

Critical Race Conversations, a Folger Institute Fiftieth Anniversary Project Supported by the Mellon Initiative in Collaborative Research

Cultivating Anti-Racist Pedagogy

DESCRIPTION: Dialogue with Ambereen Dadabhoy and Nedda Mehdizadeh

Thursday, July 9, 2020

OWEN WILLIAMS: I apologize for that technical difficulty that we experienced. But I'd like to welcome you to Critical Race Conversations, a series hosted by the Folger Institute with the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of the Institute's 50th anniversary programming. I'm Owen Williams, Associate Director for Scholarly Programs at the Folger Institute. I'd like to take a moment to introduce the series and our session leaders for today's event. This series of free online sessions features scholars who are offering new insights into the prehistory of modern racialized thinking and racism.

WILLIAMS: Our speakers are acknowledging deeper and more complex roots to enduring social challenges, and conducting more inclusive investigations of our contested paths, all with the goal of creating a more just and more inclusive academy and society. The Institute is providing the framework and platform. But, as is our practice, we turn to scholars across disciplines and career stages to lead discussions from their own experience and expertise. We recognize that we should allow others who know more about the field of critical race studies to create the conversations.

WILLIAMS: We have much to learn. Let me now welcome two such scholars for the first of these events on how college faculty can and should integrate critical race studies into their Shakespeare and early modern literature classrooms. Dr. Ambereen Dadabhoy is an assistant professor of literature at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California. Her research focuses on cross-cultural encounters in the early modern Mediterranean, and race and religion in early modern English drama. She investigates the various discourses that construct and reinforce human differences and how they are mobilized in the global, imperial projects that characterize much of the early modern period.

WILLIAMS: Professor Dadabhoj's work seeks to bridge the past to the present to illustrate how early modern racial and religious discourses and their prejudices manifest in our own contemporary moment. She has written several articles on teaching race, including "The Moor of America: Approaching the Crisis of Race and Religion in the Renaissance and the Twenty-First Century," and the forthcoming articles "The Unbearable Whiteness of Being in Shakespeare," and "Skin in the Game: Teaching Race in Early Modern Literature." Dr. Nedda Mehdizadeh teaches in UCLA's writing programs. Her research and pedagogical interests center on early modern trends of national encounter, particularly between Persia's Safavid Dynasty and English visitors, as well as Shakespeare, critical race studies, and critical diversity studies.

WILLIAMS: Dr. Mehdizadeh also designs and facilitates anti-racist and inclusive pedagogy workshops for faculty, and she trains graduate student instructors in developing inclusive teaching practices through her graduate seminar, "Diversity and Student-Centered Pedagogy," for UCLA's certificate and writing pedagogy program. She has won fellowships through the Mellon-funded EPIC program, which gives educators the opportunity to develop inclusive curricula. Her most recent article, "Othello in Harlem: Transforming Theater in Djanet Sears's Harlem Duet," was inspired by conversations she had with her students during an undergraduate course she teaches, "Global Othellos."

WILLIAMS: Today our session leaders will discuss their strategies and approaches for building more inclusive syllabi and more equitable and anti-racist learning environments in the college classroom. But, of course, good pedagogical design can be applied across all levels of instruction by the broader teaching community. We offer a special welcome to the Folger community of high school educators who take up shared concerns, and we hope that this session will be as useful to them as it is to those college faculty who are with us today. As Professors Dadabhoj and Mehdizadeh talk with each other, we invite our viewers to post questions in the YouTube chat bar, and we will reserve time for our speakers to address them at the conversation's conclusion.

WILLIAMS: Also, I should add that the professors live tweeting, and please use the hashtag #FolgerCRC so that we can all find each other on Twitter. Thank you very much.

NEDDA MEHDIZADEH: Thank you so much, Owen, for that generous and lovely introduction. And thank you to you and the Folger for inviting Ambereen and I to come speak with everyone today. And we also wanted to thank everyone for joining us and streaming in. So, we thought that we would begin today's discussion by just talking a little bit more about what it is that we do at our institutions. I teach at UCLA in writing programs as Owen described. It's an interdisciplinary program, and it serves undergraduate and graduate students.

MEHDIZADEH: The courses that I teach focus obviously on writing skills, but I center all of my courses on critical diversity studies and critical race studies. So, I'll teach a freshman composition course that takes diversity as its focus. I'll teach literature courses that center the study of race. I will teach graduate students, as Owen mentioned, and train them in having and cultivating inclusive courses as their training as teachers.

MEHDIZADEH: And I'm lucky at UCLA that I get to teach lots of different kinds of courses and to incorporate materials and themes that are and have always been very important to me like premodern critical race studies, travel literature, Shakespeare, and that sort of thing.

AMBEREEN DADAHBOY: Thanks for that, Nedda. I also want to echo my thanks and add them to Nedda's to the Folger and also to everybody who's watching. A little bit more about me, I teach at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California, which is a small liberal arts college, but also a STEM school. So, we only grant STEM degrees at Harvey Mudd. And the department that I teach in is the humanity social sciences in the arts department, so it's quite interdisciplinary also.

DADAHBOY: And because I'm teaching at a STEM school, I'm usually teaching non-majors. And because I'm an interdisciplinary department, I have a lot of freedom in the kinds of courses that I can offer. So, they range from, for example, Shakespeare to monsters and whatever's in between those two. By training, however, my research is in early modern drama, and specifically in the representation of race and religion in the drama.

DADAHBOY: I've always focused on the Mediterranean, but now when I'm looking at the Mediterranean, I'm specifically looking at the representation of blackness and also Islam and how those two connect or don't connect at certain points.

MEHDIZADEH: Wonderful. So obviously you teach such a range of courses, and I'm sure that your research really inflects the way that you teach. Can you talk a little bit more about how your research informs your teaching?

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm. Absolutely. So my research actually came about through a teaching experience that I had as a grad student. Before that, I was going to write on Shakespeare's history plays. And I was a grad instructor also at Harvey Mudd College teaching a course on race, gender, power in Renaissance drama, right? All the big things. And so when we got to *Othello* in that class, my students were very reluctant to talk about race.

DADAHBOY: It was fine to talk about jealousy, to talk about domestic violence, to talk about all of these other things except for race. And so when I started to kind of push them towards talking about this issue, what they said was that *Othello* is noble despite his race. Now, this sounds awful, but this is actually what the play says too, right? When the Duke says to Brabantio, "if virtue no delighted beauty lack, your son-in-law is far more fair than black," right?

DADAHBOY: And so, they were repeating what the play was saying. And I lacked the training to be able to get them to think about the logics that are informing our reading of that play, right? When we're reading along with the play, we're complicit in certain kinds of logics. And so coming away from that class, I really felt inadequate and demoralized. And also kind of thinking that maybe this is what I need to do and focus my energies on.

DADAHBOY: And so I was lucky enough to have a committee that let me change my dissertation topic. And so that's what ended up happening to my work. And it changed the course of my research and my teaching. And since that experience in the classroom, I've always thought about teaching as the thing that you do that lets you ask important research questions. So, Nedda, how are your teaching and research goals connected?

MEHDIZADEH: I think it's very similar to your experience and your interests when you're talking about sort of the logic that undergirds these plays and how they're often studied in the ways in which our students kind of repeat back the very problematic structures. It makes me think about how, just at the core of it, whether it's my research or my teaching, I'm really invested in understanding and thinking through the power structures that guide our day-to-day lives.

MEHDIZADEH: And so all of the work that I do really just centers on that. I'm interested in thinking about, with my students and with my colleagues, thinking about how those structures sort of manifest, what they look like at a given moment, how they're produced and reproduced, what role we play in those power structures, whether we're aware that we're a part of that or not. And what I think is also interesting is that, you know, the study of power structures is not discipline-specific, and it is not bound within a specific time period.

MEHDIZADEH: That's something that we can look at in any discipline across any time period. And so, I think, the work that I do has allowed me to think about that more broadly. Not just in terms of my area of specialty, which is of course Anglo-Persian encounter, but just broadly how that unfolds. So we see those kind of manifest in the travel narratives that we look at as early modernists and in Shakespeare's works.

MEHDIZADEH: Even just in terms of how Shakespeare and his ilk are mobilized in the academic institution. And they even exist in the act of writing itself, which of course, given where I teach and what I do, that's a particularly important kind of power dynamic. So, you know, when we're thinking about writing whose stories are told and whose are silenced, which authors are considered part of the canon, how does the university decide what courses will be required, who is going to teach those courses, that sort of thing.

MEHDIZADEH: So for me, you know, those questions can't really be understood unless we really kinda get at the core of how power works and is manifested, right? And so that is really at the core of what I feel like my research does

and what I like to bring into the classroom with my students.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think this idea, or this critique, or uncovering of power and knowledge and the complicity of those really come out in the texts that we've assigned for our audience to have read, or at some point, read before the semester starts. Because they all reveal how racism and white supremacy specifically are built into the fabric of our disciplines and our institutions.

DADAHBOY: And I also think that the work of Toni Morrison really brings this out when she talks about national literatures like English literature, like American literature, and the way that those literature departments construct and promote the project of white nation building. And we can see this very concretely, and I think this is what you were pointing to right now in the way that our departments label certain courses with ethnic designations when they feature non-white writers and authors, but then they don't call attention to the whiteness, those courses that are simply labeled as English literature or American literature, right?

DADAHBOY: And so, even there in these commonplace naming practices of the kinds of courses that we offer, we are still upholding and asserting normative forms of identity, and that normative form of identity is white identity. And part of the power of whiteness, of course, is that it's ever-present, and also that it's invisible, right? And these naming practices are actively rendering it invisible.

DADAHBOY: So whereas those of us who are non-white, we're rendered hyper-visible through that same naming practice with racial designations or ethnic designations that are designed to our field and our department. What I think my work is getting at, which is very much aligned with what your work is getting at, is to make the invisible whiteness visible. Right? Visible in my courses, visible in the departments that we teach in, visible in our own field, in our institutions, and of course in our society.

DADAHBOY: One thing, though, that sort of is a challenge is to get students to be able to understand and see that, because they are unaccustomed to seeing whiteness as a frame.

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, absolutely. I agree. And I think it's so important to remember that, you know, our students generally don't have an opportunity to really cultivate racial literacy. They haven't had the training that's necessary to really think critically about that. And they haven't developed the tools to have conversations about race. And I know we'll probably talk about this more, but they're hungry for that. And I know we talked a lot about how receptive they are, and how they really do want a space to learn how to do that kind of work.

MEHDIZADEH: So it's important for us to help them in that process. We have to be willing to give them a broader sense of the historical context of these pieces of literature that we assign to them. We have to teach them how to recognize patterns, right? We have to think about, you know, what is the rhetoric that is associated with the text that tends to sanitize a situation or that, you know, where we see pushback happening.

MEHDIZADEH: We have to be able to guide them to this kind of work. And I think that gets at Felice Blake and her essay, "Why Black Lives Matter in the Humanities" where she tells us that it's not enough to simply put a BIPOC scholar, and by BIPOC, I mean black indigenous person of color, scholar or writer on our syllabus. We have to actually revitalize the way that we're actually reading the text.

MEHDIZADEH: We have to infuse our classes with new reading practices, new reading skills so that we are doing justice to not just the work as art, but also the context in which it was created, and then disseminated. So I find that, you know, bringing our students to those political and social contexts is, to me, the most important part of the work that we do. It's what allows them to learn a set of skills that they can then take in other arenas of their life.

MEHDIZADEH: Reading literature is great. I love that, and I'm so glad that our courses do that kind of work and that there's merit and worthiness in terms of that too. But we also have an opportunity to teach them these really important skills.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm, absolutely. So when you are teaching them these really important skills, what are some of the challenges that you face doing that?

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, so I guess the biggest challenge comes from the idea that students, and it's not unique to students, but since we're talking about teaching, students don't like to feel uncomfortable. They don't like to talk about unsettling topics. I think they're eager to do it when you take them there, but the human reaction to discomfort is to resist that discomfort. So I think that students are aware that when they come to college that it is going to be challenging work.

MEHDIZADEH: That they're going to have to, you know, change their studying habits, they're in a new environment, all these things. But I don't know that they're necessarily prepared to confront the ugliness of injustice. And for many of them, they are confronting that ugliness for the first time. And I think the hardest part about that is that sometimes that ugliness is familiar. Whether it is a familiarity because they have been on the receiving end of that ugliness, or maybe it's an ugliness that they recognize in their communities, with their friends, or even their parents.

MEHDIZADEH: And so, when they are confronted with that, I find that students feel very disoriented. And they go through a grieving process. It's very painful to recognize how close they are to that. And so I found that they often respond in one of two ways. Either way want to talk about it a lot and they come to your office and they send you emails and want to work through that with you, or they're resistant and they get defensive.

MEHDIZADEH: And there are of course gradations between those two extremes. But because there is such a range of response, I see it as my duty as their educator who brought them to this to help guide them.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm.

MEHDIZADEH: Regardless of how they're responding in a generous and compassionate and patient way. And that can be really hard sometimes because you have to take a lot of things into account while you're doing that. But it's a really delicate process, and it's so important to cultivate that practice so that it becomes easier over time. And it does become easier over time. But you have to be willing to go through that. And I think bell hooks was really helpful

for me with regards to this because she gives such an important reminder that as educators we have to release the expectation or the desire to be affirmed at every moment as teachers.

MEHDIZADEH: And sometimes there's gonna be pushback, and sometimes they're not gonna like what it is that they see in the literature and in the discussions. And we just have to be patient with that.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm, yeah. I think the discomfort of students is a huge challenge. For me, just thinking about the challenges, one of the biggest ones, and I have an article coming in about it, right, is that I'm seen as having skin in the game, right? My skin means something that white skin doesn't, right? And so, because I'm a visibly non-white professor of Shakespeare, when I talk about issues of race, those issues already become suspect in a way, simply because of my subjectivity and my identity, right?

DADAHBOY: So that my reading of canonical text in some way can be delegitimized simply by virtue of the body that I occupy. And then of course, if I'm trying to be race-attentive, then the body that I occupy is doing more ideological work than another body might be doing, doing the same kind of work. And a related challenge is that, so being a woman of color in a field broadly that orients itself in a hostile way towards us, both in representation in the text that we're reading, and also broadly in the representation in the field, can put you at a disadvantage.

DADAHBOY: You're sometimes the only one who looks like you in the room, and because of that, you are both hyper visible, but the things that you can say can be dismissed because it's just one person who's saying that, right? And then the text that we teach when we encounter characters who are supposed to be like us or look like us, be members of our identity group, they're usually negative. And they have to somehow be expelled from the narrative. Or if they're going to be rehabilitated, they have to be transformed so that they can fit into the normative white framework.

DADAHBOY: And reading those things does a sort of affective damage to us, right? And yet, we have to be objective, right? In how we approach these texts. And that's the challenge because our students expect us to have

this kind of objectivity, which is totally artificial, right? We all know that that's nonsense, except that that is a mode that is prevailing in how students think we should be approaching these texts.

DADAHBOY: So again, what ends up happening is that students see me as having an agenda or being ideologically motivated. Um, and then finally, like, I guess the last question, or the last challenge in trying to be attentive to race when we're teaching in the premodern is that we're having to deal with text or authors who are white, right? So when I teach Shakespeare, he literally is the dead white man who I am teaching. So that can be a problem sometimes too.

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, I love what... no, I don't love what you're saying, but I'm resonating with what you're saying, because this idea of agenda is always something that is, like, delivered towards someone of color or a minority, minoritized group member, it's never conceived of or considered that, like, teaching a class called Shakespeare is in and of itself an agenda. So that sort of double standard is so problematic, right?

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm. So what do you do with, like, the thing that you're pointing out here, right? Just teaching a class on Shakespeare which is basically teaching a class on whiteness, how do you work through those issues of power when you're designing your courses?

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, so for me, I am always thinking about, holistically, what is this course really about? Like, what am I trying to accomplish? What is the goal here? It's easy to be assigned to teach a course called Shakespeare, and then just say, "Well, it's Shakespeare. Just read Shakespeare."

MEHDIZADEH: And that's, I guess, a goal in and of itself. But it's not the kind of goal that I am interested in. I'm more interested in asking bigger questions like we had talked about before. How does his position as that old, dead white guy, you know, the ultimate old dead white guy, how did he assume that position, right? What are the structures that support that? What are the structures that reproduce that, right?

MEHDIZADEH: So the first thing that I do is I ask myself, what am I really trying to get at? And if it's about thinking about those power structures more critically, then I have to think about, well, what are the sources, just like I would be writing an essay, what are the sources that will help me to move forward in this course, right? How do I get my students to that end point, that aha moment? 10 weeks later-our quarters are 10 weeks-10 weeks later when they leave me, right?

MEHDIZADEH: And so, I have to think about the kinds of texts, and if I've asked myself a different question, like for example, interrogating those power structures, then it gives me the opportunity to invite other voices into the conversation. Because I cannot really effectively question those power structures by only talking about Shakespeare and only doing close reading analysis. It's not gonna happen. So I have to be able to afford my students with the vocabulary to do that kind of work.

MEHDIZADEH: That means I need to assign scholarship by the many ShakeRace scholars who are publishing amazing pieces. I need to bring in other texts like, let's say, a global adaptation of Shakespeare. Or, you know, my favorite, Djanet Sears' *Harlem Duet*. You know, a person of color who speaks back to Shakespeare, and not just by sort of reimagining Othello's life, but really speaking back to Shakespeare himself as someone who is that ultimate dead white guy.

MEHDIZADEH: And then when I have figured out which resources I want to use, I also have to think about the structure of the class. Because as we tell our students, you know, when I begin an essay agreeing or disagreeing with a scholarly essay, that sets a certain tone for the work that I'm producing. And it's different than if I begin with taking us to, let's say, Djanet Sears' *Harlem Duet*. That's a very different paper. You know, or if I take them to a news article that somehow, I don't know, some politician's saying something silly about Shakespeare, right?

MEHDIZADEH: You know, if I wanted to start my essay there, that sets a different tone.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm.

MEHDIZADEH: So, you know, how you develop and conceive the course, I think just at a core level, gives you the space to do that kind of work where you can put him and that oeuvre into question, then to have more nuanced and interesting conversations with your students as a result.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm. Yeah. There's absolutely so much preplanning and the planting of seeds that we're doing when we're designing our courses to be attentive to race. And when we're dealing only with the early modern period, there might be certain constraints, right? Constraints in terms of the objects that we might study. But I think that growth also comes from constraint, right? Creativity comes from constraint. So if I'm teaching Shakespeare and he is, you know, the giant dead white elephant in the room, then how can I develop a course that is attentive to race, right?

DADAHBOY: That's really my question. And this question, I ask actually for every course that I teach, right? How can I be attentive to race? How can I give my students racial literacy in all of the courses that they take from me? Maybe that means some students don't ever come back 'cause they don't want to learn it, right? But that's still gonna be on my agenda. Um, and one way that I do think, and I think you pointed out that you regularly do this also, is to assign. So if I'm limited to early modern, if I'm limited to Shakespeare as my author, then I assign theoretical works and secondary sources from scholars of color, right?

DADAHBOY: So that their ideas and voices can respond to the normative whiteness of the canon. And it's important that the voices of these scholars of color is not limited to only the time when we talk about race, right? If race is in, like, a one-week period, then that's not the only time scholars of color are allowed to share their ideas, right? We have many scholars of color. Certainly not enough, but we have many in the early modern period, and they're all working on different things, right? Everybody isn't working on race.

DADAHBOY: And so it's really important to be attentive to those voices and bring them into our syllabi so that we can actually expose our students to the diversity of the field as it's constructed, which is not only the canon, right? The field is more than the canon. Another thing that we can

do as you point out is to dislodge the centrality of Shakespeare in some way, right? And I think global courses often seek to do that.

DADAHBOY: But even with my course, right? "Global Shakespeare." Shakespeare was still in the title, so, right? He was my hook to get people in. But we only read three Shakespeare plays. And then we read two adaptations of each play from different countries, different linguistic traditions. Using Shakespeare, not to, like you said, retell this story, but in some ways to write back, and in some ways to just go off on their own experimentations with art and with literature, and Shakespeare's just a kind of thing that informs the work.

DADAHBOY: But you don't need to understand what Shakespeare's doing in that work to actually understand that work. And that, for me, was a very powerful course, and I really appreciated my students having them write not on Shakespeare, but writing on other things. And that really, I think, got us to thinking through more expansively what they were doing. And the final thing that I do with my courses on performance is I try to bring in a performer of color to talk to my students about what it means to be an actor in a predominantly white theatrical space.

DADAHBOY: And that is a whole other conversation, but also a very important conversation in terms of how whiteness structures so many arenas of our lives.

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah. Yeah, that work is so important to create that space for students, to rethink, right? How they approach the material. And I think that's part of what will allow us not just to rethink how we're teaching something like Shakespeare, but this is part of how we enter into a larger conversation about what curriculum can look like and how we can develop our courses more thoughtfully, generally speaking, right?

MEHDIZADEH: So, you know, one of the things that I try to think about a little bit when I'm designing my course, moving from the syllabus into the actual practice of the classroom, is really threefold. I mean, I do a lot of different kinds of things, but I feel like they fall under three main categories. And I'm just gonna go through them really quickly so that we can make sure that we've got a

lot of time. So if anyone wants to ask follow-up questions, please feel free. But the first is making sure that you're building a sense of community in the course.

MEHDIZADEH: And that can be done in a lot of different ways. I do community norms with my students on the first day of class. We collaboratively write the course policies. And that makes them feel more invested in the course. I have this very long packet that talks about participation, not as like how many times can you raise your hand, but how are you a member of a community? So...

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm.

MEHDIZADEH: ...it's more of like a community engagement practice than it really is, like, participating. And I give a lot of time for students to speak to each other in small group activities. I also try to diversify my method of instruction. We both talked a little bit about moving beyond just assigning a Shakespeare play, for example, and thinking about the other kinds of texts we can bring in. Our students are all coming to the material in different ways. And so giving them as many different entry points as possible I think is really effective.

MEHDIZADEH: And then the final thing is, being a really good listener. And that doesn't mean literally listening to the words that are coming out of their mouths when they're responding, but really hearing and reading the room. So when you are sensing that the conversation has hit a roadblock or they're not talking or they're uncomfortable addressing it head on, being willing to adjust the course of your lesson so that you're responding to their needs in real time.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm.

MEHDIZADEH: And I know that you've done that kind of laying the foundation in your courses. What do you do, specifically?

DADAHBOY: Yeah, so, and I'll try to keep mine short too, specifically what I do, I think building the community in the classroom for the kinds of conversations that we want to have is of primary importance. And it doesn't matter if we're talking about race or not, right? This is for every classroom environment I do this thing. And I give my

students, this was of course when we were in-person, I'm not sure how it'll work when you're online, but I'll figure out it out. But I give my students a survey on the first day of course of the class, and it has questions about what drew them to the course, what they're interested in learning, what they fear about the course, how they learn, and what kind of strategies they want us to have for how we do our seminar.

DADAHBOY: And most of the courses that I teach are seminar courses. So you might have to adapt it if you're not teaching a seminar course, right? And they work in groups to everybody has a chance to contribute to that document. And then they report back, and I write on the board everything that they've said. And we spend a considerable amount of time on the section where we talk about how we want to conduct ourselves in this seminar space.

DADAHBOY: Because it's really important that students feel free to speak, to make mistakes, to be offered correction on those mistakes, and to be generous with one another so that we can learn. And this generosity and making mistakes component is really important, I think, because what with say in the seminar should stay in the seminar space, right? But what we learn from the seminar, what the wisdom that we make should leave.

DADAHBOY: But sometimes students are afraid that what they say is gonna leave the room rather than what they have learned is gonna leave the room. And that's problematic, of course, with our age of social media. But also, I teach at a residential college, so students live and learn in the same place. So it's really important that we think through how we can allow people to make mistakes in the process of learning, and we're not going to hold that against them for the rest of the semester.

DADAHBOY: And here, I'm assuming good intentions on everyone's part, right? I'm not assuming bad actors. I don't think I've had students who are bad actors, but I just might be lucky that way. But I think we have to start with that assumption, right? That everybody is there in good faith and we're crafting ideas and interpretations that are all in good faith, and nobody is kind of serving a damaging ideology.

MEHDIZADEH: Right, yeah. And I think that concern about making mistakes that you're describing that students have is something that bleeds into what we hear, and we've talked a lot about this from our colleagues, right? So we have a lot of people who've talked to the two of us about, you know, their fears or concerns about doing this kind of work in the classroom. So maybe we can talk a little bit about some of those fears and concerns are, and then share what we would say to those fears and concerns.

DADAHBOY: Yeah, no, that sounds good. And because I think we are running out of time and we want to give our audience some time, maybe we both won't answer them...

MEHDIZADEH: Okay.

DADAHBOY: ...as we originally planned, and we'll just sort of, you go first, I go first.

MEHDIZADEH: Okay.

DADAHBOY: Or I... that way? Okay. So very broadly, we've defined these fears and concerns, or we've broken up into two categories. Applicability and capability. And these are not exhaustive. And we're gonna start with applicability, and then we'll move onto capability next. So, Nedda, do you want to answer this question? This first one? I can ask it.

MEHDIZADEH: I will ask it, you answer.

DADAHBOY: Okay.

MEHDIZADEH: So, one of the concerns that comes up is, you know, "I'm teaching literature, I'm teaching Shakespeare. I'm not teaching cultural studies. So, you know, this is something that they should really get for a different department or a different instructor altogether." How would you answer something like that?

DADAHBOY: So I think it's really important to change our thinking here, and what comments like this suggest is that race and discussions of race are located elsewhere. Right? We have them in the week that we talk about race. Race in this context also always means non-white. And when Shakespeare's presented to us in this un-raced way, what

we're doing is positioning him as racially unmarked and as normative. And we're simultaneously doing the same thing for whiteness. So we can by all means keep teaching Shakespeare in this way. But we just need to know and make it clear that what we're teaching is a white Shakespeare.

DADAHBOY: Nedda, here's the second question. [LAUGH] Another thing that we hear often is that situating critical race studies in the early modern period is anachronistic. It has no place in a course on Shakespeare. What do you say to that?

MEHDIZADEH: So this concern, with all due respect, really bothers me. And the reason why it really bothers me is that because it is a complete disregard for the excellent and rigorous and brilliant scholarship that has been in circulation for decades by the amazing scholars who began this field. They've already done that work to answer that question. So when someone asks that question, to me, I feel like that either means that they have not done the work and they're creating an opinion based on not having done the homework.

MEHDIZADEH: Or they are actively dismissing the labor of those scholars. And my answer to that is to simply refer them to that scholarship. I don't really even answer that question anymore. And good place to start, if this question is resonating with anyone in the audience, is since we're on a Folger platform, to look at the 2016 special issue on race with the Shakespeare Quarterly.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm.

MEHDIZADEH: Because we have a lot of really great scholarship there that is a good starting point to kind of tackle that question.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm, yes. Thank you, next. [LAUGH]

MEHDIZADEH: so, Ambereen, that question about anachronism really does have a lot to say about relevance. So one question that we also get is, "Why should I make all of my students learn about race when it isn't relevant to all of my students?"

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm. So, everyone has race, and everyone lives in society. Therefore it's relevant to everyone.

MEHDIZADEH: Excellent. Short and sweet. [LAUGH] But another-another version of that question is, what if doing this work silences my non-black or non-BIPOC students? What would you say to that?

DADAHBOY: So, I mean, the answer is still the same. Our white students have race too. And the reason why we are in the pickle that we are in right now is because we have trained people to be colorblind and not see race, but also to not acknowledge the power, the material power and domination that whiteness exerts. And so our white students shouldn't feel silence when we are talking about race. Sure, they might feel uncomfortable as you pointed out, but that's different from silencing. So we need to be attentive to race.

DADAHBOY: Right now is the time. And if you're not gonna do it now, then I don't know when you're gonna do it. And I don't know then if you really want to do it, which is what I would say. So think about how you prioritize the learning for every one of your students, right? And that includes white students 'cause they should have racial literacy and racial awareness.

MEHDIZADEH: Right, and I just would add to that that, you know, what if not doing this work silences your black and BIPOC students? So the answer isn't to pick one group or the other, it's to have a really holistic and generative conversation about this so that everybody can participate and learn.

DADAHBOY: Absolutely. Okay, next question rounding out applicability is, "I'm not sure I have the time to do this work, I'm really busy, I can't learn all this new stuff, and my syllabus is really packed and I cannot sacrifice any of the readings."

MEHDIZADEH: Maybe you should take on this 'cause my answer's really short. Make time. It's that important. You need to make time. You need to prioritize it.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm, yes. We need to prioritize it. And I'll just add to this, and I'm sorry that my gardener is here right now, this question is really about what we are committing to, right? If we are committed to seeing our objects and our fields as complicit in racial domination,

then we have to be willing to clean our own house. And if that means throwing out one play so that we can do it, or two plays, we have to do it.

MEHDIZADEH: Yes, absolutely. And this idea of cleaning out our own house is a great segue into the next category, which is capability. So, you know, how do we start with cleaning our own house? By looking inward and becoming capable, right? To doing this work. So the biggest concern we often hear with regards to this is, "I'm not sure I'm equipped to do this work. It isn't my specialty and so I'm not sure I'm the best person to teach it." How do you respond to that?

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm. Do you want to take this one?

MEHDIZADEH: Sure, I can. Learn. I mean, I have really straightforward answers to this. You know, we educators are lifelong learners. We're not filled to the brim with knowledge once we get a degree. We can continue learning. And so this is a good opportunity for you to continue to learn. And not only that, but to model for your students what that continuing education can look like. So, yeah. I would say learn and read. Read and learn.

DADAHBOY: And you don't have to reinvent the wheel, right? There's scholarship out there. Utilize that scholarship that's out there.

MEHDIZADEH: Exactly. Exactly.

DADAHBOY: Okay, so like the question about not having expertise, another barrier is the classroom environment. And we've been talking about this a lot. But, what do you say to people, and Nedda, I really like your answer here, so maybe you can answer it. What is...

MEHDIZADEH: It's not the off the top of our head, Ambereen.
[LAUGH]

DADAHBOY: Maybe you can speak to the fear that we will lose authority, or that we will make our students uncomfortable.

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, so just because you are acknowledging that you are continuing to learn and that these are really challenging topics does not mean that you are losing your

value as an educator, or that you are in any way seeing authority in a way that diminishes, right? Your role. Or how your students see you. And in fact, what you're doing is you're showing how, with the authority that you do have as an educator, what does it look like to empower someone else with that authority?

MEHDIZADEH: So it's not like there's this finite amount of power, and if I am somehow showing that I don't know what I'm talking about, that, like, all is lost. That's not how it is. It's about having a conversation, engaging with your students, and in meaningful ways. And demonstrating that these topics are hard, and they will always be hard, and they will continue to be hard. Even for us sometimes. So we have to be willing to navigate that discomfort. We are modeling for our students what it looks like to navigate that discomfort.

MEHDIZADEH: And that is also in and of itself an important teaching moment.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm.

MEHDIZADEH: So, having said that, I do understand that there is a fear about messing this up, doing it the wrong way. So how do you respond to that?

DADAHBOY: I think we might mess up, right? That's natural. It will happen. Everybody makes mistakes. We will make mistakes in the classroom too. When you make a mistake, we acknowledge it. We apologize for it. And we make some kind of restitution for it. Because we do those things outside of the classroom, and there shouldn't be the fear, we won't be diminished if we do that in the classroom with our students too.

MEHDIZADEH: Right. Exactly. And so, that also I think segues nicely into the sort of final portion of this category, which is kind of an issue that bridges applicability and capability, which is the worry of how students are going to respond. And that's a legitimate concern insofar as many of us rely on student evaluations for promotions. So that is something that we have to consider. So how would you answer that?

DADAHBOY: Well, if you follow me on Twitter, you will have noticed that I posted about student evaluations yesterday.

[LAUGH] And they're no joke, right? I think that they exert an undue influence on our careers. I certainly do want to know how I'm teaching. I don't know that tethering that to whether or not I'm promoted or given tenure is the way that student evaluation should work, especially because we also know that women and women of color, BIPOC, we receive evaluations that are more negative compared to our white male counterparts, right?

DADAHBOY: Given all of those things then, if that wasn't the case, or even if that was the case, we don't teach because we're afraid of what our students will say. That's not why we're in the classroom, right? We're hopefully not teaching for the evaluation. We're teaching because we want our students to learn, and we want them to be engaged citizens of the world. And they can't do that with shallow understandings of how power and knowledge work. They can't do that without understanding how race works in connection to power and knowledge.

DADAHBOY: So, we have to be willing to take a chance on our students and that they'll go with us. And then if we take a hit, we take a hit, because, you know, justice comes at a price.

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah. It sure does. And I just want to briefly add to your point that I also think that, you know, when you design your course thoughtfully, you're not, like, coming in hot, right? You know, calling everybody a racist left and right. You're really, you know, talking about the structures that are in place that reproduce racism. And so, it's not so much about, you know, calling this or that idea out that a student had said. It's more about referring them back to the structures that are in place, you know, that make life easier for some people and harder for others.

MEHDIZADEH: And that is a truth that we have to all agree upon. And when you use that as your starting point and you're really thinking about those systems, students often actually respond very well to that. Because what they feel is that you are educating them about the systems that are in place. And that makes for a lot of potential growth for them, and they, of course, really like to experience that. And sometimes there are students who are resistant. But I've had a lot of experience with students emailing me years later talking about how much the work that I did in the course with them paid off in some way.

MEHDIZADEH: So they're listening, and they're more receptive than you think that they might be based on their outward exterior. So just be patient with them. Like you said, this work is important. We have to do it. And just trust that process.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm. Okay, so again, this was not an exhaustive list, and hopefully in the Q&A, we can field more questions. But we're nearing the end of our conversation with each other, and we wanted to leave the audience with some specific strategies for cultivating anti-racist pedagogy. And this work can be addressed in many ways. We are here going to address it on a curricular and methodological level. And then we're happy to talk more about this in the Q&A, of course. I think I am slated to start, so I [LAUGH] will.

DADAHBOY: Talking a little bit about the way that I teach my Shakespeare courses, I always try to design them around a theme rather than by period or king or queen. So last fall, I taught a Shakespeare course called "#MeTooShakespeare." And if you want to know more about that experience, you can go to my website and read all about it. In that course, I included plays featuring racial others. So the so-called race plays. I also included text by black scholars and theorists.

DADAHBOY: One of those texts that I assign quite frequently, not just in this course but in others, is bell hooks' "The Oppositional Gaze." What's so great about this text is that it offers a counterpoint to the ways that white feminism talks about the male gaze. So hooks notes that black women look from a different space and that their looking relations are different because they can neither identify with the sexist position of patriarchy, which black men can, nor can they identify with the object of the male gaze, which white women can.

DADAHBOY: Therefore, their gaze is outside of the frame of representation, and its relation is always in a kind of opposition, highlighting new different and critical aspects of the text. This essay works really well when we're teaching drama because of the visual and embodied nature of the text that we teach. So that's one thing, right? To introduce theorists who can speak to our Shakespearean

text, and particularly the insights of black feminists who are going to offer us different critical ways of knowing.

DADAHBOY: Another thing that we, I think, are especially well-positioned to do is to highlight for students the understanding that race is a social construct. And what that means is that race is discursively produced, and then it's located in bodies. It's a floating signifier, as Stuart Hall tell us. Meaning that it has infinite variety and malleability for those who are seeking to make race. This discursive quality of race is something we can emphasize in our text because they exhibit so much racial language, and also racial incoherence.

DADAHBOY: In other words, they don't present a consistent theory of what race means. But that doesn't mean race isn't there, right? Consistency is not our barometer. [LAUGH] Inconsistency is actually a necessary component of racial formation. And we can emphasize this in how we model close reading, right? So thinking about how race is connected to close reading. And this exercise that I'm gonna talk about right now, I kind of lifted from my reading of Kim Hall's *Things of Darkness*. Especially the intro chapter which is about how race is located in places other than the race plays, right?

DADAHBOY: So she's talking in that about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. So the thing that I do, and we can really easily do this when we use open source versions of the plays, is I have students search for key words that are about race, right? So, "Ethiope," "Tartar," if I'm using the example of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. "Moor" or "Negro." And you can follow up on that thinking about other words that connote race, as Patricia Akhimie points out in her book that are words associated with service and cultivation, right?

DADAHBOY: So there's lots of ways that you can do this exercise. And what we look for when we're doing this is frequency, and then we chart the use of each word. When it appears, who says it, what's the connotation, who is it applied to. And then we further categorize all these uses by whether or not they signal moral categories, aesthetic categories or qualities or social qualities. And then students do their close reading in defense of the qualities that they've assigned. And of course they can intersect. There's no just one quality.

DADAHBOY: This close reading is then, is revealing something to us about the plays attitude towards race. And again, it's not about racial coherence. What I'm looking for is the many strands that the play is using to make race, which is really in the service of making whiteness. It is not about establishing any kind of truth claim about non-whiteness. And I'll just leave you with those strategies, and certainly we can talk more about it. Nedda?

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, sure. I'll just be really brief. So if any, again, we can talk more about this in the Q&A. So the example that I'm talking about has to do with, when I teach *Othello*, I always pair it with *Harlem Duet* by Djanet Sears. I love that play. It's a great play. If you haven't read it, you should read it. [LAUGH] But for those of you who are unfamiliar with the play, it's a prelude to *Othello*. It imagines his life before he meets Desdemona or "Mona" in the play. And it imagines that he was once married to Billie, a black woman, and Billie is short for Sybil.

[00:55:50]

MEHDIZADEH: And that's of course a reference to the Sybil, who, in her prophetic fury, sewed the handkerchief. So even though it's a prelude, it has a complicated relationship to time. And what we find is that the play follows the love story of this couple, but three different iterations across time. So you have him and her in the Civil War era. You have he and she in the Harlem Renaissance. And then you have Billie and Othello in the present day.

MEHDIZADEH: And in each of these times timelines, Othello leaves Billie for Mona. So the first time I taught this play, I did not do a good job with it. And it was because I hadn't created the necessary framework from the outset. I sort of took for granted that my students would be able to talk about these issues. That they had developed racial literacy prior to the course. But that was not the case. So the way I learned this was when we were doing a close reading activity in class with Billie and Othello having a conversation.

MEHDIZADEH: And Othello was communicating his desire for a colorblind world. He just wanted to be accepted and to assimilate. He wanted his colleagues to see him as their equal. And Billie just, you know, does not have the same

worldview and really kind of pushed back and talked about how, you know, he could never really escape his history. That he would never be seen as an equal. And not only did my students agree with Othello's point about colorblind, a colorblind world, they revolted against Billie.

MEHDIZADEH: I mean, it was like, you know, your standard angry black woman trope talk. You know, like, Othello doesn't want her anymore, she makes his life harder, she needs to just get over it and move on, what's her problem, why is she so crazy? So this kind of rhetoric. And I was horrified. And managed to get the course in order by the end of the class period. But then I went home immediately and I just redesigned the entire lesson. And I think over the course of the quarter, it ended up being okay.

MEHDIZADEH: But I learned a really valuable lesson. And it's that even though you will always come to instances in the classroom that surprise you, and you will have to kind of correct course from time to time, the best sort of strategy is to take a preventative measure. So what you're doing is you are setting your students up for those difficult moments from the outset of the course. So I spent, for example, more time on Othello's narration of the Sybil.

MEHDIZADEH: We talked more about what that figure means so that when they would get to it with *Harlem Duet*, they were more familiar with who that figure was, right? So those kinds of things. Giving them some more reading to do, contextualizing and more emphasizing different things, so that by the time we get to those moments, they're already prepared. They already have that vocabulary and they're already starting to notice what's really going on. So I think that covers it for the strategies that we wanted to share.

MEHDIZADEH: So unless, Ambereen, you have anything you wanted to add, maybe we can open up to Q&A?

DADAHBOY: [LAUGH] I'm muted. I think we can open it up to Q&A. And I think we have a question already here. The question is, "How do you deal with the majority white undergraduate classroom where there is only one BIPOC student and everyone seems to look to them to be the voice for that?" That is a fantastic question.

MEHDIZADEH: That is a fantastic question, and I'm pretty sure that both of us have, if not majority white, predominantly white classrooms, over the years, things have changed a little bit at UCLA. But, so I'll just kind of answer it first. I teach it the same way. I don't change my course of action, because as Ambereen mentioned earlier, everyone has race. And so it's important for everybody to think about these different ideas.

MEHDIZADEH: With regards to looking to a student of color to speak on behalf of the entire group, I guess it depends on how that comes about. If it's something where a student, like, actually turns to a student of color and says, like, "What do you think," which actually has happened, I will just call it out. I'll say, "No, no, Ambereen is not gonna speak on behalf of everybody from this demographic. That's not her responsibility to do that," right? I would just say it outright.

MEHDIZADEH: But I think in many ways, when you are preparing the students from the beginning, you can do some of that work. Just the last point that I had made about preventive work, right? You start to put things into place so that students are aware...

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm.

MEHDIZADEH: ...that that is problematic, right? So with your community norms or the survey, in the case of your course, Ambereen, the foundational texts that you're teaching them, the earlier conversations, those are the moments where you start to set that that tone so that students don't move in a direction. What do you do, Ambereen?

MEHDIZADEH: I think one of the things that I can do in terms of identity that I occupy is, you know, I put myself in that situation, right? I can't speak for all Pakistani Muslim American women. I can't speak for all Muslim women. I can't speak for all... right? Like, there are ways that you are asking is, for someone to be a native informant, right? And to collude, in a way, to give information that people want to hear, right?

DADAHBOY: So a way to turn it around so it's not necessarily about, or if you feel like you don't occupy another identity, right? I can't speak for everyone who

wears glasses. I can't speak for everyone who has blonde hair. I can't speak for everyone who has blue eyes, right? That's the kind of level of discourse that this question is getting at. Of course I wouldn't do it in a mocking way to the students. But we need to make them aware of the kind of question that is being asked, right?

DADAHBOY: I mean, and if I BIPOC student wants to actually share something of their experience that is relevant, certainly that experience is a place from which we can speak, right? Experience does have authority. But sometimes experience and the text don't interact the same way. So it's always important, I think, to go back to whatever text that we were talking about and think through what the text is trying to do. Because, right? We're not gonna ask what a student of color to tell us what *Othello* thinks or means, right?

DADAHBOY: Because that's Shakespeare's white creation of a black man. And so there's no real blackness there, or essential racial quality there for people to speak on. Certainly they can speak about what *Othello* means to them. That's a different question.

MEHDIZADEH: Right. So it looks like we have another question. What do you do when you realize halfway through the semester that one of your students is not engaging in good faith? This has happened to both of us. Do you want to go first? [LAUGH]

DADAHBOY: Sure, yes. This can be very demoralizing because, of course, we have to have a conversation with that student. And I think the best way to have that conversation with a student is to do it privately and not in front of the whole class. And we need to make them aware of a kind of pattern of behavior that kind of signals to us that this is not in good faith, what it is that they are saying.

DADAHBOY: And in fact to let them know that when they are doing is not engaging in intellectual debate, but they are trying to undermine the work of this course, which can also then be seen as undermining the work of equality and justice, right? And if that's what they want to do, perhaps they can continue to do that, but not in the environment of your classroom. Because you do have control

of your classroom. And I would also, like, let my department chair and my dean know that this is happening.

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, so the hill that I will die on is community norms. They are magnificent, because the way that those work is you invite students to all participate in creating sort of the framework of the course what the rules and regulations are. The way I do it is, it's on a Google Doc. I ask a student to write that down, so it's not even that I'm writing them down for the students. They will write it down. I'll put it on the board, but they'll write it down.

MEHDIZADEH: I ask students to revisit the Google Doc. I bring it up in the next class and ask them if there are any questions. I invite them if you have a concern that you don't want anyone else to hear. You don't want to say it out loud, come email me or talk to me in person. I've done that. So at that point, you know, I kinda leave it at, "Okay, so then we all agree, right?" And so when students are not following those community norms, that is something you can fall back on, right? So when you do call the student into talk, the first thing that I would do is ask a series of questions.

MEHDIZADEH: I've been noticing X, can you tell me more about what's going on? Why are you having response? What's going... you know. Hear what they have to say. If it's because there's actually something that's justifying them as acting out, I deal with that accordingly. But if they are really acting in bad faith, I remind them of the community norms that they agreed to. That these are a policy that they helped to create, and that's how we are going to move forward. And so it's important for them to engage as a community member. And, you know, that that's what I would be expecting from them moving forward.

MEHDIZADEH: And then if it need be, then I would escalate and contact my department. Do we have any more questions?

DADAHBOY: We do. We have another question. "My school is looking into reworking GE requirements to include more coursework on race and/or black history. How can we do this without reinforcing these whiteness-erasing structures you are discussing?" I'll attempt an answer, and then Nedda, jump in. Or do you have an answer already?

MEHDIZADEH: Well, no. I guess I'm trying to make sense of the question. So they are bringing in race and/or black history into the GE requirements, but that incorporating that... Oh, okay. Now I'm understanding it. I need to read it a second time.

DADAHBOY: [LAUGH] Okay. So I would say that if institutions are committed to this kind of race work and introducing coursework on race and black history, they need to put their money where their mouth is, and they need to hire faculty. And they need to hire black faculty to be in charge of this work. Because again, critical race theory is a discipline. Black history, Africana studies, African American literature, these are all disciplines, and they are specialists.

DADAHBOY: Certainly we can read up on them and, like, you know, I could wing it. But in my winging it, [LAUGH] I might fail spectacularly. So that's the first thing. If there's no money, okay, then what do I do? I think then it's very important that we do not wing it. That we read in the field. We read what scholars are doing. Again, these are fields. They are histories. They are methodologies. They are traditions. We need to know what came before. And we need to center the writing and research of scholars of color as well as the text written by black writers.

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, I think that's really important. I think that, you know, you've said it, you mentioned something in passing, and we've talked about this a lot, you and I, before. But you can't have, like, you know, your one text by a black author. So the worry that I would have with something like this is that the GE course is going to, like, assign a particular text, but the person who's teaching it may not be trained in actually contextualizing it fully.

MEHDIZADEH: So I guess I'm not really adding to, like, how to answer that question from what Ambereen was saying. I'm just kind of emphasizing the importance. The fact that you really do have to hire people who are trained in this. You know, you have to become trained yourself so that you can do that work as well. If you are unable to hire someone, then perhaps you can create, like, a symposium or something like that where you can give an honorarium and have people come and talk about how they do this in their courses.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm.

MEHDIZADEH: Okay, looks like we have another question. "Have you identified particular ways in which Zoom meetings and other online teaching platforms might unwittingly sustain racist dynamics? If so, any advice?" Yeah, so this is a really great question. And I think, at least for me, because this is a very new forte for all of us, I think my quick answer to that question is, I don't know yet. We haven't kind of been in the field, so to speak, to do that.

MEHDIZADEH: I think, so one thing that I did in the spring term, which was completely remote because we went on lockdown right before the spring term had started, was really streamlining my class. It gave more space to do more of this kind of work. So whereas I might have, you know, I don't know, assigned, let's say, 10 texts, this time I assigned seven, right? Or five, or something. And I created more space and time in the classroom to be more present, read their responses more carefully, to respond to the students individually. We did *Kindred*. And there were some really problematic things that my students said.

MEHDIZADEH: I responded to each of those students very gently and explained, you know, the need to contextualize in these ways. So, you know, I think one strategy might be to be more focused in what it is that you're trying to accomplish in the classroom, so that way you can create space for the instances where that kind of thing might happen. And then it gives you the time and space to be able to answer it.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I agree. I think that one of the things that I have my students do is write certain kinds of responses. Like, Nedda, you just mentioned. And when those things come up in responses, especially if they're public, like if they're on a Slack post, then it is my obligation to respond to it in a public way, in a gentle way, of course. Because all the students will have read that thing that potentially could be racist, right? And so I need to let me know and offer, again, a correction to this, right?

DADAHBOY: So, scaffolding the actual Zoom meeting with other kinds of written responses, moments, can help fend off things that might happen in the Zoom meeting. But we just have to expect that things might happen. And again, as

Nedda, be preventative, right? So that we're not reacting in the moment, but we've thought about these kinds of pitfalls when we're actually designing our course. So we have another question. Okay, we don't have another question. We're still on this one. I wonder if we're almost out of time. [LAUGH]

MEHDIZADEH: Yeah, it's [INAUDIBLE] happened.

WILLIAMS: I'm afraid so. I'm afraid so. It's been a wonderful conversation, though. Thank you both so much. I will give you the last word, but let me say a few things just to draw this conversation to a close. I'd like to take the moment to thank our scholars for their insights during this conversation, which will help teachers of all kinds cultivate anti-racist pedagogies and create more inclusive classrooms. A special thanks also goes to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their support in this series. And of course we'd like to thank our audience for their wonderful questions.

WILLIAMS: We at the Folger Shakespeare Library ask for your continuing support for our work in so many audiences, from K-12 educators and their students who are served by the Folger Education division, to fellowships and advanced programming for graduate students and faculty run by the Folger Institute, to the award-winning productions of the Folger Theatre. If you are in a position to contribute, we will be grateful. Our institution is founded on philanthropy, and your philanthropy will help us continue to support groundbreaking research, and to share it with wider and more inclusive audiences just as we did today. We hope that many of you will be able to join us next Thursday afternoon to hear Professors David Sterling Brown and Jennifer Stoeber of Binghamton University's English department, discuss "The Sound of Whiteness." Or, "Teaching Shakespeare's 'Other Race Plays' in Five Acts."

WILLIAMS: While the series will then take a hiatus in August, programming resumes in September, and details may be found soon on the Folger's Critical Race Conversations webpage. In closing, we would like to give our speakers the chance to offer any parting thoughts for today's session.

MEHDIZADEH: Thank you so much. Well, I guess what I would say is this is, of course, you know, just, I don't even know how long we've been talking. An hour or whatever it

is. And so it is not exhaustive by any stretch of the imagination. If you're here and you're listening, it's because you're interested, and that is the first step to thinking more critically about this. Please go read more of the ShakeRace scholars' scholarship. Make yourself more familiar with these different topics.

MEHDIZADEH: And give yourself the allowance to learn. Because that's something that is a process, and it will take time. It's not gonna happen overnight. So you just have to keep practicing, and be in dialogue with colleagues. Read, practice, rinse and repeat. [LAUGH] And it's an ongoing process.

DADAHBOY: Mm-hmm, yes. I echo Nedda. And I want to say that I think it's very important that we are committed to building in our students' racial literacy, and committed to building in our own pedagogy race attentiveness. And so if I can only leave you with that, then I would say this is really important. This is critical. Our students are hungry for it. And I think we have to do it. Thank you.

MEHDIZADEH: Thank you all so much.

WILLIAMS: Thank you both.