Vincent Munoz:

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:

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

Bettina Aptheker:

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:

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. Happy New Year and welcome to season two. We are excited to kick off this new year by being in conversation with author and University of Pennsylvania professor Sigal Ben-Porath. Sigal's newest book, Cancel Wars: How Universities Can Foster Free Speech, Promote Inclusion and Renew Democracy, is out this week. It touches on so many of the issues that are at the heart of the Center's work. Before we talk with Sigal, however, let's turn to Class Notes: a look at what's making headlines. Just when you thought you had your fill a free expression news coming out of Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis sent a memorandum requiring all public Florida colleges to send his office information on the use of state resources for any programs and courses related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and critical race theory.

Of particular concern is the memo's request for the name of the faculty and staff who are involved in teaching and administration of these classes and programs. Just asking for this type of information can chill speech and academic freedom. Universities are supposed to comply by January 13th. We will keep you updated on what happens next. In an end to the largest higher education strike in United States history, a six-week walkout of 48,000 UC graduate workers, academic researchers, and post-doctoral scholars from across the UC 10 campus system, employees voted to return to work. While graduate union members received raises in base pay as well as promises of benefits like transit passes and dependent child healthcare, not everyone is satisfied. The length of the contracts are short - until 2025 for graduate students - and housing prices in California will likely continue to be unaffordable, so folks may be back at the negotiating table as early as next year. In the meantime, UC universities and students have been forced to reckon with their dependence on these graduate workers and are endeavoring to overcome the strike's effects on students' educations and the timely processing of fall quarter and semester grades.

A story of art, religion, and academic freedom has garnered the attention of the higher education community around the country. In an art history class at Hamline University, an adjunct professor showed paintings of the prophet Muhammad. Before doing so, the professor included a warning about the discussion of the image in the syllabus of the course, and gave students the opportunity to choose not to view the paintings as some sects of Islam prohibit viewing depictions of the prophet. A student in the class, also president of the university's Muslim Student Association, reached out to administrators about the incident which she found shocking and upsetting. Her complaint resulted in the university sending an email to the community, characterizing the incident as "islamophobic." The university also

rescinded an offer to renew the instructor's contract. The response to the university's decision was fast and fierce with free speech advocates and academics arguing that this type of a reaction compromises the promise of education and will have a chilling effect on teaching. In a press release, PEN America called this one of "the most egregious violations of academic freedom in recent memory."

And now to today's guest. Dr. Ben-Porath has been teaching at Penn's Graduate School of Education since 2004. She's an associate member of both the political science and philosophy departments at Penn. She served as a special assistant to the university president and as chair of the faculty advisory board to Penn Press. She was a board member at the Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy. In 2012-13, she was affiliated with the Safra Center for Ethics at Tel Aviv University, and then in 2020-21 she was a fellow in residence at the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard.

I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Sigal for a number of years. Her perspective on how to honor inclusion and equity while simultaneously preserving free expression in higher education has played an important role in my own thinking on the subject. She has supported the Center's work, including participating in Center programming on institutional speech and academic freedom, and it is a privilege to have you join us today. Welcome Sigal.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

Thank you Michelle. It's a real pleasure to be here.

Michelle Deutchman:

So let's start with your background. You are a political philosopher by training. And I'm curious, when you received your doctorate, did you have any inkling that you would end up being an expert in this sort of niche area of freedom of expression on college campuses?

Sigal Ben-Porath:

Yes. So I would say generally, no, I didn't guess that this would be such a big focus of my work. However, I've always been interested in the ways in which we are shaped by the institutions around us and the institutions that we are a part of. And at the same time, of course in the ways in which we as individuals and as groups can shape these institutions ourselves. So in other words, how our choices are made for us through the landscape or the architecture of choice that institutions are building for us. And then how we navigate these choices and how we construct them when we build this architecture as a community or as a society. And for me, this is the core of the democratic process and the core of my interest as a democratic theorist. So as a part of that, I've always been fascinated by educational institutions.

I was a teacher before becoming an academic. And so schools and universities, especially in the ways in which they organize the lives of young people, the way in which their structures and policies and practices shape the lives of young people in different ways. And of course, again, as I said, how in return, these young people and others are shaping the institutions. These for me are really the most important questions in political philosophy and definitely the ones that are most compelling for me. And so when I came across or sort of crashed into the issues of free speech in my life as an academic, it was clear to me that this is just a really important policy area and a really important dimension of the institutional structure which can allow us or can shed light on the ways that some of these interactions between individuals and institutions are operating. So the answer I would say is no, but also a little bit yes.

Michelle Deutchman:

I love that answer. I always love exploring people's origin stories. And I'm going to follow up by asking you, you said you sort of crashed into these issues. And of course Cancel Wars is your second book on this issue. Your first book Free Speech on Campus was one of the first I read when I became the Center's executive director in 2018. And I'd love to hear a little bit more about the journey and that crash to writing that book before we move on to talk about Cancel Wars.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

Yeah, great. So yeah, definitely Cancel Wars is, at least in my head, sort of like a follow-up to the previous book, Free Speech on Campus. Although it's not really a second volume, it stands on its own. But yeah, so in 2015 I was asked to chair the committee on open expression at Penn. I will put it on the record that I declined at first. It's a very stressful type of administrative responsibility, but I was convinced to take it on. And so from 2015 to 2019 I chaired the committee on open expression. It's a large, sometimes a little bit unwieldy committee of 17 members and it has representatives of the different constituencies on campus. And this was just the time when a lot of the more recent issues and tensions and flare ups were starting to occur, not just specifically at Penn but around the United States and actually other countries as well.

So we've seen speakers being disinvited or students protesting various policies and individuals. And we've seen a lot of tensions around matters of speech and also growing media attention to this matter, which of course enhances the tensions and also makes the stakes a little bit higher. People are more worried or have a harder time resolving conflicts when they feel that everyone is watching and the media is reporting their actions and their decisions. And so this was a opportunity for me to learn very quickly both the legal landscape, which is not a part of my background, but also a lot of the educational regulatory policy related institutional histories. So a lot of different aspects that really influence the kind of decisions that we make on a college campus when we are facing tensions around speech. And so we were thinking together, sometimes commiserating, getting guidance or advice from each other.

And through this process I really recognized the centrality, or maybe I could say the way in which these tensions are representative of some broader political and institutional complications or difficulties or points of contention that really need more attention than they have gotten. So I sort of was partly having my administrator hat on and partly moving back and forth with my research or democratic theorist hat on just looking at the issues that we were facing and how some of my understanding of the democratic function of universities can potentially serve as a framework for addressing some of these tensions. So this is really, I mean, sorry that this is a little bit of a long answer, but this is how I came to devote so many hours every week to thinking about free expression on college campuses and just in the moment in which it was evolving in the public discourse and in the reality on the ground in many institutions. And so it was a stressful and exciting time to think about these things and that's where my first book came from.

Michelle Deutchman:

Well, my mom always says timing is everything. And I think in this case that seems like it played a role in how this all evolved. And I think the fact that you mentioned wearing different hats, I think that's part of what makes your perspective so unique is that you can see from more than one vantage point. So there's one more table setting thing I sort of want to do before we can jump into your new book, which is one of the things that was so key to your first book was you laid out a framework for inclusive freedom. And I think that also serves as a foundation in your new book. And I'm hopeful that for those listeners who haven't had the opportunity to read your first book, maybe you can just talk broadly about the concept as a way of setting this up for the rest of our discussion.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

Great. Yes, so the notion of inclusive freedom is really an effort to communicate what I see as both a normative goal, so a vision for how universities can function in this area, but also really the way that I observe universities in fact already functioning most of the time. And that is that universities, in their mundane daily teaching and the rest of the things, research that we do every day, we in fact include or have an overlapping interest in both inclusion and free speech. And why is that so important to emphasize? Because in the public discourse, and especially the ideologically motivated public discourse around free speech on college campuses, the tendency is to say that universities can either support free speech or open expression, which would mean that they would allow for any kind of speech or expression to take place unfettered and really unregulated. That's one option and one value.

Or on the other hand, they can support an inclusive environment, what sometimes people think about right now as a DEI commitment or a commitment to belonging and diversity, which really by this account would require that they suppress and censor various types of speech that are hurtful or otherwise offensive to students and to others. And so a lot of the public discourse, definitely when I was starting to think about these things, was reflecting this understanding that you have to choose between these two values. Either you like diversity or you like free speech, but you cannot like both. And you cannot have policies that endorse and promote both. And really in my work on the ground, it became very clear to me that this is not the case and that in fact both of these values are reflected in our daily work and that we can express in our policies and in our practices and also in our value commitments, really the necessity of adhering to both at the same time.

And the notion of inclusive freedom is really, it's a framework that tries to both, at the value or abstract or philosophical theoretical level, justify the combination and the equal weight given to inclusion and to freedom of expression and other types of freedom in the function of the university. And also to show how, in decisions that we make, small and large ones, we can reflect both rather than choose one or the other. And as you were saying, Michelle, this current book is trying to continue developing and thinking about the same framework.

Michelle Deutchman:

So it's not a zero sum game. And I think that's such a key point. And let's move to Cancel Wars. And I'm going to start by asking you about the title because that phrase, whether it's cancel culture or cancel wars, can be such a lightning rod. And it can mean different things to different people. And I'm curious, what does it mean to you, and why did you decide to title your book about higher ed and democracy with that phrase?

Sigal Ben-Porath:

So the word cancel has really been used in different ways by different people. And nominally, you can say or define it as an effort to scrub the public sphere or the discourse from words and ideas that are inappropriate, that have no place in polite society. And of course it's not a new phenomenon. We've seen that even in the United States with artists opposing the Vietnam War or people who responded in ways that were seen as inappropriate to the 9/11 attacks. So in past decades we've had people being canceled, so to speak, across the political spectrum. But today it's really most often used derisively to describe actions that are taken by progressive activists. That's at least the most common usage. So you would see a person expressing a certain opinion. In response people are trying to get them to bear the consequences of their unsavory or hurtful opinion.

And as this is happening, the person is blaming or accusing the other side as canceling them. So canceling is really not used in the positive ever. You and I would never tell each other, "Oh Michelle, let's go and cancel this person." The dynamic is usually different. We will make some decision or some people would make some decisions that they want to rebuke someone, they want to hold them accountable for their expression, and then for that they would be accused of canceling. So really the discussion is a discussion about accountability. What are the boundaries of expression? Which is of course a norm that is in strong disagreement today. And when somebody crosses this boundary, when somebody acts or speaks in a way that is seen as inappropriate by some norm, what is the proper accountability measure that we can take against them? What as a public can we do to address that?

And this overall, is the cancel wars. This is the domain where we are looking at each other's or hearing each other's speech. And when we deem it to be inappropriate or otherwise undesirable in a certain context, then we are looking for appropriate measures of accountability which are also contested as part of these same cancel wars. And honestly, we see that, Michelle, in various institutions taking place, and of course we see it in a very, let's say, lively way on social media. But we are also seeing it very significantly in higher education and more and more also in K-12 settings. And so I just had the opportunity and the privilege to see that on the ground in so many settings and it's became clear to me that what we sometimes call the culture wars are evolving into this new phase of the cancel wars.

Michelle Deutchman:

Thank you. That's so helpful. And lively is such a generous word to describe what happens on social media, Sigal. But going back to boundaries of expression and accountability, that's something I spend a lot of my time thinking about and talking about with others, which is how do we develop non-censorious ways of responding to speech that has a harmful impact on individuals and campus communities? And your book only has five chapters, but one of the chapters is devoted to the question of do I belong here, inclusion and harm. And one of the things I thought was interesting was that you distinguish harm from wrongdoing. And I was hoping that you could talk a little bit about how these concepts are distinct and then why it's important to differentiate the two of them, especially in situations where we are going to potentially be responding to speech that seems outside of the appropriate norms.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

So it's really important, Michelle, and I'm glad you're highlighting this, I think it's really important to distinguish causing harm from wrongdoing. So let's illustrate that for a second with the current case that a lot of your listeners I'm sure are familiar with, the case in Hamline College. And just very briefly in case people haven't heard of it, maybe you've spoken about it in your Class Notes, an adjunct professor teaching art history was showing in a class that was taught over Zoom, a depiction of the prophet Muhammad from the 14th century. And she gave some warning about this both in the syllabus and in class, but still after she showed the depiction, one of her students felt offended and hurt, complained about her, and she was fired. Which just to be clear, I think is a completely inappropriate response by the college. The reason that she lost her job is that the student found her decision to show the artwork offensive and the student complained. The dean was hoping that they would avoid a firestorm, so they chose what they thought would be the easiest route, which is to fire her.

So there's a lot to talk about here. The lack of job security is one thing, the difference between a respectful pluralist and even critical view of a religion including Islam, the difference between that and Islamophobia. So we can talk about the substance, but if we focus here for a moment on the difference between harm and wrong, it's clear that the instructor caused some harm. How do we know that she caused harm? Because the student is telling us, I am hurt by this, I'm harmed by this. Okay, it's that

simple. And it's enough. If I'm telling you that you hurt my feelings, the fact that you didn't mean maybe to hurt my feelings or you were unaware of that doesn't matter. You still hurt my feelings and that's what matters. However, that doesn't tell us everything that we need to know and it doesn't tell us what we need to do.

We need to ask, okay, here is a person who is telling us that they were harmed. And now we need to ask, has the other person done anything wrong? Did she wrong the student? And I would say that in this case, the answer is no, she did not wrong the student. And in fact, if she hadn't shown the relevant pictures as she explains in the syllabus, and this is of course not my area of expertise by any stretch, she would've harmed all of her students and she would've wronged them by not providing them with the opportunity to learn what they need to know and by not exposing them to a knowledge that they actually are coming here to learn. That would've been wrong. So the student is harmed, but they are not wronged. And in fact, by my view, the only person who is wronged here right now is the instructor who was fired for no fault of her own.

So what would be a better response? Just very briefly, and I know you probably want to talk about this more as we go along, but a more appropriate response would be for the student and instructor to have an opportunity to discuss that, to have some kind of a relationship, which honestly is very hard to build in a Zoom class, so just to say that. But if the student has gone and talked to the instructor, that would've been one solution. Or if they are complaining to the dean, the dean can go and talk to the instructor and try to get her sense of it, try to mediate a resolution with the student, have a group conversation with the class. I mean, there are a lot of relational aspects that we can build on in a college. There is always next week, there is always next semester, these are not one off meetings. They are opportunities to expand our knowledge, to expand our relationship and to build on those, to resolve the different norms that we might have about the boundaries of speech.

And so when we feel hurt or harmed, we can express that and then we can try to decipher together, has any wrong taken place? And we can try to make some path together forward in resolving the harm without accusing anyone of doing anything wrong. So for me this is a really important sort of exit ramp from the cancel wars, trying to build on the relationship instead of creating policies and responding in ways that are so conclusive and not allow for nuance and the conversation which really is relieving the students and the faculty of their relational obligations to think together about these norms and about their learning communities.

Michelle Deutchman:

Sigal, you're talking about the relational aspects of these issues and really trying to bring it back to the actual people that were involved in the incident - the student, the professor - rather than trying to raise it up to a higher level of administrators and so forth. And at the core of what you're talking about is this issue of trust, which is something that you focus a lot on in your new book. And I think the tricky question is how do you cultivate trust, especially in a moment when there's so much divisiveness and polarization? Then you mentioned now we have more online classes, people don't have as many opportunities to be together in the same space. And so I realize this is a big question which is like how do universities, what role do they play in cultivating trust? But I'll let you kind of take that in whatever direction you want, whether that's individual trust or larger social or civic trust.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

Trust really is at the core of the current struggle around polarization. And the lack of trust in each other, the lack of trust in institutions, and the lack of trust also in facts, in scientific facts, historical facts, we see that all around us really contributing to the process of polarization that we are all experiencing. And

so I think it's evident that to rebuild trust is really the first step out of the current democratic backsliding. We have to find ways to rebuild trust socially, in each other. We have to find ways to rebuild trust in the institutions that are affecting all of our lives. And we have to find a way to rebuild trust in the shared truth or knowledge or understanding that we have about the reality around us. And so we've seen that, for example, in the mistrust of public health and vaccines and the data about the pandemic. This is one very striking example of how the loss of trust in each other and in institutions is really affecting all of us.

And of course it's not the only example so we really need to find a way to understand why people are mistrusting each other and the institutions that serve them, why they are mistrusting the information and knowledge and scientific understanding that we have. And sometimes they also propagate and circulate misinformation around the same topics. And then we have, through this understanding of why trust is so lacking, we have to try and rebuild it. And I think if you hear these different aspects of the current conundrum we're in, the current democratic backsliding that is the result of this mistrust, it's pretty evident the universities are in a unique position to address it, because universities are institutions, whether public or private, they are public institutions in the sense that they are serving various types of public goods. And they are really responsible among other institutions for developing knowledge, for serving society in all of its variety, and for building civic trust, both internally to their members, and externally with the communities that they reside in.

And so when we are thinking about the rebuilding trust, we can look to institutions like universities. Again, they're not alone in this, but they're definitely an important institution among others that can provide us with the kind of opportunities that we need to rebuild trust. And of course, as we all know, the higher education sector itself is experiencing a reduction in public trust, particularly across ideological lines. And so we see that in various surveys, more conservative members of society are expressing reduced trust in higher education institutions. And it's important also to try and understand the sources of that. Some of that probably has to do with political expediency, but also some of that has to do with policies and practices that we can reflect on and that we can address. And so broadly speaking, I think it is incumbent on universities, on the higher education sector, to try and recognize its important position in rebuilding trust and to try and take it on intentionally.

And there are a lot of steps that the people in different positions within the university can take. And we see some people taking them on but I think it needs to happen in a more systematic way. People in leadership positions are often making these days statements about their commitments and their values. And I think this is an area that needs some further attention. You and I, Michelle, spoke about this in an earlier episode of your spotlight series with our colleague, Cerri Banks. So statements by leadership are very important. Faculty can do a lot of different things, which I go through in my book. Let me give you one example. Faculty can develop norms with their students about how to raise issues or perspectives that they think need to be addressed in class. And they are not on the syllabus, so anyone in class should be allowed to call for a three minute or five minute timeout and devoting these three or five minutes to a perspective or a topic that is silent in the class, is not addressed in our conversation.

So this is something simple and powerful that faculty can do to reflect their commitment to diversity of views and perspectives, something that can serve a lot of different students in the room, and can serve the expansion of our knowledge. And of course, staff can do a lot to create spaces that encourage bridge crossing. So support of course the spaces that are safe for students based on their identities or their interests, but also create opportunities to go outside of this safe or comfort zone and to engage with diverse perspectives. And so these are just sort of quick examples of things that we can do as members of the university community to try and rebuild trust as we at the same time protect the free expression, rights, and interests of all of our colleagues and all of our students.

Michelle Deutchman:

There is a certain irony in the fact that the university is a place that's uniquely situated to build trust, and yet we're having a reduction in trust of that actual institution. It is a sort of weird and challenging situation. And I think that the way that you illustrated some very specific things that people can do is really helpful. I don't know if you have any thoughts about what students, you talked about staff and you talked about faculty, I don't know if you have any thoughts about what students can do or be thinking about as they come into the classroom. I think sometimes we don't always assign as much agency to students.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

Oh, thank you for asking that, Michelle because I think it's very important to assign agency to students and also to listen to them and to learn from them. And there are definitely some ideas for students, both student leaders and activists and other students that I talk about. And I'll just mention one thing, Michelle, which has to do with my comment regarding staff just a minute ago. I think students really should look for ways to expand their perspectives through encountering different people, people with different experiences, different views and different values, and really try to understand where they are coming from, with the clarity that the goal is not necessarily to be persuaded by different opinions, but really to try and see what kind of a society you live in where people have all of these different views and just learn to do what Loretta Ross, who is a real role model of course in this and other areas, what she's recommending to all of us.

If somebody is telling you something that sounds unhelpful or maybe odd or really stands in contrast to your own beliefs, the best response that you should start with is tell me more. Tell me more. Why do you think that? What is the source of your position? What are your goals with this perspective? 'Tell me more' is usually a more productive way to structure the exchange than aiming, let's say, to cancel the person or being mad about the difference between the two of you. And what they are coming to tell us, which I think is a very important message that we need to be able to hear, they're telling us that the democratic practices that we are enacting, generationally speaking, are insufficient, that their broad cohort of students is more diverse and is more interested in a feasible and present diversity. And so when we are thinking about rebuilding trust, this trust really has to be benefiting everyone.

And so I think this is a message that I'm hearing quite clearly from a lot of students across the country and that we have to adhere to. And I think the opportunities that students have and need to either take or demand, is the opportunity to cross bridges and learn from each other. And not only just from their professors. This is something that in the early times of women being admitted into higher education institutions, feminist scholars like Adrienne Rich and others would say, "You are not here to receive an education. You are here to demand it." And I think the students demanding that we live by the norms that we set and we preach is a really important role that they can play in improving their institutions.

Michelle Deutchman:

Thank you. I really appreciate the sort of empowering framework of that answer and also the reality of how hopeful your book is. I mean, you begin with the question, can colleges and universities help heal a backsliding democracy? And I think it's clear both from the book and from our conversation, that you think the answer is yes. And I think that message alone is very powerful, especially I think in a moment where people are very weighed down by all of the problems that need to be solved. And it's really hard to find silver linings. And so I think especially as our listeners, who are largely folks who are stakeholders in higher education, I think this kind of gives them further motivation to know that they can make a difference.

And that's sort of where I want to end. I usually close my interviews with the same question because I think it's important to leave our listeners with some ideas for how to make an impact. And you've already given some great ideas. I know for me, I'm going to try, tell me more. And I might even start that trying that at my dinner table because sometimes it's hard to get information from middle schoolers. But not everyone has a platform of a classroom or a publication. And I don't know if you have any other thoughts for what is something that someone might be able to do today or this week to sort of advance expression in civic engagement and ultimately democracy?

Sigal Ben-Porath:

So I would say that the best way to think about an action that you can take is to think back at what we just talked about regarding trust. And I think it's clear from research and from a lot of our experiences, that to build trust, you really have to find ways to encounter people. And so I would say that one small thing that you can do to contribute to that is to borrow an egg or a cup of sugar from your neighbor. Of course, it's so easy these days. The supermarket is always open and you can get Instacart or you can find another way to make the muffins that you were going to make.

But I think if we allow ourselves to knock on our neighbor's door and either practically or metaphorically, ask for small forms of help, we can do it in the classroom, it doesn't have to be an actual egg right or cup of sugar, it can be a request for assistance with an assignment or with something else that you are missing. And it can be various other ways in which we can ask each other for support when we need it. And we can try and expand even our thin network of people to whom we are connected and who are different from us. I think this is a small step then that we can take to revitalize our communities and in this way to rebuild democracy and to expand opportunities to listen to each other.

Michelle Deutchman:

I am so moved by that answer. And I'm going to urge all of our listeners to think about how one might do that. And it certainly is a very American value to sort of be self-sufficient and independent. And I think what you're asking people to do is to set that aside a little bit and be a little bit vulnerable, even if it's just saying, "Hey, I forgot to get milk and I really need it in my coffee this morning." So I appreciate that. And there's so much that you covered in your book and there's no way that we can cover it all today. But I do want to give you a chance to add anything else before we close, something we missed, something you feel like we need to touch on.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

Well, maybe I can just add, Michelle, that I dedicated this book to the memory of my sister, who lost her fight with mental illness a couple of years ago. And some of the conversations that I've had with her and some of her experiences when she was a student, really the way that I think about the boundaries of speech, about the ways that we can respond to people who are hurt or harmed, even when they're not wronged. And also the ways in which we sometimes have to recognize, as we were just saying, vulnerability and be able to express it and address it. And so while, as I say in the book, I definitely don't think this book would've been funny enough to her taste, I really want to acknowledge the way in which I'm inspired by Maya for writing this book.

Michelle Deutchman:

I really appreciate your sharing that. Of course, I noticed both in the dedication and in the acknowledgements that you mentioned her. And I wouldn't have asked, but since you've raised that, I think was such a beautiful dedication to her memory. And certainly I think mental health and mental

illness is again one of the foundational pieces that we need to be working on as a society, not just in higher education, but across the board. I'm very grateful to you, Sigal, for sharing so generously of your time and your insights. And I think you've given all of us a lot to think about. I hope and expect that Cancel Wars will be greeted with a lot of success in that. In the coming year, one of my big goals is that I would really like to meet you in person.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

I sure hope that this will happen soon, Michelle. This is definitely a great New Year resolution for me.

Michelle Deutchman:

All right, well listen, thank you again. And I'm sure we'll talk again.

Sigal Ben-Porath:

Yes, thank you so much, Michelle. I really appreciate the opportunity to speaking to you and through you to your listeners.

Michelle Deutchman:

So that's a wrap of our first episode of 2023. I look forward to a year filled with interesting guests and topics. Don't forget to mark your calendar for our fifth annual Speech Matters conference, Fighting For our Democratic Freedoms, online on March 23rd from 9:00 to 12:30 Pacific Time, which is noon to 3:30 for you East Coasters. Talk to you next month.