

January 24, 2017

To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to write a letter of support for Andrea Sonnier who is on track to advance to doctoral candidacy in the Department of Education at Gallaudet University. We have worked together on the Black Deaf Families project and the #DeafEd Twitter chat on the intersection of race and deafness in deaf education. I believe that she has demonstrated her abilities as an emerging scholar with the critical eye on deaf education for diverse learners whose needs must be appropriately matched with culturally responsive teaching practices.

In 2014, Andrea joined as a volunteer assistant in the Black Deaf Families project conducted by Dr. Carolyn McCaskill and I as part of her research course. Her tasks were mainly collecting data from the attendees at two regional Black Deaf Advocates conferences in New York City and Memphis, Tennessee. She took an initiative to contact the conference organizers, applied for the travel funds to support her conference trips, developed the presentation slides, and conducted the workshop in ASL where the Black Deaf attendees shared their thoughts and perspectives about Black Deaf families. She filmed the workshop discussion so the emerging themes could be identified during the later analysis. For about six months, Andrea and I had our regular online meeting to keep track of her progress and share our insights about the project. We also discussed about our professional growth, with hers as a student in the doctoral program and mine as a tenure-track faculty at a research university. Based on her participation in the project, she demonstrated her professional behavior and leadership and applied the basic research principles in conducting this research task.

We reconnected in 2015 when the organizer of #DeafEd Twitter chat invited us to guest host a topic on Thursday October 1, 2015. #DeafEd Twitter chat is a live chat where people from all over the country and from outside of the country can participate and share their thoughts about a topic related to deaf education. Many of them are educators, administrators, interpreters, parents, and students. Andrea and I chose to focus on the education and language of students of color with the special focus on intersectionality. We were tasked with developing 7 questions that should be written in 140 characters or less including the #DeafEd hashtag so the live participants could follow the conversation thread. We wanted to maximize our engagement with the audience by cross-posting our tweets with other hashtags, e.g., #EduColor, #socialjustice, #AfAmEdChat, and #EdChat. These hashtags are normally used by people who are not part of the deaf education community or profession but this is a way to expose the issues to them, particularly when it comes to racial disparities in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students of color. We also developed a set of prepared responses to our questions with the links to articles and readings that our audience could file for later reading. On the day of the live chat, the discussion was very productive and our participants provided invaluable insights and resources on the intersectional nature of deaf education. The partnership between Andrea and I was fruitful and, as a scholar whose training is in linguistics, I appreciated her knowledge of deaf education and her literature collection of culturally appropriate teaching pedagogies and multiculturalism in education. I would have not known much about the existing multicultural practices and pedagogies in education if it weren't for Andrea.

I believe that Andrea Sonnier have demonstrated her abilities that the Department of Education expects to see in their doctoral candidates. Her work will be a substantial contribution in the field of deaf education where racial injustice must be exposed and resolved and culturally appropriate teaching

should be promoted. She will be one of the most successful educators and scholars that the Department of Education would be proud to claim.

Sincerely,

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