Hi, my name is Safiya Umoja Noble, and I'm an assistant professor in the Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism. My research looks at racist and sexist algorithmic bias and the way in which people are marginalized and oppressed by digital media platforms.

I spent 15 years in corporate marketing and advertising, working for some of the largest Fortune 100 brands in the United States. We were starting to redirect significant portions of our advertising media buying dollars online and thinking about, in fact, how to game Google search and Yahoo! to elevate the brands and amplify the messages.

And so at the moment that I was leaving corporate America and moving into academia, the public was increasingly falling in love with Google. And this led me to thinking that this was a space and a place that needed to be looked at more closely.

It was interesting to see this total diversion of public goods, public knowledge, and libraries being shifted into a corporate, privately-held company. When we go to places like Google search, the public generally thinks that what they'll find there will be credible and fairly representing different kinds of ideas, people, and spheres of knowledge.

And so this is what really prompted a 6 year inquiry into this phenomenon of thinking about misrepresentation on the internet, particularly when people are using search engines, and that culminated in my new book, Algorithms of Oppression:How Search Engines Reinforce Racism. People think of algorithms as simply a mathematical formulation. But in fact algorithms are really about automated decisions.

In 2009, I was kind of joking around, in fact, with a colleague, and I was telling him that I was really interested in what's happening with Google. And just kind of offhand he said to me, "Oh yeah, you should see what happens when you Google 'Black girls'." Of course I immediately did the search, found that pornography was the primary way that Black girls, Latina girls, Asian girls were represented.

That started a whole deeper line of inquiry about the way in which misrepresentation happens for women of color on the internet and what some of the broader social consequences of that are.

In my work, I look at the way that these platforms are designed to amplify certain voices and silence other voices. How does that come about? What is that phenomena about? What's the role of capital or advertising dollars in driving certain results to the first page? What do the results mean in kind of a broader social, historical, economic context?

So I contextualize the results that I find to show how incredibly problematic this is because it further marginalizes people who are already living in a margin, people who are already suffering from systemic oppression, and yet again, these results show up in these platforms as if they are credible, fair, objective, neutral ideas.

In the end, I call for alternatives. And I argue strongly that we need to have things like public interest search that are not driven by commercial biases. And I put out some ideas about what it means to imagine and create alternatives in our public information sphere that are based on a different set of ethics.

If anything, I think that this book is the kind of book that will help us re-frame the idea that, "We should just Google it" and everything will be fine.