

AUDIENCE: I wanted to give an answer to 2.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: OK, yeah.

AUDIENCE: So to both parts-- like, one of the parts was, like, how do the discourse of power affect the role.

Like, I don't know, how do discourse of powers affect how I choose to, I guess, identify or how I choose to make decisions related to language.

For example, I'm from Mexico and I speak Spanish, but at the same time, part of wanting to be more Mexican is acknowledging that we have native languages.

Like, Spanish is a language that was imposed on Mexico-- people who were from the land of Mexico.

And it sounds like, because I want to, I don't know, get to know that part of Mexico, that motivates me to try to learn some of the native languages like [INAUDIBLE]..

Or just because I feel it's like I could be more-- RACHEL: More Mexican?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, more Mexican.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: OK.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, I'd even add that in these discourses of power, how they affect how we see our roles and my choice of identity, I think that really explains why a lot of African-Americans see African-American vernacular English as something bad.

It's something that we keep private a couple times.

I have been caught and chastised for letting it slip out in public.

Like, you know, going out to eat with family members to get-- and so, you know, oh, don't talk like that in public.

And I think this question speaks to the heart of that.

AUDIENCE: And for the first part, I wanted to-- like, we were talking about authenticity and language, but something I want to comment-- it's something like I feel like speaking a language is an experience, but just by the fact that it has different stories, and different sayings, and all this stuff.

So in some sense, not speaking a language, you're-- for example, I'm sure there's a lot of sayings in Creole or in Chinese that I will never be aware of, because I don't speak the language.

And it's almost like I'm not experiencing them.

That doesn't mean I'm less authentic, but it just really means that like if you-- like, I cannot identify as Chinese, because I haven't had those experiences.

It's not to say that that should change how people identify, but like, what I [INAUDIBLE] say is like there is-- we cannot ignore the role that language does have and experience do have in, I don't know-- for example, somebody who is Mexican American, even then I don't think being American, it's almost like deprives you from Mexicano.

Even some of the most famous Mexican people like artists, like, artists like Selena.

Selena, like she's not from-- she was from Texas, but everybody, my grandma, everybody loves her.

And I think it's part of just like how much of the quote, unquote like "collective experience" you had.

That being said, you were mentioning how language in some sense is a barrier.

I think parts of being barrier means that you can-- it's overcome-able.

Like, if I wanted to experience more-- I don't know.

If I wanted to-- let's say I want to work in Haiti in the future, and I want to not feel like an outsider.

Then part of it is like me-- in that sense, it's hard that I didn't experience that, and I have to learn a language.

But it's part of-- just because it's hard to be two people at the same time-- at the same time, I think it's possible to-- if I don't know-- the fact that it's a barrier means that I think it's possible to-- you know?

I don't know.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: In fact, you go back to the areas that you mentioned, the fact that they were-- the documentary makers from New York were-- they were Haitians who grew up in New York, and they were concerned with losing-- they didn't speak Creole, so therefor they weren't Haitians enough.

But now, in fact, they reached back to me last week.

Anyway, continue the interview, because I'm going to ask another question, which is that if you're Haitians who grew up in the diaspora, OK, you learned Haitian Creole, you see?

So what would I suggest, and what do I see as the advantage of Haitian diaspora to actually try to keep the

language-- actually, if they haven't-- they didn't grow up speaking it, how can they learn it now even if they are adults?

And so, [INAUDIBLE], your point is that you can always learn.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, and it doesn't make the experience less in the first place, but it's just like if you want to enhance it-- not enhance it, but it's like if you want to listen to other people-- if you want to-- there are some other things that you might experience, but like it's not the end.

RACHEL: I just wanted to add sort of on the basis of language being an experience.

So the other day, so my boyfriend is Haitian, and I'm learning Creole.

This is for the people who haven't taken this class the entire semester, and we were-- so there was a time period-- and you can correct me if I'm wrong-- where Haitians stopped-- the Kompa stopped being a thing for a little bit, which is like Haitian music, and now it's becoming more of a thing.

And so, there's a lot of like young music groups, and the main way I've been-- MICHEL DEGRAFF: So I could use some feedback about Kompa-- RACHEL: I love Kompa.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: --with the [INAUDIBLE] Kompa.

RACHEL: I don't know if I have an American reference.

If you know what Machata is, it's like Machata but not really.

It's-- MICHEL DEGRAFF: It's better.

RACHEL: --a partner dance.

I can't agree with that.

I'm very much invested in both.

But there's a lot of young music groups that are producing new Kompa music, and the way I've been sort of learning with the absence of, like, time to sit down and go through a book is just by listening to the songs and, like, learning the lyrics.

And we went through a song, and it took us an hour because there were so many cultural references that there was no way without being Haitian or having Haitian parents-- like, there was no way you would have known what it was.

I can't think of one off the top of my head, but in this whole experience of, like, being here and learning about Haitian experience.

Like, there is a restaurant in Miami called Tap Tap.

I didn't know that Tap Tap was a bus.

That was an interesting experience.

It's a bus, an open-back bus you run and jump onto it in the middle of traffic.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: So our colleague was now [INAUDIBLE]..

He said something that is very beautiful-- that when the language dies out, it's like a library that's burned down, because a language is a whole library.

And as you mentioned, it's a whole set of experiences that you can only really enter through the language, and so the examples of our thinking.

But we can enter it.

You know, we might not master all the books in the library.

In fact, who can ever read-- if it's a big library, you cannot read all the books.

In fact, I, myself, I learn proverbs every day in Haitian Creole.

It doesn't end.

And sometimes, I learn about proverbs through other cultures, because there are many proverbs in Haitian Creole that I've found also in Africa-- in West Africa, even in South Africa-- and sometimes the meanings are slightly different, and sometimes you'll learn more about your Haitian proverb by learning it through an African.

And then we could say, oh, that sounds familiar.

And then you understand better, what the proverb means, through the African substrate or ancestry.

I think we should stop here for the discussion.

Are you guys happy?

Do you have anything else that you want to add?

Are the two of you-- RACHEL: Jonathan.

AUDIENCE: So you just mentioned that when a language that's out of a library motel and language as an experience.

I'd even argue that I would have applied that same definition to identity as well.

That's why I was really glad that I didn't answer the first question first [INAUDIBLE] taking a hit, because-- you know, I was sitting here reading it, and I was choked by it, because [INAUDIBLE] the short answer to that question.

Because the notion of authenticity is really kind of vanity, and I agree with what Sophie was saying earlier that we-- there's a tendency to hide ourselves under these labels, and we kind of neglect our own power, and we in a formation maintenance, I guess, of identity-- and kind of like what she was saying about wanting to sort of take and grab hold onto a mutual power to forge your own identity, and I think that's really everybody's responsibility?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Right.

And that reminds me.

Maybe I should bring back this issue of stereotypes.

And it's a whole new literature these days on fixed mindset versus growth mindset.

So in a way and given what you just said, one can think of this notion of having identity that's fixed is pretty much like this notion of having a fixed mindset, because if you believe in-- and in fact, there is a lot of research that show that-- that if you have a growth mindset meaning that you could actually learn new things-- that you're not bounded by your experience.

You can always go beyond that, and that requires, of course, practice.

Because this is something that's-- intelligence is not innate.

You can always develop more intelligence.

Now that's a big break from previous literature.

Previous beliefs that they were-- you were born with a certain amount of intelligence.

It's like height, and you cannot go beyond that.

So the new literature on growth mindset versus fixed mindset tells us we can always go beyond what we are born with, which means that identity should not be taken as something which is given once and for all.

It can always massage it, given particular context and given particular needs.

So maybe actually-- yeah?

AUDIENCE: It's not like infinitely mutable though-- MICHEL DEGRAFF: Sure, of course.

Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Like, your skin color's kind of fixed, and that's how people [INAUDIBLE]..

MICHEL DEGRAFF: But we know-- I don't if you remember way back when.

[INAUDIBLE] gave an example of this person who changed-- who was white and changed to be black.

What's her name?

She had a job in the ACLU.

AUDIENCE: Rachel Dolezal.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: That was you?

That was you who said it?

Yeah, so even that-- even that, because of skin color doesn't come alone.

It comes with particular assumptions about skin color.

Like, in Haiti there are people who look very white but who are black.

Well, if to go back to Dessaline to 1805, isn't really that even if you are Polish, you want to be black, so even back then, skin color was not determined-- AUDIENCE: Yeah, although it's interesting, because with Rachel Dolezal, I feel like most people are saying they don't accept her identifying as black, so I feel like that supports the idea that there's something that's kind of fixed about it.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Right, yeah.

AUDIENCE: But I feel like that ties into what [INAUDIBLE] is saying about and what you guys are all saying about cultural experiences tying into certain things-- like, it being a cultural-- it's not just about how-- like, I guess am I wrong or right for having this attitude?

Like, kind of don't feel like she-- not like don't feel like she should be allowed to, but I wouldn't want to accept her because it's like how dare you, a person who has had no experience as an African-American human try to identify with that.

And maybe it would have been different if she had been a person of color trying to identify-- like, if she had been Indian or, you know, I'm trying to think of another-- or Filipino or something trying to identify as African-American, maybe I would have been more lenient, but as a privileged non-person of color, I don't know.

AUDIENCE: But it's also interesting, the idea that when you're crafting your identity and crafting your authentic identity, what do you-- your whole identity, your authentic identity is that you're not authentic to anything, but when you're crafting your identity, what do you draw from?

Is it like what you authentically feel as, or is what you authentically have ties to?

Like, I have a similar situation where, like, mixed Indian heritage kind of thing, and when I'm crafting my Indian American identity, do I base it off South Indian, do I base it off Mauritian, do I base off of North Indian?

Like, what what do I do?

But it's like, do I pull from the past or pull from what I feel?

And Rachel Dolezal's, her whole thing was that I feel black, whatever that means, but like where do you draw from?

AUDIENCE: And in a similar way that doesn't just apply to what you identify as nationality-wise or culture-wise, because I've been so focused on being a linguist that the possibility of having a capacity and having the intuition to be a mechanical engineer never occurred to me, but in participating with some friends who are creating projects, I've been the one who to come up with ideas that solved problems.

And I never thought that would be a possibility for me, because I don't like math.

So it's like the identity of being a linguist was so limiting that I didn't even know I could do that, and I think that it's, like, along the same lines of are we limiting what we can be by choosing our identities as well?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: That's a good question to ponder.

AUDIENCE: And yeah, sorry.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: No, that's good.

That's very good.

I think let's stop here, and we're now