

Anneliese: The student was an international student who came in with a paper. And they had gotten a "C" so they were really upset... and just kinda wanted to know what to do for the future... so it wasn't a draft or anything, it was actually their final paper. They were wondering what they could do better next time. So, basically all it said was — in red pen — which I know is really scary for people... "C" and like a circle and it said "it looks like you're still having trouble with English... visit the Writing Center."

Yasmine: It was one of those papers where the professor just tries and corrects all of the grammar, and it's covered in pen... of different colors from multiple times of getting it back and sending it back over. And so she's in tears, and essentially like one of the comments, and what he told her to do is "go to the Writing Center to learn English".

Kat: A lot of the movement was "you need to move this to make sense" Or why... this word is not is not English. Like, I incorporate a lot of Spanish words, because a lot of Spanish words are said around my house. And they're like, "no, you can't use that because you don't know if the people who are reading this know Spanish so they're not gonna know what you are saying." You can't start a statement with with, you know, some Spanish words. Or, just very attacking words that not only affected, like... Not only attacked my language, my Spanish... but like, attacked my culture, because they felt that I needed to please a Board of Admissions.

Susan: So my family comes from Afghanistan — they are refugees from Afghanistan — and we speak Farsi at home. But obviously, I'm fluent in English, and I remember I submitted my first essay, and she commented that she 'didn't understand' my writing, like, she couldn't understand what I was saying. And that she was getting lost in my sentence structure and that she was getting lost in my points and that she couldn't understand what I was saying. I'm a sophomore in college. I've submitted so much writing. If people couldn't understand what I was saying, I don't think I would have gotten this far. And since then, I feel like I think about her comment every single time I write a sentence.

Odia: I've seen people cry in front of me reading their instructor's comments or just being so confused and flustered that they just, emotionally — there's a lot of spillage. I think at least twice a year... I've seen that happen. So, we foster these really bad habits and attitudes toward writing when we know that people are going into this experience believing they're not good at it... Believing that they don't have the talent for it, or the intellectual abilities to convey themselves on paper. Those comments don't help that. They only make it worse.

Yasmine: I mean... I don't even think you can think of yourself as a writer after that. If someone tells you you don't even know a language... How can you think about your identity, you know, as a writer? A language and the ability to write well are not the same thing.

Susan: And I think a lot of times when they could have... taken a situation and turned it into a learning experience... It was just turned into something condescending. It made me feel little. You know... I wouldn't even say that it made me feel little... It fed into an imposter syndrome.

But it affected me in my day-to-day. I feel like I just became aware of the environment that I was in... and I started to see it in so many different spaces.

Yasmine: I just felt frustrated, and I didn't feel motivated... to put the same kind of effort into any of my other papers for that class. You know... I kind of figured, you know, if the best that I can do isn't good enough for the professor, then what's the point in me trying anymore. And I just felt upset — a little bit defeated but mostly just like... I don't have the energy to care about this anymore.

Kat: In my early years of college I've learned not to say it... because I understand how bad it sounds... But there's a common perception in the minority community that you have to sound white in order to get jobs, feel accepted, and I think I tried so hard to sound that way... At least sound like I was raised growing up as if English was my first language.

Odia: Racism has really given the impression that only white people have academic thoughts... or good thoughts. And neutralizing language, especially racialized language, which is usually only referring to white people... So, even when we say "he" or "she" or "they"... Or when we try to take race out of the picture... then the default speaker is envisioned as white.

Anneliese: It's hard, especially when it's a student and a professor... Like... talking to a professor about that? The person who controls your grade... It's scary. And those conversations are scary in general... but especially when you're a student. And you feel like maybe you don't have the power in the situation. So... Implicit bias and microaggressions I feel like they add up the more that you experience them the more they kind of build up and it's hurtful and detrimental to your well-being. So I feel like it's really important to address those as much as we talk about addressing explicit bias and oppression. I think they're just as important and impactful on a person. And even if it wasn't the intention, I think intention and impact are different, right? And so you may not intend for any bias to come across because usually people don't... but it can be subconscious.

Odia: Good intentions mean very little if the consequences are negative. We can have the best intentions in the world that we want. If we create harm... if we do damage... we have to apologize... we have to rectify... and we have to do better. Good intention and hope is not going to be sufficient if we really want to dismantle the ramifications of racism in our teachings and learning and schooling.