

Transcript from the Freelance Friday #EFAChat, August 22, 2014

Topic: Diversity in Editing

Guest: Nisi Shawl: editor, reviewer, and co-author of Writing the Other

[@EFAFreelancers](#)

Good afternoon, editors and allies! Welcome to #EFAchat, the Editorial Freelancers Association's monthly chat.

[@EFAFreelancers](#)

Please use the #EFAchat hashtag to be included in today's conversation. Jump in at any time.

[@EFAFreelancers](#)

We'll use Q1, Q2, etc. for questions. Use A1, A2, etc. for your answers (or discussion related to specific questions). #EFAchat

[@EFAFreelancers](#)

Today's chat is moderated by @wordfey. The topic is diversity in editing, with our special guest, @nisishawl. #EFAchat

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Nisi is an author, editor, & reviewer. She co-authored Writing the Other with @cynthia_ward. #EFAchat

[@EFAFreelancers](#)

She also co-ran a workshop of the same name this June, where we met. #EFAchat

[@EFAFreelancers](#)

Welcome, @nisishawl! And welcome to everyone joining us today. #EFAchat

[@NisiShawl](#)

I'm so glad to be able to do this! #EFAchat

[@EFAFreelancers](#)

Q1: We've seen a lot of discussions on diversity awareness in writing & publishing. Where do editors fit in? #EFAchat

[@scieditorIM](#)

A1. Well, looking around the last editors' conf I attended, I noticed a lack of diversity in the room. That's 1 edge of the problem #efachat

[@brinsonian](#)

@EFAFreelancers For one thing, addressing biased language in a constructive way. #efachat

@GLHancock

A1 As always, good editors strive for and suggest a gender balance in examples. He/she/he/she/etc. if it makes sense. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A1Editors have immense influence on the reality of diversity of publishing, as one of the industry's main gatekeepers. #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

A1. Recognizing bias takes deep awareness. More than counting male vs female names or photos. (Which I do.) #efachat

@NisiShawl

A1: We can highlight diversity, ignore it, play down its importance, or commit to doing it full speed ahead. #EFAchat

@GLHancock

Recognizing bias can be very tricky. First we must be aware of our own. Second, allow authors to be themselves. Flaws included. #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

@GLHancock Indeed, my science texts are trying to be less Euro-centric wrt to theories as well as history & examples. #efachat

@EFAFreelancers

Q2: Speaking of bias, one word that constantly comes up in discussions about diversity is "privilege." What is privilege? #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

Joanna Russ wrote about how bias can be invisible to its perpetrators in terms of literary contest judges, #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

A2. Privilege is not understanding there is a problem. #efachat

@GLHancock

Also, our perception of bias can be rather subjective. IDK about privilege. Context? #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A2: Privilege can be present at the same time one experiences oppression. Difference from "normal" aren't monolithic. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

But what is clear to one reader can be murky to another due to cultural background. Corrections can then flatten. outofmiryclay #EFAchat

@outofmiryclay

@EFAFreelancers Editors should correct for clarity without changing the deeper meaning or message#efachat

@scieditorIM

@outofmiryclay At least "flagging" bias is 1 of the professional editorial standards of @editorscanada. Considered an ethical duty #efachat

@outofmiryclay

@scieditorIM I agree but depending on the writer's intended purpose the bias maybe apart of the message they are conveying #efachat

@GLHancock

@scieditorIM Is this another "special" use of a word only in the context of some issue? I am unfamiliar ... #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

Some of our editors might not be aware of "privilege" used in a diversity context. Anyone have a fast definition to offer? #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

I always thought of it as those things you don't see. Being male, and not witnessing street harassment, for example. #privilege #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A2: Privilege is playing the game of life at an easier setting than others. (Per John Scalzi) #EFAchat

@GLHancock

@NisiShawl I can certainly agree with that! Not so sure it means being clueless, except for the young, for whom we make exceptions. #EFAchat

@klhamilton

or: Privilege is not *needing* to realize/be aware there's a problem, let alone trying to understand it. #efachat

@ElectricBookLab

A2 "Privilege"=fits the criteria for the default or majority in a group dynamic and benefits from in-group/out-group behaviors #efachat

@MANUALOFHULK

@EFAFreelancers THIS PAGE HAVE PRETTY GOOD SUMMARY OF PRIVILEGE.
<http://t.co/a9xRYfRzWJ>#EFACHAT

@scieditorIM

@GLHancock I've absorbed "privilege" as jargon. Means something like "You don't know. You haven't experienced it." #efachat

@scieditorIM

Important reason to keep it, then. MT @outofmiryclay bias maybe apart of the message they are conveying #efachat

@GLHancock

Let's not confuse diversity with equality. A lot of people do. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

Next tweet is the unshortened version of the URL I posted earlier, since some had probs with the shortened one. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

<http://t.co/Yin3HM6D6I> #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

Q3: What are some examples you've seen as an editor in which diversity awareness helped or could have helped? #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

Q3 (in other words, give us examples of things editors ought to look for--things you've seen personally or otherwise) #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A3: Editing "Bloodchildren" (stories by Octavia Butler scholars) I noticed a tension in some dramatic situations reviewers missed. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A3: Story by @rcloenenruiz was about the effects of colonization in space. I saw what she was going for. Some didn't #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A3: An editor said she didn't "feel the danger" around my heroine in her black neighborhood. There was no danger. Just blackness. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

A3: I can give one from writing assessments. A girl in an ELA item lamenting being bad at math--playing into the stereotype. #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

A3. Using only WASP names in examples. Using only one gender in examples... #efachat

@scieditorIM

A3. Showing only one gender or ethnicity in images. #efachat

@HumnEnterprises

A3. Portraying only "traditional" (stereotypical) families in words or images. Assuming a uniform socioeconomic status. And, and... #efachat

@HumnEnterprises

A3. @ScieditorIM Even my beloved CMOs falls into this trap - its whole indexing foreign names section is problematic. #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

A3. That video games are dominated by teen boys: <http://t.co/3CdLYWPbXN> #efachat

@scieditorIM

A3. Heroes (in the capital letters sense) are mostly male. #efachat

@GLHancock

Where do we draw the line, though? Authors have rights to their ideas and expressions. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

Q4: Regarding @glhancock's query, how does, and should, an editor advocate for diversity awareness with no mandate from a client? #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

Draw the line where you always do, @GLHancock: what do your readers want to read? Who do you want to reach with your pub? #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

Expressing ideas is a right. But many ideas go unpublished as "unmarketable." Lack of diversity is unmarketable #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

Case/ purpose dependent. Maybe Mg Ed realm? MT @GLHancock Where do we draw the line, though? Authors rights re ideas & expression. #EFAchat

@debreese

@GLHancock Sure, but when "rights" trump "right" do we have an author who is invested in power structure rather than people? #EFAchat

@GLHancock

@debreese Not sure there's any kind of right about this. It's all what is P.C./fad/trending at the moment. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

Q4 (Anyone have an example of interacting with a client proactively about diversity?) #EFAchat

@GLHancock

Often when I've pointed out problems, the authors say they were completely unaware of how they had presented something. Happy. #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

A4. Suggest, flag, point out, query. It's up to the creator / publisher how much bias is appropriate.#efachat

@EFAFreelancers

A4: I've found that my clients are usually very receptive when I frame diversity in terms of the author's readership. #EFAchat

@ElectricBookLab

A4 Query, remark, respond to the text, as always! It's useful to alert authors to text that possibly alienates their audience. #efachat

@scieditorIM

It's hard to write diversity when you don't live it. "Write what you know," and all that. Make an effort to experience diversity? #efachat

@scieditorIM

@GLHancock Felt the need to jump back out of the way after that observation. #efachat

@GLHancock

@scieditorIM I just have a deep aversion to jerking others around, trying to force them to do something they may not want to do. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

Not me, @GLHancock. I am a bossy person. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A4: Does the client who hasn't expressed a desire for diversity want to reach my niece? #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A4: Does the client who hasn't expressed a need for diversity think readers don't want it? #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

Fundamental change in thinking required to get that readers want diversity. Only successful stories will prove this to the market. #efachat

@EFAFreelancers

Q5: To @scieditorIM's point, publishers are often reflected in the books they publish. True for editors? #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

If you're just joining us, welcome to Freelance Friday! Jump in at any time with hashtag #EFAchat.

@scieditorIM

@MANUALOFHULK Rather awesome checklists, thank you. #efachat

@NisiShawl

A5: Most kinds of editing I've done bear some reflection of my profile, I bet. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

I am an oldest kid. And not part of any recognizable power structure. Just tryna tell people they could do better. #EFAchat

@GLHancock

A5 Maybe, but if presented with a piece that advocates something I feel deeply against, I just refuse the job. I turn down a lot! #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

A5. It's why I finally gave up trying to edit "anything" & called myself a science editor. But, does wider world notice/ care? #efachat

@EFAFreelancers

Q6: Editors often want structure, style guides. Many new diversity-aware terms out there. How to navigate it? #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A6: You mean, like what pronouns to use? Letting people choose their own labels? #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

@NisiShawl Largely labels, yes. Choices of how to display and determine identity through language. #EFAchat

@GLHancock

A6 I don't want no stinkin' style guides! Unfortunately, publishers do. #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

A6. <Mumble> years ago, Canadian govt put out glossary of gender neutral terms. I haven't seen anything along those lines since. #efachat

@ElectricBookLab

A6 Establish those parameters during development, let CEs develop consistent/logical stylesheets per project goals #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A6: Some styleguidisms are bound to date quickly, feel forced and awkward. But attempts are appreciated. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

A6: The prob with static guides is that what people call themselves can change over years. #EFAchat

@debreese

@EFAFreelancers Weary of style guides that change "American Indian" to "Native American" or that omit tribal info author provides #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

@debreese Good point. I work with Elders often, & default to using their self-identification so I get it right. #efachat

@scieditorIM

@debreese Nearly every Elder has his or her own perspective on which terms show respect and why. It's not simple. #efachat

@GLHancock

A6 Haven't most major guides updated terminology by now? #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

It changes daily. And person-to-person sometimes. RT @GLHancock A6 Haven't most major guides updated terminology by now? #EFAchat

@GLHancock

I thought the AP did a marvelous job a few years ago. Yes, it updates frequently, online version.#EFAchat

@ElectricBookLab

A6 Also suggest addressing terminology in the book's intro or fwd, noting those terms may be fluid, explaining AUs choices #EFAchat

@scieditorIM

Must run. Fab chat. Could revisit this every month. Thanks! #efachat

@NisiShawl

If we can get to the point of acknowledging that I get to choose how you address me, we're getting *somewhere.* #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

The term used to be Negroes. Then came black, African American. Now, joy! People *ask me* what I'd prefer! #EFAchat

@blackpotmojo

A6: @NisiShawl Not only can what people call themselves change, but there may also be regional differences in the language. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

Harder to ask readers what terms they prefer to be addressed by. Hmmmm. #EFAchat

@debreese

Troubling how many ppl continue to use "squaw" as THE "Indian" word for woman. Wonder if THAT is in a style guide somewhere?! #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

Eeeeww, "squaw!" Be nice, and prolly easier, to compile a list of diversity editing term "Don'ts" than one of "Dos." #EFAchat

@debreese

@NisiShawl Same with "brave" or "chief" for Native man/boy and "papoose" for baby. #EFAchat

@MANUALOFHULK

@EFAFreelancers GLAAD HAVE MEDIA REFERENCE GUIDES FOR LGBT FOLKS: •
LGB:<http://t.co/CAclAE98mC> • ...AND T: <http://t.co/1ldVZCx1av> #EFACHAT

@EFAFreelancers

Q7: Thanks for all your links, @manualofhulk! Anyone else have guides, groups, or initiatives dealing with diversity in writing? #EFAchat

@debreese

@EFAFreelancers @MANUALOFHULK This one is great 4 anyone considering a Native character:
<http://t.co/ZcWURWRUMg> #EFAchat

@debreese

@EFAFreelancers And at my site, my critiques focus on representations of Native character/content/culture. <http://t.co/c7nE2IVEHk> #EFAchat

@blackpotmojo

@debreese I learned more abt the various preferred terms for diverse communities when I served as the Diversity CoChair of the NWU #EFAchat

@blackpotmojo

At that time, the NWU worked w/ writers across the country to update info brochures & union materials based on their input. #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

That NWU effortsounds sincere and productive, @blackpotmojo! And where is the compiled record of that work archived? #EFAchat

@blackpotmojo

@NisiShawl on the NWU's website in their archives. Barbara Beckwith helped write the union's history#EFAchat

@blackpotmojo

The NWU discussions arnd the preferred terms of diverse groups was long, difficult, very rewarding. A great team effort! #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

It's 4pm ET, so the written transcript will end here. Feel free to keep chatting, though! It's been a great discussion so far. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers

EFA is delighted you could join us for the chat this month, @nisishawl. :) #EFAchat

@NisiShawl

Thank you for having me! A pleasure to do this. #EFAchat

