

## Creating Coalitional Gestures Episode 5 Transcript

Welcome to Creating Coalitional Gestures: A BIWOC 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 nonbinary 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 envision this podcast as a healing justice project seeking to transform the impact of BIWOC on the field of Writing Studies.

Creating Coalitional Gestures will take you on a journey. We will explore what healing means in WS, by conversing with scholars, teachers, activists, and writers of color. We gesture toward healing in 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.

Hello, everyone. I'm Don Unger, a Spark Editorial Collective member. Welcome to this special episode of Creating Coalitional Gestures. In this episode we do something a bit different from previous episodes. In this episode we present a series of short interviews that Liz Lane and I conducted in March and April 2021 with Iris Ruiz and two other editorial collective members, Jaquetta Shade-Johnson, and Darin Jensen. This spring, we reached out to some of the other editors who have been working on Spark and related projects to discuss their experiences with activism over the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Jaquetta, Darin, and Iris had a lot of interesting things to say about how they and their research, teaching, and service have been affected. We hope you enjoy the episode.

Dr. Jaquetta Shade Johnson is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Missouri. Her research focuses on how Indigenous communities make meaning through the relationships with land and through the everyday, embodied practices of material production—such as foodways—that stem from these relationships.

Alongside Phil Bratta, Jaquetta edited the third volume of Spark, which was released in May 2021. This volume focused on coalition building, and Jaquetta and Phil published a number of wonderful articles, columns, and interviews where scholars presented different perspectives on how to build activist coalitions. I encourage you to check out volume 3 if you haven't already. You can find it on the web at [sparkactivism.com](http://sparkactivism.com).

### **Interview With Jaquetta Shade-Johnson (JSJ) by Liz Lane (LL) and Don Unger (DU)**

**Liz Lane:** How does your work with *Spark* compliment your other research teaching or service?

**Jaquetta Shade-Johnson:** For me as a Cherokee citizen, my research is mainly situated in the areas of indigenous rhetorics, so I'm primarily concerned with anti-colonial de-colonial and indigenous activism, specifically how we embody resistance through our everyday rhetorical practices. Some of my work looks at like the ways that we cook and forage foods that were politicized. That were, um, supposed to kill us like genocidal practices.

Right. And so how we resist those through the ways that we, um, interact with the land in our communities every day. For me, *Spark* tends to compliment that research service as well as my teaching and service work because it offers me the opportunity to sort of bring those conversations into the larger context of the journal and into the larger conversations happening around activism in the field.

**LL:** Yeah. That's, that's wonderful. I'm just gonna ask a follow up to that. So you're citizenship in the Cherokee nation and the work you just described in your research areas, how does that also compliment your community or activist work? I know you kind of started to address that a little bit, but would you mind saying a little bit more?

**JSJ:** Sure. So, a lot of the work that I do is around sort of challenging the Western codes of what our identities are supposed to be, and some of that is pushing back against food sovereignty issues and issues around food production and cultural-genocidal practices that have been going on and that we're still experiencing.

So for me, some of that looks like helping native youth get access to different resources, things of that nature. So, my work is really community oriented. I feel like Phil is actually really much more engaged with direct action activism. I think that this question--I'm kind of sad that he wasn't able to be here to join us today.

Phil Bratta is the co-lead editor for this volume. But Phil engages in a lot more direct action activism specifically around different types of communities. For instance, during the Black Lives Matter protests in Tulsa, Oklahoma following the murder of George Floyd, Phil joined up with one of my long-time friends who's a Muskogee Creek woman named up Apollonia Pena, and they established the Greencorn Medics Crew, which was a medical crew that went around helping with medical care during the protests. They help with people who were injured or became ill for like dehydration during the marches. And so I feel like that really aligns with the ethos of this particular journal and the work that we're doing here in *Spark*.

**LL:** I guess I have a follow up question related to that. So you're describing this active community work and engagement that you've been a part of for quite a while. How did that shape your writing of the CFP for volume three and the focus on coalitional rhetorics?

**JSJ:** That's a good question. For me and for Phil as well, we're both involved in a lot of different activism in different ways and as we were beginning to draft the call, we were just thinking, what is the thing that's really like on our minds, aside from COVID of course.

At that time in early 2020 with so many things happening around the election, we just decided that we needed to address it, and fortunately, it worked out really well since the podcast, as well as the other work that we're doing with the Teacher Scholar Activist blog, all sort of like aligned in a really

beautiful way. So for us, bringing those conversations about what we're doing, and the coalition work that we're engaged in into this larger conversation seemed like a really nice fit.

**Don Unger:** I think that dovetails with a question we have about where you see work in the field writ large going in terms of activist work within, rhetoric, writing literacy studies.

**JSJ:** Sure. I think that's a really good question as well, and I think that it really leads into what we're working on in this particular volume. For the last few years, I've noticed that our field, at least within the US in general, has been deeply, deeply focused on navigating political harm, which has really fueled our interest for volume three, but with the change in administration that we've experienced, I foresee a bit of a shift--and to be clear, I think there's still plenty of political harm for us to be navigating. Definitely. But, I also think that it would be exciting to see a trend happening in the area of community action and reconciliatory justice. So like how do we sort of move past all those polarizing conversations that we've been having as a larger society; how do our communities continue to survive and heal from that systemized trauma while still advocating for our needs and priorities? How do we, or can we even reconcile with our families or our fellow humans who kind of took the opposing sides? I know that was such a big deal at least on my end. So how's the Biden administration upholding or not their campaign promises for communities. Additionally, as COVID wears on, I anticipate an emergence of scholarship around the circumstances of the pandemic.

For many of us, I know that the pandemic has sort of weighted down our lives and our productivity, but I think as we begin to sort of suss out as a field, what that burden of COVID has been doing to us, and as our collective experience begins to sort of like lift out of that, I think we'll have lots to say about it. I think we'll have lots of conversations around vaccine testing and access, data representation, data sovereignty, and labor. I know that a lot of parents, caregivers, healthcare workers, essential workers have been experiencing just horrific circumstances as well as pandemic related inequities, across class, race, gender, sexuality, disability, et cetera. So, those are the sorts of things I foresee coming out that could be new and exciting and really move our conversations forward.

**LL:** That is a fantastic answer. Thank you so much for that thought. Like you've just got my brain spinning in different directions and thinking about different things that we could be doing to kind of address a lot of these harms.

I'm curious as well how your role as a teacher, a scholar, and an activist...how have those roles evolved for you over the last year, few years? As you know, we've experienced these shifts.

**JSJ:** Oh, that's a good question, and I think there's a lot I can say about it, but for me, helping work on the journal has been really useful. It's given me sort of a place to put some of those things as I've been sort of struggling with the issues that have been coming up and hitting us as a society, as far as the different sorts of things happening with COVID and the things happening in our political spectrum. This has kind of given me an outlet to sort of direct those feelings in a productive way that I feel has been really helpful in general.

It's also helped me to think about genre differently as we begin to engage in these conversations and the way that we set up our genre expectations for *Spark*. It really helps me to push against like those more stringent academic article sorts of models and to think about different ways that the

work that we can be doing can engage with our communities using things like tool reviews and interviews and things like that--sort of opening up what that scholarly work looks like for us.

**DU:** Thank you so much for taking a few moments to talk to us. We're using this episode of *Creating Coalitional Gestures* to look at how the podcast connects to other work that *Spark* has been doing, and as you said, with *Teacher Scholar Activist*. I think the connections start to have more meaning and depth when you talk to specific people about how it's affected them and what their perspectives are.

I really appreciate everything you said. You've given me a lot to think about in a very short time. I know I'm still processing how COVID has affected me, you know what I mean, how the pandemic has affected me. So, I think it's somewhat understandable that we won't be writing about it for a little bit because we're still in the midst of living at right.

**LL:** Yeah. I believe that's all we have, unless there's anything else you'd like to mention or add to our discussion here today?

**JSJ:** Well, thank you so much for inviting me. I really appreciate it, and I know that Phil had planned to be here, but wasn't able to. But, we're really thankful for having this opportunity to voice some of these concerns.

In our next interview, Liz and I spoke with Dr. Darin Jensen. Darin is a faculty member in the Department of English at Des Moines Area Community College in Iowa. He is also an editor of the blog *Teacher Scholar Activist*.

I encourage you to check out *Teacher Scholar Activist*. You can find it on the web at [teacherhyphen.com](http://teacherhyphen.com) or [scholarhyphen.com](http://scholarhyphen.com).

#### **Interview with Darin Jensen (DJ) by Liz Lane (LL) and Don Unger (DU)**

**Liz Lane:** Well, I guess we should have you introduce yourself Darin, so if you could tell us who you are, where you are located, and what you are associated with institutionally and otherwise, that would be great.

**Darin Jensen:** Well, all right. I'm Darren Jensen, and I teach English at De Moines Area Community College (DMACC) in Iowa, but I'm stationed at a very small campus in Carroll, Iowa. However, I've really been teaching out of my basement for a year, which has its own DMACC campus. Now, I'm also the Editor of *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, which is the NCTE journal focusing on the first two years of writing instruction in particular two-year college writing studies and two-year college English studies. I am also I'm founder and co-editor of a *Teacher Scholar Activist*, a blog that is now four, no five years old, I think since the last election, or the election of Trump. Oh boy. And then I do other things too, but I think those are probably the main things that I do most of the time.

**LL:** All right. Fantastic. So we are really curious to hear about how your work with *Spark*--as you are an Editorial Collective member with *Spark*, but also how your work with *Teacher Scholar Activist*,

compliments your research, or teaching, or your service. If you could illuminate that for us, that would be wonderful.

**DJ:** Well, what I like about *Spark* is that it is the connection between activism and the academy, which is the same thing that Teacher Scholar Activist is supposed to be, and as someone who teaches in a two-year college, I'm always thinking about that mission and who we serve. I think that in that way, *Spark*, as a collective, attempts to examine that in each of its issues, from different angles. So for me, that's what I really appreciate about it.

**Don Unger:** I think that dovetails us with our next question, which is how does that work come into or reflect more local work that you do in community or activist work you do?

**DJ:** That's a really interesting question. I am, at my college, I'm helping to build a governance structure right now because we've never had a shared governance structure, and you know, I just finished reviewing a piece that will be published for the third volume (of *Spark* that talks about some of the challenges of creating and enacting activism on a campus, and I think that it was kind of that serendipitous experience of reading something while you're also engaged in that. That is something that I really like as a connection. Another thing I do, I volunteer for the food bank and do some things with my Unitarians who are always deeply engaged in social justice work, and it's really interesting to see how the vocabularies of those organizations and *Spark* fit, (such as) the scene reports and the columns. I think that using the academic lens, that's just the best way to put it, to think about our on the ground work is really useful. And then I think that's something that I get to bring to those communities and it's helpful then too, to be critical and thoughtful about what we're doing in each of those instances.

**LL:** Yeah. That's very cool. I'm curious to hear, especially since you mentioned that Teacher Scholar Activist grew out of the exigence of 2015-2016, how has your teaching your scholarship and your activism evolved in these ways that you're gesturing to, as you're talking about the things you're involved with?

**DJ:** Well, the teaching is involved in that it's become much more intentional. So as a community college teacher, most of what I teach, four out of five classes a semester, are typically first-year writing. And so all of the classes now have critical literacy components, rhetorical analyses of fake news, rhetorical analyses of conspiracy theories, a rhetorical analysis of—well, we'll see how it goes—a rhetorical analysis of violence and, and how it's portrayed, or how white supremacy is portrayed in the media. I think that for me, I'm applying all of those things and the students are experiencing. They're more interested in those than they are in traditional projects because they're a part of their lived experience. What I really like about *Spark* is that a lot of the work that I see concentrates on social issues.

So I'm sort of thinking about like, I'm not talking yet about poverty and the ways that I'd like to, especially because I'm on a rural campus, and I deal with lots of poverty and lots of working students. And you know, the pandemic has brought all of those things home, but I haven't yet had the opportunity to build those intentional assignments, but I'm also thinking that eventually *Spark* and other publications will hopefully take up some of that thinking because I think we discovered, I always knew that many of my students struggled. They're first generation students who are working

poor students. I think that the pandemic ripped the last bit of veil off for many of us, especially my administration.

**DU:** That dovetails with our next question, which is where do you see this type of work that focuses on activism and on connecting scholarly work or scholarship on activism to on the ground activism? Where do you see that moving forward in our field or academic environments?

**DJ:** At the two-year college it's so hard for me to often think of other contexts because I'll see projects that folks are doing with grad students, and I'm fascinated by that, but that's not work that I do. I wonder, when we get back face-to-face or when we come to our new normal, which is a phrase that I'm hearing a lot, how we're going to want to have assignments that deal with the lived experiences with students in ways that we don't. I hope that we never go back to traditional essays and not that I was teaching traditional essays, but I know that many of my colleagues were, and I think about that chapter from *Bad Ideas About Writing*, and I cannot remember the author, but she talks about the research paper 2.0, but I think what's research paper 3.0? It's not only digitally mediated, maybe it's not a paper, but it's going to be directly embedded with whatever the student is doing in their lives.

And I don't mean service learning. I mean, how do you apply these rhetorical tools to help students develop critical thinking and even action plans about whatever it is that they're doing. And I'm thinking about that, what that might look like next year already because so many of my students keenly feel that when we do a rhetorical analysis of conspiracy theory, they find exigence in that. Right. So, this is sort of a cliché, right. They're able to talk to Uncle Joe who has been watching Fox News and have a different kind of conversation because they've been empowered with a different kind of vocabulary, but what does that mean beyond that? If they understood, you know, if we could teach you about the structures of poverty and social oppression that we see in rural Iowa and that those are socially constructed conditions, then where would you make an intervention?

That's a more interesting paper than one more theme on the death penalty. Not that that's not important, but you know what I mean. It's an overused topic, and that's what students come up with. They come with an expectation that teachers and professors want these garbage products, right? Because that's what they've been used to getting, and that's what they'd been called on to do. I think that we have to somehow break that mold and get down to something that's more, I hesitate to use the word, but authentic.

**LL:** Yeah. I think that's interesting. I feel like pretty much anyone who's teaching has definitely had to overhaul or reconsider and recast a lot of their assignments, and there's definitely this push and this urge to think about what is really productive for our students and productive socially, culturally, and what can kind of push the boundaries in productive ways. I think that's my perspective.

**DJ:** Right? It's pushing boundaries and also reconsidering the kind of teaching lore that we have in first-year writing about things that we should still be carrying on. If you looked up all of the course outcomes for places, how many of them would say the thesis-driven academic prose, and how many of our students will ever need thesis-driven academic prose. Do you like to read thesis-driven academic prose? It's not really my first choice most of the time. What are more valuable genres and frames for students to write in, but that also challenges language supremacy or ideology in really

interesting ways, because you can start to teach that here, but then when they get to another class, another professor is going to reify those old forms.

I feel so conflicted about that moment because I know so many other folks aren't doing the work we're doing. I think it's both educating students and this is back to maybe Don's last question, but it's also, how do we begin to communicate, not just within English studies, but in writing across the curriculum ideas or other disciplines that ask for writing and challenge or decenter their notion of this old-fashioned academic writing, old fashioned, maybe that's maybe the right word.

**DU:** I think connected to that too--if folks are already thinking about this, based on their experiences teaching over the last year and a half, I think more people are going to be thinking about this in terms of, particularly with first-year writing, having students who haven't been in a classroom in a year and a half. There's a sort of potential for bringing people together in a different way around a different set of ideas of what writing means and what writing is meaningful when we're finally able to meet face-to-face, with safety precautions. We have all gone through this pandemic and have different experiences with it of course, but, then we'll be coming back together and for some people coming together for the first time in a college classroom. It feels kind of strange to be like, now do a traditional academic essay. This is the first class these students will be taking. It seems like something will be lost if that is the case, and it's not really even trying to play any role in sort of addressing how do we as communities come back together once we can be together with less risk.

**DJ:** Yeah, no, totally, but also emotionally too. I mean, I think that there's that expectation and that functionalism in education that we're going to come right back to preparing students to be workers, right. That that's what we do, and I'm not sure that's what I'm doing, and I'm not really sure that that's what I should be doing. I mean, last week when it was the anniversary of the WHO calling it a pandemic, I asked my students at the synchronous session, so how many of you have taken a moment to really think about this? And they hadn't. And so I had some poems and yeah, it's a first-year writing class, but we had to stop and have that moment and create that space. I don't know where else they were going to do that, and it was selfish too because I was creating that space for myself. Right. I think, what have we lost in this last year? I want to really resist the idea that we're coming back and teaching freshmen writing again in the exact same way. Can we re-imagine this at all? Will we be allowed to re-imagine it? You know, I mean, for us, we have a state department of education and course outcomes, and we have all of those things that are sort of always shaping and disciplining what we do even if we didn't want to do something that was radically different. So, what does look like? I don't know yet, but there has to be space for humans to feel because it's going to be weird. It's going to be anxious for us all to be back together.

**LL:** Yeah. You've certainly given us some interesting things to think about, Darin. I love that you said humans need space to feel, and you make an excellent point that many of the first-year writing classrooms and writing classrooms in general, that's where students feel safe enough to express feeling right, or to share that emotion with classmates and with instructors. So, it'll certainly be interesting. That's for sure.

Finally, Liz and I spoke with Dr. Iris Ruiz. Iris is of course the regular host and the driving force behind this podcast. Conceived broadly, her work focuses on decolonizing writing studies. In this interview, we catch up with Iris and discuss the roots of her work as well as how it has progressed over the past year. We hope that you enjoy the interview.

### **Interview with Iris Ruiz (IR) by Liz Lane (LL) and Don Unger (DU)**

**Liz Lane:** If you could just introduce yourself to us: tell us who you are and what position you hold.

**Iris Ruiz:** Hello, everyone. I'm Dr. Iris Ruiz, and I'm a continuing lecturer at UC Merced. I've been at US Merced since 2010, and I went from UC San Diego into UC Merced, so I'm really closely affiliated with the UC system.

**LL:** Wonderful. So, we obviously know that you were the founder of the CCG podcast, and it's really your initiative. We're really curious how your work with CCG maybe emerged out of your research, teaching, and service, or how it's related to those sectors.

**IR:** Thank you so much for that question. I was just talking about this a couple of days ago with some graduate students at the University of Indiana. We were talking a little bit about what it meant to be a scholar activist and how do we marry our scholarship and our research with our teaching, but also beyond the classroom and thinking about being an activist, also in a community. Looking back and being able to reflect on my own work, I definitely see a connection among all three and that connection is very much of my motivation for wanting to pursue higher education and then eventually, teaching in higher education has a lot to do with my roots and where I come from and seeing some of the injustices in my own family and my own community, particularly like my grandmother. My grandmother had seven children, but she went back and she finished high school when she was 47. I actually lived with her, which is kind of a really common thing in Mexican families for the oldest to spend a lot of time with the grandmother. So, I was the oldest in my family, but she really tried to instill in me the importance of education and how much she wished could have went on and et cetera, et cetera. So I learned a lot from her. I reflected myself a lot off of her. So going forward, like I actually got into writing about my grandmother.

With my scholarship and then going forward in my teaching, it's something that points us back to Chicano history and like learning about what it means to be a Chicana. My first monograph is titled *Reclaiming Composition for Chicanos and Chicanas*. Although I tell everybody, it's not just for Chicanos and Chicanas; it's actually a critical history, but yes, it's from a Chicana perspective. I am trying to reclaim some of that Chicana history. I feel like that's also contribution to a community. Then in my teaching, I'm definitely bringing in that perspective because I'm also trying to teach my students--I work at an HSI--how to do reclamation of their own histories, their own backgrounds, or more about themselves in order to be able to interact more with their community, their family but at the same time doing it with a research focus.

**LL:** Thank you for sharing that. I'm really curious to how this might relate to your activist work or how you see yourself as a scholar-activist outside of the institution. You mentioned that a little bit. What are some recent activist initiatives or things that you've been a part of related to that area?

**IR:** Yeah. You know, it's been really interesting because I feel like I would have to really trace my solid, present, and public activism through my membership with 4Cs but specifically with the Latinx

Caucus. That's kind of where it took off. It's really interesting how that started, because I think we were at a business meeting and the previous co-chair, Cristina Kirklighter, who had been the co-chair for many years, said, I really need to pass the Baton on. I'm getting ready to retire. I remember there was another colleague with me and we were just kinda looking at each other like, "It's not me." Because of course it's a lot to take on, and I didn't have a tenure-track position. I still don't. Sometimes we think about taking on those roles is more secure when you're in a tenure-track position, because you can get time releases and stuff like that, which you do not get for NTT.

That decision right there to take on a co-chair shift was definitely a strong community gesture because like I said, as non TT was all going to be extra time. It was all going to be pro bono and, and it was for three years. During that time, I kept saying "okay, I put myself in this position. What kinds of things can I do to make a difference? And if I'm going to do that, what kind of things can I actually do even though It's going to take time, energy, et cetera." But there are a lot of things. And number one was just the invisibility of my colleagues, which was a big thing. Some people think, "well, is that really being activist?" Definitely. I feel like it is because we wanted the organization to give better attention to us, to give us better days on the program, like just little things like that, like give us better times, better days. And then, ending up with this idea of the politics of citation and really trying to bring Latinx scholars and their scholarship into publication venues all over the place, but especially in the places that counts because that's what's going to make us visible and that's what's going to help us to grow our presence, for our knowledge to be legitimized and honored and things like that. It's definitely been a journey.

Even after leaving the Latinx Caucus, I'm still trying to do some of that work. With CWPA, for example, I'm working on the outcomes revision with Asao and Vershawn, Neisha-Anne Green, and Tanita. We're working on that, and it's kind of like, this takes some time and energy too, and we're definitely not just like being given the baton, like just go. We're definitely coming up against some resistance and things like that. All of that is off the books for me, like I said, it doesn't really necessarily go to my P&T or T&P. That is my activism. The last thing I'll say about that is that, you know, whatever I'm doing here, I'm trying to also impart it to my family and hopefully on the grassroots level also make a difference within the community.

**LL:** Thank you for that, that answer. I think you really articulated the importance of being an activist through these different organizations that exists in these various ways and showing how to kind of make inroads in interesting ways. That's really fascinating.

**DU:** Over time, but also maybe particularly in this last period during everything moving online, during the pandemic, and all of that: could you continue to talk about how things have evolved in your own career in terms of your activism?

**IR:** Thank you for that question. It's a lot to think about and COVID has been so overwhelmingly, exceedingly challenging of so many different levels for all of us and just trying to bring everything together. As a single mom and also an educator, with all of a sudden school going online and then, and our own remote teaching going on online, it was just a lot to take in at the very beginning. It was just like that saying, where you feel like you're drinking out of a fire hose. It was just like, "Oh my gosh. Wow." I just felt like I was drowning probably for the first six months or so. Just kind of like, what is this? Are we gonna get into famine and all that kind of stuff? You know, just thinking what's the worst possible thing that could happen. And just trying to get more in touch and in tune

with being locked up all the time and not necessarily having the same life that you had. Your identity was changed on multiple levels as well, because all of a sudden, you just kind of had all this stuff to face, and having to go through all of that stress and trauma. I will definitely say, trauma as well. As an educator, it's kind of like, "okay, I know I'm going through this trauma, and this is really difficult. I'm sure my students are going through. Just the same or worse in some instances, because there's some privileges that I know that I had that they don't have." I was always thinking about that too, and it was a lot to think about, but I guess I consider myself semi-senior scholar. I feel like I have a lot of experience, especially within like the past five to seven years. I really tried to do a lot with digital assignments and have students already accustomed to and things I was already accustomed to like assigning podcasts, videos, working with different apps and teaching the students how to build their presentations in a multimedia format so that they would look nice aesthetically and things like that. That helped a lot. I know I have colleagues who are not digitally literate in some ways. I would imagine that that was very difficult. I didn't really experience it that much, but I guess I really missed the interaction. I really miss the interaction with the students. I've just tried to keep in contact as much as I can and then try it lower, not lower but really measure my expectations within this environment because it's kind of like having all this pressure on you, and you're not going to be able to necessarily just perform like everything is normal and everything is fine.

So that was with my teaching: It was challenging. But with my scholarship, a couple of interesting things have happened. After being overwhelmed the first six months or so I realized, and other people kind of pointed out to me, "Oh, you're able to do like these webinars because these all of a sudden anti-racism became universal." That's what happened during COVID: all of a sudden anti-racism became like universal, very needed because of Black Lives Matter because of the murder of George, George Floyd, and then Breonna Taylor, and then seeing all of that happening nationally, nationwide was just kind of like, "wow." But, it was amazing at the same time because all of the sudden the whole entire nation, from the corporate level to nonprofit level, to the NBA level, to the celebrity level are all wanting to be on board with Black Lives Matter. And that really mattered. It really showed, especially in the digital realm. Right. was already doing this work, and then all of a sudden, our country just like woke up with COVID and woke up with the racism, and it's just like, "Oh wow. You know, this is really cool." It's overwhelming in some ways, but then it's like, "Okay. Well, we want to be able to hear you talk about this and other people talk about it: whoever can talk about it. Let's hear people talk about it because we need to share these ideas." And so that came up and I was like, wow. Somebody had pointed out the other day, if it hadn't been for this medium and what was occurring here this last year or so, you wouldn't be able to have four different scholars from four different states, for example, being able to come together and talk about anti-racism and their pedagogical approaches and their scholarship to grad students. So that's been a really interesting development. I can say that I've been able to experience being able to talk to people all across the country and beyond about anti-racism and about my decolonial scholarship, like talking about decolonizing the syllabus and the different ways for approaching what that means because it doesn't only mean one thing; it means a lot of different things.

And then the last thing I'll say about that, Don, is that 've also been able to put in some of this coalitional work with professors from other institutions that I would have never met. We've never met before and it's kind of like, through Twitter, because a lot of us are trying to just keep in communication. We realized we have these similar interests, and then I've been able to make some connections in that way and try to bring together coalitions so we are not feeling like we're so

separate. We're more connected in so many ways, but we don't necessarily get the time to be able to consider how. You know what I'm saying?

**DU:** Thank you. Yeah. I think you are starting to work towards our last question, which is, where do you see potential for exciting work emerging in the coming period. I think that, again, ties into things like more people getting vaccinated, the potential for coming back to face-to-face school, maybe maintaining some of the things you've been talking about once we get back to quasi "normal" or whatever. What do we bring with us from this experience?

**IR:** Yeah. Oh my goodness. Take a little breath here because there's so much to think about going back. I've actually been working on the strategic plan with the leadership, the administration on campus, just thinking about going back and all these plans that your institution might have going forward, like the ways that they'll implement, for example, Black Lives Matter, anti-racism. I know some universities are opening anti-racist research centers, right, and really giving more focus towards inclusion and diversity and hiring more people of color and diversifying the pedagogy, all of this stuff, but then it's kind of like, "yeah, but we're just coming out of a pandemic." I have to mention, we just came out of a Trump presidency and as a woman of color, that's a really big deal. It really is like, just thinking about going back after the Trump presidency and the whole Black Lives Matter Movement. It's a lot to think about because for somebody like me who is working on an anti-racism, you're advocating for equity, diversity, inclusion, et cetera, and you have some colleagues who don't necessarily, they're not on board with that. Like, you can't expect your colleagues to just all of a sudden be on board with that, especially when you're the minority out of a group of colleagues that you're a part of. And that's a lot to think about I felt like we definitely need to keep the dialogue open. We definitely need to keep concentrating on the fact that this is a more global movement. You know, it's more of a national movement. It's not this internal kind of departmental political game. You know what I'm saying? Like we got to look past that when we know that that exists on micro levels in most departments. You know, we have to learn how to communicate and get along even when we agree and disagree. I mean, for the past four years--since 2016, woman of color, I've kind of had to learn how to accept how certain attitudes changed after Trump with some kind of extremist ideologies and things like that, but we'll have to continue to be able to compromise in certain ways.

At the same time, I want to be very real and be able to say that institutions also need to learn how to protect their faculty of color. They really do because there are going to be some challenges going back, and as far as the classroom gets, let's continue to build upon all of this digital stuff that we've learned, all the apps that we've learned, we understand, we know that's the future the more connected that we can be, and the more that we can realize the old, traditional ways of doing things like with white language supremacy, the whole academic discourse movement, and the more assimilationist model of pedagogy and teaching, et cetera, that needs to go. We have to see that that's not really working anymore in the way that we function every day. Other than that, I welcome everything back. I think that the high flex classrooms or hybrid classrooms would be one possibility. We can continue to go with that. Like, let's use this space as best as we can to be able to be accommodating, you know, thinking about accessibility and things like that too. But yeah, I think that's a lot, right. It's a lot to think about.

**DU:** Yeah, I definitely think one thing that's come up in other conversations too is like, since we're still in the midst of all of this, we're still sort of figuring out, what the sort of order of it items we're going to deal with leftover from Trump and like how rapidly and how much. Maybe we didn't know about some things that's only sort of coming to light or the lasting ramifications or only coming to light, but also with the pandemic we're still in the midst of it. Right. I think as we move towards hybrid or face-to-face classes with safety precautions in the fall, once we get to that percentage for herd immunity, I think then we'll really start to have space to think about what are we going to take from this experience. I would think there'd be a lot of people who are like, "really, I'm going to go back to face-to-face teaching traditional academic essay writing?"

**IR:** Yeah, exactly. That's a great point.

**DU:** Now that we're together, do you want me to just pick a topic I don't really know or care much about, but can write academically about and in a pseudo five-paragraph structure and leave myself out of it, even though you're telling you it's okay to bring myself into it. Do you know what I mean? It just it's like we are finally going to be back together after almost a year and a half where we weren't and we go back to certain things. Like, I don't know, that just seems strange.

**IR:** Exactly right. I think we have to understand, and we've even been mentioning this in different circles and I've been thinking about it a lot with my own students in Advanced Comp, in what ways did we actually experience like a real paradigm shift? Did we experience it? We just experienced that. We're so lucky that we were here. We were in the moment, right. I don't want to say we're lucky we had a pandemic, cause we're definitely not lucky about that, but to be able to have experienced like this big shift in consciousness and the way that we understand things, the way that we learned about our connectedness. A lot of the things that we took for granted, I would say thinking about like the technological advances, thinking about the ways in which those can help us towards these motives to want to be more equity minded and et cetera. How could we use some of what we have learned? Some of the advances that we have with big data, et cetera, to try to carry forward our social justice awareness, but also thinking about the climate, thinking about the ecosystem, thinking about the things that we do and about the ways in which when we had to slow down and not drive around anymore. Animals wanted to come out. They wanted to be seen. They came out of hiding. They're saying, let's think about the environmental factors in it. Some of the emissions are lower in the air; the oxygen was better, and it rose, so think about the ecosystem and the ways in which we contribute to that. What do we want to do? Some of us became gardeners. I had a colleague who started raising chickens in her backyard and having her chickens lay eggs and et cetera. One time, I went out to a ranch to buy my eggs, and I'm just thinking overall, this was a kind of a huge consciousness shift, thinking about how are we going to be sustainable. I could see us going back to the classroom and talking about that. Right? Talking about the things that we learned, and how to just be more of what I call eco-conscious.

Thank you for joining us on this reflective episode. We hope that enjoyed the interviews. I know that they left me with a lot to think about before I resume my teaching in the fall.

In the next episode of *Creating Coalitional Gestures*, Iris will return as host and we will resume our regular podcast format.

Thanks again. So long.