

Episode 7: OER and Social Justice with Marco Seiferle-Valencia

[Theme music: "Cool Upbeat Hip Hop Piano" by ItsMochaJones on freesound.org]

Josie Gray: Hello! Welcome to the Open Knowledge Spectrums podcast, which explores questions of epistemic justice, or knowledge equity, in the context of open education and considers different possibilities for making open education and open educational practices more equitable.

My name is Josie Gray, and I am your host. This podcast is my final project for my Master of Design in Inclusive Design at OCAD University.

This is my last episode for this project. Thank you so much for tuning in, whether this is the first episode you've listened to or if you've made it all the way through. If you have thoughts or ideas about any of the episodes, I would love to hear from you. I think these discussions are super important, and I definitely want to continue them. I know that I've learned a lot on the way.

With that, let me introduce the final guest, Marco Seiferle-Valencia. Marco is a Brown, two-spirit digital archivist and librarian. He is currently the Open Education Librarian at the University of Idaho Library. He is also a co-founder of the Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, which is both a digital collection of Chicax archives and oral histories, as well as the radical praxis that encourages non-institutional memory recovery as *encuentro*.

In this episode, Marco shares the work he is doing at the University of Idaho to support faculty in creating low or no-cost course materials that have specific social justice goals. He shares how his own positionality impacts the work he does in open and offers a critical perspective on citational practices in open education scholarship and discourse.

And with that, let's hear from Marco.

[Theme music]

Josie: Would you provide an introduction to who you are and what you do?

Marco Seiferle-Valencia: Yeah, so my name is Marco Seiferle-Valencia, and I'm the Open Education librarian at the University of Idaho library. I'm also the manager of something called the Gary Strong Curriculum Center. So that's a small education library, like separate from our main library. And it's where we actually have like all the state curriculum. So like, when K through 12 educators want to pick out a new textbook, we actually have all of the, sort of like "official" approved state curriculums and all the different subjects for them to go check out. I'm also, in terms of professional roles, the technical director of a project called *Chicana por*

mi Raza, which is a sort of grassroots digital memory project. And so we collect oral histories and we collect archives of what we might loosely term Chicana-feminist. I say loosely, because, you know, some of the people in our archive don't identify as women, they don't identify as Chicanas, they may be a different kind of Latinx background, and they don't necessarily identify as feminist either. But that's kind of the sort of grouping ideology that the project comes out of is looking at, how do we kind of recover this, sort of, submerged history of Chicana activism? The very sort of minimal kind of documentation we have around Chicano rights is sort of macho and male-centric and ignores a lot of the contributions that women who are artists, activists, educators, politicians made in all different kinds of areas across the country. So we have a few geographic focuses like Texas, and Los Angeles, California, places like that. As well as other sort of like less expected places like Michigan. Like sometimes people are surprised like, "Ah, there's Latinos in Michigan?" Like who knew. There are. [Laughs] So those are kind of my key, sort of, professional roles. And I always like to, sort of, contextualize myself personally as well. And so I grew up in Northwest New Mexico. I identify as Brown. I am biracial—my mom is white, and my dad is Indigenous New Mexican. So sort of a complex interweaving their different identities. And I've been a librarian for about, I guess, 10 years, if you count when I was in grad school.

Josie: And what brought you to open education?

Marco: It was kind of an accident, to be honest. So I had moved to this region to actually have a job at a university in the region (that will not be named). I was actually in kind of a completely different field. I was a digital scholarship librarian at my institution before. So I was at Michigan State University as a digital scholarship outreach librarian. And so I was in charge of trying to put together you know, sort of outreach and programming for our digital scholarship lab. So at the time, we had gotten a huge grant and were putting in, you know, this like really exciting, like VR technology and sort of like 360 spaces. And so I had a lot of digitization expertise, my undergraduate degree is actually in photography. And so I had been, you know, sort of in the digitization, digital humanities, and somewhat archives. But the sort of like grassroots non-traditional archives, open archives, if you will. Not sort of like traditional special collections work. And so I moved to the region for a job in that vein, working specifically with Indigenous communities using a well-known content management system. And I immediately had some challenges with the leadership on that team, and you know, was one of very few people of color working on this people-of-colour-focused effort. And immediately running into some very... predictable and structural issues, we'll say. And so I made the really tough decision to quit that job, actually, not knowing what I was going to do and having [inaudible], now I'm in the Palouse region. There's really not a lot out here.

And so I got very lucky, and I saw this position in open education open up at the University of Idaho. And I had really never thought that much about open education, right, I've been thinking about digital scholarship and digital humanities, and this digital memory work, which had sort of veins in open, you know, these

thematic things that I'm going to come back to later, but weren't overtly connected. And so I thought, well, you know, I'll try it out. I'd never thought of myself as an education librarian. I'd never thought of myself as an open education librarian. So I did sort of the crash course thing and you know, gave the presentation and ended up really liking the library. Here at the University of Idaho, we have a lot of really innovative digital projects that actually kind of continue that digital humanities work that I've talked about, including that kind of emphasis on, sort of, grassroots or non-traditional or under-resourced archives via some of the software we develop here. And so I was like, oh, this may be a different place than I was expecting. I really didn't know anything about Idaho. I didn't have ties to the region, right. So I just really came into this role sort of completely blind. And it was very challenging, right? Because you're immediately in the role as an expert. And I'm like, I'm actually not an expert in open education. And everyone's like, "Oh, that's your imposter syndrome." [Laughter] And I'm like, no, it's literally... the truth. You know, I don't have that sort of, like, "Oh, I learned about it in grad school, and I've been doing it..." You know, people have some really deep histories in it. And for me, I was very new to it and brought this, you know, very kind of digital humanities focused perspective. And so I started that role in 2018, and it's been really exciting. And it's been really interesting, the ways that I can, you know, have sort of synthesized that past experience in digital humanities, and digital project work, and that digital archiving work. And how those perspectives informed what I saw in open, when I saw those open histories, seeing the same kinds of things repeatedly play out. So, yeah.

Josie: Yeah, one of the great things about open is it is so flexible to be able to take those past experiences and use them to inform the work that you do in open is, yeah, really great way to approach it. In the work that I read of yours, you talk about the Think Open Fellowship Program. Could you provide a little bit of information about what that program is?

Marco: Yeah, so I like to try to, you know, follow a sort of citational practice and give people credit. So that was started by someone who was in my role, like a couple of people ago. And her name is Annie Gaines. And she's actually a librarian at the Idaho Commission for Libraries now. And so she started the Think Open Fellowship, you know, using sort of like a \$10,000 grant that— I actually don't know how she got it, because it's sort of like soft money from inside the library. So I think it's very much like she came up with this idea, and then, you know, successfully pitched it and got the funding. And, you know, it's a pretty big success story in that the state has picked it up and sort of provided funding to the library to support it. And basically, what it is, is it's a kind of typical incubator program, if, you know, people listening are familiar with those. The kind of idea is that we incentivize faculty with a small financial reward, or award, to change a course from a traditional text to an open text.

Different programs, of course, have different, stricter definitions of open, you know, kind of "open as a spectrum." And so at the University of Idaho, I think it's a very

pragmatic program, and it's very low-cost focused. And so when I came in, you know, vis-a-vis that sort of unusual process of arriving, I arrived halfway through an academic year, and so I came actually into a set of Think Open programs already happening. And I was like, "Oh, so this is interesting." Like, you know, I think maybe one of them, the book actually still cost money. The solution was to use a really old edition of the book because chemistry hadn't changed that much or something. And so, you know, it's a \$5 cost. And I was like, "Oh, so this is really interesting," right? Because like, I'm learning about open, you know, and I'm kind of, I'm feeling like I'm starting out. And so I'm like, oh, the five R's and I'm like, "Well, where's the five R's in a \$5 textbook?", and it's like, well, but that... this is part of the thing, right? Is it's like, you know, Annie's program I think really had a very pragmatic focus about let's try to, you know, not constrain faculty to platforms or impinge on their intellectual freedom in any way, and just try to incentivize them and support them and getting, you know, the best possible option that they can come up with that's as low cost as possible.

And so, there are some pure, you know, sort of like textbook-transfer projects that we've had through Think Open fellows where, you know, we had a graduate student who was really successful in getting a lot of our core courses switched over the standard physics textbooks, switching those to OpenStax physics textbooks. And having just really great results with that in terms of the cost savings. You know, him saying, "You know, there are some challenges with the content. But there's also challenges with the traditional content." And so, you know, the grad students aren't necessarily as entrenched in a particular format or anything and are sort of like, well, you know, they see there's issues with kind of either approach, and I think are more flexible. And it's interesting, sort of that trajectory of that project also then kind of hit a limit in where it could go, because, you know, a faculty department only has so much input from grad students. Not every faculty is going to throw out their traditional texts just because Ross Miller has done a really great job [*laughs*] of making a persuasive case.

We also had more intensive, kind of custom digital projects, like a custom music textbook, where it can actually be like, edited in real time, it can actually have students like annotate it, and it plays the music back or plays the score back. And so that was something that we had built actually in the library via our digital infrastructure librarian, Evan Williamson, who's, you know, just kind of a technical genius. And he was able to collaborate with that faculty and really build this like, very unique offering, that happens to be OER, right. But that's just sort of one piece of what it's doing.

And so those were all the kinds of projects that had been underway when I came into the Think Open Fellows Program. There hadn't necessarily been an overt DEI focus—diversity, equity, and inclusion, for those who don't know, or aren't in the acronym soup. And so because that is something that's very present for me in my personal and professional identities and also something that's a thread in my research, you know, I think that sort of was immediately in my mind, which is like,

"Well, how does this, you know, how are we engaging with our sort of land grant obligations and opportunities to, you know, challenge limiting curriculums and improve representation?" And so I think I kind of immediately brought that, sort of, tweak to the program, to what had been a pretty traditional and successful kind of mini-grant program.

Josie: Yeah, that's really great. Could you talk a little bit about, like, what that shift looked like, and some of the projects that have come out after?

Marco: You know, I think it's hard for me to quantify, right? Because it's like, I will never know what Annie Gaines' experience was like, or whatever. I think something that... and I don't want this to be a controversial thing to say. But I do think that... my positionality in the university, you know, I'm one of 16/17 faculty librarians, three of whom are obvious people of colour, right. So very, very, sort of low representation for people of color on campus. The library is probably one of the more diverse units on this campus. And so it's like, I'm sort of immediately conspicuous. And so it was interesting to me that a lot of the people who applied the year that then I came onto campus, and I'm the person who is facilitating the Think Open Fellowship, they sort of naturally had this focus to their work as well. I mention this because I think I didn't necessarily do some fantastic job of promoting DEI and Think Open Fellowships. But part of the reality of being a minority faculty is that you are sort of a walking advertisement for minority faculty concerns. And so that's both good and bad, right? It's the sort of like lightning rod where it's like, so I tend to be the place where people want to come and bounce bad, racist ideas off of sometimes, or, you know, they want to share things that it's like, hmm, maybe you shouldn't be sharing that. But then it also does attract collaborators who are like, "Oh, you know, I noticed, you're not only a person of colour on the campus, but you know, through conversation, that that's one of your research interests, and I'm also engaging around those topics. And so what about if I were to do a Think Open Fellowship". So in that first year that I came on, four out of the six projects that ended up being selected did have that strong DEI focus.

Folks might wonder about, like, the selection process, which I think is, you know, potentially reasonable question. And we try to use a sort of model where we have like a little, like, panel of faculty librarians who review the applications. And at the time, I think the rubric was really around cost savings, like what's the sort of potential overall impact? You know, probably angling for a higher impact and when possible, sort of weighting that. But also trying to sort of, I think, evaluate projects for sort of how unique they were in terms of, is this a unique contribution? Is this an opportunity to do something where maybe an OER hasn't been developed before? Maybe working to develop a different kind of technical solution? And then of course, evaluating them for feasibility, you know, sort of like, is this something that is actually within the scope of what this can support? I think those are sort of the main criteria. And I do you think that I modified the official kind of proposal, CFP, call for proposal thing, to actually say that projects that include an emphasis on DEI, you know, sort of supporting U of I land grant mission. It's very conservative

state here, and so, obviously, how we word things, we have to be very mindful of no appearance of support for any particular political positions. And so, you know, it's all it's kind of threading a tricky needle there. But I do believe that I went ahead and added that.

And so, I don't quite know what the magic is that made it so that this particular year that we had these projects. I think it's partly that a couple of the fellows that I've worked with were people who had developed relationships with and we were already talking about these issues. I think other people, I had had more sort of a, like a kind of professional acquaintance-ship. Maybe I'd done one or two lectures in that class, but not as strong of a collaboration. And then I think we had a couple of projects that year that really didn't have any DEI focuses. You know, and I think that's one of the things that I do think it's worth trying to, you know, talk about a bit is, you're kind of in this tension, where if someone isn't interested in modifying their courses in this way, I don't really feel that it's my position to even really try to convince them, right. I feel like it's more appropriate to support the people who actively have that and to, you know, to suggest things, when possible, when people are open to it. But in general, the Think Open fellows, we have a real range of collaboration, where sometimes I'm seeing people every week, in which case, those tended to be the ones where I did have a bit more input. Other times, it's like, well I saw them twice a semester, and then when they're done with the project. So of that particular year, there's kind of four main projects that came out of it, and that have that strong DEI focus. Two were actually by grad students, and then two were by faculty.

And so one is a project that is like still very much in progress because COVID hit right when we were starting it. And the kind of concept of it is filming Indigenous community members in our U of Idaho community and having them talk about that experience of being a person who's Indigenous and who's also, you know, a faculty or, you know, staff-researcher on campus, something like that. And talking about the kind of overlap between those roles, tension between those roles, with a real focus on creating curriculum for education students. So this comes from Professor Vanessa Anthony-Stevens who's a really amazing education professor who also has a really great anthropology perspective, and a really great perspective from just doing a ton of work with different Indigenous communities in the area. She's a big facilitator of our IKE program, which is our Indigenous Knowledge Education program, where we're actually helping Indigenous educators figure out culturally responsive teaching strategies, culturally preservation teaching strategies. You know, trying to actually really create a space that nurtures our future Indigenous educators, as opposed to kind of trampling them down like our typical education systems do. That was her idea was, you know, we tend to have these like really, really limited curriculums that in terms of how we depict Native American people. It's pretty common for, you know, kids, even in a region like Idaho where we have these really strong Indigenous histories and presences, current realities, and histories to, you know, they're like, "I don't know any Indigenous people," or, you

know, I don't know, like "Nez Perce people over there and we're like, over here." And so trying to figure out, you know, how can we model for educators, this is a way that you can create curriculum, and also, you know, sort of this meta thing where the educator students are themselves hopefully learning something from the content as well. And so the kind of idea for that was to replace some of her existing textbook with these curriculums that we created that are kind of focused around these interviews with those different Indigenous community campus members. So we recorded a couple, but then, you know, COVID kicked in, and obviously in-person recording was not ideal. And we were very particular about wanting a certain kind of aesthetic on this. And so, you know, one of the things that Vanessa rightly noted is that the sort of overall presentation of the thing, including the textbook or an OER, can be a place where, you know, white supremacy and structural racism also expresses itself. And so we were very adamant about, like, these are going to be well composed, well lit, well shot, well recorded interviews, right. And so some people might be wondering, like, well, why didn't you just do them on zoom? It's like, because we hadn't—especially at that time—figured out a good way to record a high-quality interview that we can then turn into, you know, maybe a clip that includes some footage of that person's reservation or home space, you know, some space that they want to share in terms of physical region. You know, really wanting to have some options to put in some extra sort of, I guess, you might say B-roll footage that provides that additional context.

Another was with Professor Ashley Kerr, and she was actually working on a Latinx survey course that was interesting because it's like a sort of history of Latin America, history of South America. It's a course that's actually in Spanish, so that added an additional element in terms of trying to identify OER. And she wanted to challenge the traditional text's really colonial perspective, you know. And so she had just a number of examples where she was like, "You know, this is really an anti-Indigenous perspective in the text. This is a very anti-woman perspective in the text. This is a very anti-queer perspective in the text." You know, and wanting to really kind of explode some of these, just norms in the traditional texts that were themselves very, sort of, colonial. And so I appreciated that she didn't call it "Decolonizing Latinx Spanish Survey History Course." Because, you know, the whole kind of concept of a Latinx, Spanish history survey course is sort of inherently colonial. [*laughter*] But I think she did a really good job of taking that traditional text and basically replacing it with a lot of different types of assignments. And so they included things like some really innovative things, like particular political actors in history, and creating a Twitter account and trying to tweet from that person's perspective. You know, especially I think this was during the sort of Donald Trump presidency, and there was this like real learning opportunity. How do different kinds of leadership—totalitarianism, authoritarianism, etc, fascism—how does it manifest in a sort of rhetoric in this kind of format? And so I think she used that to sort of explore like, well, let's look at some of these, you know, Latinx survey history, let's look at that history and actually apply that sort of critical digital humanities perspective and allow students to, kind of, try something

out there. And then I believe, we also identified a number of open resources from here and there, right, a lot of, sort of, searching on the web and finding things in Spanish that then we translated, or finding just raw materials, things coming from museums, even, where it's like examples like... barbaric, like, Spanish caste system stuff, you know. And being able to use sort of like original archival elements to say, like, "Oh, look at this depiction, that's like trying to sort out people by their skin colour and sort of rate different levels of interracial identity in colonial Mexico." And this is something that we want to like shove away, because it's so horrific and old and racist and gross. And it's also very deeply relevant, right? Because colourism is like a major, major issue in the Latinx community. And so taking sort of like raw archival objects, if you will, out of, you know, Mexican American Museum of History, you know, Ciudad of Mexico history kind of thing, and pulling that out and then having students work on digital assignment through that.

And then our two graduate students did work. One did work on an English 101 and 102, trying to make sort of more culturally responsive materials. She was a graduate student who'd worked a lot with English as a second language learners and had noticed that a lot of the cultural reference points in traditional English 101 and 102 texts didn't resonate for people, were actively alienating for people, were often racist. And so you know, she had sort of limited autonomy as a graduate student in an English department to rewrite these kind of fundamental syllabi, but she was able for her courses to actually experiment with some different solutions that I don't know that you would necessarily call them exactly open, you know, things like using captioning on Netflix to allow people to, you know, have the captions in the language that they need, right? And so to say, like, okay, you know, making sure that it's just selecting something that she's checking through and saying, like, oh, is there actually Spanish caption on this to help facilitate this for English as second language learners, or things like that. And so that syllabus is really interesting, because, you know, it wouldn't pass anybody's five R's. But it did get the course cost down quite a bit for those particular sections. I think they were now like a \$5 course, and she had found YouTube channels where she was able to actually have Spanish captioning and things like that. And so was able to find that and then have sort of supplemental things that people could do if they did have access to things like Netflix, etc, or, you know, the paid textbook. She couldn't change the curriculum at the fundamental level where they stopped using the English 101 text, but she said students could get through the course without it, because she was seeing students getting through the course without it and suffering. And instead, the course was now rewritten that it was like, yeah, it is actually optional. So like, if you don't do it, you're not actually missing out, and also, hopefully, we're not exposing people to so many of these, like really tired and racist cultural reference points.

And then the fourth project was with a graduate student named Rebekka Boysen-Taylor. She's a PhD student in the College of Education. And she's also a seventh-grade instructor at Palouse Prairie Charter School. I think it's K through 8. And

that's a really interesting school. For me, I went to public schools, and so I'm like, "Is this a Montessori school?" because like, it's like, let the kids do stuff, like they don't have to sit in their desks, and you know, they do these interesting kinds of projects where they work with Indigenous communities. Like in sixth grade they like build a dugout canoe as they're sort of learning like the Pacific Northwest history. And so it's a very, you know, sort of open environment to try out different things. And one of the things that Rebekka was working with, is you know, they had a kind of standard unit on chattel slavery and abolition. Frederick Douglass was sort of central person of interest that often a lot of the curriculums that she was working with would sort of tell this story of, you know, the abolition of slavery using Frederick Douglass as kind of a central figure through that. And, you know, one of the things that popped out for Rebekka was the sort of misogyny of this, you know, the kind of way that his wife Anna Murray Douglass, was basically referred to literally as "Frederick Douglass's wife," you know, and very little was said. But at the same time, you know, there's always this, like, very popular story told about how she is the person who makes his freedom possible, right. So she gets this like, shout out as the person who's like, critical to his emancipation early in his life in a very literal, logistical way, and then she somehow just becomes his wife and that's like, the end of her contributions. So Rebekka, you know, is a white, cisgender woman who is very interested in sort of developing her own anti-racist potentials, I would say. And so, you know, when I met her, she was working on, I think it's called, like, the white supremacy workbook? Not sure if you're familiar with that?

Josie: Yeah, I think so.

Marco: And now, it's like a book, I think that you buy. And at the time, it was like a PDF that you could sort of take on. And it's intended for non-Black people to kind of, you know, be a workbook that's like, here's a bunch of exercises and sort of thought exercises, I guess, you might say. And also practical writing exercises to help non-Black people unpack their anti-Black racism, and you know, hopefully address it. And so I had never heard of that resource, and that was like something she was working on. And I was like, oh, this is like, really interesting to see this like white women in Idaho is like, really, critically engaged around all this. Like, I'm sort of curious what's going on here. And basically, you know, it just turned out that she has this, you know, kind of intersectional feminist perspective. And as she was reading this stuff about Frederick Douglass and preparing this curriculum, she's just like, "What about Anna Murray Douglass? Like, this doesn't sound right, you know." And so she looks into it, and it turns out, Anna Murray Douglass is, of course, instrumental in Frederick Douglass' abolition. But she's also, you know, a noted abolitionist in her own right. She's a conductor on the Underground Railroad, she's responsible for the freedom of probably hundreds of people directly, as well as then all of these support in a million different ways that she provides Frederick Douglass. And not just a sort of, like emotional supportive wife that we tend to sort of want to feminize, but also very real, like, no, this is like a logistical, practical, strategic political operation of which she is a key part. And so Rebekka knows that and then

she really just kind of picks it up. And she ends up working with the Frederick Douglass family and working directly with the descendants. She ends up working with some of the sort of best-known historians of Frederick Douglass in terms of writers, as well as folks at the Library of Congress. And she starts basically to pull together all these primary objects that are these like digital archive objects. And we're wondering, like, how can we turn this into a curriculum that then supports this intersectional feminist perspective, without being really ham fisted about it, because we're still in North Idaho, right? And so that's kind of the launching point. And so for her first Think Open project, that's what she develops, is this kind of modular curriculum. And we actually try it out in this seventh-grade class with these kids. And it's, you know, it's pretty amazing the things that they're coming back, and that their parents are coming back and saying. And then this is also a curriculum that gets presented to education students in the college education at University of Idaho, saying, "Hey, these are the kinds of assignments you should be thinking about making in your classes, you know. You don't just have to teach these tiny, standard, limiting curriculums".

Josie: Yeah, I love how all of those different projects, like they have different levels of intervention. And they're also very localized, they're very specific to the context of the course. In the context that I work in, we're often trying to create resources that are very— like they're localized in the context of the province, but not very to like an individual class. And I guess that's because I work on a provincial level as opposed to in an institution directly with faculty, but it's so great to hear those examples. Like really prioritizing that localization and making the content really relevant. Yeah.

Marco: Well, I think for me, it's been kind of a natural fit, because, you know, I was doing what are sort of what we call like a lot of "boutique" digital humanities work. So supporting these smaller, individual projects—that are often what you might call like, a "micro" history. You know, they are very specific, and they're often focused around sort of a specific geographic region or a specific group of people, and so that's a really interesting observation. And I think probably something that for me, I was like, "Oh, yeah! They're like, you know, super nation-specific." Although I do think sometimes, I have anxiety about like, okay, but how do we, you know... I feel like with open there's always this feeling of like, well I should be making the next great thing that everyone can use. And it's like, well... I don't know.

Josie: Yeah, there's like benefits and drawbacks to both models. And like, I think that localization is a lot where the change happens on like an individual student level, an individual instructor level. Yeah, you know, like those OpenStax books that can be used all across... like multiple countries—they use them in Canada, too. Like, they're super powerful, but they don't have that, like, localized, you know, knowledge that students like, see their communities in.

Marco: Right. Which means that they almost inherently then can't be very Indigenous, or anti-colonial, right? Because it's like they've got to be...

Josie: Yeah.

Marco: Sort of that global... Yeah.

Josie: Yeah, we kind of get into the problem of like, how we understand what textbooks are, as these like, you know, "objective" narratives that present "truth." Right?

Marco: Right. *[Laughter]* As if. *[Laughter]*

Josie: So, kind of about your positionality, and how you fit into those projects. How does your positionality inform your work in those projects?

Marco: Yeah, that's a great question. You know, I think my positionality is something that is complex for me, especially because it's changed quite a bit fairly recently. So I am a Brown, transgender, queer, disabled person of colour, sometimes man of colour, in the academy, right. And so I say sometimes, because my gender identity is pretty complex. I lived my life for 31 years or something like as an out lesbian, right. And so it's, it's a very complex situation for me. And it's interesting, because I never quite know how things are reading, right. And so I think sometimes when I initially start talking to people who are wondering why this man is interested in working on feminist projects, you know, and there being this sort of, like weird contradiction of like, "Well, does it make more sense if you know that I'm a trans man, and I'm interested in feminist things?" Like and is that a weird kind of like, transmisogyny? Like, you know, there's kind of like a lot to unpack there.

And so each of these projects I come into, these are all very new relationships for me. And so it's like, we're forming the relationship and the partnership as we're going, which does include getting to know each other. And so I think one of the things that does stand out for those four projects as compared to those other two—j that I'm sorry to say, I don't remember for that year, because we just didn't work that closely. I'm sure I could look them up. But they were more like a kind of just traditional textbook conversion. You know, these were the four projects that I worked closely with were people that I was out to in pretty much all of my identities. And so I think that that really opened us up to have more candid conversations and more honest conversations where I could say, "Oh, well, you know, I think this is actually sort of transphobic," or "I think this is sort of queer phobic." And it's not that I couldn't say those things without being out, but I do think that if you're sort of trying to be closeted, then there can be—which I again, I— that's sort of like inflammatory language. So not everyone has the option to be out—but I think if you're sort of like trying to preserve the "stealth-ness," then it can be kind of tricky to be like, well, I'm not trying to let people know that I'm transgender, but I keep talking about like, well, where's the queer people in this resource? you know. And so I think with each of these projects that I've talked

about more in depth, I found, you know, the person that I was working with, even though they didn't necessarily have a lot of the same shared identities—I think everybody's a cisgender, straight white woman that I was working with on these projects—I still think that we had a lot of the same commonalities in terms of those shared values around like feminism, around wanting a more intersectional perspective. And I think each person kind of coming to that with a sort of an awareness of their own privilege. You know, and so, me wanting to be mindful about not sort of taking up like “mansplaining” privilege kind of space, you know, and understanding the way that those kinds of pitfalls can manifest. And at the same time, also, sometimes needing to say, like, “Oh, I'm not sure that that's like, you know, the best idea.” And so, I do think that it's like, you know, part of being a person of colour is you don't know what— you don't know what any other experience is like, right? So it's like, I do sometimes wonder, like, would a person who didn't have as many diverse identities, would they have necessarily brought the same perspectives? Probably not. But I think that that's something where white people have an obligation—or people of privilege, whatever your privilege is, have an obligation to be developing those kinds of perspectives and interventions.

Josie: Yeah, I've been reading— as part of this project I've been reading different people who have wrote on epistemic justice, without using that terminology, but particularly recently found writing on white ignorance and ignorance that comes specifically due to white supremacy and racism. Which allows white people to not understand or to like, be ignorant of, either willfully or not, of the experiences of people of colour. So that's been really helpful reading for me.

Marco: Now, that you've said that, it does make me think that I should also mention that I do think that working on these projects was also very affirming because it was a place where I got to sort of be more open in these different identities, right. And faculty position is still fairly conservative in many respects. And so there's not necessarily as many places on campus where I feel quite as comfortably being open as I did and those partnerships. And I think it then partly showed up in these kinds of dynamic interventions, that I could be a bit more my full person in those spaces, and then that brought that additional perspective in.

Josie: Yeah, for sure. In your presentation at Open Ed 2020, you talk a little bit about citational practices, and like the intellectual genealogy—you don't use that word, but—

Marco: [*laughter*] I should have.

Josie: But, of open education scholarship, like who we point to as thought leaders or like the origin of the values that we claim in open pedagogy. So could you talk a little bit more about that?

Marco: Yeah, I will say I feel a little reluctant. Because I don't feel like I'm an expert on this by any means. I think there are probably other—I hope there are other people who know more. But basically, my perspective was, you know, as I

mentioned, I was pretty new to open librarianship. So in 2019, I believe it was, I took the Creative Commons licensing course to learn how the Creative Commons licenses work and so on and so forth. And, you know, they had a sort of typical introduction to open, you know, I now know is kind of the standard open narrative. But I remember reading it and it—and, no disrespect to any Creative Commons, authors who contributed to do the textbook or whatever—but to me, I was like, what I'm reading sounds like open education started in the 1990s. Like some white tech dudes invented it, and then like, some other white tech dudes were like, "Oh, yeah. This is great." And then some, like white education dudes were like, "Oh, yeah. We love this." And now here we are. And I was like, this is really weird, because, you know, as I mentioned, I've been working on this Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective. One of the big kind of sites of feminist activity in the 1970s, 1960s, 1980s, that timespan, is an education. And I was like, well, that's weird that you would... why is it like, "Open education starts in 1990 with XYZ cisgender white man," and not "It starts in, you know, 1970 Detroit, when Lucy Cruz is making her own museum to educate kids about Mexican American history because there's all these kids living in southwest Detroit—to the point that it's literally called Mexican Town—and they don't have any curriculum, you know, there's nothing." There's no curriculum that supports Mexican American history, and you have people in the community who are like, "That's fine. I got curriculum. I make it, I scan it, I give it out for free." She's got a museum, it's full of like, artifacts, you know, she's giving out tours. And I'm like, that, to me, is a genealogy—you know, as you say, an intellectual genealogy—of open education. And I am really not an expert in Black feminism, but the tiny bit that I know, I was, like, you know, education is where so much of the core Black feminist thought that we now think of as the Black feminist kind of ideological canon. I mean, that's where it comes from. So I was just like, I don't understand how you can have this history of open that ignores what systematically impoverished, poor people have been doing to make sure that we're educated. I didn't understand.

And so I thought, well, maybe there's something missing in the research. But I think, you know, unfortunately, it's the very kind of, this sort of meta thing, where it's like I'm talking about while the "standard narrative," right. And who's not in the standard narrative, and how the standard narrative really just serves to sort of uphold typical white supremacy power structures. And I was like, and here it was again, where we're talking about open education and acting like it's sort of a technological intervention from the 1990s. You know, and also kind of ignores sort of, like, English open school stuff, you know, it's like a weird.... I don't mean to totally denigrate white folks, by any means, [*laughter*]. It's like, this kind of like, this sort of history that's like, so technology focused. I was like, this is very... It just feels very "of our time," that has a culture that has a very particular attitude towards technology and likes to think of it as being this very recent and very particular thing that sort of particularly mastered by particular people, which happens to be the same old people who we tend to think of as wielding power in this country. And so that was my just immediate and obvious criticism. And as I

looked into it more, I was like, "Oh, yeah, it doesn't actually seem like this piece has really been connected." And for me, it's important for my work to be liberatory for me, personally, as much as that's possible within these very confining systems. And it just seemed natural to kind of connect those things. And, you know, hopefully seed some conversation in the community about the actual ideological history of OER.

Josie: Yeah, it really got me thinking a lot. I've been doing lots of reading on citational practices and like, particularly in the context of white feminism, and its appropriation and all of that. So I've been doing lots of that kind of reading and so when I heard you make that critique of open, I was like, yeah, our definitions do point back to not that long ago, mostly tied to the internet, mostly tied to open licenses, which are under Western colonial understandings of copyright, and...

Marco: Yes, yeah.

Josie: Yeah, so that was a big "lightbulb" moment for me, for sure.

[Theme music]

Josie: In the show notes, I provide links to the Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective and the article Marco published titled, "It's not just about the cost: Academic libraries and intentionally engaged OER for social justice." In this article, Marco draws on Sarah Lambert's three principles of OER and social justice to discuss the OER projects at the University of Idaho. He also draws on the work of bell hooks and Regina Austin to present a call to action to those who support OER projects to specifically and intentionally diversify the perspectives in OER. I will also link to Marco's recorded presentation that he gave on this paper at the OpenEd 2020 Conference.

You can learn more about this podcast at knowledgespectrums.opened.ca. On the website, you can find all episodes and transcripts, along with many other resources and information related to this project.

You can connect with me on Twitter [@josiea_g](https://twitter.com/josiea_g) and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #OKSPodcast

I record this podcast on the traditional and unceded territories of the ləkʷəŋən Peoples, now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the territories of the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples, where I am very grateful to live and work.

The theme song is "[Cool Upbeat Hip Hop Piano](#)" by [ItsMochaJones](#) on freesound.org and shared under a [Creative Commons Attribution License](#).

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This has been Open Knowledge Spectrums. Thanks for listening.

[Music fades out]

—End of Episode—



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