

Chapter 23

I Am Woke: Unmasking Race, Gender, and Power From Within a TESOL Affiliate

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ABSTRACT

This praxis-based chapter explores advocacy in the English language teaching (ELT) field. The chapter introduces a new conceptualization of advocacy, the Critical Advocacy Framework, informed by Freire's critical consciousness (conscientização), Fanon's race (Black) consciousness, and Crenshaw's intersectionality paradigms. For critical advocacy praxis, this chapter integrates the "iron triangle" model from the American politics and public policy fields to highlight patron-client relationships between multilingual learners (MLs) advocates and stakeholders. This chapter highlights how the racially mixed author, a trained political scientist and newcomer to the ELT field, leveraged her Blackness, experiential and organizational knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) in a Machiavellian sense, to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) throughout a TESOL state affiliate. The chapter provides evidence-based practices and learning activities for MATESOL program administrators, pre-service, and in-service English teachers.

I can't breathe man. Please! Please, let me stand. Please, man I can't breathe. —George Floyd, Transcript of Exhibit 2, 2020, p. 14

INTRODUCTION

The spectacle of George Floyd, a Black male adult, begging for his life while being pinned under the knee of a white male police officer, Derek Chauvin, for 9 minutes and 29 seconds, resembled a modern-

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day lynching in broad daylight. This 21st century lynching, however, was distinctive from its 19th and 20th century counterparts in two respects. First, the black and white still images on lynching postcards (Wood, 2018) of agentless, lifeless, Black males paled in comparison to the audiovisual narrative *of and by* Floyd – a living and breathing lynching victim without agency. Second, the death of Floyd – a Black male born on US soil – sparked outcry not only from other members of the African diaspora, but also from non-Black populations all over the world. His death ultimately sparked an international, multiracial social justice movement and demonstratively signified that the global village had hit its tipping point.

From the perspective of a political scientist and nascent TESOL member (2021), this chapter explores the author's reflections on her participation in and service to Language Teacher Associations (LTAs), one of TESOL International Association's large state affiliates (2018 to present), its partner organization (2020) and a local chapter (2020). The theoretical underpinnings of this chapter draw heavily upon Fanon's (2008) colonizer-colonized and master-slave paradigms to contextualize and delineate how the author – a descendant of a formerly colonized population – leveraged her Blackness (Fanon, 2008) to challenge white power and privilege throughout the LTAs.

In the 50-year history of the TESOL state affiliate, the author was the first non-voting board member to advocate for the creation of two Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) posts. With respect to the partner organization and its 14-year existence, the author was the first voting board member to write a DEI grant – a teacher training initiative – for five language educators representing K-12, university/college, community college, adult education and intensive English program (IEP) contexts. Regarding long-term DEI strategic planning, the author created and leveraged the pipeline of DEI grant recipients committed to social justice as a means of upholding the advocacy goal in the TESOL state affiliate's mission statement.

This research introduces the *Critical Advocacy Framework* – an advocacy framework informed by *critical consciousness* (Freire, 1974), postcolonial theory (Fanon, 2008) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) paradigms that focus on oppressor-oppressed, colonizer-colonized structures and intersectionality, respectively. This chapter also integrates the “iron triangle” (Adams, 1981) model from the American politics field to highlight the patron-client relationship between advocates of Multilingual Learners (MLs) and stakeholders who ultimately determine the fate of MLs within and beyond the English language classroom.

This chapter highlights how the author leveraged her Blackness (Fanon, 2008), experiential and organizational knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), in a Machiavellian sense, to promote social transformation throughout the LTAs in the aftermath of Floyd's death. The chapter was written for newcomers, like the author, to the English Language Teaching (ELT) field and the TESOL International Association, MATESOL education program administrators, professors, students and leaders within LTAs themselves who might find the author's reflected experiences, learning activities, and portraits of practice to be of use.

CONCEPT

Advocacy for English language learners (ELLs), as suggested by *Standards for Initiation TESOL Pre-K-12 Teacher Preparation Programs* (2010, 2019), is increasingly becoming a requisite skill set for pre-service teachers. An excerpt from TESOL (2019) Standard 5 states that “candidates demonstrate professionalism and leadership by collaborating with other educators, knowing policies and legislation and the rights of ELLs, advocating for ELLs and their families” (p. 11). Linville (2016) asserts that ELLs

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