

‘Round About Campus Episode Transcript
About Lessons I (Un)learned from Student Development with Jessica Harris and Reginald
Blockett
(Season 4, Episode 8)

Z: I’m Z.

Alex: And I’m Alex, and this is the ‘Round About Campus podcast, bringing our scholarly magazine to your ears.

Z: This season on ‘Round About Campus, we’re serving an extra helping of the evolving landscape of college student learning and development. Even as higher education faces mounting challenges, supporting student growth remains critical for educators and leaders alike.

Alex: Who doesn’t like seconds, especially when the episodes have been so delicious!

Z: You already know, Alex!

Alex: A girl sure does know, Z! Today, we are closing in on the end of our epic Season 4 with an incredible conversation. Before we get there though, it’s time for a quick segment we call “Take a Round” where we each take a round to talk about something related to our season theme or individual episode. Z, take a round to tell us: if you were going to start a new study related to student development tomorrow, what might it focus on?

Z: Well, Alex, you know that it’s all about the affect for me. So, specifically thinking about grief and loss and their altering effects on how we think about who we are and based on how we think about who we are, how we act and how we work alongside others. So, I would be probably doing some work around grief and loss and probably continuing to be in community with queer and trans people to think about that. What about you? What might you want to focus on?

Alex: I most likely would be focusing on the effects of artificial intelligence on student development. It’s something that really is piquing my interest, particularly around cognitive development and how people think about knowledge claims. So, more to come on that. But that is the big bold area where we’re going to go next.

Z: Look at you, plans. You got plans.

Alex: Plans that are hopefully post-promotion plans.

Z: Well, definitely post-promotion plans. I’m just going to put that into the podcasting universe. So, alright, let’s get out of the way so we can talk with our amazing guests, shall we?

Alex: Today, we are talking all about the lessons we learned and unlearned from student development theory. To talk about this, we have two guests, Drs. Jessica Harris and Reginald Blockett. Jessica works at UCLA, where she is associate professor of higher education and student affairs. She has taught student development theory for over ten years. She often uses critical race theory and/or intersectionality to frame her research, teaching, and personal world. Jessica is very excited to be in conversation with us today! Reggie works at Auburn University, where he is assistant professor of higher education administration. This fall marks Reggie's 20th course he has taught on college student development. His research employs queer of color critique and intersectionality to study the sociocultural experiences of LGBTQ+ students, particularly Black queer, trans, and gender non-conforming students. Reggie is also excited to be here and share the mic with his fellow Indiana University HESA alumna. Reggie and Jessica, welcome to the 'Round About Campus podcast.

Jessica: Thank you! Thanks for having me.

Reginald: Thank you! I'm excited to be here.

Z: Yeah, and we're excited to have you. I think, Jessica and Reggie, you both, not only do research that adds to the student development theory literature base, but you also teach student development theory. My gosh, Reggie, I can't believe 20th time this fall. My goodness. So, yeah, I mean, I'm just tired thinking about it. So what is an often heralded assumption of student development theory that through your research and teaching that you've kind of grown skeptical about? And maybe, Jessica, let's start with you on this one.

Jessica: Awesome, thanks! So I think I've often held assumptions that, I have seen in my research, but that I was socialized to as a graduate student, that there is a canon of student development theory—that there's a specific set of theories that you should be teaching that you should know, particularly to be a successful student affairs professional. And, I think there's also this assumption that you need to kind of think in, bank it in your brain, hold all of this knowledge. Right, hold all of the vectors, hold all of the pathways in your head, and apply that to your students. And, that makes you a good student affairs professional. Then it's also the assumption that you need to learn all of that in 16 weeks. And in my case, I teach at UCLA, which is on the quarter system. So 9 to 10 weeks, right? So I think that is an assumption and some of those assumptions I still kind of play into. I'm sure we'll get to that.

Reginald: For me, I'm very similar. I think especially the ways we think about foundational theories as being, you know, just that they everybody ought to know them, and it's wild sometimes to think about both in the research world and also in the teaching world, but also for me as a student those kind of students to develop the theory of things that we just give it. I don't want to say given up on. But, we've just sundowned, that we kind of assume that they have no meaning anymore. I agree with what Jessica said, this idea that everybody must know these certain things. And then we've kind of went to this other end of the pendulum where it's like, okay, we're just not going to learn certain things when or even talk about these things. Right, you know the pathways or the processes around anything that seems to be too fixed or too linear. And I think that there's purposeful reasons why we've done some of that, but, I find that students just jump into a class and talk about critical and structural work. So that sometimes

leaves folks out of the conversation. To even have readings assigned that don't sort of, you know, cover the foundational pieces or cover why what's the basis of learning theories and learning models? Always sort of like you got to kind of get that to understand the complexities of social identities and understand the complexities of them when we get to the systemic level, critical race theory, or intersectionality, how we apply those theories. So I sometimes wonder if we went off the deep end, too much, which just kind of completely gave up on some of our foundational works.

Jessica: Reggie, I love that you just said that. And I am kicking myself because the other day when I was preparing for this, I wanted to ask you for your syllabus to see what you're doing. And then send you mine because I have, I haven't taught student development theory for 20 years. I've taught it for about ten. But, I taught it for probably eight or nine years. And then, I took a break for the last three years, and then, I just returned to it. And I've drastically revamped my syllabus this year, and I just did what you said went off the deep end. Right? Like it's CRT, it's intersectionality, it's queer theory. It's... I mean, I still do self authorship. But then, I introduce critical self authorship, and I do wonder like where is the sweet spot? I still go back to the assumption, you know, I said I play into these assumptions still where my thing that I tell students is, I hope you just like one theory. I hope you just walk away from here, like with one theory in your head that you really vibe with, and then, that maybe becomes embodied in like ten years. I would even say that part because I'm trying to trip them out about embodying theories. But yeah, I just, I mean, I now teach so much different than I was socialized to and I began to teach. And I wonder if that is because some of you're just trying so hard to challenge the things, the assumptions, right?

Reginald: Yeah, yeah, I agree with you. I mean it's that soft spot, sweet spot thing. I don't know that I landed with it. Just the idea of I don't know what it looks like exactly. What I've done on my syllabi is I'll have my plate—what are required reading for the day, which is oftentimes pointing to our blue book or rethinking, well, that we're rethinking or reimagining, but then, I'll still have 2 or 3 chapters from the old school book, you know, the green book. I will say these are optional foundational readings. And, I tell students, I love this. You're getting into the blue book. And, it's this seven page chapter that doesn't quite get you enough of what you're looking for. Here's some step-by-step pieces that might be good for you as well. And, we discuss those in class too, sometimes. So I agree, I don't know what that soft spot is. But we do know we're going to hopefully think about that more.

Z: Yeah, yeah. And, it's a little bit...it's almost like a little bit of a dance or a shuffle, right? And, kind of going back and playing with and moving forward and thinking about, you know, I think first of all, I love the fact that we reference books based on the color of the cover. It's like I remember when I was in class, at Western Illinois in Horrabin Hall, and I was working with the yellow book...the yellow cover. Yes, Jessica, that's how old I am for folks. Obviously, you can't see the audio, or the video that we see. Jessica just gave me the eyes like, girl, you're that old. Yes! But, I think what this conversation we're having invites a kind of broader question about what's valuable about student development theory. These questions about if, when, and how do we sunset particular theories; what's valuable about student development? What does it help us do as educators? Kind of what are you thinking from like a 30,000 feet above view on on this topic? Reggie, we'll maybe start with you for this one.

Reginald: Yeah, no, thank you. I think that's a really good question, and an important question right now, especially in this moment of thinking about how do we teach, what are the things that are most critical? I don't know. I'm just not a fan of the idea of fully sunseting something. I'm like, there's a reason this thing became important. . . Personally, I don't want nobody to sunset me? Like 30 years, what was this person talking about? But I will say, I have appreciated that we've moved beyond just or solely kind of focus on the wrong psychological theories. Theories that sort of come from the kind of Erik Erickson sort of canon of things, and I tell students thinking about the ego, thinking about the id, that's really important. That's a good contribution of that work, of Matisse's work. But I do think that it's something to be said about those psychological theories that sort of focus on the self a lot; they don't always think about the self within context. They don't always think about the self within the context of peers. And so, I won't say like fully sunseting those, but I've found the need to sort move us beyond it, or give some context to those theories for students just to understand here is how these theories can be used in practice, or here's what they mean. Here's why they were developed, and why they worked at the time that they were developed around. We all have to have some sort of basis to understand what we're doing. So, yeah, I don't know, I have a hard time with the full sunset. Oh, I love a good sunset, but it's like the theory or sunset and knowledge that sometimes the field, to me, it just say this knowledge is no longer valuable. And, that's tough.

Jesscia: I have so many thoughts. I'll try and organize them, but I'm a non-linear thinker. So one thing, just to answer Z, is, you know what, what's the value here? And an OG theory that I do, I don't know if we would call it a theory, but an OG theory that I do cover every single year. First class is a challenge and support like that undergirds everything that I'm telling students, right? I could teach you about Chickering, or I could teach you about queer theory. But you always need to understand the challenge and support that you're going to lay on. Hopefully, lay on top of that theory or model when you're supporting, when you're challenging and supporting students. And then, also the readiness aspect. Like we forget that one a lot of times. So, I think for me that is a valuable theory, but that is something that I value about theory, is that it helps us to challenge and support and to gauge readiness of students to help them do something like develop. But then, like, what does development even mean? For me, it is important, though, to bring in the critical theories and the theories that are constructivist, but are more about the systems of domination that are already challenging students. Sometimes we don't need to challenge students because sexism or ableism or racism is already doing that. We need to learn about those systems so that we can understand the challenges some students are facing, many students are facing, and then, the support that we might provide for them. I think that is valuable. I would just want to respond to Reggie, and the sundowning of theories. There's two things there. So the first thing I was thinking was, I'm okay, I mean, I have to be okay with it because I've given up. I haven't given up on some of these theories, but I have made a conscious decision that they do not serve the students that are in my classroom and the students that they are serving. So at UCLA, this is different. I mean, also ten years earlier at University of Kansas, the majority of students in that room were white students, and the majority of students at that institution were white students. I'm at UCLA. The majority, if not all students in my classroom, are students of color. And, you know, it's still a historically white institution, but the majority are students of color who are also attending UCLA. It doesn't sit right with me to go in there and talk about Chickering. And I know, I'm like picking on Chickering, but—

Z: I think he can take it.

Jesscia: Right, yeah. So for me, it is a conscious decision, and the other side for me is okay, you know, you can kind of feel bad about doing away with these older theories, but if I'm going to give a lot of room to them, then I'm also doing away with these newer theories, right. Like I'm sundowning these other theories. So in some ways, you know, again, in ten weeks, I have to pick and choose. I have to literally read the room. And that room is, you know, begging me for these more critical theories.

Alex: Yeah, and I think, what is exciting about all of this is the proliferation of ideas that have come out in the last couple of decades that have made us all be like, well, what ultimately makes the cutting room floor in our classes, right? That there's just so much good work that has come out. And so, I guess, to ask this next question, what would you suggest are some arguments for letting student development theory go in part or in whole? Like, is this focus on student development and learning still serving the field in the way that it needs to? So, Jessica, I want to start with you on this one. Then, we'll go to Reggie.

Jessica: Yeah. I think I don't argue with anyone on letting it go or to keep it, right. I know that's just the word that was chosen, but even with Reggie, I very much respect Dr. Blockett. Right. Like, I still do want your syllabus, but I'm really intrigued. Like, I honor people who have all of the foundational theories. And I think that's a beautiful perspective. It makes me just really intrigued when someone from my class and someone from their class meets, like they get to learn hopefully from one another. So that's the other thing where I'm like these theories are not just, again, you leave the classroom and you never think about them again. Hopefully you share with your colleagues. I just don't argue with people on letting them go or to kind of justify my stance. So there's that. But I have let student development theory go quite a bit. I have not let theory go. So, like I said, I have a lot of these theories that are not generated with students development, let alone students specifically, in mind. But, I think that makes these theories way more expansive. And, there's so much more possibility for these students in my class to apply those and use those and work with those, and for it to speak to them as well. So yeah, like I haven't let theory go, and as long as others haven't let theory go, I'm not going to argue with you. So that's kind of my stance on it.

Reginald: Yeah, I don't like the piggybacking piece, but I really, I don't disagree much at all there. I think I look at my syllabus sometimes, and I'm thinking to myself, I took student development theory with Nancy Edmonds back in 2007. What would Nancy think about my syllabus these days? And it's like, what I say with Lori, who's a mentor, you know what they say, am I still teaching a close read of student development theory? But I think I mean what I'm hearing from you and what I think about the way I kind of have all minute is to write the theory part is going to still be crux and center and foundational. The focus of these theories are solely around students or solely around human development, that they are...this thing and now you know how a person becomes, or the process of becoming, how they step into the role and things like that. I have moved away from that. For example, I'm not teaching racial identity development models, but I do teach about racialization. And, we spend two weeks on racialization. And this past week, we read Dr. Moria Ozias' work on white women's affect and

niceness, you know, comfort and neutrality. So one thing that is different for me this semester and teaching this class, I have a classroom full of all folks who identify as women—women of color and white women. And so, the only person who identifies as a man or who uses any sort of masculine sort of embodiment is myself and my co-teacher...both of us are men. And so, I give that caveat too. I say that I found I have had to lean into frameworks and theories that are current contemporary that are addressing the realities that I know that these students themselves will face, are facing almost certainly, dealing with with their own students and, you know, I've found this is the second year that that reading has been on my syllabus and as a part of my racialization readings and, you know what? I try to help students understand is like that I was not talking about, oh every single white woman develops, and she's talking about the ways in which whiteness sort of situates itself upon this particular gender and race and racial group and what it means when I'm trying to be my best. I'm trying to be the nice person and all these things. What that sometimes is read like and what that's read through. And so, I do think that there's this need to sort of stick to the theories; in that piece, the theory that we're focused on is whiteness and theories around, you know, white identity. So it's almost like we've taken, you know, Helms' work from back in the day about white racial identity development. And we've kind of fast-forwarded that too. Yeah, but as a part of that stage about acknowledging whiteness, here's what that looks like when your acknowledgment of your whiteness sometimes still becomes self-centered and still becomes the thing that when you're kind of leading the conversation from. So I agree, I haven't...I don't think that this stuff has to be solely about college students or traditional students, but it certainly needs to still derive from theory. It needs to still teach them a set of theories or some set of concepts that they can rock with as a professional.

Z: I think that that is such a powerful kind of point and moment of learning that it's not necessarily I mean, we've been talking throughout the season with some of our guests too, about reading beyond the field of higher education, and effectively, that's what you're talking about in terms of theorizing and working with theory that it need not be capital S, capital D student development theory, but theory and theorization allows us to understand those people that we call students, the environments that we call colleges and universities, in some really helpful and important ways in terms of how we do this work called education. I think that's such a kind of a powerful moment for definitely our listeners, and especially for myself and Alex. We're sitting across the table nodding at each other. The next question that we were going to ask was kind of how you think about approaching your teaching. I think the two of you have been answering that a little bit. I'm curious to think about maybe shifting that question to think about how do you each approach either maybe your research or your work as educators, kind of broadly speaking, and through theory, how have those approaches been shaped by the lessons that you've learned and unlearned through practice? And maybe, Reggie will pop over to you to start.

Reginald: Really good question. And a good shift in that question. You know, I really kind of lean into it, employ and kind of put to work queer of color critique and a lot of my work. Queer of color critique is certainly one of those theories that I don't think that Roderick Ferguson had college students solely in his head when he was developing that theory and when he was doing that work. But I think certainly can be applied to and help us think through college student populations and certainly college environments and the ways that sort of everything starts from

hetero-cisnormative perspective. And in my research with college students, I have found that particular theory and the concepts of complementary to be really useful because they help make some of the things that are tough to understand or explain a little bit more explanatory. How is it that masculine embodiments get mapped onto everybody who have certain characteristics and figures? And how do folks actively resist some of those masculine embodiments and masculine performances and regulatory masculine rules that sort of supposed to dictate how we're supposed to act or what we can or can't do. So I believe it's a queer of color critique. I certainly have taught it in my courses. My thing is always helping students realize these theories were not designed to sort of think about whether persons are in this stage or that stage or not. But here's the ways that these systems are operating, and here's how students are coming to know their gender identity, their sexual identity, their racial identity within these context. You know, we experienced between 2022 and 2024, there are some 800 some pieces of legislation across the country that are attempting to regulate gender, sexuality, race by way of erasing certain histories, telling us what we can or can't teach. What does it mean to come to know your racial, gender, and sexual identity in that context, where you're actively seeing your state say you don't earn the right to healthcare or affirming care, you have not earned the right to Advanced Placement courses about your own racial histories and lineages. What does it mean to be 18 and learning about yourself when the state, the nation state for that matter, is sort of telling you what you can and can't do or what we can or can't teach you. So I try to help students understand these things are not...nothing magical is happening in or on our college campuses, or in our college classrooms. They're coming here already understanding the world, already experiencing the world. Our job is, to go back to certainly the challenge and support, our job is to help them, give them the tools they need to better understand themselves, to better make sense of themselves, to better figure out how to transcend this environment and prepare for the workforce and prepare for life long of factors and festers that are trying to augment and change you and manipulate you at times. And that's such a bigger...to me, that's tougher than just teaching stage one, we do this so, and stage two, we do this...And this idea that by the time you're 24, you've mastered all these stages. You know, when I teach self authorship, I'm always like, there are grown ass people out here [laughter]. So, I just think that it's a more productive way to teach students about the world in some ways.

Jessica: I don't know if this will completely address your question, but I'm just so in it with theory right now. I'm teaching standard development theory on Wednesdays and then critical race theory on Thursdays. And specifically in my critical race theory class, I feel so humbled this quarter, by the knowledge that students are bringing to the classroom. It's EdD students. This is my first time teaching a cohort of 38 students who are currently principals of K through 12, or academic advisors in higher education. There's a lot of me saying, like, I don't know, I don't know the answer to that question or let me get back to you or, there was a big moment that I've never had before. Last night, we moved into week five, and we were talking about intersectionality and a lot of women of color in that room, which is a good chunk of women of color. They were saying for the first time, like, this theory makes me feel really seen. Like I think I'm just now realizing, like how much I've been in denial about, like the hyper sexualization that I feel or the objectification I feel as an Asian woman or as a black woman in my space, and I got chills. And I got emotional because I also was realizing that the first four weeks I was talking about critical race theory, but I was talking and talking about race, but it was very much like I was talking to and about cisgender men in the world of race. And so it

was just this very humbling moment for me of like, whoa. I think intersectionality is an embodied theory for me. And I'm trying to, like, empower other women of color to feel empowered. And yet, there are still ways that I have internalized what I've been socialized to my entire life. And so I think all of that just goes to say that I...that leads me to be really gentle with students. And again, I said earlier that I try and stress to them like, I just want you to walk away with one theory. And not even one theory that you can feel like you're going to put into practice, but that that you can someday embody, right, that you can someday feel so empowered and like, confident because of that theory that makes you a better practitioner. It makes you a better teacher. And so I think that's also what I'm saying is that like, because of intersectionality, because of my engagement with intersectionality and critical race theory, I feel like I'm very...I feel more confident human walking throughout this world. I feel like a more confident and competent faculty member and mother and partner. And that just is infused in my work. Like I feel really confident walking into the classroom. Probably the CRT classroom a little bit more than the student development theory, but, yeah, I think those are just some of the lessons, like the lesson of theory that has really empowered me to be like a better human and a more confident human, a more confident woman of color.

Z: Yeah, yeah, totally. I mean I'm going back to the comments that you made about Nev Sanford's work around support and challenge and readiness and thinking that readiness is not just a one time event, but an iterative process that we cycle back to over and over again. There may be ways that you have been ready and you're now ready again through these experiences that you're talking about in the classroom and that your students are cycling through that as well. It's interesting to think about Sanford's theory as, theory around development, also as a learning theory. And also, as just a theory to think about our livingness and in various different ways. So, yeah, I really appreciate what you're offering.

Alex: Yeah, so as we thought about this season, we wanted to tackle some questions and ideas that seem, in some respects untouchable in their long term assumed importance to the study and practice of higher education. So that's...we're really curious from both of your perspectives, what's one thing you think educators would benefit from letting go of or deeply rethinking when it comes to student development theory and practice? And, Jessica, I'm going to put you on the hot seat first for this one.

Jessica: It's probably going to surprise everyone that I'm going to say Chickering [laughter]. Totally joking, totally joking.

Z: You're going to get an email from Art at some point.

[cross-talk, laughter]

Z: From Art and his estate. I was just going to say, yeah.

Jessica: Yeah, I was...I literally was like, oh God, I hope.

Z: Linda Reisser is going to email on his behalf or something. Student development jokes!

Jessica: It is. Again, like props to people who are still like honestly. It's so funny when Reggie earlier was saying like, oh, it's so much easier for me to teach the expansive theories, right? Instead of the like, model or stage theories. Yeah, I almost feel like opposite about that. Where it's like easier, I don't know. Did you say easier Reggie or not?

Reginald: No, I said it was easier to teach the stage models and things, the foundational stuff than it is the more expansive theories.

Jessica: That's what it was. I because then when I just said that, I was like, no, I don't like teaching. Yeah, it's really hard for me to teach the stage models, not cognitively. More so I am in my office for hours before class being like, okay, so this is a stage. And increasingly students are like I don't get it. You know, like because I think that's very much showing me that it's not...they don't get it because they don't embody it. They can't see the future of embodying that theory. Yeah, but that was a joke. I don't do away with it. Do as you will with whom you will. But the thing that I'm continually thinking about again, humbling myself, something that I like cannot figure out, I'm grappling with. I know you've dabbled in this Z, maybe you, Reggie, but, I continue to teach the class like, identity by identity by identity each week. Right, so it's history, the first week of student development theory. Then, we do intersectionality, and then, race, ethnicity, social class, self-authorship. And it just...I mean...I'm just sitting here being like, oh, intersectionality is embodied and all this stuff. And I'm not even being intersecting with my syllabus really. And so that's something that I'm trying to do away with. It makes it just so much more muddy, right? Like it's like I'm trying to figure out the actual theories, let alone how I talk about identity development overall. So that's something that I want to do away with eventually. And I'm just starting to kind of dabble in how that might be possible.

Reginald: I'll say number one, I'm going say this and I...we are not going to have a piling on Chickering today. But, I remember being a master's student and having the joy, the opportunity, to go pick him up from the Des Moines airport. Some like five in the morning or something like that, and be like, cool person, who is this person [laughter]? I had to learn who that person was real quick. But I'll say...I was going to say one thing well, maybe two things related to Chickering. But, before a lot of people were talking about it. Go read Education and Identity, Chickering and Reisser, second edition. But one of the things I appreciate, I remember seeing this even as a master's student...They do, fair, decent job of thinking about these vectors in relation to students of color, particularly to African-American students. And so, you know, we all know, like Linda Reisser got added on to this piece, and comes from a community college background. I think they kind of had to, like, they were kind of forced to think about those things. So that's the only reason why I'm like don't throw the whole thing away. Because I do appreciate that there is...some of those vectors are so important. They're just so important in different way. That's why I can still hold onto it. But what I'll also say in this same regard, and I'm going to date myself a little bit, but maybe dates all of us. I'm thinking about back in the day to the 2000s, you know, maybe the 99s and 2000s, where you go to the placement exchange, right? The TPE or ACPA used to have the career central, and you're preparing for your interviews, and they go, maybe they still do these things and we're just dated. But, you know, I remember being in the little room with all the grad students, all the folks working, job seeking folks. And we'd all share our notes about...if they ask a question about theory, what's the theory

you're going to give them? A lot of us, it was Chickering, some people it was Marcia Baxter Magolda. It was different folks, but it was a lot of namedrops, and it was a lot of just throwing out stuff and had no clue what these...how these things actually would apply. And then, I remember getting my first job and being told, this is a school of...we do practice here at this institution. We don't do theory. And so when I think about this question, I sometimes am thinking like, number one, I need us to move beyond...I hope that if there are...I know this podcasts attracts professionals in the field, practitioners, administrators, if we're still asking those, that kind of, that basic sort of question of like, what's your favorite theory or what? It doesn't do anything for either party. So, I hope we might move beyond that at our practice, especially at our job seeking techniques. It might be much more productive to think about, you know, tell me about the issue that you see students facing today that you think there's a set of theories or a set of thoughts that we could use to sort of create a new program or an initiative or move our thinking. We're a women's center; we employ post structural feminism. How do you see yourself kind of fitting into a space like that or something like that? Just a much more thoughtful thing. And maybe we've gotten there, and I just haven't gotten the memo. But, when I think about some things we can let go, it's like, let go of this thing that, you know, rattling off a name and set of concepts. And that way you, you know, demonstrated your expertise. I agree with Jessica, knowing the theory and knowing how that theory like, why that theory is important for you, what it can mean for your life. That is so important. But trying to sort of flex in these interview spaces, or expecting the candidate to flex in an interview space by rattling off a random name of a person who they probably have never really, truly done a ton of deep engagement, I hope that we might move beyond that. That's my dreams at least.

Jessica: Can I...I love that, Reggie. And when you were just saying the placement exchange. This is relevant because of your story, but also one more shout out for my man, Chickering [laugher].

Reginald: You love him, you love him.

Jessica: No, in my master's program, one of my faculty members would tell this story of...it must have been the placement exchange. And you know, it was us learning student development theory. And it was he was trying to really encourage us to rote memorize theory and know these theorist and how important it is. And he told the story of like, oh yeah, when I go to the placement exchange, there's someone who was always like running it. And when they come out and call your name, sometimes that person will say, "Chickering, Chickering" and whatever student like laughs or like shows like, oh, I understand what you're doing like would automatically get a job. It seems like a myth now that he was telling this. So like it's again, it's like the hazing of that faculty member by saying that, but also like, I don't put it past someone to actually have done that. And so, yeah, I guess it's also another reason why I tell students, like, just learn one theory, if should you choose. Right? Because I think when I was you telling that story. I was like, oh, I think I'm really like...there's some scars that are coming up from how I learned theory my first time. And then my second time was with Lori Patton Davis, which was way more liberating. And the possibilities were there.

Z: Yeah. It's interesting to think about, the weaponization of theory, and how we use it as a tool of assessment in a particular way that seems deeply unfair, and also, I'm just reminded again

about, like, if there's one thing, I'm taking many things away from this conversation, especially your antagonism with Art Chickering, Jessica. But if there's one thing I'm going to take away from this episode, it's thinking about like, maybe the letting go or the pausing is around the student development part, but definitely not around the theory part. There are ways that we can theorize about students and their development without feeling like we need to only focus on student development theory. I appreciate those reminders, kind of through this conversation and through the answers that you're providing.

Alex: Well, and then, it feels like student development theory, given it's the sort of developmental mission of a lot of foundational documents that have come through the student affairs profession, feels like a very particular kind of knowledge to have. That's both signal and legitimacy granting. That like, if you can name these people...it's part of why within my class, I have moved away from naming theories as people, right. Of like, if I want to talk about self authorship, we're going to talk about Marcia Baxter Magolda because there's no way to not to talk self-authorship and not MBM. And I want to talk to you about the ways this idea has been expanded, pulled apart even and reconstituted together. I think the other thing that came up when both of you were talking was, Jessica, I have moved away from an identity week model, and I've...that has been a radically different decision for me in my class teaching. But I've been inspired by what Z has done in her class of taking sort of a keyword approach to thinking about development. And, I think now of a construct approach. And so, like we'll do a week on identity salience. And what salience tells us across identities. I'll do a week on crossing difference, and how that looks different for students of color versus white students. And bring in some work from Zeus Leonardo to talk about sort of racial dialog in that way. And so, it's been a hard shift, to be clear, and it has felt like a good, worthy shift to get folks, students to focus on the questions I want them to consider when it comes to working with students versus here's the theory to use in this situation question.

Z: And shout out to my dear advisor, Dr. Elisa Abes for the keyword idea. And so, final question for you too, and then, you're both off the hot seat. What are two texts...and we can think about texts broadly: writing books, articles, videos, podcasts, other things that you're engaging with, art exhibitions. What are maybe 1 or 2 texts that you might recommend to our listeners that they engage with? And Reggie, we will let you finish by going first in this round.

Reginald: Love this question. Love thinking about texts broadly. One of them is, as a text-text, as a book, and it's called *Sissy Insurgencies: A Racial Anatomy of Unfit Manliness*. I have grown fond of that text. I have begun to use that text and some of the concepts presented there in my own research and work, especially the idea of what it means, sort of, sissy housekeeping. How do we clean house in different ways when it comes to things that we want to completely eradicate from the concepts of gender, and the ways that gender sort of modes unfitness in certain men and folks who identify in different ways. So that text. And then, I have been in a podcast season, in addition to, and maybe because I'm also in a commuting season where the beauty between Georgia and Alabama, living in one place, commuting to the other place for work.

But, I listen to the podcast here, 'Round About Campus. I've also been listening to a lot of *Blacktivism in the Academy*, a podcast by JT Snipes and some of his colleagues there at SIUE.

Really have enjoyed those podcasts. And I think the same reasons here as always. When I look at my syllabi, there are lots of podcasts assigned, and the students love them. They have appreciated being able to hear from other folks around the country. A lot of times it's like, I don't know, I think they learn more when somebody else is telling than what I'm just trying to beat those things down. But I think those are two texts that have been really popular for me, both my research and my teaching.

Jessica: For me, the first one I will say is also a podcast. It's *Today Explained* by Vox. It's very...it just helps me understand the context in which I'm teaching. I feel like I used to be a lot more dialed in to what was going on in the world, and I think because of many things and circumstances, I feel a little disconnected from a lot of things at this point in my life, which I don't think is a horrible thing. But, in order to feel a little bit more connected, I listened to it. They explained, and I also do put that sometimes into my course syllabus. So there's one, this quarter that they're talking about how Gen Z has become more religious than other generations. And so, that goes into my thinking and teaching around religious identity. They have one on like what is critical race theory? And I think it's helpful because...I think off of audio, but I just find that students aren't reading as much or they prefer not to read as much. So these podcasts are helpful. The other one is a text, a text-text as Reggie said. And, it's Derrick Bell's *And We are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*. And I mean, again, like, talk about me getting emotional about theories and theorist. Derrick Bell is...he is the one...I'm like that man is a very amazing, brilliant human. Someone I would say is like the father of critical race theory. And so, basically, this book is ten chronicles that really get us thinking in different ways, through science fiction, through fantasy about how racism is endemic to the US. One of the most well known is a chronicle entitled "The Space Traders," where aliens come to Earth, and say to the U.S government like, hey, give us your Black people, and we'll solve all your problems. Like, literally we'll give you gold, we'll take all the pollution away. And, it's about what ensues the ten days after that proposition is made. So I highly suggest this book to all.

Z: Yeah, thank you so much for all of the gems you've dropped, for leaving us with some good readings to do, some good podcasts to listen to. It's such a gift to be able to talk to the two of you just about anything, but, yeah, about this topic, especially because you have such vast knowledge and depth of ideas. So appreciate you being here.

Jessica: Thank you, thank you for having me, for having us.

Reginald: Yes, thank you. Thank you for reuniting us as well. This was fun.

Jessica: Did we even mention that? We were in grad school together too.

Z: That's right.

Reginald: I know right? Like in the trenches, okay.

[cross-talk, laughter]

Jessica: Yeah, I blacked out. I don't remember that.

Alex: The 'Round About Campus podcast is audio-engineered by the incredible tech team in the College of Education at the University of Arizona, including Jason Aragón and Erica Lmuth.

Z: Mary Ellen Wade designed our logo. About Campus Managing Editor Kelly Ancharski helps us pull together the show notes and transcript. You can send questions or reflections about this episode to aboutcampusmag@gmail.com.

Alex: I'm Alex.

Z: And I'm Z, and we're recording today from the ancestral and current lands of the Tohono O'odham Nation, home to the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui Peoples. We'll see you around for our next season soon. Bye, bye!