

Vincent Munoz ([00:03](#)):

I think what we need to do is explain how our principles of free speech, free inquiry will help serve the cause of justice.

Betty Friedan ([00:13](#)):

The First Amendment, the constitutional freedom of speech, and freedom of conscience that is the bulwark of our democracy.

Bettina Aptheker ([00:22](#)):

There was a passion in what was being said, affirming what people considered a sacred constitutional right, freedom of speech and freedom of association.

Michelle Deutchman ([00:35](#)):

From the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, this is SpeechMatters, a podcast about expression, engagement, and democratic learning in higher education. I'm Michelle Deutchman, the Center's executive director and your host. By tackling the challenges arising on college and university campuses, we highlight how each of our voices is important and why speech matters. Welcome to episode two.

Michelle Deutchman ([01:02](#)):

Today we'll be chatting with Dania Matos, UC Berkeley's vice chancellor for the Division of Equity & Inclusion about being targeted online because of her work and her identity, and how universities can support staff and academics that find themselves in similar situations. But first: Class Notes, a look at what's making headlines. Much coverage over the past few weeks has been devoted to free speech surveys. A Florida law passed in 2019 requires state public universities to survey students and faculty members' political beliefs annually beginning this year. Many opposed the survey, including Florida's statewide faculty union, which sued to enjoin the surveys from being distributed. They argued that the surveys function as political litmus test, and ultimately violate faculties' First Amendment Rights. A federal district court judge was unconvinced, and the survey was released earlier this month. The union however, is urging that students and faculty not participate.

Michelle Deutchman ([02:03](#)):

There was a similar kerfuffle at University of Wisconsin over a different survey that solicited student perceptions of campus free speech. Ultimately, the dissemination of the Wisconsin survey was postponed because of backlash, including the surprise resignation of an interim chancellor who had raised concerns about the survey, as well as other questions surrounding the survey's funding. All of this serves as further disheartening evidence of how legislators and outside groups are successfully co-opting higher education as part of the culture wars.

Michelle Deutchman ([02:36](#)):

It seems that last month's controversies over invited speakers were not an anomaly. There has been much back and forth about former Vice President Pence's visit to University of Virginia in mid-April. While the talk went forward without incident, I found an editorial by the board of the Cavalier Daily, UVA's independent daily news organization, to be concerning. The piece argued that hateful rhetoric is violent and therefore a platform should be denied to anyone espousing such rhetoric, including Pence.

While it is true that words can be harmful, deciding to censor speech based on that assessment - a subjective one - is a dangerous way to decide who can be heard. Surely we will have more opportunities to discuss this, but now it's time to turn to our focus today, leading with love in the face of targeted harassment.

Michelle Deutchman ([03:28](#)):

Today's featured guest is Dania Matos, the vice chancellor for the Division of Equity & Inclusion at the University of California Berkeley. Dania started in this role in August 2021 after serving as the inaugural associate chancellor and chief diversity officer at the University of California Merced. A lawyer by training, Dania served in the Virginia public defender's office before transitioning to higher education. Over the past decade, she's led equity and inclusion work in the private, nonprofit, and government sectors. Dania and I had the pleasure of connecting two years ago when she and her team at Merced received a Center VOICE award to host the university's first free speech week, which was organized around the theme, "Can speech truly ever be free?" Since then she's been an ardent supporter of the Center, and we recently featured her in an installment of our Ask the Experts on how to ensure free expression, and diversity and inclusion on campus. Dania has generously agreed to join us today to discuss her experience being targeted online as a result of her work and her identity. Dania, I appreciate your willingness to talk with us and share your story.

Dania Matos ([04:38](#)):

Thank you so much, Michelle, for the opportunity and the platform. I'm really honored to be here with you.

Michelle Deutchman ([04:43](#)):

Just for some background for our listeners. I learned about Dania's experience while collaborating on the creation of a resource guide for academics at University of California Irvine who've been targeted online. UCI's Chancellor Howard Gilman, who happens to also be one of the amazing co-chairs of the Center's National Advisory Board, noticed this taking place more frequently. And he asked the Center and the Campus Counsel's office to create a resource to support academics who find themselves targeted online. While putting this together, I started hearing not only from faculty but also from staff who had been targets as well. And that in turn led me to Dania and her experience. But before we turn to the events of this past December, Dania, I want to ask if we can go back in time a little bit further. Can you start by telling us what drew you to diversity, equity, and inclusion work?

Dania Matos ([05:33](#)):

Wow. I love... Back in time, probably into my mother's womb, Michelle, I always share the most important parts of my bio are that I was born and raised by a single mom who ensured that I knew that I was inheriting a struggle, and that I had a responsibility to do something about the world that I was inheriting. And that's something that really stuck with me as a child. So before this work was actually named that, I think it was really embedded into who I am, and how I approached the world. I think law was a career that I picked because I knew I had a big mouth, and I had to pick a career that would help me with that advocacy piece, and get into some good trouble as we like say. And so as this work started formulating both in the creation of the positions of chief diversity officers and all those things, for me the thread was really of, where can I be of value and in service, and where can I create the most impact?

Dania Matos ([06:30](#)):

And so this work is work that is deeply embedded into who I am. And as I navigated private, public, nonprofit sectors, particularly you mentioned the federal public defense world, I'm really thinking about systemic oppression, and how it shows up in every single one of those spaces. And the thread of my client's stories was mostly, no one saw the greatness in them or asked them to step into it. And that they were confronting of systems that were built not for them, but to incarcerate them or to keep them in lack of access and opportunities. And so I kept thinking of, how could I make it where I'm not celebrating one less day in jail or one less sentencing guideline, but I'm truly celebrating anti-oppression and freedom?

Dania Matos ([07:19](#)):

And so I thought about higher education, and the power it has for that. Although it's also a system that we are truly trying to create and build for all. And so the trajectory made perfect sense to me. I always tell people, "Your journey only needs to make sense to you." Because as I was coming into this work most people were, including my own family, "What is that? What's a vice chancellor for equity and inclusion? What does that mean? You're leaving a government job." And so, so much of that for me was saying, "No, this is where I want to make an impact, and this is what's calling my purpose at that same time." And ensuring that I'm really being of service and value in the different spaces I navigate. And so the work is in me. There was no drawing to, there was really no separation for me.

Michelle Deutchman ([08:08](#)):

That is really beautiful. And when you said that it probably started in the womb, I wanted to laugh out loud except we're not supposed to do that. So that was already a very inspirational and wise answer. And I can definitely relate to the journey thing. When I left a big firm, I think, everyone was like, "What? You're leaving a firm to go to a nonprofit?" It's like, I wish I had known what you knew which was the journey only needs to make sense to me. So as we move through your journey, one of the things that really spoke to me in your bio is you state, "Dania leads with vision and love, centering people and community first, and creating change through collective wisdom." And I was hoping you could talk a little bit about this philosophy, and how you elevate it in your actual day-to-day work.

Dania Matos ([08:52](#)):

Absolutely. When I think about that, Michelle, I think of that the whole, what the world needs now is love, sweet love. And love is a word that we don't use in our professional spaces enough, and we certainly don't use it in higher ed. And one of the things I really think about is, I'm from Puerto Rico, and for those of you who don't know it's still a Commonwealth of the United States. And in my undergrad career I studied the colonial subjectivity. And that individual nature of approach on life is really a colonial approach. And so as we think about collective wisdom and whose expertise we're valuing and knowledge, it's really from this collective standpoint, which is more culturally how I grew up in Puerto Rico. And so in my own experience and my own identities and the way I show up, it's really shifting that from that individual colonial perspective to really that collective good and that collective wisdom. And the fact that we all have something to contribute, and it's not always associated to the letters behind your names. This is coming from someone who has them.

Dania Matos ([10:03](#)):

And so really thinking about how you really show up and affirm everyone's full humanity. And we talk about authenticity, and authenticity being intentional for me, because when I show up authentically it's a mirror for other people to show up authentically as themselves and they see themselves reflected in

that. And so that's been really powerful for me. I have those moments where I think about, "Do I wear this? Do I say this?" And then I always step into the yes, because we need to shift the narratives of what these roles look like, or what the approaches look like and make room for everyone. So for me, centering people and community first is really centered in that. And bringing all that collective knowledge and experience, and not just from a publication standpoint, but that access to knowledge which we all have to give, and the expertise that we really comes from living our own lives. We are experts of our own journey.

Dania Matos ([11:01](#)):

And so for me, it's really doing that and approaching the work from that collectivist perspective, and also having the work embedded into who I am and that authentic reciprocity. When I think about institutions of higher ed, I think about how this is heart work too and not just head work. So really bringing that heart and that humanity. We are not just the work we do. We are people too. And if there's a time we've learned that certainly has been navigating not only the pandemic, but the racial reckoning in this country. And in some ways I think we forgot that, and we got a little bit away from that and life has forced us to, and do that, and reimagine and rethink things.

Dania Matos ([11:44](#)):

So when I say lead with love, it's truly that centering people first and allowing and creating spaces to allow their full humanity, which for so many of us as first generation equity practitioners, it's really thinking about how do we create structures to remake practice. We've got 400 plus years of stuff that we've been doing. And so how do we remake that, and practice that, and really center humanity. So for me, it's telling people, I love them, and showing it in my work.

Michelle Deutchman ([12:17](#)):

That is really beautiful. And even as you're talking, it's making me think about all the times when I probably suppressed, not just love but affection, and warmth, and authenticity. Thinking that in order to seem professional, those kinds of feelings and emotions [should] be hidden. And wanting to fight against that. But then every once in a while having someone say, "Oh, you need to seem a little more serious." As if that is the arbiter of what success is. So thanks for helping to free all of us a little bit. And I also want to say you are the first person on this podcast to sing, and you just told me that we might need a theme song for this podcast and it might be you. So I'm imagining that you come from a singing background. Is that right?

Dania Matos ([13:02](#)):

I'd be so honored. Oh my gosh, I started laughing and smiling. I was on Broadway when I was younger, Michelle. And funny story, I was about 12 years old, so credit to my mom, that amazing mom that I talked about. But she said, "You can choose this or school, but you can't choose this." And of course I thought I was being given a choice and I'm like, "Of course I go to school." And so when I finished law school, she was like, "Oh, you can go on back to Broadway now." And of course I was like, "Mom..." I just told her I had promised her a dramatic life. And if you ask her I definitely have delivered in so many spaces and places. But to your point of questioning, it still happens. I have that split second decision of...

Dania Matos ([13:41](#)):

Oh, I'll tell you a story. I used to resist wearing the color red for the longest time, particularly as someone who identifies as Latina, where I thought about the exotification and all those things. And I

said, "You know what, I look good in red. Red is my color." And I remember I used to have this red power suit. Man, I won so many things in that suit. So now I not only not resist red, but the color palette in my closet is nice and bright and very authentic to who I am from the Caribbean. And so I really encourage you all to show up authentically as yourselves. And I would be happy to record the theme song to this.

Michelle Deutchman ([14:17](#)):

I knew I heard a professional voice. So anyway, that's amazing. Part of me is like, "Wait, now I want to talk about Broadway." But we're going to stay focused on this particular strand of your journey. Obviously you're an incredible trailblazer. And one of the things that really struck me is that you've served, not just once, but twice as the inaugural chief diversity officer. First at the College of William & Mary, and then at UC Merced. And I'm curious, what was it like to chart a course in a place without a roadmap, so to speak? And maybe you could detail some support you have, maybe some of the resistance you might have met.

Dania Matos ([14:51](#)):

Yeah. I've been reflecting on this a lot because my role in Berkeley is the first non-inaugural role I've had. So it's been giving me some time to think about what it means to be first. And when they say the professional mimics real life. I'm the eldest in my family. I was the first in my family to do a lot of things. So it's not on accident that I had these first inaugural roles. I'll tell you what was exciting about it, or what is exciting about it is, you get to set the standard, the tone, and really build. Not to say that there isn't stuff. But when you think about being inaugural at these institutions. William & Mary is second oldest institution after Harvard, and then UC Merced was like a jump in time to 15, 16 years old now.

Dania Matos ([15:38](#)):

So for me, it was thinking about what is the legacy that I'm planting? What is the sustainable structure that I want to build out? And it was like a nice palette, clear palette. And for those of you who are artistically inclined, I am not much of a painter. I think I still do the paint by numbers. But there was a certain freedom with that that came. And knowing that what you set the tone for really will continue on. And you want to build things that are going to last and have an impact for centuries to come. And so I wouldn't say there was resistance. But I think that when you are the first in a role or creating something from the ground up, it really is on you to help define that and build the partnerships to help build and shape that.

Dania Matos ([16:25](#)):

So in some ways, some folks don't know what to give you or what you need. And so luckily another theme in my life is being a demand for what you need. I learned that navigating my academic career, where I would see some of my classmates go to the professor and say, "Sorry. I can't take the exam on that time, I'm going to be vacationing." And that's not the way I grew up. And I was like, "Oh wow, you can be a demand for what you need and ask those things." And so that comes up for me. And so learning to be a demand what I needed in those roles was really important, but not necessarily what I needed in my role but what the institution needed. What the community needed. And from a place that was serving them from where they are and what they need and not making assumptions of what that was.

Dania Matos ([17:07](#)):

So again, that collaborative process that we talked about before in building out those roles, I went on listening tours on both roles. But also reflecting back for the community, ensuring that I got it right. And those listening tour reports and strategy is what built out the structure. And I go back and I'm so proud to see the seeds you planted, or the conversation and the literal blood, sweat, and tears that you laid are flourishing. So I look forward to seeing UC Merced many years down the line. I won't live to see the hundreds of years it'll be in existence, but also William & Mary, and all of that.

Dania Matos ([17:44](#)):

So very supportive. I think people for the most part are very excited about helping you build and grow something, and really invested in success. Resistance less so in those place, but coming from a place of only thinking about it in one way, and not coming at it from a place of possibility. You don't know what you don't know in these roles. So to those weighing whether or not to come into inaugural role, I would encourage them to do so because it's incredibly rewarding and exciting, and so full of possibilities.

Michelle Deutchman ([18:18](#)):

I can really relate to that. I mean the Center is different than an inaugural vice chancellor position. But I do remember a colleague saying to me to think of it like seeds. And that you're just throwing out as many seeds as possible, and some of them are going to grow, and some of them are going to flourish, and it's going to take time, and you just have to wait. And I've really tried to remember that. And in the four years I can look back and feel like, "Okay. Yes, we're growing." And now another branch on our tree is this podcast. So I really resonate with that. And I know you know this about me, Dania. I'm a Cal Bear, graduated in 1997. My dog is named Berkeley. I met my husband at Cal. So I have to ask you a Cal question, which is, what is your vision? Is there a specific vision you have for moving forward in your Berkeley role? Especially given that there have been some shoulders that you've gotten to stand on and you're not the first.

Dania Matos ([19:10](#)):

I love that, Michelle. I did not know all those Berkeley connections, so go Bears. Even more excited. I knew I liked you, I just like you even more now. So Berkeley, wow. It's been an interesting eight months. I started my role during COVID, and so in many ways, still making my way around navigating meeting 60,000 people that we serve certainly starting with a division. This is the largest division I've led of about 180 people. And as someone who's very much a reach out and connect with people, it's something I've been missing. And so being intentional about how much it and how I do that. So one of the things we're really working on is the division I lead at Berkeley started in 2007, and it was the first in the system.

Dania Matos ([20:00](#)):

And so for me, it's thinking about what's the next phase? What does it look like? How can Berkeley continue to shape the vision of diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice strategy, not only across the UC, but across the state, and frankly with the platform we have, across the world. And that's been so exciting. For me, it's around a Berkeley thriving framework. So what does it mean to thrive at Berkeley? I came across a really great Dr. Maya Angelou quote today, which said, "My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive. And to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style." And that really spoke to me. Thinking about that passion that so many of our faculty, staff, and students bring to Berkeley, and our research excellence. And what would it mean to have thriving excellence?

Dania Matos ([20:48](#)):

We're a campus that is... I lead a division that serves formally incarcerated students or undocu scholars. Folks that are really navigating all these structures that weren't built for them. So what would it mean to affirm their humanity, and really build it as a place that thrives? And so in terms of accomplishing that, really building out, again, that sustainable structure. While it's not an inaugural approach, the role, the approach is the same. And thinking about how do we really create, recreate, have folks think about it in a different way, and really think about transformation and not just change. Things change every day. But if we truly want things to transform, we can't go back to the way things were. Especially COVID forced us to do that and we're still in it. And I think this back to business as usual is a misstep. We have the opportunity to pause, reflect. I often tell my division, "Rest is all right."

Dania Matos ([21:46](#)):

So how do we really build Berkeley as a place where folks are really thinking about wellness in all those aspects? So academically, professionally, holistically in all those different places, and personally. And we're inviting that in. If we were a culture that rewarded doing less, I feel like we might be at a better place on that thriving framework. But it's do more and more and more. And that's natural to folks who are high achieving and excelling. But that moment to pause and that intentional reflection is certainly something I want to accomplish. I started my tenure here on a listening tour, around the themes of truth telling, trust, and transformation. And so really building Berkeley a place where truth telling can happen, and it's cultivated with trust and transformation where we all lead with love.

Michelle Deutchman ([22:38](#)):

That is wonderful. And part of me is a little bit sad to be moving away from this discussion of your career trajectory generally, and move to this targeting that happened to you. And I don't know whether you would actually articulate it as being transformative. I certainly know that it had an impact on you. I do want to use this podcast as an opportunity for you to share what happened to you. And I think I just want to ask you, have you ever been targeted online before because of your work or your identity? And can you just share with the listeners what happened, and why they were pointing the finger at you?

Dania Matos ([23:14](#)):

Thank you, Michelle. I had to think about this a little bit. And no, I had not been targeted before, but I did talk about this incredible Berkeley platform that drew me here. And it's also the same platform that I think put me on that visibility for that targeting. I think when you're standing and advocating, and creating space for others to speak for themselves, there's a misconstruing that can happen. And so let me talk about what happened and then talk about the framing of it. So I was checking my email. I have a general email account from my office as well. And I started seeing some very vulgar language in the subject lines. And there were about three or four at the time. And I opened it up and a lot of them were an attack on my identity as a woman of color, my identity as a Latina. Some were commenting that I made too much money.

Dania Matos ([24:13](#)):

And I couldn't piece together where it was coming from. It was certainly outside emails. In my head, I'm like, "Well, what did I do? I'm just getting started here." And so I have Google alerts both for the university and my name, so when it comes up. However, I have the digest version. So at the end of the day, I'll get it. And sure enough at the end of the day, I got an alert with my name that was connected to an article on Breitbart with my picture. It had my salary, and it was connected to a tweet that had gone

out by one of the key architects of the anti-critical race theory movement. Who pretty much was not okay with who I was, the amount of money I'm making, and likened my work to critical race theory. Which if they had looked it up, they would see the distinctions in scholarly pieces.

Dania Matos ([25:08](#)):

So the reactions to that were everyone who was reading that article and decided to reach out to me and take it out on me in very hostile, toxic ways. It was that sense of lack of psychological safety or physical safety, and thinking about how vile this has gotten. Especially in the zeitgeist that we're in, and really having to treat this as serious. Especially in these times, we can't dismiss these things. I think the hate in our country has just increased, frankly, maybe with the move online. The lack of understanding, the lack of absolutely being able to connect. The idea that giving to one group is taking away from another. And without understanding the systems that are promulgating that.

Dania Matos ([25:58](#)):

And so it was one of those things... Prior to that I had had a shorter piece where I was doing an event on campus. And again it got misconstrued and I was on a website. But it did not precipitate the amounts of emails that I got from this. And so it was nearing the end of the semester where I was already really exhausted. And really it was one of those spaces of like, "Oh gosh, not this, and what do I do about it?"

Michelle Deutchman ([26:28](#)):

Well, you're leading me right to my next question, which is, what did you do, and how did you know what to do?

Dania Matos ([26:35](#)):

I felt like I stared at the screen for a very long time, Michelle. I really froze because, one, I couldn't believe that someone would take time out of their day to just spew this hate to someone else who they did not know. Two, I very much started looking at my immediate surroundings. And then I started saying, "Well, is there anything on campus? Where do I go? What do I even Google? Targeting online." And I reached out to my interim chief of staff, shout out to all chiefs of staff out there, really critical role. And shared with them what was happening. And they connected me to talk to someone else who connected me to someone else. And there were a lot of emails and going back and forth. I of course reached out to my boss to say what was happening. At the same time I was supposed to... My family was supposed to come to my space, and I decided against it and had to pivot plans quickly, and went to where they are so that I could keep them safe.

Dania Matos ([27:40](#)):

So this idea that my presence close to them would bring harm or close to anyone at the end of the year when we're supposed to be celebrating the end of the year, and all of those things was really hard. And in some ways I isolated myself because I did not want to bring danger to anyone else. And as someone who is such a people person and community connected, that was one of the hardest part about it. And one of my connections, they asked me to reach out to UCPD. And I feel like my lawyer skills came in very handy. I also reached out to my team. I think that process of thinking of, "How do I care for myself at this moment when I'm not doing that?" And part of that was knowing that I could not stay in that inbox because more and more emails were coming in.

Dania Matos ([28:26](#)):

And even though you learn that they don't mean anything, you're still a human being and you're still reading these things about you. And I'll say they wrote things to me that as a female identifying that I don't think they would write to someone who was male identifying. From body, all those different things. Just really, really hateful and vile. And so for me, it was, how do I care for myself? And so I sent my team an email. I was also really transparent with my team and shared what I was navigating. Again, in that authenticity, there were tears involved. I was very transparent about safety and feeling scared. And I asked them to meet and come up with a plan. Because I always think about how can I turn what's happening me to me for good? And how can I make sure this doesn't happen to anybody else? Or that they know the community they have or the resources they have.

Dania Matos ([29:22](#)):

And so my team is phenomenal and came up with some ideas. And so my communications director at the time started going through the emails and also helped navigate some of the information that the police department needed to pursue things. And so copy pasting, but also ensuring that they were taking some of the labor so that I could care for myself. I called my family, that mom that I spoke of and my grandmother and siblings, and they were outraged. They were so upset. I think mom especially went into protective mode and wanting to know who, what, when, where, why. So I think my going home where she could physically see me and ensure I was safe was also really important to do that.

Dania Matos ([30:09](#)):

And so for me, it was one of those collective at the same times, but really trying to center, how do I take care of myself in this moment and give myself to pause and reflect? I also reached out to our employee wellness and wellbeing, and had a really good talk with them in terms of like, "What are the resources available?" And all of those things. But these were all additional meetings that in a schedule that I was already jampacked. And so the priority was really like, "Hey, pause, reset." We were coming up to a break in school, and so I just said, "Let me get all the information I need so that I can think about what the next steps are going to be for me."

Michelle Deutchman ([30:53](#)):

It's really incredible that at such a difficult moment you had the presence of mind to reach out to the resources that you have. The resource I told you that I was putting together. You did all of the things that you're supposed to do, which is to ask somebody else to vet your voicemail messages or your inbox, and to reach out for support and help other people get information and help keep you secure. And earlier Dania, you talked about trust, transformation, and truth telling, which was your listening tour. And I think that the next tee is transparency, which is what you talked about, which is that people might not have been able to support you if you hadn't been transparent about what had happened and the impact that it was having on you.

Michelle Deutchman ([31:36](#)):

And you revealed to me the intense emotional and physical toll that this took. And you also mentioned that this type of experience is leading people to leave student facing and public facing jobs in the university. There was a large piece in The Chronicle of Higher Education recently about student affairs folks basically fleeing the profession. And I'm wondering what can universities from your perspective be doing so that they're better prepared to support staff and faculty that find themselves the focus of these types of campaigns because you weren't the first and you certainly won't be the last?

Dania Matos ([32:10](#)):

One of the things that was the most striking about this experience, Michelle, is that I did not realize how many people were suffering in silence. And by that I mean that the more I shared my story, the more others reached out to me through different avenues to tell me they had gone through something similar, or that they were currently navigating something. And I was shocked. I was also realizing that they didn't feel like they had the space to talk about it. And I really wanted to lift up how, especially if you're in the work of diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice now, which frankly in my opinion should be everyone. This is something that is now becoming a part of it, and it shouldn't be. So when I think about what universities can do is much of what you did.

Dania Matos ([32:57](#)):

Having a space or platform, or some guidelines, or a one pager, that this is where you go for the resources, and this is... So these are some steps to do. But also having that be part of the onboarding or checking in in all of those spaces. I learned that some of our students have navigated this when they run for some certain positions on campus. And they also did not know where to go and what to do. Particularly if it's, let's say, a body that's not necessarily covered by the institution. So I think one of the places having a centralized place and hub, and even if it's different for students, faculty, community, and frankly maybe even alumni, who are in positions involved with the institution, it would be important to have that.

Dania Matos ([33:45](#)):

Also, thinking about how they can take the labor. It's the same system of how to not have the survivor thinking about their own care, but really creating support systems so they can go and talk to. I was given a lot of resources and I was inundated, but all of it fell on me to reach out and do that outreach. So thinking about when this happens, what are the things we do. Do we offer to remove them from their space and pay for a night in a hotel or something? Do we automatically set things up for them. Even if I don't take advantage of it, knowing that it's there and would take away from all the things I had to think about and do. So even that, I put together, "Well, what do I need in this moment or right now?" And then gave it to my team to come together around it, was really important. Because I was, you know, walking, looking behind my back.

Dania Matos ([34:44](#)):

I remember that same evening I had to go to campus to meet with some of my team. And they were like, "Did you walk here by yourself? Let us walk you to your car." I hadn't even thought about that. So offering that transportation from wherever they're going and navigating, and that physical safety. Bodyguard, security, all those different things because we do have to treat this as serious right now. And so as much as possible, thinking about what are the things that I can take off, the labor I can take off this person that's navigating this so they could really just pause to curl up and cry or think about what they need, or make a list, or frankly just breathe and sleep, and rest, and all those different things that you don't think about in the moment.

Michelle Deutchman ([35:29](#)):

Right. I mean you're talking about a redistribution of labor. And it's very uniquely American that we expect that people are going to be able to manage all kinds of situations. I mean everything from professionally and motherhood, you know, on their own. And what you're really talking about is looking through a different paradigm, which is one where the person who's being targeted isn't the one that's

also paddling with the oar. I guess one of my questions for you, Dania, as someone who's been in DEI work for a long time now, if you were going to talk to someone who was entering the field and they asked you, "Is this part of the job? Is this what I should expect is that I might be targeted because of who I am, or the things I believe in?" How would you answer that? And what do you say to people who may feel a little bit reticent to enter positions where visibility is very tremendous?

Dania Matos ([36:24](#)):

Thanks, Michelle. I wanted to go back to your point earlier because you made me think that whole like, "We're making you responsible for your own care." And I think you said very American, is that whole individual approach that we talked about before, versus is what I'm talking about is that collective thing. So there in case and point again is another example of how we need to shift it from that colonized individual, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, to this collective care and community of when it impacts one of us, it impacts all of us. So to shift that to your current question around getting into this work, I wish it wasn't. I wish it wasn't part of the work. And certainly this is the first time I navigated it in such a visible large scale of a way. And I remember my immediate reaction was, again, to take care of myself and my family, and connect with my team and be transparent about what's going on.

Dania Matos ([37:20](#)):

But the second piece of it, this happened right on the heels of Bell Hooks' passing. And as I was navigating this, someone sent me one of their quotes, which was, "They don't want your power to exist. They're not afraid because of your power, they just don't want it to exist." And I remember thinking about that, and really grounding myself in, "No. I'm going to keep going because what they want is for me to cower, and they want me to sob." And I have an incredible privilege and platform to lead at an institution like Berkeley. And that's the reason we're going to keep going because we are committed to this and they're scared. And like I said, I haven't even really gotten started, so just you wait. And at the same time I had to think about what are the things I need to put in place as we move forward in that thriving commitment, as we move forward in transforming our campus communities and the world.

Dania Matos ([38:19](#)):

And so for me, it was, "Okay. How do I continue to build out those support systems." Frankly, here, how do we get those guide sheets and things done for others at Berkeley so that we have them. Now that I've gone through the experience I know, and I can certainly share with others. So I don't want that to distract anyone from entering this, but it's also an important piece to be honest about and bring visibility to so that as you are exploring these opportunities, you can ask that of your potential employers. Of how do you support folks who have been doxxed online or targeted online? What are those pieces? And if they're not in place, encourage that to be in place or maybe that's not the place for you. So thinking about that, I think knowing is half the battle, and then putting those things in place.

Dania Matos ([39:10](#)):

But really having a community that can come together and stand in radical resistance and possibility is so powerful. Because one of the things was part of that isolation and caring for myself to get out of that was recognizing that I had a community of people who not only had gone through this, but were also rooting me on and there to protect myself and my voice, and that which was happening. And so I tell folks to go in knowing that, but also knowing that you are incredibly powerful. And you know who you are, and who you're being really is going to transform the world. And so really encouraging that, and preparing yourself for all those different pieces. I was already someone who naturally loves all those

cameras and all those things. And I only think I got more knowing about the research and what's out there, which is possible.

Michelle Deutchman ([40:07](#)):

Right. I was thinking about that, you bring to this work, and obviously to this experience so much of a lifetime of this journey. And I'm wondering you mentioned students also being targeted, and they may not have that same presence, and certainly don't have the benefit of the years that have passed. And I'm wondering if when you work with students who've experienced this type of online targeting, is there anything specifically you tell them that might be different than what you would say to a colleague, for instance?

Dania Matos ([40:37](#)):

I'm pretty consistent, Michelle. And I think that's part of the authenticity in term of speaking. But I'm certainly am now able to share that I come from a place of knowing and deep empathy with it. And I also share my own processing and how I've come to be. That that happens because people are scared and not okay. And don't let that have you be afraid of standing up for what you believe in, or running for that office or a position. And then structurally thinking about, and working with campus partners to not make that so, and to have there be repercussions for that behavior.

Dania Matos ([41:16](#)):

One of the hardest things about the online threat piece, especially as an attorney, was people do that because they think and know that there won't be any repercussions. I think the internet and the online world is, you can do that from hundreds of miles away and not be that. In my case, that's actually what ended up happening because they were outside of California, I could not pursue... Well, I asked to pursue prosecution and they couldn't do it. And so for me it was more of a matter of principle. There needs to be consequences for that behavior. And as a society shutting that down and saying that is not okay to do to anyone. And so to the students, it's the same. They're afraid of your power. And you've got a team of people to support you, and we're working on the things to help in these spaces.

Michelle Deutchman ([42:08](#)):

I'm really pleased that you said what you did about the law because I know from my experience as an attorney that one of the hard parts has been realizing the limits of the law. And this is like a perfect example of how this is not something that is going to be able to be remedied by the legal or jurisprudential system. And that's why I think it's so important to be building other kinds of infrastructure. And of course my hope is that for the Center and for this podcast, is that it's going to serve to educate and help others. And that it's going to help build community among higher education professionals, many of whom face the kind of challenges that you have faced.

Michelle Deutchman ([42:43](#)):

And I'm just incredibly grateful to you Dania, not just because you gave us so much of your valuable time, but because retelling traumatic stories is hard work. And I really want to recognize your willingness to do that. And I guess I want to give you a chance before we close, is there anything that you want to add that you haven't had a chance to talk about? And then I'll have one final question for you.

Dania Matos ([43:05](#)):

I just want to thank you too, Michelle. I think that part of when I thought about how do I turn this into a moment of power, and to ensure this doesn't happen to anyone it's coming onto a platform like this and being able to talk about it. And frankly, either inspiring or encouraging someone, or maybe having someone refrain from targeting someone else online. This is so much a part of my own healing, and in thinking about that, so thank you. I thought about it, and I said, "What are the ways to do it?" And then your invitation came. So I think that was really powerful, and thank you for the opportunity.

Michelle Deutchman ([43:41](#)):

Well, like you I feel like I'm just getting started. I feel like this podcast is just the beginning. I think there's lots of possibilities. And I hope that we and the UC system together can continue to create ways to respond. And with that, I always want to bring us back to what the Center is about, which is free speech and civic engagement. And I'm wondering if there's one thing that you would suggest to people that they can do today to advance civic engagement or expression from your perspective.

Dania Matos ([44:07](#)):

Yeah. I think that so much of it is going up to showing up authentically, and thinking about intent versus impact of what we say, or what we don't say, and who we are and how we show up. So definitely that's come up so much in the course of not only campus life, but every career I've navigated, and frankly every interaction. Because we're human beings, and human beings were made to be in community. So I know this time and season we're in when we're not, can feel that way, and frankly has moved it on to this online platform. But the same values and ethos apply to that. And so as you're thinking about that, engaging civically and free speech is, how can you infuse leading with love into that space? How can you bring heart to that and to those principles? And I think that that's not something that... We've lost a little bit of that, so I think we can get back to that.

Michelle Deutchman ([45:05](#)):

I agree. And I think you're going to inspire people to do just that. And again, I want to thank you, and I want to say to our listeners that in two weeks we will be back to tackle another challenge. This is a challenge that's facing primary, secondary, and higher education. It's book bans and other attempts by legislators to stifle ideas from being taught and discussed in our classrooms. We'll be joined by Deborah Caldwell-Stone, the director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom at the American Library Association. And we'll look forward to talking to you then. Thanks again, Dania.

Dania Matos ([45:37](#)):

Thank you so much. Thank you everyone.