

Chapter I. More than a Story of Antiracist Failure and Hope

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Several years ago, I was working with a student of mine in a first-year writing course. I'll call her Brea. That wasn't her name. She was Black and from a working-class family in the Seattle-Tacoma area. Now, I do not have written permission to use Brea's exact words in this account because I don't know how to get a hold of her anymore. I did have a prominent note in my syllabus about using materials from that class in my research and scholarship. But because I cannot ask her explicitly if I can use her exact words or name, I will not use them in my story here. Instead, I'll do my best to represent her words with my own, but of course, this is my rendition of her and her words, not her actual words or motives. And so, take my account with a grain of salt, knowing that I'm trying to be faithful and respectful to her and her work in my course. This also includes her colleague, Adam (not his name either), whom I mention as well. Both students may have different ways to account for or explain what happened, and this chapter is my version of things, my reflection on that past course. Brea's and Adam's sentiments and responses, then, are from my recollection and perspective, and from that perspective, they seem not uncommon in my courses.

Brea was diligent in her work in our course throughout the entire term, always up for doing the labors asked of her in the spirit that they were given. She consistently labored and paid attention to how she labored during the term. She dutifully filled in her labor log and reflected in her labor journal each week. But at the time, I left our exchange feeling that Brea and I had failed at the antiracist language assessment work we'd given ourselves to do. Our job was to investigate the politics of languaging and its judgement by looking carefully at readers' feedback on Brea's draft. We also used HOWL to do this work.

Today, I'm not sure we failed in the ways I originally thought, just as I'm not sure we succeeded either. Our very different embodied subject positions, one a young, working class, Black woman, and the other a middle-aged, middle class Brown man, were not well accounted for in our work. Much of this was my fault. I designed the ecology, one I thought about as an ecology as I designed it and as the term proceeded.

Just to be clear, the term "assessment ecology" is very specific to my own theory and practice of antiracist classroom assessment. It references a theoretical framework that I discuss in *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing for a Socially Just Future* (2015). In short, all writing courses have

assessment ecologies, often numerous ones, from the larger ecology that produces course grades or learning through the entire term to smaller ecologies that form the languaging around an essay or another assignment, such as the one I discuss below with Brea and Adam. These ecologies are composed of at least seven elements (see Inoue, 2015, p. 176 for a representation of the seven elements of assessment ecologies), which can be used to design antiracist assessments or reflect upon them in an analytical way. The seven elements are: purposes (what is the purpose or goal of this assessment?), processes (what processes are used to make judgements, that is, what steps or actions are taken?), parts (what are the main or significant parts, or the codes, scripts, constructs, and artifacts used and produced?), places (what material and figurative sites are created that affect, organize, influence, and embody people in the ecology?), people (who is involved in judging, and what are their embodied language and other capacities?), products (what indirect and direct consequences are produced or expected from the judgements that circulate around any products students produce?), and power (in what ways are disciplining, control, and norming to some standard enacted?).

Furthermore, all assessment ecologies are complex systems that are “more than” the sum of what constitutes them (Inoue, 2015, p. 86). This means that to enact antiracist assessment in a course as Brea and I tried to do, we cannot just plug-and-play a practice or a rubric or some other process that in another complex system appears to be antiracist in its outcomes. The system is complex, as our failures and perhaps misunderstandings illustrate, at least from my recollections.

Assessment ecologies also are interconnected, with elements at times sharing properties of each other or morphing into other elements (Inoue, 2015). For instance, a rubric may start as something in the ecology that represents writing expectations, but later in the process of peer review becomes a heuristic that makes a process of response. It may form reading processes or even learning outcomes, that is, products of the ecology. In fact, I used this interconnection among assessment elements in order to design processes that offered opportunities for students to reflect upon their own relations to larger racialized languaging next to who they understood themselves to be as embodied writers. In the case with Brea, as I discuss below, our heuristic based on habits of White language (HOWL) was initially used to reflect upon colleagues’ assessments of their essays. In that process, students confronted in various ways how they participated in elements of HOWL through their judgements of their colleagues’ writing. HOWL turned from a set of languaging habits, discursive structures we could see “out there,” to a part of their own embodiments as readers and writers in the classroom.

After Brea’s writing group had given her feedback on a paper she’d written about the complexities and significance of rap music, I asked students to pose problems about language and its judgement in letter form to me. They would do this in two ways: through comparisons of conflicting judgements on their papers and through considerations of the ways HOWL operated in all those judgements. First, I asked students to find a few conflicting judgements from the assessment

letters that their peers had written to them. These judgements would be things that their peers said about their paper that seemed to say different things about the same aspect of the paper. They were to think more deeply about that feedback as languaging, as a paradox where there is no right answer, just different ways to experience the paper. Additionally, they were to use HOWL as a heuristic in order to understand some of the languaging dispositions being used in these divergent judgements. In labor instructions, I included a process to help them consider ways that HOWL may be operating in their colleagues' feedback letters. I'll say more about that process below.

The goal or ecological purpose of this activity was for students to have a discussion with me in letter form about the politics of languaging that was occurring in their writing groups. I prompted them in labor instructions not to blame anyone or look for "the correct" interpretation of their writing, rather they were to acknowledge multiple ways of languaging, or multiple ways of reading their drafts, while also considering how readers may participate in HOWL. In preparation, we discussed HOWL in class, and looked at examples of the ways everyone participates in HOWL all the time. We read excerpts from Sara Ahmed's article, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness" (2007) and Catherine Myser's short article, "Differences from Somewhere: The Normativity of Whiteness in Bioethics in the United States" (2003). We also looked at Vershawn A. Young's "Should Writers Use Their Own English" (2010), which resists using HOWL in some obvious ways and uses Black English to make its point. So we'd been having conversations in class about HOWL and the ways everyone participates in it.

To apply HOWL to their colleagues' feedback, students made a table. This table was meant to be an antiracist ecological part, one that linked four different elements: (1) a rubric dimension from our collaboratively developed rubric; (2) a judgement by a colleague-reader on that dimension in the paper; (3) the colleague's explanation of their judgement; and (4) at least one habit of White language that seems to be operating in the judgement or explanation. Each of these elements made a column of the table. I instructed students to use their tables to draft the letter to me about a problem of judgement they are noticing through their reading of their colleagues' feedback. The building of the table was meant as an invention process that would slow their thinking down and help us notice the language of judgement that their colleagues offered them and where that languaging came from, then link it to specific habits identified in HOWL. These parts and processes were meant to connect students/readers (people) to the dominant language habits (HOWL) that we paradoxically participate in unevenly and that likely constrain or even oppress many of us (in hegemonic power relations) in the institutional place of the writing classroom.

The differences in judgement would be most clear when students considered where those judgements came from in the lives of their readers. Where did each reader get their expectations and why are those important to have in this moment in their reading of the paper? We had some access to these things because in

order to write their original assessment letters, each reader was prompted in the labor instructions to identify their judgements and explain in detail where they got their ideas about such languaging, which included offering a textual model or two that might be in their heads. But I also suggested that students may have to fill in blanks, hypothesize.

Additionally, readers' responsibilities were to offer rich descriptions of their readings of their colleagues' papers. Writers, on the other hand, had a responsibility to listen humbly and compassionately to their readers and work to understand those readers' habits of language in nuanced ways. So the ecological purpose of giving and getting feedback was not to revise the papers. It was to understand the politics of languaging and find HOWL in the languaging circulating in their writing groups. Thus the original drafts were simply an occasion for making judgements of language that we could investigate together.

Now, I do not think that I made this ecological purpose clear to my students when they wrote their original drafts or during the assessment letters on those drafts. I did try, but of course, habitual ways of doing such work may have had more power over many students' processes. I'm guessing most assumed that their feedback was meant to help the writer revise or improve their writing or draft in some way, even though we discussed how and why readers were not to tell any writer what they should do or how to revise a draft. The assessment letter's labor instructions were very clear that the purpose of their feedback was to offer a rich description of their experience of reading the text. Like most of my writing courses, our course motto was: "Good writers don't take orders, they make decisions from rich information, so good readers don't give orders, they offer thick descriptions of their reading of a text."

Let me emphasize that this is not a typical goal or purpose for feedback in writing classrooms. Typically, students read feedback on their writing and ask: What do I change in my paper to satisfy my readers' expectations? From my own vantage point as teacher who has done this activity many times over the years, I find it is always difficult for everyone. Even conscientious students like Brea have a hard time shifting their reading of their peers' feedback away from this revision question and toward one about understanding the politics of languaging that circulate around their papers and in their writing groups. Because I didn't emphasize this shift in purpose for reading their assessment letters, many students read their peers' feedback as blueprints of what to change or revise in their papers, even after we discussed the labor instruction's caution not to do this. So once Brea got her colleagues' feedback, her purpose in our collaborative assessment work was different from past purposes for similar activities. She now had to ask: How did my colleagues read my paper, and why did they read it that way? She was not asking, "what do I change to meet their expectations?"

Another way to put our new goal in the problem-posing letter activity might be: What expectations and language habits do my readers have and where did they get them? The problem-posing letter exchange would be the way my students and

I would dialogue about these questions. Ultimately, knowing the answers to these questions could give Brea and her colleagues in the class much valuable and flexible information to make informed decisions in a wide range of rhetorical situations later, but it would do it in a non-hierarchical judging ecology, one that didn't use a single standard (like my expectations or a conventional standards-based rubric) to evaluate languaging, instead it used five different sets of judgements (one from each of her four group members and mine). Equally important, this ecology was gradeless, so everyone's assessment letters could be read on more equal footing. Readers' thick descriptions of their readings of papers hopefully would offer enough information so that writers could reflect upon the racial and other politics that travel with language habits and rhetorical situations.¹

In retrospect, I'm now less sure about my judgement of Brea's work. The problem-posing letter activity asked Brea to read her colleagues' feedback as mostly descriptions of their reading experiences, and resist reading that feedback as judgements of a text or orders to follow. This was so that we could talk about languaging and judgement, not what to do next with a draft. But even with such explicit explanations of the assessment activity in our labor instructions, this was very difficult for about half of the class to do, including Brea. In other words, I didn't see Brea doing the critical antiracist assessment work I understood then that the problem-posing assignment was trying to produce, and she didn't do it in the analytical ways I was hoping she would through the use of the HOWL heuristic. Mostly, I thought she was avoiding all of this work.

At the time, I couldn't see how I was falling into the trap that Catherine Fox identifies in many critical pedagogies (2002). I may have been imposing my own version of an analytical "critical thinking" onto Brea. This imposition, and my ideas about "critical thinking," are informed by Whiteness that Fox and others talk about. Fox explains that feminist and critical teachers often use ideas like "critical thinking" as god terms that explain the "right way" to understand things, which then leads to "a race to truth whose telos is the same as that of the traditional pedagogies criticized for using transmission models of language, knowledge, and learning" (2002, p. 201). Ultimately, Fox argues that we must "disarticulate" whiteness and Whiteness from our ideas of "critical thinking" (2002, p. 204). Instead of a race to some truth I had in mind before Brea even considered her colleagues' words, instead of my version of Brea's antiracist investigating, Fox suggests that I might have read and responded to Brea with a more transformative and organic goal. Fox explains:

Instructors will always bring to the classroom ideologies that drive our pedagogical choices. However, if we are committed to questioning the conflation of critical thinking with one

1. I have published another version of the problem-posing letter assignment, which discusses it in another writing course of mine. See Inoue (2019).

ideological stance and to positing critical thinking as a pragmatic process of knowing, acting, being, and reflecting, we may begin to move from revolutionary cycles to spaces of transformation. (2002, p. 207)

When I look back at our exchange now, I hear in my words ways that I was doing what Fox warns critical and feminist teachers against.

Brea's initial letter focused on feedback by two colleagues who both discussed a dimension from our collaboratively written rubric, which the class put together as they started their project drafts. The dimension her readers focused on was: "How does the project use evidence effectively to back up or explore claims/arguments?" This was their language. Most of Brea's discussion was on Adam's work (again, not his actual name). Adam was a White, middle class, male colleague, quiet in class but always offered lots of feedback in writing. Brea identified Adam's concerns that she include some quotes from poetry to provide evidence for the claim she was making about the poetic nature of rap. However, Brea explained that she didn't understand why Adam would ask for such evidence since her focus was on rap, not on poetry. She didn't see a need to quote poetry or discussions of poetry. Her argument was that everyone already knows about poetry, but not rap. Rap was her focus, so her evidence and quotes were of rap music. Brea's main example was Childish Gambino's work. Adam's contention was that it would be nice to see some poetry as a way to compare similar things, a poem next to a rap song.

In my response to Brea, I asked her to think more about Adam's comments and why he would want some quotes from poetry next to her material from Childish Gambino. I wasn't saying he was correct, only asking: How do you think he got to that judgement? Brea responded to me by mostly quoting her original paper. Her paper makes a claim that Childish Gambino is not taken seriously like most poetry is. She suggested that maybe part of the reason is that "childish" is part of his name, and listeners and others associate that attribute with his music. This is the place in Brea's paper that Adam was commenting on, and it could be read that he didn't understand that Brea was making the argument that Childish Gambino was not taken seriously as an artist, so her evidence would need to show his music as serious music. Poetry as a comparison had nothing to do with this argument, or the nature of poetry was so understood by her audience that there was no need to show poetry.

In her response to me, Brea reiterates this. She still doesn't understand why Adam would want evidence in this area of her paper where we see and read about Childish Gambino, and get references about poetry, but no poetry itself. She suggests that maybe Adam didn't read the paper very carefully. She doesn't know for sure.

Looking back on this exchange, perhaps Brea read Adam's comments as a guide to revision. What is she supposed to do with Adam's feedback? Revise, of course. Why else do you get feedback? And so she reads his feedback asking: Do

I agree with Adam or not? And because she did not, she focused on the fact that she disagreed or couldn't see how he would ask for quotes of poetry. But it could have been that she was struggling to explain to me that she did not know how to read Adam's languaging as HOWLing, or that his feedback was simply him not fully understanding her purposes for the draft. How could she do much else with his words if he was not understanding her purpose, a purpose centered in the Blackness of her central example and in herself as a Black writer? She could have been saying that we (Adam and Brea) don't understand each other. Meanwhile, I was asking her to keep thinking about his languaging in ways that may have been confusing or even baffling to her. I was asking her to put her disagreement aside, and try to experience her own text from Adam's point of view, not to adopt it but to understand where he was coming from.

The first step in this process is to understand Adam's habits of language that led him to his judgement. Adam was drawing on HOWL, just as I was in my similar instructions to letter-writers. Adam wanted to "see" the comparison, just as I wanted letter writers to quote their colleagues' responses so that we both could see and compare language, think deeply and specifically about it. That is, I and Adam wanted quoted language as ocular artifacts to compare. We both thought (and I still do) that this can be a powerful language tactic for antiracist ends. I wanted to see Brea's readers' judgements next to each other in her letter to me. Adam wanted to see poetry next to rap in her paper. We were participating in a habit of language that projects a particular kind of individualized, rational, controlled self onto Brea as well, a self that assumes a primary way to understand something is to *see* it. Brea seemed to resist. As Fox suggests, I could have disarticulated my own ideas of antiracist language assessment from my own Whiteness by calling attention to the ways my response to her HOWLed at her and how my HOWLing may have contradicted some language habits of her own, but I didn't.

While I did offer her a way to look beyond agreement with Adam, I still failed in my own responses to her because I didn't see her own orientation as a young Black woman who has likely lived a life in which her habits of language have been denied, devalued, or questioned consistently in a number of ways. I couldn't feel clearly how the HOWLing of my assignment matched pretty closely the HOWLing of Adam, her responder. The echo of those HOWLs may have been too much for her, even if she may not have been able to name this problem exactly in this way. Perhaps I could have pointed out this problem I was having with her responses to my questions, not in a way that suggested that she was doing the labors wrong—I don't think she was—but in a way that invited her to think with me about my limited notions of criticality and hers. That is, I could have framed this problem as *my problem of reading her kind of criticality*, not simply her problem of reading Adam.

Doing such disarticulating might have helped us both let go of our initial intentions for her draft and my problem-posing letter assignment. Had I been able to be more vulnerable in this way, I might have been able to model a more open-ended criticality, one that could have explained how I was seeing her

criticality working (or not), and invite her to explain my criticality from her view. Or maybe Brea wasn't ready to take on such an orientation. Maybe she too was conditioned by past English courses to read feedback as only "how to" guides for revising drafts. Or maybe, she just got tired of all the HOWLING. This was her resistance in a place where she felt she could resist the HOWL.

What is most striking now in Brea's letter and response to me is that she never uses HOWL, never references it all. And even after she'd followed the labor instructions, and pasted the table she created with HOWL labeled in it. But HOWL does not come up in her discussion and reflection of the judgements she is posing problems about. In my reply to Brea, I offer this:

I hear Adam saying that he doesn't read Childish Gambino as childish or lacking in seriousness just because of his name, and so he wonders: do you have proof for such a claim about other people who do not listen to rap, which could be heard by him as many White people (he is White and may feel that he is being unjustly placed into such a category).

This is about a reader's needs for evidence for particular kinds of claims. Do you think this fits into the White habit of hyperindividualism, or maybe it is associated with rational, controlled self? I can see this as a need for a certain kind of rationality that is dominant in our society: Don't talk about others unless you have some evidence outside yourself to prove any claims you make about those people's views of things.

My last comment was not an imperative pointed at Brea. It was a translation of an impulse in HOWL. I'm nudging her toward HOWL and the embodied politics that go with it when someone like Adam or I use it, even in the compassionate ways we both do in our gradeless assessment ecology. But again, what I was asking her to do was an analytical antiracist languaging, and I kind of predetermined what I thought that would look like. But it wasn't what she was doing, which was pointing out a key way her reader misunderstood her.

I end my response above by moving away from Adam's judgement and directing Brea to see the bigger picture about the assignment, which is that we are not trying to justify or defend our own decisions as writers, which I heard her doing, but trying to understand the landscape of judgement that our colleagues' feedback represents. So I was trying to engage Brea with questions about the politics of language. I was offering one set of dominant politics that were present, HOWL, so that she could better understand the strong pull of those habits of language, that orientation toward language. And I was assuming that if she used HOWL in this way, she would be antiracist and critical. Brea did not take me up on this call, at least as I can recall and read in our textual exchanges now. She never discussed HOWL directly in her letter.

Given that both Brea and I couldn't come to a problem-posing of Adam's languaging in the predefined ways I understood the assignment asking for, nor could we find common terms to do that kind of language work in front of us, we both failed to do our job in this collaborative assessment work—at least, that was what I thought after the course was over. She didn't seem able to accept Adam's languaging, nor engage with HOWL to understand his or anyone else's languaging. I too was unable to be vulnerable and show her my own HOWLing in a way that could invite her to keep thinking. I couldn't see the ways my languaging framed the antiracist language work as primarily a Whitely, analytical, antiracist languaging, one perhaps that she felt rubbing her wrong, perhaps because it felt like an attack on her embodied Black self as a writer, maybe. Again, I can only speculate here. I knew that I could not force her to see, feel, or take on my orientation to language, nor my practices of criticality, but I didn't have a way to open up our misunderstandings in transformative ways.

But maybe Brea was doing other critical work that I just didn't notice at that time. Maybe she was doing other important assessment work that my alleged antiracist assessment activity was not designed to accommodate very well. Brea is talking about race, gender, and class indirectly in her paper. She is Black, female, working-class, and looking toward an interdisciplinary humanities major. Adam, a White, middle-class, male student looking to be a science major, is questioning the means by which she makes her arguments, but not the arguments themselves. He expects an argument that offers textual evidence for particular kinds of claims, ones that establish the facts of the case. But for Brea, those facts are not only assumed to be already established by a Black audience perhaps, but not important to the central claims she makes about rap music. Why should rap music, a Black language form, have to be validated or measured next to poetry, arguably an elite White language form? To a Black writer, this could feel like having to measure up to White expectations in order to be accepted or validated. This paradigm sounds familiar, culturally and racially dismissive, and oppressive to me.

On top of this, her professor (me) could be seen as asking her to side with Adam. While I embody HOWL in a number of ways in the labor instructions and in class, it is clear from the first day when I read my introduction about myself to the class that I'm a former student of color from the projects, who was a remedial English student through most of his public education in North Las Vegas. I'm not White. I'm not Black. Yet I'm not completely Brown either. I've also got this crazy name with too many vowels in it that doesn't look or sound Anglo in any way, because it's Japanese. I slip into my former English, a Black English I mostly have forgotten, at times in class discussions. I know students notice.

I also think that maybe a student like Brea notices these things too, and they are experienced as contradictions. No English prof is supposed to sound or look or be named like me. Why is he telling me to side with the White kid? And maybe there is an age thing also happening between Brea and me. I'm easily as old, if not older, than her own father. She's 18. I'm just about 50 at that time. And then, there

is the reality that I've not lived in the projects, in poverty, since my childhood, that my White, working-poor mom's access to things, while quite limited in many ways, still gave some access, access that maybe Brea and her family didn't have. I don't know. I don't want to make assumptions about Brea's life or living situation, but I know that many students on that campus were living precarious lives, often with food and housing insecurities. So here's a Japanese professor teaching her writing and telling her to listen more closely to the White kid next to her, the one marked with White male privilege, and to also consider how we all HOWL, how we all got some White in us. Contradictions. Paradoxes.

Today, I wonder more about the ways Brea's subjectivity and her sense of audience in her draft may have caused our misunderstandings and even some cognitive dissonance for her. Is she writing to a Black female audience, or a Black working-class audience? Or maybe she's fed up with catering to White middle-class male audiences, so fed up with HOWL that she won't engage with it at this moment when she knows she doesn't have to. Why give HOWL more time, more words, even in a reflection letter about it? Maybe Brea was reacting to my own HOWLING response to her. I didn't acknowledge the way I was also asking her to show me something by asking her to respond to Adam's expectations for visual, textual evidence in the paper. That's pretty ocular in orientation—you know, "seeing is believing"—and so participates in HOWL.

But I should be clear. Because neither I nor my ecology demanded that Brea understand or take on this ocular orientation toward evidence in her paper, I cannot say that our ecology participated in White language supremacy, at least not in this moment. We may have been HOWLING our individualized, rational, controlled selves but I didn't demand that she accept my version of things, nor was our ecology structured in a way that coerced her into accepting any of it. One paradox here, perhaps, is that Brea may have missed something important, something meaningful, for her languaging, but she also was afforded the power to make that decision, to deny matching Adam's and my HOWLING because there were no grades to be awarded, just labor to be done, which no one could deny she didn't do.

I'd like to think that Brea was exercising some Black power in the face of HOWL, a power relation designed into my assessment ecology specifically as one that affords antiracist outcomes. Given her own history in school and society, given what she likely saw around her all the time, she may have felt unwilling to acknowledge Adam's HOWLING expectations as valid in a paper about Black languaging from Black bodies, written by a Black woman. We might say that Adam, like myself, did not read her paper closely enough, or we did not have the ability to do so because of our own HOWLING politics, at least not in that moment. In a way, one could say, Brea was arguing for Black linguistic justice, demanding her Black languaging be accepted on its own terms, and she may have experienced the feedback, including my own, as HOWLING that only appeared to be self-aware and critical, but ultimately reinforced all the same outcomes as before: write White; HOWL or fail.

Flash back to the first day of the semester. We all introduce ourselves with a short one-page narrative. I do one too. In mine, I tell Brea and her colleagues that I grew up in a poor, single-parent household in an all-Black neighborhood in North Las Vegas and then a White working-class neighborhood. I explain that I was a remedial English student of color throughout most of my schooling. But language was important to me at home:

In school, I didn't care much for writing or giving my writing to my teachers, because I knew what they'd do with it. They'd circle errors and put a red letter on it, a grade. I yearned for real dialogue over my language, like I got from my brother, who was the most intimate and trusting reader I could ever hope for. He was my twin brother, the one person in the world I could say was like writing to myself. It was safe. I knew he'd read each word as lovingly as I'd written it, care for them and even criticize them in a compassionate way. But mostly, I realize now, what I valued most about my brother's reading of my words from that Signature typewriter was how clearly and obviously he paid attention to my words, how fully present he was with me and my stories, he paid attention to my words and that was a compassionate act that I think we all want and made me the kind of writer I am today. We all want to be truly and deeply and compassionately listened to.

In these introductory narratives, I asked students to come to a few personal goals they had for their experience of the class. My last line above was one of my goals.

I wanted to develop a truly deep and compassionate reading practice for my students, just like I remembered my brother doing for me in our childhoods. Doing that feels like one aspect of antiracist languaging. Did I achieve this with Brea? Surely I set up the ecology in a way that kept my HOWLING from harming her chances at success in the class on her own terms, even if I did not fully understand those terms during the semester. Was our conditions, the assessment ecology, a transformative one? How could I have done more transformative work with Brea? Maybe being compassionate to Brea by being vulnerable with her—suffering with her. I mean, I could have disarticulated my own Whiteness from my analytical sense of antiracist languaging in the HOWL heuristic. I could have searched harder for ways to understand her own responses to me as informed by her own embodied Black female working-classness, when I heard her repeat her refrains about her draft's purpose. Maybe she could have then built her own version of critical, antiracist, feminist Blackness, or maybe I could have seen it better.

Or maybe none of what Brea did was an exercise of her Black linguistic freedom. I don't know, and I'm less sure now how I'd figure that out. Collaborative antiracist assessment ain't easy. But it's necessary. That is, it's necessary if we hope to cultivate Black and Brown linguistic justice with our students. If we hope to

dismantle White language supremacy in our own practices and classrooms, as well as equip our students, all of them, with antiracist practices and strategies for their own futures. And if we hope to do more than hope in our collaborative antiracist assessment ecologies.

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