

# CMD with Nth Education Partners LLC Part 1

Transcribed with Otter.ai, please excuse typos and mistakes.

**Michelle** 00:00

All kinds of mic drop math mic drops that are happening. Yes. Today, which is super great.

**Esther** 00:05

Yeah, I feel like there's extra pressure in mathematics, especially for people of color that they hold on to. And Jerica and I, we ran a circle for math teachers of color. And it was heavy, like, people come into that circle, and they were like, This is how people see me.

**Kari** 00:31

Hi, everybody, and welcome to the Critical Math Drop podcast, with your favorite math teachers, Kari Kokka,

**Michelle** 00:39

and Michelle Cody.

**Kari** 00:42

With our special guests today,

**Michelle** 00:45

we got hella guests in the building. Yeah.

**Kari** 00:49

We're really, we're really yeah,

**Michelle** 00:51

this is our first our first group group session. We've only we were expanding our relationship or to bring in more people. We're excited about that Kari, spicing it up for the new year. That's what we're trying to do. Yeah, spicing it up. Um, so let's get started. I first of all want to say like, this is the first week back at school. And my babies. I don't know what is happening with them. But they are giving me the Queen treatments. I mean, just like no drama. They're like, Yes, Miss Cody. No, Miss Cody. Whatever you say, ma'am. And I'm like, Are these my friends? Wow. Is the world is the world ending? Is the Lord coming? I don't know. Maybe I don't know. I did pray to God for the for the blessing Holly favorite package for 2024. So let him rain that down on me accordingly because I'm ready. I am ready for that. 100% Okay, let's get started. Are you ready? I'm going to introduce two of our fabulous folks. First we have Jennifer Dao. She is a national board certified. Check that out. That's my dream. I'm having taught math middle school math for nine years and currently teaches high school mathematics. She serves as a five to eight director for Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics say that seven times by us. Her work

centers around fostering students self advocacy through honoring identities and actively connecting students passions with mathematics while navigating systems in education. Guess why we invited Jennifer because that sounds a whole lot like what we're trying to do here. Next we have Jerica Jurado. They are a youth and teacher educator. They have taught mathematics in both middle school and high school settings with systematic oppression oppressed communities. On the south and west side of Chicago. Jerica's work with youth have focused on dismantling the school to prison pipeline by incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy, transformative justice practices, and circle work to cultivate empathy and communities as pillars in mathematics learning. We literally just talked about circle work a couple episodes ago. So this is all coming together. Kari, you want to take it? Take it away.

**Kari** 03:27

I was gonna say this is all coming full circle.

**Michelle** 03:30

But um, oh.

**Kari** 03:33

I know. I know. I'm not as funny and as you Michelle, but I try that's Esther Song (she her) is the co author of disrupting the newly published Disrupting Injustice Navigating Critical Moment.

**Michelle** 03:49

This is the clapping um, we're

**Kari** 03:51

gonna, we're gonna add into town when we ready. Navigating critical moments in the classroom. She has served as the District mathematics manager at Chicago public schools, and as a high school math teacher. She has also been on the publishing committee for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Her work is centered around re humanizing math classrooms focusing on student and teacher math identity. So we're going to be asking Esther questions about her book, we're really excited to talk about it. And Chanel Keyvan, she hers has experience serving as a junior high school assistant principal, and high school math teacher in Illinois. Her areas of expertise include inclusive instruction, school wide systems and processes and culturally informed approaches to learning. Her work focuses on developing methods that go beyond binary approaches to humanize diversity, equity and inclusion efforts while prioritizing the development of sustainable communities and authentic identities. And I know I personally am going to have questions for you about your administrative expertise as an assistant principal. So we are super excited for you all to join us. We know it's a little bit later for you in Chicago right now. And you found a your organization and education partners, originally called the Nippon law teachers community. And we're excited to learn more about your work. So we will give the mic to you and so that you can tell us you know, how you got started, how you met each other, what type of services and resources you offer, and anything else you'd like to share with us about your organization?

05:50

Sure, I can go ahead and start us off with how we got started. So our work at nth education partners LLC is born from our collective efforts over the last 10 years at Nepantla lead teachers community. So we recently underwent this model change and our business is committed to expanding the lens through which math is viewed each letter in our business and represents pillars in our organizations. And as for an upon bla, which is a noun term representing the unknown and an in between space T is for transformation, because we want to transform the oppressive conditions within our math education system. And h is for human eyes, because we know how important it is and critical to center each person's joy and inherent dignity for long term change and sustainability. And ultimately, our organization, which has been the work that we've been committed to over the last 10 years really wants to emphasize and focus that everyone is capable of being a math person and building a healthy sustainable long term relationship with mathematics where they are living it.

**Esther 07:06**

Yeah, so Chanel, Jen and I were part of a program together at the UEFI, or University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign under Dr. Rochelle Gutiérrez when we were pre service teachers, we went through this kind of Noyce Scholars program that I think I think Rochelle did something really special there that probably other programs didn't. She formed a community and, and she actually started kind of these yearly conferences for both alum and for current students. And we learned about what it meant to really think about oppression and mathematics and racism and social issues with within the math ed context. So that's actually the birthplace of where we started, because we started with yearly conferences, and then Jerica joined on through one of those conferences. That came from the U of I. And once that ended, we just kept doing them. And then as we were doing it, we kind of bloomed into something else.

**Chanel 08:28**

Yeah, it was such a really beautiful experience for us to continue the work that we did in college, because it was, we were so passionate about the community we had formed, and we didn't want to end that. And we've been together for so long, I think it's been, we might be on our 9, 9th or 10th. Year, together from when all of this started. And throughout, we've really evolved as individuals, not only as educational professionals, but also our own understanding of oppression and how that looks like in math Ed. And so over time, our services that we now provide under Nth education partners, I think showcases all of that, those experiences and growth that we've had as individuals and an as a team. So just to give like a little overview of what we do. We have a variety of different services that are really designed to meet any educational professional level within schools and districts. And we really like to prioritize the customization of the work that we do to really meet the needs of whoever we're working with. So we can work with teachers to teacher leaders, instructional coaches all the way up to school and district leaders as well. and this can look like we've done stuff where we've done facilitation of different workshops or provided training for a group of teachers or leaders, all the way to doing more consulting around some of strategic planning with math education, coaching, as well as I think something we're really proud of is we've done some cohorts specific to anti racism in the math classroom. And those have been really powerful community based experiences that not only us as facilitators, but the participants also took a lot out of, really, our work is centered on what we call Jedi mathematics. So the j stands for justice, E for equity, D for diversity, and I for inclusion. And all of that kind of comes together for us to work on disrupting these types of injustices, specifically in math education, to whatever local context or whatever educational professional we may be working with.

**Kari 11:13**

And so in summary, we are committed to transforming and re humanizing mathematics education, and we just want everyone to know that whatever point they find themselves that in this process, we are here to support your journey. And hopefully, people will know that you're not alone. And together, we can go further and build higher and you know, work towards building a very and cultivating, like, very positive spaces for our math teachers, as well as school environments so that teacher, students can have a high quality education. Can you talk a little bit about kind of your evolution from the Nippon law teachers community, and I know you were doing some cohort work, too, with math teachers of color, I believe, and how you kind of transitioned from that to the work with LLC, and selfishly, you know, Michelle and I have talked about what Michelle has really been pushing me, you know, like, Kari, we need to make an LLC. And I know nothing about that. And so, yeah, I, I, personally, selfishly would just love to learn more about that process, and that transition that you've made, and

**Jerica 12:27**

I can go ahead and take that. So I think for us a big pillar in our work, like we said, is the joy, right, that there has to be joy at the heart and center of everything. And that's how our collective has survived over a decade, right is this adhesive of joy is at the center. So I think our collective has really survived because we focused on that joy in the work that we do. And really using our, our focus of centering on that joy, instead of focusing on a lot of the despair that is in a lot of social justice work, using hope as a discipline. And I think in that when we engaged with, you know, annual conferences, with cohorts with bipoc only space, at the heart of all of that was cultivating this joy and this belief that a different world is possible within mathematics. And I think that when we are really believing in that different world, that means that we're also a part of it. And we also deserve justice for that. And we deserve to be paid for our work and for our labor, because a lot of the work that we've done over the last 10 years has been a labor of love coming from just our own hearts. And there's been a lot of work that we've done that's been unpaid, a lot of expertise that we've shared, that we haven't gotten monetary gains from, and we've done this all on top of being full time teachers, which we all know what that work and load looks like or being full time administrators being full time district managers. And it was always something extra that we did, but I think the way we were able to sustain it was really the key is is to find community and joy in each other and to connect and know that we're fighting for this better world, but that we also deserve to be a part of that better world to be paid for our work. And that's what's fair. And that's what's just right, and that's what's equitable to to uplift one another in these communities that are trying to push forward another vision

**Michelle 14:45**

that's begun all kinds of values. Jerica because like, two of the things, I think that sometimes when we think about social justice, mathematics, it always focuses on oppression in this weird way. Like, it's like, oh, let's talk about all the things They're not going right. And we'll talk about all the things. Because that's, there's value to that, though, right? Like, how do we get our kids to be like, let's identify what things are happening, what unjust things are happening with our community. And let's hyper focus on how we can like, either identify and put a numerical like, value and what I mean a numerical value. I always say this all the time, like, and I was just talking to my dad about this, when people want to tell the story, they use statistics to tell that story. Regardless of if the statistical information is 100%

accurate. If you throw the right numbers in front of people, you can convince them. And that's the same thing was true with children, like if you're able to get these young folks to see the data, and then be able to tell that their story with that data that's transformative. However, sometimes we find ourselves living in this world of just like, we're always lacking, we're always like, it's like, oppression Olympics, right. And so how, like centering some lessons in joy, in spirit, can also help them to see the beauty in themselves. And also like this whole idea of like free labor, we talked about this all the time, like, I stay given out stuff, right. And it's actually because of Kari, that I've gotten paid for a lot of the things that I've done like Kerry's been like, not, if you want to talk to somebody to talk to her, and pay her. And it is, it is a beautiful feeling for people to be like, I'm going to use your work, I'm going to respect your household and I pay you and people actually look at you differently. When folks got to dole out a check and write you some money, then all of a sudden, it's like, Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am. Whatever, man. And I'm like, two days ago, you would hit me up, like I was just a regular, you know, smuggler, ask classroom teacher. And now that you got to write me a check, all of a sudden, you put a little respect on my name, and I am the same person for two days ago. But you're like, you're intense. And your monetary value of me has changed. And therefore, the way you get at me changes, right. And I think that's super, super important. Because unfortunately, especially as women of color, we find ourselves in these spaces of like, we're just happy to be in the room. And because we're just happened to be in the room, we'll take on way more than our like white counterpart, especially on white male counterparts, and we need to 2024 needs to be like Nabu, you should be blessed. And I'm in a room. I need a seat at the table. You can have paper plates, you given me to China, you give me all that not? And I'm not talking about the like little flimsy forks not Where are you bringing me to big, big forks that heavy Have you ever been to a restaurant with those heavy porches? Like, that's, that's the kind of stuff that you're bringing to me, because I'm bringing all that stuff, I'm bringing everything in this space, by my experiences, by my knowledge, by my history, and by my i My like innate, just just for my children like I, I have a I am invested in them on a whole nother level. Because these are my people these are my loves these are willing to do. So I appreciate like that, that sense of joy in the fact that y'all are acknowledging how, like people need to put some respect on what you're doing. And that's, that's beautiful. That is a beautiful message to send. to folks. So yeah.

**Kari 18:33**

Yeah, I was gonna say that, we just had a whole bunch of mic drops. And really, that's how the name of the podcast came about was we were recording and Michelle was talking about a critical mic job. And I said, Oh my gosh, Michelle, that's the name. That's the name of the podcast, critical math drop. And especially Jerica when you were talking about, I'm gonna say I'm kind of re saying the same thing as you, Michelle, but I just wanted to, you know, like being compensated is so important. And I think right now also like, I'm just excited to be looking at the screen at all of us women of color, having this time and space together I think is really powerful and beautiful and an experience of joy. And I also think that having these critical affinity spaces you know, the that you did with the educators of color with the work that you have done is also opportunities for us to engage in our own healing work because we're not having to explain to other people worried about what someone might might say and then how we have to respond and was that a micro aggression? Am I gaslighting myself like what's really happening? All those things become irrelevant that we don't have to deal with.

**Michelle 19:49**

And you also get to make mistakes right? When you're in a space when folks look like you there is this like, feeling I talked about this all the time like when I I was at my high school, my high school, there was like, six persons black folks. And so I was always like black Michelle, right? Black Michelle first like, and it was a pretty academic school. And I remember one time, we were talking about slavery. Hannah Gotcha. My teacher was like, asked me how I feel my slavery. And I was like, Well, I don't like my mama with me. So I'm assuming that slavery was a bad thing. And it's like, how do you singled out the only black person in that classroom and ask them about slavery and, and that teacher probably didn't think anything wrong of it. They thought they were making some like lowball connection with me. And it's like, not friend. That's not the case. But then when I went to Howard, when everybody's been kissed by the sun, I got to be Michelle. And that comes with so much privilege, because there's such a heavy weight. When you when you are the one in the room, when you're the only women in the room, when you're the only black person in the room, when you're the only young person in the room, there's this wait that you'd like this, like the drop the shoe was waiting to drop, like you're somebody's waiting for you to mess up. So that could be like, see, we let them in a room and a mess that so take them back out. And there's no ability to like learn and to grow and to heal in those spaces. And so that is the key point of affinity spaces, because people should be able to just like, emotionally, mentally wile out and grow and be okay. Right. And we don't get that. So just like yes, you're right care. This is all kinds of mic drop math mic drops that are happening. Yes. Today, which is super great. Super, super great.

#### **Esther 21:39**

Yeah, I feel like there's extra pressure in mathematics, especially for people of color, that they hold onto. And Jerica and I, we ran a circle for math teachers of color. And it was heavy, like, people come into that circle. And they were like, This is how people see me, people expect a certain level of intelligence, because of the way that I look. We had black teachers say that they didn't feel as competent, not that they didn't feel as competent internally. But they didn't feel that other people didn't see them as competent, they got lower level classroom assignments, they got people who questioned whether they actually had mathematical authority. And that was on one side of the POC kind of circle. And then on the other side, we had Asians who are like, I didn't actually, like have a strong math background, but people expect a very strong math background for me, because I'm Asian. The pressure that's like put on specifically in math, specifically for people of color, I think that's something that like is, is so tragic, that that we come out of, you know, 12 years, 14 years, 16 years of education, and we leave feeling like our race, our skin tone has something to do with our intelligence or mathematical capacity, that I think that's like a real tragedy.

#### **Chanel 23:20**

Yeah, and I think to kind of tie together, all the pieces we just talked about, that those messages become ingrained into our identity. And especially I think of teacher of, math teacher of color, and how that also translates into the space. And something that was really difficult for me was, I actually have transitioned out of the education like space temporarily, and have been doing some of my own consulting work. And what's really difficult is being able to value yourself in these oppressive systems and structures and be able to advocate for your worth. So similar to how we transitioned into being an LLC and being able to advocate for our, you know, being paid for our services. I think along with that something we learned early on as educators is that we are to do these things just because of the kindness of our heart. Particularly in Illinois, the teacher unions really cover all of the like monetary



value of how they assign things to teachers. And once you step out of that space and have to advocate for yourself and be able to decide what is your worth or even just having to negotiate for a particular payment. It brings in a lot Out of these things from the identity space of things that you learn from it being in the math classroom, around numbers around being able to put value to the work that you're doing, having confidence in that. And I think that, you know, in some ways the system really teaches us to not value ourselves, not be able to be powerful in our identity, particularly for people of color and students of color and teacher of color. And so I think that's something that's really sticking with me throughout this conversation that we're having now is that social justice in the math classroom isn't just about what's happening in the classroom, but it's also the the legacy of how that impacts individuals, even as they move on into their professional lives in settings.

**Kari 25:56**

Yeah, and again, I think that's why, you know, like, you all have a critical affinity space with the four of you. And we all need our hype, people, who are the ones who, you know, you get this opportunity, you get this invitation to do something, and you need your hype person, you know, you run it by them, and they're like, Okay, you need to ask for this much money. I know, this person, and this person got invited by that organization, and they paid them X amount. And that person was a white man, or that person was a man of color, whatever the case may be, to be able to say like, Okay, this is what I'm going to ask for. And if, you know, they don't want to say yes to it, like, no harm, no foul. i My time is valuable anyway, so I can just say no to that opportunity.

**Michelle 26:52**

Yeah, and I also, I also think that like, you asked me high people to be in your corner to be like, you could do this, like, you got this I, um, a couple years ago, I got the opportunity to be the keynote speaker, and a Sylmar and I remember calling Angela Taurus. She was like one of the first people that calls and I was like, Angela, I got asked me the keynote, and she's like, screaming, and so happy and like, we're just, and I told my parents, my parents were super excited for me. But like, Angela was, like, really excited, because she understood like what this meant, and on that day of a Sylmar, my my boss's boss's boss. So the head of the math department how when he was an Asian man, he was like there in the front row. And he was like, let me record I got I got your iPad. Let me record. I'm alright. He record he recorded.

**Kari 27:47**

I Michelle did I? I watched that whole thing recently. Oh, I don't even think I told you. I watched it. Recently. Yeah, amazing. Amazing. We're gonna share the link with everyone. Yeah.

**Michelle 27:59**

So he recorded it. And he was just like, let me record this. And just like was so beaming and so proud. And agile was like, I can't record it. Because I'm gonna be too busy being like, yes, yes. And I was like, Yes, please, like me, somebody with a steady hand. But it's just like, it was so amazing that these people that are on paper, have higher status than me, right? We're sitting there. And they were like, cheering for me on the sideline. Right. And that right, there is just a testament because it is hard. Like as a black woman, as a math people, like I gotta convince folks. I'm a math teacher. Like, I have a student teacher who's now a classroom teacher, Rachel. Were sitting in class one day, mind you. And

this also plays into it. Like most of the time, my hair is like purple and green, and all kinds of fun things. But she was in the class, I was in the class. She's my student, teacher, some adult walks into the room, looks at both of us, and walks to her and starts talking to her like she's a classroom teacher. And Rachel was like, I'm not the teacher she is, and, and a craftsperson person that that person was a black woman that did that. So like, Oh, yeah. And so she was like, huh, because society has told me that this space is not occupied normally by women, but there's also this hierarchical thing. Like, I'm never expecting a black woman to be the person leading this eighth grade math class. And it is, it was just like, it was IRS. And this this has happened like seven years ago. And I still can tell that story with fever, because it was like, Damn girl, like, like your own people will be like, and that's how ingrained this like this racism is, like, how like, institutionalized how like, like how it just comes out of like our blood, because she's so conditioned to think that I'm not the one and it's not even. It's not even because it's harmful. It's not I don't even think there's like mal intent. It's just like that is the reality. And so how do we what that movie were that, like y'all are getting, we're just like on gaming, that, Oh, it's the movie with Ryan, Ryan, something. And he's a background, he's he, in the video game. He's a background player. And he does the same thing every day. And it's, and he like a bank gets robbed. And he's like, hit the floor, yada, yada. And anyway, something happens and he starts to fight back. And he decides, like, like, he does, the Ryan Reynolds movie. He doesn't realize that he lived his whole life, not realizing he was a background player. And then something happened. And he didn't realize he was a background player. But he realized that something wasn't right. And so he starts a fight against the system. Right? And he started,

**Jennifer** I love that movie, it's free guy for you guys. It's a really good movie.

**Michelle** And it's a really good movie, because some people will just watch it and be like, That's a good movie. But it speaks a lot of stuff too. Like, at some point, there's got to be a change, where you're like, I'm not going to be what is a non player character in NPC, right, I'm not going to be an NPC, like, I'm not going to be that anymore. Like, I am actually going to be a part of this thing, I'm going to dismantle this thing. And, and while you may not even know, the magnitude of what you're trying to dismantle, but you know, there's something's got to change, right. And that, and that's what I love about this will be if Ryan Reynolds was listening, just running so many, you could send us a check, because we just dropped a bunch of money, you may have the money off that money, you can give us a couple of \$1,000 with some zeros on there, you can handle that, or hit my tennis shoes up. That's always a thing to ask my tennis shoes.

**Kari** 32:00

But Michelle, you're making actually the perfect segue for us to discuss the resource that you all created the racism and math education, because that resource talks about internalized racism, systemic racism, how things are permeated in society. So could you tell us about this resource, we're going to offer the link on our website also.

**Chanel** 32:29

Thank you so much for uplifting our resource, we really appreciate that. It really came from throughout our work, what we realize is that this myth that math is the most neutral or unbiased subject is so embedded and almost in an insidious way into how we look at math in our society. And so this



misconception really adds to the confusion around social justice math even existing as a concept in general. And so really, what our focus was in developing this resource is to make the invisible structures of racism, oppression, in the math classroom, how that looks like with norms, with conversation, communication activities, and not just within the classroom, but beyond the classroom into the education system as a whole. And to make those invisible structures essentially visible. And what we found is a lot of the times just making these structures visible, and just by cultivating that awareness is like 50%, maybe even arguably, like 70%, of just being able to understand what social justice looks like in the math classroom. So that's kind of the motivation for what led to this resource is to be able to make those invisible structures visible.

#### **Esther 34:14**

Yeah, we wanted to make it something that is useful for teachers and for school leaders and for administrators, people that are in schools every day. So we organized it using a framework, the levels of oppression framework, from the text, *Something is Wrong: Exploring the roots of youth violence* by Mariame Kaba and several others. We didn't make it to be an exhaustive list. We weren't saying like, Oh, everything on here is what you're gonna see. We wanted to give a few examples in each of the categories. So there are four categories that we utilized. The first one is personal. And that's like the racism that we experience within ourselves almost like internalized. It's, it's for like an Asian American, for example, which is what I am feeling not good enough, because I'm Asian, and I'm not good at math like that, that is an example of like, oh, I experienced this internally. And, and it's now part of my identity, which is different than something that might be like more interpersonal, that's between people that can look like very subtly, a teacher praising a black student for doing very, very basic math. And then not doing that for a white or an Asian student, because they have higher expectations. It's, it's a kind of, you know, these are like small things that people aren't thinking about every day. They're, they're thinking, I want to do what's right for students, but, but our beliefs that are ingrained, which is that the color of our skin is going to determine mathematical intelligence, mathematical brightness, that's the part that we're really trying to, like, tease out and say, like, this is actually real, and we're doing it like, it's not just you, it's not just me, as a society, we're doing this. And we go on through like different categories, like institutional, what are the tracking structures that exist? And even kind of like, what are the cultural things that are happening? I'm not gonna like go through each one of those. But but just to give kind of a taste of like, yeah, I we hope that this resource is going to be used in in a way that will dismantle the racist things that happen in math education that are. And a lot of it is not intentional, a lot of it is not, I shouldn't say not intentional, but I should say, a lot of it is under our radar. Like, we're not even thinking about it, because it's just so part of our natural society.

#### **Kari 37:19**

Yeah, and I notice also that in your book, with Dr. Lateefah Id-Deen. So I haven't had the opportunity to read the whole thing, but I read the beginning of it, and the framing of it. And I can tell that that's also what you're doing in the book, right? You're trying to illuminate for people, the systems and structures, and things that happen in the classroom are actually tied to systemic oppression in order to dismantle it. So we wanted to congratulate you again, on your book with Lateefah Id-Deen. And you know, what would you like to share with our audience about it? What will teachers learn and take away from it? What are you most excited about? Yeah, we're excited to learn from you. Yeah,

**Esther 38:21**

I won't take up too much time. I will say that it started because Lateefah and I were reviewing some books that were coming through the pipeline. And I was a teacher at the time. And I was, I was like, you know, none of these books speak to me as a teacher. And I say that because I don't have like, my first and biggest challenge is not like, how do I structure a PLC in my classroom or with with other teachers like my first and biggest challenges? Like, wow, I have a lot of students that do not have interest in what I'm saying about math. Like, there are a lot of people who just do not care at all. And, and I'm not blaming, I get it. It's just like, how do you how do you deal with that? And, and so Lateefah and I were talking about this, like, kind of jokingly, and she was like, You know what, we need something else out there. Like we need something that's going to really speak to the teacher experience. So, so yes, it is built off of like, a lot of teachers learn about social justice, and they hear about it. And then a lot of math teachers specifically, kind of are like, that's great for other teachers. Like that's great for the Social Studies teacher, that's great for the English teacher. That's how it's even great for the PE teacher, but but certainly not in math class, where we've got to go and talk about like The quadratic formula, or we've got to learn about Pythagorean Theorem, like, how is this? How is social justice gonna, like fit in to this? And we tried to say like, actually it happens every day. It's not one of those, like, teach a lesson. And you know, you know, February 28, call it a good day and like, you know, move on to the next thing. And it's like, it's like, no, actually, this is this is happening in your classroom tomorrow. And it happened yesterday. So like, let's, let's think about that. So we offer kind of, like, accounts of what it looks like. And we make that account, so that it's like, Oh, I've seen that in my classroom. I've done that. I've felt that I've experienced those tensions that the teacher has experienced. And then we share, what did this teacher do to disrupt injustice in their classroom. And the key thing here is that we don't share it so that you can copy and paste it. I think there's a lot of education reform out there. That's like, teacher proof. And by teacher proof, I mean, like, it doesn't matter who the teacher is, this is gonna work. Like, you know, standards based grading, it's not a bad idea. It's just that it's like, teacher prove it, it doesn't matter who you are, this is a good idea, or kind of building a curriculum like you get the curriculum doesn't matter who you are, this curriculum is going to be the thing that works. We take the opposite approach, we say actually, the the main thing that matters is the person in the room that's in front of students. And we're not going to say like, actually, you need to do for this specific injustice, you need to do what Miss Lo does, does for this specific injustice, you need to do what Mr. Savage. That's not what we're saying. We're saying, here's an example. But then we ask very, very intently, like who are you? What's your background? What's your racial identity? What's your What are your relationships with others? What are what is your student relationships look like? What year of teaching are you in? These are all things that make your specific response. very nuanced, and nuanced is something that we need more of in education right now. I think before it's been kind of like, everyone do this. And it's like, no, that that doesn't work. Because we're people. And we don't, we can't do that kind of copy and paste mentality. So we're really trying to empower teachers to say, like, you have assets, and you need to bring them to the table so that we can disrupt injustice as a whole, both in the small and big picture.

**Kari 42:49**

Do you think that I love this so much? Because I think it really helps teachers to gain political clarity. And I guess what, I'm curious, because I know that your Dr. Rochelle Gutiérrez is student and I'm doing work with her now with Dr. Marrielle Myers. And I'm curious if the in your shoes, the rehearsals that you did have different scenarios when you were working with her if that kind of like influenced your thinking?

**Esther 43:23**

I definitely think that. Yeah, I think so. I will say like, I credit a lot of kind of the way that I think, to Rochelle, as a student of hers. And I'll say actually, there's one particular thing that I did with Rochelle that like really sat with me that I think influenced a lot of this book, and it was when she invited me to be part of the editorial panel of the APME book. Wow, I'm forgetting the name of it rehumanizing math, mathematics, education, something like that for black and indigenous? Oh,

**Kari 44:12**

yes. The one that she edited with Dr. Imani Goffney. Yeah.

**Esther 44:18**

And so I had the immense privilege to be part of the editorial panel that like took in the texts and read through them. And what was fascinating to me, was that there were all of these amazing accounts of what disrupting injustice look like, of what social justice looks like. And each one were very catered to their community to their moment in time. There was nothing about it that I could see was like, copy and paste double. Like, I can't just take the program that they ran And because it was built off of like the knowledge of these two professors, or I can't just take this idea that they had here with this indigenous population and take it to Chicago public schools like it, it wasn't something that I could just say like, oh, let me do the same exact thing. And yet there's something similar about those things. And one of the similarities is that the people doing this leading this work, were were contextual, they were recognizing the people that they're working with. They're recognizing their own experiences and, and the gifts that they brought and merging those things together. I, I think when I was seeing that, I was like, why aren't we looking more at that, instead of kind of going into, like, let's ignore who the teacher is, like, Michelle is a teacher now. And if we took away her entire, who she is, her, her race, her personality, her her wealth of information, her expertise, like, like that is the kind of person that we're expecting to be in front of students like that. And that is a horrible loss to say, like, like, actually, Michelle, who she is doesn't matter at all, when in fact, it probably matters the most.

**Michelle 46:20**

Yeah, I think about like, education is one of the only fields where cookie cutter things are acceptable, like, you would never go to the doctor, and the doctors will be like, Well, I don't know, some doctors are shady. But for the most part, there's a whole topic about black folks and doctors. But for the most part, your doctors are supposed to prescribe something specific to you, to your needs to your environmental stuff. Like I think about Dr. Nadine Burke, who I think we talked about her last week. Did we talk about her last name? Yeah, we did. Did you say her name many times too. And like, I just remember when she would engage with her with with her patients. It was like they asked you about they asked about your family history. They asked you about where you live about what's happening, so that they can create a plan that is catered specific to you. And I know that capacity wise, we are not able to, like, create individual learning plants for all of our students. However, if we if you get to know your community, if you ask questions about your babies, if you know the space that you're in, if you've walked the neighborhood, and walk the neighborhood with an open eye, and ear and that, especially if you're not of that neighborhood, so you don't because what you don't want to do is have folks come into spaces and make all kinds of weird assumptions. There's a the onion did this one about a teacher who

was just in a program, I'm not gonna say the program saying who's in a program, just to do teaching for two to three years. And it's a really good story. It's about this little boy. And she writes about how he doesn't have breakfast and how she brings him breakfast every day, and how she cries every day. Because of all the things that he's experiencing. And then there's a counter letter that he writes, and he's just like, Why do you have these teachers who don't know nothing about me, come into my classroom. And all she does is cry. And I haven't learned not a lick of math from her this whole fourth grade year, but she got through tears. And it's and it's just like, because she didn't know her community. She know her environment. She made all these kinds of assumptions. And she came in doing what she thought was appropriate, again, Loreena centers. And so it is it's crazy that we don't spend this time I mean, I even think about an MS like a bat like people don't believe this, like teacher ed programs are are like the carwash like not the good carwash. But they're like the the gas station carwash, we just kind of like get in the car and go through, and we meet like a detail. We need, like, get out your car, ma'am, go sit in the lobby, let's vacuum this thing out. Because when you use a vacuum, all the BS that you have your preconceived notions that are not going to be effective for you. So let's vacuum all of that out, right? And then let's go ahead and let's like Polish you on the outside, let's coach you with all the educational expertise that you need to be successful. And then less feel this, like feel this with this wax. And then you know, we're gonna do we're gonna throw in some sit in there so that when things are rough, you can still smell why you decided to do that. Right? And that and that like, ideology of like, actually putting in the work to become a teacher is lost on this country. There's no other job that has as much impact that we give that you will. If a doctor said was like, Yo, man, I gotta look up Peter took a couple classes and I'm gonna cut you up, let's go up like, you would cut me up like I didn't see all the degrees, all the degrees, all the things before you open me up. And that's the same thing that we're doing. We're making invisible cut. Some teachers are making invisible cuts on these babies lives. And we don't know the impact. They don't know the impacts until they become an adult and they realize that they have been experiencing all this for so long.

**Kari** 50:30

That was part one of our conversation with an education partners, LLC with Jerica, Esther, Chanel, and Jennifer. You can catch the rest of this interview in our next episode where we share part two. Thank you.