

We Don't Need More "Safe" Spaces; We Need Transformative Justice

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Abstract: Higher education and by extension writing centers are oppressive, violent, and harmful (Wilder; Patel; Meyerhoff). While writing centers often tout values of social justice and inclusion, in practice, they perpetuate and enforce oppressive ideologies (Green; Faison & Condon; Faison & Treviño; Greenfield). Through a combination of storying, building upon current scholarship, and radically imagining futures, the authors discuss how a Black feminism and transformative justice frame illuminates the systemic oppression/white supremacist mindset that is ingrained in writing centers. These systemic oppressions overlap with neoliberal myths of "safe spaces" and "homes" that undermine and scapegoats marginalized consultants in the writing center for the systemic oppression they experience. The article concludes by discussing what transformative justice has to offer us for *(re)imagining writing centers outside of these neoliberal stock stories and offer readers reflective questions for transformation.*

Keywords: writing centers, storying, structural racism, Spiritual Bypassing, transformative justice

Higher education and by extension writing centers are oppressive, violent, and harmful (Wilder; Patel; Meyerhoff). While writing centers often tout values of social justice and inclusion, in practice, they perpetuate and enforce oppressive ideologies (Green; Faison & Condon; Faison & Treviño; Greenfield). As Grutsch McKinney posits, writing centers often adhere to a grand narrative that "writing centers are comfortable, iconoclastic places where all students go to get one-to-one tutoring on their writing" (3). This grand narrative perpetuates the racism and discrimination experienced by marginalized people in the writing center—while allowing writing centers practitioners as a whole to function in the same oppressive ways and continuing to claim writing centers are safe spaces for all. However, in reality, this grand narrative functions as a stock story that allows writing centers to "feign neutrality and at all costs avoid any blame or responsibility for societal inequity" (Martinez 70). These stock stories include perpetuating the idea that the writing center is a "safe" and "welcoming" space; using the terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion as neoliberal

catch-alls that promote assimilation; and giving ourselves self-congratulatory praise while avoiding the call to be co-conspirators (Love).

Through a combination of storytelling, building upon current scholarship, and radically imagining futures, we will discuss how a Black feminism and transformative justice frame illuminates the systemic oppression/white supremacist mindset that is ingrained in writing centers. These systemic oppressions overlap with neoliberal myths of “safe spaces” and “homes” that undermine and scapegoat marginalized consultants in the writing center for the systemic oppression they experience. We conclude our article by discussing what transformative justice has to offer us for (re) imagining our writing centers outside of these neoliberal stock stories and offer readers reflective questions for transformation.

The Necessity of Black Feminisms

(Bethany). I was Mentor Program Coordinator for a writing center, which meant that I was responsible for facilitating new graduate students' transition and onboarding into the center. They had to do onboarding and logistics training as well as get acquainted with writing center scholarship. I created a curriculum with readings that focused on 1) intersectionality and Black feminism, 2) active listening and care in centers, and 3) a choose-your-own-adventure pathway of various options (e.g., linguistic justice, queer theory, feminisms, research). Each new graduate consultant—the mentee—was assigned a mentor who was a returning graduate consultant in the center. As the Coordinator, I met with each pair at least once a month to discuss the curriculum.

One semester, I had to meet several times with a mentee one-on-one rather than alongside their mentor due to scheduling conflicts. I had been doing this for two years now and was previously an Assistant Director of another center, so I felt more than prepared to tackle a quick check-in meeting. However, now, I'm regretful of the hubris I had. I turned on my Zoom room a few minutes ahead of the start time and found the mentee already there.

I began my usual check-in questions about how he was doing, what's happening this semester for them, what questions they had, etc. As the mentee replied to my questions, I began to feel a tight feeling in my stomach. I realized that he was interrupting me and using microaggressive, genderist language to talk about his wife. My stomach continued to turn, and as a survivor of violence and trauma, I tend to never ignore my gut, but I pushed away the alarm bell because this was work, and besides, it wasn't anything I hadn't heard from folks before, so why was this different?

I changed gears away from the check-in to try to ease my own discomfort. I moved to the readings, because I thrive in intellectualizing rather than feeling, so I figured this had to be better.

“How did you feel about this month’s readings? What questions did you have from them?”

“Well, the article on emotion and writing centers that used stories was really illogical and filled with fallacies. It wasn’t very empirical.”

“Can you say more about what you mean by “empirical”?” I asked.

“Using actual data that is quantitative and rigorous. You can’t just tell a story that has logical contradictions and expect it to pass as scholarship. This is why I chose not to go into **your** field.”

“You were going to go into Rhetoric and Composition?”

“Yes, but I ended up not because the methods were not rigorous or empirical enough.”

We talked more about his journey applying to both RhetComp and his current field, and he asked me what methods courses I even had to do in my MA and PhD. I could feel my stomach tighten more, and I continued to ignore it. I answered with all the methods training I had, taking the bait and feeling the need to justify my field before I said, “Also to circle back, stories are empirical data. We do have methods that are valid, and the idea of rigor is a Western myth of objectivity that has racist origins. When we read about intersectionality and Black feminism last month, did you discuss with your mentor about their importance? Or how it relates to storying?”

“I understand the importance of talking about identity and privilege, but at the end of the day, it isn’t important to research and writing centers.” The rest of that meeting was a blur, but I do remember logging off the Zoom and vomiting, unable to hold back the silent screams of my body, urging me to listen.

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All identities are also social and cultural constructs, and historically, arise out of and work in tandem with racism and white supremacy. For the macro-level, intersectionality and Black feminisms consider the ways that society has interlocking and overlapping systems of oppression. While each system of oppression will be slightly different based on contextual time, place, and moment, generally these systems include (but are not limited to) white supremacy, heteronormativity, patriarchy, capitalism, elitism, ableism, et cetera.

These systems, as illuminated by intersectionality and Black feminist lenses, demonstrate how people with systemically disempowered identities are “impacted by multiple forces and then [they are] abandoned [by systems and institutions]” (Crenshaw 10:31). Each of these identities cannot be untangled from one another, as the Combahee River Collective declared, “If Black

women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.” The Combahee River Collective Statement is just one text that highlights the ways that society runs on the power of webs of oppression. These webs and their work call us to acknowledge how identities, systems, and power are co- and multiply- constructed to restrain and oppress. Those with multiple systemically disempowered identities are most impacted by systemic and interpersonal harm, which creates structural oppression.

These systems create our institutions, which include education, banking, criminal justice and law, state welfare, media, housing, et cetera (Kendall). As Kendall declares:

We don't have bigotry by accident; it's built and sustained by the same cultural institutions we're taught to revere. We cannot keep sustaining a system of gatekeeping that privileges a very few at the expense of the majority. (94)

In this, these institutions are reflections and intentional creations by the overlapping oppressing systems. These intentional, institutional systems work to erase, harm, and silence, but intersectional feminisms allow feminists to “step up, reach back, and keep pushing forward” (Kendall 14) toward accountability and liberation.

Then, at the micro-level, each of these systems not only interlock and overlap, but they also create obstacles, harm, and oppression for anyone that does not fit the “mythical norm” (Lorde). In other words, everyone has various positionalities (e.g., race, nationality, language use, gender, sexuality, religion, class) that are contextually place and time specific. These positionalities and identities cannot be separated at that individual level.

Yet, writing centers and their practitioners ignore and flatten the impact of whiteness and white supremacy in writing centers. Even though intersectionality and Black feminisms demonstrate a necessary framework for understanding and disrupting centers, we as a field have not taken up the call. Instead, we fall into the racist legacies of literacy crises, linguistic assimilation, colonial structures, and more.

In one of the most telling critiques, Faison and Condon write that, writing centers participate:

in the institutionalized practice of cannibalizing the cultures and languages of Othered bodies; enforcing the assimilation of student writers and tutors of color into whitely discourses and the epistemological spaces in which those discourses are legitimated and reproduced. Whitely writing centers, we think, participate in the academy's racial project

of defining and containing racial Otherness within acceptable, normative limits, thus preserving white advantage and privilege. (9)

Writing centers, in their design, perpetuate an institutional legacy of colonialism where bodies of colors are forced to conform to acceptable and normative practices. As true in most institutional structures, policies, procedures, practices, et cetera work together to maintain a culture of white supremacy that forces marginalized communities to conform in order to preserve white privilege.

As Inoue (“How Do”) declares, “White people can perpetuate White supremacy by being present. You can perpetuate White language supremacy through the presence of your bodies in places like this.” So, when most writing centers are in PWIs and/or in a racist society, when the majority of writing centers are operated and staffed by white people, when the majority of our scholarship is written by white people and hosted at “and-grab universities, we perpetuate whiteness and white supremacy.

## Disrupting Safe Spaces

*(Amanda) My friend and I sat together in the empty, locked, writing center, using the peaceful afterhours environment of the center to catch up on whatever homework we had left from our honors literature courses.*

*Eventually, the quiet of studying turned into the distracted banter of friends, and then gossip. We were essentially just chatting about our coworkers. My friend had just started hanging out with one of our coworkers, Wyatt, and eventually our conversation drifted over to him.*

*“Yeah, he’s nice,” I said, “But he ‘jokingly’ carries around that info-wars mug all the time.”*

*My friend didn’t try to come to Wyatt’s defense. She readily agreed that he could be a jerk sometimes and started to add to the stories I’d heard about him. I learned that Wyatt had started to have jam sessions with some of the other boys in the writing center, where they would hang out, chat, and play music. Then she told me that at one of those jam sessions, Wyatt and the guys had started ranking every consultant in the writing center based on how cool they were, and another girl, who’d been in the writing center a few years longer than me and was the only other woman of color in the center was at the very bottom of the list.*

*In defense of this ‘least cool person,’ I insisted, “She doesn’t deserve that.”*

*“Yeah, but they think she makes everything about race.”*

*These interactions became one of the first on a long list of grievances I had, not about the writing center, but about being a Black person in academia. It was reinforced to me then, how people saw it when people of color advocated for themselves in harmful environments. For instance, my writing center director told me that the reason she didn't focus more heavily on race and privilege in our writing center class and professional development was because she'd tried it one year, and it had really scared the white consultants who had never thought about privilege before, and she didn't want to do that again.*

*It was evident in this writing center that consultants of color were scapegoated as uncomfortable, and as ruining the safe, fun, vibe of the writing center when they pointed out injustices. But, I didn't fully think that the writing center played a role in that. By the end of my first semester of the writing center, I wrote a paper where I came to the conclusion that, "When it comes to issues of racism, exploitation is not often intentional, but when working within a discriminatory system that does not acknowledge the burdens that minorities experience in the dominant cultural that instances of burnout and isolation occurs." I knew that racism existed in the writing center, but I had landed on blaming the system, and only the system, while failing to think about the ways that we, as consultants, were implicated inside of the system. There was no way that my friends, colleagues, and directors were racist.*



Even with all the personal, racial, and political trauma that I (Amanda) have experienced at the hands of the writing center practitioners, I had still fallen into believing the stock story of the writing center as a comfortable home; a safe space for everyone. A space where racism happened incidentally, rather than as part of the larger structure. A viewpoint that ultimately allowed the writing center practitioners around me and myself to, "avoid any blame or responsibility for societal inequity" (Martinez 70).

As Grutsch McKinney describes, the myth of the writing center as a safe space or home that I had adhered to "can be traced back to the conscious decisions made by writing center directors to make the space look like home. They wanted to create a physical identity for the center that welcomed students and comforted them" (22). However, the trouble with the physical identity and narrative that directors chose is that a narrative of home or safety will always be a narrative of white supremacy.

This is true, for one because in writing centers, home becomes defined by white, middle-class standards of home and comfort, often leaving those whose homes don't fit into that mold to feel othered or outside. For example, Treviño and Faison write:

I want to stress that feelings of familiarity, of knowing, and being used to things are a part of

what makes spaces feel comfortable and homelike, but I did not grow up in a home surrounded by white middle-class comforts.

Treviño & Faison are only two of many multiply marginalized writing center practitioners (e.g., Garcia, Green, Lockett) who have talked about feeling out-of-place, not-at-home, and othered in the writing center as a result of a physical and verbal rhetoric that prioritizes a white, middle-class distortion of comfort and safety.

Safety exists hierarchically. Ultimately, the idea of safe spaces and home is perpetuated and preserved because it comforts white writing center practitioners. Inside of a space that functions on neoliberal myths of safety, those who act “against”— by making moves like pointing out inequity — that environment are deemed as unsafe, but the people who act “against” the environment are the people who were never safe to begin with. Much like how “the least cool” person in the writing center was the least cool because she disrupted white comfort. When that white comfort is disrupted, Black and brown bodies are then scapegoated as causing that discomfort through systems like Spiritual Bypassing. Ceballos et al. write, “Spiritual Bypassing is what happens when white women confronted with racial trauma fall back on unity, peace, kindness and love to force People of Color to recant their claim to trauma at the risk of being painted as mean or divisive” (115). Spiritual Bypassing allows writing center practitioners, especially “well-meaning” white woman practitioners to continue to distance themselves from accusations of racism.

For example, in the narrative that Faison shares about Spiritual Bypassing, she recounts she how did a consultation on a racist dissertation which claimed that “a woman, no matter her racial background, would have inferior children should she become impregnated by and consequently bear the offspring of a Black man” (Ceballos et al. 98). More than just recounting the racism of the consultation, Faison recounts the subsequent racism she experienced by her colleagues who, “dismissed [her] concern as an underappreciation for and a misunderstanding of science” (Ceballos et al. 99). Here, not only is Faison silenced, but she’s also villainized as misunderstanding science for even bringing up the issue of racism in the first place. Spiritual Bypassing relies on this villainization because by using it, white practitioners can both ignore the stories of marginalized communities and punish marginalized communities for discussing them in the first place. So, when speaking out against oppressive and harmful situations in the writing center, marginalized bodies are labeled overemotional, angry, or disruptive – the people who make a writing center “unsafe”— a phenomenon that Ceballos also discusses happening to her at her own writing center in Counterstories where she was labeled as an “angry Latina” in a writing center that exerted the idea of comfort (Ceballos et al).

Additionally, my (Amanda’s) narrative shows how silencing pairs with Spiritual Bypassing. Silencing marginalized communities allows white practitioners in writing centers to not have to hear marginalized voices or be implicated in the racism they claim to resist. Rather than hearing

counterstories, the white-centered publications in writing centers create a grand narrative of inclusivity without ever having to engage in issues of race that implicate them in broader systems of white supremacy, which then excuses practitioners from making any ideological changes. The safe space and home myths function together to create this unity, peace, kindness and love, which means that anyone who disrupts this vision, often marginalized consultants, can be painted as divisive in the space, while directors, other consultants, and people who enter the space can maintain the feelings that they're doing the right thing by maintaining their ideas safety, and coziness, and unity.

## Turning to Transformative Justice and Community Accountability

(Bethany; CW: linguistic harm). It's 2015, and my first full semester as a writing center tutor. *90% of my job is working with students who must come each week to work with me as a requirement for their writing lab class that supplements first-semester composition. I have the same 5 students I meet with for one hour each week. Every week, we are required to work on papers for their Comp I class as well as writing exercises (usually required grammar drills) that are required for the lab.*

*I go and grab the worksheet from the back filing cabinet for this week's writing exercise. This client—a self-identified white, disabled, first-gen woman—sits down and I ask, "What do you want to work on today? We can do the writing exercises or stuff for your class."*

*She shrugs, "I don't care."*

*"Okay, well the writing exercise is due tomorrow, so maybe we should just knock that out." She nods apathetically. I prioritize efficiency rather than listening and responding to why she is responding with apathy. I see but don't truly listen or hear what her actions are telling me.*

*Instead, I pull out the exercise and begin to lecture about different sentence types and when to use conjunctions, commas, and the like, as the exercise asks. We get to the example sentences, and I question her about how she thinks we can make the sentence grammatically correct. She doesn't really engage, and I naively think it's because I didn't explain it well. I try to explain sentence types using different colors of paper to represent different components.*

*She finally says, "I don't understand any of this because I don't know what you mean by noun and verb. I hate grammar and I'm failing English anyway. This doesn't matter."*

*I launch into another lesson about what a noun and verb are, ignoring the core of what she was saying—that there's emotions, trauma, and feelings here with these topics and class. Even though I had begun tutoring after barely being trained (i.e., watching 2 sessions and was thrown*



*into it that year); even though the grammar drills were required; even though I didn't have the knowledge or language yet to unpack why grammar isn't actually that important or the linguistic and racial harm and violence that its enforcement causes, I caused immense harm to this student by my ignorance. And the worst part is, 8 years later, and I can't remember if I ever addressed her feelings or the content of what she was saying, or if I continued because I thought "good" tutoring meant doing our required grammar drills.*

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We all have and will commit harm. Our institutions have and will commit harm. And the worst part is we can't undo harm once it's been committed. All harm and abuse are a subset to the larger systems and webs of oppression and violence. They can't be untangled from one another.

Our institutions, which include the institutions of writing centers, are sites of assimilation, harm, and systemic and localized oppression. These institutions were never going to be the place for transformative or radical change, as their very goal and creation were and are antithetical to that.

As Sara Ahmed discussing in *Living a Feminist Life*, she critiques how diversity, equity, and inclusion work, or DEI, serve as "brick walls." Moreover, she discusses how doing that DEI work, which is always through the labor of the diversity worker, is "not the same thing as an institution willing to be transformed" (94). In that, our institutions have a stake in maintaining the status quo of racism, sexism, transphobia, colonialism, et cetera. They have distorted DEI efforts by continuing to occupy indigenous land, relying on police and carceral logics, and much more. In writing center scholarship, there has been countless harm through oppressive ideologies and practices, including not only those mentioned in the introduction, but also beyond. People experience harm daily in writing centers (e.g., the stories found within scholarship of Lockett, Dixon, etc.).

So, what do we do about the harm? One answer is transformative justice and community accountability. Writing center practitioners must reflect not only on their own identities and world with intellect and criticality, but also, we must also address the harm systems and people committed. Some writing center scholarship has discussed restorative justice (e.g., Banville et al.). While some institutions have tried to turn toward restorative justice, that work is incomplete and stays within the same system of harm. According to the Alberta Restorative Justice Association, restorative justice is "an approach focused on repairing harm when a wrongdoing or injustice occurs in a community. Depending on the process or technique used, restorative justice involves the victim, the offender, their social networks, justice agencies, and the community." In this definition, restorative justice is used to reduce harm while working within the system that caused the harm in the first place to maintain the same status quo Ahmed critiques. It is a retrofit and a harm reduction technique within that system that does nothing to prevent future harm. It is a reactive, incomplete

measure rather than a proactive one.

Arising in response to the restorative justice movement was transformative justice (TJ). TJ works to transform the system as well as mitigate harm. In the book, *Beyond Survival*, one of the contributors declares that transformative justice is “a process where the individual perpetrator, the abusive relationship, and the culture and power dynamics of the community are transformed [...]” (Barnow 50). As Mia Mingus discusses, transformative justice resists relying on the state’s carceral systems and perpetuating oppressive norms. Additionally, transformative justice seeks to be active in cultivating “healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved” (Mingus).

In this definition, there are many similarities to restorative justice, but it differs greatly in its overall goal— TJ seeks to abolish and transform the system rather than working within the same structures that caused oppression in the first place. Relatedly, transformative justice necessitates the praxis of community accountability. Contrary to popular belief, “being accountable is not about earning forgiveness” (Cheng Thom 76). Instead, community accountability (CA) is rooted in Black queer Feminist values and is a process that’s an act of healing—through self- and community-care—that helps people understand that everyone can grow (Barnow). In addition, even though harm cannot be erased, the work turns toward transforming and healing individuals, communities, and society (Barnow). Overall, these frameworks of TJ and CA serve not only as ways to enact radical criticality for imaging better worlds, but also as tangible praxes to enact.

Your Turn to Grapple with the Messiness

(Bethany) Writing centers have come to embody and be a microcosm of everything, everywhere to me. With that, I tend to feel everything, everywhere—not always all at once, but the messiness reigns inside and I’m filled with complex, clashing and crashing emotions. Sadness, when I find writing centers and the world to be too overwhelming and seemingly too big to change. Anger, at whatever in this microcosm is hurting people and reinforcing larger harm. Shame, knowing I, too, commit harm. Reckoning, knowing shame isn’t a productive emotion and builds walls to our progress. Mourning, at the loss of who I could be today if I had started my (un)learning earlier. Joy, in being intentional that I want a future-me to be proud of actions I take now knowing I already lost so much time to past progress. I want to become a person who future-me doesn’t mourn.

(Amanda) Most days in the writing center come with a flood of contradictory emotions. Safety, maybe, when I walk in the doors and see my friends. Tension, as I walk by the receptionist and wonder if I have to explain my presence. Laughter, at the heart of a good conversation. Uneasiness, when I don’t see anyone or anything that helps me feel as if I belong in the space. Elation, when I share my ideas, and they are heard. Frustration, when those ideas are appropriated. Anger, when I have to sit through conferences and professional development sessions rife with racism. Often, guilt, as I think back to the times when my decision making was informed by

antiquated views, or when I was a bystander, and I let something slide that I really shouldn't have let slide, or I made fun of student writing, or helped a student write a "better" racist paper because it was easier than challenging views. Guilt, also, as I think about my role inside of an institution that was designed to be oppressive and white supremacist and whether or not I want to continue to participate in that system. Guilt at all of the harm I have and will continue to cause, but also acceptance when I realize that, as Bethany reminds us, it's impossible not to cause harm. And even hope, sometimes, when I make plans for what I'm going to do and how I'm going to act when I do cause harm.

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A transformative justice worldview is a necessary and lifesaving framework; while some scholars have begun this work in writing centers, it must continue in all facets, particularly tutor education, professional development, and administrative praxis. To implement this in writing centers (and institutions at large), we must create better worlds through radical praxis. However, when there is the inevitable harm, injustice, or inequity committed, community accountability allows individuals to begin healing. This healing of ourselves, writing centers, institutions, and society is an act of transformative justice.

While it would be wonderful if there was one way to embody this transformative justice praxis, the actual work is messy and imperfect, but it still moves toward collective action. For instance, Sara Ahmed and Gloria Anzaldúa talk about the fragmentation and in-betweenness of embodying this transformative worldview. In other words, a tension exists between a better world we can imagine and the practice of being fragmented, messy humans who are also working toward better. Radical often seems like a scary term, as though it's a word that can be substituted for extreme. In reality, though, as Angela Davis writes, radical simply means "grasping things at the root." For this reflective portion of the article, we want to use radical imagination as a framework, which Lamar Johnson defines as a concept that:

compels language and literacy scholars and the field of English education to take action to eradicate a system that blocks the chances of creating the impossible—in this case, a more just and equitable world. [...] [T]he (re)imagining of y(our) selves must occur and y(our) hearts, minds, and souls have to be angered for justice and angered with the prophetic imagination (Dantley & Green, 2015) to create the world that we hope to see but that is not yet. (499)

We want to think radically about ourselves, our identities, and our imaginings for the future. You may be wondering what TJ looks like and exact plans for how to do it. We cannot give you the answer to that question. Instead, this work is collective, messy/complex, community-based work

that embraces small moments of progress in the present moment. This work is going to be tense and contradictory and ask for a lot of learning and unlearning to the oppressive norms many of us were indoctrinated in. It will be messy, and we will cause and continue to cause harm by reinforcing the systems that we were indoctrinated into, but we will have the responsibility to stay accountable to our communities and ourselves as we learn and unlearn, and (re)imagine a better future.

We want readers to take a moment to reflect radically on goals and visions for the writing center and what it can look like. The questions below are meant to help you reflect, and they are inspired and influenced by transformative justice scholars (e.g., those in *Beyond Survival*, brown's *emergent strategy*, and *Creative Interventions*):

- What are you embodying in your daily life? In your work?
- How can you grow? How can you learn? How can you unlearn?
- How can you become a person you don't have to mourn later?
- How do/ can you move beyond shame to more productive action?
- Who do you lean on? Who leans on you?
- Are your needs being met? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What is your first reaction in conflict?
- How do you feel when you experience/witness anger? Joy? Sadness? Grief? Tension? Conflict?
- How do you make room for complexity, non-linearity, and messiness?
- Have you engaged in transformative justice (not restorative or carceral justice)? How can you continue/begin this ideological shift?
- What are the organization's policies, practices, spaces, and places embodying and reinforcing?
- Knowing that "safe" and "welcoming" are neoliberal myths, how will/does the organization and participants define safety with that in mind?

- Do participants within the organization feel comfortable voicing conflicts and harm? How do you know they are comfortable? If they aren't, how can the organization work to establish a community of care?
- What is the organizations' participants' first reaction in conflict?
- How will/does the organization make room for complexity, non-linearity, and messiness?
- Has the organization engaged in transformative justice (not restorative or carceral justice)? How can you continue/begin this ideological shift?

## Toward Different Worlds

*(Both). The rest of the story from here is currently a fiction where we dream for a better world and people—not better writers or writing. In that dream, we would look back at who we are now and probably “being sorry” at what we were doing and working toward more self-accountability. In it, we are not just surviving, but thriving and living. It’s a world without universities and institutions as we know them. It’s a world where we operate on crip time where there’s time for “pauses” (Inoue, “Teaching”) and criticality rather than capitalistic deadlines. We don’t flatten others’ stories into one-dimensional tropes, but instead understand and accept that we are all messy people with an array of identities and experiences just trying to do our best. We work toward accountability of ourselves and others for a world where it’s not about “fixing” others—for their use of language(s), so-called “deficits, “differences in identities, trauma, etc.—but instead experience all the differences and complexity that are brought to our transformative communities. We want us to “be alive, awake, grieving, and full of joy” (Piepzna-Samarasinha).*

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