

# public-scholarship-and-representation

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## SPEAKERS

Simpsons, Derry Girls, Krusty the Clown, Megan Goodwin, Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 00:17

This is Keeping It 101, a killjoy's introduction to religion podcast. This season our work is made possible in part through a generous grant from the New England Humanities Consortium and with additional support from the University of Vermont's Humanities Center. We are grateful to live, teach, and record on the ancestral and unseeded lands of the Abenaki, Wabenaki, and Aucocisco peoples.



Megan Goodwin 00:38

What's up, nerds? Hi, hello, I'm Megan Goodwin, a scholar of American religions, race, and gender.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 00:44

Hi, hello, I'm Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, a scholar of religion, Islam, race and racialization, and history. As you probably remember, we're mixing it up this season, pairing quick and dirty introductions to topics we're not experts in with interviews with folks who are experts in those very topics.



Megan Goodwin 01:01

Today, we are giving you the skinny on public scholarship on religion, which I guess that kind of- I mean, we know more about this one than we know about the Bible. Let's start there. Anyway, public scholarship on religion, how and why to share what you know about religion with folks who maybe don't get that religion isn't done with us. And next time, author and public scholar goals, Dr. Simran Jeet Singh, will be joining us to talk about how he's putting his religious studies training to good use by being #smart in public, including his new and New York Public Library recommended, one of NPR's Top Titles of 2020, children's book Fauja Singh Keeps Going, about the oldest person to ever run a marathon.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 01:43

Yo, what's the time? It's time for the LESSON PLAN. Alright, Goodwin. I've done a bunch of being smart in public and so have you and I'm gonna talk about my own work during the primary sources. But public scholarship on religion, is, like, your literal job description. So can- can you take the lead here? Walk us through it. What is public scholarship? How do we do it? Why do we need public scholarship on religion? Teach us! Teach us some stuff.



Megan Goodwin 02:11

I'm gonna! And, as is our way, today's thesis is really simple, nerds: public scholarship is just teaching outside the classroom.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 02:19

Keeping It 101: ON TODAY. The section where we do professor-work.



Megan Goodwin 02:25

YES. So public scholarship can look like planning a speaker series, or a museum exhibit that's open to the public. Hey, Vicki! That's Vicki Brennan friend-of-the-pod who you'll probably remember from Smart Grrl's Summer's episode on religion and sound. Public scholarship can look like sharing your training or your research on a podcast, for example, or, like, writing op-eds about, I don't know, Jeff Goldblum being an Islamophobic twat on Drag Race.




Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 02:50


Oh, you mean like, when we wrote an op-ed for Religion Dispatches about dinosaur


Zaddy Jeff Goldblum for being an Islamophobic nincompoop, on season 12 of Drag Race, which he definitely was. Mere days after we released our episode on Ru-ligion in the First Season.


 M Megan Goodwin 03:08  
Yeah.


 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:08  
Ugh.

 M Megan Goodwin 03:08  
Yeah.

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:09  
But, like, that piece was fun and- and funny if I do say so myself, but it also, we hope, helps people realize that Woody Allen defenders' comments about, "that religion" by which he meant Islam, were both not okay, and decidedly Islamophobic. And that assumptions about Muslim women being uniquely or especially oppressed because they're Muslim women has a gross, long racist-ass Imperial history.

 M Megan Goodwin 03:38  
Yeah, yeah, like that. And what I hear you saying is that we responded quickly to a very public, very messed up moment in pop culture. And we used our training to help folks think about what happened, and especially why knowing more about religion helps us better understand what's going on.

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:55  
Yeah, I guess that is what we did.

 M Megan Goodwin 03:58  
Public scholarship!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:59

With our powers combined, and quite a lot of snarky gifs, we wrote a short article that teaches Drag Race fans, and we hope some other folks too, a little something about Islam, gender, and racialization.



Megan Goodwin 04:13

So yes, we- we put snark together with teaching and training, and we hopefully helped people think more closely and carefully about what was going on there. So, public sharing of expertise + publicly accessible format + comprehensible by folks who didn't spend a decade in grad school = public scholarship, my fine bitches. And we need public scholarship on religion in particular, because lots of folks never take religious studies classes, or worse, have never listened to this podcast. Can you imagine?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 04:45

GASP!



Megan Goodwin 04:45

So they- I know. So they don't know that religion is not done with us, poor things.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 04:52

I know a number of, say, I don't know UVM administrators who would do well to tune in here and that's for damn skippy. Anyway. Religion surely is not done with us, but don't worry, nerds. We're not done with religion, or with y'all, either. Okay, Megan, so if I'm sharing my expertise with folks who don't have my training, and I'm doing it in a way that makes them want to learn more and think more carefully about my area of expertise, am I doing it right? Am I doing public scholarship?



Megan Goodwin 05:26

Yeah, you are! Yeah. Yes. Do that. Do all of that. A lot of public scholarship responds to things that pop up in the news cycle, like what did our clown shoe of a President say this week? or significant anniversaries- like, I talked about the anniversary of the Jonestown massacre on Twitter a bunch last month- well, it'll be a couple months at this point. Sometimes, and I suspect, particularly with Islamic Studies, it's a lot of really super basic

things. Like, things you cannot freaking believe you actually have to say out loud, because you've been saying them in every single class you've ever taught and how do people not know this already?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 06:01

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Like, "no, jihad doesn't only mean holy war," or "no women are actually oppressed everywhere; Muslims don't have a monopoly on gender oppression claiming they do leads to a lot of gross Islamophobic policies," or "South Asia is a region of the world that includes countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka," or, I guess, say, "religion shapes the world around us, and you should know more about it." Actually, all of that sounds like a great idea for a podcast, come to think of it. But yeah, that sort of thing. Honestly, it's- it's often shocking to me to see that the most basic points truly things that I cover on the first day of any class I teach, are things that get the biggest and most positive responses from folks when I do work in public.



Megan Goodwin 06:46

Yeah, this is so frustrating and- and also so true and brings me to the meat of our lesson for today. Top two things we wish Religious Studies scholars understood about public scholarship, may I start us off?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 06:59

Hit me, let's do it.



Megan Goodwin 07:02

Thing number one: you know stuff that matters. Religion shapes the world around us. If you dismiss religion, you can't understand politics, or business, or history, or science. You just- you cannot, sorry, not sorry. So scholars of religion, you know stuff that matters. I just wrote a thing on this very topic, which seems to have struck a chord with a lot of folks, it is called "UVM Might Be Done With Religion, But Religion is Not Done With Us." We'll share a link for it in the shownotes. I like the piece, and I am glad I wrote it. But my partner also referred to it as, "Greatest Hits piece" because, truly, we say this shit about religion mattering all the time. All the time. And it's true, we do. We do say that all the time. But we also don't talk to everyone, believe it or not. And way too many folks assume religion just isn't important at all, because religion isn't important to them.



Ilyse Morgenstern Fuerst 07:52

You know religion is important, nerds because you're here listening to us. But this is brand new information for a lot of folks. So it's important to explain this super basic point or what feels like a super basic point to us. And what certainly feels like super basic points to our next episode guest, Dr. Singh, in a way that people can understand and in a way that makes them want to know more. I want to say this loudly that goes doubly for you, actual experts. Why should randos dictate what is known about religion while you write egghead books?



Megan Goodwin 08:25

Yes, even if something is super obvious to you, it's often not obvious to someone who hasn't taught and read and written and lectured about it a million times. So yes, when Dr. Singh joins us next time, a lot of what he's saying about his work, if you know anything about Sikhi is super obvious, but guess what! Most people do not know anything about Sikhi at all. Which is a problem-



Ilyse Morgenstern Fuerst 08:49

Including how to pronounce it.



Megan Goodwin 08:51

It's true.



Ilyse Morgenstern Fuerst 08:51

So like, if we're talking about being sad and embarrassed and angry about having to start at something too basic, there is a reason we've got Simran coming on the next show.



Megan Goodwin 09:02

Yeah. Also, he's great. We just love him. But, okay so also, public scholarship requires a certain amount of confidence, a willingness to take up space in public. I've talked about this a lot, recently. But I'm always surprised at how many freaking brilliant scholars I encounter, who have to be encouraged to do this kind of work. They're convinced no one will care, or that they don't know enough to claim to be an expert (that word really trips a lot of people up). Or that their work is just way too complicated to explain to someone

who doesn't have graduate training in the field. IRMF, talk us through the first objection here.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 09:35

Alright, Objection A: no one cares about my stuff. Listen, nerds, that's incorrect. The stuff we work on is interesting and important to you, or you wouldn't work on it. You wouldn't have gathered your attention for nigh on these 5-10-15-20-30 years.



Megan Goodwin 09:52

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 09:53

You just have to find a way to explain why it's interesting and important, much as you would in an intro class on your subject. People do care about your stuff, they might not know it yet. Help them out.



Megan Goodwin 10:05

Yes, please. Okay, Objection B: I'm not an expert. Again, incorrect. Do you have graduate level training in religious studies? Then you are an expert in religion. Do you know everything there is to know about all the religions in all the world throughout time and space? You do not. But neither does anyone else. So don't sweat it. You don't have to know everything about religion to know something about religion. And chances are you've thought more carefully about religion than the average bear. So if a reporter or a dean or a local representative asks your opinion about something having to do with religion, don't start with it's complicated, because that is boring. Or this isn't my area. True, but you're the person in the room. Give your educated opinion on the matter and then you can recommend other folks they should talk to. I also want to be specific, this is not advice for everyone. Let me be even more specific, I am emphatically not giving this advice to most straight white cis dudes in the academy. We know what you think, because you tell us- you tell us all the time. We're all good on what you think. This is in-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:10

I'm so sorry.



Megan Goodwin 11:10

I'm sorry but it's true. No, don't be-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:12

Totally true.



Megan Goodwin 11:14

Just- Just to be clear, this is advice for anyone whose first reaction to the word expertise is to cringe in horror like Nosferatu at dawn like ahhh! Chances are, you are minoritized in the Academy on the basis of race and or gender and or sexuality and or class and or disability and, and, and, and, and you've been socialized not to kick up a ruckus or draw attention to yourself. This advice is for y'all. You do not have to be Neil deGrasse fucking Tyson to do public scholarship, you do not have to be Christopher Hitchens, please, please do not be them. Those dudes are / were public intellectuals. The shit they do or did in public was about being the smartest guy in the room. Fuck that. Nobody needs any more of that garbage.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:54

Yeah, preach.



Megan Goodwin 11:56

What we do need is public scholarship, which is not about being, or building a brand. It's about helping folks without your training think more carefully about something you know a lot about and showing them why what you know matters. And you can absolutely do that. And we think you should, in whatever way feels useful and important and fun to you. Maybe that's chatting with your mom's church group, or writing a letter to the editor, or as our next episode guest did, writing a children's book.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:25

Yeah. Alright, I guess Objection C: My work is too complicated to explain to the public. Alright. Incorrect, thrice. And this one I hope you hear my tone, give me a break. Anthea Butler does public facing work, and she's gonna do some with us later this season.





Megan Goodwin 12:46

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:46

Judith Weisenfeld does public facing work, and she just did some with us last season.



Megan Goodwin 12:50

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:51

Carl Ernst does public facing work. Carl is an actual factual wizard and I'm slightly afraid of his talents and powers. Your work is not more complicated than their work. All of our work is complicated. But it's not- it's not so complicated. People assume that because public facing work is comprehensible to general audiences, that it's dumbed down. It's not. It's not, it's not. It- It's not every single piece of information and analysis you'd include in a peer reviewed article, sure, but it is bringing the full weight of your scholarly expertise to bear on an issue that affects our lives and our worlds. Clear and concise doesn't mean dumb down. It's really challenging to write that way, but it doesn't mean that that's dumb. And honestly, way too many academics don't seem to think or care about the audiences for their work. They need to be cited for tenure and promotion. But it's not super important if fellow scholars, like, enjoy reading it and my hands up, guilty as charged. But for public scholarship to work, it's not enough to be right, you also have to be engaging, which is a little bit harder for many of us. I'll give you that. But it's- it's not impossible. And your work is not more complicated than any other set of issues in the world.



Megan Goodwin 12:57

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. It is not. So again, Thing number one, you know stuff that matters. Thing number two, public work isn't safe, and it's less safe for scholars who are already less safe both within and outside the Academy. And again, Dr. Singh is going to help us think about vulnerabilities and risks and doing public work. This is yet another thing I yell about a lot online, nerds, and I will share more resources with you for homework, but the short version is that while institutions and guilds, I am looking at you, the American Academy of Religion, are increasingly calling for public scholarship, they're mostly not set up to help deal with the blowback. And there can be blowback, especially if you're not white, not male, not cis, not straight, not able-bodied, not securely employed, not institutionally

housed, etc. There are incredible rewards to doing public scholarship, you can help shift important conversations on topics you care a lot about. You can build networks, refine your own thinking, translate complex ideas into vocabulary that helps people better understand their own lives and the world around them. But there's also risk involved in doing public work, both professional and personal risks. So we're gonna provide you with some tools to help you better understand those risks and hopefully help mitigate them a little bit, IRMF anything you want to add?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 15:30

No, I think that this question of risk and danger and reward is something that I wanna just- I want to just have our listeners perk their ears up at. Both, because it reflects a lot of what we've talked about in this podcast about systemic racism, systemic inequities, and systemic violence, but also because this is the bread and butter of what we'll chat with Dr. Simran Jeet Singh about in the next episode. But I guess I'll- I guess I'll just say, to reiterate, listen, y'all, those of you who are scholars- students, I don't know pay attention, maybe nudge your professors. But you know stuff that matters, dear scholars. You know, I hope, that public work isn't safe. And so only you get to decide if sharing your work in public is worth the risk for us, it is and has been, and that work includes making and sharing this pod with all of you.



Megan Goodwin 16:25

Yeah. You gotta fight, for your right, to STORYYYYYY (TIME).



Krusty the Clown 16:39

Hey, kids it's story time.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 16:42

Give me my Beasties.



Megan Goodwin 16:44

Okay, yes. Yes I will. Rest in peace NCA. Today's storytime is a quick little snippet from Mira Sucharov's, *Public Influence: A Guide To Op-Ed Writing and Social Media Engagement*. Sucharov is Associate Professor of Political Science at Carleton, and I like this book, both because she takes social media really seriously, which a lot of scholars

don't. And because some of her own public scholarship deals with religion and specifically Judaism. Also wanna to shout out CJ Schmidt, who sent me a copy of this and I really enjoyed it. So here goes: "In 1969, an editor at the New York Times invited a scholar to adapt the ideas from his recent book into an op-ed for the newspaper. The scholar agreed and submitted a draft. But when the editor presented some suggested edits on the op-ed, the scholar demurred. 'I am afraid that I will have to abandon the project, reluctantly,' said the scholar. 'For some reason, I find it enormously more difficult to write 700 words than 7,000- a typical professorial defect, I suppose.'" The scholar was Noam Chomsky. He would go on, of course, to become one of the most prominent public intellectuals of the twentieth century and beyond." Ilyse R. Morgenstein Fuerst, What do you think about this?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 17:56

First of all, that's funny.



Megan Goodwin 17:59

Uh huh!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 17:59

That's a good- it's a well written reveal. Good job.



Megan Goodwin 18:01

Uh huh, uh huh!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 18:02

But I think- I think yes. Yes, it is sometimes harder to write 700 words than 7,000. For those of you who 700 words sounds like a lot, it's just a couple pages. Um, and for academics who are used to training in things that are like 7,000 words, that's probably closer to 30 pages, 25 pages of writing. And so, yeah, we're trained to write in 20 to 30 page chunks, maybe even a little bit longer. And so, finding the right words, and- and making them powerful in 700 is rough. I love that Noam Chomsky had to learn and start somewhere. I guess I also want to say- I guess I also want to say that, like, for me, public scholarship didn't start as writing op-eds. I've actually never written an op-ed. Really, I've written a couple of pieces about stuff but not an op-ed. Public scholarship for me started as lecturing, it really started as teaching outside of the classroom. And so I think- I think that

if- if you need to demure, if your 700 words ain't gonna cut it, then go give that public lecture to someone who needs it. Right?



Megan Goodwin 19:17

Ben and Jerry's, for example.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 19:19

Yeah, but I'm even thinking local. You know, I love a calendar, right? So like, can you go to your kid's school board and tell them why their calendars are racist and- and pro-Christianity? Can you, if you're at a university or institutionally housed, is there a diversity and inclusion board that almost for sure ignores religion as a node of diversity and inclusion? Can you tell them about that? Can you make a case for why your institution actually should care, in addition to race, gender, sexuality, religion, right? So I think- I think all of that feels- those are my thoughts. What are yours?



Megan Goodwin 20:00

Sorry, I'm just- I just now remembered that the very first fight that I picked when I went to Bates was about the- who got included on the multifaith calendar and who didn't, and I have been for a full year now mocking you about your calendars, and then I just remembered that I- I fully did that.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 20:17

This is going to be one of those things where I make you a straight up fanatic about calendars.



Megan Goodwin 20:22

Like I can't unsee it.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 20:23

Literally radicalizing you about calendars.



Megan Goodwin 20:27

I just completely forgot that I was- I was a complete bitch because they included, like, Baha'i holidays, which, I mean, Lewiston, Maine is an interesting place, but it doesn't have a robust Baha'i population. And I was- I was snarky about, like not having included solstices or something. It was, yeah. Huh! Anyway. Yes, yes to all of this, I- I think public scholarship can be really intimidating. But I also- I find it to be a lot of fun. And honestly, if it's not something that, like, energizes you and gives you a way to engage with your material in fun, interesting, energizing ways, maybe it's not for you. But, ya know, for me, and for us, we talked about really serious issues in our piece about Drag Race and Islamophobia. But we also called Jeff Goldblum a basic bitch, because he is, and that shit was both true and hilarious.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 21:26

You've heard from us, now hear about us! It's PRIMARY SOURCES.



Megan Goodwin 21:31

[singing] Primary Sources!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 21:33

I didn't know I did public scholarship, uh, really, until essentially, you told me I did Megan.



Megan Goodwin 21:41

Yeah, surprise.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 21:43

So, I'm glad I do. I'm going to skip- we're going to talk about our own experiences primary- in primary sources about public scholarship.



Megan Goodwin 21:51

Yup.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 21:52

So, I'm going to skip the podcast even though this is literally the most impactful work of any form that I do, especially if we measure impact by people using it, citing it, learning from it, downloading it, I don't think I'll ever do anything more impactful than what I'm doing right now. But I do think I want to talk about inspirations, risks, and harms for primary sources. One of my real inspirations around public scholarship is- is Simran. So Simran and I have known each other since, uh, master's degree. And it was pretty clear then that he was gonna be one of these rockstar humans, just like one of the people whose like charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent, has them shining above the rest.



Megan Goodwin 22:41

Yeah, it's tight.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 22:42

That- Yeah, that classmates wanna listen to him and be around him, all of that all of that felt really true. But it also felt really true because while I was at Harvard Divinity School, I had an internship at the Pluralism Project, which is a project run by Diana Eck in conjunction with Harvard University. And it was really clear that while I was there, both Valarie Kaur and Simran Jeet Singh were both at Harvard at the same time as me and all of this work was happening around how do we make sure that we, six, are visible? How do we make sure that we, six, are protected? How do we make sure that, if the idea was essentially like, if people know about us, we will be less likely to come to harm? Yeah. And, you know, that has stuck with me, because, and this is going to be real- this is some basic white lady shit. Okay, so like, let me own out loud that this is some white lady shit.



Megan Goodwin 23:39

Okay, but we have to start somewhere, so.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 23:40

Yeah. But the white lady shit was that, it- I was always the lone Jew, right? Like, so I did what my seven year old just did the other day in class, which was like, I made sure that I had latkes during Hanukkah, and brought dreidels for all the classmates, and did the like, "Hey, everybody, I'm seven, but I'm going to represent an entire faith tradition, because it's not on the goddamn calendar." But I hadn't at all thought about racialized religions.

And so as a wee baby master's student, watching my Sikh classmates who are visibly marked as Sikh, particularly men like Simran, who wear turbans and don beards, that this was so clearly a safety issue, and a survival issue, that- that I was so struck by how collected and calm and willing he was to do these public lectures and public writing, while also being the most at risk.



Megan Goodwin 24:10

Mmhmm.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 24:44

Right? And so, I've carried that with me, and I want to be clear here. I've carried that with me in really specific ways. So, I do a lot of what I have now learned is public scholarship, a lot of, like, church lectures, a lot of like "the old folks' home want to know about 'ji-had,' so will you come in and instruct us about it?" I do a lot of: the state is doing something shady, and so a group has gotten together and they want me to be the scholar representing all Muslims in all time as good people. Stuff that honestly makes me a little bit uncomfortable, at times. I've worked on legal depositions, both pro bono and for pay. If the state is doing some shit, I will take their fucking money. I- I think about Simran, and actually, I think about Omid Safi, our guest from Season One a lot when I do this labor, because I get to wash it off at the end of the day. I get to be a white Jewish lady who the ire and the hostile questions from the audience, and the wink, wink, nudge, nudge, here's a horribly racist thing I just said, I get to be grossed out by that, and- and pained by that, but I also get to, like, be a white person, right? Like, there's a certain level of insulation, like, that doesn't harm my- I mean, it harms my humanity, but it doesn't come at my identities.



Megan Goodwin 26:11

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 26:12

And so I really think a lot about not speaking in situations where folks are asking for Muslims, like, I don't ever try to be the person who's like, "and this is what all Muslims think." But in the, like, intro, 101 spaces that especially read hostile, or where a community asks me to be the white face so that they are taken more seriously. Like, I have grossed out feelings about that. But I'm also willing to do that labor because I am not at risk in those situations. No one who's going to threaten to take my kids away or threaten my visa

or threaten my job. Like, none of that happens for me. The worst that will happen is some jackass man (and it's always a man) will think that he knows more than me and say some really racist stuff. And in only one situation, I had to ask someone to be removed from their own church. And believe me, I did. Because in that scenario, I again, I'm not so minoritized, or racialized, or persecuted, or oppressed, that that that modicum of power isn't available to me. And so I really- I do think about when I do- what- what I say yes to when I do public scholarship is often influenced by will this situation harm other people? Can I withstand that harm better than others, given the location of my privilege? And I don't know that I always get that question right, but it's a thing I think about a lot when I engage in publics, so yeah. Thanks, Simran and Omid, y'all are great.

M

Megan Goodwin 27:53

Yeah, they are. Well, and- and Simran, and Omid, and Najeeba Syeed, and Nyasha Junior are all folks whose voices are in my head when I think about doing public work. Particularly because they have demonstrated through their thoughts and their actions that like, public scholarship is not a choice for everybody. Not everyone gets a choice about whether they want to weigh in on issues. Whereas, yeah, if I want to opt in about yelling about calendars, or something horrible and religio-racist happened in my community, I can opt into that, but no one's going to look at me and go like, ah, she must be the person who has an opinion about that, I'm going to make her the spokesperson, for you know, a billion + people. So- so balancing the "I have training to be able to talk about this. It potentially is less personally violent toward me to be the person who's offering like a scholarly expertise." Yeah, that's- yeah, I am grateful to the folks who have helped me think about that and showed me how it's done and how it's done well. I have- yeah. So thank you to all of those people. I have many thoughts about public scholarship and why it's important and not just public scholarship on religion, although obviously that is really important. But we also don't think public scholarship is just for religion nerds, because of course we don't. And public scholarship isn't just about complicating people's understanding of tough subjects that get over simplified in the- in the discourse. For me, sharing what I've learned is often fun because I love teaching. And it's urgent, because religion is such a factor in how America regulates our bodies, and how we relate to one another. But public scholarship is to my mind, also part of what we owe to one another, in, like, a very Good Place sort of way. I've worked out- or I've worked hard to learn what I know, yeah. But I didn't get there alone. And we just- we just talked about this in the last episode, too. I fully know that there are people out there who are just as smart, if not smarter than me, who just didn't get the opportunities or the support I got, who never had the privilege of spending a decade, give or take, thinking about important issues. And the longer that I'm in this game, the more aware I become, of how hard the Academy works to keep people who rock the boat out of it. So helping folks who want to live into their



intellectual commitments, who can, and do put that shit into practice rather than pretend scholarship is just an intellectual exercise, that- that feels like a moral obligation to me. I think the last thing I want to say about public scholarship, not just doing public scholarship myself, but encouraging other folks to do it, which is, after all, literally my job, is that it's made me aware of how much work goes into telling minoritized folks to shut up and keep their heads down. That probably sounds dumb, because like, of course, this is how oppression works. But it never stops being staggering to me that so many smart folks, folks with literal PhDs, top 1% most educated people in the damn world are convinced that what they know doesn't matter enough to share it with anybody outside the Academy. And again, this- here I am specifically talking about folks who are minoritized outside the academy too. I- I keep saying this, but my job is so much more about cheerleading than I expected, which is fine. I, well, we at Keeping It 101 have the spirit, yes, we do. So if you're listening to this and thinking, like, "she's not talking to me, though!" Let me say again, you are incorrect. Especially if you're someone whose voice has been sidelined in the Academy, we need to hear from you. If you can share what you know without opening yourself up to unacceptable personal and professional risks. What you know matters and there are lots of ways to share it. So find a way that's fun and fulfilling for you and just go for it.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:56

Yeah. Hey, Goodwin, uh, I know we don't usually do this with primary sources, but you know what? I think we need to- let's- let's- let's make this clearer. What does all this cheerleading about public scholarship and our experiences with it, what does that have to do with Simran Jeet Singh?



Megan Goodwin 32:14

Yeah, I love him. Simran Jeet Singh is a prolific public scholar who teaches us all the time about how certain people with certain bodies are not afforded the choice to be public scholars or not. He recently wrote in "Why Universities and the Rest of Us Need Religious Studies" that is a turban-wearing beard-having brown man, knowing about religion is a life or death issue for him and people who look like him. He talked a lot in public about how being a scholar looking and presenting the way he does means that his life in and outside the academic arena, has often had folks demanding he be THE Sikh voice, THE brown voice, THE non-Christian voice.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 32:51

Yeah, so what I hear you saying is that while you and I choose to do this work, and you cheerlead folks into doing it, for others that's less of a choice?



Megan Goodwin 32:59

It absolutely is, yes. And what makes Simran so damn awesome is that he doesn't just do it, he thrives at it. And he finds all these interesting ways to get it done: podcasts, webinars, the Becoming Less Racist web series he does with RNS [Religion News Service], and, of course, a best selling New York Public Library and National Public Radio Best of 2020 kid's book, I love this so much too, because like, I just- I love illustrated children's books, and his is stunning.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:25

It's so stunning. And I really- I know, we do a whole episode on this. But I really can't say enough that the idea of a children's book as a valid, viable, and vital way to share his expertise is like, not just brilliant, it's also- it also opens up a public in a way that we don't think about children, right?



Megan Goodwin 33:49

Yeah, yeah!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:49

We don't know about children as subjects worthy of our intellectual attention.



Megan Goodwin 33:56

Yes.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:57

And- and- and there Simran's doing it. So this idea of public scholarship and thinking about what audiences you have, and here he is just saying like, "Yeah, what about kids? Like, what if I translated all of my PhD shit into a book for babies?" Is, like, holy crap, and it's- honestly it's gorgeous. If you don't have this book, you should get it.



Megan Goodwin 34:18

You should, you should have it, you should buy it for everyone you know, but also, and we'll get into this more when we talk to him next time. It's exactly- it is such a beautiful and brilliant example of taking really complex ideas about race, and religion, and disability and truly boiling them down for- for the wee children. And also, obviously, the folks that are reading the books to them. Like, this book isn't dumb about disability. It's really smart about disability, but it has to say it in the simplest, clearest possible language and that is such an accomplishment. Very excited.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 34:54

Chomsky was mad about 700 words for an op-ed, you get 700 words total in a kid's book.



Megan Goodwin 35:01

If that! I mean-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 35:03

And so- so yeah, I- I- I- I know, I'm gonna say this in the next episode, nerds. But his treatment of disability and ageism is actually some of the best I've seen, period. Like, not- not like the best scholarship, obviously, there's quite a lot, I don't want to denounce anybody's awesome scholarship, but the simplicity with which it is presented without being preachy, or without being, um, overwhelmingly, moralistic just there is so good. Like, as a mom who reads this book a lot, and as a scholar who thinks about these kinds of - isms. Anyway, you get the sense that we want him on our show, because he's doing public scholarship in these novel and important ways, with new sets of publics in mind. So next time, nerds, join us when we talk with Simran Jeet Singh about all of this. But we also want you to hear, before we close out, that public scholarship can be a crucial strategy for minoritized and racialized folks, particularly within religions, to be seen, to be represented, and maybe to find pockets of safety.



Megan Goodwin 36:18

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 36:18

But don't pack up your stuff yet, nerds. You've got HOMEWORK.



Simpsons 36:23

Homework, what homework?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 36:26

Remember, you can find everything we're assigning here and a whole lot more in the show notes for this episode, links, citations, non-paywalled options for stuff you need a university login to get to, occasional silly pictures of us and transcripts. Because accessibility isn't just good pedagogy, it's mandatory. What do you-



Megan Goodwin 36:44

Yes.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 36:45

Oh sorry, go ahead.



Megan Goodwin 36:46

No, no, I just- I did so much talking today, please, please assign our nerds some stuff.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 36:51

Sure. So for good examples of public scholarship, I'm going to assign some work by our very own Megan P. Goodwin.



Megan Goodwin 36:59

Twist!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 37:00

Specifically, I'm going to send you to Megan's pieces (there's three of them) at The Revealer that show you what a true legend does to sell a book. So each of those pieces

corresponds to one of the major case studies in her book, it does not give away the farm here, it's not like why would be buy the- the 'cow' book, when you get the 'milk' article for free or something. But it does show that this translation of a highly theoretical, super specific, double blind, peer reviewed, University Press book, can, in fact, be translated to, frankly, like a long-form digital piece, but I'm gonna- I'm gonna link you up to all those.



Megan Goodwin 37:41

Thanks, lady!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 37:42

I want to show you one of the pieces I wrote way back when about hate crimes because no, I am not an expert on American data about hate crimes, but I am an expert on Islam, history, and racialization. And so, using one to talk about the other I think it's a good example of you can know enough to write something smart that lands. And I also will link you to a couple of podcasts I've done because like I've said I'm- I'm actually not an op-ed writer, I do a lot more of the talking, chatting, teaching-side of public scholarship. And of course, I will link you to our dino zaddy RuPaul nonsense article. I also want to just shout out- as usual, I feel like we shout out Hannah McGregor and Secret Feminist Agenda often, but they- she specifically did an episode about feminist podcasting and why more women should be podcasting. Specifically with this idea that like women, and women's voices should take up more space in our (I almost said our visual landscape but it's more of our) audio landscape which is, to be totally honest with you, why we're here. We looked into that podcast. We heard that episode and we thought, you know what, maybe we could do this too.



Megan Goodwin 38:54

Yeah, it's our origin story. True story. Yeah. Okay. I will try to keep the short, I promise. I already mentioned Mira Sucharov's, Public Influence, which I think is a good place to start if you're new to the idea of just doing public scholarship at all. Tressie McMillan Cottom's short essay: "Everything But the Burden" is mandatory reading for anyone with a university affiliation thinking about doing this work. And thanks again to Nyasha Junior for that recommendation. Sarah Bond has done a bunch of great writing on public scholarship and classics. And, I'm going to include, like, for real homework for you, nerds. This is the New York Times Open Team's guide to doxxing yourself on the internet. Doxxing is where assholes search for your private information on the internet and then make it public. It's unusual, but not unheard of, for academics doing public scholarship to get

doxed so this guide helps you lock down your private info before assholes on the internet can get to it.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 39:49

Yeah, that's mandatory.



Megan Goodwin 39:50

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 39:52

Join us next time for our Applied Learning conversation with Dr. Simran Jeet Singh who's going to talk to us about what public scholarship looks like in action.



Megan Goodwin 40:02

Yes.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 40:02

Shout out, as always, to our awesome research assistant, Katherine Brennan, whose transcripts and work makes this pod accessible, and therefore awesome. Need more religion-nerdery? You know where to find us? Twitter. The answer is- the answer's Twitter. Okay? It's Twitter- It's always Twitter.



Megan Goodwin 40:17

It's always been you, Twitter. It's always been you. You can find Megan, that's me, on twitter @mpgPhD, and Ilyse @profirmf or the show @keepingit\_101, find the website at keepingit101.com, drop us a rating or review in your pod-catcher of choice please and thank you and with that-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 40:40

Peace out, nerds!



Megan Goodwin 40:41

Do your homework, it's on the syllabus.



Derry Girls 41:01

I know how daunting research examinations can be, so if anyone is feeling anxious, or worried, or even if you just want to chat, please, please do not come crying to me.