

Transcription for Episode 78: Diversity Committees and Microaggressions in the Workplace

Episode Duration: 53:07

JENN: Hello and welcome to the latest episode of the Minorities in Publishing podcast. This is Jenn, and for new and returning listeners, you may know you can find the podcast on Spotify, iTunes, GooglePlay, TuneIn and something else that I continually forget and need to look up. But we're all on that. Then we're on Twitter @minoritiesinpub and on Tumblr at minoritiesinpublishing.tumblr.com. I'm really, really happy to have two people in scholarly publishing, and I am in scholarly publishing. I also work in trade, but it's interesting because I feel as though we're part of the diversity conversation, but we're also not. When it comes to the larger discussion, it does talk about representation in children's books. Everyone keeps talking about, "We need diverse books, we need diverse books." Having worked with them, I know how much great work they've done, but I think this extends to every part of publishing, including scholarly. I am interested in several things. I'm going to start with one question, but I want to talk about something else that has come up in the Scholarly Kitchen that I retweeted on the podcast account which I talked a little — a lot, not a little — it was focused on microaggressions that People of Color, Indigenous people, face, specifically. I think that's something realistic that we need to talk about because it isn't black and white. Can each of you talk about your entries to publishing? Who'd like to start?

T: Sure. So I'm T.

JENN: Hi, T.

T: Hi. So I randomly started in publishing, where I was looking for a job after college and one of my friends recommended a temp agency, so I signed on with this temp agency and my first job was in publishing, and after my three weeks, they hired me on full time.

JENN: Were you an English major?

T: No, I was not. I was not. It was totally random.

JENN: Really?

CELINE: So this is C. I'm just going to use my name, it's Celine. I work in marketing, and I didn't think I was going to end up in marketing. I was an English major. I went to Kenyon College, which is a very literary school, so I was exposed to a lot of publishing programs and literary journals and things like that, I initially I was more interested in the writing side of publishing, as opposed to the actual production, but I ended up doing the Columbia publishing course after I graduated Kenyon, mostly because I didn't have a job lined up. I thought that it would be a good way to meet people in the field of agents and editors and things like that. But once I was there, I realized that there were a lot of aspects of publishing that I did enjoy, so I

applied for editorial and marketing assistant positions, and I ended up getting marketing. So I work now in marketing at Oxford University Press. I started off as an assistant. I was an assistant for about 15 months, and then I was promoted to marketing coordinator, which is fairly unusual. We can talk about that later. I've now been a marketing coordinator for about a year and a half.

JENN: So this sounds like y'all fell into it. It wasn't pursued.

CELINE: Yeah, no.

T: It was not pursued.

JENN: This is unusual. This isn't typical.

T: I think it's because once I was there, they realized I can do this job.

JENN: Is it fair to ask: Is it a job that you enjoy? Like, the job itself. We're not talking about the people...the work itself.

T: Yes, I really enjoy what I do on a day-to-day basis.

CELINE: I enjoy it as well. A lot more than I expected. I find that marketing is very creative and that you work with a lot of different aspects of publishing, so you are still working with the editorial side, with the authors and production, etc. So I think that there's a lot of different things going on. So I find it interesting and exciting.

JENN: I remember when I was doing a publishing certificate program at City College, that for me, everyone was anti-scholarly. "I don't want to do scholarly. I'll go into trade." I use that voice because it was kind of like, "Ugh, you don't do scholarly." And not recognize that there's viability in scholarly publishing. They do trade titles, it's very important. A lot of times when other aspects of the business is on the downswing, people go to school, so that's usually good for us, because we're selling a lot of books — knock wood — all that stuff. I fell into it because it was so hard to get into trade and I was really shitty at writing copy. I cannot write copy. You needed that for editorial assistant jobs for some reason. So I said, yeah, no, that's not good. Now I'm in production and I actually like the day-to-day of production and I like editing.

It's interesting that when you like your job and you're a marginalized person, it's not enough. We're dealing with all these added barriers and systemic issues that feed into our job. We kind of talked about this before I pressed record, the Scholarly Kitchen piece and how we have to take days and look after ourselves mentally. I know that even in the space we're recording, I've had incidents that were very tense and I actually sit across from my boss, so it can be very tense, because we're in each other's line of vision. Something goes down, then there's no, "Well, at least I'm down the hall," or x, y, z. That caused a rift for a good year, a good year. It was only because we're at a university and they have a diversity committee run by a Black lesbian. That's more work on her because she's the VP, she's a professor, and now she's running the diversity committee, or diversity inclusion, which is basically that stopgap, where if it doesn't work in HR because it's technically not illegal, you go to the D&I area. So she's figuring all these things out,

and it's kind of like she's a lawyer. She's like, "Well it's not...but it's..." You can just see it working in her mind and going to her. She kind of...not fixes it, but says, "Stop doing that." Then I think about corporate entities that don't even have that. That don't even have someone you can talk to to say, "Can't you just step in and tell my boss or tell this manager, tell so and so that they're doing that?" So that's a long way around, but asking for those of us who don't have those spaces, but for those who do have that, it doesn't necessarily fix things. So how do you respectively deal with any of the issues that you find but also how does that affect your work?

CELINE: I think the reason that these things happen is because we're the ones that notice. Maybe that is part of the reason why I didn't consider publishing from an earlier age — I didn't find myself represented in literature when I was younger very often. I think that's part of the reason why I wanted to become a novelist, was to write those stories for other people. I think that that's why I still every day, every book that I market, I do decide for myself, is this a diverse book, is it not? How is that book published and who has written it? How are we going to sell it? So it does affect me. Also, when you do bring those questions up, you're often made to feel you're overreacting. There's often a wall of defense. Something I've encountered a lot is: "We've published x number of books on African American history." Something similar to that, LGBT issues. "Isn't that enough?" There's always: "Why don't we acknowledge what we've already done? Why are you always pushing for more?" Something that we did within the diversity & inclusion committee, which I co-founded at Oxford, the US office, we pulled a list of every title, academic and trade title, we published in the last five years to identify areas where we could grow more diversely. For instance, are we publishing enough in Native American religion? Something like that. Some of the feedback that we got was: "Well, why don't you consider this book, related to the white lower class as a diverse book? Why don't these things count?" You're also made to feel like you're the one being exclusive and that your definition of diversity isn't broad enough. Another thing that I've often heard from non-diverse employees at my company is, "Well, I don't really like describing this as diverse. It seems kind of...I'm just not comfortable with that. It seems restrictive." Or something like that. There's often a resistance to even open the conversation. The reason we have to talk about whether things are diverse or not is because they're not. I would love to say we don't have to talk about this. It would make my job easier if I could spend all seven of my paid hours a day just marketing books and not having to think about how every time I look at a cover, there's someone who doesn't look like me. Metaphorically. I'm light-skinned, but something from a similar background to me, There's a lot of exhaustion at the end of that day when you're getting that much pushback. That's why sometimes I just have to take a sick day, because I'm in enough emotional distress that I can't get my actual job done.

T: I do love what I do on a day-to-day basis. The biggest barrier to my job is that I'm constantly second-best. I'm the person in my department with the most experience, and yet all my suggestions, all of my input, what we should be doing, and I'm not included in major meetings. I'm not included on email chains, so people make these decisions in a vacuum, and they really shouldn't. Eventually they'll ask me, but it's too late. I should have been included in the beginning before you did all this work. I would have told you what would have been the best and most efficient way to go about it.

JENN: How does that even work?

T: It does not work.

JENN: I don't even understand how you just don't include someone who needs to be included, and then say, "So yeah, we did that."

T: It's very awkward because sometimes I won't be included on emails for estimates or reprints, so if you don't include sales, and you're just coming up with the number on your own, it's either going to be too much, it's going to be too little. It's going to cause you issues if you're not getting any feedback from sales.

[00:10:13]

JENN: Sales is crucial. That's one department we don't really talk about in publishing. It's not really considered, I feel. Contracts, too. Contracts is important, and subsidiary rights. All these elements, because editorial is given so much — and it's crucial — but it's given so much visibility. We only see editorial and we don't think about marketing and sales and contracts, and production, all these things. It's all part of the machine, and if we're not there, then we're not all experiencing the same thing because "I have privilege." But we're definitely receiving some kind of negative pushback in terms of how we're seen, and I know as a Black woman and a dark-skinned Black woman — I was tweeting about this earlier — about how everything is perceived as being attitudinal. That's a "feedback"—I'm using air quotes—"Feedback" that I receive a lot is: "Well you know it just kind of came off...you know, could tone it down. We had some concerns." I said, "Well, who has concerns?" They said, "Oh, some of your authors." In my mind I said that's BS because I'm the utmost respectful to my authors because they're the ones bringing us the money. It really was the person who was pissed at how I talked to them, because I said, "That doesn't make any sense." I literally said that: "That doesn't make any sense."

T: Yes, I have had that feedback a lot, where somebody will say you came off very mean. It's like, no, I'm straightforward and I am honest and I am to the point. I will tell you this is what the account is ordering. That's a fact. "Well, that was mean." I was like, facts are mean? Okay.

JENN: That's how we got here. Facts are not okay.

CELINE: You'd think at an academic publisher, too, where you're supposed to be publishing fact...

JENN: A lot of divas.

CELINE: Yes. That was something we were talking about.

JENN: No offence to dudes and non-binary people, but divas.

CELINE: No, it is across all the binaries and non-binaries. I mean, it was something we were discussing. I work...Oxford is a nonprofit, and I won't say it's a super corporate environment or anything like that, because it's truly not, but it still is a publisher. At the end of the day you still need to make a certain amount of money to keep yourself going and pay your employees. As a

result, there is still a lot of pressure sometimes to get things right. I've noticed a lot of pressure — maybe it's across publishing — but a lot of pressure to keep authors really happy, even when they're wrong. Even when they're asking for something that isn't in their contract, it's not something they're inherently entitled to, and I've also actually noticed that sometimes that extends to editorial as well. I'm sure this is across publishing. I don't want to make that assumption, but —

JENN: Oh, it definitely happens in production.

CELINE: Okay.

JENN: We're magicians. "I decided to add two chapters." Oh, my goodness.

CELINE: It seems like it's always editorial versus marketing, or editorial versus publicity or something. That there is such a divide. So I've noticed that at Oxford, even to the extent that it's sort of outside of work. Marketing has their own happy hour, editorial has their own.

JENN: Segregated. Additionally segregated.

CELINE: Yeah. I've hosted many a happy hour in my day where I'll invite everybody from every department that I know. If I know your name, you will be on that email, but more often than not, only people in my department show up. No matter how many times I invite people from other departments, I never get invited to their happy hours, even if we're friends. There are several people I knew from the Columbia publishing course. They're all in editorial. If I were hanging out one-on-one outside of work, we're cool, but within the departments, even if I'm friends with someone in editorial, I'm not going to get invited to that birthday happy hour because it's an editorial thing. It's very strange and it bothers me a lot because I don't think that it helps matters when people don't get to know each other as people. Not that a happy hour will fix everything. Of course not. But I think it would help if we spent more time trying to bridge the gap than widen it.

JENN: Yeah, it's very interesting because...I was talking to someone in publicity about this and she was saying that everyone's very intense at their job. "This is my job, and you're kind of screwing with my job," so then we can't separate you're very good at your job but you have a tone and someone can't look beyond that, or maybe even because John doesn't like Jill, you can't invite Jill. So therefore that's what happens with those. This constant segregation of partitions that are built up. It's very high school. I realize that. Never left high school, apparently.

CELINE: It is very high school.

JENN: It just moved locations.

CELINE: Yeah. When I first started working, there was a clique of marketing assistants. I never got invited to lunch or to their happy hours.

JENN: Were they all white?

CELINE: All but one at that time. I don't know how much that had to do with it. I don't know if it was because I had done the Columbia publishing course, which is sometimes considered to be the fancy, fluffy of the publishing courses.

JENN: Really?

CELINE: Not to the people who are hiring. To them it's definitely a checkmark on the resume. It looks good. But for a lot of people that work in publishing, particularly in academic, because publishing courses are more catered to trade, there's definitely an attitude that they're not necessary to get a job in publishing, which they're absolutely not. I haven't actually noticed in academic publishing, it's definitely more preferred that you have a fancy master's degree or something like that in the subject that you're working on — if you're in editorial. For marketing it's not at all necessary. I work across subjects that I don't have a background in. I'm still not really sure. Maybe I'm the problem. Maybe I was not friendly enough or something like that. I have always felt like I've put in more effort to get to know people and be social with people than has been reciprocated, to the point that I do often question my likability. I think at the end of the day, it's just gaslighting, but that's often part of the reason I have to take a mental health day.

JENN: I was just about to ask that.

CELINE: Because I'll sometimes feel like, "Wow, everybody hates me. Only two people came to this happy hour, and it's all because apparently I spend all day complaining about white people at work."

T: But I feel there is a lot of pressure. You have to be nicer than everybody else.

JENN: So you have to be likeable.

T: You have to be extremely likeable, and everything has to roll off your back. You have to laugh at everything. It's just, the normal level of friendliness is not enough. You must be overly friendly and overly complimentary, and nothing can offend you, even if it's offensive.

JENN: Yeah, that's true.

T: You have to make so much more of an effort if you're not always going to somebody's office or cubicle and chatting with them, then you're mean.

CELINE: You're antisocial.

T: Yes, you're antisocial.

CELINE: It's crazy. People are busy. I have stuff to do.

T: We have to do our jobs.

CELINE: After I got promoted, I was too busy to even care about the marketing assistant cliques. I'm still not invited, but it's fine, I'm not an assistant anymore and I don't have time anyway. But it's kind of like... apparently that was my fault though, because I was getting worked done... I'm not really sure. At the end of the day, no one's a bad person. Everyone I meet at work is nice, and they're smart, and they're good at their job for the most part. Again, on an individual basis, I've gotten to know a lot of people and made some of my hopefully lifelong friends at my office. I don't want to be negative to the point where I would erase that, but I often feel that... I take that mental health day and I'm like, I'm just not going to try anymore, but I guess that's my fault. I guess you can't win.

JENN: A lot of that is internalization, though.

CELINE: Yeah. I think that happens when you're a minority in the room. There's a lot of loneliness in that aspect.

JENN: Second-guessing. I feel like I'm constantly second-guessing everything I say, and write, do, especially when you get that commentary that you're not nice enough or you get that cold shoulder. I imagine that if you run up to the cliques and say, "Is there a problem?" you'd still be a problem because you're trying to solve the problem, but you'd still be a problem.

CELINE: Eventually I did ask. I was like, "Why can't I get invited to lunch? It would be nice to know when you guys are just hanging out," and they were like, "No it's not you, you just seem like you're busy."

JENN: Which is totally skirting the issue and not owning it.

CELINE: We all have the same job. We're all doing the same amount of work, so that's not really... it's not like I don't eat lunch. I do. I would just do it by myself because I had no friends.

JENN: Can we talk a little bit about the diversity committee? How did that come to pass and what are the goals? Because I found that talking to other publishers, a lot of trade especially, they know they should have one, but they don't really know what that means.

T: Which is so weird because it's not rocket science. You just hire people that are diverse and actually put your job posting in places that diverse people will see them.

[00:19:20]

CELINE: There's a few other things that we do look at as well. As Jenn mentioned — I'll just explain — I started the diversity & inclusion committee so it's OUP USA as of right now, but we do have other initiatives going on in our other offices as well. The reason that I started the committee was because I had to make a complaint to our HR department about a coworker who made a comment to me that was insensitive to my ethnic background. That's as diplomatic as I can put it. It got me thinking a little bit. I had already noticed that I was often the only person of color in the room. Sometimes, not always, of course. That I noticed things that other people didn't notice about the books that we publish and how we publish them, but this comment, I

suppose it took something that had to hit me super personally, so I suppose I can't take as much credit as I would like to, but essentially it got me on this path. Originally I was just thinking, this is the kind of comment that makes me feel like I'm not wanted here or included or accepted for who I am. I can't just be a coworker, I have to be the ethnic coworker, and also, you can't say things like this in the office. It's actually illegal. Now, this person who made this comment, we had actually started the same week, so we had had our orientation together, so I knew how much diversity, harassment training, those sorts of things, that this person had had, which was zero, because I was there and I didn't have any. So I approached HR, and I approached the president of our company about having potential diversity training. So that sort of snowballed. It's something we're still working on. I'd like to have it more often, but I also started thinking in addition to retention, which is: How do we keep people like me here, who have to deal with microaggressions on a daily basis, how can we create a more inclusive environment which will attract more diverse people here so our office will not only be more diverse or inclusive but both. So there's a recruitment and retention aspect. Something else that we work on, kind of tying into the retention: improving the office environment. We have, like many publishing companies, a lot of lunch and learns, we call them, panels, we have a lot of author talks, we'll have happy hours. We'll have events in the office with food and drink, and I noticed that while these events often vary, there could be greater focus on the diverse content that we do publish, because there is of course a lot that we do already publish. As well, celebrating the employees and the diversity that our company claims to celebrate and strive for. So we've diversified the author talks, so we're specifically bringing in diverse authors and diverse books as well as outside speakers. We try to create safe spaces for discussions to be had. We redesigned our summer intern program so there's a focus on hiring diverse interns as well as demonstrating to them that this is something that is being talked about at publishing companies, so it's something that they could talk about regardless of their background. That's what it can be like if they end up in publishing full time. Then the last sort of, sub-committee we call it, is editorial and promotion. This is one that actually made me think of T here, because I am still struggling with this one. So there's a lot of questions at play: How do we acquire more diverse books? So that has a lot to do with the authors that are promoting, and the academic community is largely male and white and fiscally privileged, financially privileged as well as socioeconomically. In addition, most of the people who are doing the acquiring in editorial are also from a similar background to that. In addition to that on the promotion side, which is where I would come in as a marketer, how are we getting these books out to everyone? Being at Oxford, it's an education nonprofit, so the idea is we're trying to get everybody to learn, we want 100% literacy, we want people to have access to books, and we're trying to publish affordable books and get people reading in their classes. How much of that are we actually doing, and are we only marketing books that have to do with a diverse community to that specific community? Because someone said this to me, and I think a lot of people can probably relate to it: People from marginalized backgrounds, we've always had to be educated on the history of the majority. So I know the names of more white men who were influential in the founding of this country in literature, in philosophy, than I do non-white cis straight males, probably straight. It doesn't work the other way around though. Most people across backgrounds are not as educated on the history of people from marginalized backgrounds, on the culture, on the politics of today, on what people's experiences are like. We shouldn't just be marketing books on African American history to African Americans. All Americans should be educated on... because it's not at the end of the day African American history — it's American history. So that's something that I heard that someone said to me once, and that

resonated with me. That's something, though, that we're still trying to figure out, because it's a little hard to decipher: What exactly is marketing diversity? What is that? What is diverse marketing? I think you can kind of define a little more: Is this a diverse book? The definition may differ, but you can kind of define that, but in terms of marketing, how does that really work, and as I mentioned earlier, just come up sometimes, why are we marketing this as a diverse book? Should we just market it as a book? That's something else. I don't know. That's something I would like to talk about more. Essentially that's what our committee does, and I think something, Jenn, you and I have talked about in terms of who should be running a diversity & inclusion committee at a company, who should be on it? I've only worked at OUP, but I've heard from you and from others that are at other companies, diversity & inclusion committees tend to be made up of diverse people that are expected to solve our own problems that society has been kind enough to put on us, and it's not up to, for instance the patriarchy, to dismantle itself. I hope... I put a lot of effort at OUP into making it clear that the diversity & inclusion committee is for everybody. There are definitely more non-PoC on the committee than there are PoC. I'm often still the only person of color in the room at a diversity & inclusion committee meeting, for better or for worse.

JENN: Is that because of the staff itself, though?

CELINE: I think so. There are plenty of People of Color or people of other diverse backgrounds at the company who have never come to a diversity and inclusion event, who have never come to a meeting for their own reason. We've heard various feedback about why that might be. A lot of what we do is behind the scenes and a lot of people don't realize that there is a lot more work going on than it seems. Sometimes it can seem like we're just having happy hours where we don't actually talk about diversity, but actually a lot of the recruitment efforts that we do involves outreach to schools, which happens outside of work hours, often outside of New York City, and thus not everybody knows what's going on if they're not doing it themselves. So that's part of it, I think. But also, I think that people who are perhaps woke, as the kids like to say, they do feel an obligation to be there and to contribute. Sometimes it's more helpful than other times, but I think that it truly is a diverse and inclusive committee. Of course, I wish every single employee felt like they could be on it and had something to contribute and felt like it was a safe space. I think there is more that has to be done. The committee is less than two years old. I think it's a good thing. I think it's a good thing because it means that even though I still have to take mental health days because I feel like I'm the one that cares the most, I'm the one that hurts the most, and is affected the most because I care the most, I know that after my mental health day, I know that that's not actually the case, and often people will defer to me. White people or whatever will defer to me, but they know that it's also on them to change things. Not always, but I think more...it's helpful.

JENN: T, what are your thoughts on a diversity committee, not necessary the one Celine is talking about, but the presence of them?

T: I think it's fantastic to have a diversity & inclusion committee at any company. My issue is that sometimes the people that should go and learn about what is diversity and what is inclusion are not the people that go. There are a lot of people who think that they are woke, as Celine said, and that they're perfectly fine. They don't understand that no, you are not the most liberal,

accepting person in the universe, and you need to reexamine your innate prejudices. They think they're being funny or friendly, and it's like, no, you should really go and learn, and talk to actual People of Color.

CELINE: I've experienced more microaggressions at the office from overly liberal, cis, straight, White people than I have from that initial person who made that comment to me which started the whole thing. I've been told by numerous white women at the office that I'm "not feminist enough," so apparently I have to make room for white feminism before I can make room for feminism for other people. I've been told that by my friends, even. I've been told that by multiple people.

JENN: Are they your friends?

CELINE: I've been told by multiple people, "Race is your thing, feminism is my thing."

JENN: They need to read some Audre Lorde.

CELINE: Even though I'm a woman...yeah. In many ways, I actually fit the classic...I was born a woman and I identify as a woman. I 100% love being a woman, but apparently if you're also a person of color, then it negates everything else.

JENN: So you can only look at things from a PoC lens, as a PoC feminist.

CELINE: Right. So I will definitely agree with T that there's not a lot of intersectional feminism and other intersectional diversity and inclusion going on. A lot of people, and even our president who is a member of the committee, I mentioned this to him in our first conversation ever. Since then, he brings it up a lot, that most of the people who should be coming to the meetings who say things that I have to take a day off from work because of things that they say, they're not at the meetings because they feel, "I've done my part. Also, I vote blue, and I went to college, and I'm not a racist. How dare you imply that I'm a racist. I love people of all races..."

[00:30:09]

JENN: "I don't see color."

CELINE: Yeah. That one's great. Another one I get — I mentioned I'm light-skinned — another one I get is that — I've always gotten this my whole life — is I'm not Black enough. I'm not Latina enough. I will be the first to admit that I have so much white privilege because no cop has ever given me a second look for doing something suspicious or something, not that I do suspicious things, but at the same time, though, my experience is not that of a white person, and that often gets negated, I think because then people don't have to talk about race, because it's like, "You don't count, you don't know what it's like." I get that from People of Color too, of course: "You don't truly know what it's like. You've assimilated. You're basically a white person, therefore you're trying to draw more attention on yourself." Maybe that's just my perception of other people's perception of me.

JENN: If they said it...

CELINE: Yeah, people have said that. People have said it. I think it's something I've internalized to the point where I can tell when other people are making comments, such as "race is your thing" or whatever, that I'm making a mountain out of a molehill, as we've been talking about. A lot of people want to find a reason not to have to have the conversation because they feel like they're one of the good ones, therefore the work has been done, we're not the problem. I should be off complaining about some alt-right publisher or newspaper or something like that, that actually employs people who are openly racist, whereas the problem exists on both sides. Our committee has just started hosting movie nights as well. We're showing movies and documentaries related to issues within diverse communities. I think one of the ones we're going to do soon is *Get Out*.

JENN: Oh, shoot. Have you done *The 13th*?

CELINE: It's like looking in a mirror for a lot of people. No, We've only done a couple. I think we did do...we also did *Step*, a documentary.

JENN: Rachel Dolezal.

CELINE: I haven't worked up the emotional courage to watch it yet on Netflix, but I am going to. It's interesting because I mentioned it in a meeting recently and a lot of white people where like, "Ugh, I could never watch... I can't even give her the time of day." I just want to say, "Maybe you should be thinking about why it is that people like you, why people think this is something that is normal and okay." We should be unpacking this. Why is it that People of Color have to go and fix that, fix people like Rachel Dolezal, who appropriated us and our culture?

JENN: It's interesting because what you are saying is very specific. The diversity committees that I've talked to, and it's been a few months that I've spoken to some of them, but the diversity and inclusion place here, which is a job given to a woman of color who is intersectional, and she was given a staff too, it wasn't just her. It was active specifically...I don't know if it's meant to do retention or anything like that, or inclusion... well, it is meant to be that and coexist with human resources, so if you have that comment with that person in your training who says something racist, that's where you go. PoC in Publishing...I'm not sure if you're familiar with PoC in Publishing. It is more trade. The members are more trade.

CELINE: I'm in the Facebook group and I met —

JENN: Patrice?

CELINE: — Patrice one time.

JENN: I haven't been to a meeting in a very long time, but theirs has been to bring people in and also to keep people. So it's looking after more the people in the community, the PoCs.

CELINE: The retention aspect.

JENN: Yeah. What do we do to keep the community, help the community? It seems like there are all these efforts, but I would love to see each company really dedicate themselves to it. So (a) as people who have been a part of, or are a part of, or seen diversity committees, do you think that they should be mandatory, and (b) do you think there's an ongoing level of education that has to happen which also can create tension already, not that you're not already feeling that as a person of color, if you're like "the ethnic person" and the person who cares the most, you're forced to, but also is this what's going to help? Is this ongoing education what we need or is it really just like, "No, just figure it out. Just let people talk to us. They'll figure it out sooner or later. If we get two people, it's great."

T: I do think it should be mandatory, the same way sexual harassment training is mandatory. My issue is some people are just going to be resentful. "Why do I have to take extra training," or "This doesn't even apply to me." For those people, or for some other people, it will just be a box that they've checked. "I've done it. I'm good." Everybody takes sexual harassment training now, but sexual harassment is still very much an issue in any corporate workspace. It didn't stop anything. It still happens. People know that it's wrong. People still do it. So I think diversity and inclusion, it would be great if more people came, but I think for a lot of people, it would just be, "I did it. I'm not racist," and they would still continue being themselves and not changing their actual attitudes.

CELINE: Yeah. That is something we talked about when I started the diversity & inclusion committee, but what brings me some comfort is that you cannot cure people of their racism, of their biases. We all have some biases, but you can educate people on what conduct is allowed in the office environment. Ideally they would take that outside of the office with them in their day-to-day lives, but I couldn't cure that person who made that comment to me of his racial biases, but because I reported this person to HR, I think that hopefully he did go away from that understanding that he couldn't say things like that to people and treat people differently because of their backgrounds in the office. I think that, for now, that's the most that we can hope to achieve, but as T mentioned, even when people know it's wrong, they'll still do it.

In terms of making these things mandatory, I do think that diversity & inclusion training, bias training, harassment of all kinds training, those should be mandatory and in general they are. We did have a harassment training last year, and it was mandatory for everybody, so in terms of the diversity & inclusion committee, this was kind of a back and forth for a while, and there was some friction and pushback in it, between me and other members of the committee in leadership positions, but what we came to eventually was that if someone has signed up to be on a subcommittee, if someone says they're going to come to the monthly meeting for recruitment and retention and mentorship, then that is going to be mandatory for them. Something else we decided, was that for everybody, regardless of who they are, these meetings are on paid time, so even if the meeting is at 12pm, it's not their lunch hour. It's meeting from 12 to 1 and then they should take their lunch hour, because all work that we're doing in regards to diversity and inclusion is only going to benefit the company at the end of the day. The more diversely we publish, the more diverse audiences we reach, probably the more money will be made, and also the more diversely we're recruiting, the better candidates we're probably going to bring in, the better employees we'll have. So the president of our company has been hugely supportive. This

is something that he has set down in writing, that this is how it is. People still have to clear it with their managers that they are going to take an hour of their week to do this and so and so, but it's not volunteer, actually. You in a sense volunteer to join the subcommittee. It's paid time, and you just need to be able to work it out in your day-to-day schedule, that you can make room for it in addition to your editorial job, and that's worked for a lot of people. It hasn't worked for everybody, which is totally okay. Even if it wasn't a diversity & inclusion committee, we have other committees at the office: We have a green committee, we have social committee, and not everybody has time to be on those as well. It's very similar. So it's understandable, depending on who it is and why. Now sometimes, people still don't always come to the meetings. Sometimes we hear later that they feel that the meetings are too tense or that they're not actually productive, so they're either too serious or not serious enough.

JENN: I didn't know that could be a thing. Social justice—it's way too serious.

CELINE: Yeah, right. I think people who are shy in general maybe don't speak up at meetings, but I don't necessarily think that's because of who they are. So there's actually two presidents of the committee. It's me and my co-founder, and she's a White woman. So it's kind of balanced in a sense that you can be on this committee if you're a Person of Color, you can be on this committee if you're not a person of color, and obviously the committee's not just about race. It's about all sorts of aspects too, but we don't really talk about what our...some of that other stuff is way more personal. I'll always disclose my race, but I won't disclose my sexuality or my disability status necessarily in the workplace. Ideally I think because of that, because the leadership is pretty diverse, and our president who is a straight, White man puts just as much work into the committee as I do, I think it's pretty clear to people that anyone can be involved, so I like to think that's not necessarily a reason why people don't come to the meetings. I'd rather it be because they don't really understand the level of seriousness. I'd rather it be because people don't truly understand exactly what's going on and how things do get done, but it's very slow, a very slow process. That was a very long answer. I'm very sorry. So yes, I think to some degree they should be mandatory, specific kinds of meetings, especially the training, but otherwise it has to be the people who feel that they can bring something to the table. You should go to meetings at your company. I'm sure you have something to contribute, no matter who you are and what your background is.

JENN: You've mentioned a bit about retention. That's come up a few times. That is a big problem. So Scholarly Kitchen, the two part with the microaggressions and the issues, a lot of the results were that people ultimately left publishing, because they just felt too mired, and the BS, and they didn't feel respected, and they felt like they had to be a constant educator, albeit they were taking those mental health days and it wasn't enough. So we're losing those good people who, again, like we established since the beginning of the episode, like their jobs, like what they do, are good at what they do, but because of these added barriers of plain old ignorance because you're a minority—and this was PoC-specific, I should add—you can't stay there. It's an unhealthy environment. You're trying to correct something...the moat. Before people step to you, they've got to go through a troll, answer some questions, go through a quiz, swim through the moat, all that stuff, because you're not ready. How do we retain people? Retention is the biggest thing, so that means mentorship...I feel like there's no...no space is safe

in true fashion. My apartment isn't safe. I feel like it's safe, but it's not safe, because someone could climb up my fire escape, break my window. That's dark. I'm sorry.

[00:41:30]

T: No, it's real.

JENN: To me, it's an illusion, but it's an illusion we need. How do we—and I'm not saying let's fix this, because we've got like four more minutes—but how do we go about these spaces, or what do you think you'd like to see on a personal level, that maybe you can save your mental health days and your sick days for when you get the flu. Knock wood, you don't get the flu. But do you know what I mean? Rather than walk out on days because once a month someone invariably pisses me off and I've got to deal with that, and that's a day I'm going for a job interview, going for a dentist appointment. So what would you like to see, or what have you seen, or think is helpful to retain people, or retain you in this industry? Because at some point, we're going to feel burned out.

T: That's true. I think just being respected, having your opinion count, not being constantly second-guessed and having to prove myself over and over again, and being given the benefit of the doubt. I've seen so many people just be like, "Well, I think he can do it." What in the universe makes you believe in him when he has zero experience, but you will not believe in me when I have experience? That just astonishes me. I don't feel included. There have been many days when I've thought, is it time for me to leave, not only leave this company, but leave this industry? How much do I love my job versus hate the drama that comes with being in that building? I have to weigh it every day. How much is it worth it?

JENN: Do you feel that you come in with your guard up?

T: Yes, I absolutely do. That's a hard way to work. It takes a toll on you.

CELINE: The way that I sort of operate the rest of my day or the next day, I will be totally debilitated in the morning if I've had a particularly—

JENN: Interaction?

CELINE: Yeah, or really stressful meeting, or really negative feedback from somebody about the diversity & inclusion committee, something that makes me feel like all the work that I do hasn't actually changed anything, and I doubt myself. I think there could be more encouragement in the workplace. I was promoted after 15 months, which is pretty rare. I've only seen one other marketing assistant since then, and I've been in my position in my same company in the same department for three years.

JENN: So not being at those lunches benefited...? I'm being a little bit facetious.

CELINE: It was interesting. I began to wonder maybe it had to do with that, but I had a really good relationship with my boss. I did feel like in many ways I did thrive in that position, in the

marketing assistant position, and she was supportive, and she was very supportive when I had my very bad experience I had to go to HR about, and she came to all the meetings with HR with me, and she's a White woman, and she was very supportive and made sure things got done, and asked HR questions and things like that. So she's not my boss anymore, she's my current boss's boss, but I did have a really, really positive experience, so I was promoted. I will say, I've never felt that my professional career has been negatively affected by my race except that I have been to certain interviews where I do get very racially-charged questions, like pretty earlier on. "What are you" type questions. Aside from that, I have benefited, I think, from having light skin, from having the education that I have, the majority of my childhood I wasn't really worrying about money after I was about eight years old, so didn't have those setbacks. My boyfriend is a Person of Color and he's an immigrant, and he's had a very different background, so I am very aware of those privileges that I have. I don't think the promotion had anything to do with my ethnicity, and I don't think my work as a marketer has been affected by it except that I'm just more prone to notice things and call them out, but I've never been actually punished for that in a professional sense. With the diversity & inclusion committee, I get emails and things like that, and those all definitely have to do with my career and my profession because diversity and inclusion is always going to be a part of who I am in the workplace, so in a sense it does affect me, but I won't say that at my company and my experience, me personally, I haven't been passed over for something because of it, but I would like to see other People of Color or from diverse backgrounds not be negatively affected because of their background. When you come in feeling the way I did, which was very singular, I think it would have been helpful to have mentors or to have role models, and I didn't really have those. There wasn't anyone really that I was working with directly who understood where I was coming from and could mentor me in that way. Mentorship is part of what we do with retention in the diversity & inclusion committee I think that's really important. I do think that there needs to be active efforts in retention to keep good candidates, to keep good employees around, not just because they're diverse people, but the people who are talented should be kept, regardless of who they are. I've seen lots of people from publishing and my company's mostly White woman, and plenty of those White women have not gotten the promotions that I got, and they left, and they were good at their job, and we should have kept them. I don't have an answer.

JENN: Literal last question: In regards to this retention, what about training managers? Should it be mandatory that managers—at the very least, managers, I'm saying this four times for a reason—should it be mandatory, in your opinion, that managers get diversity and inclusion or whatever it's called wherever you are, training? Because they're actually overseeing people?

CELINE: And they're hiring, so I think so. I do think so.

T: Yes, I absolutely agree with that. I think there have been a lot of people placed in management positions or promoted to management positions that were not ready, and they don't know how to deal with people or how to draw that professional line, so if you were peers and you're promoted to be a boss, that person is no longer your best friend. There are certain lines of propriety that you have to observe. You should not be asking someone who works for you, "Hey let's go out to the movies, or go drinking the two of us." That's weird for your boss to ask that. There has to be some professionalism, and I think there are certain things that you don't say to somebody who works for you that you might say to your golf buddy.

CELINE: We were talking about this on the way here, but a lot of people in publishing—maybe it's different in other industries—the further up the chain you go, it's kind of impossible not to become a manager. I think maybe in other industries, maybe the more tech-y or something, there are opportunities to have a really high position where you have a lot of responsibilities, but you're not actually in charge of anybody else, you're kind of doing everything on your own. You can't do that in publishing. If you want to move up, that means that someone is going to replace you in that lower position that you were in and you're going to be in charge of them. Because of that, I don't understand why it's not mandatory. Managerial training in general, not just bias training.

JENN: Oh, yeah, I don't think managers are trained to be managers.

CELINE: I asked my manager, the first one that I mentioned, and she said she didn't really get any training, and she'd been a manager for years and years at that point. So occasionally they have one-day seminars or something where they talk about different aspects of managing, but I think if you get promoted, you should have that training right away, and also that bias training.

JENN: Because it seems to me that, like you were saying, people aren't getting training before getting into this position, and I guess if you're modeling after who previously held that position, that could go so many different ways, it's like being on an interstate. It's ridiculous.

CELINE: It doesn't only affect you. It's affecting another person who doesn't have the same amount of power that you do and can't really do anything about it if they're not being managed well.

[00:50:04]

JENN: Or listened to. Because I've found that sometimes—and it depends on the personalities—because again if we're being “stern” or we're being upfront, it appears as though we are unfeeling. I get that a lot, and I think that's just the modus operandi about Black women. “I could literally throw a brick at you and you'll be fine.” It's like, “No, I'm mature, but pretty sure that hurt.” Or what's been said online—White women tears. So a White woman will cry.

CELINE: Oh, they love to cry.

JENN: Then all of a sudden she goes, “Oh my gosh, she's crying, she's emotional, oh my god, oh my god.” You're just sitting there, like, “Okay, this is ridiculous.” And maybe you're not crying, and then you become the problem, because, “Well, she's crying.” Automatically those racial undertones come in, and all that stuff. A manager should theoretically be able to be like, “Okay, well, you did say this to so and so, and now you're crying because you've been caught saying that so-and-so, so let's...” But again, it's like those instinctive... and this bias, “Oh, I'm just doing this.” So I wonder if training for managers would help that, or if it would just kind of... I don't know. Again, it's individual, right? I don't know. We didn't figure anything out this episode.

CELINE: At least we told... you always do with your podcast. It had to be said.

JENN: Bias training and managerial training.

CELINE: Yes, please.

JENN: Please, guys.

CELINE: Just invest the money.

JENN: Weekly training. It'll be like a TED Talk. Thank you both so much for being on. I think this was a good conversation. I think people really need to know that this is in publishing. This is not just in these sectors. This is in publishing. This is the world, sadly.

CELINE: Thanks for having us. It's really great to talk about this and I hope that someone will get something out of it.

JENN: And there was sugar, so that helped.

CELINE: Yes, thank you for cookies.

T: Cookies were great.

CELINE: Jenn gave us cookies.

JENN: It was a good Monday.

T: Good start to the week, cookies.

JENN: Thank you both for being on.

CELINE: Thank you for having us.

JENN: No problem. Thanks for listening. Again, this was the Minorities in Publishing podcast. This is Jenn and the podcast is on GooglePlay, Spotify, iTunes, TuneIn, as well as Twitter @minoritiesinpub, as well as Tumblr at minoritiesinpublishing.tumblr.com, and there's a newsletter pinned at the top of Twitter. Maybe you can sign up for it, and you can get alerts whenever I do a new episode. Thanks so much.

[00:53:07]