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LINDA – Fieldnotes – Monday, October 29, 2007

Subject: meeting Shadia Alvarez
Location: Gordon campus
Time: 5:30-5:45pm

Veronica had told me that Shadia's group was meeting tonight. She had not given me the time of the meeting, so I pestered Veronica by email. Veronica sent a flyer over email announcing a "Community Discussion" by Monica F. Walker, called "Moving Students Beyond Internalized Racial Oppression." Walker is the Chief Diversity Officer of the Guilford County School System in North Carolina. According to the flyer, the audience was supposed to be "educators, administrators, school social workers, parents, students and community members."

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I showed up just before 5:30. Raul was not at the desk, although I did notice that the name plate by the door now bears his name, Raul Guerrero. Granted, it is not a permanent sign, but a color printout with a blue background almost matching the blue nameplates all around TC. With no Raul in sight, and with no phone numbers of people to call inside, I banged on the door with no luck. I could see from the 2 televisions showing 8 camera views that there were still people inside the building. I tried calling through the open reception window, the smallest slot on the bottom right, to no avail. Then I waited, hoping that somebody else attending the presentation would arrive. To my surprise, nobody did. Next I tried banging on the other door, without much hope, since I seem to remember that that door leads to a corridor where the bathrooms are located, and at the end of the corridor is the student space.

Finally when a woman was leaving the office I shoved the flyer at her and told her I was looking for "this." She scanned it briefly and told me there was somebody "sitting at the table" who might be able to help me. This woman looked relatively young. She had thick, straightened cut in a short bob around her face and very dark skin. She was wearing jeans and I think a denim jacket, but I am not sure—I got the impression that she was casually dressed. She let me in and I thanked her.

At the table in the room just down the hall [the same table where we sat with Yaowen] a woman sat talking on a cell phone. The woman was well-dressed but not expensively or ostentatiously so, in a cream turtleneck sweater and beige pants. Her blond-brown hair [could have been dyed] was straight, pulled back in a ponytail hanging just below her shoulders. Her skin tone was a pale honey. She had papers and a personal calendar spread before her.

I hung back, not wanting to disturb her, and she motioned me closer. [I cannot remember what she was saying, but she clearly knew the person on the other side well] I showed her the flyer as she listened to her interlocutor, and she gave me a sympathetic frown as she turned the flyer over and wrote, "was cancelled" on the back. I nodded my understanding,

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and was getting ready to leave, when she said into her phone, "Can you give me 2 minutes?" The person on the other end decided to end the conversation, so I stayed.

She introduced herself as Shadia, and apologized for the cancelled event and told me it would be rescheduled for after Thanksgiving. She told me that the speaker was stuck in White Plains. I make a face, and she says something like, "I know, I didn't know she was so far." [of course I don't know where White Plains is, but I know to act like it's far enough to justify a cancelled event] Ms. Walker is from North Carolina, but was "in town" today, so Shadia organized this talk. I expressed my regret that the event was cancelled, and my appreciation for the topic.

Shadia tells me she's a new assistant principal and I congratulate her. She says thank you but also hints that she'll see how it goes. I say that Veronica told me she does work in the Bronx, and she tells me about the Equity Alliance with Pedro Noguera and NYU. [A quick web search shows that earlier this year she had a Columbia email address (in January 2007), and that she's been the Assistant to the President for Community Development, Multicultural Affairs and Recruitment and Head, Multicultural Affairs Office, at Antioch College.]

I talk about my project, and a little about Ed Gordon's vision to involve ethnographies of efforts on the ground and accounts from practitioners. She sighs that she hasn't had met with Dr. Gordon in a while.

She asks for my email address and I give her my card. She promises to add me to the list.

[She has an air of lots of important things to do, so I do not linger.]