University of Westminster - Pedagogies for Social Justice Podcast
Episode 6: Lubna Bin Zayyad
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Kyra: Thank you for tuning in to the Pedagogies for Social Justice podcast, brought to you by a student-staff partnership at the University of Westminster. This is a platform for students and educators to exchange knowledge and encourage discussion about the current challenges facing higher education. I'm your host, Kyra, and for this episode, I'll be in conversation with Lubna Bin Zayyad, who has just completed a Master's in Journalism at Westminster. Lubna also plays a role in the Pedagogies for Social Justice Steering Committee, as well as a co-creator of the project's glossary. In this interview, we discuss multiraciality, media representations, and how we might begin to decolonise media and media curricula.

Kyra: Hi Lubna! Thank you so much for joining me on this episode of the podcast. I've been looking forward to finally getting you on here. How are you doing?

Lubna: I'm doing good. I'm super-hot – you know we talked about it a bit earlier, but the weather is beautiful so I cannot complain. I'm very happy with what we're having so far.

Kyra: So, I like to start off the episodes with guests telling us a little bit more about themselves in their own words. So, first things first, where are you from?

Lubna: Yeah. So, by the accent, I am clearly not from the UK. Most people think American, but I'm Canadian, by virtue of just having a very generic North American accent. So, I'm from Canada, from the city of Calgary, Alberta, in Western Canada. Not many people know it, which is okay. And I'm studying…I'm doing actually my Master's in Broadcast Journalism at the University of Westminster, but my…my journey to here was a bit, you know… It's not as conventional as most people. I ended up basically doing two Master's degrees: so, one was in Islamic History, and then the second one was in Journalism.

Kyra: Amazing. And what were your kind of reasons for choosing to do a Master's in Journalism? I'm aware your undergrad is in another subject?

Lubna: Yeah, my undergrad actually was in Cultural Anthropology, and then I did a minor in Archaeology and Development Studies, because, in my head, that was like the holy trifecta and I wanted to be the next Indiana Jones, with like the fashion sense of Lara Croft, so I had these big dreams. And then I realised, you know, getting into Anthropology, specifically academia, it was just a very long and arduous road, with a lot of schooling, and I just did not have that energy. I was a bit…I think I was a bit…jaded by the whole academic experience.

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Once you come to the end of your undergrad, I kind of realised what academia was about. We'll probably touch on it a little bit more as we get through this podcast, but it was quite… white [laughing], especially in my city, and it was very narrow-minded and competitive, and I just thought, you know, it wasn't doing me justice, and it doesn't do academia justice. So, I decided to eventually choose Journalism. Well, actually, what I wanted to get into was more private sector work, using my academic background, primarily using the concept of like culture and heritage, and temporal elements of heritage, as a way to build like socioeconomic development in countries and communities that have very rich heritage, but it's also a very difficult industry to break into [laughing]. So, along came Journalism and, you know, I really love writing, and I really love telling stories, and I also like just hearing what people have to say and then taking their words and kind of creating a narrative for people to listen and enjoy. And I thought there's a lot of stories, and there's a lot of data out there, in Anthropology, in Archaeology, in kind of that area of academia that often just stays in these dusty journals that only a few people read, or often are referenced maybe in one or two of their own articles and that's it. You know, academia actually does a big disservice because we do all of this amazing research but then it never gets shared with the public. So, in my head, I thought Journalism would be the greatest way to kind of take all this information that's out there, this research that's been done by these academics, in a lot of kind of areas that you might not necessarily think about. My area of interest is primarily in the Middle East and in the Islamic world, and I thought I could take Journalism, I could use Journalism, and kind of make that as like a vehicle to tell these stories and inform the world out there. And so, that's my story of coming into Journalism.

Kyra: Amazing. I think that's a really thoughtful approach as well just to have, like going into your studies and things like that. So, what would you say has been kind of the highlight of your Master's?

Lubna: Oh, that is just a difficult question to answer [laughing] because I feel like me and a lot of other students – I'm not the only one – we just…we sort of got short-changed for our university experience, but I try and see the…the glass as half-full instead of half-empty, so I would say the highlight really was the people that I met, like I met some amazing people on my course, and that was… I just think to myself, if I never took this course, I would have never met them. So, I would say that that's definitely been the highlight. And, you know what, I've kind of enjoyed working from home, like doing school from home, because I've had a lot of time to do other things, and I didn't have to spend all this time like commuting back and forth for my university. So, again, there's a silver lining to this whole experience.

Kyra: So, just thinking about your background, multiraciality is a topic that we've talked about previously on the show, particularly the experience of being mixed with ethnicities that aren't white or racialised as white. So, you being Arab and Indian, you fall into this category, alongside myself, and I think it would be interesting to get an idea of your bi-racial experience. When you were growing up, at home, did you ever feel like you were more in touch with one culture than others or would you say it was a very like even split?

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Lubna: Yeah, that's such a good question, actually, and I feel like that question can be answered depending on the part of my life I was in, you know. I guess to answer your first question, when I was growing up, what kind of culture was I more in touch with, the thing is is that I felt very proud of both; however, I was not necessarily seen as a part of either, and the biggest one was due to the fact that I didn't speak Arabic or Hindi growing up. I never learnt it, I was never taught it, actually – I don't want to say I never learnt it because it was never taught to me. And when language is no longer part of… It feels like language is what makes you part of that culture because it's how you're able to communicate with people from that culture or from that community, and when you can't do that, unfortunately, by default, those members of that community don't see you as part of their group. And I've tried to talk to this to a lot of people who come from an Indian background or from an Arab background, and they can never fully understand the experience because they've never had to go through that, and it was quite an isolating experience growing up because I looked Arab, my name was fully Arab – you can't run away from that name – and so I'd have people coming and asking me, "Oh, like do you speak Arabic?" and I felt like "no" wasn't enough of an answer. I had to launch into like this…my own personal history, as like some sort of justification as to why I don't speak it, and it still wasn't enough. And then, on the other hand, also being Arab wasn't enough – like I would identify as being Arab, but the community I grew up in had a lot of people from the [Lavak] region of the Middle East, of the Arab world, and I look very different to that. They're more…often fairer-skinned, lighter hair, lighter eyes, and I'd just come in as like this dark-skinned, dark-haired person and people would be like, "Oh, you're not Arab" because their perception of Arab was what they knew. So, I think I identified through…to both my cultures primarily through my parents, more often my Mum. She was…she was the person who instilled our culture and our cultural values, both the Arab side – because she's not Arab, she's Indian, but also the Indian side, and actually primarily through food, you know, and the music and the films. So, I knew everything, even like the politics, but I was still not considered Arab enough, and so I think I primarily just defaulted to identifying as like Canadian, you know? But I think it was only as I got into university that being like a coloured person, or a person of colour, sorry, really kind of…that's when it kind of struck me that there is a difference because, growing up, I hung out with a lot of white kids, I was in a white neighbourhood, and I never really saw…like I don't think it registered, and I'm sure you've experienced this before, like your ethnicity didn't really register as like something that's different. It was like, "Oh, we're different colours, but like it doesn't really matter" sort of thing. I think it was only as I got older that I realised there are a lot of problems, and as I reflect though them, I realise that, growing up, there were instances where I faced…you know, racism or prejudice, and I just wasn't aware of that until you…you reflect back on it. That's the long story [laughing]!

Kyra: Honestly, it sounds like quite a painful experience as well, I think, like just hearing what you've gone through. So, would you say that you kind of…you had to like navigate your kind of racial identity, like going…before school and then when you ended up coming into school,

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you realised that, you know, that you were able to just kind of have this identity and that it was okay amongst, you know, your peers and things like that.

Lubna: Yeah. So, it definitely was quite a painful experience, and I don't think anyone will ever understand what that feels like unless you come from a bi-racial background, and even then, I think some bi-racial kids or children or bi-racial people have a better experience than others.

Kyra: Mm, absolutely.

Lubna: So, yeah, it's quite nuanced. I would say that I never…it was never about justifying my existence amongst my peers or even like my white friends because they never really cared. I found that where I really had to justify my existence and my cultural identity were with members from each of my cultural backgrounds, from my Arab background, from my Indian background. I think that was the hardest part. There was no real just acceptance of it. So, I think I've come to kind of accept it now. I realise that I don't need to justify my existence and I don't really need to identify as…as anything except what I want to identify – like I do think we've come to a day and age [that identity] politics has now just become… I think you'd rather – I think you should just go to therapy [laughing] instead of like discussing identity politics in depth because it's not going to serve you. You're just going to spend your time trying to argue with others and justify your existence.

It helps that I wasn't an only child – I had a brother and sister, so we kind of grew up with this experience together, and I think, as we've grown older, we've had very…we've had very frank discussions about our childhood and growing up and it helps. And my Mom, honestly, big shout-out to her, she was the one who really was a pillar, who was like, "You don't have to justify who you are – you are who you are" sort of thing.

Kyra: So, thinking about just kind of like media and socialisation and things like that, what did you used to watch growing up – like did you feel like you had access to good representations of girls that, you know, you could say "That looks like me"?

Lubna: Not at all [laughing] – 100% not at all. I grew up in, you know, in Western Canada, in a time where my city was primarily white, and it's only been over the last 15 years or so that you've seen a lot more diversity and representation. But in terms of media, no – even our Barbie dolls, like our Barbie dolls were white. So, I think…I'd never seen anyone like me on TV. Even now, honestly, like I can never see…I've never seen a half-Arab, half-Indian person who's Canadian, who identifies as a woman, who is also Muslim, on TV. You know what, if Hollywood is looking for that, they can come reach out to me [laughing]. But, no, I never did, and, again, it was one of those things, like growing up, it didn't really seem like it was an issue too much. I remember – and I don't know if you've ever done this, if you have siblings and you've done this with your siblings, but like you would watch a TV show and then you would like call a character, like "Oh, I'm this character!" and "I'm that character!" and then

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you would like fight amongst your siblings, "No, I want to be that person!" That was like kind of what we did, but it was never based on colour, it was actually more gender. You know, my brother would be, obviously, the boy, and my sister and I would be one of the girls.

But I think where I really wanted to see representation was when I was older. I think now is when I really want to see people like me, even bodies like me, like as well, like any – I just want to see a diversity in it because there's seven billion people on Earth and they do not look all alike, and so it would be great to see that representation. And I think Canadian media particularly is actually getting a little bit better, like we have produced a lot of independent TV shows and movies that have representation, and it's not representation in kind of like a tokenised way, it's just kind of like these people happen to be of this different ethnicity but they're cast as the role because they actually do a good job acting, and I really love that. I think, actually, just to wrap this up, but like two really good examples of representation: the first one is 'Little Mosque on the Prairie'. That came out maybe like a few years after 9/11, so around 2006…yeah, about 2006-ish, and it was basically about this Muslim community in this tiny town, farming town, in Saskatchewan – that's a province in Canada – and kind of how they navigate their relationship with their neighbours. It was done so well because it showcased different, you know, different perspectives, and [perhaps biases and ignorance], kind of how they navigated that dialogue. I think that was very proactive for 2006, you know, Canada. And I also like 'Kim's Convenience' – I think that that's an excellent show to, you know, demonstrate kind of like the Korean-Canadian experience. You don't have to be Korean to relate to, you know, the characters. I think, if you come from any ethnic background, you can see parallels. So, yeah, I do, thinking upon that, and reflecting upon that, I think that, you know, diversity in media is really important, and representation is important, and I think I benefit from it more now than I did in the past.

Kyra: Mm, no, I agree – and thank you for those suggestions, actually. I'm going to add them to my list [laughing]!

Lubna: Yeah.

Kyra: But yeah, I completely agree with you, and I think…it's not even just like, okay, I do want to see, definitely, representations of people that look like me, but I also want it to be like the experience as well, like I think it would…it would be great to have a show of like the bi-racial experience and not just have like, you know, this is a bi-racial woman who is the lead, like I would like to see that kind of relationship and like to see that narrative. And I think, yeah, there's definitely been a shift, and there's a lot of kind of shows that are bringing those kind of ideas forward, and yeah, I think it's definitely a step in the right direction. But thank you so much for sharing, and I'm pleased we got to have this conversation. It's so interesting to kind of compare like other people's experiences to my own, and I also feel like it allows me to kind of know them on a deeper level and, you know, that's always a pleasure.

Lubna: Yeah, of course.

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Kyra: Moving on, I came across this quote a few months back, actually, from the Decolonising Media Collective, and it speaks to how…because the media is like a dominant and powerful set of representational apparatuses, they say: "We must hijack the spaces they colonise and decolonise the sites that they have infiltrated". And I think, you know, the media is a perfect example of coloniality. But I'm interested in kind of what your opinion is. What spaces within the media do you feel have been kind of colonised or…for me to better word it, what kind of characteristics of the media make it a kind of colonial force or tool?

Lubna: Yeah, that's an excellent question as well, and I think that there's a lot to unpack with that question. I would say, first and foremost, because it kind of touches on your earlier question about representation in the media and growing up, and as you were asking this current question, I thought to myself where I wanted to see better representation wasn't in popular media, it was in news media, because I grew up right at the height of 9/11 – you know, I wasn't shielded from that. I remember my Mom and Dad having a very frank discussion with my siblings and I when 9/11 happened that said our lives are going to change now because something happened and, as Muslims, we are now responsible for that, for the fallout. I remember having these…eight-year-old me having to talk to a bunch of like Grade 2 or 3-ers who were talking about like 9/11 constantly, during like our current events kind of session in class, and I'm out here being like, "Do you understand that there's atrocities happening in Iraq? There's still children being killed in Palestine." This is like eight-year-old me having to now come and have these discussions [laughing] because I felt like I had to defend everyone, defend Muslims, because, you know, we were not being fairly represented.

So, I think, to answer your question about what spaces in the media are colonised, we can forget about popular media for a second because popular media also has issues with representation in terms of just kind of like typecasting people and projecting kind of like prejudices and ignorances, but that's…it's a whole different story. I think the most insidious form of media is news media because, as the public, we tend to trust media as something that's objective. In fact, in our Journalism courses, we're constantly being taught the ethics, and, as a journalist, you're meant to be objective, but, unfortunately, journalism is subjective by nature. It will be subjective because, even if you try and be as objective as possible, you still are in a role of privilege. When I'm a war journalist, I have a role of privilege coming in there. I have my own unconscious biases. I'm representing…perhaps a media group that has a certain agenda. So, media is not objective. It is fully subjective. And it's more insidious because we see it as something that we can trust and it's truthful. It's only now that we're sort of seeing that the news obviously has a bias and has an agenda, and I think that we need to start addressing that. Even when we think of news platforms that we thought in the beginning we could trust – and I've been, you know, guilty of this, first and foremost the New York Times. I was a really bit proponent of the New York Times, you know, and I'm talking about this is like kind of like within the last 10 years because every Western news outlet post-9/11, during 9/11, and 10 years after 9/11 was completely biased, but I think

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once…you know, around 2015, 2016, the narrative towards how Muslims were portrayed in the media had changed. So, for example, the New York Times, I was like a fool, I fully supported it, until they started releasing articles about what was happening in Palestine and Israel, and the headlines…the headlines, to me, were just like…how could you write something like that? You didn't even represent two sides. What you did was you sensationalised something and you clearly showcased what your perspective and stance was, and that impacts people who read it and who are not going to do their own research.

So, I think a long story short is that the media, the news media, is one of the most problematic areas of media in general, and that is the form of media that's most colonised and that we do need to decolonise, and we have an issue…we have an issue with… publications not allowing people of colour to come onto their payroll. You know, we have issues even just with the concept of freelancing. A lot of freelancers are people of colour or minority groups, and we're only called upon when we need to be tokenised and we need a voice of the community. And I'm sure, you know, also being half-Black, you've seen that experience when the BLM movements were happening, like all of a sudden, there was a Black person on every news-show. It's like…we don't need that [laughing]! We needed continuous representation that was normalised, not when there was some atrocity that happened and then they get the random Black guy to come and talk about the experiences – like that's not helpful.

So, yeah, I think that – and as a journalist, or I guess wanting to be a journalist, I've become more jaded. It's funny, getting into Journalism kind of has made me jaded again about the experience, and I don't know if that's just growing up, you end up realising that like the rose-coloured glasses you have are now kind of…they're losing their colour, and you're like, oh, the world isn't as… Well, I wouldn't say the world isn't as good of a place as you thought it was, but there are more issues than I thought existed and there's a lot of work that needs to be done.

Kyra: So, do you think it kind of falls onto the kind of individual actions of like journalists and kind of the way the media is kind of like a colonial force?

Lubna: Again, also a very good question, and I think it's kind of like a two-part question. Unfortunately, and this really sucks, but I think that, as individuals, the responsibility always lies on our shoulders. You know, we work hard to vote and to promote politicians that we think are going to do well for the community. We try and support businesses that we think have a good agenda. And then, all of a sudden, they mess up, or they have an issue, and they look back to the public and they're like, "Well, it's time to fix it" and so, up again, [we] pick up the pieces and we try and build again. But in answer to your question, I would say it's two parts. So, I think, first, yes, it is unfortunately up to journalists. We do have to be the ones to make change. I think that can come through two ways. First, it comes across…you have to do it by calling out publications. There is this very sad, unfortunately, kind of unspoken rule amongst the journalism community, especially amongst freelancers, is that, if

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we have an issue with a publication or an editor, we can't actually call them out because there is a power dynamic, an unfair power dynamic. And I want to point out that editors and these publications, it's not just white people, it's every person, [it's everyone is] represented in there, but when you add that element of power, it doesn't matter what colour you come from, power is what causes the imbalances, and that's what causes that systemic oppression. So, I think, as freelancers, I want to have more of an honest conversation about publications that are problematic, and editors that are problematic, for whatever reason. We need to call them out on it because we continue to just reinforce it because, unfortunately, we're at their mercy. If I call out a major publication, I'm going to be blacklisted and then there goes my livelihood. So, it's, all of a sudden, you need like whistle-blowers, but we're not even like whistle-blowing major state secrets, we're just saying, "Hey, this publication actually has some severe problems and they need to be called out – they just need to change, that's it."

I think the second step really is to support more independent news outlets and look towards getting your news from other communities, from other sides of the world. I think we tend to put a lot of emphasis and value on Western media outlets, but that's only because we've been colonised to think that Western media is objective, is truthful, is fair, because it comes across under this fallacy of free speech. Newsflash: there's no such thing as free speech. You know, we're only fed to think, you know, there is free speech because it makes us feel better about ourselves, but yeah, so… It's tough, and it's not something that's going to happen overnight, but I do think, if you start the conversation now, I think that we might be in a better place soon, hopefully.

Kyra: That kind of ties into my next question for you, and I think, you know, you touched upon this kind of concept of de-Westernisation. You know, I think that's almost kind of like a given when it comes to talking about decolonising the media. But what else does kind of decolonising the media involve for you?

Lubna: I think, on the more general scale, [and this is easy to do], is to stop finding news that is newsworthy, and by that I mean that any time – and I think a lot of freelancers, freelance journalists, are going to resonate with this – any time you go to pitch an idea, you have to have an angle, but that angle isn't "I want to talk about this photographer who's doing work in an obscure place in the Maldives because I think it's interesting"; the angle has to be like "How can we sell this? How can this entice our readers?" Well, more often than not, what it means to entice the readers, it's like what sort of already kind of, more often than not, a Eurocentric perspective can we put on this so that people will click, you know? It's not enough to just have a story for a story's sake. That's not to say that, you know, I can just write about, you know, any…I can talk about like filling up a glass up water today – no, I mean, they have to be interesting stories, but it doesn't have to be newsworthy, as in something that has to go on, you know, the six o'clock news, or has some sort of Eurocentric perspective. I mean, I'll talk specifically about an experience I had where they kind of wanted to talk about…relate it back to the Arab Spring, and I thought, well, the Arab Spring

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has happened over a decade ago now, and we need to stop looking at the Middle East as just the Arab Spring. There is a lot more that's happening. In fact, the Arab Spring is quite, in some cases, very irrelevant. And this is for a publication that prides itself on being, you know, diverse and having diverse writers and topics. So, I think, you know, to answer your question, again, it's just about taking a step back, not trying to push this agenda to sell. And I get it, like media is dying, no one's buying newspapers anymore, they need to obviously make money, but I think when you start putting this pressure, like make money, make money, you're missing out on all of these authentic voices and stories that can actually have very impactful change.

Kyra: I definitely agree with you, and I think, just having this kind of agenda to like sell, sell, sell, when it comes to like your stories and what you write, that in itself is like colonial, and I think that actually ties really well into our next topic of like Media Studies and Journalism curricula, and I think, you know, you're obviously in a really good position to give a well-informed insight, seeing as you study Journalism at a more advanced and like focused level. So, my first question is: are there any things you've noticed in your curriculum that have kind of colonial undertones or are even kind of explicitly colonial?

Lubna: Yes. So, the curriculum itself on…on paper is fine. You're never going to look at our Journalism course and see, you know, the module proforma and be like "This is inherently colonial". The issue is the execution – that's the issue. And the execution cannot be monitored: it's basically students' words against the lecturers. And, unfortunately, I think that, this time around, and I don't know, I don't know if this is just because it's Covid, but also I don't want to have to keep using Covid as like a crutch to be like, oh, let's justify everything because of Covid, but I can only speak on this experience because I was only in this course during Covid. There was many instances where I had a lot of classmates that wanted to talk about stories that impacted them – and this goes back to what I just said about talking about a story for the sake of it being a story, with no news angle – and particularly I had students that wanted to talk about the protests in India, the pharma protests, and I had another classmate who wanted to talk about the BLM movement, and also the movement in Nigeria against the military police there. And each time my classmates would pitch these ideas, my lecturers were like, "Well, no, what's the value in this? What's the value for a UK audience, for a London audience?" and I thought to myself, London is a city of 10 million people, and for every one white person, there's probably like four other ethnicities you can throw out there. So, when my lecturer was saying "the London audience", are you specifically talking about the white audience, the Anglo-Saxon audience? There we go, that is a big issue right there. Now, you don't see it in the proforma, they're always talking about "Oh, the audience, the audience!" – well, on paper, the audience can be anybody, but when it's, you know, in reality, this audience apparently is this just like this uppity person who lives in King's Cross that goes and has, you know, bottomless brunch. It also does a disservice to them because it assumes that these individuals also don't care about international politics or international news as well. So, I think that was a big problem I think I noticed especially in this programme, is that any time you wanted to write a story,

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you were always told, "Well, what value does this have for our audience?" It's like, well, there's 10 million people out there – there's going to be somebody who finds this interesting. And I think that that was a big issue.

Also, I think a lot of us probably – and I think this is just an issue, unfortunately, at the University, and maybe there isn't enough talent out there – by "talent", I mean talent that's [ready for the role] – it's like we didn't have a lot of representation in our lecturers. For example, most of our lecturers were white males, you know. We had two females who came as guest lecturers, and they were phenomenal, but they're not here on like a full-time basis, and I think that that was kind of… It would have been great to have women, and it would have been great to have people of colour, because you do get a different perspective when they teach because they're bringing in their own experiences so they can really kind of provide that diversity.

So, I think, really, healing and change comes from people talking about their experiences and sharing it. Because, you and I are completely different ethnic backgrounds, but there's a million and one things we can relate to, you know, there's a million and one things that we're like "You've had that same experience I have had" and that's obviously quite universal and we can change it. So, I think, for the Media Studies, especially when I talk about how journalism and news media is quite insidious, that's where a lot of these undercurrents and these tones of prejudice and ignorance come from and continue to be [part of] mainstream. When you start teaching these students to be, you know, free-thinkers and also kind of objective, you're also telling them, at the same time, you can't really be a free-thinker – you have to tailor your ideas to fit the agenda, to fit the news angle. And also, you can't really be objective because your audience, "Who is your audience?" kind of thing, and that was…that definitely needs to be changed.

Kyra: So, do you feel like it's possible to kind of effectively decolonise Media and Journalism curricula when the media outside itself like isn't yet decolonised? Is that something that needs to happen first, or are we capable of doing this work despite that?

Lubna: It's kind of like a "chicken and egg" question, you know, it's like: what do you do first? Both are, obviously…it's kind of like this circular system, both feeding into each other. I feel like you just need to come and karate-chop it right in the middle and just cut it off and then, you know, fix it. I think that, honestly, both, but I also think to myself today's students are tomorrow's future kind of thing, and so, gun to my head, if I had to choose, it would be start fixing the curriculum because we, as students, we are literally this blank slate, and we're also full of optimism and energy and this desire to change, and we can effect change, you know, because we can go out there and collectively be like, actually, that's complete BS – I'm going to start my own publication. And to be fair, there's a lot of freelancers out there that are starting their own publication. Unfortunately, you know, a lot of them solicit freelancers and they can't pay them because they don't get enough views, they're not getting sponsored, etc. etc., but I think like there's probably eventually going to be this change. I think what's

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really awesome is that digital media – like that's also another thing, the fact that, now, there's a lot of self-publishing, you could easily create your own site now for a handful of dollars, put your work out there. That's great. I also think that it's kind of one of those things where it's now becoming a bit diluted. Everybody is doing their own thing. There's so much out there, but it's now become diluted because you don't know where to begin.

But, yeah, I think we could start with the students. I think students, young people – I'm saying "young people" as if I'm an old person, I'm not, for the record [laughing]! You know, like we are the future of tomorrow. We can effect change. We can change these institutions. I mean, think about what's happened with the last 365 days. Who would have, in a million years, thought that there would have been people on the streets bringing down statues of white men who went across the world and caused a bunch of these problems? You know, I would have never imagined, in a million years, but here we are. So, I do believe that we can create change.

Kyra: Thank you. I think that's really inspiring as well, and a nice way to kind of draw the episode to a close. But, as a question I like to end on, what is something you'd like to see develop within higher education in the next 10 years?

Lubna: You know, this might come across as kind of like a very scandalous answer, but I would like to stop perpetuating the idea that people need higher education to be successful in life. I...I do see, unfortunately, higher education as actually a barrier to entry for a lot of people as well, and I think about the fact that – and this is just regardless of background, ethnicity, whatever – I'm thinking how expensive it is nowadays, how, unfortunately, undergrad is not enough to get you a job. Oftentimes, you need a Master's. Even then, you know, you're competing with a bunch of other talented individuals with a limited amount of jobs, and that puts you in a really precarious place because, most often than not, most of us are taking out student loans and trying to pay for these things. So, I think, in the next 10 years, I'd either want the idea of "You must have a university degree to be somebody of value" to be changed – I want that narrative to be changed.

I also want higher education to become affordable. I really don't think that, you know, nine grand, as an international student, 17 grand, is justifiable, and I think that it's quite problematic.

And the third thing I'd love to see for higher education is just...I would honestly love to see just diversity in the teaching staff. I think there are a lot of...courses and degree programmes here in universities here in the UK, and also even back home in Canada, that would benefit from having modules and courses that are not so Eurocentric and that are not taught primarily by research staff that come from a European or a white background. I think it would be great to have diversity in voices because, you know what, the reason why I didn't get into academia to begin with was because (a) the schooling was...was too much, you know, it was like 10 years of schooling, and then, after that, the chances of me being hired

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from a university, even within Canada, was slim to none because they kept taking research staff from the States, and, more often than not, they were always European or white. So, I thought, well [laughing], a brown Muslim woman is definitely not going to be getting a teaching job or tenure track, professorship, anytime soon.

So, yeah, I think those are the changes that I would like to see.

Kyra: Thank you so much for joining me on this episode of the podcast. It's always a delight to see you and chat with you, but I think to interview about something you really show a passion for is just like the icing on the cake, and, you know, you've made some really interesting points and suggestions, and I look forward to hopefully having you again in the future.

Lubna: Of course!

Kyra: Thank you so much.

No, thank you – this was honestly a very enjoyable conversation. I really loved all the questions that you asked, and it's always a pleasure chatting with you as well.

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