Interview

"There is not a word I speak that has not been given to me by somebody else"

an interview with Dr. Alison Phipps

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Alison Phipps holds the UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow where she is also Professor of Languages and Intercultural Studies. She is based in School of Education at the University of Glasgow where she uses creative, decolonising and restorative methods to teach widely in refugee studies, critical multilingual studies, religious and spiritual education, anthropology and intercultural education and education for non-violence. She was Co-Convener of Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNET) from 2009 -2019.

In 2019 she was appointed DeCarle Distinguished Visiting Lecturer at Otago University /te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo. In 2017 she was appointed Adjunct Professor of Hospitality and Tourism at Auckland University of Technology /Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau. In 2016 she was appointed 'Thinker in Residence' at the EU Hawke Centre at University of South Australia. She was the Inaugural Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Waikato /te Whare Wananga o Waikato Aotearoa New Zealand in 2013, and in 2014 Adjunct Professor of Tourism and hospitality.

In 2011 she was voted 'Best College Teacher' by the student body and received the Universities 'Teaching Excellence Award' for a Career Distinguished by Excellence. In 2012 she received an OBE for Services to Education and Intercultural and Interreligious Relations in the Queen's Birthday Honours. In 2023 she recevied a D.Litt (honoris causa) from the University of Edinburgh in recognition of "inspirational and extraordinary research and work with refugees and multilingual and multicultural communities."

She is an elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and Fellow of the Academy of Social Scences.

Alison chairs the New Scots Core Group for Refugee Integration in partnerhsip with Scottish Government, COSLA and Scottish Refugee Council; She Co-chaired the The AHRC Global Challenge Research Fund Advisory Board and she is an Ambassador for the Scottish Refugee Council. She has served on the boards of the University of London in Paris, and The Royal Society of Edinburgh's International Committee.

She is author of numerous academic books and articles and a regular international keynote speaker and broadcaster. Her latest short monograph is Decolonising Multilingualism: Struggles to Decreate with Multilingual Matters. She make regular broadcast media appearances and has a regular column in the national Scottish broadsheet press. Her first collection of poetry, Through Wood was published in 2009, with a further collection - The The Warriors who do not Fight in 2018, with co-author Tawona Sitholé.

She has published widely in the arts, humanities and social sciences, most notably in the field of language studies, theatre, performance studies, creative methods and ethics, refugee studies, tourism and hospitality, intercultural studies and European anthropology as well as in the field of higher education studies. She co-edits the book series Tourism and Cultural Change and the book series Languages, Intercultural Communication and Education and is on the editorial board of both Language and Intercultural Communication, Critical Multilingualism Studies, and Hospitality and Society.

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[Alex Alves Egido & Josimayre Novelli] Professor Phipps, when we first learned about The Specialist special issue call, entitled "Language Policies for Multilingualism in the Global South", we immediately recalled your 2019 book, named "Decolonising Multilingualism: Struggles to decreate". To start this conversation, could you take us back to 2019 and comment on the broader context that motivated you to write the book?

[Alison Phipps] The idea for the book really came back in 2013, when I started out with a project that some colleagues and I were working on across a whole range of different countries, which was looking at how we might consider language as a key, what scientists would call variable, what we might call a construct, or we might even call a category alongside race, gender and class. So thinking really with Crenshaw's intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), but also more widely than that. Why is it that we talk about sexuality as an intersection? But why don't we talk about language and languages? It just so happens that I had the fortune or misfortune to be born into a family of English speakers, and therefore was raised to speak English. It's an inherited category. What do we do about problematic inheritances?

I just so happened to live at a time in the world when English is a dominant language. So that gives me an advantage over other speakers, and particularly within academic life, but also within other walks of life. Be it in medicine or be it in law, be it when crossing a border, wishing to claim asylum, be it when you are working in literature or the arts. When you are working as an educator, teaching languages, people will make comments all the time which are prejudicial based on something that is absolutely not your fault and is down to chance of inheritance. Nevertheless, I was really exercised by this question of language as an intersection, but also my colleague at the time I was doing this work, he was a clinical psychologist and was really thinking hard about the fact that it is the voice of the parent that is the first thing that the child hears. Our first affective connection is through an acoustic.

So whilst we focus a lot of the time on race, actually those auditory areas around language, around the sound of the mother's voice, the father's voice, the voice of the siblings, these are really critical to knowing who we are in the world, knowing where we orient ourselves in the world and that these are primary categories of making our identities, they become constructs.

They are constructed in the world around how we speak, who we speak to, which language we speak, how that speech is inflected, and whether we are people who are naturally multilingual, because that's the community that we are brought into. We are in a world of many speakers of

many languages. Through the research that we were doing from looking at how the world was constructed and categorised multilingually, people kept asking me to give an account of my work as a multilingual.

I wrote an article about being an expert on a board of people who are multilinguals, thinking about multilingualism. I was aware that I was an impostor, that I was answering a question based on a world view, which was the European one and that the truth was I was not in any way a multilingual expert. I was simply someone who had, through chance of birth and through particular forms of privilege, but also through particular forms of disadvantage that went with my upbringing, been raised to know some colonial languages very well.

However, with the work that I was doing, which is largely with people seeking asylum, living in a family that is made up of people who have sought refuge, who have been granted refugee status, the languages I needed to be able to speak were the ones that I did not have and were the ones that people in my family or people in my community were fluent in. So these questions of privilege and advantage and multilingualism, were really problematically cast and these needed rethinking. For those of us who speak the languages that have been privileged by the United Nations, by the European Union, by public education systems worldwide and through the way in which colonialism has worked and has intersected then with language and race and gender and class, there needed to be an effort made by those of us within what's often geographically but also economically and in terms of privilege, called the Global North, we needed to be able to tell the story of what it looks like when we try and decreate, that is, reimagine those systems ourselves.

That was the work that I wanted to talk about in the book called *Decolonizing Multilingualism*. I think actually the subtitle is really important, which is *struggles to decreate*, because it is about the struggle, about how hard it is for those of us who have privilege to find ways to keep working, to live in worlds where we might experience a little of what it is like to be exposed and unknowing and unsafe within dominant structures.

[AAE & JN] Could you please explain to us what 'decolonising multilingualism' means to you? Also, how would you say your Global North positionality influences this understanding of the concept 'decolonising multilingualism'?

[AP] It is a question of who I am and where I am and what that means. The way I would answer that question, and I answer it towards the end of the book as well, is through the invitation that

was given to me by my friend and colleague, Dr. Piki Diamond, who is Māori scholar, educator, and artist. I remember being with her on a journey into the heart of the Ureweras, in the northeast of Aotearoa New Zealand, and we were talking a lot about identity and position. During that time, I said to her: it is a struggle to account for who I am in your world because I am not from a family of settlers, so my family just stayed. All of them were moved around in the North of England as part of the Industrial Revolution. They had their land taken from them to make room for the railways, and they had to move from village to village. They were impoverished. They worked long hours in sweatshop conditions, in factories processing the cotton that had been sent from India to be processed in those mills, all of which was fueling the empire. But my own family, their story, was a story of indentured labour, a story of poverty, a story of people dying very young from breathing in the fibres of the cotton. So the story is about people that still live in other parts of the world, because we have not yet eradicated conditions of exploitation of workers, we have not yet managed to bring in safe environments for work for everyone.

But I knew that that was a strong part of the history of my family and that, therefore, my family was bound inextricably into the productions of the empire. However, in different ways, that landed me in a different position that is both part of the exploitation of perpetuating the exploitation cause, of course, this was wage labor that would not have existed had there not been a trade in cotton, but also that was not a happy story. It was a story of poverty, of people dying young, of serious suffering, often medicated with far greater quantities of alcohol than we are good for people that led to members of my family signing a pledge to say we will not drink alcohol in my family again, because this has created such devastation.

There are other stories that I can tell, but they are about the profits within the land. They are about the public education system. They are about the welfare state. They are about things that were set up in the U.K. that are public goods, but which were set up off the back of all of this colonial labour. So, thinking about decolonizing multilingualism, it is about what was placed in the public schooling education system to be available to everybody, to mitigate the effects of English being a dominant language, and the languages that I had to learn in school were French and German.

Why did I have to learn those languages in school? Well, because we were at war during the Second World War with Germany, and, therefore, learning German was to learn a language of

peacemaking and rebuilding, and of making Europe a safe place, and one where we would not waste human lives and resources on waging war. In that sense, learning French was about the Entente Cordiale about building a European Union about building.

Hence, we know what came out of the League of Nations, the European Union, the United Nations, these languages that were part of modernism, these beliefs in modern systems where people would speak in languages they could understand. I believe fundamentally that the choices of languages were misguided. But the impulse to say we needed more than just English or more than just French or more than just Spanish or more than just Arabic were not.

My grandfather was the personnel officer or human resource officer for a weaving mill in Lancashire, in the early post-War period. He was the first person that anybody met when they came over from the cotton mills to work and to address that labour gap that was plugged by people coming from the Indian subcontinent in the U.K. He was the first person people met, and he realised these people who were meeting him had left their families behind. Then, he and my grandmother would host meals on a Sunday in their house and would feed people a traditional Sunday roast. Hence, gradually, they would help people begin to have a place where they could feel at home and practice language. And I thought back to all of that and that work that my grandparents did for years as positioned, yes, as people in the Global North, but also in attitude, like people of the Global South sharing their food, opening their home, allowing a porosity of culture and language to come through their lives, and passing that on to others as grandchildren.

I also think when I speak about my positionality that I am being disingenuous if I say that my position is only of an elite member of the cultural elite who speaks English in the global north, geographically, because, of course, my family are also networked into many different elements of life that take place in low to middle income countries with people who have sought refuge, who have claimed asylum, who have come from parts of the world, which are some of the most exploited in the world. Therefore, that positions me as a foster mother, as an auntie, as a grandmother; it positions me as a friend and as a community member; it positions me as a principal investigator, as a professor, as a teacher inside networks which are deeply multilingual and not about French, German, and English, but about languages such as Blin and Tigrinya, Arabic and Portuguese, and inside languages such as Shona and Dangbe, and inside languages like te reo, all of which call me to respect them and that respect needs me to commit to learning something,

even if it is just a little bit that will say I acknowledge the dignity of you as speakers, because when I hear you speak my name in my language, it is acknowledging my dignity and my place.
Whilst we might choose to speak English as the language that is easiest for us by allowing that multilingualism to be porous and by committing to being inside of not knowing of walking in the shoes of people who can barely get the gist of what is spoken, then I inhabit a different position within those places.

I believe when we speak about where we stand, we do not have an easy place to stand. We stand in multiple positions. We stand within a diversity as multilinguals and we have work to do to try and to make sure that we might not just be fluent in way too many colonial languages, as my friend and colleague Annika Marshall said to me once. We might find a grounding that can change by being porous and being prepared to be learners. And, of course, when we do that, it is a very humbling experience because there is something about linguistic power, a fluency that means we can shape and create and craft the worlds as we want to. Whereas when we say we will not understand for as long as it takes for understanding to come to us, then it is like being little children again and grappling for language and needing to shape it again and making lots of mistakes. Those are positions of real humility that I think are necessary to us for any form of decolonial scholarship.

For me, that's what I have really learned through projects of trying to think through decolonizing multilingualism. It is actually really a constant, committing and recommitting to a path of being humiliated in a good way. For all that I do not know, for all that I cannot learn or have not been able to learn because of the accidents of my birth visa, via the accidents of somebody else's birth.

[AAE & JN] Comparing the broad, social context of the 2019 book publication to nowadays, what changes do you see?

[AP] My degree allowed me the privilege of reading people, like Frantz Fanon and Edouard Glissant in the original, I was lucky. I could read in French because I had studied it. I worked hard to learn to read in French and that was already for an English speaker.

However, the more I worked with people in low to middle income countries on projects that were working in different parts of the world interculturally, the more it was clear to me that

we were both decolonizing and also post-colonising at the same time; that was not a settled thing. The new generation of scholars, who were not of my generation, were really embracing the social movements and needing the energy, the intellectual energy of the 1980s decolonial thinkers.

That was exciting because I have been through years both as an academic and as an activist where it would be me and two other people standing in a protest and it was a really sad event. Now, I go to protests and there are thousands there and it feels like there is a whole movement of people trying to really just quite simply change the world for the better and to address inequality and to work for human freedom.

I have seen that in the last 10 years up to now in 2023. However, those movements have grown in the urgency of the situation. When I was publishing in 2019, it was just before the second wave of books with decolonizing in their title and, therefore, the wave of cynicism in academics about the term "decolonizing" was only just beginning, because we move as critical scholars to cynicism quickly. As soon as somebody else publishes something with a similar title to ours, we go: "Oh no, that's terrible". We need to be critical of concepts and we shift to the critical so fast that we often don't let the creative do its gestating work.

So, the moment I see us in now is quite fraught and quite difficult. It is quite hard to articulate the space. I think our debates are quite immature and they are not yet settled, and we need a lot more debate because, of course, what debate does is it gives you freedom to test the boundaries and say: "OK, I can go that far with you". Nevertheless, actually, we need a bit of time to rest where our thinking has landed because the next thing said might be starting to hurt people and when it is starting to hurt, that's not necessarily a good thing. There is no place in the world where we stand where we cannot diversify and pluralize and find more points of connection with one another, and that's the work for me.

It is permaculture work and, in many ways, that's the big area that I am thinking about now. I am really thinking hard about the principles that come with permaculture about the principles of cultural freedom, the principles of cultural justice, the freedom to create, the freedom to work, the freedom to be critical of our work, and to do those things in such a way that we will multiply the number of edges to which we connect. We will see a way in which there is abundance. We will not be closing things down and saying, "I am only going to work with people who look like this or sound like this or act like this or walk like this". We will not be doing that work of essentialism that has happened before, but we will allow ourselves times when we retreat. This is work where we

enter the places that for us are safe and our sanctuaries where we can lick our wounds. Dust ourselves down. Find our energy again and then come back out to do the work again.

So, for me, that's the change from 2013 when the world was quite optimistic and intellectually optimistic for me and 2023 where it's really hard, I'm not going to sugarcoat it. It is not going to get better anytime soon. I do not know if it will get better in my lifetime, but that does not mean there is not really important work to be done. That is about abundance of languages, abundance of words, abundance of creativity, about creating spaces where we can connect with different languages, but also about being in space as where we can be restored and work on restorative forms of justice. A multilingualism that will actually develop the work we need to do so, I think those are the big changes. We were not really talking about restorative processes in 2013. We were kind of quite excited about the return to the decolonial. Now, there is cynicism in the system.

In a politics of representation alone the languages I speak that come out of my mouth that I love to be part of cannot be heard, and those gut feelings of anger I understand. I know where they come from. I know why they are visceral, but we are intellectuals. We can ask more intelligent questions. We can see beyond skin. We know we all bleed red. We can see beyond what it is that we think is just immediate.

There is not a word I speak that has not been given to me by somebody else, or a word that you speak that has not been brought to you by somebody else. We were all taught by our mothers and our grandmothers. We all stand on the shoulders of our ancestors. We have all been taught, by the way, that the land speaks to us, by the way the rivers flow near us by the words that are part of the ancient speech of the land that has been handed down to us. Then, if we do not come into this with a sense of being part of a plurality of gifts, then I think we begin to miss out. And that fraught energy will stay.

In that sense, I believe passionately that we can find ways through if we are inspired by the way that Maldonado Torres speaks about it; love and rage. Love for the world, love for the language is love for diversity. Love for the plurality. Love for all that we have been given and can do and rage at the different forms of injustice and the ways in which we have been removed from the ability to do good at times and the ways in which we are then required to act for justice in the world.

I think those two are really powerful forces and they were embryonic in 2013. Those were times when we had slightly more technocratic responses, I think, which were like, who you cite in your references or how we might work with representational politics. Now, it is far more than that and we know that we have done the work. We have seen the errors; we have seen what can happen and we have got more to do.

[AAE & JN] In one of the chapters from the book, entitled "A Short Manifesto to Decolonise Multilingualism", you state that the decolonisation of multilingualism "... needs people who are able to embark on such a journey and *return with tales to tell of what happens when decolonising is attempted in foreign languages learning*." (Phipps, 2019, p. 8, 2019, p. 8 - emphasis added). Based on your own experience and attempts witnessed to decolonise multilingualism, what tales can you tell us?

[AP] There were so many people who do this work, who tell amazing stories about what happens when you have a go. They are often really funny stories, and I do think, again, a big change from 2013 to now is that I have just become really convinced by the need for more humor, comedy, and lightness. A really great psychotherapist that I have worked with has said: “Alison, you will never change anything without humor, without lightness. You know, if we're all too puffed up and serious about it, we do not change anything.”

I am going to have a go. I am going to try and order a coffee in this language and they pull it together and they do it for the first time and then they get a hot chocolate and then they tell “Oh, no, sorry, I really did not want a hot chocolate. I wanted a coffee”. And then what? They end up with a free coffee because there is a relationship that has started, and that relationship started around human error and our lovely response as human beings when we get it right to say, I am going to take that shame away from you and I am going to make it alright for you. And it is like the world is full of stories like this.

The world is full of funny stories and stories that you tell against yourself and books full of stories like that and stories against me. It is like the difference between learning to play a musical instrument when you learn notation and to read music and learning when you learn by ear. It was incredibly difficult. I could not hear the tonalities. I could not get my head around. I could not remember from week to week, but bit by bit slowly but slowly parts began to stop and settle, and I began to appreciate the sheer joy of what that's like to learn that way.

However, I also believe I learned something else from that process, which was that, in my te reo language classes, in Aotearoa New Zealand, every class began with what is called a karakia, which is essentially an incantation or a prayer, or a ceremonial moment of acknowledging the ancestry held in the language. The wisdom held in the language, the people who have been custodians of our language and offering gratitude for that. Again, I found that there is real wisdom in that moment and, whilst that does not fit well in a secular Western higher education system to start a class with an incantation, there is a wisdom in there for us.

And certainly work that we now do within the UNESCO Chair at University of Glasgow will be to honour the ceremony and the rights and the rituals that come with this kind of work and to say that part of decolonizing is to tell the story of how people offer acknowledgement, how people give thanks, how people respect what has come before and that when we open up a space for people to tell the stories of what's come before, it is really quite astonishing what the stories are and what people will tell. There are many stories, and they're often funny.

In the book, there is other work we have done about what happened when we decided to put English last, and putting English last. It came as a result of one of the projects we were a part of, we were doing some work in Ghana and about an hour north of Accra in the Dodowa rainforest. It involved a group of young people who are extraordinary dancers. They're made up of people who have been internally displaced or are migrants in that region. There are about 7 different languages spoken in the township and we were working with a group of people, again, with many different languages themselves, and we started off and I arrived. And, of course, because I arrive, everyone just starts to speak English and I spent a whole day really frustrated on a project to work multilingualism with everyone speaking English, including all the children from the school and struggling to do that.

I was watching people feeling a bit uncomfortable and not in their power and not expressing themselves in the way that I can when I'm speaking to you in English. And I went back that evening and we sat down and we did our usual debrief at the end of the day asking each other what were the high points and the low points? And the low point for me was that we all spoke English, that we did not commit to multilingualism. And I said, yeah, I've been working all my life for a multilingual world. And to do this decolonizing work and it has not happened here. Is there anything we can do to make this better? The next day, my colleagues, who were leading the

workshops, just began in their own languages, and the language they have been taught by their mothers. Languages I do not understand. And they then did all kinds of workshop work, and all day we worked multilingually. And the next day and the next day and the next day until that became an embedded normal way of working until it became a bit of a joke for the young people to say: “How’s it, Alison? Understood any of this yet?”

The work went through many translators and my power could be decentered in those spaces and we could watch what happened when young people became translators for me and for each other in that project, when we could let meaning flow through different languages and we could all stop and rest in the languages that made us feel the most comfortable.

[AAE & JN] In her publication entitled "A Coalitional Approach to Theorizing Decolonial Communication, Gabriela Veronelli asked the following questions regarding decolonial futures (2016, p. 405): "Decolonial futures don’t have words yet; they don’t have a 'how': How would these networks of exchange of people thinking and living against coloniality be formed? What are the conditions of possibility of this pluriversal movement? Would it be necessary to establish conditions for these dialogues? Among whom would they be? Would they include the oppressor? What languages would be spoken? How would nonverbalized knowledge be recognized?" In that sense, how would you say the multilingualism paradigm has been decolonised? In other words, how have multilingual futures been constructed?

[AP] There have been the multilingual strategies for the world, not least in inter-governmental organisations and bodies, which have operated in colonial ways, linguistically. This can be seen in the choice of languages for which interpretation and translation are available, and there is an exciting moment I'm just seeing with UNESCO, who are now starting to think through what decolonial futures would look like for strategies for multilingual education in the world. I think that, between strategies and tactics, there are multilingual tactics in the world. Multilingual worlds exist. They have hidden themselves away. In them people have known how to educate children in many languages. They have known how to keep their languages safe, even when it is close to the point of extinction.

However, they have really tried and they have done it through improvisation and devising. So, it is a key point that I am making. The manifesto, in Decolonising Multilignualism, is that if we are going to do this, we are going to have to improvise because there is no map. We do not know how to do it and, because the map could not be made by the people who needed tactics for keeping themselves alive, it is based on Glissant’s understanding of the need for opacity, so we

cannot say what it looks like. We have to have lots of tactics that mean that we can keep languages alive, keep these words alive and they will be held in the oral arts of poetry or the visual arts of multilingual that the hiding of multilingual words within art. They will be kept in all kinds of really creative ways that we cannot yet think of.

We are not going to get it right the first time or the 10th time. It is not something you can clean up, theoretically or conceptually, or have the correct methodological framework for developing. It is going to be messy and so, to my mind, the single most important thing we need in this work is the ability to say we are sorry. To say we are sorry we pronounced your name wrong, to say we do not know how to say we are not equal to the task but that does not mean we should not have a go. I think one of the things that really concerns me in some of the debates around decolonizing our present is that there are excuses for people to not do anything. There are excuses for inertia. I cannot get your pronunciation right or I am too white, or I am too rich.

Relationships take courage, and it is only through relationships that we will find what we need, and we will never be able to work with different languages without people in relationship with us who are happy to be teachers and happy to be learners. Today, it is Nelson Mandela Day, as we are doing this interview. One of the famous quotes from him is "What is the most effective weapon in the world? It is sitting down and talking to one another" and we cannot do that without actually being in a position where we do it and where we do it without just throwing really quite shallow accusations at one another.

Paulo Freire said we don't just have to speak but pronounce the world - pronunciar o mundo. I think that is such an important phrase and it gets translated into English as we have to speak the word, but it is not *speaking*; *pronouncing* is a much stronger thing. It requires much more of your body to make a pronouncement you have to work at it. Pronouncing is a much stronger thing. It requires much more of your body to make a pronouncement, you have to work at it. You have to articulate it. You have to be precise with it. You have to say it to people.

We all have different roles to play within this work and it is a work as Paulo mentioned: it is a work of love, fundamentally a work of love. He says this at the end of "Pedagogy of The Oppressed". He says, in the last chapter, that was not translated into English, about this being a work to enable there to be a little bit more love in the world. If we have more words for love to

refer to multilingualism, then there is a lot more love in the world. Some of this is often both more complicated and also simpler at one and the same time, than we might make it.

[AAE & JN] We would like to sum up this conversation with reflections on learning with each other, especially those from the Global South and Global North. Here, we take "the term global South [as] refer[ing] to the geopolitical rather than geographic regions of the world and their people who have been paying the costs of colonization and economic globalization. It includes regions and peoples which have historically been politically or culturally marginalized." (Chiappa; Finardi, 2021, p. 26). In your view, what can those from the Global South learn with the ones from the Global North - and vice versa - when it comes to decolonising multilingualism?

[AP] So I think honoring the specificity of everybody's decolonial story is my first point of departure, because a truly decolonial work is that in which the oppressor does learn to do more loving and that the oppressed do to learn to do more loving. It really works when you realise that you are not who you thought you were and that you have become what you hate. It is part of the condition of being human. I think for me, those times where we share our stories are really important.

I think we are going to struggle with the terms Global South and Global North for a long time because they are imprecise, helpfully imprecise, but also unhelpfully imprecise. And, for me, too, I understand them much more as metaphors for the people who are on the journey and the people who are against the journey. The people who are really still wed to perpetuating conditions of inequality as an ideology, as opposed to those who are not. They might still be wedded to perpetuating some of those inequalities, but it is not because they want to or because they are not trying not to. I think that the geopolitical conceptualisation is helpful, but I also see it as metaphorical because I have worked in context and projects where those who are geopolitically of the South are colonial in attitude, and that those from the North are decolonial in attitude.

It is not particularly where or what the heritage or experience has been, though these have a huge influence. It is about the journey that people are making and the commitment that they are making to the work and that's hard work, and it is hard to see, but I do think that the future of this work depends on settling on terms that can give us more precision, maybe asking better questions than who's in and who's out.

Work that is done and undertaken from the South and from the North in those metaphorical ways, and what is it that we have and what is that we share at colleagues of mine recently authored a piece (Yemane; Yohannes, 2023) reflecting on the movements and for

liberation reflecting on the term and expert by experience. And again, this is language that's used a lot at the moment in debates around decolonisation. They were reflecting on the context of coloniality that we all find ourselves in, that is common to all. When I am in a situation where I am entrapped, where I am stuck, where I cannot find my way out, then I need people to advocate for me and they are the ones, the ones who will do that successfully will be the ones who are the experts.

By experience, they will be the experts in the asylum system, or they will be the experts in the transfer of resource, or they will be the experts in particular forms of teaching of knowledge. We can really work together on this and we can recognise one another for being on a journey of liberation that is mutual. I am thinking of those amazing immortal words of Lila Watson when she says "if you have come here because you can think you can help me, then I am really not interested. But if you have come here because you think your liberation is bound up with my own, then we can work together".

For me, that's still the baseline for this project within the coloniality of decolonizing overall, because, fundamentally, it is about a quest for human freedom. I think many of the terms that we are using, at the moment, at the start of this work, are too imprecise and are quite unhelpful. We may need to give them a rest rather as we had to give the term "ideology" a rest for a while or "discourse" a rest. We need to put them in the attic and then the next generation can go up there and see what they are like, and we might then want to rehabilitate this concept.

I was just thinking with friends yesterday about the tradition of the Jewish Passover, where you had the matzos which are broken and a piece is hidden during the Passover and you have to find the exact one to put it together again. Those principles, those love tokens in the past that were made and broken, and you have to find the exact one and your lover would have it somewhere across the ocean. There's something here about our need for each other. The oppressed cannot heal, as Paulo Freire has said, without the oppressor, and the oppressor will become the oppressed. Without a way of finding a space in between. I have seen this again and again when we turn ourselves into competition and accusation and holier-than-thou we just take all the energy off for a project that is going to self-destruct. You know it will eat itself, whereupon it becomes cannibalistic.

So, let's ask better questions when we come up against those pointless questions. What's a better question? What's the question of learning? What's the question of humility? What's the question of greater diversity? What's the question of searching out words that we do not know exist in the world that suddenly come to us because of what we have said? Do you have a word for that in your language? We will find that there are words that exist that we did not know existed on Earth, and they will be illuminating in ways that we would not have known otherwise. For me, the Enlightenment was so much about a project of the monocultural mindset enacting its monoblock imposition. The new light will come from all of these many, many thousands of lights that are held in words and people who have different answers to those questions when they share that light, rather than keeping it just for themselves.

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