When I started working on this talk, I spent a long time reflecting on what my experience of inclusion has been, and how that illustrates ways the institution of higher education could improve. For those of you who know me as a scholar, you know that I like to take a critical, top-down, macro, historical scope to my work--and this will be no different.

Overall, I find the challenges faced in higher ed--particularly with respect to inclusion--stem from the fallacy of normative space. We as Linguists accept the fallacy of an ideal speaker, that the concept serves as a convenient abstraction for our inquiry. Just as we reject the assumption of an ideal speaker, so must we as educators shed our assumptions of normative experience. Everyone who pursues higher education is carrying an invisible burden, to espouse professionalism and competence; the majority does not have a normative, unmarked, pressure-free experience. That is a fallacy.

Yet this assumption is baked into the foundations of higher education, which when established in the old world served but a single social channel--a steady stream of middle sons; white men who wouldn't inherit and who were perhaps ill-suited for ecclesiastic or military life. Much of the experience of the University--in terms of social practice, apprenticeship and patronage, titles of

advancement--remains unchanged. This single channel--this fallacious normative space, group, person, experience--constrains all scholars. Educators and administrators over the last 5 decades have done the all-important work of throwing open doors, pulling new seats up to their tables, and retrofitting their models of matriculations to fit this reality. Inclusion work like this is not to be scoffed at; it takes bravery and commitment and institutional change is glacial and isolated by design. However, depressingly few efforts have significantly impacted the graduate level, and we must take seriously that inclusion, in its current state, has created pathways to the institution and not through the institution.

Since 1968, the Black population in graduate school has grown considerably--up to 8%. However, these 192,000 students nationwide across disciplines face grim odds when it comes to completion and placement rates. Plenty of us are getting here, but as Okahana and Zhou report, no more of us are finishing our degrees than in 1968. And of those of us dedicated enough to finish and lucky enough to get jobs, almost half end up leaving the profession in under 5 years. My friends, the canaries are dying in the coal mine here.

What does this mean for today? For Linguistics? I can share what I've seen of the structural failings of higher ed, and the pressures I experience being corralled into this single channel. Two schools I've attended, I did so on merit-based scholarships for students of color. At my undergraduate university, we meritorious POC scholars were all placed in the same writing class, in an effort to build community, one supposes. Yeah, we were segregated--our ideas shared among ourselves and not other students. At my MA university, the department had funding allowing them to accept one student per year from an underrepresented background, so I was "the one" for our cohort. Those two years were the most visceral experience of tokenization. Marked among my peers--who has different pay scales and teaching opportunities--marked by the institution who targeted me with ads: emails, surveys, volunteer service solicitation, events… It's not that those things aren't of value and didn't make me feel seen, its that those opportunities aren't offered to every student. Again, there is no normative experience for the minority either; we aren't a monolith. At both of these schools, when it came time to study for comps and apply for PhDs my fellow students and advisors told me I didn't need to stress because my acceptance was "a sure thing". These comments did not feel merit-based--they feel like they are about my race. And they haunt me.

This is the experience of double consciousness that Affirmative Action type policies breed in an education community. This icky, race-baited feeling that I get when my White colleagues tell me I'm a sure thing is why I push myself to excel, because I believe I cannot afford any hint of mediocrity. Deandre yesterday quoted Toni Morrison speaking on racism as a distraction saying: they tell you you are less than, you'll spend 20 years trying to prove otherwise. And this is why I study race--not because everyone expects me to,or because it keeps me theoretically curious--it is an abiding effort to better understand how people see and treat me and those like me.

James Baldwin says to be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious, is to be in a rage almost all the time. I find that

While this rage propels me it is also accompanied by a profound sadness, which comes from watching my work bleach before my eyes, seeing self-erasure in real time. John Rickford tells us that to be a productive writer, we must first get into therapy. And this is why--because we cannot hope to be successful and remain healthy carrying such rage and sadness alone.

So what do we do? Because I have faith in this generation of graduate students I am happy toc call peers and friends and coconspirators. We're gonna make it! I think we start with a good faith effort at making the single channel more accessible. Well-intentioned advisors must do more than taking their students struggles into closed door admin meetings. They must work together to create school- and field-specific guiding documents to better prepare incoming Black students for the personal pressures they will face and allow them to make more informed choices. Creating such materials will give rise to a curb cut effect, which is a well documented phenomenon showing that changes which initially serve a small population create more accessible (and safe) conditions for all.

Too, well-intentioned advisors must build reciprocal relationships--and Ratcliffe provides an excellent model for that--with their advisees to allow us to begin to think beyond traditional knowledge in our field. Tracy has already spoke here of gaslighting, about being told your work isn't linguistics, or being told your work is unpublishable. Such assessments from well-intentioned advisors do not often stem from some failing of our work, but instead are echoes of the limiting production model we with within, and the channels through which we disseminate our findings as scientists. I have recently become the editor's assistant for the journal Language, and it was my duty this semester to catalogue all Linguistics

and Language journals worldwide and make sure their editor contacts were up to date, and in doing so I counted everything because I'm a huge corpus nerd. And interestingly, of nearly 750 journals worldwide, and from what I can tell there are zero Black women editors.There are ⅓ Non-White-presenting editors in the field, but when we look only at English-language publications that proportion falls to ⅛. This is where we can loosen up some ground, and create a better marketplace for the ideas we Black graduate students seek to share with the field and the world.

I ask editors and reviewers to be slow with our work--to resist the narrow boundary policing rampant in our field because of siloing which itself is dangerous and limiting). If your initial reaction is "this work is good, but perhaps better fit for another venue" realize that there are not many. Please, if you aren't familiar with the literature we bring to bear or the experiences we investigate, trust us to have curated representative datasets and to have developed cogent arguments. We are professionals.

Baldwin says what is really important is not that the people we write about are Black, but that they are people. And the suffering we write about is universal.

There is so much more uniting us than separating us--especially in this post-Truth world. Going forward together we must heed the suggestions Hudley, Mallinson, and Bucholtz make in application of the new LSA statement on race to encourage fieldwide integration of POC work--which allows us to stop reinventing the wheel every generation to incorporate race into our scholarship. We must embody best practices as students and teachers and public scholars to create engaged and equitable educational experiences for all.

Thank you.