the ability to think and write within and across linguistic and rhetorical traditions: to code-mesh, and teach that to our students!

“Serrigated.” Seems to me that whether the women in your stories knew they were wielding that knife or not, the wound remains and hurts! You and I both believe, I think, in our hearts that at some level they must have known or, at least, had available the means to know exactly what they're doing when they speak and act in such ways. In terms of impact, though, it little matters whether white supremacy so beclouds the vision of the whitely that they cannot discern the harm they do or whether they know exactly where and how to slice their words.

Love,



Frankie,

I agree with Mary-Mathilde. There is nothing normal about racism. Her seating arrangement was not normal. Her seating arrangement was “serrigated.” The academy was built on a “serrigated” mindset and not much has changed. MLK once said that “segregation is the adultery of an illicit intercourse between injustice and immorality.” Just like Mary-Mathilde, stories like the ones we're talking about cut me like wounds made on my belly. Linguistic imperialism, rhetorical

imperialism, epistemological imperialism ride our backs even when they aren't bent and as much as it is declared that diversity, inclusion, equality and equity are benchmarks that we now all, regardless of color, class and creed live by it really isn't so. There are still too many examples of folks who could otherwise make a positive difference acting like there's no language other than the imperial and ever fluid language that passes for a standard. There are still too many examples of discrediting and destroying the Englishes of communities of color. Still too many examples of ignoring and dismissing the rhetorical traditions of color. And Frankie, we haven't even really touched on the discrediting and destroying of the bodies of POC. We haven't talked about how I am judged by my hair, told how to dress, how to speak. We haven't talked about how I was denied the right to fully grieve my mother. How my timesheet is the only one that's scrutinized. Frankie, I am tired of working too many times as hard and getting a fraction of the recognition for my efforts. I am tired of being ignored or spoken at instead of to.

Frankie, these notions that people who look and talk like me need to be policed in every which way is real and actually being taught in schools. Just watch this instructional video from the Education Portal.³

📺 Considering pronunciation, articulation, and dialect in public speaking (<https://study.com/academy/lesson/pronunciation-articulation-and-dialect.html>)

I believe James Baldwin (1961) was completely right when he said that “to be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a constant stage of rage” (p. 205), but Baldwin didn't stop there as most people do. People like to forget that he then said that the next problem was controlling the rage so it doesn't destroy you. This control is one of the first lessons children of color get well before they've even entered pre-K! This video is a clear example of why this homeschooling is necessary. Children of color go to school and are taught that serious bodily harm could become them because of their accents, because of their dialects, because of their rhetorical traditions. White students are taught that it is okay to inflict that harm and hate.

Writing for my life,

Neisha

3 This video, produced by Study.com (Kadian-Baumeyer, n.d.), shows a series of cartoons. The first shows two students and discusses the difference between a teacher they admire who speaks with a British accent and another whom they dislike who “has an accent thicker than mud and a personality to match.” The speaker in the video describes these differences between speakers as “vocal traits.” The second cartoon shows a Black public speaker named Katie Bobbins who failed to “practice her pronunciation” and told her audience that if they “want to see the secrets of success they have to ask for it.” Katie Bobbins is then struck in the head with an axe.

Dear Neisha,

That video is horrifying and maybe the most frightening aspect of its message is how widely and commonly its assumptions about linguistic and rhetorical diversity circulate. And there the threat against those who dare to speak and write their mother tongues is made explicit.

Neisha-Anne, you know I told you about the chapter I'm working on about Dr. Martin Luther King. Well, when I was in the King Archives in Atlanta a few years ago I found a little scrap of paper in one of the folders on the Birmingham struggle of notes Dr. King wrote while in jail there. And on this little scrap, Dr. King had written these lines: "Segregation is the invention of a God gone mad!" I read those words and I wept—not only because I imagined the moment of despair in which he must have penned them, but also because of Dr. King's courage in getting on up out of that despair to keep on keepin on.

Now, you and I know Dr. King wasn't thinking about linguistic and rhetorical segregation. But he was a master code mesher, moving fluidly and powerfully among and between Black English and the Englishes of his white audiences as well as between the Black evangelical rhetorical tradition and that of white protestantism, and of the liberatory and revolutionary rhetoric of the Black Power Movement. Dr. King understood, I believe, that in the face of united and unremitting resistance, in time the most entrenched ideas and practices must give way. Just as the course of rivers and the peaks of mountains yield to the forces of wind and water and time, so too must white supremacy in all its forms yield to our resistance if only there are sufficient numbers of us and we share a fierce determination to create racial justice.

When we talk about these matters in public, Neisha, I know the outrage, frustration, and hurt that many white listeners feel at the charges we lay against the predominantly white field of writing studies. If the lived experience of this pain is different than the pain you describe and that Dr. King expressed in the scrap of a note (and it is), the challenge to us is similar: to get on up out of that anger, hurt, and pain in order that we might yield on the one hand and join the struggle on the other. We, white folks, too need to learn to move and to keep on moving even in the face of our frustration and anger. We need to learn not to seek the amelioration of pain that can be achieved by the retreat to privilege; the real relief for the anguish of our implicatedness is to join the struggle. Dr. Vay says, "we gon win this battle fo sho!" I believe him, Neisha-Anne, but we all got some learning to do to figure out how!

Love,

Charlie

CONCLUSION

Dear Reader,

To define anti-racism you have to understand how racism operates. Racism is about power, it systematically disempowers people of color. It systematically privileges whites. It dehumanizes everyone. And racism accomplishes these things by utilizing systems and institutions to advance its purposes. Racism also accomplishes these things by disguising itself as abstraction (what Ian Haney Lopez, 2015, called “dog whistle” politics), as a very particular version of civility that excludes the rhetorical performances of racialized Others within and beyond the academy, or through a politics (and rhetoric) of respectability. In her chapter, “Sustained Communities for Sustained Learning: Connecting Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy to WAC Learning Outcomes” (this volume), Jamila M. Kareem calls this “an attitude of linguistic respectability.”

Anti-racism, then, is active and determined resistance of structural and systemic racism in all its forms. We’ve just named linguistic racism and the policing of black bodies, whether those be the bodies of our colleagues or our students. So what do we do with all of this? How do we make a change?

Dr. Joni Jones (2010) gave us rules for being what she called an ally. If you’ve heard me talk before you know that my thinking has evolved and I now find the word ally problematic. In my experience in the academy, both as a student and now a scholar an ally is someone who is satisfied to QUIETLY PRETEND TO help and support someone else WHILE an accomplice, even if they aren’t called that, is someone who helps and supports someone else through what they say/do. Accomplices actively demonstrate ally-ship. Accomplices take the necessary risks that really move towards inclusivity, diversity, equity, and equality.

And so, I hear Dr. Jones’ rules and even though she uses the word ally I think her rules are spot on. Listen with me and tell me if you also hear what I hear. What I hear her really asking is for us to be accomplices, for us to take those necessary risks.

She says this:

- a. Allies know that it is not sufficient to be liberal, in fact the liberal position is actually a walk backwards. We must move towards a radical rather than a liberal approach. Allies must be willing to be warriors.
- b. Be loud and crazy so black folks don’t have to be. Being loud doesn’t mean be reckless, strategizing is important. Speaking up does mean being able to relinquish some privilege in order to create justice.

- c. Do not tell anyone in any oppressed group to be patient—doing so is a sign of your privilege. Justice delayed is justice denied.
- d. Recognize the new racism, the new sexism, the old homophobia. It is institutional and structural . . .
- e. When called out about your racism, sexism, or homophobia don't cower in embarrassment, don't cry and don't silently think that "she" is crazy and vow never to interact with "her" again. Be grateful that someone called you out.

Tell me y'all ain't hear her say take risks in each one of those rules? I see risks as being important to actually getting this work done.

Minorities spend so much time checking ourselves to see if we're good enough to fit in and get in to do the work. I've long decided that I was giving you back this problem of racism cause it isn't of my invention, or that of my foreparents, so since I'm giving you your problem back to fix I've got a checklist for you—If you can't acknowledge the following then I got no time for you and you should keep out my way . . .

Cause I'll know you're an accomplice when

- a. you can acknowledge your privilege—confession is good for the soul . . . and the movement.
- b. you can take a back seat and let the voices of the marginalized be heard loud and clear
- c. you have stopped expecting others to educate you on these issues—that's lazy and annoying
- d. you don't have to give yourself a title. Titles are overrated
 - —if you have to say that you're against oppression then chances are you're probably really not.
 - —if you have to announce that you're an accomplice then I already don't trust you. All I really wanna see is that WERK!

Sincerely,

Neisha

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APPENDIX: READINGS ON TRANSLINGUALISM AND CODE-MESHING, CRITICAL RACE THEORY, AND RHETORICS OF RACE

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