

**Rigoberto Lara Guzmán:**

Good. All right. So I'm going to mute myself, stop my video and I'll just be in the backseat as ya'll take me for a ride. All right. See you in 45 minutes.

**Meredith Clark:**

Hey Shaka! It's good to see you.

**Shaka McGlotten:**

Likewise, likewise. So wait, what were you saying about, we're not color-coded you were like...

**MC:**

Yeah we didn't talk about outfits. We didn't talk about like, man, you know, if you're going to do something like this, you gotta go all out. So the next time that we do this, we, we need outfits. We need coordinating looks.

**SM:**

Yeah. That lip. That lip is very –

**MC:**

I'm trying. (Chuckles)

**SM:**

Court side. That's a court side lip.

**SM:**

I mean, I think one thing we were talking about is thinking about this whole year and the fact that you and I had been in touch before Data & Society, and then oddly put together a year later or so in it, but we never got to be together. And, you know, I had been lurking around D&S for a year or two before the fellowship. And so I had gotten to meet Rigo in person and had gotten to hang out with people at the, you know, at these, these lunches and have someone important spill wine on my shoe and apologize a lot. And I had those experiences. But I'm curious for you I mean, during COVID, since such a wild, such a crazy complicated time, like, what has it been like for you as a D&S fellow during this period?

**MC:**

It's funny that Data & Society was both the space that I felt furthest removed from in terms of physicality, because, you know, we were supposed to be in New York and you're supposed to be in this office and all of these things that we were supposed to have happened. And then for COVID to have completely changed the way that we do work in the way that community we think about community in the way it's assembled, especially in an environment like this one. It's weird that that happened, but this is also the place where I felt most connected to people because I was able to be honest and very truthful about how I was weathering the pandemic, how my family was weathering the pandemic and to show up in ways at Data & Society, even when I didn't show up.

**MC:**

Right. Even when I was not there. Even when you saw my picture, instead of seeing me on video to show up in ways that I couldn't anywhere else. And so the, the experience overall I would say was really

affirming in that sense. And it's not that, you know, I walked through the doors, so to speak and that's immediately the vibe that I got, but in the conversations, in the intentionality of the language that people used in the way that people presented themselves, it became very clear that folks were really authentic about who they were and what they were doing here and what they wanted to be doing here. And that helped me to be more authentic about myself and how I was showing up and saying, I'm not okay and things are not okay. And I, I need y'all to understand.

**SM:**

I mean, having been, having had some sort of relationship with D&S for a few years now, you know, and I, and D&S is constantly engaging in these processes of self-reflection and in really engaging issues of, of difference. And I hate to even use the word diversity, but diversity in ways that I think other institutions could benefit from. Of course they're always still doing that work, but, you know, so there are always going to be issues. And yeah, I felt that there was part of my own ability to land a D&S from the very beginning, had to do with, there was a certain kind of critical mass of people of color at D&S as an institution. And, you know, I, I can't speak for staff or for full-time employees or other, other other folks, but for, for me, that was why I applied. And like you, I was able to really find a sense of, of belonging.

Like I felt I was able to still feel connected to people and to my, my research areas. And I think especially the Data & Society, AI now reading group and also the raw materials seminar where research and writing, those were really helpful and generative and generous. And so I, I hear you when you talk about that. And I knew that I could always just say to someone, I am not feeling it. I am having an issue, please help me or leave me or leave me alone and, or leave me alone. And I felt like that could really be honored. And I think that, I think that's something that, that does say something about D&S as an institution that is willing to interrogate itself and to take seriously the work that the people who come through D&S do, right. Who can show you, for example, the the ways like, you know, who can sort of challenge the idea that telecommuting would somehow be would something from the organization or institution, as opposed to putting people's material wellbeing first and saying, it's not good for us to be in the office. We're not going to be in the office, you know, if you need more time take it. So, yeah, I mean, all of that said, I feel that I personally, I feel that I created very little work, like original work, you know, certainly my, I did maybe half or a quarter of what I had hoped to do during my fellowship period. You can, you can excise that from the transcript if necessary. I did 175

**MC:**

We're not using, we're not using those metrics.

**SM:**

Yeah. But there was the sense too of I was able to get feedback, but definitely during COVID, and I know this was true for you is that I just felt like I was moving through molasses. Sometimes it was like, mean molasses too. Cause it wasn't just slowing me down. It was really okay. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

**MC:**

Well, I mean, so, you know, to your point, about how much you got done, one of the things that I really want to credit the Data & Society staff on in particular is developing this language for understanding and valuing the work that we each do that contributes to the organization that contributes to our respective disciplines. And that contributes to the world, like the fact that we were able to step into this organization and be a part of it and be able to say, you know, here's when it's not working for me, here's when I need some help. That is all a result of years of labor and difficult conversations that staff

members in particular as well as some of the fellows, some faculty fellows have had over the years, right. That, that is a matter of the foundation that they have laid what we contribute to that in this moment.

**MC:**

And I think that's one of the reasons that this moment is so pivotal, like in the middle of the pandemic, cause pandemic and over as reassessing, how we think about what work is and how it's measured, it's work to sit behind the computer to make the commitment, to show up at a certain time on a certain day, to sit behind the computer and to be engaged in intellectual exercises with other people who have done the prep work to do that in advance. So it doesn't have to be, I came out with 10 blog posts, I published a peer reviewed article, or I got something published in this big publication that people across the world read, or even in this subversive venue that only a few people know about, but it's awesome. And critically acclaimed here, those are not the metrics that we're shooting for.

The metrics are a matter of authenticity. Like, did you do what you could do? And did you do it in community? Did you do it in a way that was true and respectful to yourself and the practices of wellness that you accumulated over the years that you've come to practice? Like, did you do it in a way that honors the work that people who have been in this role and been in complimentary roles in Data & Society have created for you to be able to work in that way? That's the assessment that we're looking for, you know, and being able to do that, which you did, like when we came to the reading groups, you know, I, I felt like I had it easy because I could sit back and wait for Shaka to drop some hot comments. That was it. You know, maybe my space was to put some comments in the little chat box or whatever, but those are the ways that I am really encouraged and was encouraged by you and folks within the organization to think about work differently. I think a lot of that comes from, for me, Serita's leadership and her scholarship about work and labor and, and thinking about things in that way. To that end though, I'm curious about what you want to do post Data & Society. Like we've had this transformative year transformative for all manner of reasons. (Laughs) What do you want to do next?

**SM:**

I mean, I was to ask you a question about like, how would you have defined your work before, COVID and how would you define it now? But to answer, it's actually answer your question. You know, I think this refusal of productivity is going to be lasting. It's fortunate that I like my you know, my academic year ended and I'm beginning of sabbatical now. So I have this extended period of time to really reflect, but I'll tell you what I've been doing. I've been looking up things like singing lessons I've been looking up who can, who has licensed massage therapy programs in the immediate vicinity? I've been thinking a lot more like in my normal writing practice, for example, when I'm in a writing mode, it's minimum three hours a day and I break it up, right.

It's broken up into like two and a half hours and a break and a little bit more, whatever. It's not like all concentrated. And then in like when I'm in serious writing mode, it's five hours a day, you know? So it's nine to 12, take a couple of hours off. And you do again from like two to like two to two to four, two to five, depending on how you stretch it these days. Because, you know, one thing I encountered, one challenge I really encountered during the pandemic was just, my body was just refusing. Like it was just telling me over and over and over again, like you cannot sit like, and I exercise, I do yoga. I take walks, I set timers, I get up, I stand up, I walk around. It didn't matter. It was that on some level, I'm at a point now where I know that if I'm sitting for more than two or three hours a day, I'm hurting my body.

So I'm, I'm at a place now where I'm working on a transcription of a conversation between me and three other black anthropologists. And I'm like, maybe I should just pay someone to do it. The transcript to just

double-check it against the recording. I'm sort of sitting here, maybe that's not what I should be doing. So I'm really, I'm really thinking about that big picture stuff, that wellness stuff. UI'll tell you what else I'm thinking about too. Black academic survival is to bootcamp. Come on, get your institution to pay me some money to help you survive it and are a lot of, it would just be like to borrow from what my friend Lyndon Gill at UT Austin was saying is like during the pandemic he's been, he was stuck in, I think in Trinidad and, you know, he was getting all these requests for things, but he didn't have a strong wife.

And he was like, I declined. It was just total. Bartleby the script of the Scrivener. It was like, totally. I prefer not to, I declined. I prefer not to. I prefer not to. I decline. So the stuff I've been doing lately, like this conversation, super happy to have it, this black another round table, super happy to have it. I did something about post digital intimacies where I've been creating now which I started working on data society, these kind of like partially pre-made already documentary things, almost like a hepped up version of a PowerPoint of like a rich, you know, media, rich PowerPoint. And then I've been creating when I give it as a talk, I'm combining this pre kind of done thing, this little film that I've made with this live performance, and I'm trying to like, just create resonances. So Mike, right now, I'm very, like, I'm not thinking I'm field tanking and I want to have more kind of embodied experiences. I want to have more more joy. These are the more refusal. And like with some of the other, you know, this kind of the stuff that comes with every institution that we're at, I'm just like, I declined, I declined. I took it and I subtracted it from the ledger and now no, it doesn't, it's not there. Yeah.

**MC:**

That's so freeing. I love it.

**SM:**

So I know massage therapy thing is like, I just need my body touched and I want to touch human bodies and, and, you know correctly, appropriately cannot do that in the classroom. Just the mind, the mind body. But I think that it's, it's to find refuge and companionship and friendship in institutions without getting attached to things in the institution will do anything for me ever.

**MC:**

Yeah, that's real. I had a similar lesson and I would put a lot of that in, in terms of pre COVID and post COVID. I don't know, it all kind of flows together and works together as my overall experience like being an academia. You know, I didn't know that academia was a career choice. I did it. My mother was the first person in our family to go to college. She turned out to be an NP. Great. Wasn't going to be me, not the kid who passed out in biology, like dissecting products wasn't going to happen, but you know, I'm here because I followed this impulse to study something that I saw happening online that I knew was significant from my own lived experience. And that I also knew media was getting wrong according to its narratives. And that wasn't even what I really wanted to study, but I, it's not what I intended to study.

I should put it that way, but I did. And it helped me out being my backup topic for a dissertation and 10 years on it continues to be productive. And I think that's ultimately because at the root of it, I am doing work that I'm committed to, that I have a full fledged commitment to like heart, body and soul, because it's not about an institution. It's not about a specific technology. It is not about, you know, being able to go give talks or even the luxury that a tenure track position affords. And it is a luxury to be able to make your own schedule to a certain degree and to be able to work from just about anywhere. But it is the commitment to black people and to black liberation, which is like, how, how are you talking about black liberation and black Twitter?

Believe me, it's all in there. That, that creates that space. But even with that and doing it inside of an institution like the university, there is an ability to very quickly descend into overwork and to this internalized set of expectations that these institutions have for us. And for me, that is the delineator in my work pre COVID and post COVID because pre COVID, it was a matter of, I'm a very check the boxes girl. Like I'm not, I got to say, I'm not the most original one out there. I'm just not, but if I know what the formula is, I'm a rock the hell out of the formula, and then I'm going to go on and do whatever. The next thing is. COVID totally threw that into disrepair because you can know the formula, you can have the timeline, but things will happen in your world that are so far outside of your control.

And this pandemic certainly wasn't the first one of those things. You know, I tell a story about my dissertation and how it became my dissertation because of something that was totally outside of my control, the job that I took, finishing my PhD, I took because my father passed away totally outside of my control, this job that I got here at UVA, I took because I wanted to be close to my then partner now, spouse, you know, these things were so far out of my control, but COVID was the one that let me know that not only was it stuff outside of my control, but my internalized attempts to try to bring it more under control were going to make me very sick and ultimately kill me. And that is what I learned in this year, going on now, 18 months almost right. That you've got to find another way.

You have to be so flexible and find other ways to think about the work that you want to do and how it gets done and to what end to think about how you want to care for yourself and where you're going to commit that sort of care to yourself. I have taken more time for myself in this past year to 18 months than I ever have in my life. And it's been a matter of going to doctor's appointments, getting those massages because my body physically hurts from sitting in chairs for so many years, doing meetings and writing and reading and those of things. I had an accident, a car accident completely outside of my control. Wasn't my fault. Totally screwed up everything. Again, another opportunity to learn that you can work this way, that is ultimately defined for you externally, or you can choose to work the way that works best for you. And that is what has been set aside and set apart for me in this experience. And I'm just really appreciative that in that time I had the space like Data & Society to recognize that these things were indeed a choice that they are all choices.

**SM:**

Yeah. Props again, to all the peeps at D&S who helped, I think both of us. And I think other people as well understand some of that, you know, it's funny, you know, I think we're like 30 minutes into our conversation and you know, this will be repurposed and fleshed out in some, in some way in our videos will be there. So everyone will know what it is that we do. We haven't actually talked about any of our work yet either. And so I was wondering, I'm going to try to introduce myself and like the work that I do and then you should do that. And then we should, there, there's some things that we have, you know, in sort of a common that we both look at or think about in our work or in our teaching that I'd love for, I'd love to like riff with you on.

So I was trained versus a visual artist and then kind of through a series of, you know, like a new, like circumstance things happened. And I became an anthropologist. I got a PhD in anthropology. I, so I'm an ethnographer of media, art, and technology through the lens of race and queerness. And so my work has covered everything from public sex to analyses of zombie media, to discussions of you know, the ways that, you know, my personal histories intersect with my research interests, just kind of the stuff I work on now, or at least like literally in this moment. But along the way, you know, you know, we, you and I have a lot of overlap, including things like, you know you know, black media, black Twitter talking about cancel

culture and thinking more broadly about the ways that blackness is framed or within contemporary media discourse. You want to give your little, yeah. Who are you and what do you do?

**MC:**

Yeah, so I am an assistant professor at UVA, which sits on the unseated territory of the manikin and the manahak peoples and was built through the labor of enslaved Africans. Don't leave that part out. That's my current gig. I am a person who is trained as a journalist and I am committed to black liberation specifically through a focus on the way media is used and the way media talks about black people. That focus for me comes from growing up in Lexington, Kentucky, and seeing how black people were missing from the news, except for where we were criminalized, or we were seen as individuals, even creatures for entertainment. And so over the years, I have always been really interested in the way news media in particular talks about black people, who we are, what we do and how we do it. And thus, I have studied what I call very broadly, erased media and power and how the three intersect, which leads to everything from studying the diversity, equity and inclusion industry within journalism to black Twitter and black online communities and digital spaces.

**SM:**

Your work in particular, not my work, your work, not my work, your work. I mean, people will be quoting you on Twitter, on Tik TOK, Twitter, leave it aside. But I sent you a tick tock video where someone was worked like using stuff from your cancel culture. You're now a famous cancel culture, you know, but I want to talk, so I want to talk about that, but I want to talk to you just about something that in our conversations over the last year and now too, that I think is important, is that from my experience, and I think you might share this is that I do the work that I do because I'm learning something from those social worlds. Like I am learning something about how to navigate life as a black person, through my curiosity and through my intuition and through learning from what these, these digital publics among others you know, contain and produce.

So we were talking about oh yeah, like the, the kinds of the various ways we learned from the social worlds in which we that we study and how we got into the work that we did. Yeah.

**MC:**

Learn from it every day. Like I, so it, it was really interesting earning a PhD in the timeframe that I did, I did not I didn't have a critical background in any of this. Right. I, I got a political science degree and undergrad from Florida, a and M university and right, right. Let's see right back there. There it is. Okay. I have a master's in journalism and a PhD in mass communication at no point in any of those programs. Was there a specific focus on critical theory on black feminist theory on theory on any of these? And so, you know, the hip kids today can say, oh yeah, you haven't done the reading. Well, honey, the reading wasn't no one was doing the reading anywhere in any of these programs. Like I wasn't over with the anthropology kids. I didn't know the anthropology department existed at the time I went and did my PhD until I took two courses there and changed everything.

So I learned a lot from being in these digital spaces, like 2009, 2008, when I first joined Twitter to 2012, I would say the education that I got from being in those spaces from the authors and the creators and the activists and the people who were just struggling, who were mentioned in those spaces, whose names and work and ideas, I would have never heard in the formal education settings that I was in were, were, and are invaluable me, but not only those, but the way that people reflect on what it is to live and what it is to have a black life in those spaces is to take the things that I have remarked on. You know, inside

with a certain sense of interiority and thinking, am I the only person who thinks about those sort of things like that and realize that no, no, you're not.

There are plenty of people who are thinking about this and talking about it and building around it and living it every single day. And that is so affirming. It's one of the reasons I haven't left Twitter yet as, as terrible as a place as Twitter can be. It's one of the reasons I haven't left Twitter yet. Cause I, I never want to be disconnected from that. You know? And that's, I think part of the lifeblood of being in digital spaces, in an online communities, there's so much affirmation and reaffirmation that happens in those spaces. I'm curious about what some of those spaces are for you. What are the particulars?

**SM:**

I mean, when I first started grad school, you know, I'd gone to a very small private school in the middle of Iowa and this is like, you know, like our, my senior year, we had email, you know, but that was like, we graduated, I graduated in 1997, so there was no internet and just in the corn fields doing all of our, you know, Kierkegaard. And when I ended up in Austin, Texas, and grad school, after a couple of years doing other things in 1999, I really found myself in these gay, these online spaces, mostly gay, but sometimes, like sort of more broadly understood. And then it was about these chat rooms and like gay.com. And you could have hundreds of people in these, in these rooms. And, and for me, you know, that I've been out four or five years at that point, but I didn't have references beyond, beyond books.

You know, I was like, I was that person who I read all of the, you know, I've read the, the classic literature. I looked at all the contemporary art books, but, you know, being in the top floor of my library at Grinnell college in 1996, reading contemporary art books is not the same as being in a city that has like a lively life. And so I think I was always, I learned a lot about being online. I learned some about, I learned about online. Racisms very like early in those spaces as well. And, and then I think I always just sort of kept an eye. I was just always interested in what, how the internet and how the web, what kind of affordances it produced for people and how people were making the web or like how and shaping it.

And I would say it's the same in terms of thinking about it in terms of blackness as well, right? Like, you know, marginalized groups created publics that were the publics that were needed, the intimate publics that were needed in order to continue to survive, to create a culture. And I think, you know, your discussions, and this is what I wanted to talk with you a little bit about the cancel culture stuff too, is just that you know, like so many different aspects of American culture, so many different American cultural forms, you know, cancel culture as a kind of concept. And as I would say, really as a practice as well, comes from black online publics and now like critical race theory, it has become weaponized against the very people who use those things to insist upon survival. You know, it's being used again as another method to erase and to hear.

And I think that the ways that, how a term like cancel culture is understood or similarly like critical race theory, like how these terms are produced, how they how they circulate and how they come to function is really, is really interesting. I think both of us are concerned with that. And I was reading just this morning. I don't know why I did this because it just makes one upset. This is why I don't I'm on Twitter, but I don't really mess with Twitter. You know, like I post, you know, if it's a political event, I post, if it's an academic conference I post but I'm not super active on Twitter. I don't even lurk that much because I get worked up. I read some, you know, some nonsense about, you know, I guess I read that Nicole, Hannah Jones got, she got she was like, I'm going to Howard.

She was offered after all of the [inaudible] at UNC the position, the tenure position. And she declined and now she's at Howard. So it was reading that this morning. And then I was trying to go back and just to be like, okay, well, what were the things again, that people were so like that where they're like, oh, it's it's wrong or it's bad. And it's like, because I read a lot of it when it came out and I was like, this is very helpful. It's very useful to understand. And it seemed to me that a lot of that, like 80% of the critique, 85% of the critique is like, not the essential parts it's like using a qualifier some instead of all, or, or assuming the all it's very, this does not change it. And I recall just, you know, like in the early part of this year of 2021, I kind of got into a clubhouse a little bit.

I got roped it by a friend and I enjoyed it for a while. I was really enjoying it, especially with Rosie. But one day I like clicked into this room. My friend like tapped me. He said, you should come join this conversation. And it was about critical race theory. And it was instantly clear that the moderators had no idea what it was, where it came from. They hadn't read. And these were all of course, you know, like some people like of color stirring the pot themselves. Right. So it was like, they didn't know what it was, where it came from. And they actually kind of approached when I said, if you don't know where it is and you don't know the key concepts, and this is just clickbait. And then it was a sort of conversation about, well, why are you being able list and elitist?

I'm like, worst of all that original article by Kimberly Crenshaw is very easy to read. It's not complicated. It's not a complicated article. That first thing about intersectional, it's not complicated. And I thought I lost my mind. I was like, okay, done, got off. And then 15 minutes later, I was like, and then I realized it's just a mistake. I mean, so I think this is, you know, you're in this territory, right, where you've written this paper now about cancel culture. I'm sure people come at you for doing this and not doing that. Or I'm sure you've been asked a thousand boring questions about it. And I'm, I'm almost certain you want to like move on to something else. But you know, when I think about, when I think about this work, it is what we need right now. Like a lot of the other work that D&S has done around misinformation, disinformation, we need to know the intellectual history. We need to know that the genie, the regular genealogy of a concept, and then we need to be adept at being able to define and apply the term in ways that are appropriate. And then I wonder, are there ways of shutting down those conversations that are just so out there and so wrong? Whereas it always is it still just don't feed the trolls? Ooh,

**MC:**

These are tough questions. And it's, it's hard because the intellectual impulse is to do the reading, to do the searching, to engage in the debate and the conversation. And I will never say that that's a bad thing, but from my perspective as a journalist, what I know for sure is that it doesn't matter when we talk about concepts, like so-called cancel culture. We're not talking about the specific etymology of the words. We're not talking about the richness of the history behind it. What we are talking about is how language is effectively weaponized as a means of suppressing a group of people. And I think it is a more effective use of our time to focus on that part of the fight than the intellectual parts of it. We do need to know, we need to educate people who are willing to read, learn, listen, engage in good faith.

But we also need to recognize that these are, I mean, these are really tools of almost psychological warfare. I hesitate to say that, but it's true. This is something that dates back to taking, to making, learning how to read and write illegal for black people. It is something that dates back to taking language from indigenous people and subjecting them to reeducation. Because if you can strip identity from a group of people, you can tell them anything, you can create any sort of narrative and give it to them. And what's happened is that effectively, this conversation around cancel culture has been used to shepherd. One group of people further along one way in terms of there's them and there's us. And we are over



here and they are trying to cancel us. It doesn't matter what canceling means. It doesn't matter where it came from. It doesn't matter that it is really a very intimate process.

Like if I cancel someone, a person likely has no idea who I am or that I exist, especially if we're talking about a politician or a celebrity, right? And so that's why I get a little bit frustrated when I'm asked to talk about cancel culture, because I'm like on one hand, you know, I want to make sure that this is down for the historical record, but on the other, I feel bad for almost contributing to this ongoing problem of this exercise and absurdity in which the point is not so much to use language effectively as it is to manipulate language, to get people, to be able to use people effectively. Because if I can manipulate you through this language to get you to believe X, Y, and Z about other people in this country or other people throughout the world, it doesn't matter what the terms mean. And it doesn't matter what history they

**SM:**

Are. And it does seem like the process. I mean, two things. So one, the current deployment of cancel culture to me is just gas. It's just reads as gaslighting. Same with race theory, right? It's all the people who actually do this kind of work and think about these issues intellectually, politically in terms of activism, you know, none of that, it's just, it's just been redeployed kind of now you don't, you, you can't hold on, you can't contain that meeting anymore. And I sort of hear that, right? Like, it doesn't matter if you say this is where it comes from, and this is what it means. If the way people are using it is eight out of 10 times something totally, totally different. And we've seen the same thing. We've seen it with political correctness. We've seen it with, or the other political correctness is sort of the key one that comes to mind.

But multiculturalism, all diversity, like these were all the kind of same things. And it's always, you know, it seems to me that it's the people who are the most powerful, who protests the most about being canceled and who somehow still managed to hold on to their, to their, to their positions, you know? And I, and I think that there's there is like a richness now, like in the comedy of it. So like it's, like you say, it doesn't matter and there's something and you say, use the word absurd. And I think yeah, I absolutely. So whether it is, you know, the hypocrisy, the so-called hypocrisy of the left, who canceled people for perceived slights, you know like real or perceived mistakes or it's the right who uses the term in this completely, either in a mixture of like the willfully ignorant and the, you know, and the committedly stupid you know, sort of way is that, it, it can't like what work can it really still do?

It's, it's a, it's a punchline, right? It's a punchline on SNL. And maybe that's now where that term, maybe that's good that it is a punchline. So because we can know that whatever meanings are attached to it or that it sort of filled with that they that it's just like a balloon you could just pop right. To really try to understand, well, what's, what's really happening. I am curious, you know, in my own, like, I spend more time on tech talk than any other social media app. And I find partly, I think because of the, I think just their algorithm is so good that I don't I don't really, I have a lot of positive stuff on my Tik TOK, very little, there's no negative, there's no negativity. There's none of, you know, there's none of that, but I do wonder, you know, I'm like, what you know, what does it take?

What does it take to be canceled now? Or what does it sorry. I was like moving a little far till, I'll give you an example for my students. And then I think maybe we can talk about the comedy, the absurdity of it, but also the, the seriousness of it. So within like my own within with my students, and this has been going on for like five, six years now, right. As my students become increasingly politically sophisticated, they, they do also seem to sometimes have these very absolutist approaches like this kind of like all or nothing. And there's sometimes a cognitive dissonance that I always try to point out to them that I

always try to like push against with them where it's like, I believe in prison abolition, but all rapists should be chemically castrated. Like those don't go together. There's like, there's a tension there.

Right. Or a lot of the sort of these sort of comical examples of cancellation can occur in ways where you know, so the trans philosopher Contra points that'll leave when has made dozens and dozens of fantastic video essays. And in one video, I say she uses a 32nd voiceover from Angela trans man who some identify as as problematic for his he's a trans man, but his own beliefs on transection and trans transgender, transgender is an attorney transsexuality, they believe are problematic. And so they've, you know, they, so they like by the sort of transitive property will cancel her as well. Right. So these sort of excesses, you know, show to me something about that, that, that impulse to silence, that violence sort of impulse to to kind of quash that, that, that almost sometimes glee in that one confined and some of these examples of, of just the just seems so out of scale, you know, I was going to joke with you and like, try to like, be like, what would, what would you get canceled for? And I was like, no, I shouldn't be too many. Right. So I don't know. I just kind of had like a verbal spew, but I'm wonder if there's anything in that that kind of sticks with you or that you would want to point out, especially like the comical stuff, because it just does, some of it is just like, I don't even know how to approach it without humor.

**MC:**

There was a very, you know, in the, the origin story of people being canceled, people being called out, there's a very serious issue to consider. And that is those without access to power, to hold people accountable for actions who have harmed their communities who have harmed them individually. Like this is a last resort, right? And so there's that to acknowledge, but then we do have to acknowledge the comical and the absurdity of things. When we are talking about how the scale has been so far blown out of proportion with the adoption of this behavior and these sort of speech acts on digital and social media platforms, they were never canceling. Someone was never intended for this. And I would argue that the early era of social media call-outs were effective primarily when they were limited to smaller communities within Twitter. And it was the fault of journalists who took those controversies and made news stories of them to feed into the 24 hour news cycle.

That is when we started tipping over into the absurd. Right. Right. And so the things that I think about with this are, you know, no one's error, no one's redeemable, no one's redeemable. Everyone has something that they could be canceled over my background. My dad was a preacher. And so I know, I know my Bible inside and out. I know it in the parable that a lot of people are familiar with, even if they don't know that they are, is about people throwing stones when they probably shouldn't. So there is a woman she's allegedly caught in adultery, why the Bible doesn't mention anything about the person she was caught in adultery with don't know, but, you know, everyone's got something that they're at fault about that's the bottom line to this parable. And the minute that we start making justice a group sport, we were, we're losing some things, human beings don't do nuance very well anyway.

Yeah. But especially accountability via digital and social media. And in this way, it is, it's not going to work so well. Yeah, it's, it's sort of the same thing with class action lawsuits, you know? Yes. Let's, let's have redress for the harms that are done but this \$40 check that I'm about to get from a printer, isn't really doing all that much to help my damage credit that someone took off with. You know, I don't know it's a terrible analogy, but I, I think there's a lot to be said less so for the individual case and how absurd those things get. And more so for the way news media has treated those cases as though they are symptomatic and emblematic of a larger problem. That is really where I get, this is, this has gotten out of hand.

**SM:**

And I think that's a con that's a conversation then further data sort of role of like media amplification in some of these things, you know, like I don't, I'm like I'm triggered, I want to canceling our times because I keep seeing like, articles about critical race theory, you know, and they're terribly written and they are terribly written because they, I think they take from that, that the people who do this best are the comics in my view because they, they, because they puncture just the, just the absolute, absolute absurdity of some of what's at stake. And maybe this is a question for us, you know, and I think in my own intellectual and creative and political practices moving forward, I definitely want more lightness, more fun. And I want to be able, you know, I don't know, maybe there are, there must be ways that we can do some of this work.

I think as public intellectuals, people who show up on podcasts and things like that, maybe that's maybe that we're in that position, in that in-between world, between the academy and some other public that we can sort of, you know, insert something into the conversation that just puts it into perspective, right. That puts it into perspective. And that makes it just really clear, right? Like opponents who, people who are enacting laws against critical race theory, one are morons. And two, they're engaging in a process of eraser. So even if you don't even think that there were legitimate problems in 16, 19 project, the idea that you could reasonably counter that American capitalism, the history of American capitalism was contingent upon slavery, that the nation was built by enslaved and indentured and otherwise oppressed people. That's not, you can't really argue that. So, you know, if you're arguing, you, you think that critical race theory teaches your kids, teaches our kids to hate one another. That's just sort of idiocy. That's just idiocy. That's, that's, that's that's a move that seeks to return to an imagined status quo that never existed for marginalized people.

**MC:**

It's it's plainly disingenuous. And I think that that is, and that argument altogether is something that, you know, the work that we had, the opportunity and the privilege to do in this fellowship year resounds with me, and I think would be so attractive to so many people, you know, I don't know how this artifact will ultimately be used, but as we wind this conversation a close, my, my expectation, if I will, would be that having these sort of conversations is exactly what this fellowship is like and about, and creating things as a result of these conversations is the sort of space that has made that is made for you at Data & Society. Even if you don't feel like, you know, you are the academic type, the one who is the superstar, who knows all the people at the conference who is published in all the big journals because for God's sake, that certainly wasn't me, but this is a really productive place and a place where you get great feedback on such ideas like this, the conversation that we're having right now. And I think something's going to come out of this conversation so I can camera off, but it is, it's been delightful to be able to have you to myself, Shaka, and then to eventually share your company with with everyone else and want to give a shout out to Rigo for being here for being just amazing, an amazing individual and everyone over there at D&S. I don't know that's, that's my sign-out.

**SM:**

It. I want all of my, I want my speech to be turned into a rap Rigo, and it would just be idiocy, idiocy, idiocy, moron, cancel this, cancel that. But no, I mean, seriously, thanks for putting some, there may feel also that even now ending, you know, with kind of like a head shaking and is, it's such a nice relief relief, but I recall some of our conversations over this last year, and it would just sound a sort of like I was laying on the floor. Got it feels good to be, to have a sense of to have a sense of opening. And I think both of us should really, you know, I think it would be great for both of us to celebrate ourselves and our successes

during this year. And we were supported by this organization and by all of the great staff and others who work there, but we also, we survived.

**MC:**

We did. And there it is.

**SM:**

And there it is. Okay. You got it. Here we go. Peace.

**RLG:**

Thank you so much. And I'm going to stop recording now.