

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): Welcome to the Critical Educators for Social Justice webinar, *Navigating and Thriving in the Academy as a Critical Scholar*. My name's Kari Kokka. I'm an assistant professor of math education at the University of Pittsburgh and cochair of the CESJ, and my colleague, Dr. Sosanya Jones, who is an assistant professor at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale is also here with us. She and I will be moderating and also managing the technology. As a participant, you can see the discussion. In the discussion notes, we listed the questions that we sent to you, Dr. Patel, and Dean Kinloch ahead of time, so just so that you get a sense of what we're gonna get to, so if there's a question that you wanted to chat, and it's already there, we just wanted you all to be able to see that.

So I'm going to introduce both of our speakers. We're very excited. The event sold out. We had such a high interest in this, given the two of you, and so Dean Valerie Kinloch is the new Renee and Richard Goldman Dean of the School of Education and professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Prior to her – and we're in the same room. That's why it says Valerie Kinloch on the screen, and you see my face. Prior to her appointment as dean, she was a professor of literacy studies and associate dean of diversity, inclusion, and community engagement in the College of Education and Human Ecology at Ohio State University.

Her scholarship examines the literacy and community engagement of youth and adults inside and out of school. Her 2012 book, *Harlem on our Minds*, received the outstanding book of the year award from the American Educational Research Association, and her 2014 book, *Crossing Boundaries: Teaching and Learning with Urban Youth*, was a staff pick for professional development by *Teaching Tolerance Education* magazine. And she's received a number of grants from the Spencer Foundation, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Battelle Endowment for Technology. She's currently completing two book projects on literacy, justice, race, and community engagement, so we're very excited that Dean Kinloch is here with us.

And Dr. Leigh Patel is a full professor at the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Riverside. She is a researcher, educator, and a writer. Her work addresses the narratives that facilitate societal structures. With a background in sociology, she researches and teaches about education as a site of social reproduction and as a potential site for transformation. She works extensively with societally marginalized youth and teacher activists, and prior to working in the academy, Dr. Patel was a

journalist, a teacher, and a state-level policymaker. Across all these experiences, her focus has been on the ways that education structures opportunities in society and the stories we are told about those opportunities.

Dr. Patel is the award-winning author of *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*, *Youth Held at the Border: Immigration, Education, and the Politics of Inclusion*, coauthor of *Critical Literacy: Context, Research, and Practice in the K-12 Classroom*, and coeditor of *Reconstructing the Adolescent, Sign, Symbol, and Body*. She's also a national board member of Education for Liberation, a longstanding organization dedicated to transformative education for and by youth of color. She's currently working on her next book, titled *To Study is to Struggle: Higher Education and Settler Colonialism*.

So we're really excited about Dr. Patel and Dean Kinloch because we know that the both of you do your work in community with people, and so really working collaboratively, and so we're really hoping that this webinar is going to be a conversation amongst the both of you, as well as the questions that people ask. And I'll be on my computer to kind of filter through a lot of the questions, so you can focus on what you wanna say, so I'm going to move aside for Dean Kinloch to be on the screen.

Dean Kinloch: Thank you, Kari.

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): Let's start with the first question. Please introduce yourself to the audience and share about your work. How did you come to identify as a critical scholar?

Dr. Patel: So we had a little private conversation before, and I'm gonna start with this one, even though there's no reason why Dean Kinloch couldn't start this one, but I'll get us started. I first wanna thank the people who organized this. It always takes a lot to pull something together, and it's an overwhelming response, and we're really excited about that and this conversation, so thank you for the labor that's been put in and for people who are here for the conversation. So I first came into my scholarly work looking at critical literacy, so the relation _____ power and context in literacy practices and what that means for people's life chances, opportunities, and obstacles in the world.

I don't go around calling myself a critical scholar, for lots of different reasons. I think that it's more important for me as a priority to talk about education as a transformative practice and

being deeply steeped in the history of the role of formal education in this country. And one of the reasons I don't use that word, critical, as a lead in is because that often gets conflated with people who are simply contrarian to what is happening or people who have critiques, but not necessarily a positive thesis or a solution or a change. It often brings up this false argument of, "Well, if you're critical, then you must be promoting a position of nihilism, and we must do something. We must act." So I really try to front the ideas of transformation and liberation, and when appropriate, and the context and the texture is there, to colonization, so those are some of my thoughts when I was thinking about that first question.

Dean Kinloch:

So thank you, Dr. Patel. It's first of all a pleasure to actually be on this webinar with you, because I think you are an amazing human being, and your spirit and your soul are just so warm, welcoming, and generous, so it is a pleasure to share this space with you. And I also wanna begin by thanking those who set this up and those who are actually listening and watching us right now. So that question about identifying as a critical scholar, I would say I agree with what Dr. Patel is saying, and yet I do use the word critical, and I use the word critical because I work within communities of color, and many of those communities are not seen as critical spaces, with people who are actually on the front lines, doing the work in community spaces, who are thinking about identity, respectability, politics, who are thinking about engagement, who are thinking about justice and transformation.

And so I'm sitting here, and I'm thinking that maybe it's a reclaiming of how we use that word in academic spaces, because I work with critical people, and some of those people might not be in academia. Some of these people might not be degreed, but those folks are smarter than me, I would say, and they deserve to be in this space, and how do we bring them into this space? How do we think about those folks as connections and extensions of who we are in ways that lead us to thinking with them in terms of transformation and liberation and justice? And so it's a purposeful use of the phrase, critical scholarship, and I'm not quite sure I would call myself a critical scholar as much as an informed, enlightened person who just cares about the work and cares about the people, and it's about making sure that their identities and perspectives are at the beginning of everything that I do.

Moderator (Dr. Kokka):

Let's continue along that line of thought, because there is such a pressure to publish in the academy, and so how do you navigate between really bringing voice and working with your

participants in collaboration, coupled with this tension to publish and to write articles?

Dean Kinloch:

That's a great question, so there is definitely this tension in the academy to publish and to be productive in ways that oftentimes compromise our humanity and in ways that sometimes compromise whatever type of care we should give to ourselves. And I'll be honest, the pressure is real, and I have talked with many scholars who somehow believe that once they get tenure, then they'll start doing their real work, and so I wanna just disrupt that idea of real work, and doing real work post tenure. I hope that we enter the academy because we have a commitment to human lives, we have a commitment to ideas, we have a commitment to collaborating with other people within these traditionally, historically primarily white spaces. And how do we actually navigate these spaces? By never forgetting why we enter into these spaces, and for me, it's important to also remember those folks who cannot, did not have access to this particular privileged space, and so I walk with them into the academy.

When I think about publishing, it has to be connected to the walking with them, entering into these spaces that might sometimes be – that might all the time be hostile, particularly towards certain communities. So if I take that idea and I think about publishing, for me, publishing is connected to teaching. It's connected to engagement. It's connected to the struggle to be affirmed and recognized, and in this case, in writing, and so how do we begin to have those conversations where we're building a more collaborative disposition, where one of the requirements is to publish?

But yet at the beginning of that publishing, we need to understand the purposes of being here, and it is not to publish your work, not get tenure, although those are what the standards and the norms and the expectations tell us. We have to do this work because our lives depend on it. We have to do this work for and with other people, and if we have that attitude, then we understand that ultimately, my life is not determined based on the academy, and what I do in the academy has to have a larger purpose, and so I publish as much as I teach, but it's the working with other people that has to drive that, I think.

Dr. Patel:

Yeah, I'd like to jump in here. I agree with a great deal of what Dean Kinloch has said. I wanna add in one of the things that I think is vitally important. There's a related question that I might try to loop in to this one, which is – which has to do about applying –

how do we apply our scholarship outside of the academy. And I wanna flip that question a little bit, because I think the central question is how do we understand our obligation to knowledge production, and what are the ethics that should be involved in knowledge production, and remembering and holding – being centered in the idea and the fact and the history, the irrevocable fact that knowledge comes in lots of different forms, that it is not always in print; it is often oral, it is not often behind _____, particularly for people who did not grow up in families that were well connected with the academy and universities and that social class, that way of being and doing and living?

I think we have to stay grounded in understanding that knowledge isn't something that belongs to universities. Knowledge is something that people have within them and live their lives, and there's a great deal of wisdom, as Dean Kinloch was saying, in the way that people navigate very difficult situations. As we know, it takes a lot more money to be poor than it does to be wealthy. There's a tremendous amount of knowledge that people have in how they get through day to day, but do so with joy and with happiness.

So publishing is a form of communicating knowledge, as is teaching, as is performing a certain kind of service, like putting this kind of webinar together, so what are our ethics in the knowledge production? And some of those ethics should be, I think, as scholars who are aware of power dynamics in the history of the world, it should be that with and for people, should be answering those questions of, "Why me? Why this, and why now?" And those kinds of questions can guide the shape of the knowledge that takes place.

I also wanna bring in that when we're talking about publishing, we're also talking about writing, absolutely. I think it's a really harmful tendency that gets communicated in the academy, as Dean Kinloch pointed out, like, "Well, this is what you need to do, and then post tenure, you can do what you wanna do." Well, guess what? You will have been shifted by the time – if you get tenure, you will no longer be the same person if you were doing something else that was not at the passion, at the core, and at the expertise of what you were put on this planet to do. You will have modified that.

So then what is it that you might do after you have that tenure? And what we've seen time and time again then is that lots of people end up protecting that tenure process, and instead of making the

door wider for others to come through, they maintain the kind of standards that have been traditional and resulting in the demographics, like who are full professors, and who are deans, and who are provosts? I think part of what we have to understand is that publishing has a great deal to do with writing, and writing for me is a way of thinking. I really don't know what I think about very complicated topics until I have a chance to write and write and write again.

And just one other thing about publishing is that publishing for many different audiences, I think, is an important ethic for me, as a scholar who considers herself – an intellectual who considers herself very aware of power dynamics in history, but also the way that people have always found side streets and under passages and ways to be joyful and teach literacy when they were forbidden by law to do that. It's really important for me to understand writing as a way of being and a way of thinking, and that's also one of the ways, in another topic, of staying healthy and surviving in this thing, is I refuse to concede writing to publishing for the academy. I refuse to concede learning as something that is credential producing and credential providing, and I think those are some of the stances that really help me to understand just the act of writing and then how to pursue this complicated process of publishing in the academy.

Dean Kinloch:

And Dr. Patel, I'm so happy that you responded in that way. I would also say, and I wonder if you would agree with me, that when we talk about publishing, ultimately, what we need to think about and ask ourselves is this question about publishing for what purpose and for whom, because if we're not clear what our commitments are, and the responsibilities that we have to whatever work we're doing, we will always do this work in service to certain people who have not supported, who have not encouraged, who have not uplifted our humanity historically. And so when we think about publishing, it's also who are we publishing for, and what's the purpose of our publications? Where is it gonna move us as a community of scholars engaging in this justice-oriented work, as opposed to reiterating these patriarchal, racist structures?

Dr. Patel:

Yeah, I would absolutely agree. I'm sitting down. I'm trying not to jump up and down with my excitement. I would absolutely agree [*laughter*] and put exclamation points on it, and I wanna pull out as a specific example the coauthored piece that you had in *Educational Researcher*, so here is one of the most competitive, difficult journals to get into. And that piece does not in any way reproduce patterns of blaming the poor for being poor, blaming

black people for the anti-black racism that they experience, blaming immigrants for the xenophobia that they experience. I think it's also really important for us to not sideline certain venues as, "Oh, well, we can't do any of the kind of work that we do in that venue," and that's part of what I mean.

Like, I just refuse to concede certain things to the pattern that the academy has run along. Like, this is one of the fundamental things that I think about with education. Like, formal education has played one of the most efficient roles in social reproduction, for harm for many and benefit for a select few, and yet learning is so much bigger than that. Learning and teaching is so much bigger than that. Classrooms are catalytic places, and so is writing, that act of creativity, so I think it's really important as critical scholars, when we ask questions about publishing, that we also think strategically and rigorously about what needs to be said, what support needs to be there in order to best serve the communities that have been put asunder by this process.

Dean Kinloch: And not everything needs to be said, and not everything needs to be shared. Not everything needs to be exposed, and if we could just get to that understanding that research is not about how do I advance myself, when we're engaging in research, and when we're writing and publishing and coauthoring, it is also about how do we make sure that we are protecting the histories and legacies and cultural practices that belong to us, that have been given to us, in ways where we are not demonizing and we are not actually engaging in oppressive behaviors for an audience that might not even understand the people we're working with and the communities that we're doing this work in? So there is that harm that's there, but we need to make sure that we're not feeding into that harm by what we're writing.

Dr. Patel: And I think –

[Crosstalk]

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): Yeah, so let me ask a question about that: How do you – I'm sorry.

Dr. Patel: No, go ahead, please.

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): Go ahead, Dr. Patel.

Dr. Patel: I was just gonna say –

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): So I guess I just wanted to ask a related question.

Dr. Patel: Go ahead and ask the question.

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): So as kind of a related question, when we start to feel those pressures of fitting into the expectations of the academy, what suggestions do you have for maintaining your own core values when you kind of have these pressures of the academy? So you both spoke about who are we publishing for, what's the purpose, what's at the core of what I really wanna say and communicate, and how do you maintain – I mean, it's almost like maintaining your integrity, right, when you're in kind of these like toxic academic spaces.

Dr. Patel: Yeah. I think this is actually what I was going to speak on for a little bit, so I'll say a few things and try to control my excitement in my time. I'm getting all excited about the conversation. It's such a pleasure, the conversation and to be in the conversation with Dean Kinloch and all of you, so I think that one of the things that has been vital for me is I keep close mentor texts, and I keep close the kinds of intellectuals – and I'm using that word other than scholar, and I can specify why a little bit later if somebody would like me to, but I read closely the kind of work that intellectuals like Sylvia Winter and Robin Kelly and Cedric Robinson have done. And I think those to me are mentor pathways, mentor texts, mentor ways of being an intellectual that have a great deal of rigor, a depth to the work and have a great deal of purpose.

I'm not sure I was thinking about this list of questions, and I thought, "Gee, I wonder if W. E. B. DuBois would've understood himself as a critical scholar, or how he would've identified himself." I think that part of what we have to understand with these pressures to publish is that we have to approach it from many different perspectives. One is where are the mentor texts and the mentor intellectuals who are doing the work in rigorous ways that have impact in the communities that have been most marginalized, and asking exactly that question, like, "How have you done this? How have you gone about formulating research questions that have integrity to place and to history and to people?" I think that those of us who maybe have had a few more years doing it have that obligation that is a form of leadership, of showing like here's how this one happened. Here's how this one happened. I think that's one of the ways.

Another way, as someone who has taught doctoral students for a very long time, is we have to grow the culture differently, so when

I'm sitting in meetings now as a full professor, and we're reviewing people's folders for promotion and tenure, I make it a point to say like, "Yes, this person has oodles and oodles and oodles of publications, but is that what our sole measure is of success?" Like, how do we try to shift the culture, both in terms of critique and how we respond to each other's writing, how we are invested in each other's success for the purpose of our community? And then once we clear certain hurdles in the academy and we get to be in those hierarchical spaces, one above that we just used to be in, then how do we articulate those values in those spaces? And I think that's another, for me, that's another articulation of refusing to concede that getting tenure means that we always have to apply basically a neoliberal value of more is better. No, more is not always better.

Dean Kinloch: [Laughter] You better talk it. I'm about to jump up and down. Okay, let me remain calm. I'm sorry for interrupting, Dr. Patel. Go ahead.

Dr. Patel: Some of the –

[Crosstalk] [Laughter]

Dr. Patel: And I love getting to an age where I can say like, "You younger folks," 'cause I can't wait till I'm 80 and I really don't care anymore what anybody says about what I say, 'cause then it's all on, but I see it as one of my obligations. Like, I want some of the amazing younger scholars who are in this conversation – I want you in this game for 20, 30, 40, however many years is healthy for you, and I want you to be healthy. So I see part of my role when I'm in those rooms, and we're talking about promotion and tenure, as not just the very common phrase of how do we protect junior scholars' time? We usually use that in a way – how do we protect their time so that they can publish seven refereed articles in one year? How do we create parameters for this person to flourish to do good work for the long game, not for the short game in the yearly, annual evaluation with the number of texts there?

Dean Kinloch: Yes, and I am not going to jump up and down, but you know I want to jump up and down and yell and scream and do some shouting, because everything that you just said, sister, Dr. Patel, is actually true. And to get to this, so when I'm thinking about this question that Carrie asked in terms of how do I maintain my core values in the face of pressures in the academy, I have to start with this is not that serious. Like, the academy is not my life. I start by going home, and I bring home with me in everything that I do. It is

my foundation. It is who I am. It is the ways in which I have learned, because I have lived poverty. I have lived and learned about working-class conditions.

I go home to South Carolina. I still see it. It is still a part of my reality, and it's like so why was I chosen to actually enter into this academic space, when my two older brothers or my many, many different cousins and family members are in many ways struggling? And when I talk about struggle, I'm talking about the struggle that is real. I am talking about people who might not have access into these academic spaces and institutions. I am talking about how we need to really reflect on who we are and how our being and our sense of self and whatever we seek to become has to be grounded in some type of foundation, and for me, that foundation is home.

And so when I am dealing with pressures of being in this academic space, when I am dealing with what it means to be the first black woman dean here at the University of Pittsburgh, which is crazy, I return home, and I say to myself, "I will commit to doing this work because there are so many people whose lives depend on all of us working collectively to do this work." This is serious, but what's happening in our world, with our families and our friends and our community members and our young people and our children, that is the thing that keeps me going. That is the thing that helps me maintain my sanity, because that is what is critically important.

And the reality is we know institutions, higher education included, are racist spaces and places. We should understand that the foundation for these institutions, the foundation built on our histories, and these histories are not affirmed in these spaces, and so when we think about the labor, when we think about the reality of who it is that we are and who our people are and the work and the struggle and the sacrifice, we need to make sure that we're taking care of ourselves, because by extension, we have to also make sure that we are in community and taking care of ourselves in community with other critically conscious people. And I know I started my introduction by saying that I don't really consider myself a critical scholar, although I do critical scholarship, and I'm gonna backtrack.

I'm gonna backtrack, and I'm going to say the awareness of racism, particularly in the United States, the reality of racism, particularly in higher education, means that I am a critical scholar engaging in critical work with other people. And we have to be in community to engage in justice- and equity-oriented work, so we also have to

make sure that we have a commitment to taking care of ourselves, taking care of our communities, but also allowing our communities to affirm who we are in our humanity, because I cannot get that from academic institutions. I cannot. I don't seek it from these spaces, but what I seek to do is to engage in some revolutionary, transformative change in order to make space for other people who look like me, for example, to enter into these spaces, and not just to have a seat at the table, but to run the table, and that's my commitment, and that's how I don't let the pressure become a burden.

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): I feel like that's actually a good segue into questions six and seven. You spoke to it a little bit, but I wanted to ask again, just to see if both of you or either of you had anything that you wanted to add around self-care, critical collective self-care processes that you might –

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Patel:

Well, I will echo something that Dean Kinloch was saying. Immediately for me, in terms of how do we take care of ourselves and how can critical scholars support each other, I wanna address these two as two separate questions. For me, I do touch home as frequently as possible, and sometimes that means actually home land, and in many different talks, when I'm addressing the question of where you are from, when I'm addressing insiderness and outsiderness and immigration and belongingness and deservingness, actually, I draw on Taiye Selasi's work and how she reframes that question of, "Don't ask me where I'm from, but ask me where I'm local."

So where I'm local, for me, is by the side of my mother. That is where I've always been local, and how I stay grounded and taking care of myself is with my family and my sister friends. That is A to Z how I take care of myself, is I touch base. That reminds me who I am. That helps me also not to let white supremacy get in my head, because it tries to do that. The history of these institutions being racist, as Dean Kinloch was saying, and that is just historical fact, also means that it will have an extractive relationship to people of color, especially women of color. So one of the ways that it does that is through its labor practices that are exploitive, but also in the ways that it communicates a less than, a not as human, not as intelligent, not as good.

And I think one of the things that we have to do, that is coupled with knowing why we're writing and why we're publishing and

how we're working with other people and for other people, is being grounded in where we come from and who we are doing the work for. And that helps immensely to not letting that white male supremacy get in your head, because we've all been in the places where it's knocked us off our center, and then the more we – for me, the more I touch ground, the more I touch local, the more I touch where I'm from, the less that that can get in my head, because I know what I'm doing. I know where I'm grounded, and I just wanna speak a little bit to number seven. Yeah, I'm gonna also backtrack on number one, Dean Kinloch. I'm just gonna follow what you said.

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Patel:

– ask critical questions. My questions always have to do with what is the power dynamic that's going on here and has been going on here? Education has played an unseemly role in the power dynamics and, as I was saying before, in the inequities that run throughout this country along many different vectors. So one of the ways that critical scholars can support each other is being those rigorous readers of each other's work and being invested in the success of each other's work, but really reading with rigor. One of the best gifts that we can ever get is somebody reading our work and saying, "You lost me here," or, "I think that you're preaching to your choir in such a way that you may be missing an opportunity to really educate somebody who's never heard of this concept before, who has never thought about it before." That's all dependent upon purpose and place.

But I think that actually, how we started in the conversation about how do we reclaim critical, and if we're gonna use the word critical, how do we educate what critical actually means, those are some of our obligations to each other as critical intellectuals. How do we do intellectual work with each other? And it's possible to grow that. It's very possible to grow that. It's very possible for us to learn that the goal is not to show up to faculty meetings and sound like the smartest person in the room. The goal is how do we give each other feedback that develops that piece of work so it can be its fullest positive impact for communities that have been disenfranchised from academic work and from the world?

Dean Kinloch:

Yes, yes, and yes, so I'll start with where you just ended in terms of the seventh question, critical ways – or what are some ways critical scholars can support each other? And everything that you just said – being able to be in spaces where we are supporting each other, we're reading other people's works, we're giving some honest

feedback. I would also add that I think – I know; I don't think – it is very important for us to open up opportunities and spaces for other people to walk in the room, for other people to have publishing opportunities, for other people to be able to walk in their purpose. And if we are providing opportunities for other scholars to engage in this work, we also do not have to take credit for actually making those opportunities available.

So I will support and encourage and push. I will even open the door. I will even pull the chair from underneath the table, and I will walk out knowing that this person, this other person of color, this critical scholar has an opportunity to be present in conversations, to be a part of decision-making opportunities, to be able to publish in a journal that he or she or they might not even have considered. I wanna be able to make sure that there is a commitment, and that commitment does not have to have the name Valerie Kinloch on it at all. It needs to be how can I support you, because if I'm supporting you, and if you're engaging in this work, then I know that's the work that has to get done, and I know that we're going to do this work as a collective. And I just think that we need to really think about what it means for us to support each other in ways where we don't have to take the credit for that type of support, but we are providing opportunities and providing spaces.

When it goes to this other question about taking care of self, how much time do you have? *[Laughter]* Let me just say, all right, listen, we need to do a better job of taking care of self just across the board, and we have to breathe. Like, if nothing else, we need to consciously breathe. We need to be able to take a moment – I don't care what is going on – and just be present and breathe and just say, "You know what? Even if this is hard, there is something on the other side of this." Or, as I was reminded earlier today, being in a place and a space can be challenging, but also remembering the spaces and places out there that affirm who I am, and just being able to remember, "This is where I live. This is where my home is. These are the people who really know me somewhere else," and being able to just breathe and stretch and reflect and then get back up and say, "What is it that I need to do to make sure that I am still committed to this work?"

And the work is also about building coalitions that are sustainable. The work is also about making sure that if we are writing and we are publishing, teaching, and doing all this service work, that we are also doing the work of caring for ourselves and our humanity, because I don't believe, I don't trust that anyone else is going to do

it for us. So how do we build that type of coalition, where we are committed to taking care of ourselves and then also doing this important work of justice that we need to do?

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): Yeah, thank you. I wanna turn to some of the questions in the chat, and one of the questions – and they actually relate to question number five also, how do you address opposition in your work, but we know in academia, there can be different degrees of opposition, and _____ in my field, in math education, and I think Rochelle Gutierrez is on the call with us. So how – what are some ways to kind of manage opposition, and what are some ways that we can be in coalition with each other –

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Patel: I'll jump in here first if that's all right. I think that opposition, first of all, we need to understand that that happens in a lot of different ways, and this is – it's so important for us to be – I'm so glad that we're – like collective and coalition have been voiced several times here, because it's in collaboration and in collective and in coalition with each other that we develop precision about how it sounds, how it gets vocalized in certain ways, that opposition, because one of the things that the academy does as a cultural practice is put forward opposition, but put it – express it through standardized academic language that also uses a lot of terms and a lot of metrics that run deep in the academy.

And so even a slight, superficial understanding of the history of how the academy has built its hierarchy is gonna also bring about that knowledge of how it vocalizes opposition, how it vocalizes not having achieved the metric, not having achieved the standard. So some of what we have to do is build our precision at recognizing that vocabulary, recognizing when that is what is being said, so that then we are better equipped to respond to it out of a place of being grounded in the knowledge and the rigor and the work that we're doing.

I think that some of the things that we have to also really think hard about is, I mean, opposition in this particular political moment. I'll speak for myself, but I would guess this is an experience shared by many people on the call. I know that when I would stand up in front of a classroom at a college that was predominantly historically white, I know that many different things were happening for many different students in that room all at once. Just the fact that I stood up in front of the class and led the

class did this to what the world order had been for many of the students in that classroom.

For some of the white students, that was an affronting experience for them, and for many students of color, that was a different kind of experience that also did this for them, like, "I've never experienced this before. I've never had a woman of color lead a class with authority and confidence and lead us through the curriculum," and so opposition comes in many different forms. We are living in one of the spiked times of white backlash to a person of color being in a position of power, so we also have to understand that that opposition is to be expected, not that we can't meet it and deal with it, but we can't – I think we can no longer rest in the naivete that there isn't going to be opposition, particularly when people of color are speaking out loud and with authority and precision about power and history.

Dean Kinloch:

_____ yes, Dr. Patel, all over that. I also wanna add in, first of all, I love how you focus on vocalizing. That's important, and yes to all of that, and then also, your phrase "precision in opposition," that just encapsulates everything, I think, that we've been talking about here. And so when we think about that question in terms of people who oppose our work or people who stand in opposition to our work, hence it's not just that they're standing in opposition to our work; it's also that they're standing in opposition to who we are and to what we believe and what grounds us, so it's the connection with the opposition to the work that oftentimes gets masked as it's just about the work, but it's really opposition to the person, the being who we are, what we believe, who we represent.

And because for whatever reason, some folks wanna take power away because they're assuming that we have the power to disrupt their ways of being, when their ways of being are in opposition to what we might write or what we might say or stand for. And I just think that if I go back to that phrase that I used earlier, I want us to run the table, not just be sitting at the table, I connect that to how do we get to that place of running the table? And I'm not talking about just leadership development. I'm not only talking about mentoring. I am talking about what are some of those tangible things that we need to do in order to run the table and make sure that other people who are critical are running the table?

And I would say, number one, we have got to do a better job of supporting each other, and that means if we call ourselves critical scholars and we are not citing any scholars of color and we're not referencing communities of color, I don't think we're critical

scholars. Are we citing other scholars of color? Are we reading about their works? Are we publicizing their ideas as connected to our ideas and our larger traditions and histories? And if we are not, then I have to question if we're also working in opposition to our critical scholars and the commitments that we say we have, so that's number one, I think.

We need to really make sure that what we write, what we teach, who we actually hold up are people who are engaging in this work, and you cannot tell me that those folks are not scholars of color, so why are we not building with them and their work? And I would say that actually helps us to create a different type of opposition. That helps us to create a coalition, and if we're creating that type of coalition, then we get to this point of precision in opposition, vocalizing the ideas, the ideologies, our _____. We get to that place where we are already responding to these assaults that are directed toward critical scholars and scholars of color, the assaults directed toward us because we are engaging in equity- and justice-oriented work, and we are not reiterating deficit perspectives.

So this is huge. It's huge. If we are committed to this work, we are always in opposition because other people are – other people situate us as such because of who I am, because of my birthright, because I am a woman of color. People will already see me and position me as opposing who they are, and you know what? We got too much work to do, and the work that we have to do, we need to maintain our focus. We need to really emphasize the coalition building. We need to vocalize, as Leigh Patel has said. We need to make sure that the work we are producing honors the people, the community, but also pushes the academy –

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Patel:

I mean, like this is really what we're talking about, I mean, the opposition, the coalition. I mean, some of what I was thinking when I was just listening and soaking in and being lifted, like the question of how do you take care of yourself, this is a part of how I take care of myself, is being in conversations that push me to think harder, articulate better, make sure I have the receipts to back up what I'm saying, because that strengthens me to go into other spaces and do that work. We're in a moment where scholars of color not only absolutely have to be following the trains of thought that have always understood that learning is bigger than formal places of education, that have always understood that social movements have always involved some aspect of political education internally and then public education externally. Like, we

have to be deep in understanding those histories, and those are scholars of color who have documented that, who have made that available to us, so we absolutely have to be doing that.

I was recently speaking with Ruby Sales, interviewing her for this project about study and struggle. We are also coming into the time where there is going to be a different kind of possible reckoning with the fragility and the attenuation of humanity, to quote Dr. Joyce King, that happens through domination, because guess what? That is going to come from critical scholars of color who articulate, "This is the attenuation of humanity that occurs through domination of others," and that's part of what our work is as well. It's taking care of ourselves. It's shifting the power dynamics by also naming out, "It looks like you got a gig by being at the top of the social world order. This is what it's doing to the planet. This is what it's doing to you. This is what it's doing to us." We are the people who can articulate that with those precisions, those distinct, yeah, connected places of dispossession.

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Patel: – who have done the work.

Dean Kinloch: And not just citing scholars of color, right; people of color, citing folks in our community, citing our community history, citing our mamas and fathers and cousins, and citing folks, people of color because we've always been doing this work, and we have not been given credit for doing this work. And so when we think expansively about building with and moving toward this critical, transformative, emancipatory space, it has to be with all of us, and some of our people aren't in the academy, and we need to make sure that we bring their histories in.

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): I feel like what both of you were talking about leads into questions eight and nine, about survival strategies for women of color in the academy, and what suggestions do you have for allies who wanna support faculty of color and women faculty? I'm curious if you have thoughts around those two.

Dean Kinloch: Well, I'll start with number nine, because this probably isn't politically correct to say, so I'm trying to find a way to say it *[laughter]*, so this ninth question is about suggestions for allies who wanna support faculty of color, so I'm going to just simply say don't presume to know. Like, do not assume to know because you've read some books and because you have a friend who's a person of color, okay? I don't know how else to say that without

going somewhere else. We need to make sure that if we are committed to this work and we're allies, that we are committed to listening to folks and their experiences without trying to change their experiences.

bell hooks has this passage in one of her books, and she talks about colonization, and I use this passage often. She talks about going into communities as researchers or as allies and listening to the stories of people of color and then eventually taking those stories as researcher and ally and then writing about those stories as if those stories belong to you, researcher or ally, and just avoiding the voices, the perspectives, the histories that have been shared by people of color who've been doing this work. And so some folks might have a tendency to reshape and remake and refigure, and then the story becomes their story, as opposed to the people's stories, the people who have shared the stories with this ally or this researcher, and that's dangerous. That's colonization. That is taking something that does not belong to you and appropriating and reappropriating it for a purpose that benefits you.

And so when we talk about supporting and working with, it's the with, and not for or on people that I really wanna stress here, because you will not know other people's histories and experiences without getting to know who they are. You've gotta get to know the person. You've gotta critically listen and care, and if you can't, then I mean, then leave, and don't call yourself an ally. I mean, you know, Dr. Patel. I mean, I'm trying to be clean here about what I'm trying to say.

Dr. Patel: It's all right. I just –

Dean Kinloch: You wanna jump on in?

Dr. Patel: Yes, and I think that my advice to people who might see themselves as allies is know what your purpose is, and know why you are engaging in what you think will support faculty of color. Get real clear on what your purpose is. Get real clear on materially what needs to shift for that faculty of color to be able to have a different experience than the hundreds of years of experience that people of color have had, whether we're talking about the academy, whether we're talking about labor, employment, health care. We're talking about population-level proximity to suffering and death, to quote Ruthie Wilson Gilmore.

So if you imagine yourself to be an ally, what are you doing about that to alter that reality? And get real clear about the accolades that

you may want out of that allyship, and be real careful about performativity, because I think allies are not performative. They do the work, and they do the work for the purpose of doing it, and they're clear about not wanting any credit for it. I think that – and this is one of just the cultural aspects of the academy, is awards and recognition, and, "You did this, and you mentored this person." That's not what being an ally is.

An ally is being real clear on, "What I want to do is actually turn this ship around from how it has been barging through people for hundreds of years," and I use the word ship purposefully, so I need to be real clear about that, and allies need to be clear that they are also going to have to remake how they are in the world. They'll have to reshape who they are and what is important to them. Moving back into what Dean Kinloch was saying, like you have to get to know people out of a purpose that serves them, not serves you, so, "I wanna get to know you because I wanna be an ally," mm-mm, no. "I want to be _____ to you so that I can maybe somewhere down the road act in a better way that has a positive impact on your life condition."

Dean Kinloch: Dr. Patel and others who are listening, I grapple with the word ally anyway, and I just never figured out a different way of saying what I really mean when I talk about an ally. I don't know. I'm just putting that out there. I'm not quite sure what I would say or who I would call people who are allies, because allies just don't do justice to what I think we need to be talking about, and so I'm going to continue to grapple with that one.

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): There were some suggestions in the chat too, using the language of accomplice instead of ally, and I just wanted to do a time check. We have a few minutes left, and I wanted to give both of you a final word, so are there any final words that you'd like to share with us?

Dr. Patel: That's a big opening.

Dean Kinloch: Dr. Patel?

Dr. Patel: I think we've covered a lot of really wonderful topics here. I wanna say something that I would often say to my critical race theory and intersectionality classes, and really anytime that I'm asked to speak about colonization and decolonization. I want us to be very grounded in understanding that learning and knowledge is much bigger than the academy, and grounded in historical fact that settler colonialism has been trying for hundreds of years to erase

indigenous people, and it has failed, that racist capitalism has been trying for hundreds of years to collapse blackness into _____, and it has failed. It has been trying for hundreds of years to collapse brown people into _____ labor, and it has failed. It has done lots of damage to these populations, but it has failed in its project, and we need to understand these fugitive practices that have always been alongside power dynamics, and I think we need to be grounded in those.

On a smaller note, just I see some of the comments, and Rochelle, I really appreciate the comment about moving from ally to accomplice, and I think some of the ways I also really struggle with that is those are names for people, and I think we have to think about process and action more than who is who in this, that there are different processes and systems working. So how do we engage in processes that create those fugitive acts and spaces for learning and knowledge building with each other and as a collective? That was a challenge.

Dean Kinloch: That's great, Dr. Patel, so –

[Crosstalk]

Dean Kinloch: No, you know what? Because we're gonna continue this conversation, and I enjoy being in conversation with you, and because I enjoy being in conversation with you, I'm gonna offer a few words before we end that come from something that Eve Tuck wrote, the foreword to your book, *Decolonizing Research*, and she writes, "In decolonizing educational research, Leigh Patel provides a praxis of pausing and even a way to listen for the bulk as a sound of learning. She calls for educational research to be answerable to indigenous people, answerable to colonize people on indigenous land, and answerable to black people on indigenous land."

"Many authors try to write a timeless tome, something to sit on the shelf for many generations. Other authors try to write the definitive volume on a subject, so that the book may be closed on a topic. Both impulses come from a closed logic of universality and finality. Instead, Leigh Patel writes into the most timely and vexing contradictions of educational research. Her optimism throbs at so many pulse points, optimism for the conversation to shift meaningfully for proliferation of works on decolonizing educational research. For these reasons, Patel has done something quite generous and generative for educational research. She has offered it an opportunity to reframe and redirect itself. She has offered it a lifeline."

And I wanna end my part of this conversation with those words because when I think about what we talked about today, I think about what you write about when you talk about answerability, being responsible, being responsive, thinking about colonization by pushing us to think about decolonization particularly when it comes to indigenous people, indigenous _____, black people, and so I guess what I would say is that the work isn't over. The work has a long history. The work must continue, and in all honesty, I'm just glad that I get to share this space with you, Dr. Patel, and all of those other people who are here listening, because you give us a model for how we need to engage in this work with purpose and how we need to vocalize the work and make it public as we build with each other. And so I'm just going to end there, because it takes –

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Patel: You are the model. To quote you, "Who's gonna do this work? I'm gonna do this work." You have stepped into roles that have not been afforded to black women before, and you have stepped into them because, "Who else is gonna do the work? I'm gonna do the work." Like, how do we survive? This is how we do it. I am so humbled to be in this conversation with you. You humble me, and you give me spirit and energy to do the work. Thank you so much.

Dean Kinloch: Thank you.

Moderator (Dr. Kokka): If everyone could just like virtually join me, we're doing a virtual clap and a hug and a _____, everything we can for you. You'll see everyone has _____, and we do look forward to connecting with both – with CESJ's business meeting, the social, the grad student forum, the early career scholars forum. We don't yet have a pre-session for senior scholars. That's something I was just thinking about, but we thank you so much. We feel so inspired, and we look forward to –

[Crosstalk]

Dean Kinloch: Well, thank you all.

Dr. Patel: Thank you, Dean Kinloch. You always knock me out of the park. Thank you.

Dean Kinloch: Love it. Thank you, Dr. –

[End of Audio]