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PAMELA HARRIS: The Center for minorities in the mathematical sciences presents mathematically uncensored

ARIS WINGER: where our talk is real and complex, but never discrete

*[Music]*

ARIS WINGER: Welcome to mathematically uncensored where our talk is real

PAMELA HARRIS: and complex, but never discrete.

ARIS WINGER: Excellent. I was going to just pause it, just somewhere in the title and see if you could catch on to where you need to fill in the rest.

PAMELA HARRIS: It's been that long. It's been that long.

ARIS WINGER: Oh my goodness, that's right

PAMELA HARRIS: How has it been that long?

ARIS WINGER: Dr. Harris

PAMELA HARRIS: Dr. Winger

ARIS WINGER: I have missed you

PAMELA HARRIS: Listen

ARIS WINGER: It's too bad that nothing's happened since we last talked

PAMELA HARRIS: Not at all, it's like the world is just the same

ARIS WINGER: There is this notion, though, I've been talking with people. There's this . . . Happy New Year, everybody.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah! Happy New Year

ARIS WINGER: this notion that like the turn of the clock just didn't have that much of an impact on me this year.

PAMELA HARRIS: No

ARIS WINGER: Like previous years, like I can get my goals together and like be like, okay, turn on the clock. I'm gonna start new, and this year . . . it just felt so different to me.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's because we live—isn't Groundhog Day, Groundhog Day tomorrow? Like it's Groundhog Day since like March of last year. This is why it doesn't actually feel like anything reset.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. And just the same. Yeah, because it's not like, it didn't feel like anything new was happening at January one.

PAMELA HARRIS: Right.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah.

PAMELA HARRIS: Right.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I, a lot of people have been telling me that the new year started January 20.

PAMELA HARRIS: Listen

ARIS WINGER: That's when the New Year started.

PAMELA HARRIS: We knew that was coming and even still, you know, during JMM, it's like the government about the end. So that was quite the ordeal.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, yeah. So you know, contextually, you know, how we roll that, you know, we're here to talk about and center people of color in mathematics. And we also want to talk about the context in which we're talking about people of color in mathematics. And that just means what's going on in the world. And so obviously, you know, we have, we have a new president. And before then, of course, we had the insurrection

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: On the nation's Capitol. And so you and I had an interesting, you know, interaction during that time when all that was happening, right?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes. Because I thought that this was happening in Atlanta, as the votes were being counted.

ARIS WINGER: Oh, for Ossoff and Warnock

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes! And so I'm like texting you, and I'm like, "Aris, you okay, you good? Fam, like, what's going on in Atlanta? Like, do I need to come down there? And, you know, like, shuttle people North, or, like, what are we doing? And then you were like, you talking about DC? And I'm like, D.C., no?"

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, my other hometown

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes! And so that was wild to me, because as I'm seeing it, I'm putting pieces together. Because here's what was happening. As, as I'm kind of hearing little tidbits on a panel for JMM, Amplifying Voices for Indigenous mathematicians, Latinx mathematicians, Black mathematicians, there's this beautiful talk and event that got put together. And so I'm in the middle of this panel, as I'm just kind of like getting a glimpse of something in the chat, you know, something on Facebook, like people texting. And so, when I have logged into that panel, you know, I was still on the, the votes are being counted in Georgia.

ARIS WINGER: Yes.Okay.

PAMELA HARRIS: And so, when I started getting all of that, like, in my mind, I'm putting connections where there weren't any, I guess at that moment, right. And then I'm just like, Oh, no, Aris, where are you at? What's going on? And so that was wild to me that I had to learn it from you that it wasn't in Atlanta, it was in DC.

ARIS WINGER: That's right. Yeah. Someone was texting me because I was coming out of a meeting, too. And they said that, you know, some people are storming the Capitol, and I just didn't believe them. I mean, I just, I just said to myself, that's not possible.

PAMELA HARRIS: Right

ARIS WINGER: You must you must be confused. Someone may be at the bottom of the steps

PAMELA HARRIS: Right, protesting.

ARIS WINGER: You know, stomping, or something.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: Nobody is, no one's storming the Capitol, that is not possible.

PAMELA HARRIS: Like armed? With a potential bomb?

ARIS WINGER: It was before I even got to that. It was just that, for me, you know, I'm from DC. So there's no notion that anyone would even get close to the doors, and then, like it, and then it just caught on, like the news just got bigger and bigger.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: Like I just, it became completely surreal. Right.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: So I know again, that you know, our listeners have heard about this, you know, at length. So yeah, I mean, we're gonna try to keep this to a minimum, but oh my god. The audacity of white people.

PAMELA HARRIS: For real.

ARIS WINGER: Let's just be clear. And, and I don't even want to, you know, we're talking about white men, let's be clear about that. Right. And so,

PAMELA HARRIS: I mean, there were some white women though.

ARIS WINGER: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

PAMELA HARRIS: Don't be giving them a pass.

ARIS WINGER: No, no. And I'm not suggesting—this is good, because I'm not suggesting—maybe we can do a, what do we call it, different perspectives on?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes, a different perspective

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, no, and I get that. But yeah, so I'm a black man in America, do you know how often, you know, people see a bunch of black men? And I get looped in, even though I'm all the way across the country?

PAMELA HARRIS: Of course.

ARIS WINGER: Right. So there's this notion of, let's call it what it is. And so, yeah, predominantly white men. And so if it was predominantly black men, we would say this is a black man problem. This is a white man problem. And let me, let me be clear, that I know that's going to get me in trouble and all this other stuff. So the question is, can I find the right language to articulate what I'm saying? Let me give you a try. Let me give it a try. So what what I am saying is that whiteness, and maleness, in terms of the privileges combined

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: creates a problem, right?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: And so, we got a lot of people there. who are just like, give me what I deserve, or whatever, they're just mad, right?

PAMELA HARRIS: They are mad.

ARIS WINGER: The audacity to go to the nation's Capitol, right? So, in other words, if you, let's be clear. And if you, if I came from another planet, looked at all the data, and you told me a group of people went and stormed the Capitol, with guns, and went inside

PAMELA HARRIS: And people died

ARIS WINGER: And you know, less than one percent are dead? Then I would say they were white people, and they were white men. Right?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: And so that doesn't have anything to do with who they are as people. It has to do with their status

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: in this country that they have been given through social constructs of maleness and whiteness. Right? And so, and so the question is, how can the listener then hear me say that, and not take it personally? How can the white man hear me say that and not take

that personally? Because, by the way, if you hear me call out whiteness, and maleness, and you get offended, oh my god, goddamn it. That's your problem.

PAMELA HARRIS: That is their problem!

ARIS WINGER: Yes, yes. If you want to hold on to your maleness and your whiteness, and you're being uncomfortable by what I'm saying, then you're holding on to privileges and things, and then you got some work to do.

PAMELA HARRIS: They got some reflection.

ARIS WINGER: That's right. Absolutely right.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah, no, quite the way to start the year. Because I think I was just, I don't know. I mean, I'm not naive, right. Like, we knew that this was going to be a very difficult transition. Like, we felt it, we knew it, it was articulated to be that way, you know, so it wasn't like it caught us by surprise. Like, none of this was a surprise. This was well planned out in advance. But the problem that I still see with it all, is just that feeling of surrealness that you describe. That still, at our core, at least at my core

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: I was like, no way. Come on, now.

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: Like, come on, now. You know, my husband is just walking down the street, he gets pulled over by the police, doing nothing wrong. And these fools are in there with guns, kill the police officer, are storming like, you see the senators blocking the door, like, just, I, I'm at a loss, like,

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, and so I will say I'm getting better at the reactions. Right. So I was, I was still surreal. But then, I became, I became calmer pretty soon after that. Because I, because then it just became that this is just a part of the work against white supremacy. It is just, you know, because we say this throughout the book, that if we're fighting against white supremacy, then we don't get to pick how the fight looks.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: We don't get to pick how it attacks us. So that when it happens, we should be prepared, right? And so have this emotional reaction. And I said, you know what, I took a deep breath and I said, this is just part of the work against white supremacy, right? And so, and so what does that mean? That means that when we see that, then we have to call it out for what it is,

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: I got a lot of people on TV, a lot of people all over the world who just don't want to call it what it is. Right? And so, and just continuing to amplify our own voices. And so I said, you know, so the question is tomorrow, I don't know what it's gonna be. But I'm prepared to be told again, that white people are better than other people, time and time again, day after day after day. So that when there were people who, you know, they were able to do that, and then get on planes and leave. And they were able to get back in their cars and roll out.

PAMELA HARRIS: Show up at their job like nothing happened.

ARIS WINGER: That's right

PAMELA HARRIS: And be surprised if they happen to get caught.

ARIS WINGER: Right. And shocked and upset.

PAMELA HARRIS: And shocked! Like, do you mean? I have my First Amendment right.

ARIS WINGER: That's right. That's right. That's exactly right.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah, it is wild. Yeah. It's a different country, it is a different country, for some of us, than it is for the rest of us. And so

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, that's right.

PAMELA HARRIS: So how does this show up in math? Because that's, that's where we're headed, right? We're talking about, what it's like to center people of color in mathematics. That's what our podcast is about. And so, how does this kind of event that happens at our nation's capital, how is that showing up in mathematics?

ARIS WINGER: Well, you know, so this is hard because I wouldn't get in trouble today with this episode. You know, I say we got a white problem, white man problem in the United States of America. You don't think that's also true in mathematics?

PAMELA HARRIS: I mean, I know it's true

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, that's right. So, and again, let's, yo, get your feelings together.

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh no

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, what are we talking about? We're talking again about that, we're, and let's just be clear, let's get super grainy, granular with this, that we're talking about when we close our eyes and picture a mathematician, we see a white man, it's just that simple. Right? And that's nobody's fault. Right? I'm not blaming any individual, right? But the standard of mathematician continues to be that, and every single one of us needs to be doing work to change that mental narrative that we have.

PAMELA HARRIS: But how do we do that? Aris, how do we do that? When you see, you know, one of the largest associations for mathematics the AMS, fuck it up, time and time and time and time and time again. For example, it wasn't very much after the whole event at the Capitol, that the AMS puts out this announcement for the AMS fellowship for A black mathematician. And they target it because, did you know that A black mathematician has quote unquote, unique needs? None of which were articulated. But did you know, my friend, apparently your, your needs are unique? And so they've designed this entire fellowship just for one of you. Just one mathematician, just one black mathematician.

ARIS WINGER: Yes, no. And then, and then it says, this is to address the paucity. This is, this is done to address the paucity? No, I mean, insufficient, let's just get right to it. Insufficient. Weak.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: And yeah, it is. And let me just step back. All of this, this is a loving critique. Right? And so and what do I mean by that? This means, that doesn't mean I love you, who I'm talking to. It means that I love, that what I am, what I'm surrounding my statements are a love of people who have been rendered invisible.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes.

ARIS WINGER: And, and so I speak to the leaders with respect, and about asking them to look at some parts of their job that I think that are not being attended to, is tied to the visibility of people of color in the greatest discipline in the history of people.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: That's how I'm rolling. And now that I said that, that shit, this shit has been weak. Right? And so you can't tell me that you want to address the paucity of visibility of black men and black women in mathematics, and then try and come up with \$50,000 to give to one person. I mean, yeah, I mean, and so again, we said this so often in the book, and in podcasts, all over the place, we're saying that if you have the courage, and if you have the will to work, and your discipline on the hardest of intellectual challenges,

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes!

ARIS WINGER: Then you can bring the same creativity, the same courage to try and solve the problem of visibility of people of color in the discipline?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: Right. You just have to be able to do it. And so yeah, so for me, you know, as when this blew up on Twitter, and so forth about, you know, I just kept looking at the word paucity that this, THIS is what you're going to do to address the paucity? I mean, this is what it is? And I think we can do better. I just think we can do better. And while I'm here: to the to the leadership, the presidents of the MAA, the AMS, I'm talking to you. Right? What does it look like when we critically, as we say, go to the hard places?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: That this is not easy. And look, we're being cowards. We're being, and what does that mean? That means that to be a coward means that you know what the truth is. And you have the opportunity to say it, and you choose not to say it. Right. So time and again, we've already seen these reports that the AMS has been known to be a racist organization. I know they have some taskforce and stuff working on that, right? But what, but where is it in the words in every single speech? You know, we talked about going back and you

know, doing an audit, doing an ethical audit of every single thing. Where's the audit of the AMS? Where's the audit of SIAM? Of MAA? From top to bottom, where is the racism? Where is it? Right? And by the way, they are not qualified to find it. They can't go look, they can't go look. You can't tell me you did an internal investigation to look for racism in your, in your organization and you didn't find any. You think I'm gonna fucking believe you if you tell me that.

PAMELA HARRIS: Listen. But you're trying to get white people to audit their own racism?

ARIS WINGER: Well, yeah, that's what I'm saying. But I mean, so all I'm saying is it but don't, then don't pretend that you're doing everything that you're trying to do.

PAMELA HARRIS: Give the money to someone else. You're right, you're right. Then give the money to somebody else who knows what the fuck they're doing.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Yes. Right.

PAMELA HARRIS: Point blank. You want to donate money

ARIS WINGER: They could have given it to NAM. They could have given it to anybody and said you hand this out. You name this after somebody. Right.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah. I think for me what was also really troubling in all of this is like the double talk. Right? It's like, "We're trying. The intent. Look at our intent. We're trying to help." But then, what about the impact?

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: What about the impact? What message does it send to my undergraduate students who are black? Who see this announcement of the AMS. Who just attended JMM?

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: What message does that send?

ARIS WINGER: That's a good question.

PAMELA HARRIS: And to me, that is fucking appalling.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah.

PAMELA HARRIS: Because then you get words like, "Oh, you know, we're sorry. We hope that you will continue to work with us as we strive to better serve the full communities."

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: Stop striving. Stop striving!

ARIS WINGER: Weak. Yes, that's right.

PAMELA HARRIS: Actually do something or move out of the way. Cause you're just causing harm. I think that's the thing that's pissing me off, right? But it's like, at what point do we just say to the AMS like, stop fucking trying? You have failed time and time and time again, move out of the way. Because not only are they taking up space, they take our energy. Okay, how many mathematicians of color spent that entire weekend? The week after sending me emails? Sending tweets, privately messaging each other being like, did you see this nonsense? You are robbing us of our time!

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Thank you for bringing that to light.

PAMELA HARRIS: Because now we're cleaning up your mess! Because now I have to have conversations with my students about, it gets better, you know, and here's another organization that you might want to join. Here's how we make this better. We are constantly tasked to pick up the pieces

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: That they are shattering.

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: It is a non stop battle. Not only are we fighting, pushing back on these organizations constantly to be better, to do better, we also are cleaning up their mess. And you know what, that's just like at the fucking Capitol. Because we saw those pictures, of the black custodian, cleaning up the goddamn mess that these terrorists, call them what they are, these white national terrorists, defacing the Capitol. Killing people. And then we have this black man cleaning up the mess.

ARIS WINGER: Unbelievable.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's what we saw. This is what we're seeing in the mathematical sciences. This is what mathematicians of color have to do constantly. We not only push these white organizations to do better, but then we gotta clean up the mess.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, no. And that's exactly right. And I want to step back again, with the prefacing, everybody's doing their best. Everybody's nice. Everybody's kind. Everyone loves their family. Everybody loves America. Everybody loves math. AND weak efforts. It's just not enough. And so again, we know the answer to this. Too safe.

PAMELA HARRIS: Too safe.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, people. And look, I get it. I mean, so what are, what are we talking about? We're talking about people saying, look, we messed up, right? We messed up, AND really saying, we're gonna do better by critically looking at all of our policies.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah.

ARIS WINGER: Right. And that, that means going to the hard places. And that doesn't mean that you get people in house. That means you might have to get some people out house, out of the house, to tell you some of the things you don't want to hear.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: You can't do this comfortably. There's too many comfortable people around here.

PAMELA HARRIS: No worries. They'll invite us to do some free programming.

ARIS WINGER: Oh, they will. They might. Let me say they might. We used to, we used to be invited

PAMELA HARRIS: Used to. Listen, after this podcast, people are gonna stop sending us emails

ARIS WINGER: But whoever you talk to, let's have some hard conversations with them. Okay.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: We've been banned. We might be banned after this. But yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: We're on the no-no list

ARIS WINGER: I haven't given up hope. I have not given up hope. I think that, you know, we can use these moments to get a little bit better. I, I'm not sure if I'm optimistic. But I'm still, I'm hopeful, right, that, you know, we can get better and, and continue to, you know, to just work harder at these things. But, and then the other thing is that we, you know, we end up talking about, you know, race and culture, as if every single individual is an expert. And here is why we definitely need to bring people who are outside of the discipline. So what happens is that we, we talk about diversity, race, and culture in mathematics, then somehow we go and get a bunch of math people to talk about it, and forget about the race, the culture, and the gender part, right. And so there are some people out there who are actually specialized in those topics.

PAMELA HARRIS: No, no, no, no. But here's the thing, though, we don't value any of that. That's not real science.

ARIS WINGER: And that's why I'm here. And that's why I'm here for this next 52 seconds. So just be clear, that when we talk about race, we talk about culture, we talk about gender, and, and identity. There are reams and reams of dissertations, papers, research all over the place. People who have spent decades and centuries starting with Du Bois in the 1900s, when he said that the problem of the 20th century is going to be the problem of the color line. Right? And so there's the birth of sociology in a lot of ways. And so here we are talking about sociological issues in our discipline, and not one sociologist, not one historian. No one is to be found in that discussion. Right. Tell us how that's happening.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah, you're absolutely right. That's part of the elitism of mathematics. Right? So we believe ourselves so smart, so bright, so intelligent, that we don't need anything else. We can figure it out. But yet, the same white people tell us they don't know what to do!

ARIS WINGER: That's right. Absolutely. Absolutely. They don't know what to do

PAMELA HARRIS: The irony is so incredibly strong.

ARIS WINGER: Absolutely right. Yeah. Yeah. So let's do better. And, you know, if we want to know how to start, because we know we're gonna get well, what do you want us to do? Yeah, then, then you want to have hard conversations with the people whose actions, by you, are causing suffering to them. Right. And so yeah, so if you want to know. So, and again, that doesn't mean you need to burden us. Some of us are willing to have these conversations.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right. Yeah

ARIS WINGER: So that doesn't mean you can go grab anybody in particular. But yeah, we need to start having some hard conversations. And I'm not, I'm not saying that you know, that you aren't having them. But I am saying that, I guess we aren't having enough because if we did, that shit that we've been saying, wouldn't be visible to us.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah. Also, where's the check and balances? You know

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, what do you mean?

PAMELA HARRIS: So I think about this announcement for this fellowship for the AMS. And I'm like, who checked that?

ARIS WINGER: Yes!

PAMELA HARRIS: Because any person of color. might have been like, wait, yo, can, can we rethink this? Do we not name it? You know, that? I mean, that part to me is the, is the thing that's missing.

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: We are tapped anytime, that, you know, something needs to get checked or whatever. But I'm like, where? Where was that? Right. You know, where was this check and balance for, for this fellowship?

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, no. And this is difficult, right? Because what, because my, my initial, my initial emotional feeling after seeing the ad was like, if the press of the AMS wants to use the word black,

they need to spend three months before deciding to use it. Right. Thinking about making sure right, but that's too much, isn't it? Right? That's just so sensitive, isn't it? That like, but, but I don't know, I don't know the answer to that. Because I'm just like, what I mean, before you put something out, and you're gonna say something about black people, Latinx people, whomever? Yeah, you need to take some time to really dig into who can this impact in a negative way?

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh, there we go, that's the word. Impact.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Yes. Who can this impact if you write it this way, and you're mentioning black people? Like what happens when you do that? Right. And to be super critical about that? But then what happens? You got people dancing over words, and making sure, and perhaps you should be!

PAMELA HARRIS: Good!

ARIS WINGER: Right? Yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: You mean that they'll have to actually think critically about what they're gonna write and put out?

ARIS WINGER: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Right. No, that's right. That's right. Yeah, yeah. Go ahead.

PAMELA HARRIS: So here's one thing that maybe gets us into a slightly different topic, but absolutely interrelated. So we're talking about publishing announcements, right? That's kind of the content of that, of that setup of the AMS is like, okay, there's good intention. There's some money they're putting, they're putting some money to support things that they've been saying they value. Okay.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: Great. Stamp of approval on that front. But part of what I see here as the issue is who gets to make decisions about what actually gets published in the public domain?

ARIS WINGER: Yes, yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: And so I bring this up, because we've talked about this before on the podcast, which is publishing issues that have been coming up left and right for me.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: Left and right. Oh, my God, I have so much to say about this. But let's stick to the one about you know, so we recently published a book, friend.

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: I don't know if you've already forgotten.

ARIS WINGER: No, no. Bonuses over the break, too.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah. So you know, so we published this book asked and answered dialogues on advocating for students of color in mathematics. And we decided to self publish. And, you know, we wrote a piece. So we write this piece, you and I, about what that process was like. There was something really interesting that I think you and I discussed in that particular article, which is our inner fight against the standard academic publishing practices, in particular, within the mathematical sciences. We have been taught time and time again, that the process requires getting some anonymous feedback, getting the stamp of approval of an editor, going through that entire dance until, you know, somebody says, "All right, your words are now worthy of being published."

ARIS WINGER: Right.

PAMELA HARRIS: This is okay, this gets the approval. And so one of the things that we fought, I think, you know, individually, and then eventually together,

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: it was this idea that this kind of publishing is really rooted, and it's built, and it helps succeed, really for a particular demographic, right?

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: White people

ARIS WINGER: Yes, absolutely.

PAMELA HARRIS: Because in our book, it's you and I having these dialogues about our own personal experiences as mathematicians of color, and how we use those experiences to really serve our students better, in particular, the students of color that we get to interact and teach and learn alongside with. And so here we were, trying to get what, the approval of white publisher, of a white publisher for our own words, for our own lived experiences?

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: What makes them qualified?

ARIS WINGER: Right.

PAMELA HARRIS: To tell us how to edit our words?

ARIS WINGER: Yes, yes. Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yet, you know, yet, somehow you and I found enough, I want to say just supporting each other, to say,

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Momentum

PAMELA HARRIS: Momentum. Of fire, a desire to get this out there in such a way that it allows us to propel it forward and to just put the book out, as they say, a self published book.

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: And so there, there was something really important about that. And we decided to then write this article. And, you know, I, I have a lot of experience writing lots and lots of blogs for different publications. And I said to you, I know the perfect blog, you know, the perfect publishing place for this article. And the article is I, I think it's, you know, on a scale of, oh, this is a PG, maybe G version to like the, you know, R rated version, I want to say we're at PG 13. Real mild, you know, real mild. Asking the questions, rather than forming the statements. And we got quite the pushback. So much so that the piece is on hold, as I understand.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: Right? But the main editor was all for it, editing, giving us feedback. And then we want to publish this this week. And so, you and I are moving behind the scenes, doing the editing, you

know, having the interesting conversations, kind of side giggles, all the editing that we need to do to our own words. Even though, basically a direct quote from the article is what white person can give us edits to our own words?

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: And yet we're navigating that space, right, as we're writing this piece, and then the other shoe drops. We need to get the board together, and we need to just make sure that this is okay, before we publish it. And so, you and I haven't heard anything. And it's been

ARIS WINGER: Well, no

PAMELA HARRIS: Five days?

ARIS WINGER: They were expecting pushback.

PAMELA HARRIS: They were expecting pushback

ARIS WINGER: It's taking place because, yeah, cause they're expecting pushback. We wanted to get everyone together because yeah, we're expecting pushback. And so, and yeah, and so here we are. And here I struggle, because I, and here's where we should have the conversation. Like, here's the perfect example of where we should have the conversation. Because, I am baffled. And so the conversation's not just for, for them, the conversation's for me, the conversation's for everybody. Because I'm baffled as to what the pushback could be. Like, I don't know, anything that we wrote in which there would be push-back against, but I guess they're gonna let us know. Right?

PAMELA HARRIS: Are they? I don't know.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, I don't know.

PAMELA HARRIS: Dear listeners, stay tuned for the next episode where we'll tell you what happened.

ARIS WINGER: That's right. But they, look, there is this tension, right? Because, in this internal battle about whether we should publish our own word, I can't believe I'm saying that like, that's like, that's something crazy, in this internal battle about whether I'm, I deserve to publish our own words. I've been thinking about

well, wait, you know, everybody can't wait. So you know, shouldn't there be some standard, right? Can't we, you know, you have to get somebody to look at it if we're going to publish it to the world and make it, it has to be factual, right. But there's something specific about this being about our feelings, our experience. Right, that makes it different.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes. Yes.

ARIS WINGER: So that means that we don't need that even though we still have to fight hard

PAMELA HARRIS: To get it

ARIS WINGER: To see, to see our own words and our own experiences out in the world. And so, this blog piece is not that far from that. It's still our thoughts, our feelings. And I don't know, what can be said to us to be like, no, this needs to change and this needs to change, right.

PAMELA HARRIS: It became about "Oh, you're just getting publicity for your book. And we don't do book advertisements." Right?

ARIS WINGER: Oh

PAMELA HARRIS: So that's kind of how I see maybe, that coming across. Where really what it was, it was like, yes, we wrote this book, if you're interested, here's the link. But let me tell you about this lesson that we learned, which was we don't need your permission, white people!

ARIS WINGER: Right

PAMELA HARRIS: We don't need your permission for us as two mathematicians of color to come together. A) put a podcast together, B) write a book, right? We do not need your permission. Let me say that loud and clear for those white folks in the back of the room that need to hear it again. We do not need your permission to do our podcast, we don't need your permission to write out our thoughts and our experiences within mathematical spaces. We don't need it.

ARIS WINGER: Yes, that's right.

PAMELA HARRIS: And I'm at the point where I no longer want it.

ARIS WINGER: No, that's a sense of freedom. We talked about this.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah.

ARIS WINGER: That's that's the freedom that lots of people of color, in this country, have to get to, to get away from, you know, that type of approval. Indeed, yeah. Yeah.

PAMELA HARRIS: So that's where we're at with that. So this, this idea of, of this problem, right. Really, that's what it is, we have a problem of white supremacy in mathematics. And people are gonna say to us, "well, where does it show up?" Right here, this is what we're pointing at. We are giving you an example of where white supremacy lives within mathematical spaces. So now that you know that, and again, I'm, I've been saying it for a long time now, all of these issues I've been having in publishing. So. So where else is it showing up?

ARIS WINGER: Right, no that's a great question. And so yeah, usually my response to that is, look, if we knew where it was, if you told me it was over in the corner, I actually might be fine. If you told me all the racism was over, over in that room over there, I would just never go over there. We would be good. I'd just go over there, and live my best life.

PAMELA HARRIS: Awesome

ARIS WINGER: Yeah. But the problem is that it is infused in every single thing. This is why we need audits across the board.

PAMELA HARRIS: The board, yeah.

ARIS WINGER: And every single facet of all of our work.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes.

ARIS WINGER: And to ask ourselves, where's the white supremacy in this? That's just too hard of a question for us right now. And this is why I'm not optimistic. Because we say this in the book, right? We say that what happens if on the first day, you go in, and you say "I denounce white supremacy in all of its forms," right?

PAMELA HARRIS: I have yet to hear anybody say that. I mean, maybe they're not at the part of the book, like folks that bought the book, you know, thank you for the support. But I'm looking at you right

now. If you got to that part of the book, you bought our book, you read through these dialogues, and we put a call to action: for you to denounce white supremacy in everything that you do. In your talks that you give. At the start of your classes at the start of meetings. So have you heard anybody do it?

ARIS WINGER: No.

PAMELA HARRIS: I haven't heard a thing.

ARIS WINGER: No, and look, look, by the way, that's hard. But let me not say that that's easy. That's hard. You know, I haven't done it. Yeah. So I mean, look. And I mean, although it may be obvious, I still haven't done it, right? But what happens if we put that a line in our syllabus, right. But the point is that, you know, we're all in this process of getting better.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah.

ARIS WINGER: Right. And it sounds harsh, and it sounds, right. But the reason it may sound harsh is because the days of us, at least for me, the days of me trying to articulate very clearly my concerns, and to make sure that everyone hears me clearly and in the way they like for it to be heard. And so, and it'd be nice and safe. Those days are fucking over.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes.

ARIS WINGER: Right. And it's because I have now decided to be the louder voice, because people need to be shocked out of the comfort, right? You aren't going to be comfortable with me. Right? So that means that if you want, and I've already experienced this. People, you know, have considered me for things, it's like no, no, no, because he's gonna be. Yeah, but I don't want to be on your committee then, because, you know, I want to actually do something.

PAMELA HARRIS: Right!

ARIS WINGER: And to do something means that you have to push past your comfort. Right. So, so yeah, I mean, we just have to, you know, in order to do, so the white supremacy call to action about pushing against it is a long star right? We got, it takes a while to get there, right. But what is required for us to get there, right? So I'm not expecting people to do this overnight. I haven't done it overnight. But by the way, it's different for me, right?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: Because if I roll around and saying that in Georgia, there's some extra concerns and threats, right, that some of you may not have. So we are calling on you to think about what it entails for that, for that to happen. It's a provocative question we provide. And the question is, what would it take for you to get there? So for me, in a lot of ways, it's not just doing that, right? Because you might just be able to blackout and just write the words and run away.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right.

ARIS WINGER: But, we're saying, please deal with the discomfort you are feeling in the doing of it.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes.

ARIS WINGER: Where is it coming from?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes.

ARIS WINGER: Why do you feel this way? What are you going to do to do something different tomorrow?

PAMELA HARRIS: And coming back to this publishing thing. I want to just highlight the fact that the Center for Minorities in Mathematics. We have a [blog](#)!

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: So, you can send us your thoughts. And we would be happy to give you feedback if you want it, or just publish it!

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: Without editing your voice! Isn't that incredible? And please, please, please send us your blogs. So [blog@minoritymath.org](mailto:blog@minoritymath.org). There is a blog there for you.

ARIS WINGER: Absolutely. And this is in line with what we've been saying from the jump, that we want a space where we can go ahead and say what needs to be said the way we want to say it.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right.

ARIS WINGER: With our voice being at the center. Yeah.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah. So I wanted to put that out there. Because I think it's really difficult. Like, I can imagine being somebody who's listening to this, who's a, you know, a younger mathematician of color, and just being like, well, there's no hope, I guess my voice doesn't matter. And I'll just keep my head down and just keep pushing. And, and the truth is that for a long time, I felt that way, too. You know, and, and I waited, I tried not to wait to, to feel like I needed to hide so many aspects of myself, but I failed miserably at it for a very long time. And so having spaces that you don't have to build, that you could just come, be yourself, and then share your own experiences without feeling like you need white approval. That is what we're trying to create here. Right. That's like the entire purpose of the Center. That's the entire purpose of our podcast. That's the entire purpose of our book. Like we are trying to live our authentic self while making space for others to do so as well.

ARIS WINGER: Absolutely.

PAMELA HARRIS: And so please take us up on it. Your voice matters. Send us your blogs, [blog@minoritymath.org](mailto:blog@minoritymath.org).

ARIS WINGER: That's right. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.

PAMELA HARRIS: All right, so we pivot a little again, but again, within the same scope of content. Hiring committees. It's full on hiring season.

ARIS WINGER: It is, it is. I feel so old, cause, yeah, I haven't had the sense. Oh, my goodness, I had this sense of like being, I better knock on wood somewhere, being on the job market,

PAMELA HARRIS: That might be what we need to do.

ARIS WINGER: Check on me in the next couple of months, if I still have a job after today. But you know, I know that this is just a tough time, January for all my people out there who are looking for new jobs or coming, just coming out with their PhDs or making the transition, and really applying to new places. It's a nerve wracking time for sure.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes, absolutely. And one of the things that we talked about in the, one of the December podcasts, was that we wanted people to put their best foot forward in terms of formatting their CV, in terms of formatting their cover letters, right. And so we got some emails from listeners saying, you know, let me be clear from white listeners, saying, "See! Thank you for saying this." And then I want to say backup. This is not about you.

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: Let me, I'm just gonna bring it, because what do we say, our talk is real. Right?

ARIS WINGER: Yes, that's right.

PAMELA HARRIS: Here's the thing. This, again, is rooted in white supremacy. Because, how do you expect me to show up? I'm right now I'm holding up my hair and I have a braid. Are you going to tell me that when I show up to your job interview, I shouldn't have a braid.

ARIS WINGER: Right.

PAMELA HARRIS: Are you going to tell women of color how they should be wearing their hair?

ARIS WINGER: Yeah.

PAMELA HARRIS: Because that to me is also part of it. Right? Like, what we're trying to say right now, is that we are trying to present a vision to white people, in academia, that we belong. And unfortunately, they're petty as shit. Okay? If your cover letter doesn't look exactly pristine and matches your CV, they will discount you. That's their problem!

ARIS WINGER: Yeah and if your words aren't put together the right way. Yes, yes, yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's their problem. And so when we talk about formatting your CV, doing this, doing the other thing, we're coming from a place where we've experienced that already. And so we're kind of letting you in on these little points that will present to white people as if you're more worthy. Notice that at no time did we say edit the content.

ARIS WINGER: Right.

PAMELA HARRIS: We talked about what it appears like.

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: Which is what we do when we show up at these interviews. And Aris, you just did it a little while ago. Right? You change your tone. You change the way you enunciate.

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: I change the way I pronounce my goddamn name. Right? We show up to be palatable

ARIS WINGER: Ooh

PAMELA HARRIS: To be tolerated by white people. That's what we're doing. We're fitting into a little box so that Pamela Harris can show up at Williams College and get a job. But then when Pamela shows up then she too loud.

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: Ok. So that's what we're talking about. So, white folks, you listening? So think about this the next time that you start questioning OUR CVs, OUR cover letters. What white supremacy antic are you now, or lens, are you now looking at us through? And why are you so focused on those really superficial things? Rather than what we actually have to bring to the table.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, no. And that's, again, that's the hard question. And my companion question to that is yeah, when you start to have these critiques, then yeah, to your point, then where are these critiques rooted? If you're looking for a mathematician, if you're looking for a mathematician, then why are you looking at font size? If you're looking for a mathematician, yeah, why is it that you're being distracted by these other things. Now, it's funny that you called this superficial, right? Because again, oh I hear them, presentation matters.

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh of course.

ARIS WINGER: That's true. That's why we talked about this last month. Because presentation does matter, right?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yep.

ARIS WINGER: But what we have to do is that we have to step out from the fact that, how are we judging?

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes.

ARIS WINGER: How are we judging? You know when you do one of these NSF panel things and read one of these reviews that talk about, you know when you're reading to make sure that you're NOT emphasizing punctuation and grammar

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right

ARIS WINGER: Because what could happen, what proposals could you miss out on, that could change the life of a young person, because you're too busy looking at these things that you think are important because of where you came from.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: Because of where you came from. So the question is, can you pull apart where you come from and how that influences how you see things from the content and impact of what you're reading

PAMELA HARRIS: But isn't that the notion of white supremacy?

ARIS WINGER: It is! No that was my safe way of saying it.

PAMELA HARRIS: Ok good good.

ARIS WINGER: That was my safe—you said it the white supremacy way, and I said, let me say it the other way. Because what we're saying is that we're all surrounded—and by the way, this is to white and to everybody, right, because we're all impacted by white supremacy. We have internal racism too, as people of color

PAMELA HARRIS: Of course

ARIS WINGER: To think that white people are better than us. And so we have to do that work as well. And so the question is can we do the separation. And so the NSF has this as part of their policies for a reason.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: Because our biases need to be interrogated and checked, time, and time, and time again.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah. And so, let me say this because I, I just can't hold back. So thank you, listener, for sending us your "Thank you for saying this, and telling people to format, because it really matters and I want to advocate for them on the job market." Shut the F up and go do some anti-bias training. Go do some anti-bias training.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. And the best example that this person gave that now they have an opportunity and switch it up and say they take this on the job market and then someone else provides a critique, then it's time for you to open your mouth. If you bring something to somebody and they say "Oh, well look at the font, look at the format," then you have a chance to say wait, can you take some time, this is a really great person, they're a really great mathematician, and I think we should not judge their performance based upon the font and the lettering or whatever, and the grammar

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right

ARIS WINGER: Or a misplaced quotation. Are you out of your mind?

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right

ARIS WINGER: This is a person that we're talking about, and here we come back again to try and devalue the humanity of somebody. That just because people aren't following into your cultural rules, does not mean that they should not be valued for being able to be a contributor to this discipline.

PAMELA HARRIS: Oof. That was it right there my friend. But also, this brings me to these diversity statements.

ARIS WINGER: Oh yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: And I just want to laugh and laugh and laugh. Because you know what I found out recently? Through a mutual friend of ours through social media, that they've identified a plagiarised diversity statement in their tenure track applicant pool.

ARIS WINGER: Ok. And then multiple people using it?

PAMELA HARRIS: Well certainly they found one person using the plagiarized statement.

ARIS WINGER: Well they found one person, okay

PAMELA HARRIS: And not only that, I've also heard from women of color being asked "can you share your diversity statement so I can figure out what I should be writing on mine?" And you know what kind of demographics of that person was. Because if you or I were writing a diversity statement, we ain't struggling.

ARIS WINGER: That's right. No, and so here's the big challenge, and this is part of the future of our discipline. Because we've already had a blow up about this already.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: About whether this should even be required. And so, it's one of these things where, you know, should we be asking for diversity statements. And now that we've decided to go ahead, and people using them, that people are not putting in any effort at all. Trying to cheat. And then people on the other side who are doing the hiring aren't even paying attention.

PAMELA HARRIS: They're not paying attention at all

ARIS WINGER: To the diversity statements, right. And it is one of these things, where, we've now, you know, gone towards a movement to try and implement these things. But again, with no creativity, with no hard conversations. Everyone's just decided, ok let's just do it. Now we're requiring diversity statements. Now we're getting all this garbage and now, in a lot of ways, I'm just saying whose fault is that? Right? In a lot of ways, I'm pointing at ourselves in a lot of ways.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: We said that, and I don't want to, but I have to be self critical here. Because we say that this is important but then we don't really go the extra step. Because look, if we said this is important and we know it's hard, then let's say, ok let's do this like this with A, B, C, D, and E levels of complexity.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: I think part of this is on us, to say, ok we want diversity statements, what do they look like? What does the good one look like? What does the bad one look like? And by the way, we do this for teaching statements. We do this with research statements.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah but here's the thing though. There's a difference, there's a huge difference. Why do we do this with teaching statements? Because it's expected that graduate students teach.

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: So really, we put the horse before the . . . no wait, how does this go? The carriage before the horse. Because now we're saying, you know what we want, we want diversity statements. When what we actually wanted is people who are actually doing things to advance every kind of person in mathematics. That's what we are actually looking for. Right?

ARIS WINGER: Yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: A statement is simply a set of words to document the work you are doing. So what we have right now are a bunch of people who A) do not believe in diversity initiatives, who do not believe in equity in education, who do not need or believe that there is a need for inclusive mathematics. And then we're saying, by the way if you want to apply to this job, you need to tell us what you've been doing in those domains. And so these people are like, can you tell me what I should be putting on there? Because they don't have a clue!

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: They haven't been doing this!

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: And so here's what you get on these statements. Ok. They're like "well I once worked with a woman." And then you find out that it's their PhD advisor.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Yes yes yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: I kid you the hell not. You get these people who are like—and I'm telling you because I've had this experience, because

I've interviewed folks, and my question is "tell me, what is the last thing you've done to broaden participation in mathematics?" And then they "Uhh, well, I worked and collaborated on a paper with a woman."

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: And then you go google "what paper they talking about?" And you're like, wait that was your postdoc mentor. Or that was your PhD advisor. You are doing no one a favor by publishing with your PhD advisor. I'm sure they did YOU the favor.

ARIS WINGER: No, and I want to try and think about the struggle that this would be to people who have not, who have gone through all of this work in their discipline, and not had to think about diversity issues at all. And then all of a sudden, in two weeks, everybody's asking for a diversity statement. And you haven't thought about it at all. So now the question is what are you supposed to do? You want to get this job. You've been working your tail off on teaching and research, and then all of a sudden, and there's been no diversity at all there. And you've checked off all the marks, in this case, and now you show up and now they need this diversity statement and you have no idea what to do. And that's the place that people are at. And that is hard. I mean, that's just the way it is, right. And here we are, where we have to start to tell the truth.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: Right. And so when that person is being asked, when you're being asked, what you have been doing, authenticity is going to be the winner here.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: Just saying, I have not done anything, I am a product of a space—well I don't want to give away the answer, I'm sorry. Because you're going to have to

PAMELA HARRIS: Don't do it! Because you're gonna get plagiarized.

ARIS WINGER: Don't steal my answer. Yeah. But you've got to think critically about it. And believe there is an answer to the question even though you may be deficient in that area, the less people know this may be something you're going to be doing differently. But the whole faking it—that shit ain't gonna work. And you can't say, well I've worked with this person. That's so wrong. But the problem is, on

the other end, there's some people who aren't even looking at these things, there's people who are like that's a good answer. Good answer, good answer. And again, we haven't had the conversations about, how do you judge these correctly, who gets to judge them

PAMELA HARRIS: Yep

ARIS WINGER: What's a good one, what's a bad one. All of it. So I think, I struggle with like, did we push this too fast?

PAMELA HARRIS: But that's what I'm saying, right? We're putting the carriage before the horse.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: We're talking about putting these statements together to measure what people are doing. But the thing is that like graduate programs haven't started getting students to do that kind of work.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Right, right. Right. So, yeah, maybe just rephrase as "what are you going to do in the future? How are you thinking about this now?"

PAMELA HARRIS: Right

ARIS WINGER: Maybe we need to change the question. We have to go back there. What's the question that we're asking. Because saying give us your diversity statement is woefully insufficient.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: And as a matter of fact, let me just give a call out right now. Don't say that. Don't say "provide your diversity statement." That's not enough, right. You've got to ask some critical questions that not only ask about the past—because we know everybody's past work is insufficient.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes!

ARIS WINGER: Don't think people are going to tell you something that's incredible about your past in diversity issues, because the discipline hasn't been ready for that ever.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right.

ARIS WINGER: But the question now is, what is the forward looking question that we can ask, that gets someone's imagination going, right. And they can actually say something that might be useful and contribute.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah, seriously.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah. Yeah.

PAMELA HARRIS: Well what happens in these cases where you get people—so we're talking about the committee members, right, who are reading these statements. And like you said, they don't even know what they're looking for. They might not even be reading them. But then you get comments, sometimes you sit on this committee and you hear a colleague say something like "Well, this time we're hiring for diversity, but eventually we'll go back to hiring the best person, right."

ARIS WINGER: And they don't even know what they're saying. Yeah, it's . . . and that's also a struggle, because here we are trying to get into a place that they don't even want us.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: And it's just that tension that is just, what is the point, right? And again, we already know what to do with that person. That person needs to be called out. Right? When that's said, we just need to be like whoa, wait one moment. Because that's there. That lives. And so when it comes up, we gotta grab it before it runs back into hiding.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right.

ARIS WINGER: We need to pull that out and be like "no, look what you just said." You know, you're great, you're nice, love your family, math is great, love your country. But what you just said. What you just said, just there. Let me take a few seconds and just call that into question. Just like you would call me into question if I mis-state a theorem. You know what I'm saying?

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh my gosh. I would tell you your definition is wrong and give you 70 counterexamples.

ARIS WINGER: Oh yes. If I mention the intermediate value theorem and I don't mention continuity, they gonna beat my ass down. But then you

go say something racist and I call you out and I'm being the bad person. Come on, now. Come on.

PAMELA HARRIS: That is the best example in the world. Yeah, so this is great, I think we have a lot of work to do to really get to a point where these diversity statements are actually measuring what we're hoping to measure.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Absolutely right. Look, we had to start and it's a messy start.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes. That's right.

ARIS WINGER: It's a messy start. And we've got a lot of people pushing against it, saying we shouldn't even be doing it, right. And I said this to JMM a couple years ago. That we—and you've mentioned this earlier in this episode—we are living in a completely different world than some of our colleagues.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: I mean it is a completely different world. They see one thing, we see another. And I'm not saying what's right or what's wrong. But i'm saying that the only way—the future of our discipline is tied to the conversations we have to bridge the different worlds that we live in.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah

ARIS WINGER: And so, you know, some people think we should have diversity statements, other people don't. And it is tied to whether we think it's a crisis.

PAMELA HARRIS: Right.

ARIS WINGER: People who think this stuff is a crisis want to change stuff immediately.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes

ARIS WINGER: And this is why we're doing diversity statements, cause there's a crisis of diversity in the discipline and we need to do something and we need to do it now.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right.

ARIS WINGER: Right? And so, other people are just like, what are you talking about, or they're saying this is not the way to go. Ok, we can talk to those people. Because we just gave a serious critique in this episode about maybe we did this too fast and maybe we can go and do something else and do this critically in a way. We can talk to those people. Some of y'all over there who are just like "we shouldn't be doing this at all, diversity isn't a problem," I—yeah, that's a much longer conversation.

PAMELA HARRIS: I just roll my eyes.

ARIS WINGER: You can get to the back of the line because we'll talk to you . . .

PAMELA HARRIS: Probably not anytime soon. We have more important things to do than try to convince you that we matter.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. That's right.

PAMELA HARRIS: 5% fam. What did you do? What improvement did you make?

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, so I went and got an external person. You heard me this whole episode. I went and got an external person to be my ombudsperson. Who my students can go to just in case I'm tripping.

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh wow.

ARIS WINGER: Look, I right now, Professor Winger, Teacher Winger, I have unregulated forms of power in the classroom. I know that I can go back and look at all the times I could give that person, that person, that person an F just because I wanted to. And what would happen? What would happen is they would get mad, they would go to the Dean. The Dean would say, blah, blah, blah, blah, Aris is the teacher. And that's it. I have unregulated forms of power in the classroom. And some of y'all do too. And we know what happens when we have absolute power.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yup

ARIS WINGER: We know what happens. And so the question becomes, when I look in the mirror, how is it—because I've seen it, I've felt it—there are times in which I'm like, you know what, I'm not going to do that. I should do that and I'm not going to do it. And I don't

have to. I don't have to. I've had those moments, where I know what the right thing was and I didn't have to do the right thing. In my classroom. In my classroom.

PAMELA HARRIS: But you're tired. You're tired.

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Because I'm tired. Oh no, there have been some non-tired moments. Sometimes I've just been a bad person. Let's be clear about that.

PAMELA HARRIS: No. Aris Winger, a bad person? I don't believe that at all.

ARIS WINGER: Sometimes I have prioritized my comfort over what is right for my students. Let's just be clear about that. You know why? Because I'm human. I'm human. And so, I've made some mistakes. And so, the question is, can I create a structure that interrogates that. That interrupts that. That disrupts that. And so I went and got my mentor, I went and got my evaluator.

PAMELA HARRIS: Wow

ARIS WINGER: And I said look, I need you to be the person. I want them to email you just in case somehow I'm not following the policies that I wrote in my syllabus. If I'm not doing this. You know what, you know how powerful I am? I'm so powerful that I can say, y'all can come talk to me if you have a problem, and they still won't do it.

PAMELA HARRIS: Of course. Of course. You hold their grade

ARIS WINGER: Even when they have all these problems. Because I hold the grade.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right.

ARIS WINGER: Because I hold all the influence. I am too damn powerful. So I was like, let me bring in somebody who's gonna write the review of my portfolio every year. And she agrees, she agreed late last week, and so I'm gonna send the email out to everybody and say, look, this is who you talk to, just in case I absolutely lose my f-in mind. If I start tripping, and I stop following the syllabus, and I start just doing stuff I want to do, or whatever it is, and you feel like you still can't talk to me about it, then you can always talk to her.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's so powerful

ARIS WINGER: And write her anonymously. And she has decided that she's not gonna let me know who it is. Let me tell you, when you have somebody like that—I'm already on my best behavior. I'm like, let me be nice, because I'm not trying to hear from her, giving me a 2.1 out of 4, you know on my evaluations, because I'm really bad.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah. Wow

ARIS WINGER: So, yeah, I think that's 5%.

PAMELA HARRIS: Friend, that's like 75%

ARIS WINGER: So the 75% is in the deciding to try and give up some of this power.

PAMELA HARRIS: Right

ARIS WINGER: It took me a long time. Look, this has been years. It's been since I've known you. I've only gotten to this place because of the work with you and Michael. And so, it's one of these things where, the sending of the email to her, the sending this email tomorrow, those are very little things. And look, I'm not expecting, based on previous data, I'm not expecting the class to revolt and all of them go to her and say "Aris is out of his mind," now that she exists. That might happen.

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh I doubt that.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, I don't think anything is going to happen. But it's more important the message that I'm giving

PAMELA HARRIS: That it sends, yeah

ARIS WINGER: To my students, yes. That's what it's about. So when I wrote this person, can you be my judge, can you be my ombudsperson, like you're not going to get anybody, but this is about sending the message to my students that I'm thinking critically about how they get to be in my classroom.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah. Well, my 5% was kind of a selfish 5%. We talked about, I don't remember exactly which of the episodes. It might have also been the episode where we were talking about polishing your CVs and all of the things, but we talked a lot about applying constantly

to all of the things. You see something open, you should apply to it. We need to stop giving people a reason to say they can't hire minority faculty for positions because "Well they just don't exist, they just don't apply." So now I'm of the mind "Oh, they're gonna say no to me."

ARIS WINGER: Yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: But they will have to read my shit. So I did, I applied. I've made this couplet, I've applied to the Project NEXT Associate Director position, I've applied. And I did not get it. And my 5% was not only the applying, but also making it very publicly known.

ARIS WINGER: No, I saw that on facebook. And that really impacted me, I have to tell you. And you created this whole thread of people talking about

PAMELA HARRIS: Normalizing it

ARIS WINGER: Their failures

PAMELA HARRIS: Quote unquote, yeah.

ARIS WINGER: That was absolutely incredible. And I couldn't do it. I've got some work to do.

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh yeah?

ARIS WINGER: Yeah, no, I just couldn't do it. Because I'm conditioned to only show your successes.

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh no

ARIS WINGER: Yeah go ahead

PAMELA HARRIS: No no I think this is great. Because I wonder how much of this has to do with upbringing.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah

PAMELA HARRIS: And so, let me say why. And this is going to hurt me to say out loud and to imagine that people are going to listen to this. But, growing up—I'm hoping my mama don't listen to this—but growing up, my mom really emphasized to me that it was important to me

that it was important to be thin, it was important to be pretty, it's very important how you present yourself. Your makeup, your hair, you know, you have to be really put together. And, as a teenager I really rebelled against it and just didn't like take care of myself. Like I was just like, I don't need—I'm smart. For me, I prioritize my intellect, my development, my communication skills. Things that I thought were something that you work at rather than just putting on some make-up and heels and looking cute. And for me it was always like, that shit deteriorates real quick. You know? I ain't trying to hold onto something that I have no control over at the end of the day, you know. And so, for me, I think I lived through a very long time feeling like a failure. And then my failure in being obese, overweight, was out for the public consumption. I mean, I've been overweight for a very, very long time. Until very recently. And before that, you know, ten years prior to that. And so, I wonder how much of my ability to just very vocally say, "I have failed at this, this is a setback," has come from a place of internalizing very deeply that people already knew I failed. Look at me

ARIS WINGER: Oh my god

PAMELA HARRIS: Look at me. Look at her. She's so fat. And so she must be lazy, she doesn't take care of herself, doesn't she value her body. Doesn't she care about her health?

ARIS WINGER: Yes. Thank you for that. That's powerful.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah, and so, if people are looking at me, and they see my body, and they equate that body—because we know this country is full of fatphobia—and they immediately discount me that way, how easy is it to say I didn't get a job?

ARIS WINGER: No, and as a male, I do not have the same issues at all about that in that context. And that's so . . . thank you for that. Thank you for going that deep.

PAMELA HARRIS: So I'm not sure that I have an answer. But you know, I find it interesting that you say that for you that would be very difficult.

ARIS WINGER: Oh yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: Whereas for me, I'm just like, I fail all the time. People see my failure all the time, I carry my failure with me. And so, it's interesting to think about that. But also, I'm cognizant

that there's power about talking about the things that go wrong. And leveraging the community that we have built that supports and uplifts.

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: Because when I say I failed. Like first off, let me be really quick about this. That shit did not hurt my feelings that I did not get this job. Let me be very clear. It's not like I cried. You know, I was just like, next. Right. Where's the next disappointment? Like if I don't get it, I don't get it. In fact, as soon as that got turned down, a better opportunity came around. So things happen for a reason, I'm very cognizant of that. But at the same time, I think hiding the—and again, it's maybe not a failure—but hiding these setbacks, hiding these things, what I see in my 5% is that when I share that with the world, it makes it easier for them if something happens.

ARIS WINGER: Oh, yes.

PAMELA HARRIS: And that they know that they can reach out to me and be like oh shit, that happened to me too, that sucks. And I can be like, it sucks, but listen, it'll get better. And they'll know that I actually do understand. Because listen, we build relationships with people because we believe that they understand us and know us deep down at the root of who we are. So what kind of hypocrite am I going to be when I tell my students "come and tell me when you need help," when all they see is me getting invited to a plenary talk, or me having a podcast, or me putting out a book, and we don't talk about the challenges?

ARIS WINGER: That's right. Absolutely right. Yes. No, that's right. And you're helping me. Because for me, I have no problem in the classroom, I have no problem doing the equity work, admitting that I'm making mistakes. But it is facing my colleagues. Right? And that helps me narrow it down. I was not going down that thread with the rest of us up there and doing that, right. Just something there that I need to investigate.

PAMELA HARRIS: Well, much more 5% to come during this year. I'm excited.

ARIS WINGER: Yes, yes yes yes. And again, we're running every couple weeks, so 5% every couple weeks. We're gonna look a lot different in the next year.

PAMELA HARRIS: Oh my god, we're gonna be so much better. But still, nowhere near where we can be. So that's the big accomplishment there. So let's wrap up the episode with some announcements.

ARIS WINGER: You can go to [minoritymath.org](http://minoritymath.org), sign up at the database, join, write for the blog, listen to the podcast, send us ideas, thoughts about past episodes. Appreciate everybody who's been doing that, it's really been encouraging and helpful.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yeah, and even when I call you out on stuff, we still want your feedback.

ARIS WINGER: That's just love.

PAMELA HARRIS: Love, like Aris says, it comes from a place of deep, deep love. And we want you to implement your own 5%. And so if we call you out, know we will never do so by name. So if you're listening, we expect you to do the 5% as well. And then, upcoming events! My friend! Happy Black History Month!

ARIS WINGER: Black History Month, let's roll! Let's do this. It's gonna be amazing. And so of course that means we have to go to [Mathematically Gifted and Black](http://Mathematically Gifted and Black). Is that just [mathematicallygiftedandblack.com](http://mathematicallygiftedandblack.com)?

PAMELA HARRIS: That is correct

ARIS WINGER: Perfect. Go there. And here's the challenge: we also said this in the book. That what happens when you started every one of your classes with an honoree this month?

PAMELA HARRIS: Oooh.

ARIS WINGER: Oh I know!

PAMELA HARRIS: 5%. Look, not even that, there are people on social media who are taking the honoree, taking the screenshot of the website, and using it as their virtual background.

ARIS WINGER: Yes

PAMELA HARRIS: If every single listener did that, oh my goodness. It costs you nothing. Zero dollars. So take advantage of that.

ARIS WINGER: Yeah. Beautiful.

PAMELA HARRIS: There's also a conference upcoming. So [Math for All](#) at Tulane, it's going to be a virtual conference, so check that out. Their website is a google website, so google.com/view/mathforallnola. What is NOLA? Is that New Orleans?

ARIS WINGER: New Orleans

PAMELA HARRIS: All right, and also, so this Wednesday, which I guess is going to be February 3rd.

ARIS WINGER: Yep

PAMELA HARRIS: February 3rd, 7 PM Eastern.

ARIS WINGER: By the time you hear this, it's going to be tonight.

PAMELA HARRIS: That's right. So Aris and I will be on Looney Math Consulting live. So if you want to check that out, check out Looney Math Consulting on Facebook.

ARIS WINGER: That's going to be fantastic, I'm looking forward to that for sure.

PAMELA HARRIS: Yes, ditto.

ARIS WINGER: All right, we got through it. Happy New Year!

PAMELA HARRIS: Happy New Year! And may this year be better for us all than last year.

ARIS WINGER: That's right.

PAMELA HARRIS: So friends, this has been Mathematically Uncensored. Where our talk is real

ARIS WINGER: And complex. But never discrete.

PAMELA HARRIS: Awesome. See you next time!

ARIS WINGER: Bye everybody!

*[Music]*

