

## Queerology: A Podcast on Belief and Being

### Episode 34 – Dr. Robin DiAngelo

#### Transcript

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Hey, friends. This is Matthias Roberts. You're listening to Queerology, a podcast on belief and being. This is Episode 34.

Dr. DiAngelo: Well, the moment you think you're not racist anymore, you don't understand racism.

Matthias: Some of you are probably thinking, "I have heard this before." If you're thinking that, you are right. This is a repeat episode of my interview from Episode Three with Dr. Robin DiAngelo. As many of you can probably tell, my voice is a little bit rough. I ... at the QCF conference a couple weekends ago, my voice completely gave out. I had laryngitis for all of last week. It just came back last Saturday, still recovering, as you all can hear. So I had to postpone and reschedule all the interviews that I had scheduled for this week, no backups because the season of life that I am in is currently recording this podcast week by week.

So this episode with Dr. DiAngelo, I think, is vital listening. I have said this again and again and again on the podcast. If you've been listening for a while, you may be tired of me saying this again and again, but I think everybody needs to listen to this episode. Next week, just so that you all can get a little bit excited, next week if all goes as planned, if I don't get laryngitis again, I'm going to be talking with Dr. R. Marie Griffith. She is one of the world's foremost scholars on religion, gender, sexuality. Her new book is called *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*.

We're going to be sitting down talking about that book, talking about the history of the Queer Christian Movement, and a bunch of other things. I'm so excited about this episode, so excited to sit down with Dr. Griffith. So, be watching for that next Tuesday, if all goes as planned.

So Dr. Robin DiAngelo, she is a scholar in critical race theory. If you've ever heard the term white fragility, it was Dr. DiAngelo who coined that term. She's the author of the book *What Does it Mean to be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*, and the forthcoming book that's coming out this summer called *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard to Talk to White People About Racism*.

In this episode, I sit down with Dr. DiAngelo and talk about what racism looks like in the queer community, what critical race theory is, and how intersecting privilege and marginalization ... they work together and they don't necessarily give us a pass though on racism as well. If you've already heard this episode, listen again. If you haven't heard it, you're in for a treat. Such good information. So grateful that Dr. DiAngelo sat down. And if you're curious about what Dr. DiAngelo does, and this was brought up when this episode originally aired, the way that she self-identifies, there was some question about that, especially with bisexual people, because you'll notice that she identifies as bisexual, but is in a straight relationship, so often identifies as straight as well. That's up to Dr. DiAngelo to identify however she wants.

Some bisexual people did reach out after the episode and say, "Hey, what about bisexual erasure?" So I have a conversation with, in episode seven, with Rosemary Jones about that exact issue, about that exact question. Rosemary is in a straight-passing relationship, does identify as bisexual. And we fleshed that out a little bit, and what does it mean to self-identify. So, that's a really good episode as well. If you're looking for another episode to listen to, head over to Episode Seven of Season One with Rosemary Jones. Let's go ahead and dive in.

Dr. DiAngelo, thank you so much for joining us today.

Dr. DiAngelo: My pleasure.

Matthias: To start, and this is a question I usually ask everyone, but how do you identify? How has your faith formed those identities?

Dr. DiAngelo: Well, I identify definitely first and foremost as white and then as a cisgender female, as raised poor and working-class, but currently middle-class, able-bodied. I was raised Catholic. I am not currently in any faith tradition. Yet of course, I believe deeply that your foundational socialization is always shaping you, so I can't say that being raised Catholic had particularly ... because the Italian immigrants who raised me were pretty devoutly Catholic that that will likely always be with me.

My primary identity growing up was heterosexual. I met and fell in love with a woman in my late 20s and spent the next 10 years or so in primarily in partnerships with women and identified as lesbian, although I clearly am bisexual. It was just less complicated, as I think some of your listeners may understand. Now I am currently partnered with a man who I consider to be my life partner. So I don't identify as bisexual not because I'm not, but because it

doesn't feel authentic to me given how deep heterosexual privilege is, and that I live my life in a heterosexual relationship, and it feels a little disingenuous to want to kind of take up this other identity.

Matthias: Right. Yeah. That makes sense. We're talking about racism and whiteness and kind of concepts that can be really hard for us white people to grasp sometimes. I'm wondering if you can maybe talk a little bit about your story, how you've gotten into this work, and some of the key things that you've realized about yourself and about whiteness in general.

Dr. DiAngelo: That's a great question. Thank you for letting me lay that foundation. As I tell this story, some of the key things I've come to understand will be woven in. The first is that I really think that progressives are the most difficult around the topic of racism. When I say progressive, I don't mean are you Republican or Democrat, but just this sense of open-mindedness, right? I was a classic Seattle progressive.

I applied for a job as a diversity trainer, and honestly on some level thought, "Well, I'm a vegetarian. Of course, I'm qualified. Of course, I'm not racist. I'm a vegetarian." I'm being a little facetious, but on some level really, it was that kind of "I shop at Trader Joe's, so I'm not racist." That actually was the most profound learning of my life, was for the first time, my worldview was being challenged by a significant number of people of color, because that project I applied for, and of course was hired for because lots of other white progressives got to determine my qualifications, as is usually the case. I was completely unqualified, all right, but of course I got the job, because I'm white, and so nice.

Part of being white is that I could actually be a full educated adult. At that time, I was in a relationship with a woman, so really saw myself as progressive, and yet never had my worldview been challenged racially. I wouldn't have even been able to tell you I had a racial worldview. All these people of color that I was working with day in and day out were definitely holding a mirror up and saying, "You have a racial worldview and a racial experience."

So that was part one. Part two of that process was then we went forth into the workplace and tried to talk to primarily white groups of employed people about racism. It was incredible, the fragility, the anger, hostility, resistance, irrational, delusional claims of reverse discrimination when you're in a room filled with employed white people complaining about nobody can get a job anymore. So these two things coming together kind of relentless, being challenged and called in by people of color and then relentlessly trying to talk to white people, I began to put the pieces together. I realized that probably the most brilliant adaptation of racism post-civil rights was to make being a good moral person and complicity with racism mutually exclusive.

So you actually ... racism became bad, and only bad people were racist. Since I was good, and I was against racism, and I was not aware of any conscious dislike, I could not be racist. That's the definition the average white person has.

Trust me, it'll come up in the responses to this program. Therefore, if you suggest that anything about me has anything to do with race, or that I've done anything racially problematic, I'm going to hear a question to my very moral character. Then I will need to defend my moral character.

That's why I think, actually, white progressives are the most difficult. One, we think we're good to go. We're down. We've been exempt from all of this. That's where our energy is going to go, to making sure you understand that we're down and good to go. None of our energy is going to be going to what it needs to go to for the rest of our lives, which is continual self-awareness reflection, analysis, engagement, interruption, accountability and so on.

Matthias: Right. Right. Yeah. That highlights a piece that I feel like is so common, especially I've noticed in the queer community of where we identify with one specific marginalized identity and assume that because we hold that identity, we can't marginalize others, or we can't be racist, we can't ... or because I'm gay, I am a good person. I know what it's like to be marginalized. I know like blah, blah, blah. When that is related and yet entirely separate issue at the same time.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yes. Interestingly, where we are in dominant culture, so where we are in the norm, where we are swimming with the current in the water rather than against it. So as queer people, we're swimming against the current. But as white, people we're swimming with the current. One of the privileges of swimming with the current is that you are not reduced to that identity. You get to be an individual, right? So that becomes something to which you feel entitled. It is a very precious ideology of dominant culture. Now, where you're not swimming with the current, you're always labeled. So you're always going to be the gay guy, right?

Matthias: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. DiAngelo: But not the white guy, right? So one of the ways that we get our backs up, and again as you'll notice in white people's responses to what I'm saying, is that I'm challenging individualism. I'm actually not granting white people individuality. I actually am. Yes, I want to be really clear to all your listeners, I am proceeding as if I could know something about you just because you are white. That is because we live in a society together that conditions us together.

I doubt any queer-identified person would deny that gender socialization is profound, right, that that's what it's all about, is there's that binary, and how relentless it is. So perhaps we feel we can say some general things about cisgender people, or about heterosexual people and what they're able to take for granted regardless of other aspects, but it's very difficult when we want to apply it to ourselves.

So, I want to say that about individualism. But a really key learning for me was that I had spent my life thinking deeply about how I had been oppressed, right, because I was raised female, Catholic, and poor. What are the messages of those three identities? Be silent. Be subservient. Suffer. Martyr. Invisible. Disappear. Do not use your voice. Do not question authority, right? Those are deep messages I got as a little Catholic girl.

Now, those messages set me up beautifully to collude with racism, because they're going to keep me silent. They're going to keep me from avoiding conflict. They have kept me in my life very focused on my outrage about those things, right, my sense of injustice about patriarchy and sexism, and classism. I could tell you so much about how those things work, but never ever had I examined whiteness, or my ability status, or, right, any of those things.

So what I've come to realize is I'm not less racist because I was raised in any of those ways. I learned my racial position differently than a white middle-class female learned hers, but I still learned it. I realized as someone who came late to academia, again, grew up in poverty, didn't go to college till I was in my 30s, had no idea. It was just a foreign culture to me. Now I'm in academia. You know, I have a sense of the imposter deep inside me. I'm very accomplished within academia, and yet inside you're like, "Okay, day late and a dollar short," right?

I've sat there in those faculty meetings where it's almost all-white, always, and we're discussing something. It's so clear to me that there's racism in how we're discussing it, or the impact of the decisions we're going to make ... and that there's a whole perspective missing, right? Yet, I feel really intellectually inferior often in academe, right, based on my internalized sexism and my internalized classism.

So I sit in those meetings in silence, even though I'm noticing racism and I'm feeling unsettled about it. My silence really is coming from a place of inferiority, right? It's not coming from a place of superiority. Yet, I had to step outside myself and ask, "Well, how is it functioning? How is your silence right now functioning in this room? Oh my God. You're colluding with racism. You're maintaining white solidarity. You're going to look like a team player. You're going to get ahead precisely because you're not challenging racism." That is not acceptable to me.

So when I realized that, I thought two things. "You know what, you're as smart as these people, okay? That's a lie that you are not as intelligent or just because you were raised in poverty. It's a lie that because you're a female," right? So when you push through all those lies within yourself you have internalized, and you use your voice to challenge racism, you're simultaneously healing the lie of your inferiority while using your privileged position to interrupt racism.

So for me it's like a phenomenally powerful way to use my position. I don't believe that centering racism denies my oppression, at all. I think centering

racism has been a powerful way to address all of it. So no, it does not cancel out, or I guess it does.

Matthias: You used the term dominant culture. For someone who maybe isn't familiar with that term, or is taken aback by it, how would you go about unpacking that for someone?

Dr. DiAngelo: Well, again, I would find it difficult for any listener who identifies as queer or Christian, let's say that, would have trouble identifying that there's a dominant culture, and it's heterosexual and Christian.

Matthias: Yes. Fair. Yes.

Dr. DiAngelo: So, dominant culture's heterosexual, right? The assumption is that everybody's heterosexual. It's relentless in language, in law, right, in legitimacy, right? In all of these ways, it is relentless. Heterosexuality is the norm by which everything else is a deviation, right? It's that backdrop that isn't named. So is whiteness, right?

The white people are born into a society that from the moment we open our eyes, is relentlessly giving us messages that we are inherently superior, that we are basically the norm for humanity. Again, I'm hoping that your listeners can understand that maleness is the norm for us human, and or centrism, right, and anything else is a deviation from that. Heterosexuality is the norm for human, and everything else is a less than deviation from that. And whiteness is the norm for human.

In my workshops, my goal is to make that visible, right? I mean, actually white, queer people have an incredible way in. The key is not to use it as a way out, right? For me, because I'm a very angry feminist, my understanding of sexism in patriarchy has been such a useful way to understand racism. Not to exempt myself as I'm sorry a lot of white women, ciswomen do, but to say, "Okay, I'm trying to figure out this piece of racism and I'm not getting it, right? I'm not getting why I just got this feedback."

So I imagine that a man has just said to me what I'm thinking of saying to a person of color, and I immediately get at, "Okay. All right. Now, I see it." So you can use that really well. So there's a question that I ask in my sessions. There's a series, but one of them is what are some of the ways in which your race has shaped your life, or races if you're multiracial. Most white people answer that question. They pair up and they begin to tell a story of their first cross-racial experience. You can kind of imagine that, right? So you and I are paired up and I say, "Well, when I was five, I had this little friend. I didn't even notice she was black. Then one day, my dad said this thing," right? Can you imagine that's kind of how ...

Matthias: Absolutely.

Dr. DiAngelo:

... or, "Gosh, just the other day, or ..." What we tend to do in answer to the question, what are some of the ways in which race has shaped your life, tell about a cross-racial experience. I want you to notice that's not answering the question. That's not the question. That cross-racial experience that I may have had at five is not how race has shaped my life, okay? But what it reveals is how deeply we define race as what's happening when they are present, and if they are not present, race is not happening.

When I eat for dinner in Ballard tonight, I'm going to think race isn't happening unless a black man walks into the restaurant, and now race is happening, right? No. It's teeming with race. It's just the water, right? The way we should be answering that question is, "Well, even before I was born, the forces of race were operating on me and shaping the trajectory of my future life. So what transportation, education, nutrition was available to my mother? What environmental safety did she carry me in? Where did she deliver me? Who delivered me? How was she treated? Who owned the hospital I was delivered in? And who came in that night and mopped the floor and took out the garbage? I was born into a racial hierarchy."

In the same way ... I used to be a childbirth educator. I can't tell you how many couples would come in and say, "We had an ultrasound." I'd say, "Why? Was there an indication of a problem?" "Oh. No." You know why they had a ultrasound, they want to know the sex of the baby. Why? So they can prepare, right? Even before that child is born, the forces of gender are operating on it.

Even if you have progressive parents who are like, "We're not going to do that. We're going yellow, not blue or pink," good luck fighting off your friends and family. Good luck fighting off the television and the Happy Meal toy and Target toy isles. Good luck, right? We understand that it's relentless, so is whiteness.

Matthias:

Yeah. I'm remembering back to the first time I was in a class on racism and the facilitator, Dr. Hollins, asked us to think about ... She asked a question. When was the first time you ever realize that you had a race? For me, like I'd never even thought about that before. I was, what, 24, 25 at the time, and realizing, like maybe it was like three weeks ago when I started reading for this class whereas everyone else in the room who was a person of color were telling stories of before my conscious memory, like of ... in the disparity there of like I've gone 25 years without noticing the color of my skin.

Dr. DiAngelo:

And that is a part of what it means to be white. That is one of the ways that your race has operated, because you're not in a culture in which everyone has access to that obliviousness or lack of awareness. Unfortunately I think a lot of white people think, "Because I've never thought about it, it has no relevancy." You not thinking about it is not neutral. It has consequences. It certainly has consequences for how you are now going to come to the table when the topic is race. It has consequences for the people of color that have to interact with you. It has consequences for your ability to validate someone else's experience that isn't what you just said, right?

All of these dynamics cause us actually to be kind of assholes when then people of color try to talk to us about our whiteness. It's this funny thing that we think we've never thought about something. Again, I'm thrilled actually that we have this heterosexuality or heterosexism to draw from. A heterosexual person never thinking about being heterosexual. Would any queer person say, "Well that means it's absolutely inoperative?"

Matthias: Right. No.

Dr. DiAngelo: They'd say, "That's why you're so difficult and clueless. This is what I have to navigate." Let's talk about trans, trans-identified people, just the frustration of trying to guide cisgender people who can barely wrap their heads around it. I can identify with this because I'm trying to write in ways that don't reinforce that binary, right, and yet I can barely comprehend anything outside of it. It's so deep, right?

I have a few trans-friends who just, thank goodness, are patient, but it's at a huge draining cost to keep trying to get us to see something. What I'm trying to say here is, one, your lack of knowledge is not benign or neutral. It actually did shape you in deep ways. It does allow us to say some things about how you're likely to come to the table, so to generalize. And it's a fabulous opportunity for your listeners to be able to use that identity, again, not to exempt or minimize, but to reveal and illuminate.

Matthias: You mentioned how this can make us assholes at times. I think that's something from starting to enter some more spaces with more people of color and noticing, just noticing responses that a lot of white people get, and then the response of the white people towards people of color when they're called out. You coined this phrase, white fragility. I'm curious if you could talk a little bit more about fragility and why when we get so defensive.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yes. I want to take it at a deeper level, right? So, it manifests as defensiveness, but how's it actually functioning? This is really key. The question that's always guided me, because true faults, nature-nurture, I mean, these are deep questions we're never going to solve, right? I mean, even sex, right? Is it nature? Is it nurture? Can we separate them? I don't know. I don't think so.

So since I can't know that, I certainly have my perspective on it. I think it's way more nurture than we're taught. The question I always ask is, how is it functioning? So for example, it's common for people to say, "Well, it's just human nature." I mean, there's always been injustice and domination, and someone has to be on top.

Well, who's more likely to say someone has to be on top in a discussion of domination? I'm aware that these are also phrases that people ... some kind of sex-positive activities, but let's just ... Who's more likely to say it's just human nature? Those who are on top or those who are on the bottom, right? People



who are being stood upon rarely look up and say, "Gosh, somebody has to stand on me. Might as well be you." That is the narrative of the dominator.

So I always want to think about, so how does that defensiveness function? Let's start with white people grow up in an insular, protected, a fairly oblivious environment. And even the few white people who grow up and say urban poverty, and they grow up in neighborhoods where they are around people of color, outside of that, the wider culture is still ... they still know that they're white, and that they can leave, and when they leave, they'll be in a better situation, right?

I grew up in poverty but I knew that if I was going to have an upwardly mobile life, I wasn't going to be ... I'd end up in white space, which I have, right? So we grow up in this insular, rarely ever challenged, deep internalized superiority. I'm sorry. You cannot miss the message of white superiority. It is not conscious necessarily, but it is deep and relentless. Then, this obliviousness, and at the same time, we're taught not to see or know it. But let's face it, we don't really want to see or know it because it could require something of us or could've challenged our identities as good people.

So at the same time that like you might say, right? You're telling me this example of when you were in that class, you really were oblivious, right? There is this really ... this actual, "Oh my God." And on some level, you always knew it was better to be white.

Matthias: Totally.

Dr. DiAngelo: Didn't you? Yes. So did I. I always knew. We know. We also know that white people talk racist talk to each other. Any white person who came up to me and said, "I've never in my entire life heard a racist comment or joke," I would just say, "You're lying. I'm sorry."

Matthias: Yeah. It's not true.

Dr. DiAngelo: Okay. In both these things, it's a both end, we don't know and we do know, but can't admit to it. All this and then individualism and then arrogance and then ignorance and then insulation, it makes us really irrational and misinformed. So, you challenge me, right? It's going to throw me so off of my racial equilibrium, right? 24/7, I am comfortable as a white person in this society, 24/7. It is rare for me to be uncomfortable. So you make me uncomfortable racially and I'm going to lose it, right, some cognitive dissonance, just panic, anxiety.

I need that to stop. I need to get back onto my equilibrium. I will do whatever it takes to back you off of me, okay? If I need to cry, so everybody rallies around me and then the person who gave me the feedback now becomes bad and I'm ... get all the resources back to me, I'll cry. If I need to get indignant, I'll get indignant, right? If I need to shut down and go silent and then withdraw, I'll do

it. Pretty much anything but engage with humility, okay, for all the reasons I've just said. You can get to a place where you're able to engage with humility, but it does take some work, right? We're not socialized that that would be a natural response for us. Okay?

So while it's fragile and weak in the sense that I can't tolerate it, it's actually incredibly powerful in its impact and effectiveness to police people of color back into place. So I think my inability to handle it, my white fragility actually functions as a form of bullying. I'm going to make it so miserable for a person of color to call me in on racism that they just won't do it. Trust me, people of color suck up microaggressions constantly and just don't bother. Why don't they bother? Because it's too hard, because they're exhausted, because they need to get through the day, and so it's really powerful.

I've been thinking about it lately, is I'm not the 1%. I'm not the 1%, but man I can control people of color through my white fragility, right, in my place, in my relationships. I can keep people of color in their place through that. So when you're in these spaces and people of color maybe think, "Okay. These people, they experience a form of oppression. They're going to get this." And they take a risk, and then we counter with defensiveness or "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I already know that," it just shuts them down, right?

Matthias: Mm-hmm (affirmative). As white people who are trying to do better, I think a lot of times we'll realize a few things about ourselves and say, "Okay, now I'm not racist anymore because I know these things. I'm an ally." Then we enter spaces. I think a lot of times, that also causes more harm than good also.

Dr. DiAngelo: Well, the moment you think you're not racist anymore, you don't understand racism, because racism is not an either or proposition. It's not dependent on your self-image. It's not dependent on your friendships. It is a system that we are immersed in, and that we navigate 24/7, and again in the same way that I am not now free of gender. Do you know what I mean? I might say I refuse to identify, I'm non-binary, but everything is always in relation to the relentless reality of having to navigate the gender construct, right?

No one, I don't believe, would say, "I am free of all gender conditioning, all gender navigation, and certainly not a cisgender person." So let's go there, right, because we're talking white. You're now talking about a cisgender person telling you, "I am free of all gender impact." Is it clear that that's impossible? Because that's the first thing that's happening. You just don't understand racism if you think that.

You will never be free. I will never be free. I've committed my life ... I do less harm. I'm more conscious. I've built relationships. There are some people of color who consider me to be a supportive person, and I step in it all the time. Probably the difference is I step in it a little less. I'm rarely defensive about it anymore. I have really good skills at repairing it when I step in it. That's what we can go for. But in my lifetime, it's not going to end, and I'm not going to be free.

Okay, one. Two, I do not call myself an ally, and I do not even call myself an anti-racist white. I'd say that I'm involved in anti-racist work, but the reason I don't self-appoint myself as an ally is because I'm the least qualified to make that determination. I'm invested in not seeing racism, and put it another way, I'm invested in racism. How would I not be invested in racism? I am. Oh my god, it works so well for me. I mean, the psychic freedom that I don't ... that I have, right, all of it.

Now, I don't want those investments, and I've committed to challenging them, but they're deep and they're wily, and I am not to be trusted. The question, again, I think, white people have to ask ourselves is, how do you know? How do you know? Are you in a relationship with people of color? Do you talk about racism? If you don't, why not? Do you think maybe I would offer for your consideration, that you have indicated that you're actually not open. So, they're not talking about racism, and therefore the relationship's probably not as close as you think it is, right?

While, I don't call myself an ally, that is because it is for people of color to decide if in any given moment I'm behaving in allied ways. Notice a few key things. In any given moment, how am I doing? I'm not, "I marched in the '60s. So now I'm certified as free of racism for the rest of my life, right?"

Since I said that, let's look at that for a minute. This is often the ... "I marched in the '60s. Therefore, I ..." I often facetiously say, "Damn. I wished I had marched in the '60s." Then, I would be certified as racist-free for the rest of my life, even though we didn't even know race wasn't biological in the '60s, I'd still be certified as free of racism for ever and ever.

Do you see that? Do you think maybe, yes, people who marched in the '60s were not fire hose racists. They weren't the KKK. They were against those forms of racism. Do you think maybe they were running some other subtle martyr, white Savior, arrogant, patronizing racism as they took over the movement, right?

So it's an ongoing process that is ultimately determined by peoples of color in any given moment. That also reminds me, one, that it has to be demonstrated, and two, that I need to always be coming from a place of humility not arrogance, not ever already knowing.

Let me just give you a heads up to any listeners who may need this heads up. When we say, "I was taught to treat everyone the same." Trust me, people of color do not think, "Oh, this is a down white person." They're rolling their eyes, okay? When we say, "I'm an ally ..." Well, maybe a way to put it is when a man says to me, "I'm a feminist" the bubble over my head is "I will be the judge of that." Honestly, if you were a feminist, you probably wouldn't need to tell me. You could demonstrate that in a nice, relaxed way, and I'd figure it out.

Matthias: Yeah. I think as queer people. I think we have a felt sense of that especially when ... because we have people coming to us, "I'm an ally. I want to speak for your community. I want to ..." all of that. I know my internal full sense of that is automatically like, "Wait a second. I don't know you. I don't know what your motivation is. I don't ..."

Dr. DiAngelo: Right. Again, there's this incredible potential to use that identity to deepen one's understanding, but unfortunately when you have the particular intersection of middle to upper class, cisgender male and queer, you do get some arrogance, right? You can get some arrogance. That is a kind of a deadly combination.

The other thing is this idea that since I'm queer, it's okay for me to be sexist, misogynist, or racist. So you'll see it in ads, in, quote unquote, the preferences. I have had a couple of gay male friends. I'm older, and so I tend to use the term gay. It's kind of the ... I was socialized into that umbrella term. One in particular had a drinking problem. And whenever he would get drunk, he would just molest me. I don't know how else to say it. I mean, hands all over my body. While it was really uncomfortable and I'd wiggle around and try to get out from under it, there was a way that for years I just kind of accepted it because he was gay, so therefore it didn't count. Now I realize, well, I don't know why that came out of you when you were drinking, but it still seems to be based in misogyny. There's no way this cisgender, queer, white men don't internalize misogyny.

Again, we're not free of these things. And our task is to use our intersections to figure out how they may have set us up to collude in someone else's oppression. I know you probably have some thoughts about the preferences. You probably understand how that might manifest more than I do. So, in-

Matthias: Absolutely. I think in a later episode, I'm going to be talking with some people specifically around that, about racism, among gay men particularly, but that idea of calling it preference in our dating apps or whatever. I think some of us genuinely believe that it's a preference, and yet it's a function of whiteness as well.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah. I don't believe there's any pure, pure preference, right?

Matthias: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: That the messages, and now I can speak here as a woman, the ideal ... the signifier of ideal beauty is white. The signifier of ideal humanity is white. So, those things shape how we see one another. Then, you've got some really problematic ways that white supremacy sets up groups of color in relationship to one another. So, what are the stereotypes, the racist stereotypes about Asian heritage people? And why might you then have a preference for Asian heritage people, right?

It's not pure. It can't be pure because it cannot be separated from what we're taught that Asian is or means. Otherwise, Asian has no meaning, right? If I tell you I'm a woman, it can't have any meaning without the concept of a man, right? They're always in relationship ... a woman is not a man, right? It doesn't mean that your listeners should all be going, "Okay, I'm totally racist," but you do need to be willing to grapple with it and own it a little bit, and push on it a little bit, because if you are purely in a "I see everyone equally," you wouldn't have a preference, right?

People would come in different packages. That's what I think, anyway. I might say, "Well, I'm not a ..." There are certain preferences that are socially legitimate. If I say to you, "I don't like large-bodied people," that's very socially legitimate, but that doesn't mean it's not a prejudice that has come from the relentless contempt that circulates around me for fat people, right? I may not be able to change my preference, but it would behoove me to grapple with it.

Yeah. I don't know how this works with queer pornography or gay pornography. I can tell you that in heterosexual, mainstream pornography, which is consumed by, what, 90 plus percent of men, heterosexual men ... let's just hold that for a moment and not talk about women's consumption ... but mainstream heterosexual pornography is geared towards the male gays. I think we can agree on that. Even though it's ubiquitous and consumed beyond any probably other form of internet activity, it's also not talked about.

So the narratives run unchecked. And if you just want to see patriarchy, misogyny and racism, just look at heterosexual mainstream porn, because it's jaw-droppingly explicit in a way it would never be in something that was public, right? I actually write about this in my book. So again, I don't know what it looks like in gay porn, but if you look at the narratives and the way people are described, and who's in what position and who gets fetishized, in what ways, it may be worth looking at thereto. I don't know. Would you say that there's a deep-

Matthias: I would imagine this ... Oh yeah, absolutely. I would imagine this probably just the same, if not worse.

Dr. DiAngelo: Okay. Right. How does that not shape your preference, right? It's so relentless.

Matthias: To wrap up. For white people who are listening to this who are sitting here like, "Oh, well what can I do? How can I work on myself? How do I even begin to start doing this work beyond ..." Because I think so often we can hear all of this and then just kind of sit and, "I feel really guilty," or "I feel bad for being white," what are ways to move out of that guilt and into more productive work around this?

Dr. DiAngelo: We'll start with the question of how does that function. So when white people feel so bad and so guilty that we become immobilized, how does that function? I

mean, [inaudible 00:47:34] pretty much all I have to ask, right? It functions beautifully to exempt and to uphold the current situation and certainly our positions and our privilege within it.

So while it's natural to feel some guilt, the behavior that drives is what you really want to look at. So if that guilt ... I'll be honest. Back to our opening. I was raised Catholic. Guilt motivates me. It does motivate me. I can't sleep at night, and I can't live with myself if I can't look at myself in the eyes and say, "No, I wasn't silent today," right?

So, if it's something that you move through or able to move through, then yes. But if it's immobilizing you is your excuse, no, you can't indulge in it. It's narcissistic and self-indulgent.

Okay. Another key point is remember the good, bad binary. It is not an either/or. It is not good, bad. It is an inevitable function of the society we're in. So you are not bad, but you do have to own and take responsibility for this reality. There is no neutral place. And inaction is a form of action. So the default is the reproduction of racial inequality. It depends on nothing more than white people just being really nice and friendly to people of color and concerned and carrying on, and you will uphold it.

Niceness is not courageous. Niceness will not get racism on the table, right? So, you and I both know, your listeners can go, "That was interesting. That was provocative. Or she said this one thing and that's why I reject the whole thing," right? There's many, many ways that we can excuse ourselves from having to grapple with a uncomfortable issue, right? But I want to reiterate, again, there just really is no neutral place, right? Howard Zinn is on a moving train. Okay.

I also need to say there's nothing more transformative or liberating. It's the most fantastically stimulating, intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually. This is the deepest, most intellectually-stimulating work I've ever done in my life. If I'm not learning, growing and stretching, I personally don't really know what the point of my life is. The growth edge wasn't in my focus on my oppression, because I already had focused. The growth edge for me is, "Oh my God, how am I holding somebody else's?"

It's hard and it's painful, but it's so transformative and liberating. Then, you can begin to build those relationships, right? Then maybe the last thing is to break with whiteness is actually to take the initiative to find out what to do, right? So if you're white and you're listening and maybe ... like that day that you went to ... I bet it was a Caprice Holland's workshop, and you were like, "Oh my God, I've never thought about this before." Then from that place, you also expected her to hand you the answer, one, that probably wasn't going to be effective, and two, you aren't going to like the answer, because it isn't going to be easy. It's going to be ... transform your freaking very identity, right?

I mean, this is not easy. It's not a, do this today and you're done. So to break with whiteness is to break with the apathy and inertia of racial privilege and whiteness and get on the internet and look it up, because we're in a moment where there's so much fantastic information out there. If you went to the doctor and they said, "Oh my God, you have an acoustic neuroma. Oops. I got an emergency. I have to go." What would you do? Go home and Google the shit out of acoustic neuroma. You'd want to know every angle. You'd get on these blogs, because you cared, right? So, you would be driven to find out and to research and to inform yourself, right?

So, I will end by offering that question back to your white listeners, in this form, what about your life has enabled you to not know what to do about racism? How have you gotten to be a full educated professional adult and you don't know what to do about racism, and you've yet to seek out that answer? Why is that your question? And your answer to that question will map out, right? You weren't educated well, right?

I mean, there's a lot of things. You probably weren't raised to know what to do about transphobia either, or heterosexism or homophobia, but damn you cared enough to find out, and you sure heck wish your family would care enough to find out, correct?

Matthias: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Absolutely.

Dr. DiAngelo: That's on you. Again, it's beautiful, beautiful work.

Matthias: Thank you ...

Dr. DiAngelo: Thank you.

Matthias: ... so much for joining me today. I really, really appreciate it.

Dr. DiAngelo: Thank you.

Matthias: To find out more about Dr. DiAngelo's work, check out her book, *What Does it Mean to be White?* Be sure to keep an eye out for her new book coming out in the summer, *White Fragility: Why it's so Hard to Talk to White People About Racism*. You can head over to her website, [robindiangelo.com](http://robindiangelo.com). Queerology is on Twitter and Instagram, [@queerologypod](https://twitter.com/queerologypod), or you can tweet me directly [@matthiasroberts](https://twitter.com/matthiasroberts).

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Tell me what you want to hear about on Queerology. I'll get back to you. Until next week, y'all. I will have a real voice. Bye.