

Megan Goodwin (Intro): This is Keeping It 101, a killjoy's introduction to religion podcast. For 2021-2022, our work is made possible through a Public Humanities Fellowship from the University of Vermont's Humanities Center. We are grateful to live, teach, and record on the current, ancestral, and unceded lands of the Abenaki, Wabenaki, and Aucocisco peoples. And as always, you can find material ways to support indigenous communities on our website.

I never get to do this part. What is UP, nerds? Hi, hello! I'm Megan Goodwin, a scholar of American religions, race, and gender. As you well know, I am NOT Ilyse Morgenstern Fuerst, nor am I a historian of religion, Islam, race and racialization, and/or South Asia.

Happy...Question...mark? 2022, beloved nerds! And welcome to some bonus content! We at Keeping It 101 don't know what this junior year of COVID will bring, and it's hard to live with so much uncertainty for so long. But, as Nicholas Cage teaches us in my new favorite movie about a pig in the city, we don't get a lot of things to really care about—and one of the things we really care about is being in conversation with y'all about why religion is so important. So thanks for being here, and we cherish you.

We ALSO cherish Jenny Wiley Legath, the Associate Director of Princeton's Center for Culture, Society, and Religion, because she is kind and hilarious and brilliant, AND very generously invited us to share our thoughts about religion, and public scholarship, and podcasting with the CCSR community this past October. What follows is the audio from their public-facing event, "Keeping It 101: A killjoy's approach to studying religion," recorded on the 6th of October, 2021.

We'd also like to thank CCSR's Director, Jonathan Gold, and everyone else who worked to make our virtual visit happen. Please enjoy this Bonus Content, and stay tuned for more HISTORY OF THE WORLD (RELIGIONS) PART 1, coming back to your earholes and mindgrapes in just a few weeks.

BONUS: Princeton CCSR Episode!

Jennifer Legath: Welcome. Thank you for joining us. My name is Jenny Wiley Legath and I'm the Associate Director of the Center for Culture, Society and Religion at Princeton University. And on behalf of Center Director Jonathan Gold, and the whole center, I would like to welcome you to tonight's event— "Keeping it 101:A killjoy's approach to studying religion." I would like

to introduce our two speakers. Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst is Associate Professor of Religion at the University of Vermont, where she is also the Associate Director of the Humanities Center. A specialist in Islamic studies, Dr. Morgenstein Fuerst is the author of the 2017 “Indian Muslim Minorities and the 1857 Rebellion: Religion, Rebels, and Jihad,” in addition to numerous articles and chapters. Megan Goodwin is the second half of our dynamic duo. Dr. Goodwin is the Program Director for "Sacred Writes," and teaches in the Religion Department at Northeastern University. She is a scholar of gender, race, sexuality, politics, and American religions, and is the author of “Abusing Religion: Literary Persecution, Sex Scandals, and American Minority Religions” from Rutgers University Press in 2020, also in addition to many articles and other works of public scholarship. Both earned a PhD from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, where I am assuming they struck up a friendship, from which we all now benefit. Please join me in welcoming our speakers.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: We know, on year 700 of the pandemic, that coming to another zoom lecture is exhausting and so we're really grateful. And specifically, I want to thank Dr. Legath and Dr. Gold for organizing this event and tomorrow's toolkit event for those of you who are Princetonians, and for this event tonight, and I want to just talk a little bit about how Megan and I decided to run this. We are going to run this like an interview, where we ask each other questions and do our very best-- and I'm looking at Megan, she can't tell because you're in a grid but-- we do our very best to just take one question at a time and take turns. Because no one listens to our podcast to hear us wax philosophic! You tune in, in theory, because we're jokey and friendly and swear often. So you will get to watch that in real time. Um--

Megan Goodwin: You're telling me that people don't show up to listen to me just, like, randomly like yell about Derrida? Is that not why people like our podcast?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I mean... that's not what the ratings and reviews say, but...

Megan Goodwin: Fine, fine, fine.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: But, who knows? That's a self-selecting population. Who can tell?

Megan Goodwin: *laughs* They probably don't write reviews. Whatever. You don't know.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Alright, let me get started, Megan.

Megan Goodwin: Alright, fine.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: A thing that we get asked a lot, and that I assume this audience will benefit from hearing our answer, is, why this podcast? Why a killjoy's introduction to religion? Because academics know that the colon is really where the juicy stuff happens, right? So it's like title, COLON, the good stuff--

Megan Goodwin: It's the post-colonic, yeah.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Right. The post-colonic. So, why a killjoy's introduction to religion?

Megan Goodwin: I'm so glad that you asked me that, Ilyse! Obviously, first and foremost, citational politics require us to speak the name of Sara Ahmed, who teaches us that citation is political and we have to name where we're coming from, particularly to create the kind of academy that we, we hope to help flourish. So, a "killjoy" helps us think critically about subjects we care so very much about, so that we can make space for other kinds of joys and other kinds of ways of being in the world. And given our collective decades of studying religion, I think it's fair to say that we care about this a whole really lot, and we care about teaching a whole really lot, and this was an opportunity for us to bring our, I mean, orbiting teaching skills *inaudible* and our radical, optimistic politics to bear on a subject we've spent the better part of our adult lives thinking about and trying to better understand. That fair?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah, I mean, I think... I think we wanted to make accessible some of the stuff that lives behind paywalls and in university libraries that is rarified. And I think-- you joked about Derrida, and you know how much that is not my thing, even a little--

Megan Goodwin: Yeah, you're dead inside. It's fine.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Megan had the great fortune of sitting through many theory classes in grad school with me, at which point I would usually, at some point, literally hang my head and like, rub my head-- this became a joke-- and I would say, like, where are the case studies? What does this apply to? Like, just in sheer frustration. So, Derrida, not my homeboy.

Megan Goodwin: Life? Life. Whatever.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Not my homeboy, but I think... I think that-- and we'll get to this a little later, I see that how I wrote these questions, I hope-- but I, I think that we wanted to make sure that we were doing that translation work, that we do for our students all the time, for others. And I don't know that we defined "others" super well when we started recording, but... others. So, not just students but whomever.

Megan Goodwin: Yeah. Well, no, I think part of the experiment was not knowing ahead of time, who our audience would or could be, which has been really fun, um, but I do think, for both of us, the accessibility piece was really important. I am not alone in the podcaster, in the world, in having a vexed relationship to the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, but I will say I took very seriously the charge of owing something back to the public, like the citizens of North Carolina subsidized my education. I cultivated the careers that I have-- most of them-- in service to the people of North Carolina, and that is something I think both of us have carried on in our careers, and you're now at a land-grant university doing similar work there. So, our research matters to different groups for different reasons, but ultimately, I think what the podcast has taught us is one, we don't know who our research matters to if we don't share it. And two, if you share it in the right way, it has the opportunity to matter to a whole lot more folks. And that's really exciting. Oh! It's my turn to ask a question. Um, hey thanks. So, what do you think, Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, that our podcast has to say about the study of religion? What do you think we are trying to do? What is its mission?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I hope we have a lot to say about the study of religion. So, I come at this from a theoretical background, rooted in Islamic studies, and angry. I come from an angry, intellectual background, where I sat in all of these theory classes, and it was-- we did theory classes in grad school by cohort. So, everyone that entered my year took this pro-seminar together and everyone read all the same dead old guys, dead old white guys, dead old white Protestant guys, and then we sat around debating what was what. And as you might have figured out from both my tone and from listening to the podcast, it was exhausting to always have to be three steps ahead of everyone in the class in terms of your own subject matter, in terms of language acquisition, but then also be reading like Herbert of Cherbury. Why? Like truly, why? Right? And so, for me, what I hope this is doing is, frankly, the pro-sem that I wish we had had access to. Yes, it is important that I can talk theory with the folks who get to own theory, which, for the most part, are folks who study the Americas or Europe, and who get to just read Hegel all day, and call it a day. Whereas, like, I had to read Hegel, in German, also-- I wasn't slacking-- but then I also had to read the Iranian interpretations of platonic theory in Persian. Right? So

some of what I want this mission to be is the pro-seminar I wish we had, where we are doing applied theory, but we are also calling out the baloney of having to only study the white canon. And the white Protestant canon. And you can problematize that until the cows come home, and I know that there are grad students in the room, so I'm not-- I'm not mad at y'all, I think you're delightful and I honor your journey. But sitting around a table in grad school and, like, saying all the things that are wrong with a book is, frankly, boring. It's boring. And it's not actually the interesting stuff that we get to do as intellectuals or scholars, and I'm still resentful that that's how theory was always presented to me. It was a thing that you, you built up, either as untouchable-- like, you had to know Foucault and Foucault was so exciting, and heavy, and if you didn't get it, you were dumb. Or you were me and you were like, "That guy's a pedophile, why are we still reading him?" Or, or, you had to learn it and then learn your real stuff on the side, while still, as an Islamist, trying to claim that people writing in the history of Islam were doing theoretical work, right? The number of times my work has been called historical or ONLY Islamic studies, or ONLY South Asian studies, and like "Why would it be relevant to someone in Europe?" And my whole body wants to say, "Well, why is Americanist stuff relevant to me?" Right? So, in—like, the "too long, didn't listen" of what is its mission, I really hope it's about problematizing the study of religion, calling out its imperialist history, but doing it in a way that isn't about hurdle-jumping. You didn't have to jump through an undergraduate degree to get to a master's degree to read Asad in "the way that everyone should read him." Right? It's just broken down for you in the first episode. How'd I do, Megan? Would you add to that?

Megan Goodwin: I would add a wee bit to that, and I'm going to be a dick and use Derrida to do it--

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Nooooo!

Megan Goodwin: Because I think—haha! I have the microphone and now you will listen to every damn word I have to say. No, I, I think the point you're making about the way that grad students, and all of us who have been grad students, get trained to approach religion in this way we imagined to be deconstructive, which is to say, we show up at a table and we tell everybody why they're wrong and we're right, which is, in retrospect, such a colonialist, imperialist, white European spreader move that I am a little nauseated to have ever participated in it, but if you read your dairy closely, or you get to spend time with Sarah Ahmed, you know that deconstruction is itself a constructive enterprise. It's meant to clear the tunnels, so that there can be a light at the end of it, so that we can go somewhere else, and think in new ways, and imagine

new spaces! So, it's my hope that part of the contribution that we make with this podcast is to show that you don't have to do religious studies in a way that, like, a.) makes you want to die, because a lot of those seminars were rough. But also, it is grounded in case studies, it is grounded in material effects, it has real and lasting import for everyone, not just the folks that are privileged enough to be able to sit around those tables. And, yeah, I just, I feel really privileged to get to do that at all, and then to get to do it with you because, you know, I like you! I think you're great.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I like you, too. This is a great place for us to move, I think, to the next little question I've got, which is to say-- and I think we've already done this in our short, short time here—we spend a fair bit of time talking about the politics of both the construction of knowledge, and then, more specifically, the politics of the academy. So, how does knowledge work in these institutions we call universities, and colleges, and university presses, all of that. We talk about this differently, I think, Megan, because you and I exist in different places in the academy, and I want to own the privilege of landing a tenure track spot and then having earned tenure, and I want to name that as a contingent person, and as a non-tenure track lecturer, and as an alt-ac or ac-adjacent (I don't know how you describe yourself anymore) person, that, like, we really do come at this in totally different ways. But regardless, we do spend a lot of time critiquing that institutionalized knowledge and politic. So, I guess my question is, what's your take on when people ask us how our podcast works as scholarship, maybe even research? What's at stake when, either we're asked to defend ourselves-- how is this scholarship, why does this count, why should anyone care about this intellectual product? Or, what's at stake and just, how we frame it, how do we see the work that we're doing?

Megan Goodwin: Yeah. I mean, you know how bad I am at hearing criticism of myself, but I assume that anyone who's asking this question is just genuinely curious! So, let's-- from a place of genuine curiosity and like, possibility-- that's exactly what's exciting to me about this format, is that it brings our research and our training to bear, but then also challenges us to make it make sense to folks who don't have our training. It is a place where I get to just enjoy watching your-- and I use this as it in a positive way-- your obsession with religion, and science, and imperialism, and the way that those three categories have constituted one another on the bodies of oppressed and vulnerable peoples, come out not just when we're talking about India, and not just when we're talking about Islam, but truly (and calendars. Dr. Weisenfeld is absolutely right, always the calendars)—

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I can't help it.

Megan Goodwin: *laughs* But it's... it's... it is pulling on such a depth and a richness of knowledge, so many, like, reading lists for comps, so many years of writing your wonderful book (which people should read). But it... it doesn't lose any of that nuance, but it condenses it in a way that invites people in to learn more rather than overwhelming them with a tone and a language and just a wealth of information that can be really off putting. So, if they want to think, "Gosh, calendars are really surprising. How did we get here?" You're right there. It's one of the reasons I love that we have show notes, because we always have receipts, right? We always have next steps. It is always a place where we get an opportunity to learn from each other, because we always assign different homework and a lot of times you're assigning stuff I've never heard of and vice versa, and also to just draw more people into research about religion! I mean, we've also... we've also had an opportunity to talk about-- I will use my "I" statements-- I have had an opportunity to talk about both my last book project on the religion and popular culture episode, and what will turn out to be my next book project on the cult episode, which I will cite Dr. Weisenfeld as the impetus for, because she asked us to do it. I was really grumpy about it but I'm glad that we did! I assign it a lot. It saves me yelling time. So, it's a way for me to think about how to invite folks into my research, it's a way for me to clarify my thought about topics that can, particularly for my ADHD brain, and I've circled around in nebulous ways and are hard to convey where, if we do that translation work, I can then come back and when I'm giving a research talk say, "Okay! I want to focus on A, B and C, and here's why it matters," because if you-- if you can do that for students, or if you can do that for the general public, then you can absolutely do it for your colleagues. And, I think it's a space where we get to trouble the disciplinary... I don't want to say shortcomings, but I'm not coming up with another word, of some of our own trainings and I'm-- this is really more me than you-- but I think it is very easy for Americanists to be head down to not think about the rest of the world, to not realize that we are not the only ones having these conversations, and that there are, of course, deep historical resonances that we were not tested on and so just bloody well never learned. So, it has enriched my scholarship and my research to be in conversation with you, and with all of the fantastic experts who have shared their research and their time with us, and truly, not that this is why they came on, but challenged me to just think more and otherwise about the study of religion. How about you?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I think to answer that question about, like, how the podcast is scholarship, for me, and I say this as someone who's part of the, like, a traditional tenure track,

tenured-line person, I think that I'm (shockingly) grumpy about the way that we continue to push academics in various parts of their career to take up public scholarship, to do forward-facing stuff, to take a risk on modality, right? So, we want people doing podcasting, YouTubeing, public lectures, op eds-- we want people doing the bread and butter of your work, with Sacred Writes, Megan.

Megan Goodwin: I certainly want people doing that, yeah. I'll pay you!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: We also, like—I'll speak in I statements, too, right? Like, my university is really happy when things hit the news. They're thrilled when their faculty are in the news. Whatever that means, right? That could be the local, like truly, the localist of local news like when WCAX, channel three, calls me up and they're like "We're talking about Muslims, will you come on our TV show?" And it's like, four dudes and a video camera because we're in Burlington, Vermont. The university's thrilled, like, that's a thrilling moment for the university, like, "You are on TV!" But when there-- but then there's no space for it. Where does it go on my CV? How does it count for reappointment promotion and tenure? Is there funding, either at the university or more broadly with grantors to support that work? Not for, like, a one-off "Come and talk to us about Ramadan on the news, Ilyse," but more of the stuff that we do, right? Like, how does the podcast that we're putting out reach not just Vermonters, but folks everywhere? And so, I think one of the things that's been really, I want to say precious to me, almost, is thinking about how, from a position of privilege as a tenured person, I can turn around and say "I'm calling this scholarship. I am putting this on my CV in this way, here's how my department chair is backing me up, we're going to have a meeting with our Dean about it" (which happened like, when we started this podcast). We want you to understand what kind of background is necessary to do this work, we want you to have a—truly, in one of my last annual reviews, my chair, who will be a guest later this month, I think, or next month with you all? Thomas Borchert is coming to give a talk with you all. He really was like, "I want to know the word count. How many words did you write for the podcast last year?"

Megan Goodwin: *sighs* So many.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Because, because, when I go and talk to the Dean about your excellence in research, I want to be able to say "She has written a whole ass book. This is the equivalent of having written a book." And so, "When I, the Chair of the department, recommend—" we have a union, so things like raises matter, right? Like, when you get an

excellent rating, you are entitled to a bigger percentage of raise, maybe. So, this idea that, like, Professor Borchert is sort of like, “This is so much work. Help me help you articulate how much work that is in your reviews,” I care a lot about that. Not because I think tenure is a thing anymore, or that that's the only reason why we care, but I think, in the academy, so much is top down, that it is actually my job to say that this stuff matters locally, and then regionally, and then nationally with whatever platform I have so that, when we do this toolkit talk tomorrow, and we talk to you all about doing public scholarship, you then maybe have a slightly better footing than Megan and I did to claim that this work we were already doing matters to the academy. And I think I'll say one more thing if we have time, Megan, do you think? I think what's at stake in the claims of whether or not podcasting can be research is actually about how do we value the work that scholars do, and how do we value expertise? I actually think that not everyone can do Keeping It 101. I think that it's our project in every imaginable way, right down to the jokes. I don't think to other weirdos are going to write the same bits as us, and yet, I think that where it's research is, we draw on my global and South Asian and Islamic studies training, we draw on your Americanist and theory training-- this is drawing on our expertise. It's not a Wikipedia article. It's not even a survey course. It has deep reads and deep pull from quite a lot. And so, does that count as, like, original monograph-style research? I don't know. But I'm curious, Megan, as we continue this project, and we think about our-- and I have a question about influences later, so I won't get too far into it-- but I think about our, like, major influence as scholarly podcaster Hannah McGregor, who had a scholarly podcast, had a grant for it and then submitted that to open peer review, and was testing out multiple ways of how peer review is itself usually racist and sexist, and so what does open peer review do to the notion of double-blind peer review and taking out some of the, like, venom of it? But also, how do you-- how do you create footholds for things like research-driven podcasts to be evaluated in ways that are cognate to the ways we are already evaluating scholarly work? So I think, I think I see us in that framework. That, like, we could do an open peer review and it would fit really well from how we already do our homework.

Megan Goodwin: Mhm! Yeah. I think that would be exciting. I think I will say two other things. I'm glad that you brought up Hannah's work because, obviously, she's been hugely influential on and with us. I think it is also scholarship in two ways. The first-- I will again be a dick and now talk about Foucault-- is, I think, rather than being a-- people talk about public scholarship as like a dumbing down. People who don't do public scholarship, or don't do public scholarship well talk about it as a dumbing down, and I would like to invite us to imagine it as an archaeological project, in NOT a gross colonizer, say, Hobby Lobby's Robby Hobby sort of way, but in a

digging down and finding layers, and the podcast might be the top two layers that folks get to work into, but, and relatedly, the other place I see it being scholarship is the way that informs the thinking of others, which, oh my goodness, what an honor. We have started a short (but really exciting, to me!) list of folks who are citing us in their monographs, in their dissertations, in their theses, and getting to be in conversation with folks who are theorizing religion and being part of scholarship as a conversation is another place where I see us really being research. It's my question now, right?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I think so, but you tell me if you want to skip that one. I think this one's probably important.

Megan Goodwin: Okay! Hey, speaking of research, how does our podcast fit into your research profile?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I'm so glad you asked that, Megan! I feel like we both should answer this.

Megan Goodwin: That was a really smooth transition! I think we should both answer this. You go first.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: So, my research-- and again, as, as everyone has already said and as Dr. Legath already so generously introduced me, I am an Islamic studies person. My training is in South Asian religious history and I've been asking questions-- across all of my publications—is, like, what is religion, what is Islam, and how do we know? That's really it. If we were to be super basic about it: What is religion, what is Islam, and how do we know? And the how do we know part is actually, of course, the most fascinating piece of it. So, where I see the podcast fitting into my research is-- I think “How do we know?” and “What is religion?” are two of our guiding questions. and then every so often you let me have an episode that's, like, Islamic studies.

Megan Goodwin: I love that I let you have an episode when you write all the episodes. But okay.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: *laughs* Well, you know what? I think from the early days, we have worked very much in tandem on creating what the syllabus will be, and then I do the writing. Which is different than "I'm going to do an all-Islam semester," or something.

Megan Goodwin: Just go rogue. *laughs*

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: But I do like blaming you for it, because it's funnier!

Megan Goodwin: That's fair. I'll take it, I'll take it. *laughs* As someone raised Christian, this was part of my reparations to Jewish people, and I apologize to you, and to Flo and Lloyd. Hi Flo, hi Lloyd! *clears throat*

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: So, I think where it fits into my research is, this feels like a really natural extension, actually, for the questions that I've been asking my whole career. And, for me, those questions were always in search of a case study, and so, having been trained in the languages I was trained, and having spent fieldwork time and archival time in the archives, the fields that I was trained in, those questions tend to be answered in the composite and complex cultures of North India. But I think this “What is religion and how do we know?” And then the flip side, like, the underbelly side of that question is-- I'm so bored of the, like, religion industrial complex of men who churn out these, like, alleged theory books about what's wrong with the field. And those of you who know, know. You know what I mean! But there's so many of them, and there are some—like, I'm gobsmacked by how many of these same repeat offenders are allowed to write these books about Islam in particular. Like, “Why is Islam not theory driven? Why is Islamic studies so confessional? What is wrong with Islamic studies? Let us solve the problem of Islamic studies!” And it's like, bros-- and I'm sorry, but most of them are men. Frankly, most of them are white man. First of all, like, sit down and second of all, I just don't see that as what I see. As, like, an actual person doing this labor, who was the co-Chair of the Study of Islam section of AAR, I... just think it's a lie. And so, some of the podcasts-- and Megan knows this-- most of my best projects are spite projects, and so, some of it's spite. Truly. Megan and I were at a conference a few years ago that I organized or, I co-organized, and a very esteemed-- who we will not name, Megan-- a very esteemed scholar of religion got up and addressed a room of Islamicists by saying Islamic studies is stagnant and does not do theory work. And I sat there and was like, “Do we need to fight now?” Like, what's the protocol? Like, how do we bum-rush the stage, because this is bananas. We are at an Islamic studies conference, and you are a guest here, and you're like “You're all doing boring work.” I wrote a whole article in the JAAR counting job ads to spite that man. Straight up.

Megan Goodwin: *cackles* I know, I know. It's funny because it's true.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: And so-- *laughs* I see Dr. Weisenfeld has put it in the chat. Thank you for that.

Megan Goodwin: Come through, citations!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: So I think, for me, the podcast fits into my research and into my general demeanor of spite. Megan, how does the research podcast fit into your research profile?

Megan Goodwin: Love a spite! Well, I certainly write best when I'm angry, and I'm angry often on the podcast, so there are affective residences, certainly. But let's start with this question of theory and who gets to do theory, It's funny, I was just talking to a mutual friend and Islamic studies scholar about a piece that I wrote (I just put it in the chat) and delivered at the National Association for the American Study of Religion, back when we could still do things in person, and they had asked me to talk about gender and sexuality and the study of religion, in the year of someone's lord, 2018. And so, I took it as an opportunity to talk about a experience that I had at the AAR, where I was at a number of panels in a row with a fellow Americanist, and this person said to me at the end of the day, "Okay, you ask questions in every time, like every panel, but it's actually always the same question and it's always 'What about gender? What about sexuality?'" and I said, "I swear to god, friend, when somebody else starts asking the question I will ask about something else." So this is-- this is all of my work, is "What about gender, what about race, what about sexuality, what about who gets allowed to count and who doesn't, especially in the context of what's now the United States? And the piece that I'm sharing is the performance I gave, but the thesis there is "The study of religion would look a lot different if we didn't assume that it started with white men," and so-- and white Christian men, in particular—so, I think we see that borne out truly in every episode of the podcast. And I'm going to-- I will share this with reservation because I always feel weird about us talking about our anti-racist work as though that's something that people should recognize that we're doing because, no, you shouldn't. A.) everybody should be doing it and B.) it's truly the least we can do, but we have been very deliberate about inviting and lifting up not-white, not-male, or not-cis-male, not-straight experts in the sources that we assign, and the guests that we welcome in, and the folks that are invited to be experts in the season that we're giving, or that we're in production of right now—

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: And in our story time citation, like, whoever we give platforms to.

Megan Goodwin: Yeah. Right. And that is not... that is not because... That is because those are the people that have done the best work on this, and the fact that they are not cited, that they are not included in syllabi, that they are not our go-to resources, is just flat white supremacy, it is just sexism, it is just homophobia. And so, I share that only to say that it is my deep hope that we have demonstrated that it is absolutely possible to engage in scholarly... in conversations of scholarly excellence and truly never cite a straight white man, with the exception of J.Z. Smith. We're kind of stuck with him.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: No, it's true. Actually, that's a really great segue for me to ask this, like, penultimate question.

Megan Goodwin: Love it!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: So, this is a room of really smart people. We often-- and by we, I might mean me? I'm not sure, because... it might be me, it might be my influence because I'm doing a lot of the writing and because I'm so itchy about the theory, in a way that you never were-- but should we talk about some of these theoretical influences? I think that, maybe it's obvious that there's hardcore, like, religion, and frankly, anthropology critical race studies and ethnic studies scholarship that undergirds our whole podcast, but maybe we should make that a little bit explicit. Would you like to do that?

Megan Goodwin: I would like to do that not, not because... I don't want us to feel compelled to show off our smarts while we're at Princeton, but I do think that this is a citational politics moment of, like, these are the folks who made our work possible and that we are so grateful to, so... but also, you know that when I start citing things I don't stop, so do you want-- *laughs*

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: No, how about you take three? Pick your top three, and then I will pick my top three.

Megan Goodwin: Why do I have to go first, then? Okay. Challenge accepted, challenge accepted. Okay, okay, okay, okay. Obviously, get Masuzawa. So I won't say that one, and she's really more yours than mine anyway. That's fair. Um, you know, I'm really-- I am... I'm going to go back to someone who have cited at least thrice on the podcast, which is, or who is, I should say, Sylvester Johnson, and particularly the way that he imagines American religion and the development of American religion through "African American Religions 1500 to 2000," which

is the book that I can't stop recommending because there are so few books that are so grounded in history. And truly, material history. This is a book that you can feel, that is truly transnational in scope, and is also so, so smart about race, but also the... theorization of democracy as a project that requires the oppression, the unfreedom, of others. And that's something that, like, rewired my entire brain. And I can't think about America, or religion, or race, or gender, or sexuality, or any of those liberatory spaces without hearing that refrain. So that's my first one, and then you go, and then I'll go again.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I'll say Masuzawa, since you already said her—

Megan Goodwin: You have to.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I think, for me, “Invention of World Religions” is just one of those books that made me confident, where I was like sniffing around in the archives, and the theorists that stood out to me, and the language patterns that really have stuck with me as someone who-- I joke that I can walk from North India to Germany and make do, right? Because I had to study all those Indo-European languages to do what I do.

Megan Goodwin: Like a Max Weber pilgrimage kind of thing?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: No, like a... like... like a... Yeah, I mean, I guess so. *laughs* That's terrible.

Megan Goodwin: We know what we're doing for your 50th now!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: No, like a Max Müller, not Max Weber.

Megan Goodwin: Oh shit! Sorry, that's what I meant.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah, yeah, yeah. If anyone ever gets to come to my ridiculous office at UVM, there is a street in Delhi called Max Müller Marg, the word for street, and I have, like, a giant picture of it on my wall because... because... because it's funny. So, Tomoko Masuzawa's book, really, for me, does that work, that bird's-eye-view historical work that I love—like, I love a global history, I love thinking in systems, and I love thinking about both how there is so much power in western cultural hegemony, but also, there's all these places to argue back against it,

and so, I think the work, particularly I did my dissertation, which I've never done anything with because I didn't know what to do with it-- which don't-- I'm sorry if there are grad students in the room and you're supposed to be rewriting your dissertation into a book, and your advisor is telling you to do that, do not do what I do. Do what they tell you to do. But also, I wrote the book I could write while I was pregnant, so like, do that too.

Megan Goodwin: It's a good book!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Sure, but like the dissertation work was basically like, "Hey Masuzawa's really cool, but what if we also thought about definitions of religion that already were existing in South Asia?" So, yeah. Masuzawa. Would you like to pay it back? Maybe we'll do two each.

Megan Goodwin: Two each sounds fair, and I'm going to cheat because my second one is a cluster.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: *laughs* Of course it is.

Megan Goodwin: I just—I'm neurodivergent. My brain is messy. This is my truth. I think that the other place that I really draw on are folks who have taught me to look for religion where we pretend religion is not. So, I'm thinking of your Winnie Sullivans, and your Tracy Fessendens, Lynne Gerber's got great stuff in "Seeking the Straight and Narrow," all of the people who look at these either supposedly secular spaces and say, "I see religion working here" and "I very specifically see white Christianity in a mainstreamy sort of way working here," and how those help us think about... minoritization, right? So again, on axes of race, and gender, and sexuality, particularly. I'm starting to get into conversations about disability as well, but I'm not there yet. But I think all of those folks are folks I'm bringing with me in my, like, invisible theory knapsack.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I'll end mine with Talal Asad. I think that's evident all over the places where I write. I think both genealogies of religion as an archaeological, geneological project and formations of the secular, which is naming secularism as a non-neutral, deeply Christian product-- both of those are all over my work as, frankly, most Islamicists that do theory work are there. So, yeah. Why don't we ask another question?

Megan Goodwin: We can. I just also, I feel like Audre Lorde has been all over all of our podcasts, always, and we just need to say her name, because she's amazing.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: That's true.

Megan Goodwin: And particularly thinking about intersections, implications, and complexities and entanglements around race, religion, gender, sexuality-- all of those pieces. So... the end. Oh, is it my question?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: It is, but we could also bop to the last one. Up to you.

Megan Goodwin: It's okay! Oh, uh, yeah, well, this is a quick one. What are our podcasting role models? Who do we see as our podcast peers?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I think that's a really good question. I-- we have already mentioned Hannah McGregor, who does one podcast currently and has done many podcasts, but two big ones. (She had, like, a secret one on *The Good Place*). She does *Oh Witch, Please* with Marcelle Kosman, and that is a Harry Potter reread, but they're English professors who studied book history, and books as objects, and communications, and *Secret Feminist Agenda*, which was the one that was peer reviewed. So as, like, a PhD-holding scholar who is doing something in a funny way to show people what literary criticism looks like in a lived way, that's someone that we really look up to. But as, like, a podcast listener (and I listen to a LOT of podcasts), my genre of podcasts is just comedy, and specifically comedy podcasts where you get a bunch of nerds who are deeply, deeply imbricated in whatever genre this is, who know a lot, and are not just poking fun at someone-- it's not just, like, slam kinds of, like, mean comedy, nor is it, like, just improv comedy for the sake of improv. So, I listen to a lot about movies and music, with a lot of insiders who are funny. So, *Blank Check* is something I really love, I love *How Did This Get Made*, that's, like, my all-time favorite podcast. I'll listen to anything Nicole Byer does because I just find her delightful, but her podcast, *Newcomers*, where she watches movies that you were supposed to have watched at some point but had never watched before. So she did all of this--

Megan Goodwin: She's wrong about *Fast and Furious*, though.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Okay, she might be wrong about *Fast and Furious*, I don't care. She watched all the *Star Wars* and then all the *Fast and Furious*, and as someone who had never seen

any of them, I, like, watched along and listened along with her. But what I liked about those, and what I think I actually try, when I'm doing our writing, is to model that. What I like about those comedians is that they are writers, they are comics, they are grinding in this system, and they know it really well. And they're not taking potshots at bad movies just because they're bad, they are dissecting them in the way that us nerds might write a book review. Right? We might say, "Wow, it's so hard to make a movie and this one is bonkers!" So, what happens? And let's be jovial about it, let's say what's wrong, but let's let our audience in on the "How did the sausage get made" of it all without being obnoxious. Right? Because I think of *How Did This Get Made* a lot because these are three B-list celebrities who--

Megan Goodwin: *laughs* That's generous, honestly.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I mean, like, they're like C- and B-list celebrities who cannot piss people off if they want to keep working. Right? They're not trying to say "You made this terrible movie, oh my God, you're stupid." They're instead saying "This is a miracle that this happened. Every movie, even the bad ones, is a preponderance of work. Why did this go so badly? Like, let's dissect it." And I think that's actually-- I think a lot of that is how you and I come at our podcast. How do we bring the listener along with us, give you some of why we care about how this particular sausage is made, like, lift the curtain just enough, but then also make it enjoyable.

Megan Goodwin: I mean, the sausage is a little phallocentric for me, so I'm going to resist that. But, I DO think the close reading, and the, like, true joy that you see in something like an *Oh Witch Please*, *How Did This Get Made* is... I can't even say that we strive for it so much as, like, that's the vibe when we get to spend time with one another, and I think it comes through when we talk about stuff that we really care about. So, you see that in *Oh Witch, Please*, you see that in *How Did This Get Made*. I think the other places that I/we see resonances are programs like *You're Wrong About* or *Code Switch* (*Code Switch* is looking for another co-host, by the way. I don't know how to tell you, but I'm leaving, sorry. JK!) But again, those conversations that are tackling issues that people really care about, but also, that they think they already know about(?), and rather than making them feel stupid for not having the information that you have, bringing them along and giving them the tools to learn more, even after the conversation is over. And I think that's, yeah, really where I see us fitting. And this is no shade on any religious studies podcasts. We love a *Classical Ideas*. Hey, Greg, hey! Um--

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: And *New Books*. Hi, Kristian! How's it goin'?' *giggles*

Megan Goodwin: And a *Straight White American Jesus*. Like, there is a lot of really good religious studies podcasting that is this happening here. But nobody-- nobody does it like we do it, and I think that's an exciting opportunity, and it's another space where we've gotten to pull on our teaching strengths, and our joy in and of teaching.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: So what do you think is next for us, Megan? And then we'll open it up to Q&A.

Megan Goodwin: Oh hey, I feel like we might be working on a book...?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Indeed, we are. You wanna say a little bit more about that?

Megan Goodwin: Golly! Well, we're thinking that, given that our colleagues have been so generous with us as to share that they use the podcast in class, in a number of different kinds of classes (which is really exciting!), we thought it might be fun and, frankly, kind of like, Riot Grrrl, kind of punk rock, to do less of a textbook and more of a companion volume. Think about us like liner notes, maybe, that will build on particularly the material that we accumulated in season one. So, yeah. Stay tuned! yeah okay add anything.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah. Okay.

Megan Goodwin: Do you want to add anything?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I mean, that's really it. I would have said 'Zine instead of liner notes, but that's, like, a zhuzh of the Riot Grrrl spirit.

Megan Goodwin: I was in, like, a Bikini Kill space, but like, okay, I love a Zine. Let's see what we can talk presses into.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah. And well, I mean, we are currently doing this labor and... think that there is room to... yeah. A companion to the podcast, instead of the podcast being the extra, the book would be the extra, is the way we're thinking about it and writing it.

Megan Goodwin: I also think it's an opportunity for us to maybe lend a hand to colleagues who might struggle to communicate why undergrads who maybe will never take another religious studies class, like, "This is why religion is important, and interesting, and actually can be kind of fun!" So, if we can bring in more majors, that's great! If we can communicate, like, "Hey, the humanities are important" to, I don't know, institutions that might want to get rid of their religious studies departments (I mean, who would do that) but...

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: And in the conversation we've had so far with publishers, we have a pretty set, like, "You will make this a cheap book to produce."

Megan Goodwin: Correct. Yes.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Because so many religion textbooks, which are problematic for every reason that our podcast exists, are, you know, upwards of \$40, \$50, \$60 depending on the printing, and so, what does that mean when, not only is it not available at your local bookstore, but it's also pricey for a book you might read once and put it down.

Megan Goodwin: Yeah. No, this will be affordable or, so help me God, I will mimeograph it myself. I will pull a mic night, and I will tackle course this shit. So... that's the plan.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Exactly. All right, well, I think, Dr. Legath, I think we're done so, I think we have about 35 minutes for questions? Is that, is that true?

Jenny Wiley Legath: Yes, that's great!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Okay.

Jenny Wiley Legath: First of all, I just want to say thank you so much for giving us what a wonderful view into how the tofu gets made of your podcast and we loved-- I loved hearing how you are able to combine it with your research and put it in the service of your research, and, you know, I hope you're hearing that it's in the service of a lot of our research, and especially teaching! So that's why I'm totally excited to hear the news that you just dropped, live and on our show! That you are working on a Zine/liner note/book/companion volume. That sounds like something I can't wait to get my hands on, and I'm sure a lot of other people will too. So now, we will entertain some questions from the chat. And I see the first question has arrived, and, what do

you think people should do prior to ever launching a single episode? I guess these are for the prospective podcasters in the audience.

Megan Goodwin: Good news, prospective podcasters! We just released a webinar about how to make a podcast that's available on our website, and you can check that out. But first, I would like you to say no to making a podcast. I would like you to say yes to naps, and, therefore, yes to the revolution, because I love doing this so much, and also, truly, had no idea how very much time it takes. And, I mean, Ilyse and I— I forget, for, I think it was like for a grant application or something-- we were talking about how much time goes into making an episode, and we started with what, like, three hours? Maybe four hours, and then we sat and were like, “Well, what about this part,” and then the promotion, and then the website stuff, and then... and I think we arrived somewhere between 20 and 25 hours per episode? I mean, that's not consecutive, we don't sit down and do that all in one go. But that's 20 to 25 hours over the span of two weeks, every two weeks, for both semesters.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah.

Megan Goodwin: Yeah. Most of it during a pandemic, a lot of it while Ilyse both had kiddos and no outside childcare help, uhhh, it's intense. So, I love it, I wish more folks would do podcasting, I especially wish more folks who were not straight, white men would sit down and talk to other folks who are not straight, white men and add to this richness in this universe, but also just say no to podcasting. It's so much work and you could take a nap instead.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Okay, but if they don't want to just say no to podcasting, and since Greg is an active podcaster, I wonder if we should...

Megan Goodwin: He wants naps, too.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah, sure. But what if we also said, in addition to check the webinar, we have, like, all the technical stuff and we'll do some of this in the toolkit chat tomorrow. Like, tomorrow is a really hands on, much more practical set of questions and answers that we've got prepared for y'all. But I think that what Megan is getting at, with how much work it takes, is that I would really think about what is the thing that you're good at, and start there. For a lot of our planning, in the before times, we thought about, like, these lofty ideas, and how this would tie into articles we were writing, and, like, seminars that we might wanted to have taught, and at

some point, I was just like, “Wait, this is crazy. We actually can't do that. What if we start at the basement, like, not even the first floor, like, “What is religion and what is this podcast?” is the title of our very first episode because when we sat down to record our first episode, it was a mess. Like, scrap the whole thing.

Megan Goodwin: Outlines? Who needs outlines? We're smart, we teach this all the time! Whatever!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: We truly were like, we'll just sit down and chat. And it was... a dumpster fire. Like, not one second of usable audio. And I think that taught us that, like, you need to start with what's in your wheelhouse. So when folks that are trying to get into podcasting or, you know, maybe take up a gig at *New Books*, the *New Books Network*, or there's these new Islamic studies podcasts that *unknown* started, and I had a chat with a lot of those folks, and it really was “Do not try to make this complicated. This is day one of the stuff that you already teach, and once you get the hang of it, then maybe you write an episode that's really far fields for you. But until then-- what do you know, what do you know better than anyone else, and why are you the person who can say that? What about your voice, your schtick, your angle, makes it work?” Yeah.

Megan Goodwin: And that you're going to keep caring about, right? Like, what do you care enough about to do episode after episode after episode, because Ilyse is right. Originally, we had imagined podcasts that, like, fit into both of our next book projects, and we thought it was going to be specifically about race, and constructions of whiteness and religion, and I wanted to call it Tea and Crackers (which I still think would have been fantastic, but harder to get grant funding for... it's fine). But I just, to use a truly ridiculous metaphor, I am taking MMA classes right now, no, no questions. But a thing that the dude that runs my gym says is, like, “When you're in a fight, you are pulling on the stuff that is so trained into you that it's instinctual,” and, like, that has to be where your podcast comes from. You can't have to be thinking about what is the theory that I'm bringing today, what is the structure, what is the guiding question. Like, our podcasts works like our classes work. You get one thing. And everything loops back to that one thesis. So, it should be a thesis you really care about and that you... you find endlessly interesting. But also, just take naps, please.

Jenny Wiley Legath: Alright, so we take both of your caution and, you know, that this is not something to be entered into unadvisedly, and, just to reiterate the invitation that has gone out,

we do have a follow up to this event, tomorrow at noon. Also a Zoom event, for which you can register on the CCSR website, the same way you registered for this one. It is geared more towards the nuts and bolts of this, so we will get even more into the nitty gritty of creating—the creation of the public scholarship. But, I love what you're saying about start with what's in your wheelhouse, start with what-- you know, start with what you can do, and maybe that's not a podcast! You know, maybe-- and Megan at Sacred Writes can tell us more about, you know, other ways that we can, you know, bring our scholarship to the public. And I love how you said that, you know, you didn't know who was interested until you put it out there and then-- which gets to our next question, which is about audience, you know, from Dr. Kerby, who might want to jump in herself, although she has floor tomorrow. So, don't take too much away from your moderating the event tomorrow, but who asks, “How did you go about figuring out who your audience is? So, once you once you threw this noodle on the wall and saw that it's stuck, you know, how did you figure out who wanted to eat the noodle? Or, who the customers at the Italian restaurant were? And um--

Megan Goodwin: It's definitely food day in your class tomorrow, I can tell.

Jenny Wiley Legath: I think so. It's on the brain, definitely. And how do you check in about how your audience is changing, how does the interaction with your audience affect what you do on the podcast?

Megan Goodwin: Yeah. I'm going to cheat and answer a question that you didn't ask, Jenny, but that you kind of gestured toward. The piece about what other kinds of public scholarships are available to folks, and I think you nailed it. It has to be something that folks feel fed by. It has to be something that gives you joy and that is energizing, because it is exhausting, and it is risky, particularly for folks who are already minoritized both within and outside the academy. So, if it is not fun, if it does not bring you life, if it does not bring you joy, please, please, please don't do it. And there are there are a number of ways to do it, and if you're interested in exploring other ways of doing public scholarship, please talk to me about Sacred Writes! W-r-i-t-e-s. But in terms of the “How did we figure out who our audience was?” They told us! We have a fantastic audience of nerds who are also very chatty, which we love a chatty nerd. Lord knows we do. So, we have a robust conversation that happens on Twitter, and we also get emails from folks all the time, from folks who work in public health who are saying “Look, we're using these in hospitals, we're using these for social work,” I keep coming back to the dude who was a screenwriter who is like, “Uhhh, my colleagues are obsessed with Joseph Campbell, can you please give me

something that I can send them so that they will understand why this is a problem?” But Ilyse is definitely our numbers person, so she'll have a better idea of who's out there.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah. So, most of our audience comes from, as you might imagine, North America, and second place is the UK. I wouldn't say Australia's third, though they make the ranking a little bit “anglophone places that listen to podcasts.” The folks in the UK that are listening are primary education, like, K-12, what we would call K-12. Obviously there are some, you know, college professors and stuff like that. But there is religious studies curriculum in the primary school system in the UK, and especially in England, and so we have a lot of educators that are tuning in, and council members—like, people that aren't actually teaching anymore, but are on these, like, what we would call Board of Eds, who are genuinely curious. Like, we had someone asked us last year if we could help them like rewrite their curriculum, and we were like, “Thank you, no, but also, that's amazing, like, that's so interesting,” and also, like, “No one has time for this and we don't know anything about your education system, we are the wrong people to ask.”

Megan Goodwin: And here are, like, four questions that we would be curious about how you answer.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Exactly. We didn't say, like, “Peace out, bye,” we gave them interesting things to think about and then said, “We are not qualified to help you.” But I think, in terms of figuring out who our audience is, quite honestly, I watch our stats ticker, and it is always the first two weeks of a semester that we get a big bump on Episode One: What is Religion and What Are We Doing Here, and Episode 106: Religion is Not Done with You, and it is clear that people are teaching those in the first week of your generic intro class, because every single—every single. *chuckles* We've only been doing this since January 2020-- but in those semesters, those go up. Like, they skyrocket in downloads. And so, it's clear that it's tied to a semester calendar, it's clear that the most-- the people that we get feedback from-- and it's self-selecting, right? So, I can't tell who is downloading, but when you look at the cities, they tend to be clustered in college towns. The folks who interact with us on Twitter tend to be academics, or graduate students, or alt-ac folks, and then there is these pockets, as Megan said, of, like, film people, arts people, social work-- social work has been big--, K-12 educators and, like, in dribbles, medical folks who are like, “Well, how do we do rounds? Like, what does this mean for us?”

Megan Goodwin: And interfaith folks, too. Like, folks doing interfaith work. We just did a speaking gig around that. I also have an ongoing correspondence with a woman who does PR for the Church of Christ Scientist in Boston, because she likes the podcast. She had a question. So.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I do see that Kristian has asked if my parents are willing to talk as generic members of the audience, but mom and dad, you are under no obligation, and it is so sweet that you're here. So, you can do you want to, just, like, nod or shake your head no? So, we can, like, skip that question?

Megan Goodwin: Oh, we're not skipping it. Come through, Flo!

Jenny Wiley Legath: I'm giving you permission to unmute, if you would like.

Flo Morgenstein: We just enjoy listening to them. They're funny, and educational, and proud, for sure!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Thanks, mom.

Megan Goodwin: Thanks, Flo!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: You don't understand, Megan has a really complicated relationship with parental figures, so that you're here at all is, like... Megan's gonna need to cry it out later. I'm just saying.

Megan Goodwin: My cries are valid.

Flo Morgenstein: Well, we love you guys.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Thanks, mom, we love you too. We appreciate you.

Megan Goodwin: Thanks!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Alright, let's move on, if that's okay with everybody.

Megan Goodwin: No!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I'm turning purple!

Jenny Wiley Legath: Thank you very much for that audience participation moment. We appreciate that. A parental shout out is worth 1000 words.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: It is. I will remind my parents to mute themselves again before I say that I-- Kristian is right, we often frame this as, like, "I'm writing for my dad, I'm writing for my parents," because I'm-- I know that the way I write when I write academic articles is not for my parents, and God bless you. You have done your best at reading them. I remember my dad having printed out my entire dissertation and putting stick-it notes NOT just on, like, the parts that he thought were interesting, but, like, "This word doesn't make sense. Tell me what this word means, Ilyse," which is both, like, "Yay! I've unlocked graduate student writing. I had confounded one of my readers! That must mean I'm doing a great job!" And, that's not really, what I want-- where I want to be for my whole career. So Kristian, you're totally right, and I appreciate you asking that, friend. I want it to be entertaining and educational, not just for people who feel, you know, familiarly obligated to listen to what I do, but like, they could listen to two episodes and quit, and I KNOW my dad listens to it on repeat. So that, for me, means I'm doing something right, and that means a lot, and now that's too much emotions for a public talk. I'm gonna let the next question happen! *laughs*

Jenny Wiley Legath: Alright. Well, that was great and I did want to ask a question about—sorry, my dog just brought me a peanut butter jar—

Megan Goodwin: Amazing!

Jenny Wiley Legath: *laughs* --for those of us who have written books, you know, that have gone to print and, you know, might be selling for \$100, or not, on Amazon. And the question is, "Will tomorrow's call address some ways to approach how to get the word out there for those of us who thought it was enough just to write the book? Or, are there tips you can share with us today?"

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Um, that's not on my list of things to do tomorrow, but I'm happy to talk about marketing tomorrow, if that's a note of interest. So, um, Dr. Kerby, if you're the moderator, I think, um... if that's something that's interesting, then either feel free to bring us

back to it or I'll write it in my notes just after we hang up. I would say that marketing is the key. So, having a robust social media presence. Megan and I knew that when we launched the podcast it wouldn't fall to nothing, it wouldn't just be sucked into the blackness of the internet spaces, because we already were people with, like, fairly robust Twitter followings for academics. And particularly because of the, you know, for, like, mid-range academics who didn't have our books out yet, right? So, we really relied on our own personal social media profiles and professional profiles to help bolster the project, which has helped, and has mattered. I would say the other way that I would think about doing public scholarship, or specifically, podcasting around your book is-- and we've been getting a lot of these recently, Megan-- are these requests from publishers to put people on our podcast and it's like, "Well you don't listen to our podcast, and that's not what this podcast does. We will refer you to Kristian Peterson over at *New Books: Islamic Studies*, but--

Megan Goodwin: Oh, I should do that! I never do, I'm like, "You're not Anthea Butler, next. Thanks. Sorry." *laughs*

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Well, none of the people have been relevant to us, so like, I have not done that because haven't been Islam books, but the next one that's an Islam book I will respond.

Megan Goodwin: Like, *New Books: Religion* would be a place I could send—noted. Anyway.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: But emailing those folks and saying, "I have a book, would you be willing to interview me on it, would you help me, like-- I'll do this! This will be something I do." And then the other piece of it is accepting any of the book talks that you are invited to give, and leaning on your friends to invite you to give them. My first few book talks were really just friends and colleagues, who were like, "We would like to see you, come give this book talk." And then from those things, you can build a bigger profile. I hope that answered that.

Megan Goodwin: I also want to, I want to preface this statement by saying I am not on a tenure track, I am not in a space where my research contributes, in any way, to my tenure promotion or retention of employment. But, as someone whose main job is the promotion of public scholarship on religion, I don't love public scholarship as self-promotion. And that's not to say that you shouldn't talk about your work, but I worry about folks who come into this, or who get pushed by their publishers into like, "Oh, now you've got to be on Twitter." That is not how Twitter works. Twitter is a conversation, and if you treat it like a soapbox, nobody's going to care about your

crap. They're not. So I would say, rather than imagine this as like, "How can I get people to read my book," thinking about what are the basics, what are the pieces that, again, invite people into your area of expertise and make them excited to learn more! How would you talk to an undergrad? How would you talk to your community? How would you talk to a senator you have three seconds with to say here's why you care about this? Because those are the pieces that are going to make people want to buy the book anyway! The other podcast-specific piece, though, is that podcasts make more podcasts, so, if you are on a podcast, if you can get invited to do one of these, listeners include other podcasters! So, your invitations tend to snowball the more of this work that you do. But again, it needs to be in spaces where you're genuinely enjoying the format and genuinely, like, wanting to be in conversation with folks, rather than just like, "Look at me! I'm putting on a show," because that gets really draining for you, and is hard for folks to give a care about.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I see in the chat that both Greg and Kristian have weighed in, and they are two of our favorite podcasters in our spaces, so *Classical Ideas* podcast is Greg's, and Kristian is one of the hosts of *New Books: Islam*, and has been that host for, I think, 10 years now, Kristian? Is that true?

Megan Goodwin: So, like, yeah. We need to acknowledge Kristian as like, the OG religious studies podcaster.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah. And I listen to both of these all the time, like, when I was nursing both of my children and I was on maternity leave, the only way I stayed up with things in the field was listening to podcasts while I also, like, bounced and nursed my child, seemingly without end (not that I'm still traumatized). But, um, but yes. All of what Megan said is true, and I want to... yeah. I think getting your book out there is about leveraging the communities you have and then being in conversation with those communities. I— Oh, sorry. Go ahead, Jenny— Dr. Legath.

Jenny Wiley Legath: Okay, well if-- you're welcome to finish, if you had a further thought.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: No, I was just moving us-- I'm, as you can tell, the person who's always pressed for time, and so I was making sure we were still on time.

Jenny Wiley Legath: You're used to moderating your own!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I forgot. I stepped on your toes.

Jenny Wiley Legath: No, no. That's just fine. I wanted to just serve you the next question on a silver platter for you, and just to say that, Iva Patel, in the audience, echoes the thought of a lot of us, that it is such an exciting and valuable project because, as you mentioned, you do center the marginalized voices and perspectives, but wants to know, "Did you anticipate or encounter objections to your podcasts? Do you-- have you gotten pushback and, if so, how did you address that?"

Megan Goodwin: I mean, there's one dude on Apple Podcasts that said our voices make him want to gouge out his eyes, which, like, I don't know how to break it to him, but I don't think that's gonna help. Um...

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: It's a podcast! You should—you, like, puncture your ears or something.

Megan Goodwin: It's not... I don't know that he is a problem-oriented thinker. Anyway...

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: I mean, his screen name was IamBigDaddy69, so we're just gonna leave that there. Keep going.

Megan Goodwin: Nice. I honestly have been overwhelmed by how much positive feedback that we've gotten and I don't think we-- if there are haters, we have not been in conversation with them. Which kind of makes sense. I will say, though, that we have deeply valued the colleagues who have been thoughtful and generous enough to share questions and challenge some of our own premises in presenting things. I mean, this has been from, truly, from episode one, where the first day of my religious studies classes are always like, "Okay, what's a religion, and here's how it's different than theology," which 100% reflects the fact that I started doing this in the south. Like, I needed to establish really early on that we were not going to talk about who is and isn't a true Christian, what is and isn't the right way to do a religion. So, I have this, like, shorthand, completely insufficient, like, "religious studies does this; theology does this." And because I am a theater kid, who is not always great about thinking about audience, I was like, "We're putting on a show! No one's gonna listen to this, who cares what we say?" And it's not that I don't think it's a useful shorthand, but I had forgotten that part of our robust social media

and colleague networks are really thoughtful, really smart, engaged theologians. So, when we have, like, a Jake Erickson and a Jorge Rodriguez showing up and being like, “This does not represent my understanding of Theology and now we're going to talk about it,” what a gift. Like, what a treat! And there is a really, like, fascinating and multi-prong Twitter thread from, truly, the first episode saying, “Okay, well, what if we do it this way? What if we think about it this way? What if we-- What if we nuance this,” and, like, we can't present that nuance on the podcast because your general, like, intro level student is not going to care, but how amazing to get to have those conversations spurred on by this project that we just kind of did to see if we could do it.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Yeah. I don't think that we get pushed back as a podcast. I know that we've said before that, like, I get random, like, a Jewish scholar of Islam, who has the wrong sets of politics for lots of mainline Jews and... yeah, like, writes about race, and India... You can imagine the kinds of trolls, like, that-- they fall into three categories, really: right-wing Zionists, frankly, those are like-- and moderate Zionists, really, right-wing Hindutva kind of internet trolls, and, like, straight up white supremacists and Nazis. So, like, when I get pushed back, it is one of those three camps. But frankly, the pushback on the podcast has been less than things that happen in writing, and I think that's just about the way that these networks of alt-right, Hindu-right, Zionist-right, echo chamber with written pieces. So, when I write something, those things get picked up in different ways than when we say something. So, we got some weird feedback about the religious nationalism episode that we did, where I talked about Israel/Palestine, and then I talked about partition in India and everyone was like, “What?! You touched ALL of the third rails, what are you doing?!” And we got really weird feedback about—Megan, I'm totally blanking on what episode this was from season three, right before Anthea Butler came on-- I don't remember the title, but it was like, “White Christianity is a Problem,” or something like that.

Megan Goodwin: Oh! Yeah. This actually—sorry-- this actually speaks to Dr. Weisenfeld's question as well. The balancing of, there's not-- we would never want to be prescriptive in the way that religion should be practiced. But Dr. Weisenfeld asked how we balance that resisting prescriptiveness with our own political and pedagogical commitments and this-- this was the episode that I was actually going to bring up-- was the conversation about... our setting up of Dr. Butler's *White Evangelical Racism* book required us to talk about American evangelicalism as a project that, among other things, is based in white supremacy. And so we-- I wrote this episode. Ilyse does most of the writing for most of our episodes, but this was one where she was like,

“Oh, no, no. These are your people, you are doing this thing.” And I was happy to do it. But also, I think I am a less cautious... podcaster when we talk about Christianity, because I'm pulling on both my scholarly knowledge and my own personal background. I'm no longer Christian, but I-- I have spent a lot of time with them, and I am related to, well, all of them. So, we did the format that we always do, which is to talk about-- we do the story time thing, where we say, like, alright, let's pull a source and talk about it. And the thing that I pulled is (I think it was Matthew)... it's The Great Commission, where Jesus commands the apostles to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations. I was like, “I need us to hear this as an imperialist text. I need us to understand that Christianity has been, from the beginning, an imperialist project.” That is not all the Christianity is. I would never want to denigrate the liberatory work that has happened within, particularly, Christian communities of color. But also, Christianity's imperialist. Yeah, the end. And we ended that episode talking about James Baldwin calling for us to reimagine God as more loving, more expansive, or to get rid of the concept altogether. But we got a ton-- no, I will correct myself-- Ilyse got a ton of feedback, particularly from Islamic studies colleagues, saying you all do SO much work trying to get people to stop doing “Quran says this, so Muslims do that,” so like, “WTF about Bible does this, so Christians do that.” And it was a moment where I both fully stand by what I said, Christianity is an imperialist project, and also, it was a call to... the responsibility, I think, of writing episodes in a way where they can stand on their own. Because my initial response was “Dude, we do this work in every friggin episode, like, if you listen to any other episode, if you even paid attention to the whole episode, you would know that that's not what we're doing.” And also, I felt bolstered by the many, many Christianity scholars and confessional Christians who reached out and said they really liked the episode and were excited about it! But the folks that reached out and said “the shorthand is too short” were also not wrong, and so I think that has really challenged us to think about the fact that an episode might have to be, on its own-- truly even a segment-- might have to stand on its own and to just be more thoughtful about the language that we use when we are talking about religion. But at the same time, when we were asked about it in public, we said, “This is a good point, and also, we stand by this.” And that, I think, is that the needle that we've been threading. Do you want to add anything?

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: No. That was perfect.

Jenny Wiley Legath: Well, I think, having given Dr. Weisenfeld the last question in the way that we have done is a perfect note on which to end, and to thank you so much for just showing us, again, an example of what makes your podcast so successful, and what makes it do such a good

job of bringing the people along with you is your genuine engagement with each other, the fact that you truly like each other, and are good friends. And that shows. So, it's that authentic conversation that you talk about that, you know, is the goal for how to establish public scholarship, is to generate an authentic conversation. I think you've given us, you know, a wonderful example of that here tonight, so we appreciate that very much.

Megan Goodwin: That's very kind, thank you.

Jenny Wiley Legath: Anyone interested in speaking more? If anyone has decided AGAINST naps in favor of taking any kind of leap into any small measure of public-facing scholarship through digital media, you know, we invite you to join us again tomorrow, at noon, in the same—in, also in my living room! Actually, my study. And we will meet again tomorrow! But for now, let us say thank you--

Megan Goodwin: Oh also, I will also say that if folks are looking to get a hold of us, we are always, always, always on Twitter. So I'm @MPGPhD, and Ilyse is @ProfIRMF. Or you can find us at--

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: The podcast is--

Megan Goodwin: @KeepingIt_101. Rate or review us on your podcatcher of choice.

Jenny Wiley Legath: Now I feel like we need a sound effect!

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: In theory, we could play our theme song, but we'll just let it go.

Megan Goodwin: Do your homework! It's on the syllabus.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: Thank you all so much for your attention, and for showing up in your questions. This was really delightful, so thank you so much for having us.

Megan Goodwin: Thank you.

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst: And we hope to see some of you tomorrow.

Megan Goodwin: Yeah! Thanks again.

Jenny Wiley Legath: It was delightful for us in every way, so thank you very much.

Megan Goodwin: Alright. Take care, everybody.

Jenny Wiley Legath: Bye.