

Transcript – Christina Smith, staff

Narrator: Christina Smith

Interviewer: Amanda Knox, Pembroke Center Assistant Archivist

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Amanda Knox: Good morning. It is 10:15 in the morning on Wednesday, August 19, 2020, and I am here with another member of the Brown University community who is interested in sharing her experiences with all that 2020 has had to offer us. So I welcome you to this interview today and invite you to introduce yourself to our listeners.

Christina Smith: Hi. Yá'át'ééh! Shí éí Christina yinishyé. Bilagáana nishłí. Naakaii Dine'é báhishchíín. Bilagáana dashicheii. Tł'ááshchí'í dashinalí. Oh no! Ákót'éego diné asdzáán nishłí. Okay, so that was my Navajo introduction. If you can tell it's not my native language, but I tried. So, hi, I'm Christina Smith. I am the Associate Director for Undergraduate STEM Development at Brown University and in my role, I help students at Brown who are educators and so I support them in their teaching. [1:00] I come from Utah. That's where I was born and raised. I have a bachelor's in chemical engineering from the University of Utah. I kind of hung out there for a while, decided I wanted to go to grad school. So I went to grad school at Oregon State. So I lived there for seven years. Got my PhD, also in chemical engineering, kind of traveled across the country to come to Brown and now I'm here helping the STEM world kind of think about their teaching and think about more effective ways to do that work. So that's a short educational bio of me. There are other things. So there is a chance that my cats might be coming in and out. So.

AK: I love cats, and I love when they feature in our interviews, so I invite them to do so.

CS: Yeah, so I'm a cat person so that, they might be there.

AK: Fabulous. Well, thank you so much for your time today. I'm excited to hear about everything that's been going on, kind of in your world, as it relates to 2020. [2:00] So, I guess we

can also just start mostly at the beginning of 2020. Do you remember thinking in terms of the pandemic right now, do you remember the first time you heard about COVID-19 or Coronavirus and what you were thinking as this news was developing?

CS: I don't know if I remember the exact time. I know it was in the beginning of the year, and I was hearing things coming from China, some news coming of things that were happening there. So that was kind of the initial piece and that was probably January, February. I took a trip to Oregon to see my partner's family, that's where he's from, in February. And that's kind of where more bubblings of, of COVID kind of kept coming up. And so yeah, I just heard it through the news, probably January, February, same timeframe.

AK: Did you think at any moment that we would end up where we are right now?

CS: No, not at all. I work with somebody [3:00] in my office who kind of figured out this was going to happen, and it was when I think it was like March 13, when the University was like, "okay, we're not coming back," like, "see ya," over the weekend. She called that. She's like, this is going to happen, and it's going to, we're not going to come back for a while. And we're like, no, it'll be fine. But she was right. So I had no idea that it was going to end up like this. Yeah.

AK: Did you have a moment where we started moving towards this self-isolation world, or I don't even know we're calling it anymore, but did, was there a particular moment where you realize, oh, this is definitely happening, this is becoming real for us?

CS: Oh, was there a moment? I think it was just like a slow realization. I think the fact that the University asked us not to come back the first time, that was kind of like okay, so this is a long term sort of thing. [4:00] So I wouldn't say that there was a moment that there was a moment that I knew that things were different. It was just like a slow – I felt like everything, I was just waiting for somebody to tell me something. And that's kind of just, it just seemed like it was always fleeting. That, that was my experience. So no moment but yeah.

AK: What was the transition like for you to working from home? If you don't mind my asking?

CS: It was okay at first, I thought it would be nice. But I've learned being at home that it's not my ideal work environment. And I know that there's a saying going around that you're not working from home, you're living at work, and I think that's totally true. I really have discovered that I need structure. And that's what going to, you know, a workplace did for me was, was give me that structure and that separation. [5:00] So to be honest, I haven't really enjoyed working at home every day in the week. I think I could do it maybe once or twice, but it's, it's been long and I kind of dread the fact that we're here until January at least. So.

AK: With the student educators, is that –

CS: Yes.

AK: Or the, yeah, the student educators who you've been working with, did you have a moment to kind of help them prepare to work from home or kind of shift in the work that they were doing?

CS: Not really. So I primarily work with students who are under her undergraduate teaching assistants or peer mentors or tutors. And so in the spring when that transition happened, I think there wasn't, there wasn't a lot of focus on them as educators but more students and so a couple of students reached out to me, some advisees as well, like saying, "How do I do this?" But I [6:00] think at that time it was just like so chaotic in some ways that I think they just did what they needed to do to get through that term. But coming up for the fall, I will be working with specifically – So I do an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Orientation. And so as part of that, that's going online, but I'll be working with some colleagues in the Digital Learning Design team, which is also part of the Sheridan Center now. And including, like Zoom specific facilitation things. So there is support that's moving more towards like, how do you facilitate online, so that's coming up. But during the summer I didn't hear a whole lot from students until like this past couple of weeks. As we start to move into the fall, they kind of started trickling up and asking questions and things.

AK: Do you, in addition to those kind of differences, are you foreseeing any way that the work you're doing is changing or going to have to change with kind of the new plans for the fall semester?

CS: I think mostly [7:00] the things that have changed for me and will change in the future is just moving things online and making sure that it's an engaging space. But that's what our office thinks about all the time. So it does take time and preparation for that, but I can't see a whole lot of differences. I still plan to do the same programming, it'll just be offered online. I will be teaching a course in the fall and that's also fully online. But other than the personal interactions, which I think is really key, and what I really enjoy about the work that I do, other than that, that's kind of, there's not a whole lot of change that I can think of right now.

AK: This is a another personal question that you definitely don't have to answer, but knowing what you know now about how long we've been at home and will continue to be at home, and the communities around us, and the changes that we've had to make in our lives, is there anything that you would do differently to maybe [8:00] prepare for this?

CS: I've thought about this question. I don't think so. So I don't, I wasn't one of those people who went to the store and like stocked up on everything because I knew it was probably going to be long term and it just didn't make sense to do that. I mean, I went and got a couple extra rolls of toilet paper or whatever, but it wasn't a mad dash for, for me. I didn't feel that, that emergency to do that. So in that sense, there's nothing really that I would have changed there. I think I probably would have mentally prepared myself more to work from home and maybe set up my work office a little bit differently. And kind of in like a grander scheme, sort of thing, I think I would have chosen hobbies I could do at home, like I don't have things to do at home. I just sit and watch Netflix or like watch movies on whatever platform and so that's probably something that I would have [9:00] instilled maybe earlier is like doing hobbies like going outside or like painting or something like that. Because that's not something that I've picked up while in quarantine.

AK: I remember at the outset, a lot of people were like, oh, we're going to be at home, we should learn a new language and exercise more, that that has not been my reality.

CS: It hasn't been mine either. And like I, there's a lot of mental energy that's taken up with like, not knowing what's happening and what's going on. And so I had big plans of, so what's getting me through quarantine right now are K-dramas and K-pop. And so like, that was my thing is like, I'm going to learn Korean and it's going to be great. And I just know a few catchphrases from the TV shows, but I haven't, I haven't gained any new hobbies while I've been sitting at home. So.

AK: So while, [10:00] it seems almost as we were kind of, I don't want to say like settling into quarantine, but as we were kind of getting used to the flow of how life is in these circumstances, it seems like the world kind of shifted a little bit with the death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and countless other people of color at the hands of police officers across the country that has kind of spurred this incredible movement almost globally in a lot of ways. Do, do you remember that moment, learning about that moment or kind of talking about that moment with your community at all, like literally the people around you or friend groups or anything like that?

CS: Yes. And I've gotten different responses from them. So I remember when that happened when, when George Floyd died and was murdered, and kind of the feeling that I had at the time was like, I'm not surprised. Which is an awful [11:00] thing, you know, to think and feel. But I was really surprised at the response. Globally, like you said, that was something that was inspiring that it wasn't just, it wasn't just the US anymore, and it wasn't specific to a city or Minneapolis or anything like that. It was around the globe. And I think that was helpful for me to kind of think through that. But thinking about social justice and equity, that's something that's at the forefront of my mind all the time. And as a person of color that's not something I don't get to think about because it's always presented to me, whether it's just my own internal like thinking about my own identity, or whether it's students coming to me, or whether it's like my experience and reflecting and being in academia. So it was a lot of mental and emotional energy at the time and so I kind of bracketed myself from that because I think I took like a week off of Instagram and social [12:00] media just because I couldn't, I couldn't mentally and emotionally just work

through it in the way that I typically do just because it was a lot. And it got to a point where I also thought, this is something that particularly white people need to work through. Like this is them, I'm going to take a step back, I'm not going to engage this in this conversation because this is the type of, types of conversations I've been having for a while. And so I kind of removed myself. And so with that, I had mixed response from friends and things like that in my community. I have a core set of people that I talk to about it, and we, you know, we have conversations where we have similar values and perspectives around social justice and being a Black or indigenous person of color in this, in this country. But then I also make the mistake, I call it a mistake sometimes, of getting on Facebook and like commenting on certain things. And that can turn into like [13:00] not sleeping at night because of something someone said, and me feeling the need to have to respond to be, for my own, like, ethical feeling of like, I need to respond to this in order to make sure that I'm heard in this way. And so in some cases, people were really receptive in the way that, in having those conversations and they were really fruitful and helpful. And I'm also grateful that my partner, he and I can talk about these things, and we kind of work through it as well together. But then I also feel like I ostracize or push more people, some people away just because if I was a little bit more outspoken, so. I wasn't as soft with my language anymore, I guess I should say. I haven't, I'm not as soft as I used to be after that transition. And it's been great with Ibram X. Kendi's book, *How to Be An Antiracist*, and using that as a definition to kind of like push me into the space of saying race and racism and racist and that's kind of how I change. But [14:00] I don't know if that answered your question. I kind of went off on a thing. But

AK: That, that was really interesting. Yeah. Did you decide to participate in any of the protests that were happening?

CS: I didn't physically go into any spaces or protest in that way. Part of it was just for safety reasons around COVID. But also I wear contact lenses and so I know that tear gas and things it was a possibility. And so like, that was a space that I wasn't comfortable getting into. So I applaud those who, who do that, because I think that was important for them to do, but I protested it, protested like I, I would say things on Instagram. In that sense, I've been supporting more Black and indigenous, you know, businesses and things like that. So like not physically

protesting but I've been protesting in other smaller ways around people [15:00] who are closer to me.

AK: Yeah, absolutely. Have you found, in addition to the book, have you found any other resources that have either helped you do that work or inspired you to do that work?

CS: Well, so like I mentioned, this is something that I think about consistently and so that particular book was a great thing right now because a lot of people are reading it. And so that's something I think people could grab on to because it was something that everyone, not everybody, but I mean, it was like number one forever on the New York Times list. So but things in the past that have helped me. So there's that book, Robyn D'Angelo, she came to campus and I've read a couple of things from her. [16:00]

AK: I didn't mean to put you on the spot. You don't have to have an answer I just thought I'd ask.

CS: Well and it's really just me. I've seen a lot of people in person. So like, I've gone to talks, like Kimberly Crenshaw came to campus, I think, not too long ago. So her I've seen, Tim Wise a couple of times throughout my academic career, he was at Oregon and Utah. So like, I saw people out. And I've read some things. But I don't know if there's like any one particular thing that really just was like, yes, this is going to change everything for me. It was like a slow process of me just picking up things here and there. Yeah.

AK: And at the same time, it kind of seems like I'm speeding through these topics and like the timeline of life in my head right now is not, I can't keep track of it quite as well as I was doing [17:00] like in May. But I know at the same time, there are also conversations coming up, a recent Supreme Court case in favor of Native American land in Oklahoma comes up to mind. Of course, the thing that got like the most news coverage, from what I saw, is like the Washington football team agreeing to change their name. So there have also been these conversations about Native and indigenous rights and activism that have been coming up. Is, I don't really have a

specific question about that, but is there anything of that nature that's been coming up in your life at this point that you've maybe been involved in or been thinking about?

CS: So yay for the Supreme Court case. I mean, it's like, finally. [18:00] And with the Washington team, I'm actually – this is me repping today. I'm wearing this shirt that says “mis rip.” This is actually a shirt designed by, it's a collaboration of a shirt that was originally designed by a native artist. Just kind of like trying to reclaim some of that identity of that, of the stereotype of, of mascots and things like that. I think that the most pressing thing for me as far as indigenous issues go right now is the fact that, you know, on the reservation there's a lot of, there's a higher rate of, you know, COVID cases, or I think it's per capita in the in the US. And so, like that's been in the forefront of my mind. A lot of the people that I follow, the activists that are indigenous activists and people that I follow on Instagram and Twitter, [19:00] I've been supporting in ways of, you know, retweeting and making sure people are aware of what's going on in those spaces in that community. Again, going back to what I said earlier, is I've just been really more cognizant of where I'm buying things and I've like turned to be more specifically buying from indigenous and Black businesses.

But, I mean, it was, and I'm coming from this, like, I feel like maybe in the same space as us, like, time just doesn't matter anymore. So like, it's hard for me to gauge what I was thinking at the time feeling wise, but I think it's similar to what happened with George Floyd and just this feeling of like, okay, finally. Like, okay, so things are happening that have been in the works for decades, like the whole, the Washington team thing has been going on for decades. Like it's not a new thing. And it was kind of frustrating to see some of the conversation around that. I mean, it was great and it came [20:00] from a lot of the movement that's happening with Black Lives Matter. But what frustrated me was like Nike came out and said, like, we're not going to, I think it was like sell these, these jerseys or whatever anymore. They said something, they made a statement, I can't remember exactly what it was. And like, they could have said that sooner, you know? Like, just –

AK: Absolutely. Yes.

CS: Like the timing of things. And it's just kind of how we live in a society where like, money drives everything so much that it's like if businesses whether it's, you know, the Washington team, or it's, you know, Colin Kaepernick or whatever, like there are businesses and people in positions of power that could use that, but I don't know if they're just like waiting for the right time or if like, economically it makes more sense and that's why they're doing something. But that's to say like, those things that were great with the Supreme Court and whatnot, but it's like those, then I start to question like, okay, why did we get to this point, and how did we get to this point? [21:00] And why, what are the things and steps that took us to get here so long? And that's when I start to be like, okay, that's kind of frustrating about this one thing. But again, like, it's just something that I'm thinking about all the time. So it just, I'm just aware of it. And I'm happy when things are happening, but it just, the work continues. It's like never stopping. And so it's just like, one thing happens, and I can't just stop and say, okay, great. That was good. Let's just like, we don't need to move forward anymore kind of thing. That was a long winded answer. I don't know if that answered your question.

AK: No, it does. And I remember I mentioned in another interview that I was watching Trevor Noah on the Daily Social Distancing Show, and he had made the comment that like, we change a football name because then we can like pat ourselves on the back and move along and feel like we've done something without actually doing something. So yeah, I think that that's what a lot of people are realizing and [22:00] acknowledging at this point. But you've also, you've mentioned using social media a lot for different kinds of like activism or conversations you're trying to have. How, what do you think of social media as a platform for activism and change? And do you like, what are kinds of some of the ups and downs that you've experienced with it? And this might be a weird question for 2020, but I'm thinking like, in 50 years, when somebody listens to this interview, like what, what is that kind of experience for you?

CS: Oh, my goodness, I have a love hate relationship with social media. So I'm also very much aware of who's running these businesses. And so it's like, but there's really not an alternative at the moment that's widespread. And so when I think about Instagram and Facebook specifically, like, I'm not a fan of Mark Zuckerberg, and so the way that, [23:00] and Facebook as an entity runs things and the choices that they make. So that's like a con in my mind. But it's also helpful

to, like, stay connected, but not at the same time. So the way that I use Instagram, and I switched to Instagram, I had to take a break from Twitter – but I think I’m going to go back to Twitter because I like their business practices better – was it just was so much all the time. And like I would sit in bed at night and just like scroll through things and read things, and some of it was good and some of it wasn’t great. And like, I recognize that I have control over who I’m following and who I’m engaging with, and so part of that’s me, but it just got to be so much all the time so I had to take a break. But how I’m using Instagram specifically, just because it’s a visual medium is more of a journal for me. Like I’ll post things about what I’m thinking in the moment. I don’t have a lot of followers. I, you know, people look at them [24:00] and read them, but it’s more for me to just say something and get it out there. And it’s an easy platform to be able to do that in a short timeframe. They’re just like short one minute clips of me just thinking about what’s happening. So I mean, if I went back through all of my stories in Instagram, I probably could answer you know, more specifically things about George Floyd and, and what was going on with the native community, because I was taking the time to just like, blurt it out. So that’s how I’ve been using it and it’s been really helpful in that sense. So that’s a pro to social media for me is it’s a platform for me to feel like I’m heard, but also realizing that I’m not reaching a ton of people either, because I’m not famous or anything, but. But yeah, so those are some pros and cons to it. It has gotten to be a lot but I’ve been turning to it more to be a source of just like finding fun things. It’s moved from a really serious space for me in some ways to just like focusing on [25:00] what are happy things, like what are some I follow a bunch of, like I said, I have a cat. I’m a cat person. So I follow a bunch of like cat accounts and just like watch animals and things which has been helpful mentally, and emotionally. So those are, that’s kind of how I’ve been using social media. That’s how I see pros and cons. Some pros and cons. Yeah.

AK: I’m, I’m not following the chronology at this point and stepping back. Do you still have family out west in Utah or in other states and have you been kind of hearing their experiences with all of 2020 and finding any kind of difference or comparisons to your experience? I mean, I assume you’re on the East Coast at this point?

CS: Yes. I’m in Providence.

AK: Okay. Have you noticed anything wildly different or like interestingly the same among these experiences? [26:00]

CS: I think something that's probably the same across the board is a sense of loneliness. Or just, I didn't, so personally, I didn't realize how much I needed to interact with people. On the spectrum of introvert to extrovert I'm definitely more towards an introvert, but then I realized that I need people around. And I think that's a similar experience for my family. So all of my immediate family still lives in Utah. And probably one of the biggest differences is now it's turned in, it was a hotspot for a while. I don't know if it still is. But Rhode Island was really good at the shutdown and also kind of re, re-boosting, re, what's it called? What did we do? The phases where we phased into kind of just allowing businesses to open and things like that and requiring masks to be worn. I think that really helped with my experience and has been different from [27:00] what my family has experienced. Because that's, that wasn't a requirement. People kind of there have just been like, "I don't have to wear a mask if I like don't feel like it" kind of thing. And my sister is really cognizant of that and she's aware of that. She also works in education. She's an elementary school psychologist and so like she's aware of just what people are doing because she also has to go back to school and interact with people and I don't think she's, I won't speak for her, but she's aware of it. But she also had a kid this year. And so like, that was an interesting experience to hear her talk about like the process of like, getting her checkups and how, you know, the steps that were taken for that. And, you know, actually, I know a couple of friends who've had kids this year, babies, and so that's definitely a different experience for me because I haven't you know, I don't have a [28:00] kid.

What else is similar and different? I think, I feel like there's a need for my family to talk. And I think that's also just because there's, we don't have passing conversations anymore with people, whether it's our coworkers or just like people in the store, whatever. And so I just feel like there's a need to just talk. And I think that kind of leads into what I was talking about before. Like, I use Instagram as my way to talk. I think that's something that might be pretty universal experience. But yeah, I know that Utah kind of handled things very differently than the way that Rhode Island did and so there's that big difference but yeah. I don't know.

AK: My questions at this point just also have been devolving. I'm kind of like, "I don't know."
[29:00] So, I guess then the next thing that I just want to ask you is if somebody were to listen to this interview tomorrow, what is one thing you would want that person to know? And if they are listening to this interview 50 years from now, what is one thing you would want that person to know?

CS: Oh. What do I want someone to know? I don't know. I think, so I, the course that I teach is on problem solving. And what a lot of I do in that class is spend time with students thinking about culture and identity, and how that influences the way that we see problems and being, helping them to start to think critically about things and question everything. That was kind of a motto we had last term was like, just question everything. And so I think this [30:00] advice or thing that I would want somebody to know tomorrow and 50 years from now is just to continually ask questions. Because I think what's happening now politically, culturally, pandemically, just ask questions. Like, there's always a question you can ask to either better understand a person, situation. To better kind of reflect and understand yourself like, who are you as a person? What are you doing in this time? That's something that I've learned being at home as well as I've had a lot of time to just think with myself because it's just been me. So it's been productive for work in some ways, but not because I'm just like stuck in my headspace of being like, who am I? Like, how am I responding to things? What's going on? So if somebody were to see this tomorrow, I would just say like, what's something that you did different today? What questions did you ask to kind of [31:00] push you into that direction to change who you are or change or examine the things that you're interacting with. So that's a big thing is asking questions. And I think that holds now and 50 years from now.

I'm a pretty cynical person so I'm not going to have any, like grand messages of hope. But I think that's probably something that's needed. I do, I think part of the reason why I'm not there is because I haven't interacted with students. So like in the summertime when I'm not working with students one on one I don't get to see what they're thinking, I don't get to see what they're doing, I don't get to hear their experiences or what they want to change. And that actually gives me a lot of drive to keep moving forward is knowing that. I mean, I'm not much older than them, but I'm older than the students that I'm working with. And so like seeing them gives me hope, and so maybe something to think about in 50 years is like [32:00] how have you

engaged with the next generation? How have you thought about, I know in kind of like indigenous thought, you think about seven generations past and future and so like, how are you incorporating your story with, like, what's happening in the future, but also what's happened in the past? So again, that that goes with that questioning piece. I feel like I'm just like going in circles, but.

What would what would I want someone tomorrow to know? That, you know, life continues on, like, it's not going to stop. So make a decision that feels right for you today. I guess. That's kind of how I've been making it through so no, no grand, no grand things, but I don't know.

AK: So then I just, as we kind of wind up here, or wind down, [33:00] I like to just leave some space for my interviewees to share anything that you would like to get into the historical record that I didn't ask you about, that you were maybe hoping I would or just something that you want to have in the archive. I would like to leave that space now for you to share.

CS: Oh, goodness, stuff in an archive. I think this is a really interesting project. And I think it's really cool. That just, that's not something that needs to be archived, but I don't know. The focus on like oral, oral stories and like, understanding where people are coming from, I think that's really important. So I appreciate what's going on with this. I don't know if there's anything that that's pressing right now in my mind of things that need to be put into the archive, I guess just by nature of my job I think about teaching and learning [34:00] all the time and how to be more effective at that. And I hope 50 years from now, a hundred years from now, or whenever if somebody comes across this, the way we think about education and learning has changed. I think it's not to a place where everybody feels like they can learn effectively. And that's again, it goes back to, to the conversation earlier, like, I've been thinking about these things and being a person of color, an indigenous person specifically, and thinking about how to how do I change the system in a way, the educational system I should say in the US, in a way that it makes it more accessible to more people? So I'm hoping that like down the line, and I, I saw COVID for all of its not great situations and challenges that it's presented, it has forced people to rethink how we teach and I've been really appreciative of that. And I think it's [35:00] something that needed to happen. And it's unfortunate that this was the thing that pushed it forward. But yeah, I really

think that it was a great moment for us to all really think about how we teach and how we can teach differently and more effectively. And I hope that that continues on after whenever this ends. And that could be a mixture of things that are online, it could be a mixture of like doing things in person, but, or just like really getting down to the core of like, who am I as a teacher? What do I think is important kind of thing about teaching and learning? So I guess that's one thing that I hope gets into the archive is like, how have we changed education and how does education change as it is compared to this moment right now and how it's been in the past. So yeah. I don't know if that opens any other questions up or if that –

AK: Well, I mean, it, it could. Would you like to elaborate more specifically on the way that [36:00] maybe you specifically would modify the educational system or the ways that you think it could be modified to be more useful to more people?

CS: Yeah, I could say a couple things that I would change. Oh, let's see.

AK: I've really been putting you on the spot here. I apologize.

CS: No you're fine. It's just like, how do I how do I, well, I'll just talk it out and see what, whatever comes out comes out. But I think some bigger ideas that need to change, and this is, again, something that I talked about my class so hopefully, hopefully, I'm, you know, getting people to start thinking about things is, especially in STEM are these ideas, is this idea that there's an objective truth, which I don't agree with at all, because I think that removes a lot of different experiences and stories. And it's a particular narrative that gets told that some people just don't cling to or they don't [37:00] identify with. So this idea of an objective truth or sciences objective, I think is, is harming to a lot of communities. And we can see that in a lot of different cases of, of how not thinking about particular types of people or communities that people have harmed them. And so I'm hoping that that changes kind of that narrative and that culture within STEM is that you know, me as a person, I have experiences and thoughts and feelings and ideas and values and beliefs and that's going to impact, impact the questions that I ask, the research that I do, the types of people that I talk to. And so me just knowing a math

equation, maybe it is a math equation, but that has consequences within application and things like that. So I think that's something that needs to change, that culture.

I think also, that's wrapped up into that is this idea of failing effectively. So Berger, [38:00] Edward Berger, has this book called, oh I forgot what it was called, like making, creative like problem, creative problem solving or something like that. I can't remember. Maybe I'll find that the references I mentioned or something at some point, but he talks about failing effectively, and what that is is not being afraid of failure and realizing that failure is how we succeed and like, that's how we iterate. And so I think that's something that needs to be talked about more and normalized, which isn't necessarily done in education. I feel like it has been my experience and what I've seen. It's also not what I've seen and experienced as far as teaching goes as well. Like, teaching is an iterative thing. It's a practice, it's a profession, it's something that you have to try and do continually. You're not going to be the best teacher the first time you teach and you ideally would be trying to figure out what are new ways to think about the teaching and learnings and change your practice based on that. But I think there's this stigma, particularly in higher education, around, like, if I do [39:00] something wrong, then it's bad. And that needs to change for a lot of reasons, but partly because it's not bad, it's how you learn. Like, that's how you change things. That's how you change as a person, as a professional and all of those things, as a student. That's how you come to understand the world. So those are kind of like two bigger things that I would change.

My past work is also, as a graduate student, I studied epistemology, so knowledge and what is knowledge and knowledge sources and authorities of knowledge. And I think there are culture clashes within that realm as well. So in a very western US centric perspective, historically it's been I'm a teacher, I tell you things and you learn that way. And so I'm the authority, I am the source of knowledge, I give it to you. And that's changed a lot since, you know, over the past several hundred years or decades or whatnot. But I still [40:00] think that that resonates with a lot of students and faculty is like, who's the authority in the classroom and I think that needs to change. Seeing students as sources of knowledge, I think can be really powerful, particularly to groups who have been underserved and who, who don't see themselves in spaces of learning. So I think that's like the other big lofty ideas of things that I think need to change. They're very much cultural mindsets that need to change. Practically I think what will happen from that is, grades will look differently. How we assess students will look differently.

What we think learning actually looks like might be a little bit different. At that point, maybe higher education seems to be driven quite a bit by research and so that might change the way we think about research. I don't necessarily agree with, that knowledge production comes from just journals and peer reviewed journals, and I think that's a conversation that needs to be had and changed [41:00] as well. So again, going back to knowledge sources, now I'm losing my voice. So those are some things that I think need to change just the way that we perceive what knowledge is. I think that'll help make it more accessible to students who have come from spaces where authority looks different, where knowledge creation looks different, where knowledge sources look different, whether it's oral, whether it's, you know, in video or things like that. So that's what I hope changes.

I hope people think teaching is an art and that it's a profession, rather than just something that if I know something really well that I can teach it well, and that's not true. It's something that you do have to practice, which I think is another narrative that needs to change. And that emphasis on teaching being something really important, as equal to research, if not more, so, is something I think needs to change as well. So those are just kind of thoughts that I think about continually. [42:00] But, yeah.

AK: Well, I'm going to release your interview so that your students can get a head start on thinking before the semester starts. But thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it and I can't wait to make your interview available and part of the almost over I think 300 interviews that are part of this collection now.

CS: That's fun. Oh, that's fun. That's exciting. See, this is something I can watch while I'm like reaching a wall in my work. I was like, I'll watch one of these things for half an hour. Put it in the background or something.

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