



**[00:00:02.120] - Georgios**

There you go. Hello, thank you for joining me. Finally, we made it. This is going to be a sort of like one off special podcast we are developing instead of our an event on this report that we're reporting on the 12th of May. So unfortunately, we weren't able to host the event, but we thought this would be a really good opportunity to have a discussion around racism in the U.K. and especially thinking about queer people of color and queer black people in Scotland and sort of like where we're on, how we how we move things forward, especially now that, you know, pandemic is slightly gradually easing off.

**[00:00:52.700] - Georgios**

And we're sort of like we integrating, I guess, into into what we once considered normal life. I'm super, super privileged and happy to be here with Mia and Cat, both fantastic women of color. And I I'm just so excited to hear all of their contributions and input. And I know Mia very briefly from sort of like a more professional background. And, Cat, I'm so thrilled by all of your amazing stuff in your CV. I'm so sure you're going to have such incredible contributions to make.

**[00:01:33.770] - Georgios**

And I am going to pass them on to you first to yourselves, and then we can start our conversation and tat you want to go first.

**[00:01:44.510] - Cat**

Sure. Hi, thanks for having me. Yeah. Hi everyone. I'm Cat Dunn. I'm a social justice, a freelance social justice curator, and I like working with marginalized communities and especially women. And yeah, I'm also a doctoral candidate. Hello.

**[00:02:05.180] - Speaker 1**

Nice, thanks. That's really exciting, and we're going to give you an introduction to yourself, Mia.

**[00:02:12.650] - Mia**

Hi, everyone, and thank you for having me. And, Cat, it's so nice to be here with you as well. So my name is Mia Liyanage. I am a kind of split between two worlds, but they intersect massively, which is kind of why we're both here. So I'm a queer person, a queer historian, kind of by trade, I suppose. But I'm also a decolonization advocate and I currently work in anti-racism, both with Advance H.E. and full time with Goldsmiths, University of London.



**[00:02:45.320] - Mia**

So that's kind of what I do professionally. But I'm so invested in queer topics and queer life, both personally and professionally as well. So I always try and bring them both together. But yeah, that's me.

**[00:03:00.050] - Georgios**

Amazing. Thank you so much. It's really good to see who's got such a good blend of lived experiences and also professional experiences, so I'm sure we're going to have some really interesting highlights. I'm really pleased that, you know, you've both been up for this. I think it's a conversation that is maybe haven't, sorry we're maybe maybe having a conversation a bit more often down south. And I don't know to what extent is like more well received or whatever, but I can definitely see more things happening around that.

**[00:03:34.280] - Georgios**

And I haven't personally seen much movement around and sort of like, you know, the institutional racism in Scotland. Mia, you have been involved with some really exciting stuff in higher education, which is, you know, some some conversations long overdue. But I guess, like really briefly to want to maybe sort of like give me like your first, your gut reaction to the whole thing that kicked off with the Sewell report about sort of like, you know, having an institution, a, government, a state essentially telling you, you know, you're we're not racist because you guys are not working hard enough. you're not trying hard enough guys. Thoughts?

**[00:04:25.460] - Cat**

Well, I kinda think that, you know, if you kind of look back like at Windrush, when people from the Caribbean kind of came in in the 30s, 40s, 50s, because Britain came and colonised, we were part of a colony and it was like, OK, we need to boost work first. We need nurses. And some of the science that came back from those days kind of remain today, really, which is no Irish, no Scottish, no darks, no Blacks.

**[00:04:53.560] - Cat**

So, you know, in the Caribbean, we were kind of as kids growing up. We were fed this false ideology that Britain and the US, you know, was the place that was paved with gold. And you could, you know, make your way and nobody cared what you look like. And the reality of the situation was very much different, because if you were darker skinned, you had a lot of problems finding even living accommodations. I know of people who came over here as qualified nurses and then they were told to go clean up the vomit and the poo and whatever, because over here we don't consider you to be qualified, so these people who



have left really well-paying jobs in a community that they were known in to come over here to hope for a better future.

**[00:05:38.720] - Cat**

Fast forward many years later and the same government says to them, oh, we don't recognise you as British citizens or you don't have any paperwork or you don't have this. We're going to put you on a plane and send you back. What are they supposed to do? So I wasn't really surprised when this report came out because, I thought it was quite a joke, actually, when you were kind of told, "people should be following Britain"; I'm sorry, what now?

**[00:06:02.730] - Cat**

You know, and they're saying there's no systematic racism. We all know that there's systematic racism. You just need to like me to be able to walk into, you know, any organization and you suddenly get, oh, you're here is not right. Or, you know, if you've got braids or dreads, that doesn't quite work. So I kind of think that. And for me, it's a little bit annoying because the head of the Sewell report was black.

**[00:06:30.450] - Cat**

So I'm like, how much money did it take to sell at your own community?

**[00:06:37.100] - Georgios**

Yeah, those yeah, those are some really interesting points, and when I was at the Runnymede event there was a lot of conversation around, sort of like, you know, black voices and black representation and being careful about sort of like using, you know, I guess like almost like a token. Like what's going on to be like, well, a black person approved it so, it must be fine, you know.

**[00:07:04.920] - Cat**

Yeah, exactly. That is the problem right there is that people are now saying people who were kind of getting on board are now very much saying, well, this is all in your head. You're you know, you're reading too much. You're thinking that you're the U.S., you're thinking about this that were that because a black person said it was OK. And my my thought process to that is we're actually a black person that's just sold us out. So how much did he sell us out for?

**[00:07:29.460] - Cat**

Because it's pretty despicable, really.

**[00:07:31.710] - Georgios**

Mm hmm. Mia, have you got any thoughts on that as well? And I guess your reaction to this report coming out?

**[00:07:40.290] - Mia**

Yeah, I mean, before I even get to my reaction, I totally agree with Cat. And I think that one of the biggest problems that we're facing at the moment is as particularly white folks, but also maybe other folks of color who aren't kind of alone in their own proximity to racism, essentially, especially anti-blackness. What we're seeing is people rushing towards where is the closest thing that I can latch on to, to say I'm OK. I thought about these issues or I'm being inclusive or whatever phrase you want to use.

**[00:08:19.560] - Mia**

And I think that's, it's not only that, of course, it's a really historic association of kind of representation is everything. But we're seeing that here a lot, too, is that people are putting, you know, representation alone above representation tied with liberation. And we saw that so much. For example, somebody like Margaret Thatcher is obviously was the first woman prime minister, but absolutely pulled the ladder up behind her and didn't do anything to advance women's liberation.

**[00:08:54.290] - Mia**

So. It gets a bit sticky, I think, also because white people want to say, well, I'm not racist and therefore the black lead on the Sewell Report, I'm not going to criticize because how can I speak to his experiences? Because he's Black, which obviously I understand we're not with something like Sewell report, in my mind, the benefit, it's a podcast - and no one can see that I just used air quotes - but the, air quotes, benefit of a report like the Sewel report is that it is supposed to sit outside of subjectivity. I used air quotes again.

**[00:09:31.810] - Mia**

It's supposed to sit outside of that because it is supposed to come from a government. Therefore, you would hope that it wouldn't be driven in its makeup, in its findings by personal alliances, by personal biases, etc. But what you really find is the Tory government doing their utmost to form a committee that is made up of the few people of color and black folks, they can find who he's internalized, racism, I guess, is so strong that they have chosen the path that they have chosen and this is what we end up with. And look, I mean, my gut reaction to the report was twofold. I mean, firstly, I just thought, well, as Cat said, this is a joke and it's despicable. But the other thing I saw, I don't know if either of you or any of our listeners recently looked at the Stuart Hall Foundation's race report that came out a couple of months ago. That was written by a guy called Steve Nash, who's fantastic.



**[00:10:39.110] - Mia**

And, well, the report essentially finds is that I think the number is five hundred and eighty one. Now, I'm going to go with it. Five hundred and eighty one recommendations on race essentially made between the 1980s and today, essentially, and most of what they pertain to, which fell into about eight themes, broad themes. Most of those themes have not been addressed really at all. So actually, now that I think about it and I'd love to hear what you guys think about this, but the way I look at the Sewell report now is, yes, it is a joke.

**[00:11:17.570] - Mia**

And that's a well-advised word, because actually I found that because of the work that some people have done since last summer, some people have just about crossed the line when now they can see the Sewell report for what it is. And within my sector, which is higher education, it has caused a lot of people who previously probably would have been blind to the subtleties of the racism within the report itself are actually now saying that doesn't seem right to me.

**[00:11:44.870] - Mia**

So I hope that in the end it might make more of a difference than five hundred eighty one previous recommendations. We'll see if it does. But, you know, maybe it'll end up being a good thing.

**[00:11:58.820] - Cat**

I don't know. I kind of see it as it was paid for by, you know, it was created by the government. They made sure that they had sympathetic people on the board that would eer on the side of them. You know, nowhere in the report does it say, you know, we went we spoke to people living in low income houses. Nowhere does it say we looked at the injustices to LGBTQ plus POCs, you know, nowhere does it say we've looked at we've randomly spoken to marginalized communities who are on the breadline.

**[00:12:37.280] - Cat**

The one thing that this pandemic has done is this definitely showed the cracks in the system, right? So, you've got people who are literally working two and three jobs just to be able to to keep up with their bills. You've got people who are falling further and further down the line. And it's very clear that there's some of the there's becoming more middle class per se. It's very low income, kind of like a little bit up from that. Then there's this broad gap and then it's something goes in the opposite direction.

**[00:13:12.650] - Cat**

And the people who are being impacted by this, the young people, the people who are older, who are hanging in there and struggling and hoping that this report was going to help them in some way is literally just gotten a slap in the face. So, yeah, I completely agree with everything that Mia has said, but I just think I can use much stronger words, but I'm going to stick with it's just disgusting and despicable. You know, this is the same government at the moment who's looking to cut funding from art schools.

**[00:13:47.480] - Cat**

And again, who's going to feel the effect of that? Low income and marginalised students? For me to go to art school, I ended up working three part time jobs because that was what I wanted to do. So when this report comes around, we've already been told there are so many things we cannot do. And if you're queer on top of it, oh may God help you, you know, oh, you're here. Doesn't doesn't suit our parameters.

**[00:14:12.770] - Cat**

So you might be the most qualified person for the job, but your hair is purple, so you're not quite you don't fit in. So we're not going to do that. And that's what this report for me has done, is just put a cap on people who can do that and say, well, actually, it's not us because, you know, the government did a report, so we're not racist.

**[00:14:33.090] - Mia**

Yeah, I, I couldn't agree with you more and something I mean, what you were just saying about workplaces and culture really hit home for me. And I think, yes, even if a lot of people are a little more hesitant to say this publicly now in their minds, whether consciously or unconsciously, but you know in a lot of cases, very consciously, people were thinking, oh, well, I always thought, you know, I always thought that my workplace was fine.

**[00:15:04.230] - Mia**

I always thought that my you know, the culture in my workplace was, you know. People have to take it or leave it, you know, that kind of attitude, and I think the fact that it came from government and it came from this government. It has huge political implications, but it also situates the report within a particular ideological context and set of ideological kind of constructs. And what that means is that as you read it, you know, you are being given the vision of the model minority.

**[00:15:44.750] - Mia**

It's entirely based off of a deficit model. It's entirely saying pull yourself up by your bootstraps. You know, look at these people who did manage to succeed. You know, they're the good ones. They deserve human



rights. They deserve what is it? And, you know, obviously, I mean, I'm stating the obvious at this point, but it is just your own state gaslighting you and gaslighting an entire set of communities, because as Cat says very rightly, this doesn't just affect people of color and black folks.

**[00:16:24.740] - Mia**

It affects those who are proximate to them, but it affects every intersecting identity within that umbrella and, to be queer as well, for example, in the wake of this government's recent decisions around trans rights as well, when the report first came out, I was very much reminded of the very long consultation for the Gender Recognition Act because I was reminded of that because of the consultation that they did for the Sewell report. And I'm sure you've seen that they have to release the consultation as well.

**[00:17:04.550] - Mia**

And just like with the GRA stuff, the consultation, which had been very kind of diligently attended to by activists and by pressure groups as well, told an entirely different story, one that they were that were very pleased to ignore. So, I mean, I'm glad we have the consultation out there, but, yeah, it does a huge amount of harm.

**[00:17:27.040] - Georgios**

Yeah, it's so interesting, I think you've both already raised so many points that could literally we could probably spend hours talking about and I think especially sort of like the intersecting identities is such an important one, because I don't know if it's like a human mind thing where you kind of have to pick categories in order to, like, make the world a bit easier to understand or whatever, but like just by seeing, like, a black person, for example, on the committee for the report doesn't necessarily mean that the job is done, and it doesn't necessarily mean that that Black person will have the same experiences about the most impacted by the Sewell Report. And it's really interesting, like I think any conversation I've had about this always starts with, like a smile and a laugh because everyone is like it's just a sick joke. Like, what did we expect? Like, this government is shit. So we just expected a really badly curated report.

**[00:18:23.350] - Georgios**

But then it does get really infuriating because you realize. Yeah, like, fair enough. We might have sort of like the critical attitude towards it to be like, OK, this is this is clearly not great - who's going to use it? But then you do remember that people are going to use it and then people are going to use it to appease their conscience to start with and also to justify their racist behaviours and the racist system, because there are microsystems everywhere and they're like, you know, our schools, our communities, our neighborhoods, our workplaces and all kind of stuff.

**[00:18:59.650] - Georgios**

So, you know, I think it does become concerning when you start feeling like, crap, is this this is a tool that is going to be used against us? Yet another tool, actually, you know, and we both mentioned sort of like the double whammy of being queer and being Black or being a person of colour. I would just be interested to hear a bit more about sort of like that side of things in terms of, you know, as Cat mentioned, the report doesn't do a very good job of like going into detail and sort of like explaining what it means for, like, people of intersecting identities.

**[00:19:43.480] - Georgios**

And I would just be really interested to hear your your thoughts on that and like from sort of like a queer lens, what does it mean for queer people of colour and queer Black people in the UK and Scotland?

**[00:19:59.110] - Cat**

Personally, for me, and this is personal, my personal feeling about it is the fact that, everybody always says the problem, you know, this report is basically saying the problem isn't here, it's not us not to do with us. Right. And everybody looks at at the moment what's going on in the States. I can put this report being a queer person as kind of and this is quite harsh, kind of opposed to like almost me now living in North Korea.

**[00:20:33.590] - Cat**

Because the police already stop us. You know, the statistics, basically, we get stopped more per head than other people and everybody thinks so it's not it's not Britain, it's just the states. Well, that's very clearly not true. What worries me and concerns me about this particular report in impacting queer and LGBTQ plus is you've already got black and brown people who aren't quite sure of how they fit in, where they fit in.

**[00:21:13.500] - Cat**

They're struggling with these things, you know, then which then leads on to mental health issues, physical issues, psychological issues. And you've effectively just been told by your government that you do not matter. So for me. You've now got a whole bunch of people who are already on the edge just trying to work out. You know, am I okay to be me and this government has pretty much just told you no. You're not and so what is what are then the effects of that, because that's the cause, but they're not following up with the effects.

**[00:21:54.500] - Cat**



And the effects, of course, is going to be more depression, more mental anxiety, more mental issues, you know, more abuse as these kids, especially on the streets, try to make money to be themselves. It's going to be more being put in a box. And for me, all of that is problematic because you through this report, you've added to the issues. You've caused an even bigger issue and you're walking away and going like, oh, that was a great job done. Fantastic. Let's go. And who's going to pick up the pieces? And that's what I'm concerned about.

**[00:22:31.420] - Mia**

Yeah, I hear you, I hear you massively and I mean, I feel deeply and agree with everything you said, I think what I'll say is something that's slightly different so that we get like because I can't say what you said any better basically. And I'm going to talk a bit about, I suppose, what it's like in life to hold both identities. And, you know, I know my own positionality. I'm a bi racial cis woman. So that's where I kind of speak to from this and.

**[00:23:06.070] - Mia**

I think one of the easiest ways to kind of boil it down is I don't think people realize we don't hold these identities that every day or in every situation you have to make a set of choices. And that's something that people understand. It's something that people of color and Black folks understand to varying degrees. And it's just more when there were two things to think about all the time, or I suppose actually three things for Cat, because we're also women.

**[00:23:39.620] - Mia**

And, you know, in a typical day, I might be thinking, OK, I'm going to leave the house to go grocery shopping. How do I dress? Because if I wear something that's lowcut, I'm going to be catcalled or stared at or whatever. If I wear something that's too queer-coded, then I'm scared that something else will happen. And regardless, I know that because of my race, I could encounter things to do with that.

**[00:24:19.330] - Mia**

And what I tend to encounter because of my specific positionality, is, you know, I'm quite light skinned and so I tend to not experience people coming up to me and quote unquote, being racist. What I experience is you've gone grocery shopping and then it's evening and you're going to go to the pub with your friends and they're all queer. And there's a couple of people who have not met before and they're white. And you sit down and during the conversation later on in the evening, there's some discussion or some point made and you just think, well, you also think I'm white.



**[00:24:55.660] - Mia**

And so you then hear people being racist in front of you, which is very weird. But the thing with queerness as well is that sometimes it feels more invisible. And sometimes one of the hardest things about being queer is the fact that people don't know. So then you've got to think, well, do I mention it? Am I going to be thought of as unprofessional? You know, I used to worry as a student, should I take down the pride flag behind me if I have a Zoom meeting?

**[00:25:27.460] - Mia**

Because what people are going to say or think. But then at the same time, even though you kind of suffer in your kind of invisibility or from erasure at the same time, it protects you in a certain way. And obviously, race and ethnicity works completely differently in terms of how the world perceives you. So I think there's something about holding both of those identities where you're having to constantly have those conversations with yourself, having to make your choices about which way you jump and if I'm kind of hoping I explain myself decently.

**[00:26:04.030] - Mia**

But the ways in which you're pulled is different for each of those identities. And that is a lot of mental gymnastics. And the final thing I'll say on it is that obviously impacts your everyday life and some of the ways that I've explained. But I think there's also a bigger and more overarching story about how you choose to live, which is presented much more often, kind of, you know, increasingly to people who hold more and more and more marginalized identities, which is all you going to choose to assimilate and make this one facet of you that's quite small and make yourself smaller in a way and put those identities in a certain box, which all those phrases of you sound quite negative.

**[00:26:55.210] - Mia**

And I don't mean it that way. It's just I've chosen the other path. But I understand why people choose the path to prioritize other things in their life, especially because of the situations were in. But then, that's the other choice to make, which is no, I'm actually going to lean into this. I'm actually going to make it a thing. I'm actually going to, you know, commit to it. And that comes at a huge amount of risk.

**[00:27:16.990] - Mia**

And somehow we're constantly having to make that choice about the way we live. So those are my reflections, I think.

**[00:27:24.070] - Cat**

Can I just jump on there quickly for exactly what you were talking about, that pull about who you are, who you know, it's almost like every day you wake up and it's like, OK, who but which version of myself am I going to be today? Am I going to allow myself to be today? And I live in the south side of Glasgow and obviously we're still wearing masks. And the other day I went to the supermarket and I went to the post office and I had on a rainbow colored flag mask.

**[00:27:53.740] - Cat**

I'm minding my own business, you know, headphones and whatever. And I went to supermarket and it's fine. This couple watched me putting my groceries in or whatever and off I trotted down the road and I went and stood up in line for the post office. And the woman taps me on the shoulder, so I take my headphones out and she says, you should be ashamed of yourself. And I'm like, eh?. You know, and she goes like very straight so everybody in the line or maybe seven people in the line waiting to go in, I'm about three down from the back.

**[00:28:29.250] - Cat**

And she says very loudly again, for the entire length to start looking around, you should be ashamed of yourself. I'm like, exactly what should I be ashamed of? And she said, and this is so true, she said, well, it's not enough that you're Black, but, you know, you're one of them and I'm like one of them what? This is 2021. And I literally stood there in that moment and I thought, you know, you've got all sorts of things prattling through your head and all I could think as these things are prattling through my head is don't answer back and don't do anything.

**[00:29:06.700] - Cat**

Because if she calls the police, I'm Black. And that was the only kind of thought process in the very front of my head, I was so angry and upset, I was shaking. And it's that moment in time that you kind of see people in front of you and behind you. You can almost feel them like take a step back or step forward so that you're isolated in this bubble of pain by yourself. And this was last week. So I'm standing there, you know, purple hair, mask on, minding my own business, and just because I choose to put on a rainbow flag mask and I you know, it's not like I get up every morning, paint it on the black is here is nothing I can do about it.

**[00:29:51.920] - Cat**

I got that. And then feeling quite smug with herself and her husband off the event. And I just kind of stood there like, and you have that split second of I should answer her back, followed by this other split second of if I answer her, that's the thing, the person who's going to call the police and I'm going to end up in jail



today. And I literally came home. And it was one of those moments where I was like, why is there not a boxing bag in my house?

**[00:30:21.070] - Cat**

And instead what I did was I tried to carry on as normal. I went downstairs. I went to put garbage out and I ended up bursting into tears. I am a grown woman. And I normally can deal with these things, but that came so far out of left field that I didn't actually know what to do. And also it was the thing of nobody turned around, said to her, you shouldn't be speaking to her like that. And then when I did say, excuse me, of course, she goes, of course, she's a foreigner.

**[00:30:55.060] - Cat**

Well, no, I'm not a foreigner. I've been here for 20 years and I pay taxes like everybody else. You know, and so for me, you're just going to I feel like you're going to escalate and we're just going to get more and more people who are queer or who are intersectional are going to end up in these situations where you have got to make a choice. Do you defend yourself or do you stand there and let the hate wash over you and go home and burst into tears and deal with it then?

**[00:31:27.240] - Cat**

And I just kind of feel this is broad daylight, I'm minding my own business and I get this.

**[00:31:32.980] - Mia**

Yeah, I mean, I'm deeply sorry that that happened to you firstly and also yeah, I mean there are many people who feel they can act with impunity, with total impunity and. While the Sewell report has many effects in many different spheres and on many different scales, that interpersonal scale is one which clearly, you know, is at the front of your mind and should be at the front of all of our minds because someone who watches the 10 o'clock news and that's it sort of thing.

**[00:32:11.970] - Mia**

I mean, a lot of people don't even do that, right? But somebody who's got quite a like surface level interaction with the news and a general sense, which is I would say most people, to be honest, like. It doesn't take much to fuel misinformation, it doesn't take much to give people the completely wrong impression and of course, to just, you know, to just reinforce what they believe anyway. But, yeah, I mean, I'm quite, I'm not pleased that what I just described had such a poignant example from recently in your mind, but.



**[00:32:53.560] - Mia**

Yeah.

**[00:32:55.710] - Georgios**

I mean, it's absolutely disgusting, that would happen and as you said, like it's freaking 2021, like, you know, we've been have we we are having those conversations, I think, like you like honestly, I feel like people sometimes live in a different world where they don't realize what has happened in the last two years, like the outrage and what has been going on and the demands and and, you know, the immediate need for sort of like cultural shift.

**[00:33:30.210] - Georgios**

So when you when you come out with examples like that, I'm like, ah, like where where are you coming from? Like, what is going on? And, you know, I think just just the sheer emotional and mental state on that one occasion, which is why I am starting to believe one of many is just insane. You know, just having to go through that pretty much on the daily as it's just not human exhaustion is what it is.

**[00:34:06.480] - Cat**

It's exhausting. You just want to live my life, you know, and I'm pretty sure that you get this from any queer BIPOC. We just want to be us. We just want to live our lives. And the mere fact. It wasn't how I was dressed because I was dressed quite decently concerned and I was going to the supermarket, it literally was the front that I was wearing a mask and the mask just happened to be the rainbow. And I had my LGBTQ plus on it and whatever.

**[00:34:35.820] - Cat**

But then after after I got over being upset, I've pretty much worn the mask the entire time since then because that's that's kind of like my way of taking back myself, because I kind of think I have two choices. I can either let that affect me in such a way that I literally lock myself in my house and never I'm seen of again or I do the opposite, which is what I've chosen to do. And and yeah, every time I put it on and I step outside, I kind of think, Jesus, am I going to get attacked again?

**[00:35:14.610] - Cat**

But there's also that fear, the activists in me where I'm constantly telling people, don't let people put you inside the box, you're the color of your skin that you're so much more and so. If I'm constantly saying that to people, I'm constantly doing podcasts about refugees and communities and that kind of thing, then I

definitely can't let some person who's quite narrow minded and clearly still living in 1930 decided to to stop me from being me.

**[00:35:48.940] - Cat**

Like, I'm not going to go and color my hair black and morph into looking like everybody else, you know what I mean? So if anything, I'm no, I just finished saying to my hairdresser, so we need to go brighter. It seems to me it's annoying people, you know...

**[00:36:07.090] - Georgios**

It's working.

**[00:36:08.140] - Cat**

Yeah, exactly. So you do have to, I think. But again, that inner strength comes from years of having to deal with. And so years of, you know, building up to know, your narrow minded words, don't - shouldn't stop me from being who I am, but there are so many younger kids who. If I were younger, if I were, I don't know, 18, 19, 20, that probably would have been something to push me very close to the edge. Yeah, and I don't think that people should have that power.

**[00:36:47.170] - Georgios**

Yeah, one hundred percent and it's one of those situations where, you know, it sounds like you build resilience that sort of mental power to have to have your moment and have a breakdown and then sort of like be able to carry on, but it's one of those things that you've never asked for. You know, you never asked to be sort of like that resilience. Maybe maybe you don't want to be that resilient. Maybe, you know, you should be as vulnerable as everyone else.

**[00:37:16.180] - Georgios**

But they they get to be vulnerable because they don't have to be concerned with things like that. And, you know, I'm not Black, I'm not a person of colour, but being queer, like and having similar, I guess, like fears in terms of like stepping out into the public sphere and how that's perceived and oh my God, am I'm moving my hands too much. Or maybe I'm wearing the wrong color or whatever and getting like those comments from people really pushes you back.

**[00:37:47.050] - Georgios**

And then it's almost like it harms you in ways that you can't really tell at the time. Like it just becomes an accumulation of like shame and fear in your head that, you know, it takes a takes a lot of, like,

introspection to acknowledge what it does to you and then to be able to rebuild from it. I mean, again, I'm absolutely appalled that that's happened, like I'm also in the south side of Glasgow and, you know, actually it leads to sort of like a couple of points I wanted to raise in the podcast and get your opinions on. One was sort of like and, you know, thinking about Scotland and Glasgow there's almost like that perception, that doesn't apply because the Glaswegians are so welcoming and Scottish people are so open and you know, debatable. But I mean, that example has shown the exact opposite is true. And but, you know, there's almost like the escapism of like it's not as down in England, you know, they're the racists they're this and they're that. And I feel like maybe sometimes Scotland gets a guilt free card when actually there's a lot of work to be done there.

**[00:39:05.710] - Georgios**

And then the other point was, you said something about somebody who's there to pick up the pieces, you know, and we're talking about intersectional identities and communities. And what really saddens me is like in that whole line, like no one actually stepped in to say, listen, you're bang out of order. And what saddens me further, sometimes we see queer people not doing that for black people and people of colour. And I find it quite upsetting in a way, because as a queer person, you should know the kind of like trauma and discrimination and fear that you go through and how that could potentially apply to other identities.

**[00:39:51.730] - Georgios**

So, what would be a natural response from me, would be to intervene and be like, what the hell are you talking about? And so I'm just wondering about you know, picking up the pieces is the queer community, a place where you can find that solidarity, or do you feel like you're also excluded from that. Sorry, I've just given you like two massive questions and, you know, but it's up to you what to answer.

**[00:40:20.190] - Cat**

You just read threw it at me. (laughter)

**[00:40:21.610] - Georgios**

Yeah. (laughter)

**[00:40:22.720] - Cat**

I'm going to answer the first one for a living in Scotland. As I said, I've been here 19, 20 years and I came to Scotland in 2001 and then refused to leave, clearly (laughter). I left and then I came back. There's something about Scotland when you're not originally from here. There's definitely something about



Glasgow. However, I kind of think that Scotland does hide, you know, there's the oh, we don't have that issue here. There's definitely down south.

**[00:40:55.780] - Cat**

But the thing is, is here, as I've just clearly shown, I can also give examples of going outside my house. And it's almost like the post office. I just need to stop going to the post office. But you know, during the aftermath of George Floyd, when people were protesting this kind of thing, I got called a n\*\*\*\*r. So and not once, but three times in a row from different different individuals, and so I definitely think that Scotland has an issue with with race and it thing that if Scotland is looking to branch out and be known in the wider world, they're going to have to stop being the ostrich and hiding their heads in the sand and actually address the issues that they are.

**[00:41:47.210] - Cat**

During the entire protests and stuff, I have friends who are equally queer, equally black. Some of them are lighter skinned than I am. Some of them are darker skinned than I am. And literally there were saying do not come into town whatever you do, because, you know, there are gangs of guys coming after us and we're trying to get away and it was very scary. I was like, right, I'm going to call the police. And they're like, what's the police going to do?

**[00:42:10.730] - Cat**

Police are just standing up there. So, you know, I definitely think that there's an issue here that needs to be addressed and the government needs to stop pretending it isn't because it actually is. So that's number one. Number two, what can people do? I kind of understand on one side of the coin why people don't want to get involved, especially if they themselves are queer. They themselves are feeling that anxiety because they don't want the person to turn on them.

**[00:42:38.790] - Cat**

You know, if somebody is well, that's you know, I've got a pretty big mouth and I will literally be like, what the hell are you doing? But I think that there's so many people who are dealing with their own problems, coming to grips with being who they truly are, scared of their own shadow while they're dealing with that entire process that if they're in line and they're seeing something like that, you know, you kind of have that fight within yourself.

**[00:43:07.800] - Cat**



Do I get involved? Do I not get involved? If I get involved, this person going to turn on me, you know, what is this person going to see when they look at me? So on one hand, I understand that. But on the other hand, I'm also like, stop being a frickin coward. And just jump in and help somebody else, because one day it could be you and you will hope that somebody jumps and helps you.

**[00:43:32.910] - Cat**

But do I feel part of the community? Not necessarily, because I think that you get to a point where you don't quite know who to trust and which is a sad thing to say. I have friends who are gay, straight, bi, queer, you name it. And depending on who I'm with, I adopt parts of my persona to me, more or less so, for instance, I've got very, very good friends who kind of live on the other side of Queen's Park, and when I'm with them, I kind of go into the protector role because they're quite soft individuals.

**[00:44:11.270] - Cat**

And if anybody says boo to them, I'm pretty sure they're about to burst into tears. So I kind of go into that and you can say whatever you want to say to me, but do not touch that person. If I meet other people, I maybe ease that down a bit. But in general, I don't know that I necessarily feel part of the community. I just usually. Go about my business and try to not put myself inside that box at the end of the day, and here's something that people need to remember.

**[00:44:41.710] - Cat**

At the end of the day, you do not choose the color of your skin. You do not choose what you can choose your personality. You don't choose the color of your skin and you don't choose who you are. So, you know, if somebody is deciding to go after me because of the color of my skin, because of a mask, I'm wearing because of whatever, there's not a lot I can do about it. It's not like I get up every morning.

**[00:45:05.100] - Cat**

They go like, oh, today I'm going to be brown. Let's put it on. You know, it's pretty much here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year until I end up back in Mother Earth. Sometimes I kind of think I really wish that the community was more cohesive and together, but I've made my peace with it and it is what it is. So I can't hang around the people that I know are legit down with and people who maybe can't quite work out. Well, that's their problem.

**[00:45:39.800] - Mia**

Yeah, for sure. I think my kind of my experience with the community as a whole, I mean, I think it I think we will definitely find and form our own communities with that within that particular one, because that is



how you can so easily find people who would also consider themselves part of the broader community, but who have got completely different, maybe moral and social values to me or are looking for that, who are striving for adoptions of heteronormativity wherever possible. right?

**[00:46:20.840] - Mia**

Which is completely different from a local communities I occupy. I do feel like I've been more part of it and feel more comfortable being part of it because I was in uni quite recently and that was a very thriving community there. But obviously, as you get older and you need those spaces, your circles shrink. And I'm also somebody who, for various reasons, is a huge proponent of a kind of member of a chosen family. And that's massive in my life.

**[00:46:52.160] - Mia**

So that's the kinship that I've chosen and that is incredibly powerful and has such transformative qualities and that I've written quite a lot about that in my academic work. But. At the same time, no matter how much you curate your surroundings, which, by the way, a lot of people who don't hold much identities are like, wow, you know, people in their echo chambers. And look, I fully you know, there are such things as echo chambers.

**[00:47:31.800] - Mia**

Absolutely. But echo chambers and safe spaces for community are not the same thing. But I mean, an example I always think of when we talk about this is I was in New York with my best friend, who's a white gay man, an American, and we were there and we were hanging out and deciding what we were going to do. And we were recently twenty one. So we were going to go clubbing and we basically had to have this very, very pragmatic Google and conversation because we essentially decided, well, we can't really go to a gay club, actually, because they won't let me in because they only want...

**[00:48:15.960] - Mia**

I mean, if my friend was black, they wouldn't let him in either, you know, I mean, they're off to very certain person. So we're like, OK, well, we can't actually go to Hell's Kitchen or you can't do the plastic things really, because we don't want that to be a problem. So then we're like, whoa, where are the queer spaces, the intersectional queer spaces? And failing that, where were the lesbian bars essentially?

**[00:48:40.770] - Mia**

And what we discovered on that search was that there was only one lesbian bar remaining in the entirety of Manhattan.



**[00:48:48.120] - Cat**

Whoa.

**[00:48:49.230] - Mia**

One. And I don't want to guess the number of gay bars in Manhattan, but it's a lot. And we went to this lesbian bar. But I mean, just to say that they were some in Brooklyn, but still not a large number, but in the whole of Manhattan, one that remains that's pretty famous. I mean, it's been there for ages, but we went there.

**[00:49:11.580] - Mia**

And firstly, it was completely I mean, it's completely packed. It was a small space. But we noticed two main things. The first is that it absolutely didn't have an exclusive lesbian clientele because the clientele were people like me and my friends who knew that because of their, intersectional friend groups would not be welcomed as a family, as a mini community in a gay club. So they had not bothered. So there were plenty of like, you know, trans folks there and non-binary, folks, women, as well as queer women of varying identities, I'm sure.

**[00:49:49.050] - Mia**

And that was kind of really nice, actually, but the other thing that we noticed is that the bouncers and the security guards were, you know, I hate to be presumptive, but they were all straight men, very obviously had a lot of the bartenders were also straight men. And that was really bizarre. And some of them were really nice and some of them were less nice. And we stayed there for a bit. And after a while, we decided that we could have a perfectly gay old time with some champagne, if you like.

**[00:50:21.450] - Mia**

Might as well go extra frivolous. But, you know, it's just those sorts of situations. And you just think, why is there not a space for me? Like, well, you know, for me as a queer woman, I mean, these are things that I try not to I honestly try not to dwell on that much. That's just kind of depressing. But I know that within the wider queer women community, you know, biphobia is completely rampant.

**[00:50:50.490] - Mia**

So the amount of women who are actually interested in you is vastly reduced because they only won a Gold Star lesbian or whatever. And then I also have to contend to not conforming to Western beauty standards for a number of reasons. And that also completely reduces your dating pool. And one of my



big, you know, things that I rant about all the time is the kind of false primacy of sex and romantic relationships within the queer community. And trust me, I know exactly why it's there.

**[00:51:26.370] - Mia**

And those rights and those pleasures are completely hard won. And I don't at all are not saying that they're not important. But what you end up with is a situation a bit like the bars in Hell's Kitchen. I mean, this is why QuTo exists, right? It exists so that you are not constantly in a space that is only filled with alcohol is only with the promise of sexual encounter. And especially when you're young and you're trying to figure that shit out.

**[00:51:52.590] - Mia**

It's not particularly welcoming to know that you've got to go from zero to 100. And that's why that whole friendship angle is so important and obviously is individually important to so many people. But it doesn't get the same coverage.

**[00:52:09.430] - Georgios**

Yeah, yeah, that's actually such an important conversation about spaces as well, ... I'm not from here either. Like I've been in Scotland for maybe like eight or nine years now. And just I guess, like coming from a different background whilst in the midst of, like, my queer liberation and coming to terms with, like, my identity and all that kind of stuff to be presented with, I guess, what was the scene.

**[00:52:43.190] - Georgios**

And I'm using quotation marks this time, wasn't particularly useful, you know, in many ways. I was like, wow, these people are really OK with who they are. And that's great. But the same time, I was like, wait, so what if I don't want to have sex and I want to have a conversation with someone and see how they overcome something or whatever, and there just wasn't the right setting. Even I remember like actually going to like the student union, the LGBT student union at my uni.

**[00:53:17.030] - Georgios**

And I was just like it was literally a bunch of gay men that we're going to go for drinks later and you could already tell who was going back home with whom. So like it just felt a bit like what more would you guys like? Come on. And so the conversation about spaces is so important. And I think just from the way like you were talking about, sort of like your experiences with the community and stuff I really struggle with is how it feels like spaces are for other people to give access to us and something that we're really being mindful.



**[00:53:57.050] - Georgios**

And we're trying to have this conversation with QuTo as well, being a predominantly white board. I'm just really struggling with the idea of, like, you are the white gatekeeper or you're the queer gatekeeper, all that kind of stuff. And then you sort of like decide who gets access to your space. But how instead, how do we reflect on how do we make, like, organically create spaces are for all of us.

**[00:54:22.010] - Georgios**

So it doesn't seem like, you know, a space is by default white or gay, but it's actually like open space. Yeah. And I don't know if you have any thoughts about it. It's it's just such a confusing realm for me, but that maybe because I'm not the brightest in the bunch... (laughter)

**[00:54:48.680] - Mia**

I have one thought I might give now only because it's like to do with the same story that I just told. But, you know, I'm sure Cats overall ideas are going to be better than mine.

**[00:55:02.990] - Cat**

Not necessarily! (laughter)

**[00:55:06.380] - Mia**

When we were kind of when my friend and I were sitting in his apartment and saying, why was there only one lesbian bar, I don't understand. We then, like, Googled it because we were a bit like this is someone's got to have written an article about this. I don't understand. And essentially, it seems like what happens is the kind of cycle is that a new space will open and they will say, OK, this is going to be a I mean, take your pick from marginalised identities.

**[00:55:38.150] - Mia**

But let's just use the example of a like QTPOC space, right, it's going to be like queer people of color, right? Right. So say you say it's going to be that could be lesbian bar, could be like whatever. You then because of various various various factors, which there are too many to list here, and it's all very complex, but you don't immediately get this huge, huge swell of business, right, from a community that is historically marginalized.

**[00:56:13.570] - Mia**



You don't even go looking for these things, probably has less economic power, you know, probably has a more dangerous time in the streets going to your venue. Whatever it is, you've got a situation where you're not actually making that much money. In places like New York, the rents are ridiculous. So you then say, OK, well, let's open it as an intersectional space and let's open it as more of an everything goes, everyone is welcome with the emphasis on inclusivity, which is what made me think of it, Georgios, because that's what you were just thinking of.

**[00:56:49.480] - Mia**

The problem is that as soon as you do that, because of the relative privilege, purchasing power, the sense of entitlement, community kind of strength, whatever you want to say of white gay men in that queer space almost immediately is dominated by those people. And within probably a few months, it has turned into another white gay cis male and the American context, middle class establishment. And then it's completely, it's gone as quickly as that.

**[00:57:28.030] - Mia**

And so. I guess my thought is that in order to create some space that has even a relative sense of equity, you actually do have to make it relatively exclusive for marginalized communities because you can rely on the fact that people who don't belong to those communities will always come anyway. Or the ideal thing. Right. Just like the only time straight people should be in a queer club. As far as I'm concerned, when you're deemed to be an ally by your queer friends and you're invited to go with them, you know, and then we can have, you know, the white people can come, but only (laughter) in that capacity.

**[00:58:12.550] - Mia**

And that's probably how you end up having to do it, because, you know, just like saying to a roomful of people, we need more black senior management managers in our organization, just like saying that out loud doesn't mean that suddenly they're black senior managers. You've got to hone in. I think we've got to hone in. (laughter)

**[00:58:33.960] - Cat**

I completely. (laughter) I completely. I'm just laughing. I completely agree with you, Mia, especially. Yeah. We do have to kind of make space for our own. I have a story which is going to be quite funny, because when I lived in Mexico, obviously everybody in Mexico is straight. You know, men have a wife with kids and the mistress with kids and they kind of live like in houses, maybe two avenues apart from each other kind of thing.



**[00:59:04.830] - Cat**

And yet my friend who was gay and I couldn't quite work out how this works because I said, how are you not been stoned or something? As you know, Roman Catholic Mexican? And he picked me up one night and said, right, you want to party? And I'm like, well, that depends. I don't really want to get stoned to death or anything. But, you know, I'd like to come back the same way that I'm leaving.

**[00:59:27.090] - Cat**

He goes like, OK, you're never going to believe this. He took me to a club, which Monday to Friday is a straight club. Friday night to Sunday, it's a gay club. And so I had passed this place so many times, I'm kind of like, nope, nope, not from me, you know, middle and upper and rich men. And you can tell them in their suits and whatever, all hanging out the door.

**[00:59:55.340] - Cat**

The night that we went, there were two massive gold cocks standing at the door. I do not know where they pulled them from. I was very curious as to where they hide these during Monday to Friday kind of thing. But we went in and it was all, you know, a gay bartenders, no shirts, you know, lesbians in very tiny little bras. They had taken the doors off the bathrooms. Like, this was like a weekly thing, the music was hopping, people were going crazy, I had the best time ever, got very, very drunk.

**[01:00:33.740] - Cat**

But yeah, and then I kind of thought, you know, you kind of think to yourself, great, did that really happen? And so we went mad the Monday - doors back on, no cocks in sight, bartender like buttoned up to here. And I was just like, what the absolute hell just happened. And I kind of think that sometimes, you know, I've lived in New York and stuff and it was the same thing. We used to hit the Village because there were certain restaurants we knew we could go to and we didn't go to clubs and we went to coffee shops because you knew that you were accepted. And I kind of think that if you're looking for a space, yes, you do have to advertise it, but I also kind of think that, yes, you're right, Mia, you do have to have allies because those allies, you're going to the whatever venture is just going to go under or it's going to be overpopulated by the other.

**[01:01:27.740] - Cat**

Right. And then there's no room for you again. And I also think that this has to do with. Even using that basis of of Mexico is a perfect example, even if you you have people who were saying, you know what? Tonight is going to be, you know QPOC, or it's going to be all queer any queer, don't care, wants to come, they spend some money, have a conversation, get off on the dance floor, do whatever, and I think that

that's what needs to happen, because the minute that you kind of systematically just put those things in place and you say, I am this. It's like the venture is never going to work.

**[01:02:18.720] - Georgios**

I'm honestly still laughing about the whole Mexico incident (laughter). I'm just thinking that is quite the operation to achieve every week.

**[01:02:29.150] - Cat**

It was crazy, but it really worked. What freaked me out was that people I'd seen in the gym that were obviously ring on fingers, you know, or whatever, wearing their shirts off, getting off. And I was just like it was literally a little bit like feel like Alice in Wonderland. I was like, well, what what is going on right now? That's when I needed to go back because I was like, nah, that wasn't the place. And then we went back and he was like, you see, it is the place. And I'm like, what the was wild.

**[01:03:00.630] - Georgios**

Yeah, that's absolutely wild.

**[01:03:02.030] - Cat**

I just I still to this day have not found out where they store all the stuff. They get the doors off of the bathroom so fast.A

**[01:03:09.920] - Georgios**

Very meticulous operation.

**[01:03:12.780] - Cat**

And this is what needs to happen here. (laughter)

**[01:03:16.050] - Georgios**

Yeah, exactly. (laughter) Yeah. I mean, you know, that would be the dream. Take every single straight venue and turn it into a gay one - that be absolutely ideal. But yeah, I think, you know, thinking about Glasgow, like I do know - and I don't know Mia what you think of London. Just thinking about like, you know, that what we call the queer spaces in Glasgow; it's a very limited queer scene.

**[01:03:46.040] - Georgios**



It's a very exclusive queer scene that very much appeals to a specific audience. And it's very sexualized and very sort of like substance heavy for a reason, I think. And just thinking about like QuTo and sort of like the alternative that we're trying to provide is trying to create a space that people feel like they can walk in and they feel like they can belong without any sort of like performativity or any sort of like additional kind of like, you know, oh the space is not for me, I'll have to like have this fight to claim it or I'll have to like, look in a certain way or I have to be after a certain thing to feel part. And I just I really, really appreciate both of your contributions around that, especially in terms of like, you know, ring-fencing sort of like the spaces for people and sort of like being more proactive about how you approach that. I've finding that a lot more recently where like I'm just having like various conversations at work and personal life and all kind of stuff where people will make a statement X, for example, you know, antiracist or I am like pro queer or anything like that.

**[01:05:06.050] - Georgios**

And I'm like, OK, so beyond like your social posts, like on social media, like, what is it exactly that you do like on a day to day basis that actually solidifies that, you know. And I don't know if I'm maybe being a bit too harsh, like I've kind of like had really difficult conversations with people and have fallen out with people a few times. But I'm like, yeah, I don't know. It's just one of those things.

**[01:05:29.060] - Georgios**

I'm like, if I don't see your day to day practice of it, for example, if you're not able to, like, challenge your workplace or if you're not able to, like, call out your friend or all that kind of stuff, like, are you really doing the work that is needed? And again, this one is a minefield. But I think my callout from this is sort of like us queer people and sort of like with the whole notion of like a chosen family, in the context of race and the conversations we're having about race in the UK and Scotland right now, I think we just need to do more. We need to start having those conversations with each other. I think maybe the the days of, like, looking out for the Black token in the group to sort of like educate us or provide the information are gone. And actually the information is there. There is a lot of work that we need to be doing ourselves.

**[01:06:28.920] - Georgios**

And, you know, it's about time we do it because it's quite hard to feel excluded both by the state and then also feeling excluded by what you consider your community. So as I said, my message out of this is just like to actually perform that allyship, to actually go out there and educate and create the change that we're looking for.

**[01:06:55.060] - Mia**

Yeah, I mean, I think I think one of the issues, obviously, I agree with you totally. I think one of the issues that I've been thinking about quite a lot recently is the fact that white folks bring their own understandings of the world to everything as we all bring our understandings of the world to everything. But what I mean in this context is that the way you know white people really aren't touched by structural and institutional, interpersonal, organisational racism, the way they look at the world is, you know, oh, I'm just living my life, right?

**[01:07:35.990] - Mia**

Then they get introduced to privilege. And the ones who take that on board and begin to understand that privilege think, oh, I see, I live what could be described in relative terms as the good life, you know, I mean, I'm OK. I'm not impacted by this. But the thing that people seem to get wrong is they seem to think, oh, my God, you know, obviously white fragility abounds. And so people think that the goal of anti-racism or the goal of racial equality is to bring everyone else to their level.

**[01:08:10.090] - Mia**

So it's in my life I don't experience discomfort on a regular basis. Therefore, racial equality means that no one else should have to experience discomfort on a regular basis. My friends! In fact, what racial equity is, is everyone experiencing some level of discomfort on a regular basis for quite a long time until such utopian future when we've all been uncomfortable enough and thus done work for long enough, that maybe in the end no one will be uncomfortable. But but that's the thing.

**[01:08:49.370] - Mia**

I think people think like there's no use in me now making myself uncomfortable because we want everyone to be comfortable, It's like, no no no - you need to be uncomfortable. And obviously, I'm not trying to invalidate the feelings of people who are experiencing discomfort, because I think saying to people, oh, no, it's not discomfort doesn't help because it is. However, obviously it's a new feeling to these people. And that's part of what I find so genuinely interesting is that I just watch these people and I think, God, you've really, really never felt like this in your life.

**[01:09:32.210] - Mia**

And it's a bit like I mean, sorry to make a slightly flippant comparison but it reminds me of the study they did where they made men like experience the pain of like periods.

**[01:09:41.630] - Cat**

Yes. (laughter)



**[01:09:42.110] - Mia**

And childbirth and stuff. And all these men were like, no, this is too much for me. This is horrible. It's like, yes, but this is exactly what women deal with or people with uteruses I should say deal with every month, right? And so it's a similar thing here.

**[01:09:56.780] - Mia**

It's like, yeah, people are really, really obsessed with being kind of impacted in the least way possible. And people will do the craziest shit for an easy life. They really will. So I guess people just need to abandon that idea.

**[01:10:14.940] - Cat**

You know, I'm now at the point where, for instance, obviously in Glasgow, we've got COP 26 coming to Glasgow for the climate crisis. The climate crisis affects predominantly marginalized communities and out of those marginalized communities it's women who suffer. So you would think with this on its head that the government, in their wisdom, would maybe, I don't know, put a marginalized woman on the panel, the committee. But no, they have not.

**[01:10:42.590] - Cat**

Of course, if not after that report, there's no need and racism is solved.

**[01:10:48.570] - Cat**

Why do we need to? I've decided and I said this in a panel last night, my exhibition Harbinger is about looking at exactly that, the climate crisis in marginalized communities and especially women, because domestic abuse, racism, racial abuse, having to change our hair to fit into a Eurocentric society skin bleach is to try to look a little bit more whiter. And yet this all ends up in medical issues such as alopecia, skin cancers. And then obviously you throw the things out and it affects the earth.

**[01:11:22.410] - Cat**

Right. And I said in this medium, as I said, here's the thing. This is where I am now at. I am a very proud queer marginalised woman of color. I'm Black. And if you're not going to help me, let me in through the front door, then I'm going through going through the back door. I'm going to come down through the chimney or I'm going to come in through a window. So the choice is really up to you.

**[01:11:48.840] - Cat**

You're either going to put it in my big mouth in your organization where I can help, or I'm going to have my big mouth outside your organization and I'm going to help other people. But either way, I've made my stand and this is what I'm going to do now. Yes, that sounds like fighting words and oh, my God, she's against the government. Oh, my God, she's against Britain. Why is she here? Blah, blah, blah.

**[01:12:11.580] - Cat**

No, it's not. It's the fact that if you're in that privileged position and you recognize that you're in a position and you choose not to help because, oh, my God, I don't want it to impact on my own life. And it's not going to impact on your own life. But maybe saving someone's life should be a thing.

**[01:12:36.320] - Mia**

Mm hmm. Yeah, no, I think you're so right, and that's definitely the approach that I've taken to the work that I do. It's been really interesting going from. Being a student activist, which I mean, by the way, it takes you years to even use that term, I use it descriptively, but like it's really something going from that position where obviously you're going in through the chimney, you go into the back door or you're literally just banging on all the doors and windows because there's no way even of getting in because you don't have the tools.

**[01:13:19.080] - Mia**

But like you go from that to, you know, the spaces that I'm now in are spaces where I'm becoming increasingly kind o, I don't know, I find myself regularly surprised and shocked about how well what I say is received and how people come to me and say, oh, your insights are so useful, because I'm thinking this really is nothing more amazing than what any of my friends and colleagues would have said on a daily basis right? These are the conversations we have.

**[01:13:53.790] - Mia**

But, you know, taking HE as an example, within higher education, people don't let students into the room, let alone pull them, pull a chair up for them at the table. So the insights that they have just all completely kind of lost on them. And people wonder, with anti-racism in universities right now, if I was like, but where do I start? Or, you know, no one seems to know what X, Y, Z really means.

**[01:14:22.410] - Mia**

What should people do? But, you know, you're not getting out. You're probably some of these people, your two index fingers and slowly typing into Google like you're not doing the work. And that really



frustrates me, especially because sometimes the work is literally calling on the people who know, paying them for that time and giving them some sense of power and responsibility. That seems to be a real deficit there. And what that means is obviously I'm very kind of, you know, pleased to be where I am right now, grateful for that.

**[01:14:55.830] - Mia**

And I'm feel like I can make a difference. But there's always the thing in the back of my mind. I mean, POC imposter syndrome aside, which I definitely have, there's also the very real fact of well, the fact you think this is special is in itself a problem. And so then you think, well, now what? (laughter) Well, anyway, that's a rant on my current situation.

**[01:15:22.070] - Cat**

But, yeah, I think I mean, I completely understand because I was kind of one of the founders of the POC Collective in our University. Along with a friend of mine, we challenged the hierarchy to change some of the rules because I was like, well, listen, every every person of color in this university is a ghost; they don't speak, you take our money and then you treat us like shit, like, what is that about? And I go and we go into a meeting in an office.

**[01:15:48.470] - Cat**

And here is what happened to this meeting. There was one guy on his phone watching football from the weekend before, so he clearly cared. There was one person watching rugby on his phone from the weekend before. There was one other woman in the room other than me, and she was white and of hierarchy and didn't really give a shit. And they said to us, So we want you to tell us what to do. And I said, OK, so how much would you pay me?

**[01:16:16.900] - Cat**

Because you want my pain, you want my experiences, but you're sitting on a hundred grand a year, and yet you want me to give you everything for free, and I challenge the person who was telling me this. I said, well, here's the thing. Stop taking your salary for three months. You'll still be able to pay your bills, still come in and do your job, because right now you're not doing as far as I'm concerned. And that was the last meeting that we had with that office.

**[01:16:47.350] - Cat**

Because I was then seen as the angry black woman. And I said, you've not seen me angry yet. This is me actually being quite calm there, all these things that need to be systematically addressed and dealt with,



including your complaints procedure, especially if you're a person of color, especially if English is not your first language. No, no. The meeting is over. You're being quite aggressive and quite angry, and this is what you get repeatedly.

**[01:17:15.100] - Cat**

So I'm really impressed that you are in H-E because I think that there's so much work to be done. And when I came out of that meeting, I generally was depressed. I was like, wait, what just happened? How how am I not seeing this? But then I did a typical me. They wouldn't let me in the door. So I went around the windows. I went and spoke to lecturers, I got involved in other meetings that were going on.

**[01:17:40.030] - Cat**

I helped to change parts of the curriculum because. If you're a person of color and English is not your first language and you're getting a curriculum that is full of whiteness. Then why are you paying them as an international student twenty two grand a year for what? Why am I paying them as a as a domestic student ridiculous sums of money for what? I could sit in my house and teach myself, you know, so. Now, I'm really lucky, as I said, I'm about to start my Ph.D. three more years of my life to consider where my brain was when I said yes to that idea.

**[01:18:23.060] - Cat**

But the research I'm doing is very much POC, marginalised, community based. And I'm very lucky that I found allies who are willing to support me. I say allies because none of them are POC none of them are from marginalized communities, none of them are queer. Don't really know how it's going to play out. But so far they're allies and it's going well. So let it continue. But yeah, I think that we have to figure out ways between ourselves to be able to help each other, because if we keep beating on the organizations, nothing's going to happen. And in about five years, we're still going to have this very same conversation.

**[01:19:06.750] - Mia**

Yeah, I mean, I couldn't agree more. And like, when I was a student, decolonizing curriculum was the main thing that the group always part of did. And for all the reasons you say, it's hugely important and we can't be doing a lot of the work the universities want to do at the moment. This is one of my things I always say, but oh, we want to close the Black attainment gap, to close the BAME attainment gap.

**[01:19:31.670] - Mia**

OK, well, if you want to close that attainment gap but you address none of the curriculum concerns, then all you are doing is you are getting and I'm not I mean, I didn't think it would work. I don't think you can

close it without making those other changes. But say you managed to do that. People don't seem to understand. All you do then is you successfully apparently turned Black students into kind of white assimilated students. That's all you've done, because at the moment there's that quote unquote failing that failing, because the curriculum, the teaching, the marking, the racism, the harassment procedures, every single structure in that universities is literally designed with kind of colonizes in mind, literally, when it was designed by colonizers or with them in mind.

**[01:20:28.760] - Mia**

So no wonder people aren't doing as well. But people again, it comes back to this idea that people want the easy way out. And also just to say briefly, your experience in that meeting, I mean, it's not quite the same, which will be because I'm light skinned and was in a certain institution and had a certain amount of power. But I had a series of very, very frustrating meetings over last summer when I was still in my old institution.

**[01:20:55.490] - Mia**

And at the time I was a master's student and I was known for doing a lot of this work. So I was invited to a couple of kind of departmental meetings of various kind of faculties, departments, etc., that my work kind of touched on. And I ended up in a couple of these meetings where I was thinking, oh, my God, this is great. They've never had a big meeting like this before. They invited me to come along. You know, it's finally going to change. It's finally going to be something. And one of the ones that I went to in particular, I sort of said my piece, I suppose, whatever that was rambling, I'm sure. But I said my piece. And it was essentially an opportunity for the director of the entire centre department and a staff member who worked there who was high up but not an academic staff member. It was essentially their invitation to play devil's advocate with me and what I was saying to shreds.

**[01:21:50.030] - Mia**

But of course, it looked great because they invited me so we could have a debate. This is about a week after George Lloyd was murdered. And part of the discussion was meant to be, should we release a statement, you know, the rubbish, and went through this whole experience, which obviously at the time I was thinking, well, you know, whatever separate then afterwards thought that was really horrible. And one of the things that also happened afterwards is I received quite a lot of messages from junior research fellows, postdocs and PhD students who were on that call, who I knew outside of the school, who I had previously described as allies, I suppose in my mind, and certainly acted that way and in the interactions I've had with them.

**[01:22:33.530] - Mia**



And they all sent me messages afterwards, kind of like clockwork, saying you were treated disgustingly. I was so appalled, like that was terrible. You know, they don't speak for us kind of thing. It's like that's really interesting because I didn't hear any of you on the panel in the meeting and say, actually, we agree with her or I didn't hear any of that. So that's yeah, that's really interesting. And so, you know, did I start an argument with these people?

**[01:23:01.370] - Mia**

No. And some of them, it was really genuine. And I knew that they had a separate reason why they wouldn't have wanted to challenge those people. Different political reasons, different personal reasons. They had absolutely understand that. It comes back to what we were saying earlier about the people in line right in your situation, but there were other people where I was just like and I said to them, I really appreciate this message. I would have appreciated it even more if you'd said something at the time.

**[01:23:26.850] - Mia**

And I hope you'll do that the next time. But again. People want to be comfortable.

**[01:23:34.520] - Georgios**

It's hugely frustrating as I've been in many of those situations as well, just like sort of like experiencing it and like from an allyship point of view, trying to, like, in my old work in meetings and stuff would be like, you know, you can't possibly say that, it's a racist statement, like, you need to change, blah, blah, blah.

**[01:23:54.950] - Georgios**

And like, there's just such a silence in the room. It's almost like immediately you're into this vacuum where people just suddenly get paralyzed and they're like cannot compute how to react. And it's like, well, you know, you're in a certain environment. You're preaching a certain, like, you know, attitude and anti-racism work and all that kind of stuff. So why do, you know, just like jump in and actually do make it happen, like, you know?

**[01:24:24.980] - Georgios**

And I don't know. I think the last few points that you made were so invaluable in terms of like one the sort of like solidarity that we find among each other, two breaking down whatever like door window or whatever it is but you will clean a space, not table, and you will make decisions about it. And three, discomfort like I think I don't understand why everyone is so opposed to like these, you know, quote unquote, like negative feelings, like there they can be really productive and they can be really insightful.

**[01:25:02.120] - Georgios**

Discomfort is one of them. Anger is another one I like. I'm always described as sort of like angry or like aggro or anything like that. And I'm like, yeah, I know. And I want to like it's passion, it's a good thing. Like why do you want me to be so like blasé about everything? Like I know, there's certain issues I'm really passionate about and I will scream and shout, I'll get over it in five minutes.

**[01:25:24.050] - Georgios**

But during those five minutes you will have to pay attention because it's a critical issue. And, you know, I think there's a lot of conversations to be had about like British culture in there as well. And sort of like the diplomacy and the tact that people love in this country in the long like, you know, you get an email sometimes and it's like three pages long and you're like, right, that is actually one sentence that has a meaning in it.

**[01:25:49.850] - Georgios**

It's got all the I hope it finds you well and go to that.

**[01:25:53.106] - Mia**

I just wanted to possibly ask you...

**[01:25:53.250] - Georgios**

And I'm like, I just want to go like, shut up (laughter)

**[01:25:57.480] - Georgios**

Yeah. If you want to be like too much bother, could I possibly. And I'm like just say it.

**[01:26:03.583] - Cat**

Just ask!

**[01:26:03.880] - Mia**

Yes. I mean, I mean look I get that constantly as well. I mean so much so that it's actually an in-joke between my friends and I. But I mean, you know, I've been called the dominant personality in the workplace. I've been you know, it's interesting. You know what it is? It's very interesting. I mean, plenty of words, plenty tone policing, you know, you name it. I've I've had it levelled at me, which makes me think, I mean, Jesus Christ, if I was a black woman, this would be a totally different scale., right?



**[01:26:38.240] - Mia**

So I've clearly got it easy as things go and it feels constant. But, you know, I suppose. I mean, there's two small points there. The first is people are really, really happy with advocacy until it's advocacy that calls them in a row. Yes, because I also get praised for being a so-called advocate, but like, people are only happy to see that directed to other people, and then the second point is that there's just a bit of a I think there's a bit of a disconnect between like.

**[01:27:17.410] - Mia**

What people actually want, I suppose, I mean, it's a similar point, but like, you know, people seem to say, oh, you're too aggressive, you're too dominant, you're too whatever, whatever, whatever. So then maybe you change something about yourself or maybe you don't speak up or whatever. But because of the boxes that were put into you, you know, and this is a workplace thing especially that happens to people of color a lot.

**[01:27:45.070] - Mia**

I actually just for Advance HE I just finished writing a report last week about POC's experiences in the workplace and what we need to be doing to change that. And something that came up constantly is that you're either all the things I just listed aggressive or whatever, or you don't do that, and then everyone's like, oh, you know, you won't come out of your shell, you're not showing leadership qualities, you're not giving your opinion in meetings like, yeah, so what do you want me to do?

**[01:28:13.070] - Mia**

You know? And the answer obviously is, you know, be white!

**[01:28:17.980] - Cat**

Here's the problem is if you if you get that that brush mark of angry black woman, we we are not given the privilege. We cannot be angry. And even if you are angry, you can't be angry because the minute that you have that mark on you, nobody's going to listen to you. And as an activist and as a curator, if you want people to be able to listen to these stories and actually hopefully pray that something gets through the brain cells, you cannot be seen as the angry black woman.

**[01:28:48.880] - Cat**

And I actually said this recently. I said I do not have the luxury to be angry because it is because the moment that I get angry, the moment everybody stops listening to me, and that is all that you will get. Oh,

but we can't talk to you because you're so aggressive. You're so you're so I'm. So what. I'm so black? I'm so queer? Like pick up, pick anything, pick a word and so. We then hold all of this within us, and that just adds on to the other crap that you're holding within us because we just don't get the luxury. And I was talking to somebody about this and they said, oh, of course you do really have you if you saw a woman being quite passionate. About a particular subject. What would you say? Oh, well, I would just tell her to calm down.

**[01:29:40.940] - Georgios**

OK, great.

**[01:29:47.690] - Georgios**

This is funny because you really go back to the basics. Listen, I'm so grateful that you join me tonight. And yeah, for me anyway, it's been a fantastic conversation. I'm really conscious that, you know, again, these are probably conversations that you're having day to day and you're probably sick and tired of repeating yourselves all the time. But hopefully this is the start of some good discussions that we can have, like in a more localized context and thinking about QuTo operating in Glasgow and Scotland. And, you know, these are hopefully conversations that will create more allyship and get more people sort of like woken up and understand a bit more about, like, you know, privilege, discomfort, allyship and how we mingle all those things and how we create spaces and solidarity when it's so much needed. We're in really bizarre times and I think, you know, tapping into our communities and actually finding networks and families and people that can support us through all this is just so instrumental.

**[01:30:59.690] - Georgios**

And we have so much that unites us. All we need to do is just open up our minds a bit more and understand other people's experiences and reflect. And I just I don't think we've been very good at doing that. But thank you so much. Again, like your both of your insights have been absolutely incredible. And I will post all your social media links if you're happy with it so people can follow you. And I know you've both done amazing works in your personal and professional spheres, so, I'm sure lots of people would be really keen to get in touch to read more about it. And yet again, just thank you so, so much. I don't know if you have any final thoughts.

**[01:31:45.530] - Cat**

Thank you for having me, Mia. It's been amazing. Thank you, Georgios. Seriously, it's been really good. I guess the final thoughts would be exactly that. If you're going to be an ally, then be an ally, don't be an ally on paper, just actually be an ally because we need you.



**[01:32:03.050] - Mia**

Totally, I mean, I'm going to echo that final thought because I think it deserves a stand alone, but I'm also going to say a massive thank you to both of you. This has been a really excellent conversation. And I mean, one of the things that I find is that a really good way to empathize better with marginalized communities is actually podcasts because no one's being asked to perform the labour again - we've already done it and you get to listen to it. And I hope that, yeah, I hope have taken something from it for sure. Thank you both.

**[01:32:35.040] - Speaker 3**

Thanks so much.