

[Musical Intro]

[Mic being moved, muffled talking]

Moe: Do you guys wanna like sit closer together

Shifrah: Just talk

Moe: or do we just wanna do...?

Jyoti: Just wanna talk louder? I can switch

Shifrah: Everybody, yell.

Simone: I always yell.

Spencer: I can try and talk louder, cause I was kinda... [mumbling] Hehe.

[Several speaking at once]

Serena: I can switch, if you wanna sit...

Spencer: Okay?

Moe: Yeah

Simone: I can just hold it up

Moe: Because, yeah, because I boosted a lot of it, so like uh just meh

Spencer: Sorry

Simone: Am I supposed to be talking?

Spencer: Uhh.

[Mic being bumped]

Shifrah: Oh I don't know.

Jyoti: You go.

Simone: Oh?

Shifrah: Hold it up!

Serena: Do we not need to...?

[All awkwardly struggling to find words/laughing]

Serena: Is Simone also talking?

Simone: No.

Spencer: No? Okay?

Moe: You need to ask him a question!

Spencer: Oh?

Simone: Oh I need to do it? I thought he was just going to talk.

Serena: Just talk.

Simone: Do you want me - what do you want me to ask?

Moe: Uh, what is your definition of unlearning?

Spencer: Okay.

Simone: Okay.

Serena: Simone's just the interviewer.

Simone: Terrible decision, okay.

Simone: What is your definition of unlearning?

Spencer: Unlearning is what you make of it. It is the disconnect between the experiences of other people and yourself. It is the way you call yourself out, and the way you challenge what you've learned.

[Musical interlude]

Mr. Sra: I feel the learning is something that, needs to be there all the time, um. Regardless of what we learn, um, because we as human beings at the end of the day want to be happy. And what does being happy mean is different for different people. So, sometimes we need to quiet the mind by understanding things it doesn't understand. So just go out or however the way the internet is right now, maybe just go to the internet and research and see whatever that person needs to understand.

Jyoti: Do you think it's important for a person to learn throughout their lives?

Mr. Sra : Oh yes, oh yes, that's that I feel that learning is never-ending and it just whatever we come across and we feel that we need to understand we just go and do it. And i think knowledge is something that helps us understand ourselves, because at the end of the day we all want to have peace of mind. Sometimes it's just needed to - what's needed is to understand things internally or externally.

Jyoti: And then how do you feel about unlearning? Cause I know some people, they're young, they get stuck in their ways, and then later on when society changes, they still haven't changed. So do you think it's important for them to unlearn things? And do you think that it's something that should be cared for throughout their lives? Or would you say it's only up until they're 30 and they can forget about it.

Mr. Sra: Heh heh heh. No, no I think unlearning is part of the process. Umm, the way I try I to do most of the time is if there's something that I do and that I've done long - I've been doing it for a long time, it has become a part of me and become a part of - it's a habit now. And what I try to do is rather than unlearn from that point of view, try and say okay, I'm not going to do it this thing, and what I try to do something different with either the time or when bad habits want to kick in so that I can focus on what I want to learn. And I think unlearning happens as a part of the process. So once I start doing the learning part of things, whatever I wanna learn, the unlearning, I believe, happens automatically.

Jyoti: So, you're saying focus on learning, and unlearning will happen on its own?

Mr. Sra: Yes, absolutely. Because anything in any area, if I don't want to do it, I try to not even think about it, cause if the thought comes, in my mind, it's like okay, this whatever I want to unlearn, hasn't worked in the past, so let me try some different way of doing it. So, always kind of focusing on the positive of what needs to be done, rather than resisting the negative.

[Musical interlude]

Simone: Are there any things in particular that you felt you needed to unlearn about education, or school experience in general?

Serena: Um... for starters, like living in suburbia, basically. There were so many people, that were either middle class, or like upper class that I went to school with. So there was a lot of like things that people and their families did, that I was like "Oh like well, my family like can't do those things or we don't like have the time or the luxuries to." And just being able to come here [university], and like understand that "oh like there's such a range of diversity", with like people of different classes and ethnic backgrounds that, like, I can relate to more people and the interests that I have, I can actually find people that I'm like, "Oh! I can talk to you", and not feel uncomfortable, or that like they're gonna be insulted or offended or, get angry.

Simone: Totally. From that note actually, um, how would you define learning, and how would you define unlearning? And how it resonates with those experiences that you've had now, inside the classroom, and experiences that you've had previously, outside the classroom?

Serena: Well, unlearning that... like again coming to university and being able to like, sit in classrooms where people can talk about like, race and gender and like things, that for the most part of my grade school years was very hush hush and if there were people that were gay or people that were transgender, it was super hard for them, or even like faculty, and other students to talk about because, like everyone's like "oh, this never happens, so like we don't know how to deal with it." Cause like, coming to university there's like huge groups of activists that like support trans people and support gay people and things like that so, it's kinda cool.

Breanna: If you think "what does unlearning mean to you?" And so we just talked about learning as a series that happens as it builds on...

Dan: it's kind of...

Breanna: ...old knowledge, old experiences, old values. So if it keeps building and building...

Dan: mhm...

Breanna: ...then how hard is unlearning?

Dan: It really depends, like, cause for a lot of people learning is just taken for granted right? They just go to school they learn what's taught as, taught at school, it's-most of the stuff is gospel truth, right? It's people aren't really speculative about what they're learning so, sometimes it can be very hard to unlearning when you don't really consider what you've learned before. You don't know-you don't consider information source, you don't consider the implications, it's-but I, I...

Breanna: It's also sort of an explicit learning, like facts are given to you, like a school environment, and then there's...

Together: ...*implicit*...

Breanna: ...learning where things in society are just pushed on to you cause that's the way they are.

Dan: Yeah.

Breanna: so *you* learn in your head, *you* make it up and it's not always...

Dan: True. Yeah.

Breanna: one hundred percent accurate.

Together: So it's...

Breanna: Less so reality and more so your perception...

Together: ...of reality.

Dan: yeah. For my definition, for my view, what I said about learning like it's a structural process. And if you don't really think about what you're learning, and, in compared to unlearning its kind of hard to start to build down those values that you've compounded learning, right?

Breanna: Yes, because unlearning is very much on purpose, whereas learning isn't always on purpose, like I said, its explicit versus implicit, and I think unlearning you have to have a reason to want to learn...

Dan: Mhm

Breanna: ...So it's something you do on purpose. So then you have to unlearn everything you learn on accident you may not even know you learned it, per say.

Dan: yeah that's pretty true

Breanna: ...you just think you *know* it.

Mr Sra: It took uh, me a while to go through it but, but I feel that we only go through this kind of stuff is when we feel something and when we-things don't make sense. And that was kind of the big thing that happened with me going to different countries was like okay well I believed in this thing, this guy-these-not this guy-this, these people believe in different things and I feel mine is right they say theirs is right, so what is it? What is it? And then that's when you start getting into-

that's what I, actually I started getting into, psychology and understanding the mindset and understanding how we react, our emotions, all that. And it's just uh, it's, it's an ongoing process now.

Jyoti: but, didn't you ever think at that point, like, okay, like there's so much conflict; how is he right, and how am I right at the same time? Didn't you ever think "okay, let me just pull out, forget it. I know I'm right, so I'm not even gonna bother to understand him or learn about his... or anything"? I mean that could have been an easier way to get out of it.

Mr Sra: Yeah but then that's called resisting. Anytime you resist something then that creates impression in our mind as well, especially if the resistance is with strong emotions, that makes it even worse. And, uh, the other part also probably is because being in India when, somebody didn't agree and somebody didn't resist, somebody didn't agree with me, uh, and I used to do that, be able to be how could you be this, especially on a religion side that was a big thing during that time. 'Cause two people born the same, one person doesn't know what we thought in religion, in religion what we thought they were supposed to do, and we would be like 'why are you doing that' but then as you grow older I guess that's the other part, because I was 17/18 at that time, and I think, I think, it goes back to the other part, of brain development as well, now I understand that the research that has come out, that our brain doesn't fully develop until 21 at least.

Jyoti: Mhm.

Mr Sra: So, I just didn't have the capacity to reflect, I mean physically, or mentally, the brain wasn't fully developed to have the capacity to understand, and uh, reflect things at that time, and uh, maybe that was one of the differences that happened, that as it got fully developed, it was just like 'oh, okay, let's try to understand the world.'

Jyoti: Um, I feel like it's always a good thing, like, when we come across these kinds of things, to go to someone who's, like, slightly younger than you are. Just because, like, their mind hasn't been fully shaped and hardened and set in their own ways. They're able to, you know, imagine, and see okay, is this actually a good thing?

Mr Sra: Well, that is one of the reasons I love kids. Love kids, uh, to - to play with them. And just seeing kids, and talking to them... Like playing with them is just amazing because, you get this innocence, where their minds, their belief system hasn't hardened yet.

Jyoti: Mhhmm.

Mr Sra: And then, the connection is so much, because they're just doing it because they want to do it. So you're right, it is always good to come across people, and it's good to talk to people... uh, like I go to YMCA... and it's mostly folks that are retired that I meet and sit with and talk to them, and after all they had their experience as well.

Jyoti: Yeah.

Mr Sra: So to learn from them, to understand their experience, so I feel everything is a learning place. Anything we see - people, animals, they all, anywhere we can learn. So there's no need to just, say, okay, I want to leave this place and go to some other place, where we can learn. It's literally here, right now, everywhere.

Jyoti: Yeah.

Mr Sra: And we just need to be aware of it. Awareness is the key. Once we're aware of things, then I believe there's no need to go to different places in the different world... 'cause it just happens.

[musical interlude]

Shif: You know what, like at the end of the day I think I really am an academic, like, I love school and especially when I'm learning something I really really care about, I think it's... you always have these lightbulb moments where you're like "Oh my God, I can finally tie these concepts together, it makes sense." Um, someone else has had this experience and talked about it really articulately, and that is encouraging in a lot of senses. Um, so I think learning is... there's, there's many different ways you can [interpret] it, but um, but yeah just even being able to like, incorporate your learning into your lived experience is pretty valuable. So that you're learning, like, from the stories that people share with you, but also things from the classroom. Um, you know, theorizing those things. Unlearning, I think, is a little bit more challenging, 'cause that's pretty much... the onus is on the individual.

Simone: Mhm.

Shif: And, and you really are the judge of whether you're unlearning, ah, whether you're truly unlearning, or whether you know, you've, chosen to see something and then maybe glaze past it or be like you know what, I don't have time to address this issue in my life right now. Whereas other times, you're like, okay, it's core to my being to, like, understand this and work against this. Whatever it may be, whether it's like... I don't know. I think, unlearning is like really social, and learning can be formal but also social. So you know, you unlearn, like, sexism, you unlearn misogyny, you unlearn how you, in sometimes even passive behavior are violent to people that you should be supporting inherently by the nature of your own existence, like violence against women etcetera. Things like that. Yeah...

15:17 [musical interlude]

Dan: when you and I were having our first discussions of feminism and you know after a couple of months of talking about it, me myself just being rebuffed, cause really none of my arguments did not hold weight, any logical weight. I just realized, like it just hit me, like wow, I'm wrong and I never thought of it. I've just been actively denying it outright without any consideration anything

Breanna was putting forward about feminism. Was just umm, I was wrong, my lightbulb moment was realizing my wrongness of what I had thought before and i was about to start working on the deconstruction of the knowledge i had before. What about you?

Breanna: Definitely a series of moments, I had to learn to unlearn. Now there's a fun statement. Umm, I had to do a bunch of research, look up a bunch of statistics and find people who had the body issues and insecurity issues and wanting to be perfect for men issues like me.

Dan: Mmh

Breanna: And then that's kinda how I found feminism and found out the reason for it. So it was a very long process of learning and it took years and years. Started it in high school actually, and now it's just been getting .. unlearning more and more.

Dan: Just keep going.

Breanna: Unlearning so many things I didn't even realize I learned.

Dan: It's kinda like unlearning is learning.

Breanna: Yeah. Unlearning, yeah, is learning, is almost replacing what you have learnt.

Dan: With what's right.

Breanna: with what is right

Dan: I like that.

Dan & Breanna: Yeahh

[musical interlude]

Jyoti: All right then, how do you view learning for us, like as your children. How do you hope that we go into the future and our mindset is towards learning?

Mr. Sra: The way I uh look at for you guys is that, uh, always be learning, always be uh, you know, whichever way you think you see fit. Yes, going to university to go do your learning is one way to do it, but then there are other ways that we just come across so much information, and just be always in that mode of everyday learning new things and make a difference. Make a difference to yourself, make a difference to the world, and at the end of the day, I feel more than anything, is to have your peace of mind and be happy. I - the only thing I would say is just try not to resist things, uh, the last thing I can say is this: just don't resist things in the mind. Rather than resisting, just focus on the things that you want to do, 'cause the other part I believe will fall by itself once we start focusing on what we want to do; so the time we have in a day, uh do something with it and whatever that is, and what you don't want to do, it automatically will

disappear slowly in the thought process, or in the impression that has already been created in the mind.

18:39

Voiceover: So in the end, have we learned anything, from this look at why the world turned out the way it did, that's of any use to us in our future? Something, I think, that the key to why things change is the key to everything. How easy is it for knowledge to spread, and that in the past, the people who made change happen were the people who had that knowledge, whether they were craftsmen or kings. And the reason why so many people may be thinking about throwing away those crutches is because thanks to science and technology, they have begun to know that they don't know so much, and that if they are to have more say in what happens to their lives, more freedom to develop their abilities to the full, they have to be helped towards that knowledge that they know exists, and that they don't possess. And by "helped towards that knowledge", I don't mean give everybody a computer and say, "help yourself." Where would you even start? No, I mean trying to find ways to translate the knowledge. To teach us to ask the right questions. So what do we do about it? I don't know. But maybe a good start would be to recognize within yourself the ability to understand anything, because that ability there, as long as it's explained clearly enough, and then go and ask for explanations. And if you're thinking right now, "what do I ask for?" - ask yourself if there's anything in your life that you want changed. That's where to start.

20:41

Shif: All right, we're rollin'.

Moe: One more time.

Spencer: All right.

Moe: From the top.

Simone: When Spencer was in soci...

glass breaks

Shif: Shit!

mixed gasps followed by laughter

Shif: Why is this my life?! I'm sorry, just, you know what, it - it's fine.

Moe: *laughing* It's good?

Shif: Just pretend it's fine, it's all good.

Simone: *laughing* Oh this is too good.