

## SAVANNAH PEARLMAN

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818.216.9065

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**Area of Specialization:** Normative Epistemology, Feminist Philosophy & Philosophy of Race

**Area of Competence:** Ethics, Epistemology

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Dissertation: “Why You Ought to Defer: Moral Deference and Marginalized Identity”

Committee: Matthew Adams & Adam Leite (Co-Chairs), Kate Abramson, Tom Laird

### EMPLOYMENT

**Lecturer**, Howard University in Washington, D.C.

July 2023 - Present

### EDUCATION

**Indiana University**, Bloomington, IN

August 2023

*Ph.D. Philosophy*

- Graduate minor in Higher Education and Student Affairs
- Certificate in College Pedagogy

**University of Edinburgh**, Edinburgh, Scotland

Spring 2022

*Visiting Academic*

**Tufts University**, Medford, MA

May 2016

*M.A. Philosophy*

- Epistemology Area of Strength Exam Passed Fall 2014

**Brandeis University**, Waltham, MA

May 2012

*B.A. Philosophy, French and Politics Minors*

- Dean’s List, all semesters
- Graduated Magna Cum Laude with High Honors in Philosophy

### PUBLICATIONS

#### Journals

- “Combating Hostility Through University Organizing: Indiana Graduate Workers Unionization and Strike, co-authored with Joshua Paschal, in the *American Association of Philosophy Teachers Studies in Pedagogy*, Vol. 10 (2025), pp. 9-27
- “An Epistemic Injustice Critique of Austin’s Ordinary Language Epistemology,” in *Hypatia*, Vol. 39 No. 2 (2024), pp. 322-342
- “Solidarity Over Charity: Mutual Aid as a Moral Alternative to Effective Altruism” in the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, Vol. 33 No. 2 (2023), pp. 167-199
- “Mutual Aid and a Pluralistic Account of Solidarity,” in *The Philosopher*, Vol. 110 No. 2 (2022)
- “Why You Ought to Defer: Moral Deference and Marginalized Experience,” co-authored with Elizabeth Williams, in *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 8 No. 2 (2022)
- “Flipping the Logic Classroom: Arguments for and Challenges Addressed” in *Teaching Philosophy*, Vol. 42 No. 4 (2019), pp. 355-373

#### Edited Volumes

- “No Good Time: Structural Injustice Against Pregnant Persons in Academic Philosophy” *forthcoming* in

### Public Philosophy

- “Why *Should* Your Students Do the Work?” co-authored with Ricky Mouser (Johns Hopkins), on the APA Blog, posted May 21, 2025
- “Where Yoga and Philosophy Meet” on the Yoga District Blog, December 2023
- Consulted by the Iowa State Economics Department for their “Ask an Economist” blog, entitled: “Is it possible to make money in an ethical way all round?,” posted November 2, 2023
- Interview with Slate’s Hi-Phi Nation: “Effective Altruism and its Critics,” posted May 9, 2022
- “In Tension: Effective Altruism and Mutual Aid” on the APA Blog, posted June 23, 2022
- “A Puzzle for Racial Constructivism: ‘Race Faking’ as an Appeal to Moral Authority and Community Inclusion” on the UT Austin Ethics Project Blog, posted April 7, 2021
- “Is Effective Altruism Inherently Utilitarian?” on the APA Blog, posted March 29, 2021
- “Duties to Graduate Workers: Labor Protections in the Era of Covid-19” on the APA Blog, posted June 22, 2020
- “White Philosophers: It’s Time to Stop Using Digital Blackface” on the APA Blog, posted December 2, 2019 and reformatted as a case for the national High School Ethics Bowl

### Invited Contributions

- Editor’s note and introduction to the special issue of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal (KIEJ) on Mutual Aid, in the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, Vol. 33 No. 2 (2023)

### Revise and Resubmit

- “Experiential Deference: A Reason for Optimism about Moral Deference” at *Synthese*

### Under Review

- “Signaling Vice, Status, and Nonmoral Virtues,” co-authored with Ricky Mouser (Johns Hopkins)

### INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD

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|--|-------------|
| Howard University: Introduction to Ethics  | Fall 2025   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and implement curriculum for 4 sections of 25 students</li><li>• Teach three times weekly, offer weekly office hours and grade all written assignments</li></ul>    |             |
| Howard University: Honors Intro to Philosophy  | Spring 2025 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and implement curriculum for 3 sections of 25 students</li><li>• Teach three times weekly, offer weekly office hours and grade all written assignments</li></ul>    |             |
| Howard University: Feminist Philosophy   | Spring 2025 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and implement curriculum for a class of 26 students</li><li>• Teach twice weekly, provide weekly office hours and grade all written assignments</li></ul>           |             |
| Howard University: Intro to Philosophy   | Spring 2024 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and implement curriculum for 3 sections of 25 students</li><li>• Teach three times weekly, offer weekly office hours and grade all written assignments</li></ul>    |             |
| Howard University: Feminist Philosophy   |             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and implement curriculum for a class of 26 students</li><li>• Teach twice weekly, provide weekly office hours and grade all written assignments</li></ul>           | Spring 2024 |
| Howard University: Intro to Philosophy   | Fall 2023   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and implement curriculum for 3 sections of 20/25 students</li><li>• Teach three times weekly, offer weekly office hours and grade all written assignments</li></ul> |             |

Howard University: Classical Ethics

- Design and implement curriculum for a class of 37 students
  - Teach twice weekly, provide weekly office hours and grade all written assignments
- Fall 2023

Indiana University: Applied Ethics

- Design and implement curriculum for a class of 43 students
  - Teach twice a week, offer weekly office hours, and grade all written assignments
- Spring 2023

Indiana University: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Philosophical Perspectives

- Design and implement curriculum for this class of 40 students
  - Teach twice a week, offer weekly office hours, and grade all written assignments
  - This class was re-designed for online implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Spring 2020

### **ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTORSHIPS**

Indiana University Philosophy Department: Intro to Ethics with John Robison

Fall 2019 & Fall 2022

- Teach weekly discussion sections for 40 students; grade all written works and assignments

Indiana University Philosophy Department: Philosophical Writing and Methods

Spring 2019

- Serve as tutor for 6 philosophy majors and minors as they develop their philosophical writing, meeting with them twice weekly

Indiana University Philosophy Department: Elementary Logic with Krasimira Filcheva

Fall 2018

- Teach weekly discussion sections for 44 students; grade all problem sets

Indiana University Philosophy Department: Intro to Philosophy with Adam Leite

Spring 2018

- Teach weekly discussion sections for 42 students; grade all papers and assignments

Indiana University Philosophy Department: Intro to Philosophy with Kirk Ludwig

Fall 2017

- Teach weekly discussion sections for 44 students; grade all papers and assignments

### **TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS**

Tufts Philosophy Department: Mind and Language with Daniel Dennett

Spring 2016

- Grade all exams, problem sets and papers for 47 students; lecture during the professor's occasional absence

Tufts Philosophy Department: Feminist Philosophy with Nancy Bauer

Fall 2015

- Hold weekly office hours for 62 students; Grade all written assignments and moderate online forum

Tufts Philosophy Department: Logic with Susan Russinoff

Spring 2015

- Hold weekly office hours for 72 students; grade all exams and problem sets

### **COURSES I AM PREPARED TO TEACH**

#### **Introductory Courses:**

Intro to Philosophy, Intro to Ethics, Critical Thinking

#### **Intermediate and Advanced Courses:**

Applied Ethics, Feminist Philosophy, Philosophy of Race, (alternatively, one course on Philosophy of Race, Gender, and Sexuality), Special Topics: AI and Digital Ethics, Moral Theories and their Critics, Biomedical Ethics, Philosophy of Mind, Intro to Philosophy and Art, Topics in Epistemology: Social Epistemology

## **Courses I am Interested in Developing:**

Philosophy of Fun and Games, Seminar on Epistemic Injustice and the Ethics of Belief, Philosophy and Protest: Contemporary Social Movements, Solidarity or Charity: Philosophy of Giving, Philosophy of Sex and Love

## **REFEREED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

- 2024 Central American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting** February 2024
- Presented a paper, “Signaling Vice, Status, and Nonmoral Virtues,” co-authored with Ricky Mouser (main program)
- 2022 Pacific American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting** April 2022
- Presented a paper, “Solidarity Over Charity: Mutual Aid as a Moral Alternative to Effective Altruism” (main program)
- 2022 Eastern American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting** January 2022
- Presented a paper, “Is Moral Deference Permissible?” (main program)
- Stanford Ethics Center Junior Scholars Workshop** September 2020
- Scheduled to present a paper, “Why You Ought to Defer: Epistemic Deference, Actional Deference, and Marginalized Identity,” co-authored with Elizabeth Williams, at a workshop for early career scholars in political philosophy, political theory, and moral philosophy. (Canceled due to Covid)
- American Association of Philosophy Teachers Workshop** July 2020
- Presented a pedagogical method on developing anti-racist learning activities and assignments. Our group (which included Valerie Williams, Sharon Mason, Barbara Fultner, and Yvette Pearson) developed an assignment for centering non-western philosophers, philosophies, and lived experience.
- Athena In Action Workshop** June 2020
- Presented a paper, “Why You Ought to Defer: Epistemic Deference, Actional Deference, and Marginalized Identity,” co-authored with Elizabeth Williams, at a networking and mentoring workshop for graduate women in philosophy
- 2019 Pacific American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting** April 2019
- Presented a paper, “Moral Deference and Identity-Based Moral Harms” co-authored with Elizabeth Williams, on a panel hosted by the APA Committee of LGBTQ People in the Profession
  - Presented a paper, “Creating Inclusive Spaces: Flipping the Logic Classroom” in a session directed by Minorities and Philosophy (MAP)
- 2019 Central American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting** February 2019
- Presented a paper, “An Epistemic Injustice Critique of Austin’s Ordinary Language Epistemology” (main program)

## **INVITED RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS**

- Howard University** February 2024
- Presented a paper, “Signaling Vice, Status, and Nonmoral Virtues,” co-authored with Ricky Mouser
- Widener University** February 2023
- Presented a paper, “Solidarity over Charity: Mutual Aid as a Moral Alternative to Effective Altruism”
- Nelson Fellowship Symposium** April 2021

- Presented on my dissertation work to the Indiana University Philosophy Department  
**Indiana University Philosophy Department Graduate Colloquium** February 2021
- Presented a paper, “Solidarity over Charity: Mutual Aid as an Alternative to Effective Altruism”
- Presented a paper, “Moral Deference and Identity-Based Harms”  
**Indiana University Philosophy Department Graduate Colloquium** April 2019
- Presented a paper, “It’s Time to Stop Using Digital Blackface”  
**Indiana University Philosophy Department Graduate Colloquium** October 2019

### INVITED COURSE LECTURES

#### **Howard University**

- Taught a guest course titled “Personhood” February 2024

#### **CUNY Queens College**

- Taught a guest course titled “Miranda Fricker on Testimonial Injustice” April 2023

#### **Widener University**

- Taught a guest course titled “Ethical Frameworks: Case Study on the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment” February 2023

### FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

#### **Fellowships and Scholarships**

- Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Research Fellowship, awarded Fall 2021
- Indiana University Nelson Dissertation Fellowship, awarded Fall 2020
- Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Fellowship, awarded Fall 2016
- Indiana University Nelson Fellowship, awarded Fall 2016
- Tufts University Philosophy Tuition Scholarship, awarded Fall 2014

#### **Prizes**

- Winner of the **Bo and Lynn Clark Outstanding Associate Instructor Award**, which is based on faculty nominations, student evaluations and classroom observations, awarded by Indiana University in Spring 2018
- Winner of the **Cariana Prize** for best undergraduate philosophical essay, awarded by Brandeis University in Spring 2012

#### **Travel Awards**

- **American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Graduate Travel Stipend**  
Awarded in April 2022 to offset the cost of participating in the 2022 Pacific APA
- **IU College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Travel Award**  
Awarded in November 2021 to offset the cost of participating in the 2022 Eastern APA
- **IU Graduate and Professional Student Government Travel Award**  
Awarded in March 2020 to offset the cost of participating in the 2020 Pacific APA
- **American Philosophical Association Central Division Graduate Travel Stipend**  
Awarded in December 2018 to offset the cost of participating in the 2019 Central APA
- **IU College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Travel Award**  
Awarded in November 2018 to offset the cost of participating in the 2019 Central APA
- **IU College of Arts and Humanities Institute Graduate Conferenced Travel Award**  
Awarded in October 2018 to offset the cost of participating in the 2019 Central APA

#### **Grants**

- **Presidential Microgrant: Faculty Travel Award**  
Awarded a small grant in Spring 2025 to facilitate travel to the 2025 Eastern APA

- **American Philosophical Association Diversity and Inclusiveness Grant**  
Awarded a small grant in Spring 2017 to facilitate a workshop at IU on inclusive pedagogy in philosophy

## **SERVICE**

**2026 Eastern American Philosophical Association Meeting** January 2026

*Chair*

- Will chair a session on Creative and Playful Pedagogy at the 2026 Eastern APA Teaching Hub

**2025 Eastern American Philosophical Association Meeting** January 2025

*Chair*

- Chaired session on Teaching While Contingent Faculty at the 2025 Eastern APA Teaching Hub

**American Association of Philosophy Teachers** May 1, 2024 - Present

*Eastern Divisional Teaching Hub Chair*

- Charged with organizing and developing the programming for a two-day teaching workshop at the Eastern APA in New York, New York, January 2025

**Howard University Conference on Philosophy of the Black Experience** March 30, 2024

*Session Chair*

- Chaired a conference session on Moral Authority, Resistance, and the Black Body

**Oxford University Press Teaching with Technology Prize** January – February 2024

*Prize Allocation Committee Member*

- Reviewed applications and determined the winner and runner up for the OUP Teaching with Technology Prize, which included a monetary award

**American Philosophical Association Committee on Virtual Programming** October 2021 – June 2024

*Committee Member*

- Facilitated two Spring 2023 panels, one on Philosophy and Activism and one on Student Engagement

**American Philosophical Association Committee on the Teaching of Philosophy** July 2021 - Present

*Committee Member*

- Member on the committee charged with assessing trends and needs in the teaching of philosophy, making recommendations to the APA board, and sponsoring sessions at APA division meetings

**Minorities and Philosophy (MAP), Bloomington, IN** January 2017 - Present

*Founder, IU Chapter*

- Coordinate a group for underrepresented philosophers, provide a space to discuss underrepresentation in the discipline; organize relevant reading and discussion groups

**2020 Pacific American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting** April 2020

*Facilitator*

- Organized a panel for a session titled “Bullying, Microaggressions, and Harassment” (Canceled due to Covid)

**National High School Ethics Bowl** February 2020

*Guest Case Writer*

- Designed a case based on my APA blog article on Digital Blackface for debate in the Spring 2020 national competition of High School Ethics Bowl

**2020 Central American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting**

February 2020

*Facilitator*

- Reviewed and selected submissions for a session titled “Productive Conversations on Problematic Issues: Graduate Student Edition”

**American Philosophical Association Graduate Student Council**

July 2017 – June 2020

*Vice-Chair, Council Member*

- Serve as a liaison between the graduate students and the APA, with the aim of reporting to the board of officers on issues of interest, concern, and relevance to graduate students

**Indiana University Philosophy Department**

August 2017 – August 2019

*Undergraduate Activities Coordinator*

- Schedule, advertise, and implement department programming
- Serve as the staff advisor for the Philosophy Club and MAP

**Indiana University Graduate Association of Students in Philosophy**

August 2016 – August 2017

*Climate Liaison*

- Responsible for bringing general graduate climate concerns to the attention of the faculty, being familiar with university policies (Title IX)
- Generate the annual climate survey for graduate students, gather and interpret results, provide suggestions to faculty to address climate problems

**Brandeis University Philosophy Department, Waltham, MA**

April 2010 - May 2012

*Undergraduate Department Representative*

- Execute department programming and events
- Developed an honors track that was implemented in Fall 2011

**GRADUATE COURSEWORK**

**Epistemology and Metaphysics**

- Graduate Seminar in Epistemology with Mark Kaplan, Indiana University
- External World Skepticism with Adam Leite, Indiana University
- Epistemology with Patrick Forber, Tufts University
- Metaphysics with Brian Epstein, Tufts University
- Independent Study in Epistemology with Jody Azzouni, Tufts University
- Graduate Writing Seminar with David Denby and Avner Baz, Tufts University
- Graduate Seminar in Epistemology with Berislav Marušić, Brandeis University

**Logic**

- Mathematical Logic with Larry Moss, Indiana University
- Formal Logic with Gary Ebbs, Indiana University
- Logic with George Smith, Tufts University

## Ethics

- Interpersonal Thought with Berislav Marušić, University of Edinburgh\*\*
- Dissertation Research with Marcia Baron, Indiana University
- Contemporary Ethical Theories with Kate Abramson, Indiana University
- Slavery: Its Moral History with George Smith and Lionel McPherson, Tufts University

## Social & Political Philosophy

- Feminist Philosophy with Kate Abramson, Indiana University\*
- Justice with Matthew Adams, Indiana University\*
- Philosophy of Law with Erin Kelly, Tufts University
- Philosophy of Gender, Sexuality and Race with Katy Meadows, Indiana University\*\*

## History of Philosophy

- Kant with Allen Wood, Indiana University
- Medieval Philosophy with Rega Wood, Indiana University
- History of Analytic Philosophy with David Denby, Tufts University
- History of Modern Philosophy with Christiana Olfert, Tufts University

## Philosophy of Mind

- Seminar in Mind and Action: Collective Action with Kirk Ludwig, Indiana University
- Evolving Minds: Bacteria to Bach with Dan Dennett, Tufts University

## Philosophy of Language

- Qualifying Research with Kirk Ludwig, Indiana University
- Proseminar with Kirk Ludwig, Indiana University
- Philosophy of Language with Dilip Ninan, Tufts University

## Higher Education and Student Affairs

- Supervised College Teaching with Tom Laird, Indiana University
- Independent Study on College Pedagogy with Tom Laird, Indiana University
- College Teaching and Learning with Joan Middendorf, Indiana University
- Higher Education Organization and Administration with Samuel Museus, Indiana University
- Curriculum in Higher Education with Tom Laird, Indiana University

## WORKSHOPS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Teaching Hub at the Eastern APA in New York January 2025
- Teaching Hub at the Central APA in New Orleans February 2024
- Teaching Hub at the Pacific APA in San Francisco April 2023
- Teaching Hub at the Pacific APA in Vancouver April 2022
- APA Webinar: Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Philosophy January 2021
- AAPT 2020: Anti-Racist and Pandemic Pedagogies July 2020
- Athena in Action June 2020
- Teaching Hub at the Central APA in Chicago February 2020
- Transforming Your Research Into Teaching at Indiana University Summer 2019
- Teaching Hub at the Pacific APA in Vancouver April 2019

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\* Indicates audit of a graduate course

\*\* Indicates audit of an undergraduate course

- Teaching Hub at the Central APA in Denver
- Teaching Hub at the Pacific APA in San Diego
- Inclusive Pedagogy in Philosophy facilitated by the AAPT at IU

February 2019  
 April 2018  
 September 2017

**JOURNAL REFEREE**

- Synthese
- Teaching Philosophy
- The European Journal of Women’s Studies
- Erkenntnis

**READING GROUPS**

- “Racial Formations,” Fall 2020
- “Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance,” Spring 2021

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

**VIPKid**

*English as a Second Language Teacher*

May 2018 – May 2021

- Taught more than 850 online classes on English language, grammar, reading and oral communication to children ages three to sixteen
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) certified

**Tufts University Dean of Students Affairs Office, Medford, MA**

August 2014 – May 2016

*Graduate Assistant*

- Coordinate schedules, appointments, and special assignments for four university deans
- Facilitate office operations, maintain confidential information, and field inquiries by phone and email

**Harvard University Division of Continuing Education, Cambridge, MA**

August 2013 - August 2014

*Enrollment Services Representative*

- Provide professional front-line customer service for all prospective and continuing student
- Assist Harvard Extension and Summer School students with academic advising and course selection

**Emerson College Graduate Admissions, Boston, MA**

June 2012 - August 2013

*Application Coordinator*

- Process thousands of applications, credentials, and recommendations for ten graduate programs

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

In my dissertation I argue that it is not only permissible, but sometimes morally and epistemically required to defer to another's moral testimony. I do this by focusing on a subset of moral testimony: testimony provided by members of marginalized groups about the identity-based harms that they, themselves, have experienced.

Moral deference involves accepting another's testimony about moral information based, at least in part, on the testifier's say-so. This includes, but is not limited to, deferring to another's moral guidance, believing another's moral testimony, or acting in accordance with moral advice. Moral deference has traditionally created a cause for concern: deferring to another on moral issues has been characterized as too easy, epistemically irresponsible, or the wrong way to acquire moral knowledge.

Critics have focused on a small subset of cases, where the deferrer blindly adopts the moral opinions of another. I reject this characterization in favor of focusing on those cases where the testifier has additional empirical information, which form the basis for their moral judgment.

I argue that members of marginalized groups are better epistemically positioned in relation to experiencing the relevant identity-based harms and have greater moral authority to provide moral recommendations than their non-marginalized counterparts. Living as a particular socio-political identity will mean that these testifiers gain easy access to certain relevant, non-moral information. Members of marginalized groups are also better equipped to recognize certain moral distinctions, and advocate for more targeted solutions than their non-marginalized counterparts. As such, marginalized persons have localized empirical and moral expertise.

While deferring to domain experts can provide greater accuracy for our beliefs, there is also a sense in which deference is owed to the marginalized testifier. That is, deferring to another is part of a robust interpersonal exchange, which recognizes others as persons, worthy of trust and respect, rather than as a mere means to more accurate moral conclusions. When non-members fail to defer to marginalized persons when they testify about their own identity-based harms, they doxastically wrong the testifier. Taken together, these reasons give rise to a *prima facie* obligation: non-group members ought to defer to marginalized members when they testify about their own identity-harms.

I take deference to include a variety of attitudinal and actional states. In contrast to the standard framing of deference as a merely epistemic attitude, where one "farms out" their moral beliefs to another, I argue that deference can manifest in a range of more reasonable attitudes, such as affording substantial epistemic weight, or even in action, as in the case where we follow another's moral recommendations.

Participating in this kind of moral deference addresses both a negative and positive project: to minimize harm—particularly to those who have already suffered interpersonal, institutional, and structural oppression—and to afford respect.

When a person testifies about the harms that they, themselves, have experienced, they provide an invitation for the receiver to trust *them*: to believe their testimony because they said so. Often, a marginalized person might stand on their identity *as an x* to make moral recommendations. Unless the receiver has good reason to believe that their testimony is incorrect, the receiver ought to recognize the credentials of the testifier by participating in some variety of deference.

A failure to defer to marginalized testifiers about their identity harms constitutes the denial of marginalized persons as full-fledged moral and epistemic agents, capable of understanding their own experiences. To the extent that members of particular marginalized communities have greater non-moral and moral information than their non-member counterparts, failing to defer is also a rejection of domain-expertise.

The upshot of my dissertation is that even if we do not have voluntary control over our beliefs, we do have voluntary control over our actions. As such, even if non-group members fail an obligation to epistemically defer to marginalized people when they testify about their own identity harms, they still ought to act in accordance with that testimony.