



Library podcast

PechaKucha Seattle: Interrupting Whiteness - Part 2

[00:00:05] Welcome to The Seattle Public Library's podcasts of author readings and library events. Library podcasts are brought to you by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation. To learn more about our programs and podcasts, visit our web site at www.spl.org. To learn how you can help the library foundation support The Seattle Public Library go to foundation.spl.org

[00:00:34] This podcast is being presented in two parts. You are listening to part 2.

[00:00:40] Our next speaker is on a list. Are terminal though she's lived in Seattle since 2011. She is the mom of her almost 3 year old son. She is a self-proclaimed beginner to the hard work of racial justice. Please welcome on Elise.

[00:00:58] I want to show up for racial justice. I asked. I asked if I could be the voice of a white person tonight who really doesn't know how to interrupt whiteness but is trying. I think there are others like me who need a reason to start. My name is Annalise Stelzer Turman elo. I grew up in a white upper middle class devoutly Christian family in Arlington Texas a large suburb between Dallas and Fort Worth. I moved to Seattle in 2011. I met my husband here. Our son was born here. He's almost 3 years old. I believe that the first and most important thing that a white person can do to dismantle white supremacy is to do the work to deconstruct it within themselves. One of the way that I'm doing this is by analyzing the images and messages that are white dominant society has told us from childhood. Here are a couple of personal examples of this. This sounds silly to say now but I didn't know that Jesus was not white until I walked into an open church in the central district that had Jesus and His disciples depicted in photographs as people from the Middle East. That blew my mind because growing up in a white christian household in the south all of the pictures of Jesus were white and all of the children sitting at his feet were white. I have an almost 3 year old son who like most children loves picture books when choosing children's books.

[00:02:18] I started noticing how white centric almost all of them were at first. Most of the images were of white children in the center with children of color it featured at all. Off to the side or in the background. Here are the messages I perceived from these images. White people should be positioned at the center should be the leaders in our society that their voices should be heard first in that we should listen to them the most. I don't want my son to unconsciously receive these messages because they are not true. I started seeking out anti bias children's literature at the Seattle Public Libraries. I am looking specifically for books that center people of color as the main character that

tells stories of people of color either historically or fictionally and are written by people of color. I live in central Seattle and work in Rainier Beach. So the two libraries that I started looking at for children's literature were the Capital Hill Library and the Rainier Beach Library. I found that there are a lot more options for children's literature featuring people of color in the Rainier Beach Library. I recently found a really great book there about a native boy and his family called Thunder boy Junior by Sherman Alexi and illustrated by Eugene Morales my son attends a cooperative preschool that is located at the MLK theme community center that has an anti bias curriculum. I was talking to the teacher about my search for books featuring people of color and she said that if you go ask the librarian they will pull out a huge stack of books that have an anti bias message.

[00:03:50] I'm going to try that next. Not just with books but with movies to our task is not to exempt ourselves from the impact of these conditioning forces but rather to continually seek to identify how these forces shape us and manifest in our specific lives and interrupt those manifestations. A quote by Dr. Robin D'Angelo who's speaking tonight in her article. No I won't stop seeing white supremacy another way that I am starting to do the hard work of deconstructing white supremacy within myself is through continuing education. Here is where this started for me. One of my first jobs in Seattle was as a food bank coordinator. I was invited to attend a cultural competency workshop facilitated by Dr. Caprice Hollins through this workshop. I basically realized that everything that I thought I knew about black people was from watching TV shows growing up. These TV shows were not produced by black people. I was exposed. I believed or probably still believe on some level these cultural stereotypes. Without knowing it or wanting as a member of the mostly white Seattle First Baptist Church choir I recently participated in a joint project singing with the choir of an African-American church located in Renton called New Beginnings Christian Fellowship foreign MLK Day service. This project required extra rehearsal time and travel but the First Baptist choir director insisted that we do it in an effort to show up for racial justice.

[00:05:18] The Mass Choir was directed by the music minister Sam Townsend Junior of new beginnings Christian Fellowship in the oral tradition of African music American spiritual music one of the songs that we sang together was the Black National Anthem Lift Every Voice and Sing a song that was unfamiliar to me and the most and most of the people in the First Baptist Choir. We made the effort to memorize the black national anthem for the MLK Day service and had the privilege of singing it in solidarity with our black brothers and sisters in the choir and in the audience. From this very powerful experience I realized how little interaction I have with people of color on a daily basis. I realized that if I want to be among people of color and want my son to grow up among people of color that I need to make a real effort to put myself in those positions because it just isn't going to happen on its own I started thinking of what else I can do to be among people of color to listen to them to learn about their experiences. I can read informative books written by people of color such as the new Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander in order to start learning about the prison industrial complex and mass incarceration of black Americans. I can go to events in workshops that are organized by people of color such as the event we are attending now.

[00:06:30] I can find nonprofit organizations that are led by people of color like the Rainier Beach Action Coalition and El Centro de la Raza and offer my time as a volunteer. I can take my son to

public parks and community centers that are in more diverse areas of Seattle such as Rainier Beach yellow and Beacon Hill. These are small small steps. It has to start somewhere and it doesn't stop here. It is on white people to break out of our comfort zones realize that things have changed and initiate our continuing education and skill building. Again from Dr. Robin D'Angelo I recognized that in my undertaking in undertaking my own journey of deconstructing white supremacy my thinking and actions must be informed by the contributions of generations of anti-racist activists and scholars who have already done this work. I recognize that I must work with intention and accountability with communities of color and that my role is a supporting role in the collective work to end racism. I am thankful that I was given the opportunity to speak tonight. Thank you. I am so grateful to Davida Ingram an organizer of this event and a person of color for showing me the article written by Dr. Robin D'Angelo. That was so informative to my presentation for graciously and patiently offering critique and for challenging me to think deeper about racial justice.

[00:07:51] Thank you on the list is the kind of mom that I want to come to the library all the time.

[00:08:09] She also reminded me that we have a very awesome reading list that's available so if you see the book display please check it out and you can if you have your library card you can check out those books and you can also take the reading list for further reference so thank you.

[00:08:22] Analyst I also wanted to mention we're about midway through our program and we're about to have our next speaker. But I also wanted to mention that we have advocates just in case you feel like you want to talk to someone so can we have Sakina and Polly wave their hands.

[00:08:39] If you find that you'd like to check in with someone we do have two advocates in the room and I want to thank them for coming out. Polly is all the way at the top. And thank you for everybody at the top is our sound. Okay. If you're at the top can you hear us OK. All right. So we will say for speakers please belt it out. So the folks at the top can hear. All right. Our next speaker is Jim Jewel. Jim is a writer performer and educator. He is English faculty at North Seattle College where he also instigates the astral productions and drama based faculty development workshops. He is an actor playwright and storyteller on stages across Seattle and the communications director for the 14 18 projects.

[00:09:26] Please welcome Jim Jewel.

[00:09:39] This was a year of me speaking less and listening more which can be a challenge when you're a teacher but especially within discussions of social justice. I wanted me more of a learner but I also pledged to be more present for discussions at white people too often have the option to skip to protest white people too often feel comfortable watching on TV. So when local leaders asked me to participate interrupting whiteness I said yes on the spot but I imagine almost every white person presenting tonight here has had to ask in some way on some level implicitly or explicitly.

[00:10:11] Why am I here. Why should my voice be heard again. Already and there's definitely some anxiety.

[00:10:20] So this is what all white people do when we feel anxious or depressed. We listen to Radiohead. Maybe that's just me. I tend to try to bring some levity to serious topics because the news is so depressing and the world is a mess and we have to laugh to keep from crying or screaming I'm here because I'm an educator at NASA college though I'm not here as an official representation of the college I'm just here as me. But my experience is shaped by where I teach. My campus is incredibly diverse in terms of age and class and race and language and country of origin. It can be a deceptive deferred diversity my international students often say they think that instructors are obsessed with racism and then I ask them how many people look different from them where they grew up and the answer is usually none. Still our campus takes diversity and equity seriously from faculty development to community gatherings to hiring practices. We encourage and create space for discussions across every type of cultural context. When I talk about what I've learned about confronting racism and I want to give credit to the people of color who contribute to that education often I can't because they're my students when I can talk about how and why teach the way I do. I went to Dr. Lawrence Thomas who taught me to bring academic rigour to political philosophy and Dr. David Hare who taught me how important language is when he said to me minority. Listen to the word. Do you want to be at. So now I try to bring that same critical focus down to individual word choice into my classrooms. I teach composition which allows me great freedom in selecting readings and I foreground and normalize the use of the work of writers of color both confronting the experiences of these diverse thinkers and the silent implication. They haven't earned that inclusion based on their academic and rhetorical merits I employ a critical pedagogy my classroom that incorporates examination of systems of power and identity into daily practice that asks every student to reflect on their understanding of themselves and their world to question everything.

[00:12:23] I believe that there is no renouncing my authority in the classroom just as a no no renouncing my whiteness and the privilege it carries. I believe that any teacher who claims to be colorblind has no right to be standing at the head of a class. And so I also believe it's not enough to confront racism in the classroom that it has to extend outside that white people sometimes have to be willing to stand up. So when a white administrator objected publicly that Michael Brown Junior was identified as an unarmed black teenager and promotions for his grieving father's campus visit are refuted him in detail publicly and met with him privately. Only had him explain that recognizing the history of racism would only privilege the other side and that racism no longer was an issue in 2016. And when he held up as evidence the African-American president of my college said how can we be a racist institution with a black president. I hope that what I could offer was that no person of color had to sit and listen to that shit. But I'm also really careful to recognize that across them they need to stand up as the need to sit down that I have to be wary of the allure of being a white savior. No one asked me to be. So I brought Buddy Christ for a little bit more levity before I get to the most difficult part because I've had to decide what kind of teacher I want to be.

[00:13:39] What am I going to believe aspiring to some platonically ideal combination of Robin Williams dead poets inspiration. Hi Mae Escalante is motivation and Joe Clark's indomitable spirit because apparently I learned how to teach from watching movies but one idea that has always stood out. I discovered through Ken Robinson's TED talk and that is a difference in the task and

achievement aspects of the verb to teach. Because if I teach but nothing is learned what have I done. Outcomes matter and every student has a right to the opportunity to learn and not all students can be reached in the same way. I have to try to craft messages not always in the ways I want to but in the ways it will be effective and there will be students like the young white man whose rough draft attempted to criticize bell hooks for hiding behind a fake name and who was dismayed and repentant when I simply explained the history of African-American family naming but there will also be the young white man who wrote to me looking around me here at Western Washington University. It's obvious minorities don't care about college and he was much harder to reach. He had to be taken along the path with baby steps to get him there at all. And I realize that that is incrementalism and a compromise and I also believe it's one that I have to make.

[00:14:56] So much of what I do is negotiating and discussing compromise dealing with the devil's in the details behind my support for students who talk down oppressive racist speech who feel no need to welcome bigoted voices into their communities against my reticence to back calls for faculty resignation in times of conflict. And so I know sometimes I disappoint the people of color in my life the best I can do is try my best to do what is right. To learn from every attempt successful or not and to apologize truly when I am wrong I know some folks like to add never again to this list but I find that wishful thinking. And no there will be no end to my earnest mistakes and that really is the work that I think white people most need to do we need to learn to risk and recognize being in the wrong being wrong and to apologize and listen and learn and know we will be wrong again. Because there is no greater lesson I have learned in my attempts to push back on racism and classism and sexism and homophobia than this to be an ally is an aspiration not a destination. It is not something you attain board for which you eternally strive you don't get work.

[00:16:15] You work to stay work and you have to accept it as work that you will never ever stop doing. And we have another round of applause for Jim the next person up is one of the most luminous voices for racial justice in the city of Seattle and also nationally

[00:16:54] Aren't we so proud that one of the most powerful voices for racial justice is a Seattle home girl. Can you please give a warm round of Welcome to e.g. Roma Luo

[00:17:24] Thanks so much. We are literally the only person who can get me out socializing amongst other individuals.

[00:17:33] I am an known antisocial grumpy pants. But the media e-mails me like hey you want to do this thing I'm like Whatever. Sure yeah I'll do it. Hi.

[00:17:42] I mean I'm old though and I am a mixed race black woman who was raised by a white mother in this very white city. I have a huge D in whiteness. And you know I was raised in the Seattle nice I was kind of steeped in the good intentions of this city.

[00:18:11] And I hate it. I love this city. I love you guys. Also I hate it. I really do. And I'm gonna talk a little bit why I write. I write about race and I'm regularly reached out to by really well-meaning white

people who want to explain to me what my work is like to them as a white person and what you know the white perspective that I'm missing. And the only part of the white perspective I'm missing is the ability to be unaware of the white perspective. And that may sound a little arrogant. But if you're a person of color who grew up especially in an area like this you understand that every decision you make you're going. What will white people think about this. You have to. You find out around kindergarten usually that you've misjudged something and there were disastrous consequences maybe at a friend's house you're no longer allowed to go to or a letter home from your teacher but you know really quickly that if you don't know what white people want what they're doing and why what's going to make them mad what's going to make them scared. What's going to make them happy you will not be able to go anywhere. Not only are you hyper aware of your blackness or your identity of color because there's a spotlight on you 24/7 especially in a city like this where there's five of you. You have to be hyper aware of whiteness as well.

[00:19:46] And what I've noticed is that nothing really threatens the Seattle identity of liberal utopia then asking white people to acknowledge what whiteness is and where it is in their lives. People tell me to stop making things about race. All of the time when you are not making things about race you're making them about whiteness all the time.

[00:20:15] Every decision that you make with use is made with whiteness.

[00:20:19] Every door that opens for you is opened by whiteness and I know this sounds like I am taking away all of your achievement and I'm not but I need you to understand that from the Constitution to our education system to our pop culture everything that we do is steeped in whiteness.

[00:20:43] And when you do not acknowledge that you make it about race because then I have to navigate what you won't see. I am tripping over the roadblocks that you don't even know that you're placing in front of me. I am drowning in white and you can't help me if you can't see it now. It's uncomfortable. It is uncomfortable to realize how much easier you may have had things it was uncomfortable to realize that a lot of the benefits that you may have came at the expense of other people.

[00:21:24] That makes you feel bad. It makes you feel guilty. And I do not have a solution for that because it should make you feel bad and it should make you feel guilty. That is not my goal. I mean sometimes it makes me smile.

[00:21:42] But I have bigger things to worry about. But. I will say this it will not kill you but if you don't see it it will kill me or it will kill my brother or it will kill my sons. You have to get used to this. We are drowning in it in the least you can do is be uncomfortable be uncomfortable a lot and if you are comfortable take that as a sign that you need to make things more uncomfortable.

[00:22:12] Do not wait until you are ready to sit down and address race to address race. Because I do not get to decide when to address race. I don't get to say I feel safe I feel comfortable I'm going to look at racism now because racism hits me in the doctor's office. It hits me when I'm driving down the

street. It hurts me when I'm taking my kids to a movie get used to being uncomfortable be the person that nobody wants to invite to dinner party it's

[00:22:47] You are going to get pushback and I think what we've seen we have seen a lot of pushback right to the change in national discussion around race and a lot of what I hear from people is see this is what happens. You push too hard you're going with these identity politics. Of course there's going to be pushback to investigate whiteness as a threat to identity to comfort to privilege to status but what is the alternative is the alternative then to back off. People are dying.

[00:23:22] You just keep pushing you keep going people push back when they are threatened.

[00:23:28] And I would love to say that this is not a threat. I would love to say that it is a win win to address whiteness but it's not some of what you have.

[00:23:38] You don't deserve but when you can see your identity clearly as it is the good and the bad when you couldn't see where your whiteness is more than just heritage more than just culture but also a system of oppression. You then have the power to do the work to redefine it to something that you can be proud of. But you can't fake it. You cannot just pick up the positive and say that that's all that there is. This will be uncomfortable and it will be painful.

[00:24:27] But if you continue to do the work you will have a sense of authenticity in yourself that you have never known you will stop having to steal all of our stuff. You will have your own stuff

[00:24:43] And that's really what I need you to do.

[00:24:45] I don't need someone standing right next to me doing what I'm doing if black people could end racism we would have ended racism we have died trying to end systemic racism. I need you to do the work in your communities and it starts with looking at the day to day things what will kill me may not be a cop. It will be my lack of access to quality medical care. It will be my lack of access to quality education.

[00:25:14] It will be the loans that I am denied It'll be all of the thousands of cuts that people of color endure every single day in white supremacy society. And that is where your life intersects with it every time you go through something. And it's easy for you to look around and you say Who is it not easy for and what can I do to dismantle that system. But in order to do that you have to be willing to look at it and see it as a part of the system of whiteness.

[00:25:44] Because that's what it is and then eventually you will not be.

[00:25:52] So hence you will not be so defensive because you will know that even if you aren't there you are actually doing concrete things to make whiteness something that helps instead of hurts and I know you can do that I've seen what white people can do when they put their minds to things. I love you Seattle and I hope that we can start looking at kindness which is honest and built with love over

niceness which prioritizes comfort over safety. We can do this but first you have to start with yourselves and then you'll find your place. Every single day you can make a measurable impact on not only the lives of people of color but your own life as well.

[00:26:46] Thank you.

[00:27:20] I have to introduce Randy Angstrom but I can't talk thank you to you. Thank you so much. Randy where are you. Hello.

[00:27:33] Thank you so much for coming today. Randy Angstrom has been a passionate advocate an organizer of cultural and community development for over 15 years. He is currently the director of the Office of Arts and culture for the city of Seattle. Since his appointment to the position in 2012 he has worked with staff to grow grant making programs and public art opportunities while establishing and investing in new programs and policies in arts education cultural space affordability and racial equity. He serves on the boards of grant makers in the arts the U.S. urban arts federation and faced. Let us please welcome Randy Angstrom. Note to self don't go right after you show

[00:28:32] Hi Randy.

[00:28:34] Ready to go and get closer to the mike. Thank you for being here. Thank you to the organizers of this event to Davida to honor to Caroline I come into any space like this. With all the privilege one can imagine and I have to name and center that first. So I realize I'm walking into a space with every imaginable privilege and I know because of this exercise that I've done a bunch of times. This isn't the exact one I did with the city but it's the one I found on the Internet the targeted agent exercise I literally the agent in every single measure of privilege from age to income to sexual orientation to skin color to gender to everything. So that's what I mean by I guess my awareness of this issue sort of came to me when I was in college at the Evergreen State College evacuated today under the threat of racial violence. I came into it with a background in sort of activism and social justice issues but I didn't really get race and then I read this book as part of my senior thesis how the Irish became white and had no idea that whiteness was a completely invented social construct that held up systemic oppression and white supremacy and I had been complicit in that system for all of my years on the earth to date and continue to be complicit in it.

[00:29:47] In conscious and unconscious ways so who did I learn from and how did I learn to try to interrupt my own whiteness. A lot of that starts for me at the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center that I had the great privilege to found in 2005 and really it was about learning from people of color who knew a hell of a lot more than I did about running and building community. One thing we did was we invited the People's Institute to come and do a two day training not just for our staff at Youngstown but for the staff of all the organizations in the building and we invited the upstairs residents because if we didn't have a shared analysis and we didn't have common language it was gonna be awfully difficult to talk about how we do this work well and together shout out to the People's Institute also minority executive director coalition RCI governing for governing our alliance for racial likely there's a lot of good trainers out there. Larry Davis is one of the most amazing human beings I've ever met and

it's from her that I thank you Larry. I learned about distributed leadership and that command and control structure is like the ones in the government that employees me now are really another system of oppression that holds up institutional systems. And so if you can distribute your leadership through organizations like feast you can actually interrupt those systems and you can put power in the hands of more people particularly those most impacted by the work you're trying to do. This is an incredible organization run by people of color and youth that is transforming southeast or southwest Seattle.

[00:31:06] I also had some great teachers in Christina or bay and Robbie ask Alan who co-founded beast and I was fortunate to be on that journey with them for a good long time I'm still on their board and I learned about it. What accountable leadership really looks like I learned about what it means to be called to accountability to be called in to be called out and to do better. Hollis Wong where and I'll bet on me here we're also folks I had the good fortune to work with and I learned both about the concept of heart space emotional intelligence and artistic leadership really all those every single one of those folks are artists and leaders and artistic leaders. But I learned about the value of this being personal because if it's not personal it's not going to stick. And this isn't an intellectual exercise. This is a life of practice Davida Russell has been the other DeVita as she sometimes goes by taught me everything I know not everything I know but an awful lot about what I know about authentic leadership and a choice between your values and showing up in your power is a false choice. You can do both. You must do both and you have to lead with your values. Another prompt we got was asking how we are asked to show up and that can look like support financial physical that can look like advocacy getting into rooms that some folks can't get into and that can look like leadership when appropriate and if done well. One of the projects that I found very inspiring recently is a terrible picture I apologize for my curation is the black and tan Hall in Helman city.

[00:32:34] And when I think about really inspiring projects that are coming up in Seattle right now PRC led community owned brilliant and vibrant. I'm going to show up with tools and I'm going to show up with a checkbook because it's important to do that work. Sometimes I have a job like running the office of arts and culture or being on the board of grant makers in the arts or being at the table for U.S. urban arts federation and it's my job to show up and challenge systemic power and try to get them to understand why dismantling systems of racism are the most important work we can do as a field. They don't always listen but that is part of the work. And this is like a huge thing for me which is that if it's not personal it won't matter. I know I said it's not an intellectual exercise I think Roger said it so beautifully about the spiritual nature of this work but this isn't a day job. And if this isn't something that matters to you all the time not just when you're on the clock. It's not anything that's ever going to change. And a tool is only as effective as your ability to use it. This is the slide for you're not as far as you think you are or we're in it. We're not there yet and I think someone said this earlier but the moment at which a white person thinks they've nailed it they have achieved weakness they are no longer racist start over because you didn't never assume that you're further along than you are and always carry your humility in front.

[00:33:48] Share your power hire people of color invest in their leadership get out of the way. A lot of these systems and structures that I've worked in my whole career are designed to privilege people who look an awful lot like me and don't be bound by the systems that we assume are the ones that

have to be there. We fail all the time I fail all the time. Admit you're wrong and not in the sorry not sorry way that we saw earlier but like in the real be sorry. Know that getting called out and getting called in is part of this work. And sometimes when it hurts. That's how you know it's working. I've been called out and called in lots of times and continue to to this day. I'm really grateful for that. At times I've said I've heard from my peers and colleagues that we don't walk our talk and that's true because we're not there yet. Also we're not an anti-racist organization and don't throw that term around because I've done that before and I was called to task. We know that the systems that we've built and inherited haven't worked. We can see all around us every day what it's led to and we can do better. I know that I can do better. I know that I will do better and I invite all of you to hold me accountable. Thank you for the time.

[00:35:08] Our next speaker is Christina Reed. Christina is a multidisciplinary artist whose conceptual work explores social political and cultural issues. Readers earned a BFA in painting from u dub school of art and grants from Seattle print arts and Pratt are fine arts center. Please welcome Christina

[00:35:32] Good evening. Thank you for being here and thank you to be there.

[00:35:36] Anna and Carolyn for organizing this program I'm a visual artist whose practice addresses whiteness and race in our culture. Tonight I will talk about my ongoing path and becoming accountable to color. Oh. Okay. I'm hearing impaired. We'll see if this works. I'm so far behind now. All right. First I profoundly thank my powerful teachers. Each taught me technical skills but more importantly shared their perspectives and work rooted in social justice and humanity. I hold them with me always striving to be accountable. Being accountable to them drives my work. And thanks to those who support me and keep me grounded my family who loves me always friends who offer feedback encouragement supporters who have provided me with opportunities guided to illuminate the questions I must ask and orcas organizations from whom I learned and the shared space I was raised with a social justice lens amidst many social justice movements. I marched in student solid solidarity with people of color. Seeing myself as a good white person doing the right thing but all the while disconnected from my privilege white supremacist history and actions prior to retirement I worked for in H.R. for city government came increasingly aware of the difference in workplace experiences based on race. White boys were not saddled by their white racial identity and supremacy whereas employees of color navigated Race and Racism Day in and day out.

[00:37:10] Valuable voices not heard. Opportunities missed connections loss worth discounted code words keeping white supremacy in place racism negatively impacted the life expectancy financial security personal self-worth of people of color. Interruption was required I needed to learn from myriad of voices about our country's history of structural racism and the impact of my participation in it. Fortunately valuable training resources were available developed through the inside and tireless work of people of color like Mary Flowers and Knox in Covington and darling. At the same time I was trying to figure out how to address race and race racism social justice in my art practice try as I did nothing coalesced. Then I discovered been making and perhaps Fine Art Center. Things began to fall into place. I found a way to talk about racism as consciously as I could racism is of course layered

and complex. I found I could address the complexities using print MC print making techniques I layered historical and cultural imagery to address how the construct of whiteness to set the stage for racial disparities and all of our practices and policies and systems initially. These portraits came from a place of perceived empathy some questions within me arose Rose was my my part the white part in the deep discord and acts of racism in our country. What's the impact of white artists doing this work with introspection and feedback.

[00:38:52] I began moving toward accountability on a deeper and deeper level. The feedback that was really given was more often where content accountability happened. My understanding of my whiteness shapes my work how it shapes my work deepen and weight this challenge it became more clear feedback helped me shift my focus to the the construct of whiteness itself and our country's historical contradiction of building maintaining a system of enslavement and exploitation of people who were non-white in the guise of promoting life liberty and happiness for all. I use layering to disrupt racial narratives that have been taught and persist today. I print imagery from the public domain depicting racist actions policies and systems and translucent it overlays wording from historical laws and documents that contradict the papers industry. These are the questions I must always be asking. Is the impact on my work meeting its intent. What is the work I need to do here and now as a white person. How do I build relationship with and be accountable to people of color. How can I move out of my comfort zone risking having my assumptions challenged. My focus is shifted towards documenting white people upholding white supremacy and away from documenting its impact on us. On people of color my aim is to highlight the contradiction between the narrative and action and raise awareness illicit conversation on how to be active.

[00:40:23] Pass disciplines in dismantling it living both obscures and highlights the contradiction between the narrative and the action and when the contract contradiction comes into focus. That's where the conversation can begin. I believe art can be a bridge between converse conversation and action. The catalyst for accountability and change my art will always be practice through a white lens to disrupt its power requires being in relationship with those who use lenses or not white requires vigilance and always asking what does white mean. What does being white mean in this situation. This encounter. What am I failing to see. What's the work I need to do here now and always. What it means to be white in America and to break the silence that surrounds it requires arduous process and soul searching work fortunately I help those from which I learned my good intentions are not enough to work is to be done. Which means becoming engaged in activities and organizations led by people of color respecting the priorities they identify strategies for change and sustaining engagement over time. Aligned with these pieces that focus on behaviors that keep racism in place words are etched on the back to back mirrors hung at eye level and as they swivel the words reflected to the back to the viewer and off of each other it's conversation eliciting conversation big thank you.

[00:42:10] Our next speaker is John Greenberg. How is the sound volume for us. In the back. Good. Okay. And for our next speakers if you could speak loudly right into the mike. That will help John Greenberg is an award winning Seattle public high school teacher and a contributing writer for everyday feminism. Please give a warm round of applause for John Greenberg.

[00:42:38] Thank you so much I am honored to be here telling me I'm obsessed with talking about racism is like telling me I'm obsessed with swimming when I'm drowning. I am honored to be here. But more than honored. Or maybe as much as honored. I'm also very very conflicted about being here tonight. I hope that every white person in this room is similarly conflicted. Let me start with the question. When you think of prominent educators on white privilege and institutional racism whose names and faces come to mind if they belong to white people then that's reason number one to be conflicted. Very few of the ideas on those topics actually come from white people. Most often we are just regurgitating what we've learned from folks of color. And so if you learn the names of the White presenters tonight but not some of those names we're all complicit in perpetuating not interrupting whiteness. Reason number two to be conflicted. Our words are not to be trusted alone.

[00:43:34] They should be taking not with grains of salt but truckloads of salt.

[00:43:39] How can you ever really know if a white person is interrupting whiteness. If white people are your sole source of intel I mean put another way if you want to know how well the police force is serving the community.

[00:43:50] Don't ask a police officer ask the people they serve especially the brown and black communities. Ask that Ferguson resident and the same is true for teachers.

[00:44:00] If you want to know how well I as a white teacher interrupt whiteness Don't ask me ask my students especially my students of color. And yes they look happy in that photo but I could have been postponing a homework assignment not interrupting whiteness in that moment.

[00:44:14] Yet despite all these conflicts about being here I'm grateful that public education is represented tonight. Let me read you an excerpt from a local story quote about 20 years ago Seattle Public Schools assigned a committee to look at why black students were more likely than others to be suspended or expelled. But nearly two decades later little has changed. End quote. This article is from 2001 the same year I began my team my career with Seattle Public Schools referencing documented disparities that are now 36 years old and the disparities have gotten worse. In 2013 the Seattle Times reported that a black middle school schooler is nearly four times as likely to be suspended as a white student. A disparity so severe that it attracted a federal investigation by the Department of Education. Black students are so poorly served that on average they test three and a half grade levels behind white students. The disparity is nearly as great for that latte next students. The dropout rate. What we might want to call the push out rate for native students is over double that of the district average folks. We are in a state of emergency and public education for the most part has been let off the hook. We as educators are part of systems that replicate egregious racial disparities. And so why aren't we treating the status quo like a state of emergency arguably the answer is the topic that brings us here tonight. Whiteness and when I say whiteness I could be mean the color of the advanced classes or the color of fundraising in segregated schools across Seattle. I could be talking about the color of educators. I could be talking about the color of the curriculum and all those contributors are matter. But tonight I want to shine a spotlight on curriculum. Perhaps you've

heard the proverb until the Lions have their own historians. The history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter conventional history is undeniably biased in favor of white Americans.

[00:46:07] The one group that has consistently benefited from centuries of discrimination. That's why slavery is too often sanitized and textbooks in classrooms. That's why we too often call the invasion of indigenous lands Manifest Destiny or westward expansion. That's why we too often call the incarceration by 120000 people of Japanese descent internment. Let's face it we teachers teach who we are and we teach what we know in over 80 percent of us are white. Consequently in a profession over 80 percent white white teachers invariably teach curricula thoroughly bleached and warped by whiteness. So how do we interrupt the prevalence of whiteness in public education again. Take what I say with a truckload of salt please. I'm going to attend this event June 15 and hear from my colleagues of color at the time I wrote the script there were far fewer Seattleites committed to this event than they were for this for this one. But since you're here and not there let me offer one solution. Ethnic Studies which emerged of the civil rights movement and are currently experiencing a resurgence according to Seattle teacher Tracy Gill ethnic studies is reversing the idea of white as the default race ethnic studies literally interrupt whiteness by centering white as a dominant perspective. I learned the hard way that in our current setup you are on your own when you dissent or whiteness in the classroom. In 2012 one white family objected to the study of race I was teaching arguing that lessons on racism were intimidating to white students. Seattle Public Schools was caught unprepared and transferred me effectively killing the curriculum at least temporarily. I did win my job back. Ethnic Studies however institutionalized such curricula. Which is why I'm back in the NWA CPS push to institute ethnic studies throughout Seattle schools led by reading Green. I'm urging. I'm urging you to do the same. Here's an image from our launch on Martin Luther King Day. All the research supports ethnic studies as a solution to these urgent racial disparities. In January 2016 Stanford published the results of a long term study that showed ethnic studies increasing attendance GPA credits earned for our most marginalized students.

[00:48:15] Unfortunately it's not folks of color who need convincing it's white Americans which is why I'm here tonight and which is why I wrote that piece arguing that it's in white people's own best interest to learn ethnic studies were the ones who disproportionately get racism wrong were the ones who disproportionately remain disengaged. The reality is that my whiteness protects me from negative race based experiences that folks of color experience all the time. So here's what I've learned.

[00:48:42] I have to actively put myself into the line of fire and you'll know you're doing it because you'll start to get some pushback.

[00:48:47] It could come in the form of white supremacist trolls or administrative transfers but that pushback is how I get negative race based experiences as a white person and if I'm not getting that negative race based experience am I really interrupting whiteness here's what you could do. You could attend this this event tell the Seattle School Board to mandate ethnic studies they are taking too long. White people have had their turn as the curricular protagonist they've had their turn for centuries. It's time for somebody else to take a turn.

[00:49:24] That's a lesson so basic that little children learn it at a playground place playset before I say goodbye I'd like to say thank you to my family for supporting this work.

[00:49:36] I hope to see you all at the school board meeting on June 21st. Thank you so much for your time

[00:49:55] This keeps getting better. Let's keep going. After Robin D'Angelo Dr. Robin D'Angelo Dr. Robin D'Angelo writes on white racial identity and white supremacy. Her work on white fragility has influenced the national dialogue on race.

[00:50:11] Let us welcome Dr. Robin D'Angelo thank you to Darlene Flynn and Deborah Terry Hayes across many years and many struggles.

[00:50:29] Mills Ponyo Silva Audrey Lord and Stacy Lee have also been very foundational. I stand on the ancestral territories of indigenous peoples and in a continual loop of colonial relations. I have benefited from the land and work of peoples of color. Racism is a white problem. Yet White people are deeply invested in racism. I am deeply invested in racism. These investments are tenacious and wily and require vigilance humility and courage to resist. How did I come to be invested. Well even before I opened my eyes the forces of white supremacy were shaping my life. What nutrition transportation and environmental safety.

[00:51:12] My mother carried me in how my mother was treated in the hospital who owned that hospital and who came in that night and mop the floors. I grew up in the shame of poverty and the silencing of sexism. But I always knew that I was white.

[00:51:29] I still held the key signifier of ideal beauty and humanity. Whiteness has enabled me to navigate classism and sexism and I am very clear that white women don't land any more lightly on people of color. My internalized sexism and class inferiority Don't make me less racist. In fact they work powerfully to have me collude with racism through my silence and my silence on racism enables me to get ahead as a woman and to realign with the dominant white culture. My class background separated me from I have been given the message that I am superior the human norm the ideal for humanity. This is not an isolated or singular message. It is relentless and I and any other white person could not and did not miss that message regardless of our other intersecting positions. It is a brilliant strategy of racism to teach us that racism can only consist of intentional acts of conscious hatred and meanness and because we are not mean and unaware of hatred. We believe we are free of racism untouched by this relentless conditioning. And yes those were five different girls

[00:52:48] And people of color may rightly ask how is that possible. How could you not know. Why do you lie. Well we've been taught to be oblivious to shut our eyes to what we know. But it is a willful aggressive refusal to know.

[00:53:05] We don't want to know or to see and we work hard at this refusal because to see would fundamentally challenge our identities as good people. It would require us to give up our narratives of racial innocence of not knowing what we're supposed to do we claim racial innocence to hide our apathy about racism and our investment in white supremacy. But we cannot admit to this. We could not align our identities as good people with this knowing and this makes us very very irrational racially. Our irrationality functions powerfully as a form of everyday white racial control. I might not be the 1 percent but I can make it so miserable for you to talk to me about my racism that you just don't white fragility is not weak. It is a form of bullying to keep people of color in their place. My current degree of consciousness came when I took a job as a diversity trainer and embarked on a parallel process one sustained challenges to my world view from a significant number of people of color and I could be a full educated adult and never have had that experience and to trying to talk to white people every single day about racism and the predictable and superficial narratives will surface when you love to do something.

[00:54:31] 60 years ago and be certified as racism free for the rest of your life. OK that would be marching in the 60s. Focus underneath and you can see the pillars of white supremacy that prop these narratives up and how they function to protect whiteness. Take race off the table and render white people exempt from further involvement. Yet working to educate other white people necessarily centers whiteness as my voice is heard more openly. Yet again it's all about us. My work with other white people is always at the expense of centering myself and deep centering peoples of color. How have I reconciled this dilemma in my work. Well I can't say I've reconciled it but I think about it as whiteness is centered in part by remaining unnamed and I hope to dissent whiteness by laying it bare exposing admitting making visible no whites do not represent humanity. We are having a very different experience from people of color.

[00:55:35] This leads me to three guiding principles one break white solidarity and yet the pull is so powerful that I will actually privilege my white comfort over black lives. So I remind myself that niceness does not interrupt racism niceness is not courageous to accountability. The number one question I ask myself here is how do I know. How do I know how well I am doing. How clearly I am thinking who I am in relationship with. What do we talk about. Am I ever called in. If not why not. That's on me. And 3 repair I may do less harm now but I still do harm. And it's on me to repair. With humility humility humility. It is not my place to anoint myself an ally. Ally ship is a continual process that I must demonstrate in each moment and is ultimately determined by peoples of color. I don't actually know how to interrupt whiteness or how not to perpetrate racism. It is a lifelong struggle so the essential question that I must keep asking is how am I doing right now and how do I know.

[00:56:55] Thank you.

[00:57:11] That was amazing. Thank you Robin. Our. Last presenter for four talk a job or not our last speaker for tonight is Selby handler Selby is a white queer Jewish writer and which I did say which

[00:57:29] I love it. They organized with Jewish Voices for Peace Coalition of anti-racist whites and work for youth speak Seattle

[00:57:41] Love it. Please give a warm round of applause for Shelby.

[00:57:57] I want to introduce myself by naming where I'm from. I was raised on Arapaho territory in Denver Colorado. This is my maternal grandmother Rita my great grandmother Frances bitter and fierce working class Catholic single mothers and my paternal grandfather Norman a smooth talking Ashkenazi Jewish womanizer and business man. I am from truth seekers mafia leg breakers hypocrites alcoholics abusers and the women they left behind. I am a daughter of settlers of landlords of gentrifiers and gentrified of immigrants who now resent immigrants of the chase and the chasers I name my lineage to fuel my body and the bodies that brought it here to reckon with how I'm interwoven in ongoing histories of colonialism slavery and capitalism to interrupt one tiny slice of the monolith of whiteness a violent institution invented as a scalpel against solidarity. Another part of my lineage is the people and organizations I am intertwined with more people of color and white folks than I can name here have challenged me with love and truth. But I wish to honor these posse led orders that I am accountable to buy in Pacific Northwest. The PRC caucus and arts corps you speak Seattle ringside revolutionary poets and I also want to name and I put their names on the slides you can find these artists of color later because I am grateful to have journeyed with them and I offer their name with permission and sacredness. Christina when Troy Ozaki Nikita all over you may recognize that name and that will become very important. Erica Tanaka Nick was song guy Donte De Queen Johnson find them. And part of honoring my lineage is also meant reconnecting to Jewish practices.

[00:59:51] It's really heavy to hold complicity especially when I fuck up in ritual centers. Me and the interconnectedness of all beings which is a major antidote to going down the shame spiral of doing it all wrong. And in Judaism one belief is that the unity of God and the universe was shattered at the moment of creation in this explosion holy sparks fell off in all directions falling into things and beings. Basically these holy sparks are in everything all people all actions even really fucked up shit and so there's this probabilistic notion of Tikkun alarm or repair of the world based on the idea that these sparks yearn to return to one another and this is a sacred task to return the world to wholeness and as white folks what does wholeness mean. I'm a part of a group of white artists who are trying to push on that question. We collaborated on a participatory ritual and storytelling event called Toward Love in public. As Diana mentioned earlier and our aim was to create a sacred space for white people to examine whiteness. This pilot felt vulnerable and authentic. It had powerful impacts and the proceeds went to migrant Justice organizers at the Northwest Detention Center resistance. Look them up and yet we were left with a lot of questions and a lot of tensions and so in an ask for accountability. We invited PRC artists trusted friends and collaborators to give us feedback. The conversation that occurred was a generative loving direct and messy call out and call forward. It was triggering for PRC artists to be asked once again to do heavy lifting on whiteness.

[01:01:35] With a project that risked in the words of DaVita and Diana already said this quote We got to say it again risking gentrifying identity politics. And while this work for white people is necessary it was clear that our attempt had not gone deep enough to be disruptive particularly in a white and often complacent and liberal Seattle crowd. We were unprepared to dig into the rich questions offered to us on accountability dignity and love. We weren't grounded enough and our own humanity to come fully

to the conversation and to honor the humanity of our comrades are asked for feedback felt extractive and painful not transformative. I panicked. My body went numb and I could barely speak. I doubted all the supposed work I was doing. What good was any of it. My mind was a page out of the time a coon white supremacy culture article perfectionism defensiveness only one right way right to comfort either or thinking fear of conflict. But in this brokenness spring brilliance and connection multiple truths were present in that room. Pain and potential. It cracked open truthful directives from people of color on the work that white folks need to do and I don't mean this as like a neat happy ending with absolution. It was a failure and an opening both not either or. And during this conversation artist and healer and youth worker Christina or Bey urged us to examine how whiteness manifests as control and rigidity the choking back of feeling and interconnection the numbness I felt in my body was that and when I avoid feeling the harm inflicted upon people of color I am protecting the domination I've been socialized into.

[01:03:20] Later on another white artist was acknowledging that for folk for white folks privilege allows us to navigate a racist world with relative safety and that it's not an emergency for our bodies. Christina interrupted whiteness in that moment and said no it is an emergency. The bodies and souls of white folks are damaged by carrying out white supremacy. She demanded us to witness the urgency of that and not be lulled into numbness. Our humanity is on the line too. While we hold systemic power this harm is not the same as oppression. But the cost to our spirits is huge. Christina called us to a radical healing a kind of death. This death allows more space for the disconnected parts of the Soul to return to our bodies she said. Could our healing really be insurrection airy and not pacifying white folks. We must die in order to become something else. Our freedom is intertwined with the liberation of black brown and indigenous people everywhere so we cannot stay numb. And we must face an unrecognizable future as accomplices or all about being post race. So what will we be once we've helped obliterate whiteness. What will we fill that void with. I try to imagine it. There is a huge glowing fire. We are strong from finding our stake in liberation putting our bodies on the line in protest giving up power and resources calling other white people in imperfectly and with love fucking up and showing up and showing up again.

[01:05:04] Imagine it with me.

[01:05:06] We tossed the last match into the pit where part of us Burns was it even really a part of us maybe. But what do our hands look like now.

[01:05:18] Now that we have seen them for the first time I look up and watch the holy sparks on fire and flying beginning to return.

[01:05:40] Hey can you guys hear me. Yeah. Cool. I love you Shelby. Thank you so much to be there for letting me come in speak tonight. I won't do a poem for you guys real quick. Is that cool. Yeah.

[01:05:53] So we have some really difficult conversations tonight and I really want to thank everybody for being in this room and like being honest and vulnerable and holding all those complicated feelings

and we're in a world that everything's really scary and messed up right now. So this poem is about how lesbians horrible this world is currently in imagining a better world.

[01:06:15] Yeah thanks for a good segue way to that show.

[01:06:20] You remember chicken little. You remember him. Yeah.

[01:06:24] You remember when he warned his whole town the sky was falling and they did not believe him. You remember a few months ago when we warned everyone this white man would do with n and they did not believe us the sky is falling. Can't you hear it. It sounds like Twitter feeds and police sirens the sky is falling. Can't you hear it. It sounds like handcuffs clinking and white men laughing Can't you hear it. Our ancestors screaming our children asking all the questions we cannot answer. The sky is falling. The country is falling which is to say this country has always been falling. We have seen the Breaking before we have seen blood splatter church walls and gun chambers. But we know how to build beauty our destruction how to make home out of hollow when the sky is falling. But we have seen this for. Let the Skyfall let us see all the stars. We will not wait for this howling wind will not be stronger than our hope. The world is ending. The sky is falling. Thank God. I am tired of this earth. I am ready to build a new one. The sky is falling. The world is ending but it will begin again. We will build a new world from the ash. But let us not forget the fire. We will build mosaics out of the shards.

[01:07:37] Let us not forget the breaking this cycle shall not continue. The world has ended so many times. We know a breaking of following a bending yes we have heard of the end. But what is the end of something if not the beginning. Let. The Skyfall let me give birth to something new something bright and beautiful. Let every bullet be sucked into space let the sky fall let the new one be beautiful. Praise all that is new in Holy praise. All that lifts. Let the new world hold us better than all the ones before. Let the sky fall. Let us prepare for the new beginning. A men

[01:08:46] Do you see why we picked Carlin to close out our night. In all honesty as a programmer here at the library I was excited when Honore came with the call to do a PIT choc a chore that asked white people to address white supremacy. But I was also worried that with the demography of our city that that appetite for white people to hear white people talk about racism would be greater than the appetite of listening to people of color. So I want to thank Carlin Newhouse. Our final of one of the finalists for the youth poet laureate and just an incredible voice and visionary for letting us close tonight with inspiration and hope and with our hearts pointed in the right direction. I also hope that you will come back to the Seattle Public Library and also to arts and cultural groups and other community organizations that are led by people of color not just to talk about racial justice but to celebrate Joy and our brilliance. Thank you so much for spending your time come back to the library because we love you. Thank you

[01:10:15] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.