

Welcome to Creating Coalitional Gestures, a biweekly podcast by and for black, Brown, and indigenous women of color in writing studies. This is a digital space by and for self-identified women, both cis and trans, as well as non-binary scholars of color. I am your host Iris Ruiz. This podcast is a collaboration between Spark, Writing and Working for Change series, and scholars in rhetoric and writing in an effort to create resilient strategies. We are pro black, pro Brown, pro women, pro indigenous. We envisioned this podcast as a healing justice project seeking to transform the impact of by walk on the field of writing studies. Creating Coalitional Gestures will take you on a journey. We will explore with healing means in writing studies, by conversing with scholars, teachers, activists, and writers of color. We gesture towards healing and creating coalitions of women of color in order to remedy the silences because our culture, stories, and unique experiences continue to sustain us. We celebrate our traditions, our struggles, our triumphs, and our world. As many of us are still searching for connection, recognition, belonging and legitimation, while honoring who we are as critical writing studies practitioners who also delve on the margins of cyborg and queer identities.

Iris: Hello everyone. And welcome back to CCG podcasts. I am very happy to be here today with Dr. Candace Zepeda, who is out at our lady of the Lake university in San Antonio, Texas. And we're here today to talk about her work and her latest book. I'm going to go ahead and let Candace introduce herself so you can learn a little bit more about her position at Our Lady of the Lake and about her research interests and her future interests. So let's welcome Candace.

Candace: I, so am happy to be here. Thank you for inviting me. So I'm an associate professor in English, but I'm also balancing another role, which is the chair of the department of undergraduate and graduate English. And very recently the Ruben M. and Verónica Salazar-Escobedo school of mass communication in theater, that's a long name, I know. That school just had its blessing, its blessing this semester during Kobe, which was very strange. And so yeah lots of work in administration and you know, the opportunity to often teach undergraduates more frequently than I do graduate with students.

Iris: Wow. Thank you very much about that. Do you think there's a connection there between your two different stances in terms of like creative arts with administration at all?

Candace: Yeah, it's interesting, I don't like to use the word balance so much. I like to see it as I feel, and I often say this when I speak to my grad students that I'm teaching for many of us is, is vocational. And you know, so your called to always teach. So for me, even as an administrator, I feel especially as you know, so few administrators and department chairs are women of color, let alone Latinas. I'm always teaching the people around me. I'm teaching a lot of my other chairs who don't have the same experiences that I do as a Latina and a Chicana. And I'm also

teaching upper administration and advocating for things that normally they would never think about when it comes to liberal arts or funding. And so, yeah, it's, it's this constant cycle of teaching. So I don't ever leave that teaching role behind when I'm chairing, so to speak.

Iris: Thank you so much. It's always nice to see women of color in positions where they can have a really great impact. And it sounds like you're doing some really great work over there at your institution. And I'm really why I wanted to, I was so excited about interviewing you today was because I saw that you recently published you coauthored *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldua: Pedagogy and Practice for Our Classrooms and Communities*, which just came out. It seems like September, 2020. So it's very, very recent. And I have to tell you when I saw that you announced this, I was just so excited. I was just like, I really have to talk to her about this. And so we want to definitely be, get into talking about this experience and about what this book is about. But I think it'd be really helpful for our audience to get a good sense of kind of your grad school experience and your research interests there and the path that you might've taken from there in order to get to this point and co-authoring this book. And so let's go ahead and get started. So Candace, what do you think the tenor is of your research right now? How does it stem from some of the work that you could in grad school and thinking about that, what informs your research and what theoretical frameworks might be, be interested in. And I know that's all a lot. So we start with the first part and you know, talk a little bit about your research right now and how you think it's evolved since grad school.

Candance: Sure. So, great question. I have been concentrated in studying basically what a Hispanic serving institution is for well over a decade. I mean, probably going on 15 years now, it's always kind of centered my research and attention. And I, I think that through the years there's been different layers of how to study what the work of an HSI is meant to do, either historically the value of what happened in legislation to create an institutionalize, these universities that ultimately were supposed to target Hispanics and having some kind of access to higher education, which clearly still isn't the case. So for a while there, there was this kind of fascination with the history and the legislation and the law. But more recently, I've just been really kind of trying to focus on how, especially in my role as a department chair are we really serving the students that were meant to populate these institutions and are we serving them with culturally relevant pedagogies, classroom assignments, programming, even down to assessment.

And clearly the answer is we're not still, we have lots of work to do, but that common question has been since I was in grad school. And so, you know, the story from that is I went to Texas A and M Corpus Christi and they had a very true cohort system. And so you came in with a cohort and which I actually really appreciated, but you know, most people of color, especially at our level will say, you know, you were one of a few people of color. Like there wasn't a lot of us out

there. And what are the first courses I took was a bit of a research course. And I remember the faculty woman, a woman, a white woman said, okay, so we're at an HSI and all of us raised our hand, well, what does that mean? She said just basically a place that it's a name only. And I felt like she couldn't answer me. And I followed up to the point where she was clearly annoyed with me. Like, you know, can I find more information? So at that point, you know, the internet was really kind of brand new. So you had to go to like the archives and research what an HIS was, and then I learned she was really wrong and just miseducated in what HIS's were.

So this is a very pivotal point in my graduate experience because I actually I wasn't supposed to go to grad school. So as an undergrad, I struggled with connecting to classrooms and connecting to faculty and the curriculum. And I can't even tell you how many times I thought about dropping out. I can't talk about my undergraduate time without giving a brief background in my family time. So, you know, I come from South Texas, and both of my parents did seasonal migrant work with their families. You know, my mom went to a high school in South Texas called Robstown High School, which is home of the cotton pickers. And their mascot is actually a little cotton ball. It's all smiling. And so you know, my dad had about an eighth grade education, which was common at that time for Latino males. And he eventually found access through joining the military because, you know, he lived in a farm with 12 brothers and sisters and, you know, all he had was this work ethic. And then there, you know, dangling, you got free food and AC and just join the military. So he did. And you know, my mother, although she excelled in her classes was never told about college and she was a vocational student, which ironically I'll get to that. So I say that story because, you know, education was never a thing in my household and my household. It was a work ethic, you know, working hard, your, your character is everything and family is everything and your word is everything. And so by the time I got to high school, I actually was in the same vocational program my mother was. By the time I was a senior, I only went to school to like noon because I went to worked in my dad's tire store. He eventually opened a tire store and it became a family business. And, you know, we were all kind of indoctrinated that you work for pops. And, you know, I busted tires and learned mechanical work and you know, I'm a good daughter by working with the family. And so my family found out, you could go to school half the time and come work for us, well, *vamos, ándale*, come. They, it never dawned on them like that I was being funneled out of the school system. At the time, this is the early nineties, Texas had passed a law that if you hadn't passed standard tests, you didn't graduate. You weren't allowed to graduate and walk the stage. So this was the Tax or Tasks or whatever name it was. And I was a horrible test taker and it took me like four times to finally try to pass it. And I think that the people that helped during that kind of made me learn those answers within pointing at it. But I share that because a high school counselor had told me maybe a better idea for me to drop out because taking a GED would be an easier test for me. And I remember I said, you know, let me give this, this testing one more try. And by the fourth time I had passed. So I didn't go to college right away.

I worked with my parents for a while and it was you know, probably by the time I was 19 or 20 I was unloading a trailer load of tires with my pops and I remember him saying like, why are you here? Like be better than me. And so on our lunch break, I went to a local community college Del Mar college in Corpus Christi, Texas, go Vikings, and I didn't know anything. And we have a burger, national chain, called Whataburger, and we compete with In and Out. In and Out just moved to Texas. But I went on my lunch break and some senora was like, you look lost. What are you doing here? And I'm like, well, I just have questions. How do I do this whole school thing? And then coincidentally, she happened to work in the registrar and was like, well, let me walk you through the system. And an hour and a half later, she registered me and I, and to this day I don't remember her name, but I failed any, I didn't take the SATs or act or any of that cause I went to work! Del Mar had their own kind of testing and I failed everything. And so I had to take remedial writing and remedial math. So when most students take a community college education, clearly it's meant to be two years. It took me almost four and a half, five years to get out of community college. I had no idea about financial aid literacy. I just kind of went through the motions. And then somehow ended at A and M as an undergrad. But I made a close connection with one mentor, Glenn Blalock, who eventually, as you know, you know, started CompPile. And he was the chair at the time. And I don't know what it was about Glenn, but he saw something in me and he asked me to consider grad school. And without really me knowing it, he kind of, I already passed the deadline to apply, but he had already helped start the paperwork. And then all of a sudden he's like, I think you'd be a good teacher. You need to go, you're going to be teaching seminar that will help pay for your education and you'll learn how to teach. And so I went into a big old room at a university, like, where am I? What am I doing? They're like, here's a syllabus, here's a book. Good luck. You start school on Monday. So that kind of started this curiosity of my, what is part of my epistemology is work ethic. Like you work and you give a hundred percent. And a lot of the people that I was working with that had the honor to have these fellowships and weren't taking it seriously. And I felt like if I'm going to teach, I want to be the best teacher. I don't care if it's seminar. I want these students to know that I'm showing up.

And so it got to the point where I was very curious about pedagogy and all the information at that time, there was nothing that looked like me. And there was no one that sounded like me and I looked and I looked and then I happened to be in a discipline where we, you know, talked about pedagogy. So I was in the rhetoric and composition program at A and M graduate program, but we were a few people of color. And, you know, I was always the one instigating. Okay. So how does this work when you're teaching a whole classroom of migrant workers or bilingual students, or, you know populations or demographics that don't look like all of us and no one had the question, no one could answer those questions. And so it became this fascination with pedagogy. And then when I learned what HSI wasn't, it's like, hey, she's got that wrong. You know, a Hispanic serving institution is meant and designed to ultimately help

mentees rise to a certain level of having this access to a higher ed. And so while searching and pursue, this pursuit for his eyes pedagogy always came with it. It wasn't me wanting to be a better teacher. It was wanting to make sure that the students of color were seen. One thing that I've seen in the literature for the last decade, often from scholars of color, especially in our field is we were never seen, like, we always felt invisible. You know? So, you know, I teach a grad class on pedagogy and theory in spring. We just adopted your book. So maybe you could zoom in to meet students. And your introduction really, you know, was like my experience. It's like none of this, the scholars looked like me or understood what it meant to be invisible, what a meant to search and pursue this home building. You know, I was looking for a home in academia that allowed me to use my own literacies to understand what student agency meant and that just wasn't happening in grad school. And so by the time I entered the PhD program, it was just this drive of, I want it to be able to work on scholarship or work with other scholars that understood what it meant to not only teach at a Hispanic serving institution is know why those schools exist and how your pedagogy has to shape into these spaces in order to help the students feel seen. And that's kind of what took me into this book and all the other kind of publications that I've done leading to this book. It's helping students, and I'm helping faculty understand how to access this language. I know I've gone on a rant, but is some of this kind of making sense of that question?

Iris: So much of it is making sense with the question. Thank you so much for that heartfelt story testimonial that you gave, because I think a lot of us can see ourselves within that story. It's so super important just to think about how many of us share these common paths and talking about access to education, for example, and you know, bringing visibility to students of color and that being very much informed by your own experience. And as you said, you know, having these expectations from being in a Mexican household that, you know, struggling with ideas of assimilation and an accommodation, I think so many of us can it resonates right with so many of us. So so let's go ahead and go onto the second part of the question then, because we definitely want to learn more. So for the second part, we're looking more so at maybe thinking about your experience in going forward, how this helped you to decide which theoretical frameworks you might be interested in, or that you actually use in your pursuit of like unique pedagogical approaches for the way that you see your experience and the experience of students of color. So let's look at, you know, specifically focusing on theoretical frameworks that you might be interested in.

Candace: Sure. So my grad program really equipped me with the language of, you know, the post-process movement, that was sort of the hype at the time. And as you know, in the field of rhetoric and composition, like it has just glaring gaps in the voices of people like me and you,

they just almost were very non-existent for a while, other than Victor's work with bootstraps. So for me, it became this pursuit of what, this can't be it, you know. I mean, you know, I remember when I read Lisa Del Peck, I felt like, look, she's on the right track, but I was still hungry for more information. It wasn't until I took a Chicana feminist literature course, surprisingly by a German American professor at A and M where I was introduced to Chicana feminists and other women of color theorists. And I remember thinking, this is it, but it was under this gaze and a branding of like Latin X literature or feminist literature. And so those conversations weren't happening in the field of rhetoric and composition at that time that there was no bridge building. And I felt particularly, you know, when talking about the book, Gloria Anzaldúa for me, really kind of just like allowed me to see where there could be connections and how her work was so interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary. And I felt like there was this blaring accents in the field of rhetorical and written communication and theory, and these alternative ways to look at the body because, you know, one of the things about writing and as teachers who teach writing, you know, I remember in my dissertation, I liked just attacked Bloom's taxonomy, 20 million different ways. I was taught that Bloom's taxonomy was the way that someone learns. And I, I tell you, so many faculty just probably remember me as being like rebellious and I challenged their work of like a triangle, really. So students come in with no knowledge at all. Like that blew my mind, but the work of Chicana feminist really kind of gave me new language. So particularly I was always drawn to, well, what about the body? You know, if a student doesn't feel seen, they will feel as if their body is not present and you're asking them to hold a pen or to type, but their body is not going to participate in that because ultimately their flesh and blood experiences are not part of the classroom discussion or dialogue. So Chicana feminists like Gloria Anzaldúa, a lot of her work concentrates on the flesh and blood experience, theories in the flesh, for instance, that our bodies, you know, our, epistemologies, we bring to this world, this politic and, and we have to be able to use that to theorize our own experiences. And, you know, I there's this constant theme and Chicana feminism of home building and spaces that are home. And, and a lot of that also deals with when you're outside of the spacial reality, that's safe, there is trauma, and that, you know, these experiences that often many people of color have felt if they're traumatizing. And so when you're in a space where you're taught that your language doesn't matter, or your stories don't matter, your narratives don't matter. Like your body's gonna not, it will either react or not act, and then you're not participating in this what's, you know, what's called liberatory education.

So Chicana feminists really were a game changer for me and through their work, you know, everything else kind of came into place like critical race theory and Latin X theory. And actually, you know, all of these theories that are siloed outside of rhetoric and composition. So I was one of the people in UTSA's doctoral program. I was actually recruited by Norma Cantú, and she really kind of celebrated with me, like I asked her, can I bridge these works together? And she's

like, of course. And I'm like, well, it hasn't really been done a lot. She's like, well, then make it done, like fill that gap. And so since, you know, HSIs it's really moved and evolved towards how we could look at other theories outside of rhetoric and composition and how they can inform those theories. And then how we can use those theories at a broader level to where we're not just sort of concentrating on composition in itself because ultimately as you know, students need to understand their own agency as writers, regardless of what degree they're in. Like we want students who are informed writers in and outside of the university. So yeah, that's kind of like where I'm rooted in with my sisters over there and Chicana feminism.

Iris: Oh, wow. That's amazing. That is actually a really great segue way into talking a little bit more about the book, which you have mentioned a couple of different aspects of specifically thinking about you know, theories of the flesh and home building and this idea of how, when one, doesn't see their body, you know, in their surroundings and they, how can they see it in reality or how can they embody themselves and, and how this relates to, you know, trauma and this type of pedagogical trauma, right. And being invisible, there's just so much there to unpack. But it's a good segue way into talking about the book. And so I know our audience is really probably waiting like, Oh, we want to hear more about the book. So let's go ahead and talk a little bit about what this might mean for actually bringing that type of theoretical framework into the classroom. And so your book is titled *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldua: Pedagogy and Practice for our Classrooms and Communities*. And that's just a really amazing title in itself. So if you want to talk to us a little bit about this experience, because there's so many things to talk about, but the experience of publishing the book of working with Norma Cantú, of forging this new space that you're talking about in this collaboration.

Candance: Yeah. Well, you know it's an interesting story because Margaret actually was the one of three Latinas that were the last to graduate under Norma Cantú's direction, at UTSA. And so she retired from UTSA and eventually went to a different university, but the college of language and fine arts made a big deal of it cause we were her final three. So Norma has always had this magic number and I don't remember number what she wanted to make sure in her role, that she got so many number of Latinas and Chicanas to graduate with their doctorate under her direction. And so we were her last numbers. So I've known Margaret since my work at UTSA. And she actually ended up at St. Mary's, which is literally across the street from our university. And I got a random call one day saying, Hey, I have this project idea and I really would love you to work with me on this because I know your area is pedagogy. I know that all your recent publications have always focused on Gloria's work. And Norma thinks it's a great project idea, but we really need you on their team. So at the time, I'm a department chair, I'm balancing teaching and I have young children and I'm like, Oh, I don't know if I could take on this project. But then she said to me, something along the lines of, "Candace, so many people don't know

how to use her work when it comes to actually creating an inclusive classroom. They read her work and celebrate it as literature, but not, but how do you teach the shadow bees? How do you teach spiritual activism?" and all these other great terminologies that Gloria brings with all of her other work that is out there. And I think that's what sold me. So in a matter of a short amount of time, we, I agreed to be on the project. And we created everything that goes with the collection of book, which, you know, is exhausting. You know, the query to the possible presses to creating the call for papers that went over so many, several different kinds of drafts. We didn't even have a title down, but we knew that pedagogy had to also be richly connected to the community. Norma was very intentional about, we need to make sure that we're showing people that her work also, isn't just scholar and meant for the world of the Academy, but people use her work in the community, especially community activists and artists, et cetera. And so each one of us kind of took on a section that we wanted to see come to fruition.

And my section clearly is on the pedagogy side of it. We sent out the call, we had an enormous response from people which became a whole other layer of work of reviewing those essays, having to determine which would strengthen this collection. We wanted all of them and we eventually actually Arizona Press was super excited and jumped on immediately cause they had just finished a publication of one of Norma's other books. So we were very blessed that Norma had made these connections with Arizona Press. So it wasn't new information. And from there it just kind of went fast forward. A normal day for me was getting up, getting the kids ready, heavy to work about 7:45 and then just making sure that my time allowed for two to three hours of this book project. And I had a clock those in in my head. So sometimes, you know, work caught up with me, teaching caught up with me, being a mom caught up with me and I was doing this work at one or two or three in the morning cause I had to get done, either sending out letters to my authors and my part of the collection or reviewing other parts of it and editing. And it somehow just got done. And, you know, and I get asked that sometimes when my grad students, like, how are you doing all of this? And then you work to get this book out. And I think one of the cool things about our world is sometimes magic. Like this just happens. It happened for us, because this work is so crucial, so important, especially now more than ever. And, and there's been an interest in Gloria's work, I think within just the last five years alone that, you know, I love it. It's great. Everyone often reads *Borderlands* first, but how do I create like an assignment on this? Or how do I like use this language? And I often get from our white allies, you know, I'm afraid to use her work or I'm not sure how to use her work, you know, and I want to be able to use her work. And so that was sort of this kind of charge for the three of us that we felt it was time that we show people how to use her work, you know? And there's nothing really out there like this at this moment. So I think that we'd have had been very overwhelmed with the amount of people that have already purchased this book. It's already

being taught at one university, Norma told me in Ohio. And so, yeah, that's where we bring ourselves today.

Iris: How exciting! That is, just thank you so much for the work and thank you so much for agreeing to do the work because I know it's going to be so valuable and relevant. You know, the more that I talk to WPAs in different states, it's becoming more popular that the student demographics are shifting and you know, we have a lot more Latin X students in colleges all across the country. And, and not that it's only relevant there, but we're also thinking about like, you're talking about alternative types of epistemologies and different identities, right? Alternative pedagogical approaches. So this is kind of, this is just such a great contribution and I really liked the way that you described how you, you know, you really did put aside the time to write and to do the editing duties necessary to make this book happen. But I like how you described it as like magic just happens because before you knew it, it was there and it was done and it was working for you and it seemed like it was meant to be just awesome. And would you be so honored as to maybe read us a little section of the book that I know somebody who are anxious to read?

Candance: Yes, I'm happy to. So as I mentioned before, like Margaret and Norma felt well, if we're going to ask anybody, Candace has become this person, that pedagogy and praxis is her area that needs to be the chapter that she focused on. So when they ask, well, what do we name your chapter section? And I'm like pedagogy and praxis. So this starts part two of the book. And my section is called Enacting A Pedagogical Practice of Healing and Hope and Civil Unrest. And I'll read one paragraph that I think will give people insight into who I am as a professor, a writer, especially of her work. But I'll start off with a quote from Anzaldua, "Because our bodies have been stolen, brutalized, or numbed, it is difficult to speak from and through them. We are besieged by a silence that hollows us." And I think that quote kind of says a lot of what I talked about earlier, you know, being silent in the Academy. But I'm really drawn to her use of, we feel hollowed. You know, like there is no of the inner part of us. And I can't even imagine as a professor knowing that a student in my classroom feels hollowed, empty inside and then ask them to write about something. Right. So I start off basically talking about, I wonder, you know, what Anzaldua would think about our current climate, you know this book you know, we really wanted to make sure that we addressed what was happening to us politically with this current administration. So it starts off kind of looking at what would she say, what would she say about this? So in this section I talk about, like, it's important we talk about these conversations because I teach the small Spanish serving institution where like 8% of our students identify as Latin X, they're first gen. And they've, they're very open about sort of the traumas that have happened to them since our POTUS presidency, you know, from the taglines that build that wall or, you know we're criminals, et cetera. So this is called "So what happened to civility?"

The erosion of civility has extended far beyond our civil discourse with the growing polarization of our political views and the emboldening of fringe ideology. What was once a veiled rhetoric of intolerance or hate now has become normalized and today's divided America, white nationalists neo-Nazis and other extreme groups are granted the right to assert their legitimacy openly in public spaces as evidenced by their public protests across the country, by refusing to outright condemn such rhetoric and openly violent acts the current president has tactically encouraged the continued participation and legitimization of such groups in the political landscape, so they can help make America great again. This public rhetoric soon led to a surge in violent acts, including the racialization of marginalized groups, including Latin X, who regardless of citizenship, are publicly targeted as criminal, illegal, violent, sexual predator, un-American or uneducated. The full scope of this combative rhetoric is irreparable and could affect Latin X families and communities for generations. In the coming years Latin X must learn how to manage the trauma of discrimination, which has long-term effects on the body, including sense of identity and emotions of shame.

So you know, kind of connecting to one of your earlier questions in, in the last year or two years, I've really been centered on shame. And I'm actually working on a piece right now on the verguenza, suffocation of Latin X bodies in the classroom. And you know, I am kind of saying that shame and verguenza, which is for the listeners, shame in Spanish. It doesn't translate well because for the concept of verguenza for Latinx people, is you feel like you've shamed your family or your community. It's this bigger, broader version of feeling that you're letting people down versus shame in itself in that English translation is just like, well, I, I feel shame, you know, it's very individualized. And so I end that section by talking about shame and how, you know, this public shaming at the top level of our world, which just blows my mind is going to have long-term effects on our students. And and, and we need, we need to wrestle with that as, as faculty, regardless of our ethnicity or how we identify ourselves because ultimately some Latin X student for example, will be in a classroom and if another student has a MAGA hat on for it, since that may trigger something in their body of trauma of feeling shame or inferior or not wanted and so that's sort of my section of the book a bit, a little, a little insight into it.

Iris: I really liked the way that you distinguish between shame and verguenza. I thought that was just a very powerful passage overall, but that particular part, you explained that so well and how one is, you know, more associated with the cultural aspects. We were talking about the difference between shame and verguenza and you know, the alternative approaches and thinking about pedagogy and the way Gloria Anzaldua informs that. And I think it's interesting because it's one way that we see a term that is interpreted through the body, right, and how it relates to ideas of the family and of ideas of the homemaking and ideas of possible trauma. And that's really important for us to think about because sometimes if we don't see ourselves in the

pedagogical picture, there can be that, that idea, that feeling of shame. Right. Yeah, let's go ahead and continue with the next question here. And I think you started to touch on it already, talking about the current political moment here and let's, let's go ahead and move on to this suggestion part, because you already mentioned some of the really kind of racist rhetoric. That's coming from the white house right now, regarding Latinx within the United States and different, very negative descriptions, personhood and possible longterm effects of that. So for those of us, whether we're graduate students, instructors, professors, administrators, what is one suggestion you give to fellow academicians during this uncertainty?

Candace: Well, I think the, it's such a complicated way to frame that question because depending on who the audience is, my first suggestion is for any individual to first take inventory of their own use of language. And sometimes that comes at a cost. So, you know, I got asked at my university since we don't have a diversity inclusion office and half the time that I believe those exists, some person of color gets tokenized into those roles and positions without us looking at how institutionally we need to talk about the scary stuff, like what is race? And I was asked to lead a workshop on what anti-racist pedagogy is and to talk about some really heated, complicated terms. I think since George Floyd's death and murder, we at the university level saw some interesting things happen. Either universities were quick to respond to his murder or a university's felt pressure to respond to his murder. And I don't know if it was for reputation sake or with this outpouring of rage from people and protests around the world. But it did, I believe start a necessary conversation of how we use language and at the institutional level, how we're using language when it comes to our students who have historically been marginalized in displays. So as you might have heard I'm really have centered my work on how to be an anti-racist by Ibram X. Kendi.

And the other one is Love's work. I don't know if you're familiar with her. *We Want To Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*, Benita Love, Bettina Love, my apologies. Those two books, I think bring a very modern perspective to all the work that critical race theorists and Chicana feminist theorists and black feminist theorists have been doing for a considerable amount of time, which is calling out those paradigms and institutional structures that we're all part of. And I think, you know, going back to your question, like what advice, what suggestions? Well, one of the first is we need to take inventory of own language, of our, are we participate are participating in this idea of anti-racism in our classrooms, in our scholarship and our one-on-one with students as department chairs, as writing program ministers. Are we participating in anti-racist praxis and pedagogy or are we being racist? And this is an uncomfortable conversation. It's a tough conversation because people don't always, don't always, people don't want to say the racist, like you think racist, they either think KKK or George Wallace or Hitler, and use those age old stereotypes. Well, I can't be

racist. I have a Latinx friend. But I think, you know, Love's work takes it to this next level, but are you supporting policies that are racist? You are, that's my suggestion for you. You need to take inventory of how you use language. Cause for our world of rhetorical theory and communication, everything comes down to the crux of language and, and, and that comes down to the books we select. You know, one of the things that I did early on in my work as chair is make sure that, you know, if, if we all agree as faculty, that we support having voices of color in the classroom and we believe in diversity and inclusion and everyone will always say yes to that. Okay. So how many of those books in your classroom are required versus how many are suggested? You know, that makes a difference. So, you know, I think we need to take inventory. And I think for many of us, we have to do the work that matters, which is, you know what, Anzaldua kind of charged us with do the work that matters. And part of doing the work that matters is publishing and making sure this is your focus and anything that you find magical. So for, for graduate students specifically, like we need more of the scholarship out there. We need more of those voices in all kinds of genres and the creative arts, as well as in theory, we need clearly that in the field of rhet comp, right? But we also need people to take it to the next level with being in board meetings or being at that leadership level or being a program administrator and being a department chair, or maybe even being an associate Dean. I don't buy into that age old myth of like, Oh, it's faculty against administration and I can't even tell you how many times people will say you've entered the dark side. It's like, yeah, but some, one of us needs to be at that table. And one of us needs to be able to call out administration when they don't know how to engage in this conversation.

We need to, because we're never, pedagogy, Anzaldua's book and you know, our book is never going to fix the problem. One 16 week classroom, isn't going to fix the problem. You know, we have institutionalized racism as it exists is, is always been here. And us, as, you know, people of color, we know this, we know this loud and clear, right? So when people, you know, think like, Oh, well Obama was president, we live in a post racial world, don't we? And then they're surprised to see Floyd murdered on camera. And, and then you thought that was it. And then, you know, there was another murder after that. And you know, we're still Briana Taylor's has never been brought to justice. And so how does all of that work affect us as practitioners? Well, we get those students in the classroom and regardless if we don't want to be political, we have to be, it's our responsibility to be because ultimately they're, they're watching these feeds of these murders on their phones. They're reading out there on Twitter. I mean, they're seeing it and that is changing their psychosis is changing their mind and this trauma doesn't happen. Does it have to happen to them? As long as you're witnessing it, you are still participating in that traumatic act and feeling othered. And if you feel othered, you're going to feel othered than a classroom. And if you're in a classroom where you don't see literature that looks like you, or you don't have a faculty that sees you and you feel hollow, like Anzaldua says, we have

to talk about this as pedagogists. We have to talk about this with professors and, and it's, it's uncomfortable work, but it's work that matters. Sorry, I got very passionate with talking about this.

Iris: Yeah. I mean, it's just unbelievable, right? Some of the things that we're being exposed to, and I think that you captured all of that emotion and things that people are not necessarily able to articulate about being exposed to those types of violent acts immediately, you know sometimes immediately, sometimes after, and it's horrendous. It's just, like you said, and talking about, you know trauma and how that happens in so many different areas of life within the classroom. And then, you know, now talking about social media and the ways that those two are not disconnected, and we shouldn't think of them as being disconnected. And really what I was really drawn to here was how you were talking about the use of language and how we really need to check ourselves and our own use of language and how we're critical of languages. So many different levels, but especially at the level of policy, if you have the agency to be able to change policy, which for me leads me back to what you're talking about here, as far as your own experience, your research, your scholarship, the motivation for it, and how as a scholar, it's almost like you have to inherently be from what I'm hearing, you're saying, an activist when thinking about policy and activists. And I think thank you so much for, for capturing all of that. So passionate, this has just been so helpful in so many ways. And you know, thinking about going forward and creating more partnerships with community with the classroom and with institutions, I think that your work is definitely speaking to all of those areas in ways that we need, we desperately need right now in this political climate and really thinking about civility and how we can help one another through these difficult times, because you know, when we're talking about difficult times, we're talking about unprecedented times right now, right. That we're just being challenged in so many different ways. I also want to commend you for continuing to stay strong during this time. Is there anything, you know, we're going to be closing here in a second, which I hate to do, but is there anything that you'd like to leave the audience with that you feel has brought you strength through this time or anything at all that you'd like to share as we're closing here today?

Candance: Yeah. I think, you know, one of the things I'd like to leave the audience with because I get asked this often. Our work is, is, is challenging work and it's challenging on the body in, in so many ways. I don't think there's any piece that I've done recently or any publication I've done recently where I don't talk about the body and the traumas of the body, but you know, I'll, I'll point back to Anzaldua for a second. I think one of the things that she does really well that I actually saw reflected in, you know, Cantú's work of how to an anti-racist is that through this pain that we're experiencing and through this trauma and all the things that come with COVID, which we didn't get to talk about, which is, you know, our bodies are exhausted. You know, when COVID happened were you were locked down and, you know, sort of isolated from

everybody else in the world and many of us had to still teach our children while balancing work, et cetera, and was exhausting on the body. You know, this work is exhausting and it is traumatic to remember, you know, that I was told that, you know, I wasn't smart enough to go to college. I was told, Hey, you may drop out. I never went and toured universities like the kids do now, you know, I went to go work. And that's, those are painful memories. But you know, Anzaldua's says that, you know, when we, when we pull through this flesh, right, our flesh and blood experiences at the same time, we're sort of, it brings healing, it heals us. One of my latest things I'm working on now is I've been fascinated with her work on Mictecacihuatl, which is, you know, I know it's difficult to explain on a podcast, but they could look it up. Is this beautiful idea that, you know, this Aztec goddess is cut up until a million pieces and decapitated by her brother and, you know, she reappropriates that story of you know, being cut up and that ultimately our goal is to put ourselves back together, you know, it's this constant action of making, unmaking and pulling out the flesh and that we are kind of decapitated and our culture and our people of color.

And, you know, the we're, we are George Floyd, you know, when he died, I think a little bit of us died with him, but we honor his death and the hundreds and thousands possibly with colonization, right. You know, we, we have this sense of responsibility to find healing in our own ways. And that's probably the biggest advice I could give anybody that in order for us to heal, don't get caught up with the distractions. And for me, I labeled distractions as, you know, the, the real Housewives of America, or just spending hours upon hours, bingeing on Netflix. Look, some of the times that that's meant to happen. And, you know, sometimes I could get caught up in a battle online, over someone who's super conservative. And, but those are distractions. Ultimately we find healing when we collectively can make our own magic, right, either through poetry or art or drawing or scholarship, it matters because someone, one person may read it and that's all they need to feel seen. And then they could take that magic somewhere else and make someone else feel seen. And so we're called to do that, you know, to grow together in community and coalitions together, and to build these bridges with our grad students, particularly, you know, I ask anyone on this podcast, if you have a grad student, you know, who you feel like needs some direction, mentor, take the time to mentor them. And I'm not talking about that bullshit mentor of like random meetings, like get their phone and send them a motivational message of hope on a Monday and remind them that their voice matters. And I do that. And it's really important for me that my mentees know that I see them and I see the potential in them. But I also think as scholars of color, we need to get outside of the Academy and we need to be able to work in communities and grassroots communities to make change. And it's brutal because that change, we want it right away, but it's not going to come right away and it's slow, but we can make that change in our own classrooms and in our own one-on-one conversations. And for me, that's where the magic happens. So that, I guess that's my hopeful advice for anybody. And if you want to read some amazing people that are

making changes, I encourage people to consider adding this book to their library. You know, and I would advocate for anyone, you know, you gotta grow your library, graduate students, and find every scholar of color that you can and support their work and buy their work and promote their work because ultimately that's how we decolonize a classroom space, you know, by using our, an alternative narrative. And there's so many of us out there and that's how we, you know, break down those walls so to speak. So I appreciate you taking the time to interview me. I'm very humbled because I totally think you're amazing and I love everything that you write and I'm really honored.

Iris: Oh, well, thank you so much. That means a lot for me, just for you to hear as to say that, because we need to hear that as you said, and we need to collectively participate in this healing process, right? We need to collectively feel together and, you know, by participating with this work and engaging with this work, not only with Candance and I here today, but with the scholarship that we share, that I feel that, you know, we do have some things in common in our work and trying to work towards healing. Some of the trauma that we experienced by not seeing ourselves within the field, not seeing ourselves within the scholarship and things like that. And so I think it's really powerful that we're here today because we both have this mission of wanting to heal and being able to offer other people you know, tools and ideas for how to participate in this collective healing, in this coalition of healing is really important. And that's what this podcast is about here. So thank you for leaving us on that very magical note. And we just want to say thank you everybody. And thank you for continuing to listen to us. And we definitely want to see you all reading Candance's book and whatever you're doing for the rest of the day, have a great one.