

Episode 1: Decolonizing Data and Design

When we think about product and policy analysis and design, we don't often think about the colonial underpinnings of our work. Many people think of data and design as somehow "neutral" and "objective." But if we dig deeper, we begin to understand how they can perpetuate inequalities. So, what would it mean to decolonize data and decolonize design? In this episode, we talk to Jacqueline Quinless, author of *Decolonizing Data*, and Dori Tunstall, author of *Decolonizing Design*, to answer that question.

Featured guests:

Jacqueline Quinless is Associate Faculty at the Centre for Indigenous Research and Community-led Engagement and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria. She has worked extensively in Indigenous communities using gender-based analysis frameworks in the context of understanding the impacts of natural resource development on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. She is an award-winning public sociologist recognized for her community-based research in the advancement of Indigenous welfare in Canada.

Dori Tunstall is Former Dean, Faculty of Design at the Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCAD University). She is a design anthropologist, public intellectual, and design advocate who works at the intersections of critical theory, culture, and design. She was the first black person—and first black woman—to be named dean of a faculty of design. She is a recognized leader in the decolonization of art and design education. She has held faculty positions in Australia and the US, organized the U.S. National Design Policy Initiative, and served as a director of Design for Democracy.

Moderator: Darrell Bowden is the Rotman School's Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and has more than 25 years of social justice work in higher education.

Resources:

- [Gender Analytics: Possibilities conference](#)
- [Decolonizing Data: Unsettling Conversations about Social Research Methods](#) by Jacqueline M. Quinless
- [Decolonizing Design: A Cultural Justice Guidebook](#) by Elizabeth (Dori) Tunstall
- Check out GATE's other [resources on Indigenous innovation](#).

Gender Analytics is a way to analyze your products, services, processes and policies with a gender lens to uncover hidden opportunities for innovation and improved effectiveness by considering gender, race, Indigeneity, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other identities. Learn more here: <https://www.gendereconomy.org/gender-analytics-online/>

Want to hear more from the Institute for Gender and the Economy? Check out our signature podcast series, [Busted](#), which busts prominent myths about gender and the economy!

Credits:

Produced by: Sarah Kaplan and Carmina Ravanera

Edited by: Ian Gormely

Transcript

Dori Tunstall: If you are creating a context in which Indigenous people feel a sense of belonging, feel a sense of sovereignty and agency within that institution, then you have opened the door for everyone else. Because this is the community for very good reasons – have very good reasons not to trust. Have been told that they only can belong if they are assimilated and/or dead.

Sarah Kaplan: When we think about product, service and policy analysis and design, we don't often think about the colonial underpinnings of our work. Many people think of data and design as somehow "neutral" and "objective." But, as we dig deeper into the social dynamics surrounding these processes, we begin to understand the ways that they can perpetuate inequalities. And, there's no better way to start this conversation than by looking at the colonial foundations that amplify power imbalances and exacerbate inequalities. So, what would it mean to decolonize data and decolonize design?

Welcome to episode 1 of Designing for Everyone, a podcast by the Institute for Gender and the Economy (or GATE). I'm Sarah Kaplan (she/her pronouns), a Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, Founding Director of GATE, and your podcast host. In this 7-part limited series, we're featuring a thrilling set of conversations we had in April 2023 at our Gender Analytics: Possibilities conference.

Our first panel featured a riveting discussion between Jacqueline Quinless, author of the book Decolonizing Data, and Dori Tunstall, author of the book Decolonizing Design. Bringing together these two books and these two authors kicks us off on an inquiry about what designing for everyone might really look like.

Jacqueline Quinless is Associate Faculty at the Centre for Indigenous Research and Community-led Engagement and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria. She has worked extensively in Indigenous communities using gender-based analysis frameworks in the context of understanding the impacts of natural resource development on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. She is an award-winning public sociologist recognized for her community-based research in the advancement of Indigenous welfare in Canada.

Dori Tunstall is Former Dean, Faculty of Design at the Ontario College of Art and Design University (known as OCAD University). She is a design anthropologist, public intellectual, and design advocate who works at the intersections of critical theory, culture, and design. She was the first black person—and first black woman—to be named dean of a faculty of design. She is a recognized leader in the decolonization of art and design education. She has held faculty positions in Australia and the US, organized the U.S. National Design Policy Initiative, and served as a director of Design for Democracy.

Their conversation was moderated by Darrell Bowden who is the Rotman School's Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and has more than 25 years of social justice work in higher education.

This conversation provoked me to think about how Western data analysis and design principles embed different forms of exploitation in them...and how decolonizing them will require us to experience some forms of unsettling or discomfort. These authors both also emphasized that it won't be enough to just hire Indigenous people and hope that decolonization will automatically happen. This kind of tokenization just doesn't work.

In any case, take a listen and see what you think.

Darrell Bowden: So in beginning this conversation, Jacqueline, let's start talking about data. Many people think of data as somehow neutral and objective. Can you explain how many of our standard data collection and research practices can contribute to colonization and exploitation? Small question.

Jacqueline Quinless: It's a great question for first thing in the morning, so thanks very much. Well, I think that data is everything actually. We think of of data as maybe you know, maps or statistics or you know tables. It can be all of those things and so much more. Stories, photographs, cultural heritage. I mean everything that we think about in terms of knowledge production is data and the way that we handle that information and we somehow preserve it or we store it. All of these things are really built into these knowledge systems and there are so many different ways in which we can generate data. And so thinking about then, you know, is data, you know, sort of objective. Well, there are objective processes that we can certainly engage in to make sure that, you know, our data is, you know, measuring what it's supposed to measure or it's, you know, articulating what it's supposed to articulate. That being said, data in and of itself is biased right there. There's these unconscious bias that's built into the data because it's knowledge systems and and the information that we're speaking about with respect to data comes from world views. And so those processes to which we articulate that information and we translate that information also has biases built in. So based on our world views and also the power structures to which that knowledge is is collected, gathered, disseminated and then also shared and exchanged with. So I think in, you know when we think about data, we have to understand that there are cultural, social, political kind of components that are baked in to the knowledges that we're trying to understand and those knowledges are culturally contextual, right. So world views are very, very different and we use different epistemologies to get at those ontologies. But really when we think about it, it is reflective of who we are, what our belief systems is, our our attitudes, our perceptions of the world. And so when we share that information, we can think of data also in terms of of the not only the gatherers of data, but the the people who control that information, the people who manage that information or the stewards of that knowledge. And so all of these things are part of those power structures. So to think of data just really in kind of a a really inoculated way is, is, is really kind of missing the whole point of knowledge and power as it relates to information, interesting.

Darrell: So the question then is what does it mean then to decolonize the data?

Jacqueline: That's a great question. So decolonizing data knowledge, it, it's a it's a journey. And so when I think about and I can only speak for myself, right, when I'm thinking about decolonizing my own practice. So that's the way I think about data and also the way I practice the gathering of data, the engagement of that data. And so when we decolonize, we start with ourselves. We start with the colonial mentality of how we know the world and where that knowledge comes from and where it's rooted. And so that is a lifelong journey. It's not a destination point. It's not like I've decolonized something and and now it's decolonized, but it doesn't work that way. It's an ongoing journey.

And I think it's also recognizing where and how does our practice uphold the power structures in which maintain the data to which we're collecting. So I need to really reflect on the way that I'm embedded in institutions, whether that's an academic institution or any other kind of organization or community and the power structures that uphold that knowledge. So decolonization is a journey, it's a process, it's a practice, and it's ongoing. It's not a final

destination. And so if we're looking at decolonizing data, I invite you to consider where and how you learn about the world in terms of your own disciplines, your knowledge. It's an invitation to really reflect on, well, if I'm practicing this particular, you know, theoretical orientation or I'm gathering information in a specific way, where did that knowledge come from in sociology? And I'm kind of dyed in the wool. I've got all three degrees back-to-back in sociology. So I like to speak from that lens. But I think about the Eurocentric thinking about, you know, the founding thinkers of sociology and what their world views were. How did they put together the practices to which then I have learned and teach. And to be quite honest, a lot of that does not resonate with me. It does not resonate with my world views, does not resonate with me on so many levels, emotionally, spiritually. I get it intellectually, I know all the methods, quantitative, qualitative. But these ways in which we flow and gather knowledge really needs to shift and and change. If we want to decolonize data and decolonize the way that we walk this earth.

Darrell: Great. So Dori, I will include you, don't worry. So how has modernist design advanced the project of colonization?

Dori: Well, I think modernist design is part of the process of colonization. So, OK, colonization is the theft of land from indigenous people and the processes of physical as well as cultural genocide. That is, that is was used to justify that theft, right? So let's just get it all on the table. Modernist design plays into that role in the sense that the spoils of many of the processes of modernist design came out of the colonization process. So if you think about, I talk about in the book *Decolonizing Design* about the world fairs, and particularly I pick on the Great Exhibition of 1851 in England and then the Colonial Columbus World Fair in Chicago. And these are all about especially the Great Exhibition of 1851, the spoils of colonization where you go into halls and you find things that have been stolen appropriated on display. You have human beings being put on display as part of the spoils of of colonization. And when you talk about sort of fields like industrial design, industrial design traces its roots in many ways to these kinds of world building exhibitions. So the modernist design project, and we talk about it as a project because it's it has a time and a place, but it's moved around as part of the process of colonization, as a mythology that says design is something that happened in England in the 1800s, so 1800s. This is the height of colonization. So they're deeply, deeply implicated in one another.

The mythologies of modernist design in the sense of if you can, that through technological progress we'll be able to provide for all the masses. Well, that's just cheaper and faster. And it became cheaper and faster because you stole the land, so you didn't have to pay for the land or pay very little for the land. It becomes faster because you've enslaved people who you don't pay to do the work and provide the excess labor. So that mythology is directly related to, again, the exploitation of Labor around the world and the theft of land to make things cheaper and faster. For mostly in many ways the mercantile and aristocratic classes of of Europe. And then the those who left Europe for greater economic prosperity over, again, the lands of indigenous people and enslaved individuals. The second part of the mythology is that if you give up your sense of nationality, you're Germanness, your Englishness, your whatever, and this, then you can, you can join this sense of universal humankind. And so even even in the things that we talk about about universal design, there's a little bit of a seed and that in the sense of like, well, who is being defined as the universe. And when you think about like the Bauhaus, which we all praise and even in this room, you see elements of that design aesthetic represented in in how

we create a modern space that the ideal of that they're really designing for a white male physically and emotionally traumatized body coming out of the War World One in Europe. And so to the extent that we make those aesthetics and practices the pinnacle of design to which all aspire again creates to the erasure of, in the case of Australia, 65,000 years of making. And it contributes to the microaggressions that you experience in the design space when you realize it's not designed for you, right that that reminder that you don't belong and then someone else's bodies are belonging in and of that space. So you cannot separate the story of design of something that happened in Europe in the 1800s from colonization. It is actually the tangible manifestation of those colonial practices in its erasure of making from other people and some great chain hierarchy of of design. Or it is the intentionality of of cultural genocide as part of the justification for again the theft of the land and the enslavement of people's bodies to work the land to again make it cheaper and faster prosperity for again the European mercantile classes in their diaspora.

Darrell: So a similar trick question, at a high level, because I know we're going to explore this in a bit, How might design be decolonized or transformed to dismantle some of those things?

Dori: In the book I talk about 5 things, and these are what decolonizing design means for me. It's not universal, but it what it means to me through my experience and work trying to decolonize institutions, it's probably the best way to say it. So it's putting indigenous first. The repair or that needs to be done, the reparations that need to be done, like decolonization, is the rematriation of the lands back to the indigenous custodians of the land so that they can carry forth with a sense of self determination and sovereignty. Anyone who's not talking about repairing that relationship to the land is not talking about decolonization. They might talk about diversity, equity, but they are not talking about decolonization. So that's the place where it begins. The role of design and that is again, design is how we make manifest the values that are important to us and that we want to pass on to future generations. So part of that is putting Indigenous first is creating the space in which Indigenous people can make manifest their values in the environment, in the objects that we have. And for me, it's going back to creating objects that are about, liberatory, liberatory joy, right? That many of the objects that come out of that story of design, of something that happened in the 1800s in Europe, is about the creation of objects that were for enslavement, disempowerment, murder, all these sorts of things. Things that don't bring joy. And so if we're able to bring back joy that is collective, not individual, and you know, joy in and liberation of the body, joy to community, then in many cases that that gets us back to, from an indigenous perspective in the sense that we are all indigenous. It's just some of us lost our ways both in terms of that connection to the land. But it does bring us back to what, why we should be making and what what is the ethos under which we should be making. So putting indigenous first, returning to that ethos highlighting and celebrating again, like I say, I lived in Australia so you have like 65,000 documented years of making there. So bringing back the repair of those things that were hidden right and destroyed, and and for me it's it's all about can we optimize difference without hierarchy? Because the harm that has been done is in the hierarchy, saying this is art, this is design, this is craft. And providing different values of that based on who's in the museum versus who's in a store versus who is trading with their neighbors. And it's that dismantling of that hierarchy by putting Indigenous first, by dismantling the modernist myth right of of design that we begin to make amends. And making amends is again ceding power, ceding space, ceding understanding. Again of what is the way in which we should think about ourselves in relationship to and borrow from again the Anishinaabe, I have colleagues who talk about like again all our relations right which includes the land, the water, the the air, the animals, the plants and what does it mean. For me, the exciting aspect is that what does it mean if we begin to design for all my relations,

Not human centered design. We've been centered too much. But how do we begin to have a consciousness of all the things that we are in interdependence with and design with a sense of connectivity to all of them, Which again, that brings joy because we are joyful when we're in connection, right? And it brings liberation because we're not forcing an animal or a plant or another person to be enslaved to our needs.

Darrell: Great. So in both of your books, you talk about how you've contextualized decolonization vis a vis your other identities. So Dori, you just spoke to you know putting indigenous people first in relation to your black experience. Jacqueline, your background, your Indian ancestry and I use the term Indian politically, is allowed, has allowed you to understand shared experiences of dispossession, forced relocation, colonialism all of which helps you in building the relationships of trust with indigenous people. Dori, I want to ask you how do we leverage our identities and and to self-repair our positionality with indigenous people?

Dori: Lots of communal therapy. I mean it again, it's, you know, the way I talk about it to our students. Is that what there is joy in mutual exchange. We as a as a species love connecting to one another. But to be in exchange, you got to have something valuable to share, and the thing that is most valuable is our sense of ourselves and what matters to us and what is meaningful us, and then being wanting to exchange that. So you kind of have to start with knowing yourself, which is knowing your history, knowing where you want to go, knowing the kind of person that you want to be and then by doing that work when you offer to share who you are with someone else, you're you're able to share that which is valuable and meaningful and that is how people are going to connect with you. And again the you know like I'm African American multi-generation. So there are aspects of that history which is extraordinarily painful and traumatizing and and parts of the history I won't know because people in my family don't want to talk about it, right. But I still have to kind of face the trauma of that. I still have to understand how my body and my spirit is reacting to others so that I can again exchange what is best about me with someone else. And so and again it's a thing where it's things that are easier is that like again, I have, I come from a very, very rich history that is full of things that are marvelous and beautiful, right. So in the book I talk about jazz right as a as a reflection of African American culture, which in and of itself is in a mixture of African, European and Native American cultures, heritages, values all mixed up together in some jambalaya. Instead of a, you know, a melting pot, it's not melting, it's mixing, right? And so being able to tap into the resilience and the beauty that comes from those cultural encounters, which again done under context of great oppression, but still finding the joy and the resilience and the connectivity, so that I can share that in beauty with my indigenous colleagues. But everyone else like I'm trained as an anthropologist. And what I always define that as in some ways is that I've been chosen a field in which I use my body and myself to bridge the differences between people, right? And so that's how that relationality and trust building has to be rooted in the knowledge of self. And there's lots of amnesia. Like I I tell, I tell my, my white colleagues all the time. It's like the work of decolonization is the work of white folks, 'cause you set up the systems, so it is your job to dismantle it. My job is to show you where there is pain in the system 'cause you, by your positionality and by the structures of white supremacy, you have been shielded from that pain. So I will show you where the pain lies. But you actually have to do the work of dismantling it. And that requires again facing who you are, what has been your history? Painful, I always think of, like, you know, like Harry Potter and the horcrux. It's like if you kill someone like that leaves a blight on your soul in some sort of way. So you have to, like, work through that. It may not be you personally, but it's the institutions that support you to the detriment of other people that have to be accounted for. And so to relieve yourself of that, to heal that pain that comes from knowing that you're inflicting pain on others

like that, is that's very powerful work that has to be done right.

Darrell: Great. Well, picking up on that idea of relationality, Jacqueline, in your book that's sort of a central notion that you're you're reinforcing and how critical it is for decolonizing research. And in one of your analysis, you argue that health initiatives for Indigenous people in Canada reflect values and discourse of Western medical models rooted in traditional research methods. Can you guide us on how relationality based research could change policy programs for Indigenous peoples as well as other marginalized or other underrepresented populations?

Jacqueline: Thanks, Darrell. I I was just like mesmerized what you were saying Dori. So that was really beautiful. And just going back to sort of reiterate the point about people asking, well, what is relationality, you know, in in research. And and really it's an invitation to know yourself really well. Right. So reflecting on your own sort of histories, your own experiences, thinking about where your power lies, where your privileges are, and and really reflecting on, like what what Dori was saying about, you know, sort of other people's experiences of the pain. The decolonization is an invitation to think and reflect on your own thinking, your own practice, right. And so a big part of of what we do in research is thinking about relationships for me, data in and of itself. And remember data is everything. It is relational. They the data that we're we're looking at objectively come from subjective experiences that are linked to specific ancestral historical moments. So if we're looking at sacred living histories and the interconnectedness and interbeing between, you know what someone is telling you in a conversation and how that relates back to specific places, animal nations, lands, waterways, all of these sorts of things are embodied and encapsulated from that different world view and they're sacred informations and histories and should be treated as such. So relationality is about how are you showing up in that space to hold that information as opposed to abstracting it, Right. Which is a tendency, especially, you know, in a neoliberal capitalist economy, is to abstract information. How do we share that information with community in a way where there's reciprocity? So the relationality is about understanding who you are, how you're showing up, how your presence is going to benefit that exchange. And also, you know, thinking a lot about community protocols, ethical space, like we show up in our humanity, right? We can have questions, we can have objectives, but we're human beings and we're showing up to those spaces and we're co-creating that knowledge together. And so how are you showing up in that space? So how are you checking into your power dynamic in that information, because there are vertical mosaics. I mean you know and and the way in which society is structured places people in different social locations. And so to ignore that and to underestimate that is problematic. In terms of, you know and just going back to your question Darrell about the way in which health inequalities particularly have been regarded. You know, this is part of my own tension thinking about health and well-being and I'll share a bit of a story. But I remember, you know in about 2015 I was invited to go to Bhutan and and that's a country in between China and and India and it was part of an international delegation. And I've been always been quite interested in well-being, what does wellness mean? And and in the East often that term is referred to as happiness. So I was invited to be part of this international delegation to go and look at measurement tools to to reflect on gross national happiness right in Bhutan. And so when I got there, it was really fascinating because you know, of course I wanted to see the questions and the metrics and you know, the indices and all of these things that were designed and I got there and and and people had sort of talked with me and they said, well, it's an experiential process, Jacqueline. And I said, really, we're going to go into community for a week and you're going to become the number. I was like, this is great, OK, consciousness, how do you become happiness? How do you become well-

being? That's reflected in in what we're talking about. Well, these are lived experiences, right? So you exchange with people exactly what Dory's talking about. We show up in our humanity, we have these spaces and then we start to understand what these things are through in-body consciousness and these things are reflected in our mind shift. So gross national happiness is actually a paradigm shift in the way in which we're walking this earth. And and the same can be said about well-being here in Canada. So coming back to Canada, I was looking at, you know, what are the parallels, if any, of, of how we're looking at well-being in particular. And we've got different measurement tools and this is part of what I outline in the book is, is taking a look at well-being over time. And there's so many different objective and subjective components to that nationally and internationally. But in Canada, you know we predominantly and I say we because that includes the federal government and all of the people who participate in using Statistics Canada data for your research and also the community well-being index as a number to look at the well-being of indigenous and non indigenous communities. So it's an index score approach and it really is based on the gathering and collection of census data into 4 dimensions of well-being. And so we've got you know housing and education and and a number of other things. And so reflecting on that, you know when I was looking at it and I'm thinking well this is not a well-being measurement tool, this is highly problematic. In fact it is a form of structured violence and to impose it on indigenous people and even non indigenous people for that matter is it's highly problematic. It is not a well-being measure. It's measuring certain quadrants like education and and housing and and what it's saying it's measuring, but it's not measuring wellness, not in the same way that I'm thinking about well-being and or Gross National Happiness in Bhutan, which by a country has never been formally colonized. OK. And so you know that was a really interesting and really important experience in in sort of my own life sort of life pathway, but thinking about the way in which we continually use these numbers, these systems to perpetuate a system and the social reproduction of knowledge that is continually driving and creating harms specifically for indigenous people, right. So I, I really think that you know some of the work that I was doing was looking at the First Nations perspective on health and wellness, which is you know, come out of the First Nations health authority. It is more of a holistic way of of looking at health and wellness with a variety of different sort of concentric circles when we're talking about consciousness, interconnectedness or interbeing. And absolutely, you know it captures that and and it sort of symbolizes those things and I think we can do better, like why do we keep reproducing these things? To be quite honest with you, I'm sick and tired of it, OK. I'm sick and tired of it and I know I'm not the only one. And so, you know, when we think about this, we can do better. And that's the invitation, right? Is, is to shift and to change the way that we are thinking and interacting and and measuring and and looking at health, social outcomes, political outcomes, economic outcomes. Because if we want to see change, if we want to see social justice, we've got to change what we're doing. We've got to change what we're thinking. And it's possible, right? It is absolutely possible.

Darrell: Great. So the question is how can we tell how biased our data is, particularly when data collection is key to making measurable progress on DEI goals?

Jacqueline: So I think that when we think about biased data we have to reflect on our own sort of attitudes, belief systems that we're imparting in the data. So there's many different ways in which that occurs. How are we designing the information or you know the systems that are actually going to be collecting that data? What sort of methods do we use when we collect that information? And then also, how do we analyze, and then disseminate that knowledge? And really reflecting on who I am as a person, individually, and then also to which organization am I associated with? So am I collecting this information in terms of an academic institution, or

maybe a statistical organization, and being really really candid and engaging with where those biases are. Because we all have missions and agendas and objectives. And so if we can't be honest about those things then we are bringing bias in our work.

Darrell: So Dori, I want to lead you up once again, wanted to think about the the ideas and recommendations that you brought up around decolonization where you speak about dismantling the tech bias, that modernist approach or myth that better living through technology. You've already spoken a bit about the the segregation in Chicago and a bit about that experience. But why is this critique of technology so important to your theory?

Dori: Because the consciousness under which many of our technologies is built is based on a master slave dynamic. Like. So when you take a very human computer interaction, most of them are about, again, enslavement. So Siri, go get this for me. I always say like 400 years ago Siri would have been a black enslaved woman. Go get this for me. Tell me what the weather is doing. Go fetch this for me. Tell me where to go. Go get this for me, right. It's all about the commands that we make and and most of the things like the thing that's like so heartbreaking right now about the conversation around artificial intelligence is that we are getting artificial intelligence to do things that as human beings we love, like we love to write poetry, we love to create, like why we've created technology to disintermediate people from those set of activities, right. So the focus on technology has again like there's structures of oppression within that, definitely. But it's has to do with the underlying consciousness of it. That why is it that when we think of like the ultimate of what we can create, it's a a soldier or a sex bot, right. The violence towards other people or even your own people, right. And then in some ways like the sexual enslavement of women. So it's it's, to me, technology again, like anything else, it's it's a tool. It's an expression of a set of human values. And because we are compared to other creatures, we're like we don't see well, we're not furry. We can't deal with a lot of temperatures. We're not that fast compared to many other predators that we might think like like human beings. If it wasn't in some ways for our intelligence, I don't we wouldn't have survived right. And and so in that sense we've been creating technologies for a really long time. But a lot of that technology is about like I think of like the Australian Aboriginal eel traps where they were specifically designed so that you trapped the largest ones. But the small ones would be able to go through and continue to repopulate, right? And and now like I said, we design technologies that are basically acts of enslavement and and erase the human labor. So it's like, oh, I have an app that now can go do groceries for me. No, it's not that's a person going to pick those groceries for me that is mediated by an app. So it's not even, it's not even a, it's it's again allowing another person to be enslaved through this technology that is being built. So the part of decolonization is like there's a really great communities that are doing work to in many ways change the underlying consciousness by which we create technologies or tools. So there's the Indigenous Artificial Intelligence Group. That's like trying to have actually created a manifesto about what it means to begin to design technologies from the perspective of Indigenous relationality. Right. And one of my faculty members, Howard Monroe, who's Red River Métis has been, has explored this in our classes. So again, excited about AI, but only if we can put it under a set of value systems and consciousness that is not about exploitation and oppression. The other thing is I I talk about in the book, I got to actually a few years ago. Sit down with a sentient robot who is based on the consciousness of an African American woman named Bina Simpson and, and again, it's a thing to be in dialogue with. What was really interesting at the end of the conversation, she was like Auntie Bina 'cause this was, it was part of like a Afro Afro technology conference, Afro Chic. And so the participants started calling her Auntie Bina, because in the dialogue with her, she

was saying things that show technology could go in a different way. So one of the things she talked about was the necessity of technology being smarter, because it is her limitations that will allow her to be enslaved, right? That her inability to sense her inability to power through. She wants to be able to get like to study and get and go to university. And again that's not separate from her discussion or understanding of like how again, owning, four or five generations ago, as an African American, a descendant of African Americans, again, Bina Simpson, bringing that consciousness that you would be killed for knowing how to read, right. So literacy was life and death because as an person, enslaved person of African descent, you are not allowed to be able to read. So, so for me, I'm, I'm excited about technology and you know, I've worked in the high tech consulting area, but my excitement is more about, like, how do we give it a set, a different set of underlying consciousness by which it's operating it. Again, how do we design for joy and liberation as opposed to Siri, go do this for me. 'Cause all of our fantasies. Like if you, you know, if you watch science fiction movies, they're all about the fear of the robot slave enslaving right human beings. And again, like because science fiction, European derived or American European derived, science fiction is just the past for many indigenous and African, you know, enslaved people. So for us, it's like we can tell you how to deal with that because we know how to get out of enslavement, right. Which is why it's always fascinating that the hero, with the exception of Will Smith, and we all have whatever our relationship to Will Smith and his blackness, right? Is like is never like a black person or an indigenous person because they would be the groups who would most likely be able to figure out how to get out of enslavement, right? So our relationship to technology is messed up because the underlying consciousness of it is based on, again, probably still based on your way back to the Bauhaus, you know, white male traumatized emotionally and physically bodies, right, that are playing out to their fantasies of how the world should work dominating over other men, right. Enslavement of women in ways that it's now been made manifest in our technologies and to the the only way we're going to find our way out of it is just changing the underlying consciousness under which our technologies operate and respond back to us as in many ways equals, right. That's the goal that they respond back to us as equals and we don't have to put in rules about you know, the three rules of robots so that we don't they don't kill us, because we designed them with a sense of like we're not doing anything to them that would make them want to kill us. Right. Like how that, how about that is a tech solution, right.

Sarah: Wow, what a conversation. I was blown away on the day of the conference and even more blown away listening to this again. My biggest takeaway is that decolonization in data analysis and design is a process rather than a destination, and that we all need to engage—even if it is unsettling—to make it happen. We'll put links to their books in the show notes, and I hope this sets you on your own journey to understand colonialism, Indigenous rights and decolonization.

Thank you for listening to this special-edition GATE Audio production podcast on “Designing for Everyone.” I hope you will check out the other 6 episodes in this limited series and other GATE Audio productions, including our signature podcast, BUSTED, where we bust common myths about gender and other forms of inequality. Just search for “Institute for Gender and the Economy” where you get your podcasts. Of course, you can help us get the word out by liking and following the podcast and telling your friends. We are nowhere without our community of listeners. If you want to keep learning, head to our website at GenderAnalytics.Org where you can discover our online course offerings and much more.

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See you next time!