

## Love for the Othered

The stage must be set: I was born into a world in which othering<sup>[2]</sup> is systemic, violent, and lethal. Unsurprisingly, the institutions of our scholarship are not immune to the system (White supremacy↔global imperialism↔etc...) and the various ways we as actors bound discourse on harm by the purported innocuity of our daily decisions—that we do not listen to the real pain of our neighbors, students, colleagues and that we are incapable of any other form of living. Then the well-intentioned scholar must re-examine their work and measure both means and ends in the radical units of love. The ultimate scholarly pursuit is to answer the question of who will push back firmly; who will push for a re-imagined world by making statements with their lives to love the othered. The following briefly characterize roles central to my life, my statement on loving the othered.

### FGLSAMP Advisor

Between two stints in graduate school, I was hired as the Florida IT Career Alliance Coordinator. Additionally, outside of my positional description, I took to being the advisor of the Florida Georgia Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (FGSLAMP) at The Florida State University (FSU). I encouraged and guided students in making the group a registered student organization in order to acquire funding and to advertise to students not in-the-know of what was happening in my office, the Center for Undergraduate Research and Academic Engagement (CRE). Teaming with graduate students, we fostered a space where each student had their name, their identity, and they mattered to the graduate mentors who were along a shared trajectory. In our community, no student was relegated to “ambiguously brown chemist” or “that one Black girl in my programming class”, acknowledging the external descriptors on campus. They claimed themselves, and I was privileged to be a reference for students to seek other opportunities that supported their dreams.

### Graduate Student Advocacy

While I was a graduate student at The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), I founded the American Mathematical Society UTA Graduate Chapter with the motivation to support my peers. I was well-aware that the numbers made our graduate program seem quite diverse. Unfortunately, though our students could replace the Planeteers, our faculty and staff did not represent the women of color in the mathematics PhD program. I teamed with other organizations such as the College of Science Black Graduate Student Association and the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) to host talks by Black women in mathematics. Dr. Mayowa Awe spoke to us about transitioning to industry<sup>1</sup> from mathematical biology research, and we were able to connect with Dr. Talitha Washington to be a Colloquium speaker. The event was

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Awe is now the Director of inSTEM at the nonprofit National Science & Technology Medals Foundation

advertised throughout the Dallas–Fort Worth Metroplex by the College of Science and brought together Black community leaders to honor both Dr. Washington and the subject of her talk, the life and work of Dr. Elbert Frank Cox, the first African-American man to attain a PhD in mathematics. The greatest moment of the afternoon was linking one of the young ladies from my Calculus III class with Talitha. During the four years I was a student at UTA, I started the Graduate Student Seminar (in which six of the first seven speakers were people of color<sup>2</sup> and women in solidarity), and I invited the only African-American Colloquium speakers.

## MSRI-UP

I am extremely joyful to have been the Postdoctoral Research Advisor for the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute Undergraduate Program (MSRI-UP) during the summer of 2021. With Drs. Rebecca Garcia, Pamela E. Harris, and the wonderful graduate students Casandra D. Monroe and J. Carlos Martínez Mori, I advised 18 undergraduates in the exploration of Parking Functions. Together we wrote<sup>[1]</sup> on building successful research communities that centered people and welcomed the other of us all. Then we united in our interest to do math with good people, writing outstanding research reports and publishing one paper so far! Now I'm a co-author with amazing undergraduate, graduate, and professional researchers who fight against the othering within our mathematics discipline. I continue to do research with this group and mentor the cohort, many of whom are starting graduate school soon or in industry now. People can check out the website I developed to promote our great team: <https://msriup.com>!

## Hidden NORMS

Over the past year, I have been co-organizing the Hidden NORMS webinar, where NORMS stands for Navigating Obstructive Rules in the Mathematical Sciences. This webinar has grown into a network of professionals, students, advocates for students, and even middle schoolers! Our speakers place information, perspective, and inspiration in the hands of undergraduates. Moreover, our speakers show up authentically as themselves, and our last speaker, Dr. Talitha Williams, tied it all together with her *Unbounded Norms* talk! The norms are mathematical in name and ever so appropriate for describing key aspects of majoring in, working in, and thriving in mathematics. Hidden NORMS is another group whose website I maintain: <https://hiddennorms.com>!

## The work never ends

I limited this document to a sample of the ways I recognize my position to love others, build up others, and advocate for others. People are hurting: trans, of color, living with a disability, cis, White, not living with a disability. Note how we begin and end with people. It is imperative that we begin and end with love! And we must recognize that othering under the social order we have constructed continues to have us begin with some

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<sup>2</sup>Admittedly, this includes my own talk about Noether, Malone-Mayes, and Mirzakhani.

and end with others—if we ever get to them—claiming, “There is no more love for you.” No! I commit to re-centering my work to begin with my neighbors, students, colleagues who the social order does not serve. I believe love is a practice and endures critique. So I back my commitment with acting in community and preparation through listening and learning. This is #BlackInMath[3]; this is research on the journeys of minoritized peoples in mathematics; and, most of all, this is not the end. The work continues.

## References

- [1] R. Garcia et al. “People Over Math: A Co-created Principle for Successful Research Communities”. *MAA Focus* 42.3 (2022), pp. 26–31.
- [2] T. Morrison. *The Origin of Others*. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 2016. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-674-97645-0.
- [3] O. Ortega and N. Sawyer. *The First Annual #BlackinMathWeek Twitter Event*. Dec. 2020.