

Ada: (Music plays) *¡Hola hola hola!* You're listening to Se Ve Se Escucha, Seen and Heard, a podcast for queer people, Black people, copy editors, language nerds, and much more. Se Ve Se Escucha is a project of the Center for Participatory Change, I am your host, Ada Volkmer, and this is it! Season 2! This is the first episode of our new season. In the last season, you heard us talk a lot about Asheville, about Western North Carolina, about CPC, and this season, season 2, we're gonna focus a little bit more about opening up. So, opening up geographically, but also continuing to explore what language justice means in a broader sense. Um, we know that language justice is about people having full access, we know that it's about interpretation, translation, creating multilingual spaces, balancing power dynamics... But I also feel strongly that it has to be more than that, and so that is why I'm so excited to kick off this season—I'm a super fan, maybe you'll be a super fan too—but I am so excited to have our first guest, which is Cantrice from Queer Black Editing. Welcome, Cantrice.

Cantrice: Thank you so much, Ada, thank you so much for having me. This truly is a pleasure and an honor to be here. Really, truly, thank you so much.

Ada: So we met... This is one of those, like, Instagram stories (Ada and Cantrice laugh). This is one of those Instagram stories where I think that's how we, like, first started connecting. It was a lot of likes and a lot of resharing and stuff like that. Um, so, I'll say that it really... So much of the stuff you were posting and sharing about your work, about Queer Black Editing, I felt it was so resonant with, kind of, language justice. And you put that out there right away, like, copy editing with a language justice lens. So, can you tell us a little bit more about what that means to you, and can you tell us a little bit more about Queer Black Editing?

Cantrice: Sure! Yeah, um... First, just to explain a bit about Queer Black Editing, we are an editing business that operates through a holistic, ever-evolving social justice lens, and that piece, "ever evolving," is really important, because we always want to know that that's always changing, you know, that it's something that's, um, in constant flux. And you know, we're always learning, we're always trying to improve in any way that we can. Queer Black Editing was birthed in the fall equinox of 2017, so we're relatively new still. We offer copyediting, proofreading, and localization services for... primarily those who have some sort of political or radical analysis or who are building upon one, um... or, you know, folks who are just open, so, uhm... And I would say that our everyday editing process is informed by ancestral femme energies, sort of, you know, the dark black infinite vastness of the multiverse, resistive regiolects, and the percussive unspoken, you know, I think that sometimes what is unspoken gets left out of conversation about language, and words, and editing, and of course, old school R&B, I have to shout that out, right, 'cause you know 80s R&B is everything, um, so just gotta name that particular that 808 beat, um... yeah, and in terms of the lens that we use, I would say... I think it shows up in the form of a descriptivist approach to language, and "descriptivist" is basically a fancy term that was picked up in editing school that basically means that it's more of a community-based approach to the language, so it's language shaped by the people, versus "prescriptivist," which is basically, like, you know, the authoritative language that is, um, sort of, you know, that you learn in the dictionary, or that your teacher is like "this is what's correct," and kind of the lens that we use in copyediting, too. Um, and so... basically, sort of the framework that we use is that we honor language birthed in community, language spoken at home, language that your ancestors

spoke, you know? And so this is about, um, for example, English: one of the first things you learn if you're an editor, a copy editor... in particular, is to italicize... in an English-language text, to italicize non-English words. And that's something that at QB—Queer Black Editing, we're not about. Um, you know, for example, not italicizing Spanish-language words in a predominantly English-language text, um, you know, that's othering, you know, it's like, why is there a need to italicize those words? (clears throat) So, that's sort of like, a way that, you know, in terms of being sort of resistive, just those little tiny, tiny... uh... tiny... yea, those tiny ways that we sort of go about language. And also, flagging language that doesn't belong to you or your people, so, for example, like, if there is language... and this is within English, even, like if there's language that is sort of being used in a way that is calling in a particular group of folks but the group using that language doesn't belong to that particular group, that can be a problem, you know, so flagging—just, very gently, you know, "Oh, this is not, you know, this is not the language that is spoken in your community, so maybe let's reframe that," that type of thing. Which has totally happened, you know, that's the thing, it's a collaborative process. It's not a shamey, gross, that type of (Ada: yeah!), type of thing. Yeah, and also allowing the writer—another piece of this, too, is allowing the writer to also guide the process, so instead of going back and forth with writers on, like, you know, "should this be a semicolon or an em dash," you know, Queer Black Editing is about the bigger picture, you know, who is authoring these words, you know, what kind of impact will this piece make in the world after its collaboration? You know, and again, how can Queer Black Editing always, sort of, keep improving and keep getting better at what we do, um... And the other piece I would note is also prioritizing the voice of multiply marginalized folks in particular, that trump any sort of quote-end-quote standard "style guide" or dictionary, you know, my grandmother, you know, she is now 90 years earthside, you know, she was a domestic... you know, cleaning up after white families and their kids, you know, in the 1950s and 60s in central Virginia, being a single parent and raising two children in the city... you know, and it's really interesting how she comes up with new ways to enunciate and delete and subtract syllables, you know, her words carry all of those hickstories, you know? That to me is sacred, and is to be honored, you know, and it's like, yeah, it's certain vocabulary that I would not have known about had it not been for my grandmother, so it's just really interesting and also just, uh... yeah, sacred.

Ada: I think when we first met you said something about being multilingual? I wanted to ask you if you'd tell us a little bit about that.

Cantrice: Yes, yes! So I am... Let's see, I speak south eastern US English, and I know that's a broad term, specifically central Virginia, I guess now central North Carolina... African American English, some people call it Black Vernacular, some people call it AAVE... And that actually was my first language, so my father, he only speaks AAVE, or AAE, I think some people—some folks call it now, and, uhm, and then my mother code-switches between AAVE or AAE and... quote-end-quote "standard US English," I know that's a problematic term (laughs) I know, like all this navigation around, like, language... Yeah, and also French, so your central European French, and I say central European again, and that's broad, but I learned French in school, lived in France briefly, in central France for a little while, and so those are the languages that I speak in terms of, like, sort of... like... word-based, you know, language, yea. So yeah, those are the languages that I... And, one quick note, by the way, with AAVE and French... some folks may know this, but it's

interesting that when I started studying—well, actually, later in my adult life—really looking and digging deep into French, um... not knowing until later that AAVE and French actually have the same exact—pretty much the same exact structure. That the grammatical structure is like the same. Double negatives, triple negatives... They're actually quite similar. And not to say that a European language legitimizes, you know, an African diasporic language, but just saying that I just thought that was interesting how they almost mirror each other whereas, like, English—quote-end-quote “standard English” and French don't, which is interesting. Yeah.

Ada: I really appreciate what you say about, like, the different Englishes that you speak, and that's one of the things that I feel, like, very connected to your work. Um, one of the things that as interpreters, um... one of the things that we have done in the past is, you know, you get a gig, you walk into a room, you explain what you're doing there, you explain how the interpretation equipment works, and usually we say, you know, “we're here to interpret between Spanish and English and English and Spanish, please, if you speak Spanglish don't speak Spanglish, because as an interpreter, it's very difficult to do that.” Um, and as we've done this work and, for me, just wanting everyone to feel—to see themselves reflected in language justice, and it's not a Latino thing, a Spanish thing... I want everyone—when the interpreter stands in the room, I want everyone to have a moment to be like, “I can relate to that.” And so, now, when I go in front of a room and I introduce the interpretation equipment, I'm like “we welcome your southern English, we welcome your Black English, we welcome your North Carolina Spanish, we welcome your Peruvian, Colombian, Puerto Rican Spanish, we welcome, you know, your country accents, your northern accents, and just to—and just to see how people, instead of closing off, open themselves up, and to—to be a little bit more open and creative about the ways we talk about how we speak. I think that's really powerful, and I think that that's one way to kind of make more people, um, see themselves reflected in this language justice movement. Um, I want—I want to ask you—I've seen before you're very good at the infographics, so I wanted to ask you about—I saw an infographic that said, like, “we copyedit English, like US English, we do not copyedit Caribbean English.” So, can you tell me a bit about that?

Cantrice: Yeah, yeah, no, that's a great question, yeah! And it's funny that you (chuckles) named that, 'cause I was looking at it the other day and I was like, yeah, still true! (Laughs) (Ada: unintelligible) I know, right? No, but it's... I think it's important, because yeah, we're very clear that it's US English, and that's because that is the—in terms of English, that's the English that we know, um, we're, you know, very big into doing what you know, you know? Caribbean English is not a language I grew up with. Um... Australian, British, not even Canadian English... I mean, sure, I know a few things, but like, that's not my, sort of, that's not my lived experience. Um, you know, that's not the lived experience of Queer Black Editing at all, so just wanting to root ourselves in the knowledge that we do have, that is lived.

Ada: That's beautiful (laughs). Um... So I guess this is the part of the podcast where I'll ask you to share what you want about yourself, and that could include, like, how you got to Queer Black Editing, so yeah, tell us about yourself.

Cantrice: So yeah! Uh, I go by she/her/they/them pronouns myself, Cantrice Janelle, I am a queer Black, non-binary, inabled, documented, woman with an x, just wanna name that (Ada

laughs). Born and raised around the Powhatan River in Shocquohocan of Turtle Island, which is today known as the James River in Richmond, Virginia, of course in the, um, the south, and besides being an editor, I'm also something of a writer, a budding aromatherapist, that's been fun, I really enjoy that, it's something very—for me, tactile, but also soothing. Like, working with oils and working with, um, yeah, sort of like, the oils distilled from plants, that's been really, like, curative... is an English word? I don't know (chuckles) healing, that's... yeah, that's been very healing for me. And I'm vegan! I don't know (laughs) I don't know if people want to know that, but, yeah, vegan too, and... Yeah, in terms of Queer Black Editing, in terms of how it came about... It was created, to be honest, out of frustration around, you know, some of the confines of the English language, and also, you know, wanting to honor my people, and when I say my people, I mean, you know, everyone, from my ancestors, whose language won't in no dictionary, you know what I mean? To those who I've never met, you know, who feel like the ways that English is used, particularly in the United States, continues to harm or erase their existence, you know. So I feel like that's—that's pretty much how Queer Black Editing came about.

Ada: Well, I wanted to ask you about some of your practices. So you're doing this work, and I think you're doing it with—not just all of yourself, but you've told me before, like, with myself and my—and my ancestors, um... So I know that you also view this with, like you said, a holistic approach... I know that you have some practices *oséa* with the aromatherapy, or like other practices, so: How is that part of your copyediting work?

Cantrice: Well, that's a great question, Ada! Yeah, um, yeah, for sure, meditation, first of all, my goodness, yeah, I start off every single day with meditation. That is just... it just sets the tone, of course, for the whole day, and also, you know, literally, just allows—you know, allows me to breathe. Um, yeah, and so then, um... I would say, in terms of like, just knowing that pretty much every day there's, you know, lots of work to be done. Just making sure that that work is flanked with lots of walks outside, you know, just being grounded in—getting grounded in nature. That's super important. You know... And not even just being in nature but like, really, like, appreciating nature. I think like on Instagram the other day, like I posted, like, on my personal account, I think I posted something like... it was like a moth. It was a rosy maple, and it was like, pink and yellow moth. I had never seen a moth like that before, you know, it just—it landed on the door and I was just like, wow, just in awe, just the beauty, just... So, you know, just sort of, I guess in a way getting lost in nature.

Ada: Um, so I wanted to ask you what your process is like. So, someone wants to work with Queer Black Editing: what would they do?

Cantrice: Oh, yes! Ah, yes, so if folks want to work with Queer Black Editing, go to our website, it's queerblackediting.com/contact, and there's a contact form. And so yeah, and then from there we have automatically—it's built into the services, the free consultation—and then we take it from there! Yeah!

Ada: Um... Is there anything else that you would like to share with the Se Ve Se Escucha listeners?

Cantrice: Oh my gosh! Just, yeah, I guess, you know... This is something that we talk about a lot at Queer Black Editing, which is: Keep telling your truth! You know, keep telling your truth,

be truthful to yourself, your stories, your hickstories, your cultures, all of that. Um, that's, again, just at the core of not only Queer Black Editing, but that's really... hopefully what we all can do without having to face harm and erasure, so, yeah, just... Keep telling your stories, keep telling your truth.

Ada: Well, I want to thank you, I want to, uh... just thank you for your work, thank you for, like, being a *compa*, being like, a fan of the podcast, yeah, and I'm so happy to have you here, and I'm so happy to have your voice as like, the first voice that we hear in this new—in this new season, so thank you very much. If you are listening to this episode and you have asked yourself "Where is Andrea Golden?" please make sure to check out our last minisode, where you find a little bit more about Golden, what she is doing. We are *comadres*, we are co-conspirators, we are just not co-hosts of the podcasts, so check out the last minisode to find out more. Cantrice, *muchísimas gracias* on behalf of the Center for Participatory Change, I'm Ada Volkmer, Leonel is doing the editing, thank you all for listening, remember, like, follow, review, rate, and we'll talk soon, thank you! Music by Combo Chimbata. (Music plays)