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00:00:00,210 --> 00:00:06,330

So you have to take action when you learn all these things in your unlearning and you looking at these pieces,

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00:00:06,330 --> 00:00:10,860

you've got to take actions and transform but know why you're doing it.

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00:00:10,860 --> 00:00:21,500

You know, know the reasons behind you doing it.

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00:00:21,500 --> 00:00:30,410

Hi, everyone, and welcome to the staff lounge, a place to unwind, reflect and connect with the faculty at No College in Toronto, Canada.

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00:00:30,410 --> 00:00:36,770

In each episode will be having casual chats, interviews and tips from our teaching and learning support team.

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00:00:36,770 --> 00:00:43,730

I'm your host, Shirantha Beddage I'm a saxophonist, composer and faculty in The Bachelor of Music Program.

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February is Black History Month, and to recognize this important occasion, I had a conversation with Morris Beckford,

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manager of education and training at the Center for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion.

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We had a challenging conversation about the significance and representation of black

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history and how faculty can reflect on black history in their own teaching practices.

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I found this a really thought provoking conversation, and I hope you will as well.

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00:01:11,720 --> 00:01:16,700

Morris, welcome to the podcast. Thank you so much for joining us on the staff lounge.

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00:01:16,700 --> 00:01:18,440

It's great to have you.

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00:01:18,440 --> 00:01:26,420

Can you just open by telling us a little bit about yourself, your position at Humber and your involvement with the institution over the years?

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00:01:26,420 --> 00:01:38,570

Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for having me. It's I've been with Humber now for about maybe three years and started in 2019 as a as a professor.

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00:01:38,570 --> 00:01:43,160

It's always interesting come as a professor without a Ph.D., but I am a professor.

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00:01:43,160 --> 00:01:53,060

Yes, of course. Yeah. So I'm now the manager of education and training at the Center for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion.

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00:01:53,060 --> 00:01:59,930

That means I manage all the training around human rights and human rights related

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training that happens across the across the college and across University of Humber.

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Before before this, as I mentioned, I was a professor at the Faculty of Social and Community Services at the Lake Shore Campus,

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00:02:14,660 --> 00:02:20,710

but I also taught some stuff at the time by the University of Guelph Humber as well in the Justice Studies program.

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00:02:20,710 --> 00:02:23,180

I'm going to say I think I believe that was it.

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00:02:23,180 --> 00:02:30,950

I'm doing my Ph.D. in leadership, but I work to develop the first anti-Black racism class with a colleague of mine,

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00:02:30,950 --> 00:02:36,140

Professor Natalie Blake, at what I was at FCX.

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00:02:36,140 --> 00:02:44,030

And I'm hearing that the class is going to be a breath class, which is great, so everybody at Humber will be able to take it.

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00:02:44,030 --> 00:02:51,830

I was one of the first co-leads for the Humber Black African Employees Resource Group that the center started.

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00:02:51,830 --> 00:02:56,780

I was co-lead with Professor Adrian Kerr Brown. I mean,

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00:02:56,780 --> 00:03:04,490

I've sort of tried to engage in meaningful work at the college when it comes to anti-Black racism

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00:03:04,490 --> 00:03:13,400

and dismantling anti-Black racism at the college and across all the spaces that I've worked in.

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00:03:13,400 --> 00:03:18,560

You know, for me, it is not transformative or moves towards a transformative space.

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00:03:18,560 --> 00:03:27,950

Then why bother engaging with it? Although I'm very cognizant of the fact that any change within capitalism is tinkering at the edges,

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00:03:27,950 --> 00:03:35,870

I'm not delusional, but I try to be as transformative as I can within the space that we we occupy right now.

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00:03:35,870 --> 00:03:42,110

Yeah, so that's been my experience. And no, so so far, so far, so good.

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00:03:42,110 --> 00:03:48,530

Can I just get you to unpack that word? Transformative for me because I'm wondering what that looks like for you in your classroom?

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00:03:48,530 --> 00:03:52,880

What does it look like for you and for your students? What do you think about that?

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00:03:52,880 --> 00:03:55,780

Yeah, it's I mean, it's you know,

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00:03:55,780 --> 00:04:03,500

when you're in the initial space that we talk about transformation and transformative and bass and stardom, all that academic stuff.

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00:04:03,500 --> 00:04:11,390

But I mentioned a little while ago that transformation within capitalism is still tinkering at the edges.

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00:04:11,390 --> 00:04:21,470

So I guess sometimes I to ask myself if there's anything as real, such as a real transformation when you're operating within the system.

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00:04:21,470 --> 00:04:30,980

For me, though, it's about getting to a space where where we're living, the values that we tell ourselves that we're supposed to be living.

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00:04:30,980 --> 00:04:37,670

So values of equity and values of inclusion, building a sense of belonging for everybody.

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00:04:37,670 --> 00:04:41,540

So for me, transformation is about digging deep and going.

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00:04:41,540 --> 00:04:48,890

Going to the heart of why we got to this horrible place in the first place is is making sure that we understand that.

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00:04:48,890 --> 00:04:54,920

So we don't do it, don't do it again. That's that's to me what transformation really look like.

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00:04:54,920 --> 00:05:04,530

But again, as I mentioned before, I'm not delusional. I know this transformation within a particular kind of kind of system.

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00:05:04,530 --> 00:05:12,070

Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Well, we're recording this interview on February 4th at the beginning of Black History Month,

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00:05:12,070 --> 00:05:20,050

and I'm wondering what to use the significance of Black History Month and also Black 365?

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00:05:20,050 --> 00:05:29,620

Mm hmm. I mean, I suppose it means different things to different people and probably should, you know, sort of asking myself about this the other day.

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00:05:29,620 --> 00:05:39,140

And if I'm blunt and I'm trying not to be too blunt in this interview because my employers are listening.

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00:05:39,140 --> 00:05:48,280

I'd say it's sort of time to reflect on the evils of, you know, of the collective evils that we've done to black people.

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00:05:48,280 --> 00:05:57,040

And I think we should be very, very direct about saying that we did it to black people and how we can try to undo some

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00:05:57,040 --> 00:06:01,390

of what we've some of what we've been doing to black people for a very long time.

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00:06:01,390 --> 00:06:08,410

I mean, we've been at our space anyways at the Center for for Human Rights Equity inclusion.

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00:06:08,410 --> 00:06:13,240

We've been doing what we call black history is everybody's history, did you know?

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00:06:13,240 --> 00:06:18,280

And we've been putting those out there and communicate. Hopefully people get a chance to to read those.

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00:06:18,280 --> 00:06:23,340

If you don't, you know, if you haven't, please go ahead and start reading reading those.

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00:06:23,340 --> 00:06:35,530

Uh, it's it's just around. Let's focus on highlighting the history piece and that forget forgotten history piece of black people,

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00:06:35,530 --> 00:06:44,770

because I'm sure a lot of your listeners know that our texts don't necessarily tell the stories of black people in this country,

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00:06:44,770 --> 00:06:52,060

or pretty much anywhere, really. And if it does, it's one particular kind of history.

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You know, I remember I remember the first time I sort of learned about this idea that black bodies weren't just lynched.

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Black people weren't just lynched in the south. Their bodies were literally dismembered and sold.

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00:07:08,500 --> 00:07:15,190

So people were selling fingers, selling toes, selling burnt livers or parts of it.

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00:07:15,190 --> 00:07:20,800

That stuff stays with you. I remember the first time I heard I just completely shook.

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00:07:20,800 --> 00:07:25,630

I was frozen. Angry, sad, scared.

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00:07:25,630 --> 00:07:32,320

Those disturbing emotions. And I'm not sure I've dealt with it fully,

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00:07:32,320 --> 00:07:40,000

but I want people to know that history because it's our history that's rooted in who we are as a people in North America.

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00:07:40,000 --> 00:07:46,900

And if we don't remember, that is, we don't understand the history or we're going to repeat that history.

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00:07:46,900 --> 00:07:53,710

I suppose people will argue that we've been repeating it consistently over the last couple hundred years.

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00:07:53,710 --> 00:08:02,990

So I think I'm black. Black History Month is sort of a time to remember that history or those histories, so we don't do them again.

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00:08:02,990 --> 00:08:05,590

I mean, I love the idea of black futures, for example,

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00:08:05,590 --> 00:08:12,910

but I also think that we must never forget because if we do forget and we turn the gaze and we look other places,

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00:08:12,910 --> 00:08:20,290

we are going to forget, and if we forget, we're going to do it again. So it means different things to different people.

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00:08:20,290 --> 00:08:24,280

For me, this is this is what it means.

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00:08:24,280 --> 00:08:34,540

I know from speaking to you that you have been studying imagery of black masculinity in textbooks and various other sources.

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And can you tell us a little bit about that, what you've been,

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00:08:39,250 --> 00:08:45,130

what you've been finding and what you've been and what you've been seeing as a result of that research?

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00:08:45,130 --> 00:08:54,670

Yeah, the disturbances that I've been experiencing are so it sort of started when I read Earl Ofari Hutchinson,

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00:08:54,670 --> 00:09:00,250

the Assassin, The Assassination of the Black Male Image, a wonderful book that everybody should pick up.

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Get a chance. And in it, Hutchinson talks about this.

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00:09:04,840 --> 00:09:19,940

You know, this positioning of black bodies, black male bodies, particularly as as troubling, you know, as as spaces where we we.

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00:09:19,940 --> 00:09:27,380

We don't have black male bodies, we don't get to sort of experience the the.

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00:09:27,380 --> 00:09:40,060

I'm going to say. Different positioning of a body, we get one positioning of a body that's violent and brutish, stupid, angry, maybe a big penis.

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00:09:40,060 --> 00:09:44,650

That's pretty much it. So we get the negative positioning.

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So I've been looking at, OK, so how are these images and texts?

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00:09:51,280 --> 00:09:57,400

Where do we show up in texts? So we're looking at three, two or three texts,

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00:09:57,400 --> 00:10:06,730

one of them at Humber and one of them on another space that I've taught from and I've seen used in some of our classroom.

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00:10:06,730 --> 00:10:14,890

The one at the one at Humber is particularly troubling because, you know, I can't go through.

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00:10:14,890 --> 00:10:19,360

So what I do is I go through these texts and I count the images of black males.

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00:10:19,360 --> 00:10:24,010

Or do black male males show up in any of these texts?

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00:10:24,010 --> 00:10:28,570

If they do show up, how do they show up? When do they show up? What do they look like when they show up?

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00:10:28,570 --> 00:10:38,380

So what's the image like? So I go through this text and there isn't a single image of a black black man or a black boy.

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00:10:38,380 --> 00:10:45,250

Actually, no black people, but I'm focused on black black males. Not a single image of a black person in this entire text.

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00:10:45,250 --> 00:10:51,430

And so, you know, I ask myself are hoping that people who are listening ask themselves,

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00:10:51,430 --> 00:11:01,630

So what does that do to a black boy or a black man black teenager when they are in this class and they're using this text?

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00:11:01,630 --> 00:11:10,360

And there isn't a single person who look like them in this text is no example of what they what they're going to be.

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00:11:10,360 --> 00:11:18,010

So I'm looking at stuff like that and looking at the psychology. How does that that work for for me?

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00:11:18,010 --> 00:11:21,250

You know, not seeing myself reflected in any, any space.

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00:11:21,250 --> 00:11:31,390

And of course, I tie that to my work on leadership and in leadership spaces where, you know, many leadership.

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00:11:31,390 --> 00:11:37,330

There's the leadership of a lot of organizations in Canada, including number does not reflect back black bodies,

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00:11:37,330 --> 00:11:46,180

so there are no black people in paid cooperation or leadership positions in many of these these organizations.

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00:11:46,180 --> 00:11:52,870

And so what does that do to the people of called on the front lines?

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00:11:52,870 --> 00:12:01,000

They can't see anybody that looks like them in this role that they should be projecting or wanting to get to.

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00:12:01,000 --> 00:12:08,880

So it's that's some of the stuff that I'm doing right now for me in my own, my own research.

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00:12:08,880 --> 00:12:15,990

And mean, listening to this as a faculty member in is, as I'm sure many listeners will be thinking in their minds,

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00:12:15,990 --> 00:12:21,840

how is this reflected in the courses that I teach, you know, in terms of the materials that I use?

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00:12:21,840 --> 00:12:25,980

And for all of us is we're kind of reflecting on this even just from listening to it.

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00:12:25,980 --> 00:12:32,490

I'm wondering what what do you suggest in terms of a thought process or for those who are

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00:12:32,490 --> 00:12:40,590

kind of wrestling with representation of of of a black people in their learning materials?

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00:12:40,590 --> 00:12:49,410

What do you have any thoughts on what we should be considering or what might be a useful kind of framework to look at that?

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00:12:49,410 --> 00:12:58,350

I mean, is it is it a matter of you think finding was finding a textbook that better represents a black people period and of course,

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00:12:58,350 --> 00:13:03,600

in a more positive light than than portraying them as being less than what are your thoughts?

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00:13:03,600 --> 00:13:10,230

Yeah. You know, representation is a very, very important paramount.

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00:13:10,230 --> 00:13:21,180

But I also think that being a critical practitioner is much more, much more important is a wonderful article that I love to use,

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00:13:21,180 --> 00:13:26,520

and I certainly infuse it in my own work as as a as a critical practitioner.

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It's called critical theory pathways, from dichotomous practice to integrated social work.

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00:13:31,180 --> 00:13:42,420

It's a long title by Silas, Ascend and Segal, and they talk about these six sort of dimensions of what it means to be a critical practitioner.

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00:13:42,420 --> 00:13:50,680

The first one is, you know, examining history and cultural context. So if you have a text, I wouldn't go rushing to replace the text.

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00:13:50,680 --> 00:14:00,390

I want you to engage in a conversation with your students around that text and help them to identify what was in the text.

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00:14:00,390 --> 00:14:06,600

How did those bodies come to be in the texts and how some bodies are coming to come to be excluded from the text?

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00:14:06,600 --> 00:14:10,470

And so engage them in that in that work of being being critical.

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00:14:10,470 --> 00:14:15,090

That, for me, is an important piece considered power and power distribution and power dynamics.

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00:14:15,090 --> 00:14:20,760

Who has it? Who made the decisions to put only images of certain bodies in this text?

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00:14:20,760 --> 00:14:29,700

How does that work? How will we help students to make sure that they are understanding and unlearning and and we're unlearning those.

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00:14:29,700 --> 00:14:39,030

But by looking at power dynamics and who was who is gaining from from from the text, for example, engage in self-reflection.

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00:14:39,030 --> 00:14:48,390

You know, somebody made the decision to use this text. And so how do we self-reflect and make sure that we're not making that decision?

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00:14:48,390 --> 00:14:54,990

What is it? Not a conscious? This is not a thing. Unconscious, I guess.

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00:14:54,990 --> 00:15:01,450

But self-reflect being non-judgmental. They talk about non-judgmental inquiry.

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00:15:01,450 --> 00:15:06,330

So how do we make sure that we are, you know, maintaining perspective,

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00:15:06,330 --> 00:15:13,410

not destroying who we are because who we are is is integral to to how we judge other people by making sure that

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00:15:13,410 --> 00:15:20,370

we are also looking at other people as people and people with intelligence and ideas and thought processes.

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00:15:20,370 --> 00:15:26,820

Just like we are acknowledging that there are different value systems that we that we all bring it into into

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00:15:26,820 --> 00:15:34,080

different spaces and respecting that and acknowledging other people's values doesn't mean that we destroy our own.

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00:15:34,080 --> 00:15:39,060

It means that we understand that we are our own is not the only value system that there is.

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00:15:39,060 --> 00:15:44,910

There are other really very legitimate value systems out there that we need to respect.

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00:15:44,910 --> 00:15:49,290

And my the last one that they talked about is one of my favorites. It's action.

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00:15:49,290 --> 00:15:58,110

So you have to take action when you learn all these things in your unlearning and you looking at these pieces, you got to take actions and transform.

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00:15:58,110 --> 00:16:02,430

But know why you're doing it. You know, know the reasons behind you doing it.

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00:16:02,430 --> 00:16:11,990

I know we're in this space now where where some people, I guess, are pushing for the removal of texts from from,

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00:16:11,990 --> 00:16:20,280

you know, from from teaching and from libraries in the states, usually deep south.

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00:16:20,280 --> 00:16:31,530

But it's let's look at, you know, why we get to a space where that's happening and and really engage what's happening, what's happening in the text?

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00:16:31,530 --> 00:16:36,480

Some people just advocate for removal without actually reading what's in these things?

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00:16:36,480 --> 00:16:45,000

I haven't read it at all. You don't know what's in it, but you're advocating for removal because you are from a particular political spectrum.

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00:16:45,000 --> 00:16:53,550

And that, for me, is problematic, especially in academia, where we're supposed to be having tough conversations and engaging with these hard ideas.

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00:16:53,550 --> 00:17:02,370

We need to engage with them and be fully immersed in them, or as we shouldn't be, to call ourselves academia as far as far as I'm concerned, right?

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00:17:02,370 --> 00:17:08,260

But they're challenging the troublesome and the challenging, but it needs to have action at the end of the day when we're not.

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00:17:08,260 --> 00:17:17,170

I reflection is done there needs to be action, and we need to make sure we're engaging in a way that gets us to a place where we can act,

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00:17:17,170 --> 00:17:21,130

if that makes any, any sense to you and your listeners.

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00:17:21,130 --> 00:17:26,860

Oh, 100 percent. I think it does well. And of course, I mean, I think you touched on the idea that.

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00:17:26,860 --> 00:17:32,260

I mean, if there's anywhere to engage in a tough conversation to, you know,

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00:17:32,260 --> 00:17:38,260

elicit critical thinking and our students and in ourselves and in our world, it's a place like an academic institution.

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00:17:38,260 --> 00:17:42,190

I mean, that's a it's it's a given. It has to be that right.

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00:17:42,190 --> 00:17:50,200

And part of our job, I think, is teachers is to challenge our students to question their conceptions about the world and what,

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00:17:50,200 --> 00:17:55,000

what, what we've done wrong, what we could be doing better, what can we be doing differently?

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00:17:55,000 --> 00:17:57,590

And yeah, let's get into it.

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00:17:57,590 --> 00:18:06,130

I think that, you know, sometimes the right wing ideology take that up to mean that they should perpetuate right wing, disturbing ideology.

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00:18:06,130 --> 00:18:10,870

That's definitely not what I'm what I'm talking about. Sure, we should definitely have a conversation about that because I think that,

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00:18:10,870 --> 00:18:15,910

you know, if you can't defend your position, then it's a bit of a challenge.

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00:18:15,910 --> 00:18:24,520

But I'm not saying that I want people painting swastikas and calling me the [INAUDIBLE] on campus.

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00:18:24,520 --> 00:18:31,360

That is definitely, you know, that's not what I'm saying. So I want people to be very, very mindful that that's definitely not what I'm saying.

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00:18:31,360 --> 00:18:37,900

What I'm saying is that have conversations that are tough and and they're challenging and not move away from move away from them.

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00:18:37,900 --> 00:18:45,760

So one example of I got to move away from a challenging conversation that I often hear when I talk about issues of race and

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00:18:45,760 --> 00:18:54,550

racism and white racism and anti-black racism is I get why people in the room saying stuff when they talk about slavery,

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00:18:54,550 --> 00:18:59,500

particularly, so didn't black people. So black people in Africa.

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00:18:59,500 --> 00:19:04,420

It's the immediate move to move away from the discomfort of talking about white

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00:19:04,420 --> 00:19:12,550

racism and the challenges around white racism that people are very uncomfortable,

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00:19:12,550 --> 00:19:17,410
uncomfortable with. I'm very willing to have the conversations around
black people, something other black people.

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00:19:17,410 --> 00:19:21,460
But that's not where the power lies and that's never been where the power
lies.

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00:19:21,460 --> 00:19:25,750
So I want to talk about where the power lies and that's in whiteness and
white ideology.

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00:19:25,750 --> 00:19:30,670
So let's talk about that first, and then we'll get to then I'll talk
about the the other, because that's the stuff I'm talking about.

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00:19:30,670 --> 00:19:39,100
Let's talk about the tough conversations and really engage with them in
the uncomfortable conversations and not try to turn the gaze immediately.

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00:19:39,100 --> 00:19:47,220
Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Well, it strikes me, too, that talking about power, which
is, I think,

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00:19:47,220 --> 00:19:55,380
an uncomfortable thing that all educators have to kind of wield in a
sense because into whatever extent,

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00:19:55,380 --> 00:20:02,010
you know, we have a lot of power as educators over students, whether we
like it or not, that's just part of it, right?

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00:20:02,010 --> 00:20:05,790
And because of, as you say, because of the system that we're in and we
think any educator,

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00:20:05,790 --> 00:20:10,020
but especially one that's in an academic institution has to kind of
wrestle with that power.

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00:20:10,020 --> 00:20:17,190
And one of those areas, of course, that always comes into play is things
like marking and assigning grades to students.

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00:20:17,190 --> 00:20:25,790

So I'm wondering if you could speak about some of the ideas that I know we discussed the last time we had a chat or the things about.

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00:20:25,790 --> 00:20:32,210

Thinking about grading from the perspective of unconscious bias and and some ideas and strategies,

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00:20:32,210 --> 00:20:39,260

perhaps that you might have or things that you've used in your own teaching practice in order to address that.

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00:20:39,260 --> 00:20:47,830

Yeah. So I think, you know, we were talking about this, this question around.

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00:20:47,830 --> 00:20:57,650

So we living in a space now where I think we're were. Well, some of us anyways are acknowledging that.

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00:20:57,650 --> 00:21:06,380

The systems are have made the lives of particular people very, very bad.

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00:21:06,380 --> 00:21:09,830

Systemic racism, systemic oppression. It is there.

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00:21:09,830 --> 00:21:17,360

It's taking a lot of energy and a lot of time to get to even understanding it, much less dismantling it.

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00:21:17,360 --> 00:21:22,910

So we we have that, we know we know that that's a system that's that's that's that's the issue.

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00:21:22,910 --> 00:21:30,380

We know that institutions are the same as an institution. We know those things.

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00:21:30,380 --> 00:21:34,670

So, you know, I've often asked myself, who might some of my colleagues this question?

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00:21:34,670 --> 00:21:41,210

So if we know those things to be absolutely true, we don't challenge them anymore as truth, then we take them to be true.

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00:21:41,210 --> 00:21:47,840

We have a research to show it's scientific fact that systems are racist, sexist, homophobic.

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00:21:47,840 --> 00:21:51,080

They are challenging for certain bodies.

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00:21:51,080 --> 00:21:57,950

And if you're at the intersection, if you are a black woman, you are experiencing that system much worse than other other people.

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00:21:57,950 --> 00:22:06,950

So we know that. So if we know that to be absolutely true, is it fair that we grade, for example,

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00:22:06,950 --> 00:22:16,670

a cisgender white man the same way as we grade a black woman in a wheelchair if we know that systems have been horrendous to her life?

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00:22:16,670 --> 00:22:23,320

Is it fair that we continue to try to do the grading the same way of those of those two bodies?

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00:22:23,320 --> 00:22:28,100

It's a question I throw out there. It's not a question that I know the answer.

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00:22:28,100 --> 00:22:34,850

Maybe I do know the answer to it. It's pretty simple, but you get I get pushback, right?

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00:22:34,850 --> 00:22:40,250

The, you know, the meritocracy, meritocracy, pushback is always there.

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00:22:40,250 --> 00:22:48,050

The individual pushback is always going to be there. But I want us to really think about that.

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00:22:48,050 --> 00:22:53,300

You know, if we're in the space and we understand the space and we understand that everybody has been getting from this space,

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00:22:53,300 --> 00:22:59,510

how we treating everybody the same way, how is that equity and how is that inclusion?

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00:22:59,510 --> 00:23:04,370

If if we know this to be to be true, because if we're grading everybody the same way,

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00:23:04,370 --> 00:23:13,220

then we are basically saying that everybody has had the same access to everything for the last number of years to get them to this to this point,

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00:23:13,220 --> 00:23:18,770

which we know is not not true. It really isn't. And we know that for a fact.

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00:23:18,770 --> 00:23:28,460

So that's one of my thinking, you know, over the last little little while is, how do we make sure that we're looking looking at looking at that?

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00:23:28,460 --> 00:23:35,630

I know that's problematic and troublesome for a lot of people and a lot of minds and even from afar,

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00:23:35,630 --> 00:23:40,580

for people who, you know, may benefit from that would, you know,

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00:23:40,580 --> 00:23:46,100

automatically probably say, we're thinking we've heard some of this and even for my own self,

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00:23:46,100 --> 00:23:53,790

I guess that, you know, I don't want to be in a space where I'm getting.

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00:23:53,790 --> 00:23:57,060

Quote unquote preferential treatment because of.

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00:23:57,060 --> 00:24:05,040

But there's also an understanding that for a very long time, white people have gotten the preferential treatment based on nothing but their whiteness.

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00:24:05,040 --> 00:24:09,900

Absolutely nothing but their whiteness. And it was a white woman who reminded me of this.

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00:24:09,900 --> 00:24:16,740

I remember a long time ago, you know, I, I got this leadership role and we were talking and I said to her, Did you hire me because I'm black?

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00:24:16,740 --> 00:24:24,090

And she said to me, before I even get to answering that question, I want you to think about something that there are a significant number of white

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00:24:24,090 --> 00:24:28,590

people who have gotten to where they are based on nothing but their whiteness.

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00:24:28,590 --> 00:24:31,350

So I want you to think about that. And then she said, No, I didn't hire because they're black.

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00:24:31,350 --> 00:24:36,300

I hate it because they're super intelligent, but I want you to think about that.

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00:24:36,300 --> 00:24:45,630

So I want to think about that as well. When they get to a space of I don't want to benefit based on nothing but conversation.

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00:24:45,630 --> 00:24:51,780

So stories like that we really should be thinking about if we're going to transform our system and dismantle oppression

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00:24:51,780 --> 00:25:01,410

that we made probably shouldn't treat everybody the same way because that's not building an equitable system.

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00:25:01,410 --> 00:25:11,230

If we know that we've designed a system to really make the lives of certain people a living [INAUDIBLE] for a very long, long time.

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00:25:11,230 --> 00:25:16,580

And I mean, practically on on the topic of.

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00:25:16,580 --> 00:25:22,480

Of thinking about marking in, and I think in a way that.

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00:25:22,480 --> 00:25:29,300

Takes into account unearned privilege, perhaps access and all these issues that you're speaking about,

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00:25:29,300 --> 00:25:37,060

what are some ways this is it's it's as I'm sure, you know, it's a tough thing to wrap your head around practically in terms of implementing it.

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00:25:37,060 --> 00:25:47,010

What are some ways that you, as as a faculty member have have found were ways that you could address that in your own classes?

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00:25:47,010 --> 00:25:52,110

Talk about it, how open, honest this conversation, if you're going to, you know,

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00:25:52,110 --> 00:25:57,750

get to a place where you are building in the consciousness of your students,

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00:25:57,750 --> 00:26:05,490

have these open and honest conversations, have these problematic conversations in your classroom with them, they're intelligent beings.

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00:26:05,490 --> 00:26:10,440

Listen to them, listen to your thought processes, have them be disrupted.

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00:26:10,440 --> 00:26:13,680

You can disrupt them with these with these ideas.

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00:26:13,680 --> 00:26:20,970

Have them leave your classroom seeing how much they hate you because you've now forced them to think about something very, very differently.

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00:26:20,970 --> 00:26:34,770

You know, that's that's our job as academics, as teachers and educators is to not continue to have everybody feel, you know, coddled on on campus.

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00:26:34,770 --> 00:26:42,450

It's our jobs to be a little disturber for our students because that's how we help them to get to a space where they

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00:26:42,450 --> 00:26:47,310

are going to challenge the oppression if they can't even challenge the tiny oppression that's in our classrooms.

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00:26:47,310 --> 00:26:52,980

Challenge one person, how the [INAUDIBLE] are they going to challenge an entire system out there?

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00:26:52,980 --> 00:26:57,780

So that's that's, I think from one of our our images and talk about it with your students.

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00:26:57,780 --> 00:27:08,910

The other thing is get to and I know that the impracticality of this and you do need to get to know your students and not the individual students,

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00:27:08,910 --> 00:27:11,100

but get to know the experiences of black people.

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00:27:11,100 --> 00:27:15,710

Get to know the experiences of South Asian students because they're all coming with those experiences.

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00:27:15,710 --> 00:27:20,250

Now if you've got if you got refugees in your classroom, that's a particular experience.

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00:27:20,250 --> 00:27:26,790

So get to know that experience and what that that's like for a student in your student, in your in your classroom.

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00:27:26,790 --> 00:27:33,370

Those things help. One of the things that I've done as a practical thing is.

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00:27:33,370 --> 00:27:42,210

Opened myself up to. Editing the work of first gen students because they don't a lot of reasons,

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00:27:42,210 --> 00:27:48,330

you just don't have anyone to edit their work or advocate for spaces on campus or teach them workspaces

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00:27:48,330 --> 00:27:55,500

on campuses are on campus are to get their work edited before they send that work to you for grading.

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00:27:55,500 --> 00:28:06,900

All right, because once you grade, that's it. But one of the things that I've also, you know and I get accused of is all the time is done.

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00:28:06,900 --> 00:28:09,810

Great stuff that you didn't give to the students.

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00:28:09,810 --> 00:28:17,040

And if you're going to grade by Robert, grade by a rubric so that they know what they're going to be graded on.

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00:28:17,040 --> 00:28:25,230

I've maybe not at home, but I've seen teachers, all grade students based on stuff that they had no idea about.

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00:28:25,230 --> 00:28:31,560

So if you get a grade students based on stuff that's not in the assignment, that's unethical. And so we shouldn't do it.

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00:28:31,560 --> 00:28:37,470

So just grades students fairly and stuff that you've told them that you're going to be grading,

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00:28:37,470 --> 00:28:42,450

grading them on so they know what, what, what's coming. So just basic things like that.

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00:28:42,450 --> 00:28:45,810

But for me, it's doing the critical stuff,

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00:28:45,810 --> 00:28:54,060

having the scary conversations with our students and pushing the ideas out there that says we're going to transform our system.

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00:28:54,060 --> 00:28:56,520

And for me, if we're going to transform our system,

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00:28:56,520 --> 00:29:03,000

then we need to look at equity in the real sense of equity when it comes to stuff like that grading.

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00:29:03,000 --> 00:29:10,860

Although we probably shouldn't have been dwelling downgrading in anyways. But that's a whole different conversation.

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00:29:10,860 --> 00:29:16,350

I like the point of being able to just be open and have those conversations with your students,

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00:29:16,350 --> 00:29:23,490

get to know them and particularly set those clear expectations about what it is that you're looking for and not surprise them.

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00:29:23,490 --> 00:29:28,590

They don't need to be surprised. Just be be be clear about what it is that you're assessing.

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00:29:28,590 --> 00:29:32,460

You know, that's fair. And tell them, tell them how smart they are.

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00:29:32,460 --> 00:29:34,770

They're intelligent group of people.

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00:29:34,770 --> 00:29:42,960

I think I was reading up on the Pygmalion effect and the other day, I certainly don't know enough about this to be having any kind of conversation.

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00:29:42,960 --> 00:29:48,910

But generally speaking, it's around the toast uses that they're dumb, that they're going to believe that, that that stuff, right?

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00:29:48,910 --> 00:29:52,930

And if you were you, would you go on the dumb road?

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00:29:52,930 --> 00:29:58,890

We know what that road looks like, where we're telling people side conversations about what they can and cannot do,

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00:29:58,890 --> 00:30:04,680

then that's what they're going to live up to. So tell our students how intelligent they are.

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00:30:04,680 --> 00:30:12,720

You know, they they've gotten this far and some of them have gotten this far despite and they've been working through oppression to get this this far.

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00:30:12,720 --> 00:30:18,810

So they are at least stronger than a lot of people. So let's just remind ourselves of that.

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00:30:18,810 --> 00:30:25,200

I'm not saying coddle our students. I'm just a reminder of how intelligent they are as beings.

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00:30:25,200 --> 00:30:34,440

And in the chatter we had last week, just you and I, we were talking about the idea that it's important from your perspective to encourage

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00:30:34,440 --> 00:30:42,000

students and give them the agency to be able to challenge a grade when you give it to them.

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00:30:42,000 --> 00:30:48,420

And that's a really I think it's a really important point, and I'd like you to speak to that because it's something that.

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00:30:48,420 --> 00:30:52,680

I, to be honest, I've taken for granted as something to to put out there into the open,

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00:30:52,680 --> 00:30:58,140

sometimes in the past, I've just assumed students will do it if they if they feel like they need to.

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00:30:58,140 --> 00:31:04,950

But it perhaps is not something that's necessarily something they know that they have the agency to do.

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00:31:04,950 --> 00:31:12,030

Yeah, especially a lot of of racialized first gen Fraser University students.

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00:31:12,030 --> 00:31:19,020

I think I may have said that wrong, but still this was for the first person in there in their family to to go to university.

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00:31:19,020 --> 00:31:25,290

The power dynamics is ridiculous. You know, when they look at you, they see there's a teacher, a teacher have all the power.

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00:31:25,290 --> 00:31:29,010

Period. That's not true for all students.

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00:31:29,010 --> 00:31:36,510

We know that. But it's our job as educators to really empower is to challenge us because I said if they can challenge us,

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00:31:36,510 --> 00:31:39,150

we can expect them to challenge systems of oppression.

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00:31:39,150 --> 00:31:49,260

And so one of the things that I remind or try to remind my students or students in my classroom about is if you feel like your grade level is off,

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00:31:49,260 --> 00:31:54,600

certainly by what you mean, don't come to me if you she got an A-plus, an A-minus, and you should have gotten an A-plus.

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00:31:54,600 --> 00:31:56,730

Not entertaining that.

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00:31:56,730 --> 00:32:05,790

But if you if you got a B and you're saying Morris migraine is an A and I am absolutely confident that my grade is an eight year to challenge that.

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00:32:05,790 --> 00:32:13,080

And so we need to help empower students to be able to challenge that because that takes a lot out of a student when they

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00:32:13,080 --> 00:32:20,550

see you as the one with all the power who is going to destroy them because this is not the only paper you're grading.

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00:32:20,550 --> 00:32:25,770

And if you set it, leave a bad taste in your professors mouth. You know it could be horrible.

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00:32:25,770 --> 00:32:30,900

But if you empower his students to leave about this memo, I want you to come and challenge me.

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00:32:30,900 --> 00:32:33,570

If you don't come and challenge me actually gets me upset.

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00:32:33,570 --> 00:32:40,440

If I've graded you wrong and you know I've graded you wrong, because that means I'm not teaching you anything right?

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00:32:40,440 --> 00:32:46,210

Especially in some courses that are built around advocacy. And this is the job that you be advocates.

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00:32:46,210 --> 00:32:55,590

So remind me of a story at York. I think we were talking a little bit about this, where one of my students is a black female came to me,

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00:32:55,590 --> 00:33:05,190

and she said that she got a grade that was just not the I think it was like a C or B that does not the grade that she thought she should have gotten.

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00:33:05,190 --> 00:33:09,180

I said to her, You know, you've got to make sure that your challenged grade, especially if it's one grade level.

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00:33:09,180 --> 00:33:17,640

I think I actually said that to the whole class that their job is to challenge grades that they think is is the grade level off.

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00:33:17,640 --> 00:33:21,390

And she she did that. She did that. And I think the next couple of weeks later,

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00:33:21,390 --> 00:33:29,550

she came back and said I got an a on a paper that I think was either a C or a B because I challenge it because I did it in a way that,

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00:33:29,550 --> 00:33:35,520

you know, showed that I did do the work. So you do have to prove that you did the work, but you got a child.

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00:33:35,520 --> 00:33:37,710

It starts with challenging your grades.

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00:33:37,710 --> 00:33:46,320

So I I implore our students to do that, to be empowered to do that and law professors to empower our students to do that.

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00:33:46,320 --> 00:33:50,130

You know, help them to do that, teach them how to do that.

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00:33:50,130 --> 00:33:56,880

Not in the angry throw my paper across the room and the professor way, but in the let's,

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00:33:56,880 --> 00:34:02,340

let's get you to a place where you feel strong enough, empowered enough to to come.

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00:34:02,340 --> 00:34:12,000

And let's have a conversation about, you know, have a debate about where your grades should be because you don't think it's in the right place.

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00:34:12,000 --> 00:34:13,200

So that's what I'm saying.

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00:34:13,200 --> 00:34:21,450

Let's make sure that we get to that space with with our student population because, as I said, if we can empower them to do, that's the simple thing,

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00:34:21,450 --> 00:34:30,950

then our systems are going to stay exactly the same because that means we have to empower them to really dismantle systems of oppression there.

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00:34:30,950 --> 00:34:38,630

Yeah. Yeah, I fully agree. One final question for you before I let you go.

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00:34:38,630 --> 00:34:44,000

You know, I think you've touched on some of these points already, but I'll I'll I'll I'll I'll I'll ask in a different way.

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00:34:44,000 --> 00:34:51,170

You know, how can we as humble as a community and as a faculty honor and celebrate black excellence?

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00:34:51,170 --> 00:35:00,360

Black History Month and Black 365. Yeah, it's you know.

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00:35:00,360 --> 00:35:06,360

I think I can say the whole Paulo Ferreira stuff around education can and should be transformative.

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00:35:06,360 --> 00:35:12,070

And you know, we know, we know that. But for me, it's about making sure that we.

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00:35:12,070 --> 00:35:24,680

Go back to the place where we are looking at history and not wanting black people to tell us about the history, there's so much information on Google.

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00:35:24,680 --> 00:35:31,000

My goodness, we're in the we're knee deep in the intimate neck, deep in the information age, right?

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00:35:31,000 --> 00:35:35,450

So we can find information really quickly, really easily.

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00:35:35,450 --> 00:35:44,440

So let's do that. Let's find information. Let's look at the experiences, not just the one dimensional experiences.

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00:35:44,440 --> 00:35:49,990

Let's listen to and lord. I hate even seeing the side of my mouth, but let's look at.

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00:35:49,990 --> 00:35:58,390

Let's listen to the Conservatives right wing black ideology and the left wing black ideology and the middle of the road and the Liberals.

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00:35:58,390 --> 00:36:04,360

And let's look at all of that because all of that is also also blackness, right?

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00:36:04,360 --> 00:36:10,300

Don't tell anybody I said that. But no, you're right.

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00:36:10,300 --> 00:36:14,710

You're absolutely right. It's well. And it's I think what you're saying is.

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00:36:14,710 --> 00:36:21,310

Sorry to interrupt, but it sounds like as opposed to just being in our own sort of a filter bubble in

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00:36:21,310 --> 00:36:26,560

terms of the views that we really hang on to continually exposing ourselves to views,

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00:36:26,560 --> 00:36:32,080

it might be in opposition to the ones that we we currently have as ways to to wrestle with the ideas that we hold.

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00:36:32,080 --> 00:36:38,770

True, perhaps. Absolutely. And thinking about people as I thought, this is binary because you're not right.

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00:36:38,770 --> 00:36:47,350

It's a very complex. Blackness is as complex as everything else, and it's a spectrum like everything, like everything else, right?

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00:36:47,350 --> 00:36:54,340

It's not once you learn about Black, Morris is the black guy that doesn't tell you anything more than Morris of the black guy.

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00:36:54,340 --> 00:37:01,600

It doesn't tell you much, much more than that, right? So there are a multiplicity of experiences out there.

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00:37:01,600 --> 00:37:07,720

So take go, take a take a look at what those experiences experiences are.

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00:37:07,720 --> 00:37:14,590

You know, I think I have mentioned something around the blackness in North America is certainly rooted in slavery, but there's a history before that.

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00:37:14,590 --> 00:37:20,110

There's a huge history before that. So take that time to go and look at.

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00:37:20,110 --> 00:37:26,710

Look at that. I can hear the the partial professor's point.

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00:37:26,710 --> 00:37:32,260

What the [INAUDIBLE] are you talking about? Morris, who has the time, but we're not supposed to find the time to go and look at that.

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00:37:32,260 --> 00:37:38,680

It's an issue. It's about confusion and look at your curriculum differently.

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00:37:38,680 --> 00:37:51,490

I remember when I was in teaching middle school, we infuse gardening in our math class because there's much measurement to be had in the garden,

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00:37:51,490 --> 00:37:56,230

you know, so you can get pieces into the work that you're doing.

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00:37:56,230 --> 00:37:58,930

I know you teach music and we're talking about jazz.

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00:37:58,930 --> 00:38:07,900

And how can you talk about jazz without including blackness in that it would be a bit of a challenge for, I think for me, right?

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00:38:07,900 --> 00:38:17,020

It's because you've got to infuse it in everything that you that you're that you're doing because it is it is everybody's history.

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00:38:17,020 --> 00:38:21,790

I think that would be probably what I would have to say to put it the folks.

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00:38:21,790 --> 00:38:23,960

There's lots of other people you can listen to.

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00:38:23,960 --> 00:38:34,480

I'm certainly not the authority on any of this that's speaking from my own experience and the research of items that I've done.

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00:38:34,480 --> 00:38:37,720

So take a look at other folks as work.

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00:38:37,720 --> 00:38:48,400

I know that there's a ton of different writers out there in Canada, in and certainly in the United States that people should go and look at.

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00:38:48,400 --> 00:38:51,670

There's some some of the work I find on that.

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00:38:51,670 --> 00:38:56,860

Everybody. Honestly, if you'd left and if you'd leave college or university without reading Fanon,

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00:38:56,860 --> 00:39:05,680

we has an institution that done you an injustice and we should probably apologize, but go and read those those seminal pieces, right?

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00:39:05,680 --> 00:39:10,850

It's important for me anyhow. Stuff from Pablo Freire. It read that stuff.

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00:39:10,850 --> 00:39:20,910

Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Great. Well, we've we've got work to do, and we need to do it right.

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00:39:20,910 --> 00:39:28,800

Well, thank you so much, Maurice. This has been very enlightening and thought provoking conversation, and I really appreciate your time today.

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00:39:28,800 --> 00:39:38,060

So thank you. All right. Thank you. Take care. This week's teaching tip is a more reflective one.

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00:39:38,060 --> 00:39:41,690

My personal feeling is that black history in curriculum is something that we

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00:39:41,690 --> 00:39:46,370

should all do in our individual courses and programs on a continual basis,

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00:39:46,370 --> 00:39:52,970

not just in the month of February, of course. To reiterate some of Morris's points from our earlier discussion,

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00:39:52,970 --> 00:39:58,130

consider the resources that you use in your classroom and how they portray black people.

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00:39:58,130 --> 00:40:04,400

Consider the power dynamics that are inherent in your grading practices and how they impact your students.

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00:40:04,400 --> 00:40:12,020

For myself, as a music theory teacher in the past several years, I've become more open about the analytical tools that I use in my own courses,

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00:40:12,020 --> 00:40:19,250

which are largely based on the musics of European male classical composers in the 18th century.

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00:40:19,250 --> 00:40:27,080

When I introduced these tools to my students, I try to provide them with resources to show the students the inherent biases in these systems

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00:40:27,080 --> 00:40:31,460

so that they know that these frameworks don't always neatly apply to other musical styles,

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00:40:31,460 --> 00:40:35,370

such as jazz, which is a Black American art form.

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00:40:35,370 --> 00:40:40,290

When grading their analytical assignments, I try to let them know that they can use these tools as a guide,

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00:40:40,290 --> 00:40:47,210

but that I really have no right to mandate one correct answer because the tools themselves are quite biased.

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00:40:47,210 --> 00:40:54,970

I hope that this helps to empower them to think critically and to question the musical cannons that are biased towards whiteness.

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00:40:54,970 --> 00:41:05,740

I fully admit that for me, this is a process that I intend to reexamine continually, and I hope that you'll consider the same.

369

00:41:05,740 --> 00:41:08,980

The staff lounge is brought to you by innovative learning,

370

00:41:08,980 --> 00:41:15,250

our producer and editor is Fiona Tudor Price Promotions and Graphics by Elizabeth Spring Gate.

371

00:41:15,250 --> 00:41:20,680

Humza Ibrahim manages our website. Our executive producer is Rania Khan.

372

00:41:20,680 --> 00:41:24,910

Our theme song is composed and performed by me, Sharon, for the better.

373

00:41:24,910 --> 00:41:30,280

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00:41:30,280 --> 00:41:38,168

Thanks again for listening and we'll see you next time. On the staff lounge, then.