

**Transcript for Season One, Episode Two:  
Students Speak Up! The History of the Difference, Power, and Discrimination  
Program**

**Nana Osei-Kofi 00:00**

Welcome to Transforming the College Classroom. This is a podcast for anyone who's interested in taking up teaching and learning and higher education from a social justice informed perspective in ways that are centered on a deep commitment to teaching all students. My name is Nana Osei-Kofi, I'm director of the Difference, Power and Discrimination Program at Oregon State University and I'm also associate professor of Women, Gender and Sexuality studies.

**Kali Furman 00:33**

I'm Kali Furman, I'm a post-doctoral scholar with the Difference, Power and Discrimination Program.

**Bradley Boovy 00:39**

And I'm Bradley Boovy, associate professor in the School of Language, Culture and Society at Oregon State and co-facilitator with Nana of the DPD summer academy where we work with faculty who are developing and teaching DPD courses.

We're recording this at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon, located within the traditional homelands of the Mary's River or Amphinefu Band of Kalapuya. Following the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855 Kalapuya people were forcibly removed to reservations in Western Oregon. Today living descendants of these people are a part of the Confederated tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated tribes of the Siletz Indians.

**Bradley Boovy 01:16**

Today we're here with Dr. Kali Furman. Kali is one of the co-editors of the volume of course and the author of the first chapter, titled "Student Activism and Institutional Change: A history of the Difference, Power and Discrimination Program."

**Nana Osei-Kofi 01:30**

Kali, why don't you start by telling our listeners a little bit about your chapter?

**Kali Furman 01:36**

Yeah, absolutely. So, my chapter focuses on talking about the early history of the Difference, Power and Discrimination Program and how it was started, and some early trials and tribulations at the institution. I really focus on situating that story within the specific context of the state of Oregon and Oregon State University as predominantly white spaces and institutions. And really thinking about the broader history of student activism at Oregon State University, particularly in response to racism and other forms of bias incidents.

The Difference, Power and Discrimination Program was originally created as a result of student activism in the early 1990s. So, I talk about how that falls into a broader pattern of student activism and institutional responses to student demands for change at the Institution. So, looking at the specific and unique history of DPD but also how it fits into a broader pattern in terms of institutional memory and how institutional responses take place to student demands on campus. And so it's looking at this context and the broader history that Oregon State's a part of and then also talking specifically about the origins of the Program. I And tell that story by using archival materials from our Special Collections and Archives Research Center here on campus in the Valley Library and so, really using primary sources and the documents that we have about those origins to tell that story.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 03:03**

That's fantastic and I really appreciate what you said about the way that you look at it in terms of themes that are situated within a larger context because its, I think we could look at this chapter and say, oh, well, I'm not at Oregon State so, it has nothing to do with me or I don't live in the state of Oregon so, that history's not particularly interesting to me but what I'm hearing you say, if I'm hearing you correctly is that, it probably doesn't matter what institution we're at, these institutions have similar histories, these states have similar histories and we can see these themes throughout. Does that capture it?

**Kali Furman 03:42**

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. I think that's one of the things that I want folks to take away from reading this chapter, is not just learning about the history of DPD but also asking folks to think about what is their own institutional histories, right? How have their institutions been shaped by policies, by practices? What are legacies of student activism on all of our different campuses? How are the contexts in which we teach and we live and we work informed by these broader events and these broader mechanisms and processes that happen. Which, while there will be unique situations in every institution, there's also themes and connections and how those things function. So, I think there's a lot of value in both knowing our own specific context as well as how it fits into broader patterns and connections as well.

**Bradley Boovy 4:26**

So I'm interested, as you think back to the work that you did for the chapter and your research, I'm interested in thinking through with you, what do you think changes when we look at the history of institutions from a student activist perspective, right?

So you mentioned our archives are filled with policies, they're filled with emails from faculty and other correspondence between faculty and administration about setting up the DPD program. What do you think, what does it add to our story? How does it challenge us to think about institutions of higher ed differently when we take student activism as the entry point?

**Kali Furman 05:00**

That's such a good question, Bradley. I think a few different things around that. One, is I think because students move in and out of the institution relatively quickly in the grand scheme of a life of an institution, right? Typical undergraduate student is here for four to five years, grad students, two to six years maybe and so that's relatively high turnover, whereas staff and faculty will often be here for decades, particularly tenured faculty. So, I think when we look at the histories of institutions or institutional memory, a lot of times it's faculty and staff that are centered in terms of how we think about what changes an institution, it's people who have some of those longer standing stature, status, time at the institution but when we focus on student activism, I think that it allows us to think about contemporary issues and how those actually cause change in the institution rather than sort of long term change.

Something that I really noticed in doing this research and in my work with students – I used to work in student affairs. I worked with undergraduate students on this campus and on others and particularly here where there is such a student activist presence, is students didn't know the history of previous student actions. They might know a bit here or there, like they might know how our cultural resource centers came to exist and that student activism had something to do with that but they don't necessarily know all of the stories about how those things changed. So, what you see in some of the history of these student movements is patterns repeating themselves. And so, I think when you zoom out and look at student activism as an entry point, you can see those waves over time and how they're connected but not necessarily looked at in connection because those groups of students move in and out of the institution relatively quickly.

**Bradley Boovy 06:47**

Yeah.

**Kali Furman 06:48**

Does that make sense?

**Bradley Boovy 06:49**

Yeah, totally and so I just wanted just a quick follow up. So, then do you see, is your chapter potentially then a resource for student activists?

**Kali Furman 06:55**

I think it could be.

**Bradley Boovy 06:57**

It seems like something they could use to, either here or at other institutions, to kind of get a sense of those patterns and maybe also learn strategies, like learn what has been effective for students in the past.

**Kali Furman 07:07**

Yeah. I certainly think so, for sure because I think it's easy to be in the moment of something to be like, we're going to do these things. But, I think it's really helpful to think what has been effective in the past and how has it moved and what can we learn from those? And then also what do we have new to offer in terms of student action. So, I certainly think it could be or I would hope it would be.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 7:28**

Yeah. I also just appreciate in what you're saying, what a powerful reminder this is of the role of student and student activists in creating and shaping change, progressive radical change in US higher education.

**Kali Furman 07:46**

Yeah.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 07:47**

I feel like a lot of times we forget that it's actually, the role of students in demanding and pushing for changes that I think a lot otherwise would never have happened.

**Kali Furman 08:00**

Yeah. Absolutely, absolutely.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 08:02**

Yeah. They're worth remembering and acknowledging.

**Kali Furman 08:07**

And connected to that and something that I talk about my chapter, is the coalition that formed between students, staff and faculty in getting the DPD program created. So students created this initial push and demand for the university to create a curriculum that would deal with the origins of racism and discrimination that all students would have to learn about. Then staff and faculty were tasked with the logistics of actually creating that and in that process, the team of staff and faculty that created the structure of what became DPD, they really, really centered what the students were asking for as they did that.

It's apparent in the meeting notes and the memos that I read through in doing the research for this chapter, that they didn't forget about those students when they were doing that process. That they engaged with them, that they kept coming back to what did students really mean when they asked us for this and how can we create that and live into that in a meaningful way that will last at the institution. And so, I think the coalition that's possible too when we take that student activism seriously, and those requests seriously and then leverage the institutional positions that faculty and staff have to continue to move that forward beyond when the students are here.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 09:11**

Yeah. Excellent, excellent. I'm always interested in why folks do the work they do and what that process is and you shared a little bit about coming out of student affairs and working with students so it seems like there's a natural connection there with that. What I'm really curious about, because you spent so much time in the archives, was there anything that surprised you or something you found that you just didn't expect that you are able to share?

**Kali Furman 09:36**

Yeah. Yeah. Well, I'm a huge history nerd, so it was so much fun to just get to spend an entire month digging through the archives. I was supported by the Resident Fellows program by the Special Collections and Archives Research Center. So, I spent a whole month just digging through the archives and there were so many interesting things and there was a lot of things in there that I didn't necessarily expect like printed copies of emails from the '90s between faculty emailing each other.

So, it's just a lot of stories in there that I wasn't necessarily expecting to have that level of personal narrative detail that was there which was great. I think really, I was just pleased at how much of an in-depth story I could find about the origins of the program. I think just being able to see, especially, so I look... so we have a special DPD collection that's categorized everything DPD and then there's other collections that I looked at as well, like the student newspaper. There's copies of every student newspaper in our archives and so I read through those. Just seeing some of the firsthand student reporting of what was happening when the program was created and then when the program's funding was almost cut in the late '90s.

So, being able to really see those firsthand accounts, which you always hope to find in your archive but you never know what you're actually going to find until you get in there. Because there are often gaps in archives because of people didn't think to save something or you what I mean? Like some of those kinds of things. So, I think that that was really, really great to see.

Then, I think something else that I found myself thinking about a lot, particularly as I was reading the student newspapers, was how many parallels there were between what was going on in the 1990s with what is happening now. I constantly found myself being like is now the 1990s? There were just so many similarities in terms of what the op-ed pieces are like, what issues were people concerned about? There were budget constraints, people were questioning, should we be doing diversity education? What's the point of this? I think we see those same questions now around issues of social justice, around the paranoia around critical race theory that we're seeing today. So, there was just a lot of parallels between all the things that were happening in the '90s when the program was created that are still going on right now that are sort of unresolved questions. And certainly things have changed and like some of those elements but in a lot of ways they haven't. There are so many similarities. That was really, really powerful to see and think about in my research as well.

**Bradley Boovy 11:59**

Yeah. I really love... We've talked a lot about archives. I also love to work in archives and just hearing you speak to the ways in which archives, both in what is present and what the gaps are, can become a kind of source of radical change. That can become a source of activism and change in the institution. I love that you, in the chapter you really trace that history at OSU through the archives and through interviews because you also did interviews as another part, perhaps not as much in the chapter but as another part of your research, right on DPD?

**Kali Furman 12:28**

Yeah, so I wrote this chapter, it's part of my dissertation that I wrote in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. I did a case study of the Difference, Power and Discrimination Program as my dissertation project. Part of that was this chapter that I wrote looking at the institutional history of DPD and then I also did interviews with faculty members who've gone through the faculty development program and who teach DPD. It was interesting to think of all of those things together and in relationship to each other, for sure.

**Bradley Boovy 12:52**

So, just thinking, I guess, about the past and how we can also leverage that when thinking about activism in the present. I think that also just in terms of our podcast here that also connects really well to the other two chapters in the first section of the book and I think also to Marisa Chappell and Linda Richards' chapter at the end of the book. So, I think it's a... in the

chapter, you really pulled together a lot of themes that run throughout the book in terms of collaboration and working with archival materials. So...

**Kali Furman 13:19**

Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 13:21**

Yeah. I think those are wonderful ideas that readers can take up in terms of thinking about how they want to work in their own classrooms and maybe using archives. Also, I think that part of it is, speaks to why it's so powerful to work with students on current issues and allowing them to do their own research in terms of the history to understand issues deeply, to understand where they come from and how they've moved through processes and procedures over time. What I'm thinking about, there's a question in this. [laughter] What I'm thinking about is that seems like it's a specific example that has to do with the way you put together the chapter and that's something that let's say a reader from X university somewhere in the country reading this can take away from that and use. I'm wondering, are there other things that, if you were looking at this as the optimal outcome from somebody reading your chapter, what do you want people to take away from it? What do you want them to engage with specifically when it comes to curriculum transformation as a result of reading your chapter?

**Kali Furman 14:34**

Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. I think for me such an important part of curriculum transformation, that's aiming to do that through a social justice lens, social justice perspectives in service of that goal, I think the importance of knowing that it's not just about what happens inside our classroom and the literal curriculum that you're putting together in terms of your text, your assignments. But it's also about understanding the context in which that curriculum is happening and that there are a lot of connections that can be made within your own institution, your own context that is important to incorporate into your teaching. What are the contemporary issues that students are concerned about? How do they connect to what you're doing in your classroom? How do they impact what you're doing in your classroom with your curriculum and then how, no matter where you teach, how does the institutional history impact what you're teaching and how and why?

So whether you're in a critical field, like we're all in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies or in any area that you're teaching, what does the institutional legacy mean for what you're teaching and how. At Oregon State, we have some faculty that do really great work around the history of science and engaging with some of the really difficult histories about eugenics being taught at the institution and how does that impact what you're teaching now?

So I think, thinking about curriculum transformation as not just a sole project about like what's in your syllabus but it's about a much broader context and perspective than simply what you're putting on that document that you're giving to your students.

**Nana Osei-Kofi 26:08**

Thank you, Kali. Thank you for everything that you shared with us. I think there are a lot of wonderful ideas that I hope folks around the country will take up and work with in their own classrooms and in their own institution. So we appreciate your time.

**Bradley Boovy 16:22**

Thanks so much, Kali.

**Kali Furman 16:23**

Yeah. Thank you both. It's always fun to talk about your work. So yay!

**Bradley Boovy 16:27**

And, in our next episode, we'll be talking with Jenny Myers, whose chapter is on online education from a social justice perspective and the course comes out of Jenny's experience in the sustainability studies program so it should be a really interesting conversation.

We'd like to thank Orange Media Network and their Podcast Director, Jen Dirstine.

**Kali Furman 16:45**

This podcast is sponsored by the Difference, Power and Discrimination Program. More information on the DPD program, our book and the transcripts for this podcast are available at [dpd.oregonstate.edu](http://dpd.oregonstate.edu).

**Nana Osei-Kofi 16:59**

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