

[00:00:00.77] ANTHONY SIS: The opinions expressed by the guests and contributors of this podcast are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Cornell University or its employees.

[00:00:10.39] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:00:12.57] During our last interview with Hei Hei Depew, she asked me and Toral a specific question that did not make the final cut. Instead of leaving it out completely, we are offering it as a bonus episode for you all to listen to today. We hope you enjoy it and get to learn a little more about me and Toral in our response to Hei Hei's question. My name is Anthony Sis.

[00:00:34.26] TORAL PATEL: My name is Toral Patel.

[00:00:35.70] ANTHONY SIS: And you are listening to the Inclusive Excellence Podcast.

[00:00:39.18] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:01:00.13] HEI HEI DEPEW: So I want to know what is your biggest struggle as a person of color at Cornell? I feel like I've had a lot of conversations with other people of color. So I want to ask you both, what is your perspective on this?

[00:01:13.05] TORAL PATEL: Yeah, so I can start with this question. Hei Hei, I think for me, it's similar to something that you said earlier, that my entire life in the United States, I think every time we've talked about race, it's always been a Black-White conversation, right? So it's like, people and their struggles versus White people and their experiences, and so I sometimes feel like my race doesn't belong in that conversation.

[00:01:37.63] And then I think you and I have had this conversation before as well that being from India, that technically, I'm also Asian-American, and it's hard because a lot of people don't think of India as part of being Asian. And so when people think, identify as Asian-Americans, they don't normally think of somebody who looks like me. And so I don't quite belong in that category either.

[00:02:03.97] And so that's kind of the hard part for me at Cornell. So in terms of holidays that I celebrate or the language that I speak or the culture that I'm a part of, it's not something that's discussed openly at Cornell and it's not part of a conversation. And so I think to your point that I don't necessarily belong in any of the categories that we typically discuss when we talk about race or racism.

[00:02:30.94] ANTHONY SIS: I think, for me, my biggest struggle as a person of color is to really talk about the intersection of identities that for me is so salient. So even for me talking about my experience as a person of color, it's very much tied to my LGBTQ identity, to my identity as being part of the queer community. And this isn't unique to Cornell, but I think it's been something that I've always struggled and tried to navigate in

several different spaces, even outside of Cornell, is where is that space to talk about the intersection of identities where I'm also being-- like, I also feel like I'm being heard, respected, and validated, and I think sometimes in the conversations around diversity as a whole, people want to focus on just race or people want to focus on just gender, people want to focus on just these particular identities that impact how we show up at work, but I think what also impacts us at work is the intersection of those identities.

[00:03:28.33] And for me, I've thought about this a lot in terms of my own identities, where I might carry certain more privilege than others and how that affects my experience as a Cornell employee. And so I think for me, that's been my biggest struggle, is to really find spaces where that intersection of identities can be discussed and what that looks like, but also, to meet people with those same intersection of identities, or at least other intersection of identities that are similar to my own. And I think part of it it's not just like a Cornell thing. I think part of it is due to other factors outside of Cornell.

[00:04:01.24] But I think that's something that, with the work that I do now in terms of my role as a training specialist, I really try to bring that to light because I do know that that does not only impact my experience, but it also impacts other people of color who work here at Cornell and they day as well-- I've heard-- I've had conversations with them that they also struggle to find those spaces to talk about those intersections, that we don't just show up, as you mentioned, as a monolithic person or as-- it's just one identity. There's race, there's ethnicity, there's gender, and all of that impacts how we show up at work and the experiences that we have. So I think that, for me, is my biggest struggle as a person of color. And hopefully, with the work that I do, I hope that I'm elevating it and bringing it to light, and also, me talking about my own experience and identities as well.

[00:04:50.50] HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you.

[00:04:51.43] ANTHONY SIS: Yeah.

[00:04:51.88] HEI HEI DEPEW: I think there's-- that's a-- what's the word? Intersectionality, like, when we talk about all these different identities and how they kind of come together, and in that space, there's a lot of different struggles and a lot of things that you kind of face that perhaps as this identity or this identity you wouldn't face alone. So I think that's really, really interesting. And I think there's so much to be said about these different identities.

[00:05:18.08] I think, at the end of the day, ultimately, everybody wants to be able to have a seat at the table, to be able to talk candidly about their perspectives and to be heard. And sometimes, it feels as if it's so important to be able to have these spaces, to have these conversations, to truly feel heard because sometimes, it doesn't feel that way. Yeah.

[00:05:39.60] ANTHONY SIS: Absolutely.

Episode 28: A Special Bonus Episode
Released on October 23, 2020

[00:05:40.38] HEI HEI DEPEW: So thank you all for creating this platform for us all to congregate, have a conversation, and discuss some of these topics that are really very pertinent right now.

[00:05:49.88] TORAL PATEL: And thank you for representing staff and advocating for all of us through the Employee Assembly as well.

[00:05:55.93] HEI HEI DEPEW: Thanks.

[00:05:58.42] ANTHONY SIS: We hope you enjoyed this special bonus episode. If you like what you've heard, be sure to subscribe and submit a review on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or SoundCloud. It helps new listeners find the show.

[00:06:10.53] Also, if you or a fellow colleague would like to be interviewed for an upcoming episode, please email us at ie-academy@cornell.edu. My name is Anthony Sis.

[00:06:22.23] TORAL PATEL: My name is Toral Patel. Thank you for listening to another episode of the Inclusive Excellence Podcast.

[00:06:27.79] ANTHONY SIS: This podcast is a production of the Department of inclusion and Workforce Diversity in collaboration with the Cornell Broadcast Studios.

[00:06:38.54] TORAL PATEL: Anthony and I would like to give a very special shout out and thank you to Bert Odom-Reed. Bert has recently been promoted to the director of Cornell Broadcast Studios. He has also assisted us as both our sound engineer and as a co-producer for this show. So once again, thank you, Bert, for making us sound wonderful each and every episode.

[00:06:58.04] BOTH: Congratulations, and thanks, Bert.