

Transcript for MiP Episode 65: Interview with Nic Stone

Episode 65 Duration: 60:23

JENNIFER BAKER: Hello, and welcome to the latest episode of the Minorities in Publishing Podcasts for new and returning listeners. You may know, you can find the podcast at minoritiesinpublishing.tumblr.com or on Twitter @minoritiesinpub. And this is an all-star Fall for the podcast because we are having Nic Stone, author of *Dear Martin*, which is out October 17. And that's not yet, as of this recording, but it will have happened by the time this episode airs. So, you have time to buy this book. [laughter]

NIC STONE: I know, right. [laughter]

JENNIFER: Especially in it's first week of release. That's really nice to do.

NIC: It would be awesome. I won't lie.

JENNIFER: [laughter] And this is another Skype interview. And Nic is actually in Atlanta, Georgia.

NIC: That I am.

JENNIFER: And you're on the same time zone, which is super helpful. [laughter]

NIC: Good.

JENNIFER: And, so Atlanta, how is that? How is the literary scene in Atlanta?

NIC: Eh, hmm. It's all right. Like, there are...

JENNIFER: Says the New Yorker. So, what is it like over there?

NIC: Right, oh, my god. You-you would not--- But, I mean, it's not that bad. There's a nice little crowd down here. It could be better. So, anybody looking to relocate, Atlanta is up and thriving now. So, feel free.

JENNIFER: I mean, I'm-I'm not a fan of heat. [laughter] So...

NIC: Oh, I love the heat. I can't do the cold. The snow and stuff, miss me. I can't do snow.

JENNIFER: [laughter] And that's why you're a Southerner and I'm a Northerner.

NIC: Yeah, you're in New York. Exactly.

JENNIFER: [laughter] As I was saying before, I was in Aiken, South Carolina in July. And that was just like the depths of hell because I had not been in the south in the summer. I usually just go for the holidays because that's where the family is. So, going in July is like oh, no. Oh, god no.

NIC: Oh, yeah. You got to be prepared. Like, it... There's definitely a mental and emotional preparation [laughter] that has to happen with the south in the summertime, especially with all the, like, climate change. It's been nuts.

JENNIFER: Yes, but it was... it was horrible. [laughter]

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: The whole [indiscernible] was the Krispy Kreme hot and ready that I had for the first time in my life which was nice.

NIC: The first time in your life?

JENNIFER: I've had Krispy Kreme. But in New York, they don't do the hot and ready. We just get these prepackaged, kind of, already done Krispy Kreme's.

NIC: That is blasphemy.

JENNIFER: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

NIC: I-I'm going to need some correction around it.

JENNIFER: [laughter] Well, we have our Artisanal doughnuts that are 18 dollars. [laughter]

NIC: True, okay. Okay. I give you that. But I...

JENNIFER: Those are made on site.

NIC: I love a good doughnut, so I will not... Like, there's this doughnut place here called Re... what is it called? Why am I drawing a blank? Oh, my goodness.

JENNIFER: Is it someone's name?

NIC: It's Sublime. It's called Sublime. Come on, Nic. Get it together. Sublime Doughnuts. It's this bougie doughnuts. And they're so great. So, I'm all for bougie doughnuts. Yes, to bougie doughnuts.

JENNIFER: All righty.

NIC: Krispy Kreme is great but bougie doughnuts work too.

JENNIFER: Okay, that's cool. Yeah, I think so. I mean, Krispy Kreme, it-it scratched the itch, and it was hot and ready.

NIC: Yes.

JENNIFER: I was very excited. I literally did a U-turn and I don't drive often. And I said we're going to the Krispy Kreme because the sign is on.

NIC: There you go.

JENNIFER: So, it-I really also glad because it... your publicist was kind enough to help set this up and get to talk to you because of your experience and you being a mom and what you're doing and how you've also talked at length about the issues that are presented in *Dear Martin* and the way that you chose to pursue writing about it in a, kind of, alternate way, I think, in terms of the discussion that's going on. I'm not trying to skip around but [laughter] just kind of preface. This is going to be a fun discussion.

NIC: Hey, I'm with it.

JENNIFER: So, I do want to start off with your contribution to *The Writer*, *The Writer Magazine* for people not in the know, on writing *The Other*. And I really enjoyed it for one because you discuss something that I personally think -- and I'm not saying I'm the arbiter of everything that goes on -- but, in terms of marginalized writers not always discussing openly intersectionality and writing as an under-repped writer about other under-repped communities. So, I feel like we talk about we. I used the royal we because I include myself in that.

NIC: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER: We talk about, you know, kind of like what white writers do or what, you know, able and non-abled and da da da dah. But, what about when a queer writer writes a -- a queer white writer -- writes a black character? Or a black character writes an Asian character, you know? Like, do those... do we talk about that cross over? So, I want to talk more about how you learned from this process because you discussed it a bit in *The Writer* article. But, this idea of

good intentions and you mention that specifically, good intentions, and how that helps you in the pursuit of your own work.

NIC: Yeah. So, I-the... the first book I wrote was trash. We will never speak of it again.

JENNIFER: We all wrote that trash book though. [laughter]

NIC: Everybody has to have their trash first book. But, the second book I wrote was kind of in response to some stuff. I was a Psych major in college and mental illness stigma really bothers the crap out of me, especially in the African American community.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: Because we just don't handle mental health well.

JENNIFER: Mm-hmm.

NIC: So, I get this idea that I'm going to write about this African American girl who is living with bipolar disorder. She's on meds. She does her therapies. She is living her life with this disease. A lot of times you see with books that deal with mental illness, you're dealing with characters that are dying from it, which is a completely different experience than, you know... I-I rarely see books where you have characters with mental illness just living their lives with their mental illness, like, without it overtaking everything, I guess. But the issue is that, like, okay yeah. I did all this research and I, like, read all these memoirs. And I spent, like, hours and hours a day on different websites and in these chat rooms and, like, all of these... there are all of these spaces that I was kind of granted access to. But, I never actually talked to a black person living with bipolar disorder. Anyway, the book landed me an agent without ever being sensitivity read. I didn't even think to do that. Landed me an agent and we went out [on sub?] with it. I will say luckily my illustrious editor decided that wasn't the book that she wanted me to debut with. And so, we ended up going through this whole other process and landed on *Dear Martin*.

JENNIFER: Okay.

NIC: But, I saw luckily because the book did not need to go out into the world the way it was. And I hadn't yet learned the importance of having people who are living an experience that I am not have their eyes and their minds on the work that I'm trying to do. Because, yes, while it's great that, like... okay, yeah, I wanted to try to undo or confront --pick your -- pick your verb-- mental illness stigma in the black community. The way I was trying to do it wasn't right. My intentions were great, but I had... there were so many things that I wasn't considering. And, when we're writing, like-like you said, but your question had to do with marginalized people writing marginalization's that are not their own. And it's important to also-to do the work still. Like, I feel like we do often say well, white writers, you have to make sure that you're getting the opinions and the reads from people of these communities of color that you're trying to write about. And, like, of course, obviously, honestly, I learned about sensitivity reading and writing and research from Jodi Picoult. She's the person who taught me the importance of really and truly doing your research, and sitting down and, like, having interviews with people, and trying to get inside people's lives, going to the places you're writing about. Like, she's the one who taught me how to do all that stuff because she does it. But, I find that it's something that never crosses my mind. Because there was this thing about being marginalized, I guess, I felt like I had this access. Like, I am marginalized so I understand marginalization, if that makes sense.

JENNIFER: Yeah, absolutely.

NIC: But, like, that's not true. And if it, like you said, intersectionality is a thing. And it's important that we make sure, first of all, that we're not being hypocritical because for me to not get... uh, of course, this is before I learned about it. But, like, to not do something that I want others to do when they're writing my experience is hypocrisy. And so, I think it's important that we really, really make sure that we're treating each other with respect. Like, as marginalized people, we need to treat other marginalized people with respect. And that's how I feel about it. Did I even answer the question? [laughter]

JENNIFER: You absolutely answered the question. And I'm sitting here nodding the whole time.

NIC: Yeah. I mean, it's hard, you know. Like, I want... I want to make sure that... like, and since then, like, this isn't a book that I've shelved. Like, it's something that I'm still working on because I do think it's an important book. I-I honestly am still conflicted about whether or not, you know -- permission is probably the wrong word-- but, there is a level of -- I won't say pretense but maybe that is what it is -- or hubris. Hubris is the right word. There's a level of hubris involved when a person who is privileged decides that they're going to write somebody who's not. [10:00] And, there's no getting around it. So, like, I have to keep that in mind. I have to... I have to admit that this isn't technically my story to tell, and I'm aware of that. And so,

whether or not I decide to do it anyway is on me. But, that's something also that I think that we all need to be grappling with. Like, when you're telling somebody else a story, you need to be, you know, up front with the fact that you're telling somebody else's story. Now, I have... I do have a couple of wonderful incredible amazing women who are African American and who are living with bipolar disorder. They're, you know... I've gotten some sensitivity reads on it. And they're helping me. It's great. But, the conflict is still there. Like, I can't and there's no getting around it. Like, it's an important story to me so I'm probably going to tell it anyway. But, even that, even that is something that I have to grapple with.

JENNIFER: I-I completely agree because I've been in similar situations. And that, for me, it's writing the gay, the homosexual character. And it's like, well, I've always been around people who are homosexual. So, I don't see them differently. But, that doesn't deny my privilege, you know, in this called good intention mindsight of recognizing that there is privilege. Is it enough to recognize that there's privilege?

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: Yeah, yeah.

NIC: Yeah, it's hard.

JENNIFER: It is.

NIC: And I think it all comes down to a question of, like, okay, are you going to do it, or aren't you? And [laughter] one of my favorite... and you hear... and I hear it a lot of times from writers of privilege, "Well, I'm damned if I do, and I'm damned if I don't." Well, I'm like if you feel that way then just don't. Like that's [laughter] that's how I feel about, you know, people trying to write my experience. Well, if you feel like you're damned either way, just fix the damned where I tell my story, not you. But in saying that, I'm also, like I said... I'm being kind of a hypocrite because I'm going to be the person. And I don't, first of all, I don't think "damned if you do, damned if you...". Anyway, we're not even going to get into that but-but... so, for instance, in my second book, I can't say. I can't tell the title yet because it hasn't been released. But, anyway, it's a book...

JENNIFER: Okay.

NIC: That is on voices, in the sense that it's a book about these kids who are grappling with coming to understand romance and sexuality. And one of...there's... it's two girls and a guy. One of the girls is... and, like, I'm queer. A lot of people don't know that because my husband is a husband.

JENNIFER: So, the assumptions are made.

NIC: Right, exactly. And then, of course they are, you know. This is what... this is what passing privilege is. Heterosexual passing privilege is a thing. There's no denying that, which is why I don't walk around with, like, rainbows on my forehead. I think it's important to also... but, I mean, I'm serious. Like, it's important to also recognize where and where you are not oppressed. I'm not openly oppressed about my sexuality because most people don't assume that my sexuality is what it is.

JENNIFER: Yes.

NIC: So, I wrote this book because it's a book that I needed as a teenager. But, the-one of the characters in the book, like, there's a boy. There's an African American boy, while I'm a woman. Yes, he's African American but I do not have a penis. I will put that out there. One of the characters is biracial. She's half Chinese and half Irish. And, like, she's actually based loosely on my best friend from childhood. And the third girl, her father is white Cuban and her mother was African American. So, I'm also, in this, like, I'm writing bits of myself into each of these characters. But, it's still not me. And, what was interesting... and see, the interesting thing is with this I specifically, specifically decided that the second girl was going to be half Chinese, partially, because of my best friend. But, also because my editor is Chinese American. So, there's this coverage that I have. Well, not coverage, but like I have somebody working on this book that's going to tell me no, you can't say that. And there were instances in the book where, like, there was a point where, um, the character... her name is Raye, by the way. But, the Chinese Irish character's name is Raye. There's a point where Raye says Sayonara. And my editor went no, that's Japanese. She's not going to say that, you know. Like, so there... so, there are things that, like, when you're going to do it, just make sure that you are... I can't say make sure you're doing it well because you can't really make sure you're doing it well. Like, other people have to kind of validate whether or not you're doing it well. But, just like, know what you're doing.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: I guess, that's my point.

JENNIFER: Yeah, yeah. And your editor, who was actually a guest on the podcast, Phoebe, was...

NIC: Yes. She is the queen.

JENNIFER: She is. She's serious. She's serious business.

NIC: She like my ma. She's like my other mom, and I'm obsessed with her and it's wonderful. It's such a privilege to be working with her.

JENNIFER: I adore Phoebe. I love talking to her. She also is into food and sweets so it's, oh, we're automatic friends.

NIC: Absolutely.

JENNIFER: Because we like sugar so that's fine. Not that I don't like people who don't like sugar but I'm just saying connect the dots.

NIC: It's a bonus when they do.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: Like, I totally get it.

JENNIFER: Connective threads. [laughter]

NIC: Right.

JENNIFER: But, taking into account, you know, this own voices and whatnot, *Dear Martin*, protag is a black male, Justyce. And I wanted to ask because it's so... it's so different. It sounds like the first book and the second book are different in terms of themes, if that's accurate even to say. Like, these themes that are woven in or how... definitely in terms of how it's going to be categorized and marketed, right.

NIC: Absolutely.

JENNIFER: Yeah. With a debut that dealing with such heavy topics, of police brutality and death and things that are constantly in the media, do you feel like with your debut that you are a political writer? Because there's so much talk about writing is or isn't political, I am political. My existence is political, and we all have our opinions in regard to that. But, with a book with such a heavy topic that you're going to be talking to people about, do you feel like you're, kind of, stepping onto the stage as a debut. And you're going to... and it's going to be like oh, Nic Stone. She's a political writer.

NIC: Oh, absolutely. Deliberately. If you, like... if you pull up the definition of political, which I just did on my computer while you were asking me this question. It's relating to the government or the public affairs of a country, right. That's how you define the world political. And every book that I write at the... well, every book that I have written. Because I've written a few. I've written four books at this... five. But, anyway, four that will see the light of day. And every single one of them relates to the public affairs of this country, like, deliberately. The way we think of the word politics is just gross to me at this point. Think about that. When I hear the word politics, it engenders this disgust because I feel like it's so... at this point, it triggers this notion of dishonesty and maneuvering and not being straight forward and saying in, like, rhetoric that gets you, kind of manipulative rhetoric but...

JENNIFER: Yeah, it definitely has negative connotations nowadays.

NIC: Yeah, it's got a really, really negative connotation. Um, but in my books, I am very invested in the public affairs of this country. I'm very invested in... because, I mean, and like you said, you know, everything is full of... I honestly do feel like pretty much everything is political because we all exist in this space and have to exist in it together. Like, we have to, like, coexist within it. And as such, like, it's public and we're dealing with each other's affairs, I guess. After Phoebe got my, Phoebe's reminder, my editor... after she got the... about the girl with bipolar disorder. After she got that book, she wanted to know if I was working on anything else. So, I had 12 hours to pull together a proposal.

JENNIFER: What?

NIC: So...

JENNIFER: You can say I need at least 36. [laughter]

NIC: I got 12 hours. And I... so I whipped together this because it's this thing... *Dear Martin*, was a thing that had kind of been churning in my head about this boy who gets racially profiled and decides he wants to explore Dr. King's teachings now. Because... and it really came from seeing Dr. King, who I am a-an avid Dr. King follower. Fan girl, if you can be a fan girl of Dr. King, I'm it. And his teachings, his sermons, his books, all of it makes sense to me. So, I'm very invested in his teachings and the way that he moves through the world, right. So, when I would see these quotes, especially like anytime a name would become a hashtag, Treyvon, Jordan, Michael, I mean I could go on and on, unfortunately. But, anytime that would happen, and the protests would follow, I would see people quote Dr. King in opposition to the protest. And I would just like wait, y'all are off.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: I'm pretty sure you're off and that's really what made me want to explore this idea of this kid trying to live like Martin now in the... in the 21st century in 2017. So, when I sat down to write out this idea, I knew from the get-go that this was going to be a political book. I knew that it was going to touch on issues that a lot of people really don't want to think or talk about. And I'm glad that I did it because there were things that I needed to dig up. There were things in my own thinking and in my own... in my paradigms that needed to be plucked up. Like, I had so much internalized depression that I had no idea was in there until I started doing the research for this book.

And I had to research and write it simultaneously because it-it sold, like Phoebe bought it off of those 13 pages that I turned in. So, then I have like two months to do a draft. [20:00] And so, I'm doing all of this intense research and trying to pull together this narrative at the same time. And it was just this really awful eight weeks. And I hated everything, and I was constantly crying. I was either sobbing or I was furious. There was nothing in between. But, it was so good because it was like this purging of stuff in my own soul that I didn't even know was in there. And, I came out of it so much more wide eyed, I guess, is-is the way to put it. Woke is

one thing. It's like I have this image of this woke person whose kind of got their eyes narrowed because I'm trying to look cool, if that makes sense.

JENNIFER: Mmm, yes. Absolutely. Absolutely.

NIC: It's a difference between being woke and having your eyes actually open.

JENNIFER: Yes.

NIC: And I feel like I went from this person who thought I knew stuff to this person who actually has a handle on why things are going the way they are, and the stuff beneath the surface that nobody talks about because nobody knows how to talk about it. That kind of stuff. So, yeah, it's political. It's real political.

JENNIFER: [laughter] I'm looking forward to talking to some more aspects of like privilege and how people... how the teams talk to each other, and try to rationalize. And maybe... actually, rationalize isn't the right word. But, I think also when you don't understand why things are happening, you do try to rationalize.

NIC: Absolutely.

JENNIFER: There's a reason for this right. There's a reason.

NIC: Absolutely.

JENNIFER: And it's kind of, I think, it makes me think also because it's been on HBO a lot, uh, The Dark Knight, where Alfred is talking to Christian Bale AKA Batman. And he's like, some people just want to see the world burn.

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: You can't explain everything away.

NIC: Yep.

JENNIFER: But, it's a really good book and a helpful book in propelling those discussions of... But, how do we talk about it, and how do we recognize that sometimes you can't fix something?

NIC: Exactly.

JENNIFER: Yeah, yeah.

NIC: Oh, my gosh. You just hit the nail on the head.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: Like, this is... this is what I talk about when I go, and I have to give talk. We have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable because part of the issue, right now, with discussing race relations is that people don't like not having answers.

JENNIFER: Yes. Yes.

NIC: Like, we live in this country, and it's a very American mindset...

JENNIFER: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

NIC: To always need an answer for everything. Like, what's the solution? What's the answer? Like, we're always thinking about answers and solutions and progress. And, how do we move forward? But, I'm like, there are some questions that you-you have to sit with. There is no easy answer. There is no quick solution. These are things that are rooted so, so deeply in the foundations of American society that sitting down and having a 30-minute conversation is not going to fix anything.

JENNIFER: Absolutely.

NIC: There's so much that we don't even realize is inside of us. We are products of our environment. If your environment is a trash fire, your clothes are going to smell like smoke. But, I feel like people don't think about that. Like, there's no... we're so quick. People are so quick to not want to be labeled a racist. We have social norms. Every society has social norms. And our social norm, like... social norms function as... think-I think about it as, like, gravity. We have these-these morays and these social norms and these status quo. The word status quo is like it's gravity. We move through the world on our feet because of gravity. We're able. We-the way we move. The way, literally, the way we move we've adjusted to this idea of gravity. If the gravity were to shift, if it were to lessen, if it were to intensify, we would have to learn how to move all over again. And that's the problem when it comes to discussing social norms and with discussing the status quo. People don't like the idea of having to adjust how they move through the world. And that's what happens when you challenge the status quo. Wait, you're telling me that my gravity, my social gravity, is incorrect. That means I have to totally change the way that I do this. Which means that things that I wasn't thinking about before, I now have to put energy into thinking about.

Because if you think about it, part of the reason the status quo exists is because our brains can only take in so much information. Like, there's only so much stimuli the human brain can handle. There's so many things right now. I'm sitting in my bedroom looking at my very messy closet. But, I can also see, to my left, I can see my vanity. To my right, I can see the window. I'm not even looking at them because they're in my peripheral vision. But, like, what I'm focused on is what my brain kind of takes in and makes me think about. And so, I can do things when I'm just looking at this. But, if I were to take in everything else, like, I wouldn't be able to function. So, that's how we think of social norms and morays. Like, they're there so that we don't... they're there so that we don't have to think about how to do certain things. But, like... so now, when we talk about, you know, white supremacy and its continued existence, people are like oh, no, that doesn't exist. Because to them, like, when you're talking to people about this stuff. If they were to acknowledge that white supremacy is still a problem, if they were to acknowledge that systemic racism is a major, major issue in this country, they would totally have to change how they interact with people. They would have to change how they look at people. They would have to change how they think about things. They would have to change how they... how they... how they think at all, you know. And that's uncomfortable. But, we have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable, especially people in positions of privilege.

JENNIFER: Yeah, and it also brings me back just to the publishing. Just publishing in general because these desires for quick fixes in terms of the representation. How do we do this? We just

bring in more authors who are marginalized, but we don't have editors who are marginalized. Okay, well we bring in interns.

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: But, you're not promoting the interns. Okay, we-we gave some of them a little more money. Okay, but there're no book distributors or book sellers who are minorities, you know. [laughter]

NIC: Reviewers on every level that... Like, you know what I mean? Like, on every level, there needs to be. And I mean, listen, it's not that it's not changing. It is very clearly changing. And progress is slow, clearly, because... I mean, the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964.

JENNIFER: Yeah, it wasn't... it was in our parents' lifetime.

NIC: My mom was like dog.

JENNIFER: Exactly. Like, it was totally in our parents' lifetimes.

NIC: Yeah, I'm pretty sure it was 1964 that the Civil Rights Act was passed, and look at us now in 2017.

JENNIFER: I mean, Brown versus Board, you know. All that stuff, 1900, you know right.

NIC: Brown versus Board of Education was 1954.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: And there were still... there are still schools in Mississippi that are segregated.

JENNIFER: Exactly.

NIC: You know what I mean? Like, it had... okay, like, we get the legislation on the books but then now we have to actually locate it into our psyches, I guess.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: Um, I've been thinking a lot about... I'm totally taking this off topic.

JENNIFER: Oh, please. I love when convos circle around. It's cool.

NIC: Yeah. But, thinking about you got "take the knee" going on right now, it is life for me. I am just so... I love it. And I'm glad that it's happening. And I-I remember I watched a... I watched an interview the other day, Shannon Sharpe. This is was on the... it was, like, on the NFL Network.

JENNIFER: Oh, okay.

NIC: I'm a big sports fan by the way.

JENNIFER: I know you are. You and your hubs are sports people.

NIC: We are some sports feens. And so anyway, on the NFL Network, Shannon Sharpe was talking about how frustrated he was, basically, that it took Donald Trump calling these NFL players sons of bitches and telling owners that they should fire them. He's like it's messed up that it took that for them to get with the program.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: I'm like, no, that's always what it takes. The power of nonviolence social change, it's not in the nonviolence. It's in the reaction that happens from people, that's what triggers if you think

about it, right. So, going back to the Civil Rights Act, John F. Kennedy was not going to pass the Civil Rights Act. And then, there was a situation in Birmingham. The Birmingham situation where you had these kids out here protesting and Bull Connor, this not nice man, okay.

JENNIFER: Bull Connor, who is pure evil incarnate. [laughter]

NIC: Terrible, terrible person. But anyway, he unleashes these dogs and these freaking firehoses on these kids. And that's what got John F. Kennedy oh, yo, maybe I should take another look at this. These-the things that bring about the change, it isn't the protests itself. It's people's reaction to the protest. Think about Charlottesville, right. People didn't wake up, like.... the Tiki torches and the polos, all that stuff was happening on Friday and Saturday, right. Nobody was really saying a whole lot about it. It was just oh, whoa, no, we're not like those people.

JENNIFER: Yeah, punch a Nazi. I believe in punching Nazis.

NIC: Right. Y'all, I'm the nonviolent type I will say. But, it took this guy running his car into a crowd of people for people to be like, oh, wait, maybe there really is a problem. You know what I mean? It's the reactions, the violent reaction to nonviolence is that brings about change, right. So, right now... but, though, I'm like what exactly is it that we're trying to accomplish. Because of what I... what I think... part of what I wonder when I'm watching protests now, I'm like okay, so what's our aim? Like, what's our goal?

JENNIFER: Yes, yes.

NIC: What is the practical theme that we're trying to [OVERLAP].

JENNIFER: What are our demands? What are our demands? [laughter]

NIC: Right. Absolutely. And it's hard. It's, honestly, it's kind of hard to come up... to articulate them simply because the legislation is mostly in place. We can protest laws about...

JENNIFER: The Trans Ban and stuff like that.

NIC: Right. We can protest those things. We can protest the laws about juvenile justice. We can protest man, uh, mandatory sentencing. Like, those kinds of things lead... there is legislature that needs to be changed. But, when it comes to racism as a concept, what exactly... what are we trying to do? What are we... And I think... I feel like the goal, for me as a writer, especially with this book, is [30:00] to get people to question themselves. Because what I discovered is that even though I don't have answers at all, I go through kind of... Spoiler Alert. You go through this book, you get to the end, there are no more answers at the end then there were at the beginning.

JENNIFER: Or are they? [laughter] Or are they?

NIC: For me, there weren't. Like, when I... So, I, you know... I'm writing this book looking for... I literally wrote the book asking the questions myself and looking for answers. I'm like yeah, of course, you know, you get to the end and there's this kind of big picture thing. But, when it comes to how do we fix racism? I-I don't know. I have no idea. But, at the same time, asking the questions and digging into the roots of things and actually opening my eyes and looking around me, it really helped develop this way, way super deep level of empathy that I did not have before. So, I live in the hood in Atlanta, and I love it. Like, it's-it's, um, it's, like, on the west side. And the house across the street is abandoned. The house next door is abandoned. I've got one neighbor, and, like, all the other houses are like abandoned or falling apart. Um, but, when I'm driving up my street now and, like, all the dudes are, like, gathered on the corner up at the top. Not, even the corner, like, gathered in the middle of the street at the top of my street, like, shooting craps. Like, they're up there, like, shooting dice. And, like, it's fine, you know. It's-it's... but, this is a complete... like, it's a completely different response than what I would have had two or three years ago, even, you know. Like, now, I wave, and I smile because, like, who cares. They're shooting dice. Why is that a problem? Like, there are so many things that I didn't really think about in depth before. Like, for instance, when people speak a certain way, right. Like, I could code switch right now, but I don't want everybody to be like, oh, my god. But, uh...but, like if I'm hearing a conversation between two African American teenage boys, and there's cursing. They're tossing the N-word around, like, a damn volleyball or whatever. And, they're not using standard English, right. I know so many people who would just be livid about that. Why can't they just talk? Why can't they just use proper English?

JENNIFER: Oh, my god.

NIC: And before, it's not that I was one of those people, but I understood the perspective of those people. But, now after doing the research and coming to understand things, like, the

purpose of language, which is to communicate, why is it a problem? If these two people who are talking to each other can understand each other, what is it to me? Why would it bother me that they're not speaking "proper" English? There's no reason for that to bother me at all.

JENNIFER: Exactly. I mean, why is there not yelling and screaming, and just quiet time at the library, and people are screaming? What is the issue?

NIC: Yeah, exactly.

JENNIFER: What is the issue?

NIC: They're just, like, passing two kids on the street that are like, aye, dog [mimics exchange]. There's this... there's a very specific manner of speaking here in Atlanta that happens between young African American teenagers, right. I don't know why that bothers people, when boys walk the street with their pants sagging. Why does that bother you? I don't know why that bothers you. Like, what does it have... you know, it's-it's... there are these little things that, like, before I never really thought about. I just kind of accepted the status quo, if you will. But, now that I'm thinking more and asking questions, really, what I learned when writing *Dear Martin* is how to ask questions. Because, honestly, before then, I was too afraid to. And it has everything to do with what we were talking about earlier. About how in this country, we want answers. So, it's like if I... if there's a question that I don't think I'm going to be able to find an answer to I'm probably just not going to ask it. But, like, now, I'm like, no, it's okay for me to ask these questions that don't have answers. And it's okay for me to just be okay with the fact that these kids are saying stuff that I can't understand because they are not talking to me. What does it have to... you know what I mean?

And yeah, it's important to be able to communicate with other people, obviously. But, this idea of this is the right way to do things in this country. Nah, that just doesn't work because there are too many people from too many places that live too many different ways. And we should all have the space to live the way that we live. Was that not what life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is about? Oh, look, we getting political again.

JENNIFER: It all comes back to politics. It's funny that you said what you said, especially in terms of outcomes and desired outcomes, specifically. Like, I was thinking about this a bit earlier today, the ideas of allies and that gets very tenuous too, right. What is an ally? Do we need allies? I don't need allies and all that stuff. We never forget those stats, 53 percent of white women. [laughter]

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: A good percentage of white men, you know, voted in the way that they voted in the way that they voted in this past presidential election. And seeing people “allies” come out and do something suddenly. Oh, it’s a day. I’ll be there. I’ll do those hats. I’ll do the pussy hats. And I’ll be out there that day with millions of other women and, you know, oh, my god. Oh, I’ll use that hashtag. I’ll buy that t-shirt. You know what I mean?

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: Whereas when we were, like you were saying with, um, Birmingham and bloody Sunday that happened back in the sixties with King, or fifties, the ongoing nature of it. Like, it didn’t stop. I forget which bus company or transit company. But, there was the bus company and African American’s said, none of us are going to use this bus company. That’s it. Not for a day, not for a week. Until you treat us right and give us the same rights, we could sit wherever we want, we are not using this bus company. It wasn’t a one-day thing. It was ongoing. And even when you do the research or go to the little, you know, National Museum of African American History and Culture, you see that these weren’t one-day events. So, like you’re saying with these-this woman’s march, and da da da dah, is it literally just a visual for that moment to feel better about oneself? And I think you actually do talk about that in *Dear Martin* because you have one of the characters. She is a white... a young white woman, educating white people. Hold on. Time out. Do the T sign. Zak Morris freeze frame. [laughter] I was like... I was like, wait a minute. [laughter] We have a white person educating white people and the black kids are kind of like, yeah. And Justice is like, I’m not getting into this. [laughter]

NIC: Right.

JENNIFER: Justice is like, uh-unh. [laughter]

NIC: Y’all got it.

JENNIFER: Like, no thank you. [laughter]

NIC: Right.

JENNIFER: Keep my name out your mouth. [laughter] But, it's something I've talked a lot about with Brendon. And I'm sure, maybe you have too. Because I know your cohort, Jason and Brendon, as well, that, you know, *All American Boys* was very much this viewpoint of looking at white privilege as well as looking at those who are affected by the issues of police brutality. And I feel like yours is also. It's a helpful tome to have because it also looks at white privilege. Or, it asks white people to look at white privilege. And I was wondering, how did that come about?

NIC: That was deliberate girl. Listen, listen, okay. Full disclosure, hey, I'm a black woman. I wrote this book. Therefore, what you're hearing is from me. So, let me just first put that out there. I deliberately framed this stuff that SJ is saying. Sarah Jane is-is this... she's a Jewish girl and she's the one that does most of the educating in the book. And, she's white because white people tend to listen to other white people. It's, you know, it's very simple. It has a lot to do with... Like I said, I was a psych major. And, like, in groups and out groups, like, these things are engrained in our psyches. I, for instance, if a white person comes to me and says, like, you need to check out this fried chicken spot up the street. I'm not. Uh, what? No. No, I'm sorry. Excuse me. It's just not something that I'm... there are things that I'm not going to take a white person's advice on. Period. Like, it's... and that's just... that's life, you know. And I think, honestly, that's in groups and out groups. It's psychology. It's sociology. Like, these are very normal human things. So, bottom line, it's honestly easier to identify. It's easier to listen to a person you can identify with. And that's why she's white. Like, I mean, I deliberately made her white. She was never not white. There was, uh... in an earlier iteration of the book, Justice had a sister named Liberty, who was amazing. But, it ended, like, I had... Let me just tell. Hold on. We gonna pause for a second. Let me just tell you. No, not pause the podcast but pause what I'm talking about on the sideline.

JENNIFER: Pause my own. Do I edit this out?

NIC: No, you good. So, the first iteration of this book was eight per... it was double the length. It was, like, 79 thousand words.

JENNIFER: Really?

NIC: It was eight points of view. And it was kind of...

JENNIFER: Eight points of view? What?

NIC: Eight points of view because it was a different... It was the same story, but it was told in a totally different way. So, instead of it being about this one African American kid's journey trying to figure out his place in the world, it was about these eight people and how their lives kind of collided, right.

JENNIFER: Oh.

NIC: One of the point of view characters was Justyce's little sister whose name is Liberty in the book. And obviously that was Liberty and Justyce, double entendre. Like, I do this on purpose. I promise. And she was a very... she was like this [40:00] strong African American female voice. But, honestly, that book, while it was a great book, wasn't doing what we wanted it to, I guess is the best way to put it. And so, we just... so, we changed it. And, she's one of the characters that got cut. I'm... on the one hand, I'm sad about it a little bit because now there is... No, like, I... full disclosure. There is not stron... the-the one African American female voice in this book is Justice's mother, which is deliberate. I wanted... she's-she's the strong black woman voice in the book.

JENNIFER: And you have Mellow, whose mixed race.

NIC: And Mellow is mixed race. You don't really hear a lot from her.

JENNIFER: No. Uh-unh.

NIC: She's just kind of... she's, you know, not very woke. She's a...

JENNIFER: She's... she's problematic, as we like to say. [laughter]

NIC: She's very problematic. And she is deliberately problematic. And-and, so yeah. And that's another thing, you know. Like, I think it's important to have problematic characters in books. People need to see, like, oh, wait, this girl is not... she's not good. But, SJ needed to be

white, really, is-is the bottom line. Because what I could have done is I could have made her black. But, I guarantee you those conversations in that classroom would have gone completely differently. At the point... there's a point when the main, I guess we'll call him the antagonist... he's this very, very, very privileged, very entitled white boy named Jared.

JENNIFER: Dude, bro. He's a dude bro.

NIC: He is a mess at the beginning of the book. And... but, there's a point where he kind of sees somethings that he wasn't seeing before, and he calls SJ. If SJ had been a black girl, that call would have never happened. And-and there are things that I really had to accept about the world that we live in so that I could write a book that would actually be, not only be believable but be a book where people could find where they're at and where they need to be simultaneously. So, perhaps you have a person who starts where Jared is, and then they see oh, wait but SJ is saying these things that I can identify with because I am white, like she is. But, I need maybe to think about what she's saying. But, I don't know that they would be open, that people would be open. I feel like I'm telling all my secrets. [laughter] But, yeah, I don't know that people who have been as open to hearing about this stuff if it had come from an African American girl. And honestly, um... so, Jodi Picoult's last book was *Small Great Things*. It's about... it's based on a true story about this African American nurse who is barred from caring for the baby of a white supremacist couple. And the baby dies, that's not a spoiler, I promise. Um, the baby dies, and she ends up being implicated because she was in the room. But, she was following orders not to touch the baby. So, there's this whole... it's this big dilemma. So, she didn't try to save the baby because she was told not to, and didn't want to lose her job. But, at the same time, like, if a baby's dying, you know... so it's a real... it's areal dilemma.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: It's a legitimate moral dilemma. And, there are three voices in that book. One is the voice of the white supremacist dad. One is the voice of this black woman, and one is the voice of this white public defender. And when Jodi was doing the research for this book, I was... that's actually how she and I met. She was doing research for this book and she came to Spelman to interview. Because I worked at Spelman, she came. That was... it was my senior year. And she came to interview the president of our college, and I got to meet her because... whatever, nobody cares about that part anyway. [laughter] Just meet Jodi Picoult and help her with this research. And talking to her is really what helped me get a better handle on the fact that as unfortunate as it is, white people are more likely to listen to what she has to say about racism than they are to listen to what I have to say about racism.

JENNIFER: And I agree.

NIC: And that's really shitty but it's true. And so, I could act like that's not the case, and write a character one way. Or, I could accept that and try to maneuver through it. Kind of, I think of it as SJ is my trojan horse is-is how I think of it. I have made this thing that looks like a gift. But, when you bring it inside of your mental city, I'm about to blow some things up. And, yeah. So, that's why. Honestly, that's why she-she's been white from the get go. Also, my husband is Jewish. My mother in law is Russian. And so, the-the Jewishness plays a role too. SJ's Jewish. And so, like, they-that that's another layer that's going on. So, yeah, she's always been a white girl.

JENNIFER: Yeah, I-I completely agree with you, and I've had conversations with other people about this where also the labor. You're putting in a lot of labor as a woman of color. Do you want to keep putting that labor in? [laughter]

NIC: Yeah, you know, honestly, I don't mind. Like, I think that... I think that it's just, like, a different, you know. Different people have different levels of tolerance for other human beings, honestly. Like, I am very... I'm actually extroverted to a fault. Like, I hate, hate, hate being alone. But, it works to my advantage in an industry like this, where most people are introverted. So, like, they don't like talking, like, you know. We've been talking for 55 minutes and I'm pretty sure that, like, 45 of them have been me, just on and one.

JENNIFER: I don't mind. I don't mind. [laughter]

NIC: Right, right. Exactly. And then, you know, so it's been beneficial to me to be as extroverted as I am. And you know, like you were saying earlier, like, it honestly... it doesn't bother me that it took everything crashing down for certain people to decide they want to get involved. Because honestly, it-that to me is logical and makes sense. If your house isn't burning, do you know to leave it, you know? And, yeah, you could... you could look outside and see the smoke, if you would be willing to pay attention. But, I personally... like, if the... the way... the... where I stand on it is as long as your eyes get opened at some point, we're cool.

JENNIFER: You're a much better woman than I am. [laughter] And that may be that Northerner, Southerner thing. I don't know. [laughter]

NIC: But to be honest, I think... I feel like you deal with a lot more garbage than I do.

JENNIFER: Yeah, I take the subways. [laughter]

NIC: Yeah, yeah. Exactly. And I'm in my air-conditioned car every day. So, it's...

JENNIFER: And you have a house, and I live in an apartment. [laughter]

NIC: Yeah, exactly. I have a yard. Yes, there are... there are amenities in the South. I'm telling you just come on down. I mean, I know you were, you know, talking about the heat but see there's air conditioning, central AC. We have... our cars are air-conditioned. So, you can get around the heat, Jennifer, if you were... would like to come.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: Down to Georgia where I'm at.

JENNIFER: I feel like I should ask you about this makeup thing, though, for Courtney, for Courtney's sake. I am horrible with makeup and I use it when I have to, [laughter] for a certain photo. But, Nic is amazing with makeup. You look glorious without it. You look glorious with it. But, you also...

NIC: Oh, just stop that.

JENNIFER: You also have... you just have a really good hand with it. And, you know, I don't want to put it in these categories of fem.

NIC: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JENNIFER: Oh, if you like makeup, you're a fem, you know. Like, you know, that seems very trite to say and inconsiderate. But, you're, you know... you just have this great style.

NIC: Thank you.

JENNIFER: And I feel like that's kind of your brand. [laughter]

NIC: Uh, it... honestly, it seems like. That's currently what it seems to be becoming.

JENNIFER: Yeah. As it... you know, like, you were saying you're an extrovert, and a lot of us are introverts. I feel like I'm in the middle. I'm an introvert, extrovert. So, sometimes I really love being around people. And sometimes I really don't want to be around people.

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: But also. I feel like we feel slummy as authors, you know. Actors are glorious and glamorous, and you see them and just, like, hot couture and stuff. As us authors are just like, yeah, there was this sale at Ann Taylor.

NIC: [laughter]

JENNIFER: These are Target jeans. [laughter]

NIC: I literally, like, yesterday, I-I bought... I've bought three sequined skirts in the past 48 hours.

JENNIFER: What?

NIC: One of them looks like a mermaid scales. I am so... I am so... I'm so geeked about the skirt. I can't even tell you.

JENNIFER: You have to go on tour with Tracy Batiste then because she's the mermaid in her book. And then she can wear something, kind of like, *Dear Martin* themed. You guys can compliment each other.

NIC: Yes, I can. We can. I-I'll be the Junebies, and she can do... And she can do, I don't know. What would she wear? I don't know. But, yeah... makeup is another. It's a creative outlet for me. It's very soothing. There's this... I paint too...

JENNIFER: Oh, yeah.

NIC: Which I'm sure is something that nobody knows.

JENNIFER: Now they do, or I can edit that.

NIC: Everybody knows now that Nic Stone paints. But, eh, you know, honestly, I should say I used to paint because I haven't painted in a while. Like, I haven't actually, like, sat down at an easel with a canvas with acrylics. Like, I haven't sat down in some years. But, there's something about color and blending color. Like, I like... newsflash, I guess. I like things that re pleasing to the eye. I-I don't know that that's... I don't think that would be...

JENNIFER: Well, you're fashionable too. If y'all's ever meet... even meet Nic...

NIC: Yeah, I mean, you know... but, I think there's... there's something about things that are aesthetically please, I like. And I like... because I like things that stimulate my senses, so smell. There are people in this industry who smell amazing. And, like, I will be around them just, so I can smell the way that they smell. [50:00] I'm not going to name names because that would make it...

JENNIFER: I could name names. I could name names. [laughter]

NIC: Like, I'm sure we're thinking of some of the same people. Smell. I like sound, the sound of voices. When I'm writing, I'm real big on sound. Like, so, when-when... hope... hopefully, hopefully. Don't let me, you know, get ahead of myself and be popping my collar when I'm wrong about this. But, like, hopefully, when people read my writing, they can hear it, and they can hear the wilts and the dips and the... and, like, those things are very important to me when writing because sound is such a... it's such a big deal to me, even sound that is silent, you know. Um, and then visually, like, I love color and I love... I love glitter so much. Like, I'm one of

those weird people that, like, if you were to take glitter and dump it all over my bedroom, I would be ecstatic. Like, I would like...

JENNIFER: Oh, my god, Nic. [laughter]

NIC: I would be, like, so happy. And I know that there are people that are like glitter gets everywhere. And, I'm like exactly. This is exactly why I love glitter. It's wonderful. I like things that sparkle. And, like, with the makeup, it's just... it's this thing that I like to do because I like... I like beauty in the scientific sense. Like, the... like, there are things that are pleasing to the eye because, like, the colors complement each other and, like, they're symmetrical. And, like, you know there are... there's... there is a... like, there is science to beauty, to what-to what we find beautiful.

JENNIFER: Yes.

NIC: And I like getting to play with colors and, like, the... just the process of like caking my face in-in color and in shimmer and-and and... Like, and it fun by like matching it to a book cover.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: It's so fun to me.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: And honestly, I think, you know, this is kind of unsolicited advice that I really think everybody should have something they do that they're not doing for money that they enjoy.

JENNIFER: I agree.

NIC: Because, like, I love writing. Writing is wonderful, but I will be upfront and say or ask my-my wonderful editor. I will be candid with you and say...

JENNIFER: That does sound like Phoebe, yeah. [laughter]

NIC: Phoebe's so perfect. Nobody can tell me otherwise. But, like... like, there's... once you start writing for pay, it-it it changes. Like, it... like, it's just different.

JENNIFER: Yes.

NIC: Like, you still can get into your place where you're flowing. But, like, there's this... there's... it just changes the way it works. Well, it did for me. Let me speak for myself. But, like, starting... getting paid for writing changed the way writing feels to me. Um, so, having this makeup thing where I can still be creative. I can still be artistic. I can still kind of express myself in a way that doesn't have, like, hard and fast parameters. Like, I... it makes me happy. And I think that everybody should have something in life, whether it's a creative outlet, whether, you know, maybe you knit. Maybe you, you know, take... you do photography. Maybe you, like, nail po... I also really love nail polish. Like, if people were to see my nail polish drawer, like it's kind of shameful actually how much nail polish I own.

JENNIFER: This is why I bake. I bake because I love it.

NIC: Yeah, you know, like it's just... it's just good. It's good to have something that makes you happy, especially-especially right now in this crazy world we're living in. Because it is. It's so easy to just kind of get low and to be pulled down by the weight of everything happening right now because there are so many things happening right now. And most of them are terrible. It's nice to have something where you're like this is not terrible and I like it. And it makes me feel like there's some good in the world.

JENNIFER: Yeah, yeah.

NIC: And the philosophizing about cosmetics.

JENNIFER: Hey, this is the right place to do it. This is the right place to do it. Well, thank you so much Nic. This was such a great convo, and I'm so happy about *Dear Martin*. I feel like it's such a different book. It's such a book that's going to invoke a lot of conversation, make us look

at things differently. Hopefully, when it comes out, you'll be able to engage in those kinds of conversations that you're already eager to have.

NIC: Yeah, clear-clearly.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: I just talked... I just talked your ear off.

JENNIFER: Oh, I love it though. I real... I sincerely and do love it. But also, I know you have no answers. [laughter]

NIC: That's right, exactly. My answer is there is no answer. Be uncomfortable and be okay with it.

JENNIFER: Educate yourself, that's my answer. Educate yourself.

NIC: Educate yourself and be nice to people.

JENNIFER: And don't jump on bandwagons. Stop that mess. [laughter]

NIC: Like, honestly, do you know how different the world would be if people would engage in critical thinking?

JENNIFER: Oh, my god. It would be amazing.

NIC: It would solve most of these problems. If we were just willing to stop, just stop, for like 30 seconds even and think about what we're thinking about, like meta cognition. It's the, you know, oh, it's a study technique. No, it's also life technique. You just take a second to think about, wait a minute. Why did I clutch my purse when that black kid just got on the elevator?

JENNIFER: Yes.

NIC: Why did I do that? Like, just ask yourself why...

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NIC: Every now and then.

JENNIFER: It's very...

NIC: Even though you know it's uncomfortable.

JENNIFER: Yeah, I've been dealing with this too recently for the anthology I'm editing. I-I was telling my editor at S and S, I said whenever a writer immediately responds to a critique, it's rarely ever good.

NIC: Right.

JENNIFER: It's rarely ever. It's reactive. It's emotional.

NIC: It's good. Yeah, it's that. It's emotional, exactly.

JENNIFER: It's not. It's not what you're saying critical thinking of huh, let me think about why so and so said that.

NIC: Right.

JENNIFER: It's oh, my god. I can't believe you said this to me. And oh, my gosh and I was like... So, I-I am interested in that critical think. Because I think it would have differently... it would affect dating. It would affect art, I think. In some ways, I like that art can be reactive.

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: But, also receptions to art and politics for sure.

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: It would definitely change politics if we had...

NIC: Absolutely.

JENNIFER: critical thinking. I mean, we know who-who in office is not a critical thinker.
[laughter]

NIC: Oh, right.

JENNIFER: So not a critical thinker, this is why I go outside on weekends.

NIC: It's astonishing actually to me. Like, I'm like how? I don't... okay, never mind. Can you just, like, let me just... I'm just going to let it go.

JENNIFER: That's when you get off Twitter.

NIC: Yeah, this is like... this is why people, like, I don't... I don't be... I struggle. This is one of the reason I struggle with Twitter. Because Twitter is a very... it's a reactive space because it has to be. That's what it is, you know.

JENNIFER: Yes, yes.

NIC: Like, that's how it's designed. You have 140 characters and a very brief window to respond to something before it's not important anymore, you know, and before people aren't paying attention to it anymore.

JENNIFER: Yep.

NIC: And so, because of that... because of the nature of the platform, it's just angry, fury, response, emotion, boom, boom, boom. And I'm like okay. I'm just going to go stand over there and think about some things. And then I'm... and then I'm going to write a book about it. You're hear about what I think you're talking about now in two years.

JENNIFER: [laughter] You're old school. That's how the old school writers do it. [laughter] I'll get back to you on that.

NIC: Okay, yeah. [OVERLAP] We'll-we'll talk.

JENNIFER: And this is why the whole take a knee thing was I had no idea. I went offline on Friday night. I come back on Mondays. And then, take a knee is proliferate. And I said what, what happened?

NIC: What? You're like what's happening. I don't know what's happening.

JENNIFER: Every weekend I go offline. What happened? But, I never regret going offline.

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: I may be confused on Monday, but I never regret it. [laughter]

NIC: I deleted the app from my phone. Like, I deleted the Twitter app from my phone.

JENNIFER: What?

NIC: Because it just, like... Like, I was constantly checking it. And I, clearly, had no self-control. So, it had to go.

JENNIFER: You got books to write. Write your books. Make your money. Write your books. Get your message out there. That's more important.

NIC: Word, thank you for that validation. I appreciate that.

JENNIFER: Now, I need to get my ass off Twitter. That's what I need to do. [laughter] More than on weekends. But, baby steps. Baby steps, yeah.

NIC: Yeah, it's hard. Like, it's, you know... there's this I don't want to miss anything. Naw, naw, I'm cool. I got... I got stuff to do. We good.

JENNIFER: Exactly. We all got stuff. So again, *Dear Martin*, which comes out October 17, which will have passed by the time this episode posts. But, that doesn't mean you still can't buy it, and you still can't buy it in bulk. You can definitely buy this book in bulk and have discussions. Will there be a discussion guide at the end of your book?

NIC: There is, and it is so good. Oh, my gosh. Like, I read it and I... there were questions that I was like I don't even know how to answer this. This is amazing.

JENNIFER: Yay, discussion guides.

NIC: Yeah, it's... it's so good.

JENNIFER: So, librarians and educators, you have tools. So, Nic, how may people reach out to you?

NIC: Twitter and Instagram, I am getnicced, G-E-T-N-I-C-C-E-D. Um, and my website is NicStone.info.

JENNIFER: And that's N-I-C?

NIC: N-I-C, no K.

JENNIFER: Yeah, just wanted to make sure people knew that. [laughter]

NIC: Yes, yes. But, thank you for that because we would be looking up N-I-C-K Stone, and-and it ain't me.

JENNIFER: No, it's not. Wrong one. Wrong one.

NIC: Yeah.

JENNIFER: It might be some British dude. [laughter]

NIC: That sounds about right. It's probably a dude.

JENNIFER: Well, thank you again so much, Nic, for being on. Thank you for writing *Dear Martin*. I'm really looking forward to your next books, even though you can't say exactly what they are and the titles. I'm very excited and that...

NIC: Sure, sure. Don't worry, soon it'll be.

JENNIFER: Still by privilege, we got a sneak preview to hear about the second one.

NIC: Yes, mam. Thank you for having me. This is totally an honor and a privilege, especially since, like, [indiscernible] was on like a week ago. So, [laughter] yeah.

JENNIFER: That was intense. [laughter]

NIC: I'm sure.

JENNIFER: So, thank you listeners for tuning in. As mentioned, you can find the podcast at minoritiesinpub on Twitter, at minoritiesinpublishing.tumblr.com, as well as on iTunes, Google Play and Tune In. And stay tuned for our next guest. [1:00:23]