

“Nobody Mean More to Me Than You”:

June Jordan and a Poetics of Presence in Black English

Nobody Mean More to You Than Who?: Dedicate your time and focus here to someone(s) you believe in.

Present Indicative:

“Our language is a system constructed by people constantly needing to insist that we exist, that we are present....Therefore overwhelmingly, *all action takes place in the language of the present indicative.* And every sentence assumes the living and active participation of at least two human beings, the speaker and the listener.”

Tell me about your favorite historical black radical figure in the present tense:

No Possessive Case:

“The possessive case scarcely ever appears in Black English. Never use an apostrophe (‘s) construction...if you bump into such a component, you have wandered outside the underlying world-view of black English.”

Start a description of this room as if nobody owns anything:

‘Don’t give up nothing else’:

When police offices murder the brother of one of June Jordan’s students her entire class chooses to voice their collective protest to police brutality in “Black English”, refusing the language of the state. **In response to a violence that your community faces...create a poem/public service ad, rhyme, jingle, t-shirt in the language of the people who are most impacted by the**

June Jordan was the first known college English professor to teach “Black English” as a validated language in the classroom. Respond to this worksheet in a black vernacular that you are familiar with. Draw from any of the languages that black people are using to transform English all over the world.

No Passive Voice:

“Our language devolves from a culture that abhors all abstraction or anything that tends to obscure or delete the fact of the human being who is here and no/the truth of the person who is speaking or listening.”

Tell me about a problem that impacts the black community. (HIV/AIDS, incarceration, poverty). Don’t use the passive voice.

Rule #1

“Rule 1:Black English is about a whole lot more than Mothafuckin”

Start a praise poem for a black woman using what you understand to be a black vernacular:
