

## Transcript of Interview

**KM:** Kate Maddalena

**JJA:** Janelle Jennings Alexander

00:06:42 KM: So our first question is, who are we? And establishing the context for what we're talking about. So, who are you, Janelle, and what's your context for talking about this?

00:06:53 JJA: Yeah, that's a hard question at this point in my career. I'm an educator, I think, first and foremost. That is sort of my central identity. And I think because of that, like I aspire to be like the educators that I sort of look to for guidance, and those are people who center student experiences in all of their work, right?

00:07:21  
And so as I think about the work that I do as an educator, I'm always sort of thinking about, like, what are the students experiencing, and what are ways that we can sort of make that experience better for them. And so when I think about this work that I do related to diversity, equity, inclusion—all of these conversations, these hot-topic conversations—for me, it's not because of the fact that they're in vogue right now, but in part, because there are students within these college campus spaces that I think are being disserved by the absence of these conversations, and I'm always sort of thinking about what does it look like to create more equitable spaces for them, and to create places where we can minimize the sort of psychic and psychological harm that's done as a result of the absence of those conversations.

00:08:28  
And so I think that's kind of what's central to how my identity is central to this conversation, is that as a woman of color, as a Black woman who has come through primarily white educational spaces, and who's had to undo a lot of anti-Blackness, and like my own right, I try and think about, like, what are those lessons that I've learned about sort of who my schooling—what my schooling taught me below the surface, like what those unofficial curriculums were, and what does it look like to not pass that down to other students in ways that are really harmful, and what does it look like to help hold other people accountable so that they're not also passing that along.

00:09:32 KM: And then I am—who am I? I'm a writing teacher who has, really probably up until around Charlottesville, done—just benefited from white educational spaces, did the thing where ignoring—or like the color-blind move is what was my move, like my go-to move. And then, as a writing teacher especially, after learning a lot about sociolinguistic racism and Charlottesville happening, and having colleagues like you, realizing that there's no way to do that and have it not be just perpetuating—the underscored stuff, the underneath curriculum that you just said, there's no way to not have that, not just reproduce that, unless it becomes—in fact, I would say the curriculum underneath needs to, first of all, come up above and say, “This is what we are teaching when we teach this.”

JJA: Yeah.

00:10:49 KM: Or this is what our institutions are doing when our institutions do this. And then change that and keep it up top. So, like, this is what we want our institutions to do now, and these are the ways we're going to do this. So I really want to be able to talk to students in continuing what you're saying, like making safe spaces for students and student-experience-centered teaching. I need tools to talk to students about that actively all the time.

JJA: Yeah.

00:11:27 KM: And I realized—I guess I realized almost four years ago that I lacked those tools. Like, of course I want to be able to do this. I can do this with gender. Why can't I do it with race? That was my question. It was like, why am I not comfortable doing this with race, but I'm so comfortable doing it with gender? And it's because of my subject identity, and it's because the university is a white space; like, I learned all these things.

00:11:52 And then I guess we could say, but we can edit it out if we want to, we worked together in a small, private institution that is very much grappling with these issues—

JJA: Yeah.

KM: —because the student body, like in many small, private institutions, the student body is 50% of color, more—like hugely.

00:12:20 JJA: Yeah, at the time that we were working there, yes.

KM: And pretty newly of color.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: And the faculty were absolutely not. So, like, the students were coming into a white-dominated space, and it was already the white, like—it was a historically white institution.

JJA: Yeah.

00:12:40 KM: And we were together in that space. And yeah. And I was seeing you do a whole lot of this work that we talk about being invisible work.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: And benefiting from that work also. And then, so now, we have an ongoing conversation about what that work is and how that work is unsustainable, in many ways, and how we can make it sustainable.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: For faculty of color, too.

00:13:06 JJA: Can I ask a follow-up question about how you sort of situate yourself in this conversation? I'm interested to know, like when you talk about Charlottesville as this inflection point, what do you think that you discovered in that moment that shifted things for you a little bit?

00:13:32 KM: And now I need to make sure—that was 2016. Is that right?

JJA: Mm-hmm.

KM: That was the summer of 2016, and it was before the election, right?

JJA: I don't know.

00:13:53 KM: My basic answer is extremely embarrassing, but I think it's typical of White ladies, is I saw that, and I was just like, "Whoa." The size of it and the fact that it looked to me like something I would only expect in 1957. It shocked me. And then, as soon as I started talking to friends, especially friends of color, I was embarrassed

that it was so shocking to me; like, I got told by a few people, rightly so, like, “Yeah, you shouldn’t be that surprised.”

00:14:33

And that coincided with me coming as a new faculty member to this institution. So I left UNCW, which is nicknamed “UNC White”—

JJA: Interesting.

KM: —because its student body is so not diverse.

JJA: Yeah.

00:14:52

KM: And then I came to this new institution, small institution, where a huge amount—a huge number, the largest number in my life up till then, were Black students. And I just looked at it, and I was like, “I need—if I want to be good in the world, I need to be able to talk about this with them.” And I absolutely realized that I don’t know how because it’s terrifying me.

JJA: Yeah.

00:15:21

KM: So if it’s terrifying me, it means that I don’t have tools, yeah.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: But, yeah, the embarrassing answer is just that, like, the visuals there were just like I just—I was one of those people that was like, “This isn’t—seriously, there’s this many people that are going to go on a public college campus and do this? I can’t believe it.” And then I’m like, “Better believe it.”

00:15:43

JJA: Yeah. Well, that was 2017. And we’re getting to those—

KM: It was after—

JJA: It was in the summer, but it was 2017.

KM: Yeah, exactly.

JJA: But how you felt about that moment is how a lot of people felt about last summer, that for them—

KM: Oh yeah.

JJA: —it was like, “Oh, I didn’t realize this was a thing.”

KM: Yeah.

00:16:08 JJA: And I don't know that it—I mean, I can't speak to how people sort of react to that. I don't know that it's something that embarrassment is the necessary reaction. I'm sure people would disagree with me on that. But I find that there are always things that we don't know, and that's—you know, if we're lifelong learners, that's kind of like where we start: "All right. I recognize there's this thing I don't know. Now I have this obligation to learn it."

00:16:45  
 And so I think, both in the way that you talk about Charlottesville, and as we sort of think about last summer, we think about summer 2020, and the protest as a result of George Floyd's murder, I am not so concerned about the fact, or I find myself not so concerned about the fact that people were sort of shocked, like, "Oh my god, racism exists. Who knew?" Right?

00:17:19 KM: It's not bad it's like this level of public, overt—

JJA: Yeah.

KM: Like, yeah.

00:17:26 JJA: Yeah. But I say that being funny, but I recognize that there's nuance, right? Like, that there're so many people who are pushing back—

KM: Right, yeah.

JJA: —against that, which is the thing that's sometimes a little bit surprising.

00:17:42  
 I don't know that, for me, that it matters so much that that's a new awakening for some. I think what matters is what happens after that, and what's been sad, sometimes chilling, for me, is that folks who really have been awakening a year ago now find themselves sort of backing off of that because of, again, this conversation about bandwidth, like, "Yeah..." People who I absolutely consider allies, people who I absolutely know are really tuned in and tapped in to these conversations, wanting to really created systemic change, who are also saying things like "Well, we've had COVID to deal with, and so we had to kind of put that on the backburner for now," as if—and to your earlier point, right?—as if what's central to this is this idea of intersectionality;

that we can't separate out how the impact of COVID and implications for racial bias completely overlap, especially within educational spaces. It's part and parcel.

- 00:19:07                    There's not a way to kind of pull that apart, and I don't think there's a way to pull it apart just for students of color. I think, in particular, in this moment, helping to kind of parse that out for White-identifying students is vitally important because we're seeing so much of this pushback, and so many of these counterprotests that do feel 1950s-esque, right?
- KM:                        Yes.
- 00:19:42                    JJA:                        I think that's the reason why this moment is so important, because we have to unpack that, and I think we've done a terrible job, just collectively. We've done a terrible job of helping young people make sense of this moment. And all young people. And that, yeah, it makes me sad.
- 00:20:03                    KM:                        Even just like the fact, it's so bandwidth-related, like the fact that—that actually might be the key, one of the keys to the problem you were raising earlier, where you're like, "Can we speak to an audience that's more on board?" Maybe leading off with like, "Duh, Kate, the last summer was about those protests, and that movement first." Like, that's what happened last summer.
- JJA:                        Yeah.
- 00:20:35                    KM:                        You know what I mean? I mean, it's both things happened last summer. It was happening at the same time.
- JJA:                        Right.
- KM:                        But, yeah, that. Just the fact that when, bandwidth-wise, in the classroom, my default "these times" reference was the COVID times. Like, when I said—
- JJA:                        Yeah.
- KM:                        Although that's not necessarily true, actually. Because like in fall semester, it was definitely—George Floyd was like a topos [\*\*] for sure, and it was a intersectional, confusing, super stressful moment.
- JJA:                        Sure, yeah.

- KM: But, still, like, yeah. When somebody on the street said “these times,” they’re talking—well, no, maybe they mean intersectional. I’m talking out—
- 00:21:29 JJA: No, I mean, I think you make an interesting point. And even like when I think about it, it’s not even the George Floyd times, right? Because if I’m being honest about like where this conversation for me begins to sort of crystalize is in 2012, or 2013, I guess, when the trial for George Zimmerman’s murder of Trayvon Martin took place. So 2014, it was that summer.
- 00:22:06 KM: And the election was ramping up too.
- JJA: Yeah, right. Like, so, yeah, all of the things have been—
- KM: Yeah.
- JJA: The politics, the issues of racial strife, the teaching in the classroom in the midst of all of that, and then now this layer of COVID, right? They’ve all been mushed together for really the last almost decade, right?
- KM: Uh-huh.
- 00:22:31 JJA: Trayvon Martin is in 2012. I’m reading because I was trying to jot some notes down. So Trayvon Martin is in 2012. You have 2013, Jonathan Ferrell, who’s the guy in Charlotte who was in a car accident, knocks on a door for help and is shot. Renisha McBride, same situation: she’s drunk-driving; she hits a car; she gets out; EMS doesn’t respond; she’s shot. Tamir Rice, the 12-year-old who has the toy gun in a park, that’s 2014. Eric Garner is 2014. Michael Brown is 2014. Freddie Gray, 2015. Sandra Bland, 2015. 2016, Philando Castile, so the guy who worked in the elementary school cafeteria who—
- KM: In the car.
- JJA: —was carrying a gun in an open-carry state that was registered and was shot anyway, in front of his four-year-old and his girlfriend, right? 2017, Justine Damond, who was a White woman, right? Also killed by this gun violence, officer-involved gun violence. Jonathan Edwards [sic] [Jordan], kid who is leaving a party where the cops are called; they shot up the car and sort of lied about the circumstances there. 2018, Stephon Clark, the guy who jumps into his grandmother’s backyard and is shot 40 times.

Botham Jean, the guy who is sitting in his living room and is killed because Amber Guyger confuses which apartment is hers. Atatiana Jefferson, playing video games at 2:00 a.m. with her nephew in her house, on her couch; shot and killed because they got the wrong apartment. Elijah McClain, who was walking down the street, going home. 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, who is looking at property while he is jogging and gets cornered and shot. Breonna Taylor, asleep in the bed, killed and shot. And then George Floyd, right?

KM: Mm-hmm.

00:24:36 JJA: It's this accumulation of the fact that, despite dashcam footages and bodycam footage and cell phone camera footage and witnesses, there's almost no convictions, there are these minimal sentences when they are sentenced at all, and this overwhelming loss of life. It just sort of comes to a head, and I think what makes George Floyd's moment a little bit different is that it's not this kneejerk police reaction where someone shoots really quickly and we can make the argument that they were confused. It's the methodical nature of it, right?

00:25:17 KM: It's Eric Garner-ish, yeah.

JJA: Yeah. I mean, it's this nine-minute murder.

KM: It's very—yeah.

JJA: Caught on camera. And so I think the challenge is that on—for folks who arrive at 2020 and are shocked and like, "Oh my gosh, this has been happening; we really should pay attention," it's coming and like butting up against folks who have been watching all along. And there was some, I think, for me, some sense of relief, felt like, "Oh, God, finally." Like, we've been here.

KM: For sure, yeah.

00:26:05 JJA: Welcome to the party. Finally, let's do some things.

KM: Yeah.

JJA: And now that we're all here, and then this sort of overwhelming disappointment when that's not exactly how that happened, right? We had this groundswell of support for what was going on. So these corporations are making diversity statements, and everybody is making these broad commitments, and people are



doing this diversity and inclusion training, and it feels like people are finally ready to have this conversation and to do this work. And it gets tabled yet again because of the need to address issues related to COVID.

00:26:55

And again, I'm not saying that those are not—like really important work didn't have to be done to ensure the safety of students, of faculty, of staff, of communities in the face of this really sort of dangerous and deadly disease. But I am saying that, to suggest that that is the only thing that we have space and can have space to talk about, especially the most [\*\*] I'm challenged by that.

00:27:29

KM: Especially since like while that pause button is pushed and the academic space is trying to figure it out, and we don't have bandwidth, the bodies that are suffering are overwhelmingly Black bodies.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: Like, so that first wave, the only folks I knew who had COVID were Black people. I don't know if I'm anecdotally—they were in New York and New Jersey, in that first wave, in March and I guess not February yet, March and April.

JJA: April, yeah.

00:28:05

KM: And continued to be. So it continued to be—and to me, anyway, academia, even just the fact that—so, like, the solutions that I took and my institution took, I benefited from my employment in a mostly White space to—I was able to work from home. Everything—I retracted in that way, right?

00:28:35

And like all that, all that—I've lost my thread. I was saying, like it was very easy—everyone comfortable in that space, like everyone able to just jump online and keep doing what you do. But the tangential, like the connections and the learning that I was doing in my classroom and on campus, like conversations with you stopped, extra committee meetings and stuff.

JJA: Yeah.

00:29:10

KM: Like we didn't have a DEI meeting—

JJA: Yeah.

- KM: —time at all. And what the DEI meeting would have talked about might have been like the fact that our students of color were suffering different [\*\*]. Yeah, okay, that was inarticulate, but—
- 00:29:29 JJA: No, it makes a lot of sense. You know, one of the things you made me think about, like immediately, when you said that, I went to this conversation about sort of like how health and race were impacted by COVID, or like the health of Black people as it relates to COVID-19. But you also sort of touched on this idea that, like, who are the frontline workers here?
- KM: Right.
- 00:29:56 JJA: Right? The people who are not able to just like jump on Zoom for work.
- KM: Right.
- JJA: The ones who are work in the grocery store lines, and the ones who are delivering for everybody who is at home, and the ones who are nurses in the hospitals, right? Like who are—
- 00:30:12 KM: And on the college campus, it's the people feeding our students and dealing with student life and the staff who are—
- JJA: And cleaning the dorms and handling all of these ramped-up COVID—when we talk about, well, we increased our cleaning protocols and—
- KM: Right, all that. And not—there isn't like—the campus we were on doesn't have like a line of delineation where those folks are. But those folks were overwhelmingly more people of color on staff and on faculty.
- JJA: Absolutely [\*\*].
- KM: So that the faculty could easily retract.
- 00:30:46 JJA: Yeah. But I think you're not wrong, though, that like, while there isn't that line of demarcation, in many places there kind of is.
- KM: Totally, yes [\*\*].
- JJA: Right. And you think about where the bulk of Black and Brown people work on college campuses. It's not in classroom spaces.

KM: No.

JJA: It's in the—

KM: Between spaces [\*\*].

00:31:10 JJA: Like the physical labor of keeping an institution open. And these are the very people who have no say in the decisions that were being made about whether a campus goes online, whether it's in person, whether we're using the dorms. All of these decisions are made around them. I mean, I feel like that's true as faculty, like I felt like as a faculty member, who was fully in person, last year—

KM: Yes.

JJA: —I felt like decisions were being made for me. But I had the ability to put up a shield and decide as things started to ramp up that I was going to hold class online.

00:31:47 But if you are working in a job like in physical-plant-related work, you're physically in the spaces where the people are, without any voice to this work. And even that, right as we're sort of thinking about this idea of anti-racist work, like even that becomes part of this conversation that we're not having, which is whose bodies are you putting on the front line here when you make these decisions, and why is that not a consideration? And how is that not part of the conversation?

00:32:24 I think, as faculty, you know, we have a piece in this. I was telling somebody just a couple weeks ago, when they asked me as I was leaving my current institution, like, "What kind of work, you know, can I do as one person up against all of these institutional decisions?" you know, one of the things I said is that you can have some input as a lone person in this discussion, but these are institutionalized problems that required institutionalized solutions, right? And if you don't have the institution on board, the people who are the decision makers, the people who are the policymakers, the people who set the tone for the institution, if they are not on board with this work, if they are not centering these discussions, it's really, really challenging to create any kind of real change because what they've said or what they've communicated as an institution, whether out loud or just through their actions, is that this is not actually a priority, despite all of these statements; this is not actually something that we've thought really hard about.

00:33:35                    Like, it's one thing where it's really easy to say, "We value diverse bodies in our space."

KM:                    Right.

JJA:                    What does it look like to commit to the equitable inclusion of those bodies? What work have you done there? Because if you haven't done that work, then that statement is actually—

KM:                    Not true.

JJA:                    —not true, right? Like you don't—you like the idea, but—

00:34:03                KM:                    It might be intentional. It might be an intention. I mean, at the very least.

JJA:                    Yeah.

KM:                    Yeah. But it is not an effect.

JJA:                    But that's like—and I can say this as somebody who carries a lot of extra weight on their body. That's like weight loss. Like I can say all day long, "I really want to lose some weight," right?

KM:                    I intend, yeah.

JJA:                    But if I say that while I'm eating cake, like is that really a commitment [\*\*]? Like, I want it in theory.

KM:                    Yeah.

00:34:35                JJA:                    And I can honestly mean it. But if I'm not making better choices, if I don't change my habits, then I'm not really committed to it. And it's not enough then, right? And any—like I could go to a gym or a doctor or a personal trainer, and they would all say the same thing, like, "Yeah, actually, you're not really in this. You say you are, but you're not." I think D&I work is the same way; it's like you can put that statement out, you can say that thing, but if you haven't examined your policies, and if you haven't taken a look at your leadership structures, and if you haven't found ways to see where there are equity gaps, holes, pitfalls within your entire institution, you really haven't done this work, and you're really not committed to it, so come back when you are. Like when you're ready to put down the cake, then we can come back and talk.

- KM: Right.
- 00:35:38 JJA: But if really you're just trying to benefit from—like for whatever, like, “We got to keep our numbers up because COVID is impacting admissions,” right? If that's where your focus is, and not on how do we ensure that the people in our spaces are cared for and receiving the experience that they have paid for, that they've committed to by coming to this campus, we're not really doing D&I work.
- KM: Right.
- 00:36:09 JJA: This is all for show, and that makes it really hard to remain in a space like that, no matter how nice the people are, no matter how well kept the lawn is, right? If we don't—if these institutions are not living the values that they purport to have.
- KM: Right.
- JJA: Being somebody whose life has consequences as a result of those values, it makes it really, really difficult to find a way to stay. And then it creates all these other issues because—what are they calling it now, the Great Resignation? Yeah. All of these faculty of color who are leaving these spaces who are like, “I'm not doing this anymore.”
- KM: Yeah.
- JJA: And you're just exacerbating a problem that already exists in the academy. So, yeah, it's tough all around.
- 00:37:12 KM: One of the things that you just made me—like back when you were saying that George Floyd, for a whole bunch of people, like a whole wave of people, the George Floyd murder and resultant activism was like the turning point for them, like the realization point. And I guess I'm talking about mostly White faculty, probably. I don't know. People who hadn't been—had their ear to the ground and been doing, been thinking about social justice for four years.
- 00:37:50 So that's a four years' difference, and you made me realize like, oh, that's part—part of the big frustration for me, when talking to other faculty in these spaces, is that, so when you just said, “We are committed to making the student experience”—for example—“safe, equitable, and what it needs to be for all

students,” and my huge frustration is that the translation of folks who are newly aware that social justice work needs to be done in the academy, though what that means that they have to do there is so undetailed. It’s like “Yeah, so I just treat all my students the same.” Or it’s that first moment of realization where it’s like “Oh, the institution needs to make sure it keeps its bodies of color safe.” If I just know that, like instead of—and maybe just starting with, like, “I treat all my students the same.” No, actually, the first thing to realize is to start to learn how not the same your students are on campus.

00:39:16                   And if you keep on—and I saw this at institutional levels so much, where I was just like, “If you keep being afraid to say that all of our students are not the same, there is nothing we can do.”

JJA:                   Yeah.

00:39:29                   KM:                   Like, we have to say that out loud and then do things with different students, differently. And COVID—I mean, huge, huge exacerbator of that because it’s just like, okay, who’s able to go home and do school entirely online? Which faculty member, Janelle, is the only faculty member or the primary faculty member that students of color are going to email during this whole time if they feel scared at all in terms of racial equity? Or probably anything else, like honestly. I’m going crazy now.

00:40:11                   But just like there wasn’t enough time between these events, like this gelling event where—it’s so frustrating that there’s a gelling event where people are like, “Okay, we see it. Racism exists.” And then—

JJA:                   Oh my god.

KM:                   —everybody retreats from each other, and it is not in the same space together, and we are able to kind of ignore in ways, like we’re able to ignore just the simple fact that we’re lecturing to black boxes on a screen, for that semester. And I know that at the small institution we worked at, school came back face-to-face, and that was probably very different, and there are even more levels of this. But for at least the end of that semester, that spring semester, our bodies weren’t together, and we weren’t even faces. So that like any—I don’t know. Any accountability to that, in real space, was kind of lost. You know?

JJA:                   Yeah.

- KM: Like a moment where a group of people being—a whole lot of learning could have happened, I feel like.
- 00:41:27 JJA: Yeah. You said a couple of things that make me reflect on some experiences that I had over the last year, right? So, we did come back in person, as much as possible, but there were faculty members who didn't come back in person, so we had some classes where the faculty member was virtual but the class was in person. So a student came in and turned on the computer and—
- KM: Max Headroom.
- 00:41:58 JJA: Exactly, yes. Which it was wild. It was like, "Oh, wait, that's a thing. Okay." So we had that situation. We had some classes that were fully virtual, so all students and faculty online. We had some classes that were fully in person. But because of quarantines and isolations and illnesses, there weren't really any classes that were fully in person, because there were always students who were out, for one thing or another. And the juggling of that, having lived through it, I recognized the frustration of it. It sucked. It was not a great experience. But you take that, and you layer all of these other things now, right? For reasons why the students are not in the spaces, or why they're only black boxes and not able to be on camera.
- 00:42:58 Part of the reason why we allowed students to not turn their cameras on was because of inequity, like social inequities.
- KM: Definitely [\*\*].
- JJA: And wanting to ensure that students didn't feel really self-conscious about the spaces where they were having to interact. So I might have had a number of students who—because they were back at home, right? They have parents who are moving in the background and brothers and sisters.
- KM: Totally, yep.
- 00:43:29 JJA: Because family members have lost jobs, and many of them are having to pick up the slack, they're at work. So listening in their cars or listening at their jobs, like have their computer set up at work while also doing these other things. Like, I had students who were babysitting, students who worked restaurants who were also in class at that time.

KM: Same here.

JJA: But out of necessity.

KM: Totally.

00:44:00 JJA: And also about this necessity that has a lot of disparity sort of built into it, right? Students who are tuning in from their cars, so often we had students who had virtual classes but couldn't take those classes from home.

00:44:22 KM: Parking lot.

JJA: So when they were in the parking lot, or they were on campus, in like a closet that they could find, like a space where they were having to steal away to be able to work because there was no going home.

KM: Yeah.

JJA: Or like they would have an in-person class, and their next class was fully virtual, and then the class after that was in person again.

KM: Yep.

JJA: So they couldn't leave and come back, which meant that for some of them, they're on campus all day and don't really have an opportunity—like, the number of students I had to coach within the last year about building a lunchtime into their schedule, it's sort of astounding.

KM: Yeah.

00:45:06 JJA: Where I would look at their calendars and go, "So when do you eat?"

KM: Right.

JJA: "Well, I have practice and I have"—no, but like, when is lunch?

KM: Right.

JJA: Like, when do you take a break? You start your first—what's the word I'm looking at? The financial-aid-related employment.

KM: Student work-study?



- 00:45:31 JJA: Yeah, you do your work—you have your first work-study starting at 8:00 a.m.; you get out of practice at 8:00 p.m., and you're in class or in workouts or in practices. Every minute is scheduled. Like, that's not including homework. That's not including—right?
- KM: Yeah.
- 00:45:53 JJA: And even that—and I don't even know that that's COVID-related; I'm probably like on a tangent here, right? But even just sort of thinking about what the whole life of a student looks like, and how we're constructing your experience, and then add this layer of the way that faculty often talk to students in those particular circumstances, as if it's always tied to laziness that things don't get done; it's always tied to inability that things don't get done, and not the student's own bandwidth, right?
- 00:46:31 KM: Or like even in COVID, laziness wasn't—just overwhelm and all this stuff where—
- JJA: Depression.
- KM: Yeah, depression, mental health becoming this code word for like “everybody's got it bad” kind of thing. But it's not—that's just another way of saying, “Yeah, this is a problem. It's a temporary problem.” And it's not true.
- 00:47:03 JJA: Yeah, I mean, I have a lot of colleagues who wrote that off: “Well, yeah, we're all having a hard time. It's actually not that big a deal.” And it's like, well, that's your very personal experience.
- KM: Right.
- JJA: That is not the experience of all of these students.
- 00:47:15 KM: Or even being as a faculty member, that it's easier because the person is just in the same room, and they have no idea that you're—like the faculty experience might be I'm teaching from my bedroom, and I wish I could leave my house, but the student athlete's experience is like “I have to get my COVID test before practice; I have to do the spit thing; I go practice, and then I come back and get online, and then I go to school and get in class.”
- JJA: Yeah.
- 00:47:41 KM: What you just said made me realize, like I wrote in our notes, this idea of hybridity. Like, we think of it as modality for teaching, but

COVID shows us—it made it more, but also all the time, even not in COVID [\*\*]. That hybridity is, it's not just modality, it's like everything.

JJA: Yes.

00:48:03 KM: It's the hybridity of where school is in life. Like, literally, where it is, like if it's on our phone or in my father's living room, and he's on his lunchbreak, and so he's walking behind me, which is something that happened to a student while I was asking her to read writing aloud, and I was just like, "Sorry, let's not."

JJA: Yeah.

00:48:25 KM: I learned that lesson, like, "Actually, I see now why asking you to read aloud might not be the right thing to do right now." Yeah, that hybridity becomes—that the concept of multimodal hybridity intersects with intersectionality, like identity politics intersectionality. Yeah, cool. And we can learn from it, but I do feel like right now we're at a backslid moment where we're not learning from it, where we're pushing through it; we're trying to like, head down and just don't change because—yeah.

00:49:04 JJA: Yeah. And you know what? That's such an interesting point because, right, like what does learning from it require? It requires us to change. And there's already been so much change. It feels like one of the things we're craving is stability, and stability looks like going back to the way you've always done things.

00:49:22 KM: Or control over when we get to change.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: Like, if I were learning in a healthy situation, I'd be like, "Okay, I'm sitting here, and I'm about to change."

JJA: [laughs] Yeah. And it makes it so much harder. And I know that I sound not compassionate to the educator experience. I very much so am. I know it's hard. And I know that teachers had to shift in a lot of ways really, really quickly, and sustain that for 18 months. And that was tremendously hard, I think, for everybody.

00:50:06 I don't, however, think the difficulty of it gives us a pass. And I think that's what's happened, is that because it's hard and because we're tired, and because we've already had to do so much, the default response is like, "Ugh, I'm going to do the least

amount possible.” And I think even that was communicated in a lot of ways; I remember conversations where people were like, “Just do the best you can and just survive it,” and just minimal effort for you to make it through. And I understand that sentiment completely, as somebody who felt like they were falling apart last year.

KM: Yeah.

00:50:48 JJA: Completely understand. But I think it’s important for us to at least recognize, like, okay, so what does that mean, though? What you’ve just said is that we’re okay tabling these other discussions, we’re okay if this experience is a little bit inequitable or a lot of bit inequitable for some of us; it’s okay if our students have really bad experiences around just their sense of belonging on campus, so long as everybody is—like, everybody is uncomfortable, so just pick a number and this is just your version of uncomfortable.

KM: Right, yeah.

00:51:30 JJA: But their layers that are uncomfortable are compounded in ways that I don’t think a lot of faculty members appreciate. And I would hesitate to say that it’s just White faculty, because I don’t think that’s necessarily true. I think, you know, there is a way that people with our level of education, and within this career field, hope for a particular sort of experience, right? “I am faculty, and this is how—this is what I expect this faculty experience to be like.”

KM: Oh yeah.

00:52:12 JJA: And it’s not supposed to be this hard.

KM: Yeah.

JJA: Because I have all of these other things that I have to do. I still have tenure that I’m seeking. I still have publications I’m working on. I still have service-related duties, and it felt like so much more service this past year that if the students, you know, don’t get the best version of me, eh, you know?

KM: Yeah, right.

00:52:40 JJA: Like, “Sorry, but that’s—you know, I got stuff too.” And I just overwhelmingly heard that sentiment and this other piece that

it's something akin to—like, “It's hard for everybody; get over it.” And not in those words specifically, but like, “Why are you all making such a big deal about it being hard? Like, it's hard for me too. It's hard for my kids. It's hard for...” So if we don't get to this other thing, recognize that's just like “Suck it up,” and that's like how it is—and that does not feel student-centered to me really [\*\*].

KM: Yeah.

00:53:31 JJA: That is—I understand where that comes from, right? That's survival. I just don't know what happens when our survival requires us to ignore the fact that other people aren't surviving the same way that we are.

00:53:53 KM: And that's the question, that's the whole social justice question. And like that's even in good times—and I mean like surviving times, like that's been the problem all along.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: And when we talk about two weeks—like if you were talking about “Suck it up; the students aren't getting the best of me” for 14 days of quarantine, like which is what I thought we were going to do for—but it's been 18 months now, and it's not—like that's part of my—I'm breaking down more this spring than I was last spring, and I think it's because I also was one who thought there was a “through.” Like, this is going to be—like it's something that's going to be over.

JJA: Right.

00:54:40 KM: This new something. But there's always something.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: Like, it's the “get through it” is it. More and more, I mean, I guess life is always surviving. Life is always surviving, and it's always—surviving means different things to different people. And a lot of what it means for—like different things for different people for personal reasons, but also for socioeconomically and geographically determined reasons.

JJA: Yeah.

- 00:55:12 KM: And if we want to actually work for equity, we have to be able to work for equity during survival mode.
- JJA: Right.
- KM: Because literally it's trying to get people out of survival mode.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: So, yeah, it's super disappointing for that reason.
- JJA: Yeah.
- 00:55:32 KM: But it's a lesson too. And hopefully, maybe that lesson can, right now, this spring, kind of—I wonder if this wave is going to make people be like, “Okay, actually maybe I'm being a Pollyanna to think this.” Like, we were wrong to think that we can just duck down. Oh duh. We were wrong [laughs] to table all this stuff because this stuff—but literally, like the reason equity and inclusion work should be done is so that in situations like this, the inequity that gets reestablished does not get reestablished.
- JJA: Right.
- KM: So it failed. Like, it—
- 00:56:11 JJA: Yeah, I mean, it failed because the work wasn't institutionalized.
- KM: Yeah, it did [\*\*].
- JJA: It failed because we thought about it in terms of these one-off experiences: “We'll do a training, and we'll host a workshop; we'll make a statement.”
- KM: Yeah.
- JJA: “And diversity done.” [claps] And again, this idea of, like, systemic change. If you are not going to change the structures, it all falls apart, right? If you're not going to sustain the conversation, if you're not going to center these discussions, then of course it's all going to fall like when we get into the survival-crisis mode. You made such a great point, right? Like, we're always here, which means that—I mean, I think that solidifies the point that this can't only be when we have space and time to do it. It has to be—it's got to be the same kind of priority of making sure that we have beds in the dorms, right?

- KM: Right.
- 00:57:13 JJA: You would never open campus if you didn't have—well, I know of a campus that did that. [laughter] They had students sleeping in the hallway for two weeks—sidebar conversation, but, yeah, wild [\*\*]. But you would never, like, not have staffing in your financial aid office. Why? Because you would never be able to get students to pay for classes.
- KM: Right.
- 00:57:34 JJA: You would never not have the cafeteria up and running once you brought students to campus, because you have to feed them.
- KM: Yes.
- JJA: Not only do they pay for a meal plan, but the students have to eat, right?
- KM: Right.
- 00:57:48 JJA: Those things are central requirements for the function of your institution.
- KM: Yeah.
- JJA: And we've got to get to a point where we recognize that anti-racist work is a central function, critical central function—not optional, not when we start cutting line items on the budget, that “Well, we can't afford the DNI.” But you can't cut that, right?
- 00:58:15 KM: Like in a concrete corollary to—like just to add a concrete—you gave such good, concrete examples. A concrete example of that would be like it should be unheard of that a student would be in a writing course with a teacher who doesn't understand the power structures in creating writing, as like the linguistic power structures. So these workshops that people think of as like fluffy things, they're like cafeteria things.
- JJA: Yeah, cafeteria things.
- 00:58:48 KM: We're educating students in writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are not educating them in a standard grammar from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. That was a White supremacist grammar. And that sounds so esoteric to some people, but it needs to be cafeteria—

JJA: Yep.

00:59:06 KM: Like, I am impatient with my fellow faculty who think that's a specialization for something esoteric or like a personal choice to do—

JJA: Yeah.

KM: Like, "Oh, you're interested in that, so you can do that. But I can teach writing this way." Sorry, I got a little in the nuts and bolts about that.

JJA: No, I mean—

00:59:27 KM: I am at a place where—and it's just because I'm an impatient person, and I've been in it for however—since I was a master's student and had a linguistics course, but then Charlottesville happened. So, now, for four years, I've been trying to figure out how to do it.

JJA: Yeah.

00:59:40 KM: And impatient with folks who aren't there yet.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: Like at least you say that, to say, "We don't have this. I don't know what you mean when you say that." Like not—and I need to know. That's where I want people to be.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: I need those tools. How do I get them? They need to be—like I need to be able to feed my students.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: They have to eat.

01:00:03 JJA: Yeah, they've got to eat. So two things, right? To kind of extend this conversation, where we sort of talk about the field a little bit, at the same time that this statement or within months of George Floyd's killing and the protests and marches, and all of the statements.

- 01:00:29                    You know, the CCCC had a special committee that released this—you know, this is not another statement—I can put in the notes like what the—
- KM:                    Right. The structural—
- 01:00:42                    JJA:                    Yeah, the demand for Black linguistic justice. And they made a very clear connection between the work that we do in language and literacy to what was happening in these public social spaces.
- 01:00:58                                               And, like I pulled a quote from the paper, and one of the things they said was “As language and literacy researchers and educators, we acknowledge that the same anti-Black violence towards Black people in the streets across the United States mirrors the anti-Black violence going down in the academic streets.”
- 01:01:17                                               And like that’s the thing, right? When you talk about this idea of figuring out ways to concretize what we’re supposed to be doing—like, yeah, we got to do diversity, but like what do we do? Really, it’s the same kinds of things that people have been calling for, for years.
- KM:                    Yes.
- 01:01:39                    JJA:                    But with this sense of urgency that says, “Now can you see why?”
- KM:                    You cannot be in a classroom and not be doing this.
- JJA:                    You can’t be in a classroom and not do this. It is—
- KM:                    It’s like sending the students to school with no cafeteria.
- JJA:                    It has to happen. It is central to the work that we do, and it is the sustenance of the cafeteria.
- KM:                    Right.
- 01:02:02                    JJA:                    It is the cafeteria work of the classroom.
- KM:                    Yeah.
- JJA:                    That we have to do this work. And what COVID allowed us to do was to table this thing at the same time you have these groups saying, “No, we can’t table. Like, this is not something we can table. Can you see it now?” And the same way that people are



out marching and demanding. We're sort of marching and demanding that this conversation is central to the work that we do, and to the work that folks who have been, like, in the streets doing for decades, right? Since students' rights. Out hustling to make people see. Like, this is not optional work. This is not a side gig. This isn't like something that I'm super interested in, and so I'm going to dabble. This is the work that we do.

01:03:12                   And not simply—I think this, for me, is the really important piece to add. It's not simply to help comfort our Black and Brown kids. I think sometimes diversity gets framed only in the way that it supports a certain segment of the population. And especially in spaces where those folks are in the minority, it seems like it's something that can be tabled.

01:03:42                   I think one of the things that I feel like I realized over the last few years is that the only way that this works is when we get White folks—White faculty, White students—to understand that the validation of Black people, Black culture, Black language creates a shift in thinking that impacts everything.

01:04:15           KM:           Everybody positively. Like only can benefit. And the risk of perpetuating a systemically segregated educational system is such a huge danger risk, like it's just not—

JJA:           Well, we can't know [\*\*].

KM:           It's not okay for White students to be imbricated [\*\*] and unable to get out of a White supremacist system. Like, it's so not okay for them. It's not good for them.

JJA:           Yeah, exactly.

KM:           Huge branching reasons like that—yeah.

01:04:58           JJA:           Yeah. And I think that's the big shift, is that we've got to reframe this as a school issue, as not just the Black student issue, but that is an issue that impacts everybody in schools. And I think over the last few months, there has been this pushback against critical race theory and these kinds of conversations. I think it's part of the response to last summer.

KM:           Yeah.

01:05:32           JJA:           Because I think the folks who are savvy enough to help write some of these laws that they're sending to parents and say, "Hey,

go to your school board and say these things” —puppeteering—is that they recognize that really what the call to action from last summer was, was to make this work central to what we do, and that makes folks uncomfortable, and so there’s this pushback, like, “No, this is advancing the liberal agenda.” No, it’s not a liberal agenda, right? We have an obligation as educators to ensure the health and safety and wellness in all of the aspects that we impact for all of our students, and it’s not optional work, it’s not piecemeal work; it is central work. And what that demands, then, is changes to curriculums, changes to teacher education programs.

- 01:06:37 KM: Classroom practices. I’m obsessed with that.
- JJA: Yep.
- KM: I’m just like—look around at just little things happening in classrooms. Just hearsay about what’s happening in classrooms, and I’m just like the classroom has to [\*\*]—
- 01:06:54 JJA: Yeah. But even before we change classrooms, we’ve got to change teachers, and we’ve got to change how they think.
- KM: Yeah.
- JJA: About their students, how they understand their students. And that’s head work, but it’s also heart work, a little bit, is that’s the hard part, is asking people to step outside of the self that they’ve always been and try and change and learn. And that’s the place where I know we have the most work to do, and that, I think, is the hardest of that work.
- 01:07:36 The other thing that I wanted to say is, as we think about the places where COVID has allowed us—you touched on this a little bit earlier—has allowed us to make excuses for stepping back, but where we don’t really have the bandwidth to step back—you know, we need to be able to step up. I remember you having conversations about having ESL students in your classes.
- KM: Yeah.
- 01:08:12 JJA: So like what happens when we minimize during COVID? Well, what happens to the support for those particular students? It’s absent. Not that it was robust to begin with.
- KM: No.

- 01:08:25 JJA: But now it's worse, right? And so you have students who we've invited to these campuses and to these spaces who we cannot serve because of this conversation about bandwidth. We don't have space for it.
- 01:08:40 KM: And they are so much more likely to just disappear.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: Like just get—it's so much easier for folks who aren't prepared to make any space for that—in the writing classroom, linguistic diversity, like they just can't. A grade happens, and that student disappears.
- 01:09:00 JJA: Yep. Or even before the grade happens, they see the—
- KM: Oh, long before.
- JJA: —end of the grade [\*\*] happening, right?
- KM: Yes. Or a conversation happens where a student is told that they're not prepared for that classroom, and it isn't a space for them. And that happens—it happens invisibly, when COVID isn't happening and we're in a normal classroom situation, but it happens so much more visibly in online instruction for higher education.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: Yeah, that's—
- 01:09:29 JJA: But you make a good point, too, because one of the things that happens also when students leave is that they get saddled with the debt of a semester where they earned no credits.
- KM: Yeah.
- JJA: So they don't have the ability to transfer a transcript. They may be denied the ability to transfer a transcript. So to get any other educational opportunity in a space where we are the ones who failed, right?
- KM: Yes.

- 01:09:58 JJA: We're the ones who failed. They're the ones who suffered the consequence. And it's an economic consequence, it's an educational consequence.
- KM: And they were aggressively recruited for a sports team.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: Or even diversity.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: Like they were commodified.
- JJA: Yeah.
- 01:10:17 KM: So they were asked for—they were begged to come to campus. They were told that this was a safe space for them. It absolutely is not, and they are now in debt.
- JJA: Yep.
- KM: That's happening. Yeah.
- 01:10:33 JJA: So this advancing of White English language norms that, if we had the bandwidth, we would address with professional development. We weren't doing it before. We're really, really not doing it now.
- KM: Yeah.
- JJA: Access gaps that COVID—in terms of financial access, but technological access as well, right? That COVID exacerbated. We saw how many students don't have internet. We saw how many students are doing homework on their phones. We saw how many students—if you think about the kinds of things we ask students to do in terms of editing and revision of the work—I can't imagine editing a paper on my cell phone.
- KM: No. But they do it.
- 01:11:21 JJA: Like it's the worst. I've tried. It's terrible, right?
- KM: It's not cool.
- JJA: But we don't have time for those conversations. We table that discussion, and we move on. Or like in the post-COVID, which I think we're calling this sort of post-COVID—it's wild. Because

we're all back on campus, so it's like, well, you know, COVID is over, which is—

- 01:11:50 KM: Maybe that's the best thing for this work to do. It's like, "Okay, we're post-COVID; okay, let's get on this, guys."
- JJA: Exactly. And what we forget is all of those technology gaps that we saw before, all those financial gaps. Like, how many colleges of late are we seeing our campuses having to erase the debt from the last year? That's acknowledging that students are accumulating debts by being school that they can't pay for.
- KM: Yes.
- 01:12:16 JJA: There was an article that I saw in—I think it was *The Times* yesterday; that talked about how for like my generation, like this 30-year, 20-year gap, college was supposed to help close some of those equity gaps, and in fact it advanced them. It made it worse because of student debt, right?
- KM: Yep.
- 01:12:40 JJA: And so you have people who have education or who didn't end up completing degrees who are financially worse off than their families would have been in the 1940s. In order to address these diversity/equity gaps, really need to do deep introspective work, like to sit down and kind of wrestle with it. But when? All the faculty meetings are online, and everything is truncated because we need to get through it, because we've all been online all day long, so that gets tabled.
- 01:13:22 So, wait, I have one more. And—
- KM: I want to go back to that—
- JJA: Because of COVID efficiency, right?
- KM: Right.
- JJA: We avoid a lot of the political discussions that sometimes derail the classroom, but in positive ways, right? We'll get a time and place for that [\*\*].
- 01:13:41 KM: Or the faculty meeting. Like just—
- JJA: Yeah.

KM: That was the last point. I want to go back to the last point eventually, but yeah.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: We don't have time for those, yeah.

01:13:49 JJA: We don't have time, and those are the places that COVID efficiency decided that we don't have bandwidth for, but those are the places where that equity work is done. So that was just my list. I was just trying to think of what are all the things, what are all of the sacrifices of these conversations that we decided to make. I don't want to say we had make; we decided to make.

KM: Yeah.

01:14:13 JJA: In the name of COVID survival, that derailed any progress related to this DEI work.

KM: And the thing that we preserved or retracted to, we chose to preserve, were preexisting, anachronistic systems, like structures, like just rubrics and grade books, like that's what we fall back on. And don't—you know, like if I were to look back and think—and I'm guilty, of course; I used my rubrics and my grade books, but if I were to transform my classroom on the spot for that situation, it might in fact try to engender more of the conversation you're talking about, like, "Hey, let's just sit here and talk about what's happening here."

01:15:01 And maybe I can try to link it into the topic of this course, but is that really even—

JJA: Right.

KM: —what we're kind of learning—you know, we do transformative work. And I do think people did so some of that, like I did do—we definitely did some talking. I mean, we could talk about some of the positives of—I had students stay after in Zoom rooms longer than I've ever had students stay after in a classroom—

JJA: That's good.

KM: —to talk because they're just—I think because they're isolated and they're having [\*\*]—

JJA: Yeah.

- 01:15:27 KM: But like, that's all invisible, right? It's like not—I don't know. It's not central.
- JJA: Right.
- KM: It isn't COVID-central [\*\*]. And so I'm all over the place, but the—
- JJA: No, you're good.
- 01:15:41 KM: So that's the classroom. But the work—one of our questions is like how to make more visible and concrete, like so that credit happens, like 10-year credit happens for the kind of soft work you're talking about, which is just conversations to do emotional heart work.
- JJA: Yeah.
- 01:15:59 KM: That so disappeared. So, like, I joined a new faculty this year, and you weren't there, right? And not only were you not there, like you were my person, like, "I can ask Janelle."
- JJA: You were my person too, Kate.
- KM: And everybody lost that.
- JJA: Yeah.
- 01:16:17 KM: Like everybody lost their people first.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: But if we look under the umbrella of DEI, and social justice, everybody learning lost the very gradual, personal, social work that is having conversations, like unplanned conversations. Sometimes problem-solving conversations about like—so when you were talking about—I was remembering a conversation with a lecturer who came to ask me because I was kind of functioning WPA, even though we didn't have one, two years ago, about a student whose primary language was Spanish, and he was struggling tons with English in the writing classroom.
- 01:17:06 And she just happened to drop in to share about that, and the fact that I said, "Do you speak Spanish?" and she said, "Yeah, I do speak a little Spanish"—and I was like, "Could this low-stakes paragraph work [\*\*] be in Spanish? Like, is that, are your SLOs, or your student learning outcomes, English language acquisition

outcomes, or are they rhetorical outcomes?” “They’re rhetorical outcomes.” “Can he do that work in the link [\*\*]?” And a light turned on, and she was like, “I can do that?” And I was like, “This is what your learning objectives are. There’s nothing about” —

JJA: Right.

01:17:41 KM: Can you help him, you know? Could you then translate that little paragraph but make the grade be on this—you know, like we problem-solved that. And it was this moment where she was like, “I didn’t even realize I could do that.”

JJA: Yeah.

KM: That kind of conversation disappeared.

01:18:00 JJA: It’s that conversation, but it’s the conversation with the people who aren’t—the tougher version of that.

KM: Well, yeah.

JJA: But the people who aren’t willing to do that.

KM: She wants to help a student. She wants to help [indiscernible].

01:18:13 JJA: Yeah. But like the people who aren’t willing to do that, right? Like, where do we have the space for the little bit of pushing and nudging that sometimes happens?

KM: Be alongside performative, like so where somebody sees a conversation like that and doesn’t have to be confronted but knows that it’s going on, and maybe that day because they had a candy bar earlier [\*\*], has a little more space for like, okay, maybe like they’re so—like all of it, yeah.

JJA: Yeah.

01:18:42 KM: Pushing, confronting, which takes trust, and, yeah, all of that already wasn’t on somebody’s tenure file, which, I mean, I’m sure somebody is doing work on that. We can probably cite folks —

JJA: Yeah.

KM: —who are working, about how to make that work, actually, like, remunerated and credited in really concrete, formal ways.



- 01:19:10 Like, you, for example, like if I were talking with a tenure committee about the work that you did, I would be like, “There isn’t way she can put on a piece of paper—like there’s not any recording of some of the most important work she does on this campus.” And anybody who is willing to just, in tiny little moments, do that work, how that can be more—
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: —built into structures, like you say, like it’s expected as part of your job to do the self-work.
- JJA: Yeah.
- 01:19:51 KM: And to help other people do the self-work. And it then it’s recognized and credited, informally [\*\*], in the structures.
- JJA: Sure. This is probably not fully related to what we’re talking about, but in my resignation letter, I sort of enumerated some of the D&I work that I’ve done on the campus that was part of that invisible labor that you’re talking about. And I just pulled up my letter. I said, “In addition to the official titles I hold, I’m proud of the service I provided to the institution in and around issues of equity/diversity/inclusion. I’ve developed programming and training related to these issues. I’ve been asked to consult on everything from student events, diversity statements from the Communications Office, equitable teaching practices, public relations memos, institutional historical research, and even food selections in the dining hall.” Right?
- KM: Yeah.
- 01:20:51 JJA: Where does that go? And I have been trying to shift into the student life sort of D&I space. And one of the challenges that I’m having is that I don’t have anything on my CV that shows that I’ve done that work.
- KM: Right.
- 01:21:13 JJA: And so people are looking at it going, “Oh, I don’t know. Just because you teach African American history or literature, that’s not enough.”
- KM: Dude.

- 01:21:22 JJA: I'm like, "Yeah, but there's all this other stuff. I can't really tell—I can't explain to you, but that exists in the work that I've done, in my experiences, in really concrete ways." So, yeah, for sure. I don't know what it looks like to make that labor physical. I know a lot of people have written about the invisible labor of Black faculty, or faculty of color in general.
- 01:21:52 But, yeah, I don't quite know, because I'm living that in this moment. So I don't really know what that looks like.
- KM: And those things you just listed, like at least they can be articulated, like you could—you probably wouldn't put "consulting," although why not, you know? Like, you can. I would even call those like "above board," like they have—if you were consulted on memos, that memo exists kind of thing. It is almost portfolio-able. But then, there is so much more under—
- 01:22:28 JJA: It's portfolio-able if my name were on it.
- KM: Right, yeah, that's true. But I mean, so there is one question, like does that—on your CV, do you make—and this is a goofy question. Do you make a line item that's at the level of position that's just like "I was the only"—
- JJA: Yeah. [laughs]
- 01:22:56 KM: "I was the only consistent, more than one year, faculty member of color for six years at this campus [\*\*]."
- JJA: Right.
- KM: "And this is what I did." Like, because I'm the kind of person I am, I would push to that. I'd be like, "Make that a line on your CV." But then there's this other piece that's like absolutely not capturable, and it's like, sorry, but like that your physical body was there, in the hallway, while a conversation was happening down the hallway. And you are a faculty member, and you could've overheard that conversation, right?
- JJA: Right.
- 01:23:33 KM: Like that is a service to the university.
- JJA: Right.

- KM: So weird to say it, but it's like that you're—it's commodifying the Black body.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: But that's the truth; it's a commodity in that space.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: That people do not—they do not articulate it. They are scared of articulating it. And when I say "they," I'm saying White people, like White faculty members are scared to say, "We need this Black body."
- 01:24:00 JJA: So here's what's interesting—I think I may have mentioned this to you last week, right? As I'm resigning from this position, I start getting emails that are all very, very kind of how—you know, "Thank you so much, and it was great getting to know you, and you've been great to work with." But I start to see this thread of conversation.
- KM: Coding.
- 01:24:21 JJA: That goes something like this: "What are students going to do without you? Our campus is losing so much. You've added something, or we've lost." There's this sense of loss from my presence that is palpable, right?
- KM: Yeah.
- 01:24:48 JJA: And yet, I don't have a way of quantifying that.
- KM: No.
- JJA: But it's there, and people are able to be able to see something about your being here adds something that we don't have and won't have once you leave.
- KM: Right.
- 01:25:05 JJA: And I told HR this when I left: that that says something about the value of diversity on your campus. And I think sometimes we treat diversity as this thing that checks off a box, instead of really quantifying what it means to have diverse people in positions of power, and what that communicates, in lots of different ways—like what does that communicate to students, what does that

communicate to other faculty, what does my voice of dissension in this space add, where I go, “Well, did we think about...”

01:25:51

If no other person is having that conversation, what that means is that you have work to do as a faculty in my absence, of replacing that voice because it's a necessary additive component to your institution. And if you don't have a singular person doing it, somebody has got to pick up the slack because you can't not just have it [\*\*].

01:26:15

KM: And it should not be a singular person.

JJA: Right.

KM: And the grid that—when you're describing those two things, it goes back to what we were talking about, this work being—it needs to be central and as basic as and assumed and important as the cafeteria because—so like the work that we're describing, and we could go on and on about—when I say “you standing in the hallway,” that could function in so many different ways, but one is just like I'm overhearing this conversation.

01:26:48

And so the person who is barely aware of their inherent systemic—or inherent biases, because of the workshop the other day, is just a little more careful and aware of the conversation they're having with a student.

JJA: Yeah.

01:27:06

KM: And then they learn, incrementally, that it could be that small. So if we made a hierarchy structural grid of how important that work is, and we named positions for it, there's one on campus. But then if we put you on our campus, in the grid of the actual hierarchy that preexists, you are one assistant professor, like you are at the bottom of the hierarchy; you are indistinguishable from everyone.

JJA: Yeah.

01:27:43

KM: The 50-some other people who just happen to be faculty. And it is invisible. So when we say “structural things,” it's like names for things [\*\*].

JJA: Yeah.

- 01:27:54 KM: It's maybe a whole new grid that's like—I don't know what it is. It's the institution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where it's, you know, who—I don't know, a representation group?
- 01:28:07 JJA: Yeah, that feels like a separate paper, Kate, like this idea that finding ways to make the labor visible by sort of naming what that labor is. Yeah.
- 01:28:26 KM: In a separate, or in like something that gets weighed in that, because it's ridiculous. And this goes back to it's ridiculous also to say that I treat my students the same, and so I'm not racist.
- JJA: Right.
- 01:28:40 KM: But your students are not the same.
- JJA: Right.
- KM: This is the primary lesson [\*\*].
- JJA: This is the grown-up version of that. [laughs]
- 01:28:49 KM: You know, you and I have the same titles, but we absolutely—we're not the same, like we do not function the same in a different social grid on campus.
- JJA: Yeah.
- 01:28:57 KM: Can you please say that that person, in that function, is so much more important than another assistant professor? How can you say that? Can you say that with—what does it look like for a structure on campus to actually manifest that? It's not just having an office be the same. It's not the same. I'm going on and on.
- 01:29:27 JJA: But, you know, you make a really good point. It's funny you were saying that, and I was like, "I wonder if I need to update my CV?" Create a section.
- KM: I think so. [laughs]
- 01:29:39 JJA: Yeah, I mean, because, I mean, it's work that I did that was time-consuming and labor-intensive, and yet not represented in my professional documents, to my detriment.
- KM: Yes. It's at least comparable to—so, of course, you know, all justice work resembles each other in some ways, but like the

composition WPA struggle, so like the fact that if somebody does WPA duties at a place that doesn't have a WPA—it's like I did faculty of color two days [\*\*] at a place that doesn't designate a difference, in a place, in a space that is not anywhere close to done transforming out of a White supremacist model.

JJA: Right, yeah.

01:30:31 KM: Like, there's not language for that yet, but it's like—

JJA: Right.

KM: —we are in a transition time now, and the work that's getting done by faculty of color on campuses is formal, like it should be formalized. And then maybe we can reach a time where people can say—a little bit of say no to it, or pass it around. Because by being able to articulate that, it makes you able to say, "I've been doing this work. Can you please also do this work?"

01:31:02 JJA: Yeah. Or to have it compensated in some way, right?

KM: Right, compensated.

JJA: It's like, this is what I was hired to do; this is what I'm doing; how do you compensate that? What does it look like?

KM: Service merit pay. Course release [\*\*].

JJA: Hazard pay.

01:31:21 KM: Like, yeah, seriously, I mean. But our students are all the same. Like, I can hear an administration being like, "Yeah, but we have to treat our students the same. That doesn't treat our students the same. We have to treat our faculty the same." On and on. That could maybe go in a further work or questions thing [\*\*]. I'm looking. Did we cover—we did not go in the same order, so now I'm wondering.

JJA: Okay.

01:31:59 KM: But we maybe had better, more integrated work about the, like, "how does a White person do this work."

JJA: I think we sort of talked about that one. What is the work White ally/accomplice faculty should be doing? We sort of talked about that in the sense that like it's everybody job to be this.

- KM: Yeah. And it should be more explicitly everyone's job. I like our cafeteria comparison, although it might get—who knows. I'm highlighting "When organizations trade off one crisis for another, what does it communicate about their true values?" We did get into that. We talked—
- JJA: Uh-huh.
- KM: Yeah, okay. We kind of did it, then. And we can always chat again—
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: —when I transcribe this or when I get the transcript of this and we feel like there are holes. And we probably will have to write a conclusion.
- JJA: Yeah. I'm in this last piece. How can the post-COVID campus be stronger?
- KM: Oh yeah.
- 01:33:08 JJA: I think it's something about, you know, the lessons that we learned in creating equity during COVID, maintaining those rather than abandoning them when we were on the other side—when we're post-COVID. And then also recognizing that—the centrality of this conversation: that it is not something that we have the luxury to set aside; that we should really be doing this work all along.
- 01:33:50 KM: And the fact that the only way to make sure that that happens is kind of like your work with CCCC, like that it needs to structurally—it needs to exist in the institution.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: Not just be in the invisible periphery [\*\*].
- 01:34:07 JJA: Yeah, that idea that it's like not optional work, and that we've got systems in place to hold people accountable for that, right? That was one of the things related to CCCC [\*\*] that we discovered early on, was that, depending on who was the chair—I mean, we could come up with anything, but anybody could come and undo it behind us.
- KM: Yeah. [indiscernible]

- 01:34:31 JJA: So how do you make it—
- KM: Leave it aside.
- JJA: Entangle it all together, so it's part of the institution, like you can't unravel it, and then how do you ensure that there's accountability for that. And what it has meant for CCCC is scrapping foundational documents and building from the ground up.
- KM: Right.
- 01:34:50 JJA: So next year—not even a year. Like, I mean, it's written; it's just got to get floated around to people. So by December, anticipate seeing an entirely new CCCC constitution. Because we had to rewrite it. Because there wasn't a way to sort of layer equity on top of what we were doing, because the inequity was so woven throughout it, you've got to start over. And that's the work that we did.
- KM: Institutions we can do [\*\*].
- 01:35:18 JJA: I stepped off of that committee, when I stepped back, but I stepped back after having been a part of the complete rewrite of that document, and in the very first article of the constitution, adding a D&I note; that that's central to the work that we do, and that it's woven throughout the entire document.
- 01:35:44 KM: Yeah. And that's like individual institutions need to do the same. It will help [\*\*].
- JJA: They need to absolutely do the same thing. They need to look at where is all the opportunity for inequitable treatment of our staff, our faculty, our students, and how can we—what do we have to do to remove that, and even if it requires us to completely reframe everything we've always done.
- KM: Yeah.
- 01:36:16 JJA: I think at a place like our previous institution, the challenge is that there's sometimes a consequence for that, and especially in this political environment.
- KM: Yep.
- JJA: People see that as sort of kowtowing to the movements.



KM: Yep.

JJA: These social equity movements. And when you can't afford or you feel like you can't afford to lose—

KM: Donors.

JJA: —a certain segment of your population, there's fear that guides that work. And I think part of—I talked earlier about the heart work; part of that heart work is overcoming that fear and not—decision-making through the fear, decision-making through the opportunity and the possibility, and thinking, “Well, we might lose this, but did we gain as a result?”

KM: Yeah.

01:37:01 JJA: And that requires visionary leadership. That requires leaders who say, “Okay, I think we have a strategy for weathering what the fallout might be. We also have a strategy for rebuilding in ways that make us so much better.”

KM: So much better.

JJA: For the future.

01:37:22 KM: That links back to the “for everybody on campus.”

JJA: Yeah.

KM: Like for any socioeconomic, geopolitical identity on campus. Yeah.

01:37:36 JJA: Yeah, I mean, and that's what intersectionality talks about, this idea that once you are able to adequately serve the people who are in the most vulnerable positions, you actually strengthen everybody because the person who was the least served, if they are attended to, everybody benefits from that because the policies are robust enough to accommodate everyone.

01:38:01  
 And right now, you know, this Band-Aid, Frankenstein versions of change are completely inadequate. And until people are brave enough to really, really examine, dismantle, disrupt, break down, and rebuild what these institutions have been, they will continue to be what they have always been, which is White supremacist institutions.

- 01:38:37                         And rebuilding, you know, there has to be a way to frame it for those who are really concerned about institutions and really concerned about tradition.
- 01:38:55     KM:                         I was just about to say “tradition.”
- JJA:                         [laughs] To help them recognize that it’s okay to create new traditions.
- KM:                         Yes, it is. And it’s also okay—it doesn’t kill anybody to say—it’s more than okay to say out loud that the institution, up until now, has been a White supremacist institution. Like, that is—
- 01:39:17     JJA:                         It’s only not okay when you recognize the White supremacists in your institution are not going to like it.
- KM:                         And then you don’t say it.
- JJA:                         And then you don’t say it.
- KM:                         Yeah. [indiscernible]
- JJA:                         But there’s a tacit acknowledgement, when you don’t say it, that you recognize you’re going to piss off the racists.
- 01:39:34     KM:                         Yes. And it’s constantly that’s the pragmatic move, like that is the pragmatic rhetorical move, which is like, you keep returning to this question, like when we say we want this, but this is what we do, what are we?
- JJA:                         Yeah.
- KM:                         And like, when we say we want this, and won’t say [\*\*].
- JJA:                         Yeah.
- [indiscernible] [laughter]
- KM:                         Exactly. And there, it’s—I mean, you’re leaving the institution. There is a place where—I hope there is a place to go. Like, the payoff for being willing to say, “Right now, this institution has problems with redefining its White supremacist past.” This is its history, and if it continues to function in the same way, it continues to be a White supremacist institution, so we are going to make change so that we are not, moving forward. And it’s going to be hard, and it’s not all going to happen at once, but

everybody here needs to be on board with that. What you're talking about is that leap over—whatever jumps off the boat because they want to be White supremacists—

JJA: We have to be okay with that.

01:40:44 KM: Just be okay with that. And not taking that money.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: And then when you think taking that money—I'm starting to be that pragmatic, but—

JJA: No, but it's true.

KM: When you think about, even from a pragmatist point of view, even from a PR point of view, what you get from letting that go, moving forward, because here I am, a Pollyanna, like the future must not be White supremacist. So if you continue to, in this time of good revolution, hang on to your White supremacist, what you are in the future is the person who did that.

JJA: Yeah.

KM: Like the institution who did that. And it just looks worse. So—

01:41:24 JJA: Well, I think even in really practical ways.

KM: Yeah.

JJA: What institutions—like what a lot of small private institutions are seeing is that they can't survive in the way that they currently operate. But it hasn't—I just don't see the dawn, how it dawns on them that, like, maybe there's a reason for that.

KM: Yeah.

01:41:49 JJA: Because the people who are enrolling in colleges and universities right now are looking for something that you are not currently offering. And the thing that you are offering, which is this—

KM: White retreat [\*\*].

JJA: —completely White-led space with policies that do not protect them, with this history, now, you know, if you think about really some of the negative publicity related to diversity issues, people

see that. And, you know, you're inviting students on these campuses who are savvy enough, I think, also as a result of last summer, who they themselves are starting to see some of these things that weren't so self-evident before.

KM: Yep.

01:42:38 JJA: That they want to be in a different kind of environment and different kinds of space. It's the reason why you see these growing enrollments at HBCUs, because students are seeking a safe space to learn and grow in.

01:42:55 And somebody asked me, again, in these conversations as I'm leaving, playing devil's advocate, so it was like certainly not a problematic conversation. But said, "Well, like how do you respond to people who say, 'Students shouldn't go to HBCU campuses because it doesn't look like the real world?'" And I said, "Well, they live in the real world every single day.

KM: Yeah.

01:43:19 JJA: When they step off that campus, every time they go to the grocery store, every time they drive a car, every time they interact with White people outside of campus, on campus, it is always the real world. But what an HBCU campus allows them to do is learn in a space where they know no one is going to question their intelligence because they happen to be Black, no one is going to discount their identity—doesn't mean it's free of problems, like the sexism on HBCU campuses is rampant, right? They have their own issues.

01:43:57 But it's the one thing, like race doesn't factor in the way that their faculty sees them, and their ability. And so much of that happens in these White supremacist educational spaces that these kids—these students don't get an opportunity to be the fullest version of themselves, or realize the fullest version of themselves, because there's always somebody discounting them because of whatever prejudices they hold. And, you know, the one piece I would argue added to this change is in going back to that idea of heart work: we have to change people, and people have to be accountable for what some of their biases are. Some of this work is individual work to figure out where are my own biases, where are the places where I may be, in not deliberate ways, think and feel a certain way about the students in my

classroom. And how do I undo that before I go back into that space and try and teach those young people?

- 01:45:09 KM: So many people aren't quite there yet. Like they're just not quite ready to say—
- JJA: Yeah. And again, if we're really about real change, what that may mean, if we're really about it, is that people who aren't ready for that might not be ready to work in this new space that you're creating.
- 01:45:29 KM: Right. And that sounds so scary, but it's so not. All you have to do is say that you do have these issues and need to learn. You don't have to be done learning.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: Like it's so weird, yeah. Or attempting [\*\*].
- JJA: Be willing and making change.
- KM: Yeah.
- 01:45:47 JJA: And, yeah, I mean, that's hard and messy, and people aren't going to like it. But it's the truth. Like, you cannot adequately serve diverse populations of students if you hold beliefs about them that prevent them from realizing the fullest versions of themselves.
- KM: Right.
- 01:46:12 JJA: If you hold those beliefs, you need to be in a space where you are not educating those students.
- KM: Right.
- JJA: Really you don't need to be in any space educating students, if I'm being quite honest, because, again, what are the lessons that you are inherently teaching White students about their own privilege and value as it relates to other people? You're passing that along too, and that is equally as damaging. Well, I don't know. That's the advanced version of this conversation. [laughter]
- 01:46:45 KM: The version in smaller print [\*\*].
- JJA: [laughs] But, yeah, it's tough, though.

- KM: That definitely—like that is the teleological endpoint when we say like the people—the folks in charge of institutions who are scared to take that little jump, where it's like, "This is what this institution is about. If you're not about this, you don't belong here." I am of the mind that it is absolutely the way that an institution must survive. So when survival is the reason—survival is a theme here, but like survival of the small institution is a concern in taking that step. Arguments need to be made better to the people in charge that know, in fact, you are making sure you won't survive if you don't do this.
- JJA: Yeah.
- KM: And I really think that's true.
- 01:47:44 JJA: Yeah, I mean, Kate, I think that's the theme of this conversation really, is this idea that we're talking about the survival of people, but we're really talking about the survival of institutions.
- KM: Yes.
- JJA: And if that survival is only possible when you put things on the backburner that need to be right up front, cooking on the front eye, if they're not there, and you're not willing to put them there, then what you've just decided is that you're going to let that burn and—
- KM: Meal is not ready in time, and your restaurant is closed.
- JJA: And your restaurant is closed. So much for opening up the cafeteria, you've just burned it down. [laughs] Don't burn down the cafeteria.
- 01:48:30 END