



REFLECTIONS ON EIGHT YEARS  
OF MORGAN WILLIS MAGIC AT  
ALLIED MEDIA PROJECTS



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# INTRODUCTION



**July 26, 2019**

There was a time when you described your leadership role at AMP as The Exfoliator, but I think a more fitting archetype is The Editor.

In your time at AMP, you took in the whole story of this organization, working to deeply understand it and discern its essence. Then you set about making that essence as compelling and accessible as possible. In the process, you transformed it. You tightened up sentences (people), making us more clear about our purpose and our power. You wrestled with the text of AMP, not willing to let a murky idea or a sentence fragment remain, simply out of attachment (“kill your darlings!”). You expanded the authorship of this text, strengthening quieter voices, moving critical ideas out of the margins and into the center.

You have forever changed AMP through your leadership. We thank you and we will miss you dearly. Compiled here are some reflections on the past eight years of working with you, from your forever fam at Allied Media Projects.

With love,  
Jenny

# OUR FAVORITE MO-ISMS

"I just don't know Jesus!"

-Nadine

"That's real"

-Sophia

Idk :/ "Wild, wild question." "Real quick." "Get it while you can."

-Toni

"That is real" after I'd say something stupid then I realize it did have some substance behind it.

-Anderson

"unexpected laughter in the quiet office."

-Soh

"Gotcha"

-Honeycomb

\*Walks by my desk and waves\* "What's up, man?"

-Jon

"IDK, dudes, but something's gonna happen"

-Lex

"Haven't worked with you long enough to know your -ism's but in the short time I've been at AMP you've made me feel so welcome. I'm grateful for the laughs and positive energy you brought to the office."

-Liz

"Not a quote, but I always hear Mo laughing around the office. Even when things are stressful, it seems that Mo can find something to laugh about and that joy is welcome and contagious."

-Monica

"Why Jesus." [Not a question, just a statement]. "I disagree with myself all the time." [classic Libra]. Also, the non-verbal Mo-ism of pulling your shirt over half of your face, mid-conversation, also known as "turtling" or "tenting."

-Jenny



# WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM YOU



“I have learned to truly think about the things I take on and offer of myself. Mo has been instrumental in supporting my focus, and the focus of Petty Propolis.”

-Honeycomb

“that having an easy spirit can be really inspiring.”

-amb

“Saying what they feel, remaining open to all perspectives, finding humor through the tough times, radiating passion, dripping style.”

-Hailey

“Mo has always been a huge advocate of me and I feel that so much of my growth stems from their leadership and guidance. Mo was my first friend at AMP and they will be dearly missed.”

-Jon

“I really admire Mo’s eloquence and ability to cut straight to the heart of a problem and dissect it. They are a very charismatic, funny, and persuasive speaker. I’ve learned that inspiring professionalism and leadership are enhanced by silliness, fun, profanity, and publicly owning one’s imperfections/shortcomings/frustrations.”

-Sophia

“I appreciate and deeply value Mo’s willingness to support the people she’s working with. There’s a way Mo gives and lends support but also empowers you to do your job the best way you see fit!”

-Lex

“I have learned from you what a huge difference it makes in a room when every single person feels welcomed, is made to feel as though they belong there, and to know that their presence is filling a gap. I have become a believer through seeing you manifest this — that positive energy is infectious.”

-Una

“Mo, you’ve brought your entire self to leadership of AMP, and in particular, have shaped the AMC as a place where your quiet and loud brilliance, the beautiful contradictions of your personhood, of being a writer and being a leader, have shone.”

-Hannah

"You told me to save interpersonal conflict & stress for the work week. "Don't be sad on a Saturday. Save that shit for Monday."

#Don'tLetCapitalismWin  
Also, you've shown me how transformative black queer leadership is. How critical it is to have folks from our community represented at the highest levels of senior leadership in any company or industry. I can never know the struggles you went through to get here but I celebrate your journey and thank you for paving the way for many of us. You'll be missed!"

-Liz

"Mo has been such an impactful leader in my experience at AMP. I've learned a lot from Mo in the last two years, from understanding what it means to take up space to learning how to reorient myself toward seeking solutions rather than articulating the challenges to understanding what facilitation is in my role.

Mo's leadership encourages me to lean into being my whole self while understanding and accepting that I will make mistakes and there will be challenges throughout my journey professionally and personally."

-Nadine

"The inspiring way Mo holds and facilitates conversations with folks."

-Toni

"Mo is always willing to stop and answer a question and answer that question in a thoughtful way. I have found this very helpful and something to aspire to."

-Monica

"Mo asked 'How.' We have this vision but How are we going to do it! That most important question propelling us to know what we don't know, slow down or sometimes speed up. To be more generous, imagine a new way forward, to be more just, collaborative and creative. Thanks for asking the hard questions and making us better by the answers."

-Mike

"Mo's clear-headedness and grace amidst seas of all kinds — calm or stormy — is such an inspiration to me. I deeply appreciate their ability to consider many different 7 perspectives, needs, facts, etc, while facilitating collaborations and collective decision making."

-Kim

"Being flexible and open, but straight to the point when/if needed."

-Soh

"Courage to be heard."

-Anderson

"Boundaries— how they can be an act of love for yourself and for the work; Power— how to be honest about it, own it, shift it, grow it; How to value tangible and messy truths over abstract, perfect social justice analysis; How to stay with something longer than you want to and not become bitter; How to let go with love; How to conserve energy so as to deploy it with excellence and precision, wasting no hours of one's life on bullshit."

-Jenny

# MEMORIES

“I miss our rides into work together.”

-Honeycomb

“every single time I asked Mo for anything and they smiled and made it seem like a pleasure to help.”

-amb

“Clownin in Beatmatch Brunch <3”

-Hailey

“AMC tattoos (!) or putting out fires together at the AMC, especially before we had a huge staff (maybe this is my masochism, though....)”

-Jon

“I loved seeing Mo in between sessions and making the magic of the AMC happen!”

-Moya

“It’s a tie, either sitting in the Lab, sick as ever 6 days before AMC and making a calendar request for us to “Feel the fuck better” by two days later. OR being consumed 10 by whatever level of AMC shenanigans that were happening and being frustrated and scooping Jon up to go get tattoos 2 days before AMC started, because that felt like the best use of our time.”

-Lex

“Mo was present in one of my interviews and their chill yet inspiring vibe is one of the reasons I wanted to work at AMP.”

-Aisha

“Seeing you at Bklyn Boihood!”

-Liz

“Laughter?”

-Soh

“Planning/talking about Alaska trips!”

-Monica

“Having a shared, absurd experience sitting through a vaguely facilitated pre-Novo grant ‘convening’ at the Boggs Center where everyone in attendance had to pitch their organizations for funding while pretending not to.”

-Sophia

“Stealing you away from VSC for what felt like an illicit off-campus brunch!”

-Una

“My favorite memory with Mo is when they looked at me at AMC2018 and said, “you just secured your job” (lol).”

-Nadine

“Idk... not sure about favorite, but the way Mostays committed to being socially elusive and holding their boundaries and all the times I look up and wonder where Mo went. When they want to dip out, they dip out.”

-Toni

“Every AMC since Mo came on has been fuller of greater, dramaticer, happier, sadder and movinger memories and every one of them I can say felt meant to be and full of lessons liesions and huge wins. Mo not only understands the business but more importantly the subtle metaphysical aspects of a substantial experience.”

-Anderson

“Mo standing at the info desk during AMC as all hell broke loose around them, cool as a cucumber, spreading that grounded “it’s not that serious get over yourself” energy to all who would receive it.”

-ill



“All of the times we bore witness to each others’ breakdowns? JK. Though those moments have shaped me and will stay with me.

The year that you insisted we make special matching AMC basketball jerseys for the Opening Ceremony, or when you wore a tie and I wore a cocktail dress bcs it was the 15th anniversary. How we both loathed having to be seen on that stage, and still managed to do it year after year, taking small joy in the coordination of outfits.

The time that we saw Jonah Mixon-Webster read his poem about Flint for the first time at the Fortify retreat and it was starting to rain but no one could move, we were so floored. Afterwards we were both like-- THIS! THIS! Every year as we went through our curatorial dance (battle?) over ideas for the AMC ceremonies and plenaries, it was moments of electrifying alignment like these, where we leveled everything up.”

-Jenny

# 2015 HAIKUS (IN CASE YOU FORGOT!)



cool under pressure;  
they “move quiet and get it.”  
dear mo mann willis.

has it been five years?  
full of joy and challenges  
what an adventure

— Jenny

Morgan Morgan Ba  
Borgan, I hope to see ya  
Puttin yo feet up!

An Organizing  
Ninja, Orater: Golden  
Morgan Organ Eyes!

— Anderson

Morgan is magic  
An AMC magician  
Wonderfully crafted

Quiet in nature  
Stealth in her perseverance  
Genius on her toes

— Tawana

Mo makes shit happen  
Magical fairy she is  
Ringmastering, all.

Laughs, jokes, tattoos  
“Oh shit, we’got work to do!”  
Something’s gon’ happen

— Lex

Morgan Mann Willis  
An amazing earthling dude  
Full of joy and love  
Stars come and go fast  
Time dictates how we live lives.  
Mo makes time to laugh.

— Diana

Morgan Mann Willis  
Such enormous shoes to fill  
Enjoy what comes next!

— Sophia

Written for the occasion of Mo’s last year as the AMC Director

deep listen wordsmith  
loving brilliance embodied  
king auntie morgan

facilitating  
magical movements weaving  
may your visions grow

– ill

mo magically  
hits that epic to do list  
pew. done. so. much. stuff.

awe inspiring  
holder of conversations  
listener weaver

– Toni

Grounded in sameness--  
twisted similarity  
necessary soul.

Morgan makes us feel  
alive and needed--  
our dynamic force.

Who comes to a small  
birthday party new to  
the D - showing love

– Naidra

in times of mayhem,  
hullabaloo, and chaos,  
mo mann saves the show

AMC tattoos  
wtf, ya lets do it  
buzz buzz ouch buzz buzz

– Jon



all that you hold with  
respect, systems, brilliance  
continues to grow

onward you do go  
and what you will awaken  
I can't wait to see

– Mike

Low tech much respect  
Payment requests handwritten  
Dj analog

Solution master  
Fixing problems with a smile  
Happy you're my friend

– Monica

mo morning convos  
please, witty and a brain that  
never stops never

– Muna



“You brilliant, humble spirit. May the earth cultivate the seeds you have so deeply planted within it.”

-Honeycomb

“absolute success and deep affirmation as a writer.”

-amb

“That you continue to pursue your goals and get time to relax and re-center!”

-Hailey

“I can't wait for Mo to finish their novel, so that is my well-wish!”

-Jon

“Mo!!! I wish you so well for your next chapter! You have helped the AMC grow and grow and grow! I know that you will continue to do so in your own life!”

-Moya

“Mo, I'm so excited to see what's next for you!!! Meet you in Idlewild?”

-Lex

“Mo - best of luck on everything. In the short time I've known you, I can tell you will kick ass at whatever you decide next.”

-Aisha

“Your impact speaks for itself. The AMC is forever more radical and inclusive because of your leadership, and I have no doubt that you will bring this transformative power to all of your future adventures & endeavors. Wishing the best of luck to you! Stay in touch!”

-Liz

“Your growth is going to continue to skyrocket - please keep sharing your reflections, learnings, and love with us! Thank you thank you!”

-Hannah



“You’ll do wonderful and wondrous things!”

-Soh

“Mo- I wish you all the best in your new adventures. I am so happy for you and look forward to hearing about the amazing things you are doing!”

-Monica

“Mo, I wish you abundant joy, time spent camping, quiet writing time, and I hope you finally meet Beyonce as you are fated to (so you can make the “Formation” lyric connection). Wishing you so many new adventures!”

-Kim

“You have given so much out to the many communities you’ve held space for, and I know that that love and energy and generosity will come back to you many many times over. So you are not taking as big a risk as it might seem.”

-Una

“the time to grace the world with Mo Mann Willis novels, minis and family life, and lots of camping and woodsy wonder.”

-Toni

“I can’t wait to watch your plans for your arts/ writing and starting a family(!) come to fruition.”

-Sophia

“Dear Mo... May every car you own be sleeker and faster than the last.”

-Anderson

“All the epic novel writing, traveling, camping, King Auntying, and JOYing your heart desires!”

-ill

“Sending you hella love and light as you begin your new journey. You are a dynamic leader, a person filled with so much love and compassion. Your voice and what you do is so important and I’m incredibly honored to have shared space with you and have learned from you.”

-Nadine

“That you keep deepening your incredible power as a human, through your writing, your parenting, your facilitating, and your mentorship. That you keep protecting and cultivating your deep well of energy that is your particular magic.”

-Jenny

WE LOVE YOU MO!





