

[podcast music]

Paula: Welcome to "It's More Than That."

Helen: I'm thinking very, very intentionally about what I can do to make a difference with the time that I have left. I want to run, you know, into the finish line on fire.

Paula: "It's More Than That" is a podcast by the University of Minnesota Duluth. I'm Paula Pederson. Often we don't understand the full story of someone's reality. Join me as we explore the complexities of the human experience. This week on the show, Helen Mongan-Rallis.

Paula: All right, I would love to welcome to the studio my friend and colleague, Dr. Helen Mongan-Rallis, who is associate professor in the Department of Education. Right?

Helen: Correct.

Paula: Yes, thanks for being here. Welcome.

Helen: Thank you for having me.

Paula: Yeah, so Helen, you and I go way, way back. 30 years?

Helen: We do. We do.

Paula: Yeah. Helen, just for our listening audience, I've been fantasizing about having Helen on this show since it started. Just knowing your story, Helen, and all that you've done to, to work with faculty and staff on inclusive pedagogy and Goal Two, and so just very excited to have you here.

Helen: It's an honor to be here, seeing, listening to the ones that have gone before, I feel very humble, that I get to talk along with an amazing cast of people that you had.

Paula: Yeah, it's been really, um, powerful to hear people's stories.

Helen: Mm-hmm.

Paula: So it's your turn. *[laughter]* Yeah, so as you know as a listener, we like to start with just hearing a little bit about you, your story, where you come from, where you're rooted and how you ended up here.

Helen: Okay.

Paula: Thirty years ago.

Helen: And you have how many hours? *[laughter]* Yeah, so it's interesting that you say "where am I rooted" because I'm from South Africa, and when I'm here in Duluth, in the United States, and I talk about home, I mean South Africa. I left South Africa in 1984, but I am deeply South African, and African to my core and that is my home. But what is interesting is, when I get off the plane in Johannesburg, and I'm there and I talk about home, I mean Duluth, Minnesota, so you know, I'm sort of bi-cultural, you know, and I feel torn, and in many ways actually although I feel South African and feel Minnesotan, I still after all these years often feel neither when I'm treated as neither. So my South African friends think I'm American, and my American friends think I'm South African. And so that's that statelessness that is...it sometimes feels a little homeless.

Paula: Yeah, yeah right, and, and you used the word bicultural. I mean I think that's maybe not an uncommon experience for folks with bicultural identities.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: A foot in two doors or two worlds.

Helen: Yes, and I'm cautious about using that.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: In fact, so many people, that's an American thing, is that you have you have these sort of list of identities, you know, Asian-American, African-American, and so what am I? And I suppose, if I have to be, I am Asian-European-African-American but I almost never like to say that, because the moment I even use African-American as part of my identity, I think it minimizes the experiences of people of color.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: Although I am born in Africa, and I'm deeply African, I'm white. With all the privilege that comes with being, and unearned privilege of being white, so I don't, you know, I sort of have multiple identities. I'm rooted in place, but also rooted in many other aspects of my

identity.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: But no matter how many identities I have, the fact that I'm white, both in South Africa still even after the end of Apartheid, and here in the United States, it trumps all.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And that's something that's been part of my journey and, even in "it's more than that" is very powerful, that realization of how profoundly important that is in how I navigate the world.

Paula: Yeah, well, and I'd love to have you talk, if you're willing, more about growing up white in Apartheid South Africa.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: It's a powerful story

Helen: Yeah. So I was born the day before Sharpeville, the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, so I was born in a country deeply steeped in racial turmoil and in growing anger against the oppressive white regime. The Apartheid government came to power in 1948. I was born in 1960 and growing up as a white person in a highly segregated society, people think here in the states, you know, Apartheid is sort of like Jim Crow. And it's so much more than that.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: The system of Apartheid was not only segregation by place, but also by your role in society, by school, by who could be where. And so white people in South Africa growing up, you could choose to be completely oblivious of the incredible privilege of being white. So I went to, I grew up in an all-white neighborhood, went to an all-white school, and was surrounded by white people in privilege and the black people I know were people who were servants.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And they were...our relationship with black people was only in that way, and even as a young child, people raised to sort of see themselves as superior to black people, you know, even little children, seeing the way they talked to domestic workers. My father was a university professor, my mother was a librarian. I was born on the University campus, well in the hospital *[laughter]*, and so grew up in a very liberal environment. And my parents, as for many most

white South African families, had a domestic worker, Maria Kamala, who lived with us, and she's a hugely important part of my story.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: Because Maria was like another mother to me, and I called her my other mother, and she helped raise me. My parents raised me. And when I came to the States, people said to me "you know, how come as a white South African was I so opposed to Apartheid, and why do I feel so passionate about anti-racist work." And I used to say when I first came here, you know, my thinking was, my parents raised me to respect everyone. They didn't draw a color line. And then my growing realization was that it was actually much simpler than that. I loved Maria.

Paula: Hmm. Yeah.

Helen: And to grow up loving a person of color, black woman, you know, in especially in South Africa, it was the naivete of a child that that I loved her and accepted her, and from very, very young, started to be aware of how she was treated differently as a black person. I mean this is when I was, you know, way before I went to school even, and it used to make me really, really angry, and so I was, you know, outspoken, but I think I was born outspoken.

Paula: *[laughs]*

Helen: But one of my memories in South Africa at my old white school, with all white teachers, the principal of the school that I was at, the elementary school was, you know, I think she was a supporter of the Apartheid regime. She was an Afrikaans woman. Afrikaans were typically, but, of course not always, supporters of the National Party, the Apartheid government. I don't know if she was, but certainly her actions would suggest it. And one of my memories, we were standing in the circle outside the school, turning circle, cars, 'cause we were picked up by our parents, there was no busing, and there was a waterfall sort of tap in the middle of the circle, and our principal was there, sort of supervising the children being picked up, and one of the girls (it was an all-girls school) one of the girls went over to the tap to have a drink. And our principal said, "Don't drink from the tap, the natives drink from it." Natives being black people. And I remember being absolutely just furious beyond measure.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And she was a tyrant. I mean she used to beat you if you were, you know, she'd hit you with a ruler, over your knuckles, and people were terrified of her. I was terrified of her, but I just looked at her, and I walked over to the tap and I took a long drink.

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: And I think that was my first act of sort of political defiance, and saying “don't you dare,” and interestingly she didn't dare. She didn't say anything. She just looked at me. You know, and then later on realizing, of course, how absolutely trivial that sounds to people of color. It's a shame, that poor little white girl took a drink from a tap.

Paula: Yeah. And, yet in that time and context, though, Helen, it is so powerful.

Helen: So that was in third grade, and I also worked in my first general election then. I was a runner for the Progressive Party. *[laughter]* I didn't know what my parents political views were, neither did my brother, but we both were involved in politics from very early on. And you know, I grew up being called a Kaffir Bootie. And Kaffir is an extremely derogatory term in South African equivalent to the N word here, and bootie means brother. And my white friends, you know, when they'd be talking, saying things that were racist, and I came, they'd say, “stop talking, Helen's here.” So very young I got a reputation as, they shouldn't talk about politics in front of me because I get angry.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: So sort of speaking out against injustice, and it was about Maria and just seeing, how can you treat people like that? And you know really under the Apartheid government, as I said, there were certainly layers to Apartheid, but one of them was of course censorship of the press. The press was controlled by the government. There was no television when I was growing up, so it was the radio and the newspapers, and I'd sit and Maria would be cooking in the kitchen, and I'd sit there with her and I'd be reading the paper, and I just used to get so angry at the reporting, even in the censored press, of the what was happening to black people. And you know reading and I had one of the things that I remember reading sort of reports of an accident where they talked about how many people were killed. There were “five people killed and four blacks.” As if they were not even people and that treatment of black people, and white children indoctrinated actually into seeing themselves as superior, and even the way the education system was. You don't talk about people of color because there's black people who are black indigenous people. In South Africa there's also colored people who descended from the Khoisan people, but people of mixed race which was illegal as we know from Trevor Noah. He was sort of born a crime, because it was illegal for a black person, well actually for people of different races, to have sex.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: The Immorality Act was actually there, and so, the colored people's home language was Afrikaans, which is interesting because that's the language of the oppressor of the Apartheid regime. And then Indian people from India, Indian people, were brought over as

indentured servants on the sugar plantations. And then white people. And so the society was racist, but not just black/white. It was a hierarchy with whites on top, actually white men on top, and then women, and then Indian men, Indian women. Colored men, colored women, black men and black women.

Paula: O.K.

Helen: So it was very much like that. Schools were segregated by race, white, colored, Asian. They're called Asian and black schools. And so the schools for black people were called, the education for black people was called "education for subservience."

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: Black children went to school to learn to become servants, and so they were indoctrinated from a very early age, and that is their role. And because black people lived in separate residential areas outside of white cities, they were not allowed to live in the city, and even black families were not allowed to live together. The pass laws in South Africa required that black people always carry a pass and in order to have a pass to allow you to live in a city, people had to have lived and worked for the same employer for, I forget exactly the, I think ten years now or for different employees maybe it was fifteen years. I forget, but anyways basically if a black couple, men and women in those days (they were only allowed to be a man and a woman couple) came to a city, they were not allowed to live together. The man would usually work in the mines or the industries and the women would often be employed as domestic workers, and they would have to live separately. And if a man should come and try and spend the night with his wife in her servants quarters in the back of their white employees, the police would raid at 3:00, 4:00 in the morning and arrest them. And so, coming back to sort of how people were raised, they didn't know any different. So they were segregated, they were put away, you know, in townships outside of the city if they were allowed to live in the city. Otherwise in dormitories and in back servants quarters, and so with little access to news that told them that this was wrong.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And I remember another profoundly shaping experience for me, and actually the reason I became a teacher. I was talking to Maria, sitting in the kitchen.

Paula: I was going to ask about that, just knowing you and your relationship with Maria, and did you talk about it?

Helen: Yeah, yeah, and I used to talk about it, and she just, she just listened.

Paula: Mm-hmm

Helen: And I said to her one day, you know, I was I think I was probably about 12, I don't know, I said "Why don't you get angry?" I was reading one of those disgusting articles in the newspaper again, and I said "How come you don't get angry?" And of course now, it's just like "Well, she doesn't show her anger." But how come you don't get angry?

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And she was just such a serene, amazing woman. She held up her hand, she pointed to her middle finger, the tallest finger, and she said "Some people are born up here," and then she pointed to her little finger and she said " And some people are born down here, and that's the way it's supposed to be."

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And I was just, and again, in my naive, white privileged way, outraged. And I thought how can people believe that, you know, you can be anything you want to be. Which of course is just an absurd thing for, you know, a white person to say, because of course they couldn't be.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: I mean and it's true in this country still, if you're a person of color there's so many systemic issues. But I realized then that so much of it had to do with how she'd been raised. I'm just going through a system of education; she hadn't received. She went as high as third grade. She'd been indoctrinated to believe that. My parents sent my brother and I to private schools. They couldn't afford to send us to private schools on their professor and librarian salary, but private schools in South Africa were not subject to the same indoctrination laws as the public school, called government schools. They still had to teach a sort of government curriculum but there was more flexibility.

Paula: Mm-hmm

Helen: And so my parents wanted to do everything that they could to enable my brother and I not to be brainwashed.

Paula: Mm-hmm

Helen: And so that's where they put all their life savings and everything, all their money, into our education. They also, I think, saw the writing on the wall very early that what they could

leave us was our education. And they actually said to us, "Your inheritance is your education. There will not be any money."

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: Because the vision was important because my brother and I both left as political exiles. And we left with our suitcases. I had to pretend I was going on vacation, we both did, and so you couldn't take anything with you. I think we were allowed to take, I think I can't remember if it was three or \$6,000, but that was it.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And when we left, so for me what I wanted to do is I wanted to become a teacher who could teach children to believe in themselves. And realizing, you know, part of my philosophy of education is the starfish poem, and I don't know it exactly. But the story, I should note, verbatim of course, about a man who's walking with his little boy on a beach, and he's picking up starfish that have been washed up, and dead and dying, and throwing them back. And the man says "why are you throwing back the starfish? What difference does it make when there's so many dying, dead and dying?" And the little boy looked at the starfish in his hand, and he said "it makes a difference to this one."

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And that too, even this morning in conversation I've had, is what drives me with absolute conviction and passion is that it, and that's the, you know, "it's more than that." It has to be. Some people can do big things, the big picture, but for me, my realization early on is, where I can make additional difference is one student at a time, one person at a time.

Paul: And yet, Helen, you do also, I've seen you, I've watched you work to change systems and structures.

Helen: Yeah.

Paula; So, you know, you're throwing the one starfish back, but you're also looking at what can we do so that there's not so many washed up on the shore.

Helen: Right. Yes.

Paula: And so, I think that's, you know, we've been talking a lot about, on this show, about those different layers.

Helen: Yes, yes.

Paula: And appreciate your work on both. And I know talking about Maria and growing up is a tender and painful thing for you to do and so thanks.

Helen: You brought tissues. Thanks. Cause you know me.

Paula: Yeah, I did. I did. And you know, it was such a privilege to go home with you, I don't know how many years ago, and meet Maria. She was retired at the time, and meet her family and stay with her in Kwazulu-Natal, and clearly her love for you was very much a mutual love.

Helen: Yes, she was my mother. Even when she died, as soon as I heard, I was on the plane within hours to go back to her funeral in Kwazulu-Natal, and I was the only white person there and her family waited for me to close the coffin. And in Zulu culture, only the family sees the, sits with the body, and they waited for me.

Paula: Mm-hmm. So her family knew you were family, also, to her.

Helen: Yes, yes, you know and I that's one of my sources of huge, deep appreciation and incredible guilt, is I think I had more, I mean, I know I had more of her than her children did. She had two daughters and her daughters treated me like a sister, and I don't know how they did that. You know I think if I was black, the depth of...just forgiveness is the word, I mean I don't know, that graciousness in sharing me, because they did.

Paula: And in sharing Maria.

Helen: Yeah. And you know she, and again I just think that was the way. I don't know that they questioned to be, to hate me, to be angry with me.

Paula: Right.

Helen: But it's just that part of that and you know, who I am today is profoundly importantly affected by, affected by Maria and her whole philosophy of life.

Paula: Yeah, she was very joyful as I recall.

Helen: She was. She was.

Paula: Then she raised her grandchildren while her daughters were, I mean, it's that part of that this, skipping a generation model of family.

Helen: Well and that's part of the Apartheid model, is that if the parents go to the cities in search of jobs, because under Apartheid system black people were required to live in the homelands, like reservations here, which were fourteen percent of the land area, black people were eighty six percent of the population. And they had mostly the poorest land, and land not able to support them, which is part of the evil ingeniousness of Apartheid, because if you can't live off the land, the only thing, choice was for adults to then go to cities to work.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And they couldn't take their children, because they hadn't qualified for a family pass in a sense. So they had to leave their children in the homelands, which is why Maria was raising her grandson, because, you know, his mom had to go to the city to work. And so many, for generations of black people being raised by grandparents and living in the rural areas, and while their parents living separately, working for white people in the cities. And so Maria's family was like that.

Paula: Yeah. So one of those almost family, quote air-quote, cultural patterns that really was a result of trauma and systemic oppression.

Helen: Yes, yes.

Paula: That sometimes gets passed down then as cultural and familial. Fascinating.

Helen: You know and it's part of colonialism too. So South Africa had the most extreme form of Apartheid, but certainly Zimbabwe did, but other colonial countries where that fragmentation of families and the separation of families, because of people having to go to work. And in South Africa, one of the things that forced black people also too, initially under the group areas act, when early days, and the architects of Apartheid, was to require black people to pay taxes, but if there were subsistence problems, they couldn't pay taxes, so the only way they could pay taxes was to have to go and earn money to pay taxes. You know so there's an evil ingeniousness about it. And so it's, as you said, generation after generation, that trauma.

Paula: Mm-hmm. So you mentioned, Helen, coming to the U.S., political asylum is the term you used.

Helen: Yep. Political refugee. The way it worked for me was, I graduated, I always wanted to be a teacher, and I started teaching. As a teacher, I was a white woman, I was required to teach in a white school. I was not allowed to teach and there were no multiracial schools. I

couldn't teach black children. And as a white teacher, you were required at that stage to join the South African Teachers Council for whites, in order to be allowed to teach. And part of joining the council was you had to agree to teach in a Christian National fashion. And by Christian, you had to agree to teach Christianity. At the time I identified as Christian, but I still refused to impose my faith on students, and "national" as in the National Party, the Apartheid line.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And I refused to do either. And not only did I refuse to do those, but I refused to join the council, and I was teaching in two schools, actually, at the time at public school, government school. In the morning, I was a geography teacher, and in the afternoon, a physical education teacher at a private school. And the principals of both schools turned a blind eye to me not being a member of the council.

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: They just let me carry on teaching but each year I would get a letter from the government, saying "we see you haven't joined the council." They'd even provide you with excuses, the box that you had to check and then you had to join. And I'd just draw in my draw own box and say, "I won't join a racist organization," and send it back. But it became quickly clear that I would either have to join the council, or give up teaching or leave the country. And my friends, black people, said to me, "go overseas." They'd say "It's time. The struggle, it's time for black people. Let us do the struggle here, and you go overseas and talk to white people." Especially, I was talking about going to the states, and this is when the states didn't want to impose sanctions, because they said it would hurt black people. Which is code, I think, for, *[bitter laugh]* you know, it's a whole other line. But anyway, black people said go and tell them that we've suffered for so long for no reason, that we're prepared to suffer a little longer, if it'll end Apartheid.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And so that gave me the courage, the permission, whatever, to leave. But also the other thing too is that the struggle was turning into an armed struggle, which was a source of huge, just turmoil for me, because I'm a pacifist. And I'm white. I am reasonably sure if I'd not been white, I would not be a pacifist. But it was just devastating to see the violence that was happening, and I didn't, I absolutely supported the anti-Apartheid movement, but I was reluctant to support uMkhonto we Sizwe, Spear of the Nation, which is the militant wing, and I felt so torn.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And so I left, and so I came to the United States, and I had to say, my principals both had to write a letter to the government assuring them that I would be coming back. And I can say this now because the principals of the schools are now dead, so they can't be *[inaudible]* for this. But they actually compromised themselves by assuring that I would be back when they both knew that I would absolutely not, and so because of that then I was given a visa to leave the country. I had to buy a round-trip ticket and pretend that I was coming back.

Paula: You knew you weren't.

Helen: No. And so the way I got in initially was to apply to study. I went to the University of Miami in Coral Gables and I did my masters, and then went to Penn State, and my job interview at UMD was my first job.

Paula: Wow, really, so that was in 1984 that you left.

Helen: I left 1984. 1989 is when I started here. So I did my master's in a year, actually I did my master's in a year, but then I went back to South Africa to write my thesis. I did my master's thesis in geography on the effect of Apartheid on squatters, people living in full settlements in South Africa, and then came back to the states and and did my PhD at Penn State.

Paula: So there wasn't risk at the time of you not being able to return to the U.S. if you went back to write that thesis?

Helen: No, because I still had a student visa. I had not graduated. The moment I came back to the States, I stayed here for, because I tried, I wanted to go home as often as I can, but I didn't go home for five years, until I became a permanent resident. I didn't dare go back.

Paula: Yeah, yeah. O.K.

Helen: So then I came to UMD so I applied for the job at UMD. When I applied for jobs, I wanted it to be somewhere where there was wilderness. *[laughter]* And that's a job that I wanted to do, and UMD fit the bill, and I cancelled my other interviews.

Paula: Wow.

Helen: But one of the things that brought me to UMD as well, with hindsight, I had always been, but I only I came out of the closet as a lesbian in 1984.

Paula: Okay, wow, just do it all in one year, Helen. *[laughter]*

Helen: This before I left, so of course, I arrived as a lesbian, and nobody ever knew me any other way. But at Penn State, I was subject to discrimination as a lesbian, and that's a whole other story, but part of it was when I applied for UMD, seeing the non-discrimination clause on the basis of sexual orientation, and that that was absolutely a factor in me choosing to come here. But even then I was afraid to be out.

Paula: Sure.

Helen: And I remember when I first came, I was in the Department of Instructional Science, before education, and we were across the hall from the Women's Studies program, and they had a coffee room, and there was a coffee table and there was a journal on it and anyone could write in there, and I remember wandering in and just sort of exhaling, because there was no Multicultural Center then, and just sort of feeling home.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: And still trying to discover what it meant to be a lesbian and a feminist, cause I hadn't even thought about those things, and the people writing their coming-out stories. And they're mostly students in the journal, anonymous, since I wrote in there and say "I'm a new faculty, and I'd like to be out but I'm afraid," even though the non, you know, and I think I talked about what had happened at Penn State and a student wrote back and said, "Please, if you can, come out of the closet, it would mean the world to students. Not only to GLBTQ students (we didn't talk about Q in those days) but also to straight students to have role models." And I realized that was really important, so you know I actually could remember, I tell you the day I came out to my classes.

Paula: Really.

Helen: I mean, it was really scary.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: I never actually had any backlash, but now I have no idea. I mean and it makes it easier when you have the partner to be out, actually to talk about my partner, "she." And now with being married.

Paula: We're legal.

Helen: Yeah. It's a non-issue for me now, but it was a huge issue, you know.

Paula: Sure.

Helen: And I think about that even within the context of "it's more than that." In the early days,

as a faculty member here, I was out, and I was very much, I spoke on panels and I was, I can't even remember anymore. And you were involved in that.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: You know, and I'd be the token lesbian on the committee.

Paula: *[laughs]*

Helen: And I was in leadership and in the, I forget what the organization was called there for students and faculty and everything, and I haven't been for a while, and it's not that I don't care. But it's more than that.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And for me, in my own development, being lesbian and being feminist was sort of front and center, and "we're here, we're queer" sort of stage. That pride stage was so important, and I think I played a role then.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: But for me, it's become much more than that. My role, seeing that that is just one of the forms of oppression, and becoming as you said, more involved in an anti-racist work in intersection and in intercultural pedagogy, but I do a lot in my classrooms with my students.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: But my journey here at UMD is to become more involved in working with mentoring of faculty. And then one of the highlights of my career at UMD is with you on the intercultural leadership development, ILD, working with staff and faculty administrators from across campus and then you and I have done the intercultural pedagogy community of practice. It has been just an absolutely deeply moving, profoundly important for me and my journey, and also seeing that that's a part I can play.

Paula: Yeah, it has been powerful.

Helen: Yeah.

Paula: I had not heard that story about the anonymous journal. That's a powerful example of creating those opportunities for people to kind of ease their, you know, put their toe in the water a bit in terms of...

Helen: That was so wonderful.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And to be, you know, to be mentored by a student who became a friend. And we still keep in touch on Facebook.

Paula: So you, even though it was anonymous in the journal, you eventually knew who each other were.

Helen: Yes, yes. And actually she came and stayed, lived with my partner and I. She, you know, she rented a room from us. She was with us in the Halloween storm, and I remember because her car got buried in the snow.

Paula: O.K.

Helen: And I was thinking about her just this weekend in our storm.

Paula: Yeah, we just, we just had a big storm. We did. I'm also just thinking back to you arriving in 1989. I started teaching in 1990 and love our story of finding one another as colleagues and eventually friends. And just parking in the quote faculty parking lot, and always feeling the imposter syndrome of "what am I doing here and do I belong" and walking past your car, which always had toys on it *[laughter]*, a kayak, a bike. I mean, I thought "who is this person who must be faculty, because they're in the faculty lot, who appears to have a life outside of this institution?" And then we met at instructional development service.

Helen: Mm-hmm.

Paula: Which at the time was my lifeline in terms of, you know, you're hired to teach but unless. I mean you were, you knew how to teach but the rest of us really didn't get anything in terms of what does it mean to teach, to educate. And so, I just remember realizing that you were the person behind that car.

Helen: Mm-hmm.

Paula: And being a serious role model for me, not only in teaching and pedagogy and inclusion, but how to maintain a sense of balance. I know we lost it over the years at times. *[laughter]*

Helen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Paula: But just that there is more, there's a whole life, and fun and joy is an important part of our work.

Helen: It is.

Paula: And I thank you for that.

Helen: And likewise. Because, I mean, we've helped support each other.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: You know "come out and play." I remember you and I going kayaking. We snuck out of work one day because our teaching schedule allowed it. And we went kayaking on the bay at Lake Superior, and we were so busy talking we didn't notice that the, in the bay, in the harbor, and the wind shifted and we got trapped in the ice.

Paula: Mm-hmm. Yeah and what were we doing in kayaks? That was like December or something.

Helen: I don't know. We went kayaking.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: We love kayaking.

Paula: Right.

Helen: And you end off, and I got washed up on a big ice slab and you went off to get the Coast Guard, who didn't notice you.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: But we were so afraid that we'd be on the front page of the paper about these two professors, playing hooky, kayaking and getting trapped. *[laughter]* But I think you're right, that play, that sense of play is important, and I think you know one of the things that I think about you, talking about these interviews, is sort of a saying in life. And one of the sayings that I developed after, just after, I'd got tenure, when I just, I'd sort of pushed myself to always try and do my best at everything. And just, still playing, but just not, there were not enough hours in the day and sort of fell apart and came back with "anything that's worth doing, is worth doing badly." It was my philosophy of life which of course people shutter at that, and it's really

it's sort of tongue-in-cheek because it's not about advocating doing badly, but it's about stop worrying about doing well as a place to start.

Paula: Mmm-hmm

Helen: That if you can just jump in with glorious abandon and say if it's bad, at least you've started.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And then it's something to work on and to learn from mistakes and that, that has helped me in all sorts of ways, in all the work I do. Whether it's to do with the work in social justice and in my classroom and also working with my students because that fear of failure is devastating and just, as I get older, becoming more playful.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: You know, my last class of the semester, yesterday, I do it periodically, and I hadn't done it for a while, and I said to the students, I said "I need three spotters" and so they all kind of looked very bemused, and I said I was encouraging them to go forth as teachers and take risks and do silly things and learn from them and not be afraid to make a fool of yourself, and I did a headstand on the table again. And I still can. I'm 59. I did my headstand, yesterday.

Paula: Wow. Wow, wow. Great. You do that every semester, right?

Helen: Actually last semester, I had a neck injury, so I couldn't. But I tried to do it, and I always kind of joke and I say, "When I can't do a headstand on the table anymore, it's time to retire." But it's a metaphor, I think. And *[inaudible]* says, "I was a gymnast and actually doing a headstand is not difficult." *[laughter]* But at my age, I'm not sure when it will be, but I hope that I can do headstands for a long time, both literally and metaphorically and not knowing if I can do it, and if I can't do it, I've got spotters.

Paula: Mmm-hmm

Helen: And I think about that in the work that we do, you know, that I've done with the intercultural leadership development at your invitation and the courage to teach work and the intercultural pedagogy, it's because we have spotters.

Paula Mmm-hmm

Helen: And I think, it's become more and more important, even in the conversation that I had with a dear friend, a colleague of color this morning, is that we have to be spotters, and as

white people realizing that the role that I have to play.

Paula: Mm-hmm.

Helen: In being an ally. And an ally is not something you get to call yourself, it's what we do.

Paula: Yeah, yeah.

Helen: And it's easier to just to shut the door, go home and not be, but I want to, I want to be as spotter more. And call myself and other white folks out on this. This is, as I look forward to the next leg of my career and my life.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: Seeing that work is profoundly important.

Paula: Well, and if you don't mind circling back, because I was thinking about the do something even if it's not done well.

Helen: Yeah.

Paula: And certainly, I remember as faculty, you facilitated technology camp.

Helen: Mmm-hmm.

Paula: Believe it or not, there was a time before, I remember before email, right?

Helen: Yes.

Paula: So learning to use technology more, like computer technology, in the classroom.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: And that really helped me to start.

Helen: Mmm-hmm.

Paula: Because I was, "I don't know where to start," and you were facilitating that and you were like, "do a bad webpage then, start with a bad one."

Helen: Yes.

Paula: And I was like, "Really, I can do that?" So helpful. and then I think of this work we do with social justice and anti-racism.

Helen: Mmm-hmm.

Paula: And I think it's, it's more than that, in terms of, on one hand, you know, we're going to make mistakes and on another hand, the consequences of our mistakes are so much bigger.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: And, so how we, how do we hold those?

Helen: Yes.

Paula: How do we hope those?

Helen: Yeah, and I think about the consequences, particularly in this day and age of social media.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: You know, and I say to my students "I'm so grateful there was no social media when I was a student, because I did so many stupid things that could have been captured." And now would be captured. And I saw students, as I was upside down on the desk yesterday, with their cameras taking pictures of me.

Paula: Oh sure. Yeah. *[laughter]* Didn't think of that. *[laughter]*

Helen: I'm not quite sure if my shirt dropped down or not. *[laughter]* Oh, well, there it is. That's part of me.

Paula: O.K. We'll check Facebook as soon as we get off the air here.

Helen: We do, we make mistakes, and they can become so public. And it's so easy to rush to judgment about things that people did.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And I did stupid things.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: Absolutely stupid things. So how do we do that, and a part of what I do in my teaching is I teach about digital citizenship and social media. I teach elementary teachers, and they say, "what's social media got to do with elementary students?" And I say, "A lot."

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: You know, I said it's like you watch the movie, 'the movie,' in fifth grade about sex education, and I think the reasoning behind that is you watch before you ready.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And it's the same with, you know, we've gotta raise children in a different way, to be responsible, to bear the responsibility, because the mistakes, it's good to make mistakes, but realize, that, you know, there are consequences today that weren't there before.

Paula: Yeah, yeah, and I'm even thinking about the next step of it, which is the consequences on our colleagues of color.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: Of, as I learn and grow and develop and make mistakes.

Helen: On whose backs?

Paula: On whose backs? On whose backs?

Helen: Yes.

Paula: And it's a current struggle.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: I know we both have just in terms of our pedagogy and our process of doing this work, mostly with white colleagues.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: To encourage folks to not be so afraid of making a mistake, that they stay in their little cubicles.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: And yet also to be profoundly aware of on whose backs they're learning and growth and development falls on, and that's just a tension that we hold.

Helen: And it is complicated, you know, that I was talking to my friend this morning and saying that it's, as white people, we can't just say we're sorry. That's not enough. We shouldn't do those things but we do, but what do we do? It's much more than saying sorry. It's doing something and stepping up, and stepping up and calling each other out. And so I have an uncomfortable conversation to have with someone.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And as I hope that person would with me.

Paula: Yeah, right.

Helen: And it's to be able to do that in a way that helps people to grow.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: You know, and that's actually how I got in even with technology. I got into technology because my students said, you know, they'd ask me how to do email. I didn't know, and I hated technology. Absolutely hated it.

Paula: Really?

Helen: And I was afraid of it. Yes. I couldn't stand it, and I realized that what example was I setting for my students? And I had started going to IDS, instructional development service to improve my teaching and learning about technology, but all the technology workshops were taught by men, white men. And it wasn't their fault that they were teaching them, but I thought what kind of example am I setting, not only to women, but also to men and people of other genders (actually I didn't even think about that in those days, I think I thought about men and women).

Paula: Yeah, Yeah.

Helen: That I am not doing this, and that workshops and courses on technology are taught by men only, and I thought I have to step up.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And I have to step up with my students to learn with them and get over my fear. And then I did that for a while, and I thought, "Why am I teaching about technology? It's so trivial," when there are much more important things to teach about in this climate, and I wanted to be

much more involved in social justice in my teaching. And so I stepped out of that, and I taught a course called Teaching in a Diverse Society for a while.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And with mostly white students, to quote as you say, to teach us about how do we do more than say sorry, what do we do as teachers? And then, I went back into technology, because what I realized is, it's all connected.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And that technology, it's not something that is separate from teaching in a way that promotes social justice and intersectionality, but I have to teach students through technology, how to make a difference in students' lives. And so I come back, and I do it. I still teach Teaching in a Diverse Society, except it's now called Teaching with Technology.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And no matter what I teach, it is exactly what you say about me as a white person talking to other white people because most of our students are white and teaching them, what do we do? What do we do, and when we make mistakes, how do we fix it?

Paula: Mmm-hmm. And how do we continue.

Helen: And how do we continue.

Paula: To grow and learn ourselves, which is another, you know, I think you're a powerful example of that as a senior faculty who continues to grow, not only in your teaching and pedagogy, but in yourself.

Helen: Mmm-hmm.

Paula: And how do we encourage our colleagues to take that on?

Helen: Yes.

Paula: And in the way that you integrate diverse perspectives into your course, all of your courses, is really where we need to go. And it's been a struggle.

Helen: Yeah and especially, you know, I think about, for me, one of my growth areas is realizing, you know, I teach about this from my white privilege perspective, but in an environment where I'm very supported in my views, and surrounded by people who, frankly, think a lot like me. And so part of my own journey, in fact, it was 13 years ago, 14 years ago, I

don't know how many years ago now.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: I became a firefighter, and it's because, of course, I love doing adventures, *[laughter]* but part of it, for me, was realizing, you know, talking to people who are in rural fire departments, how most of the people in their departments were very conservative.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And had very different views, because I'm not very conservative. *[laughter]* You know, I consider myself extremely liberal, but I surround myself with people like me, and when I thought about my own growth area and that's a role that I see and I have continued to take, is to try to reach out across the incredible divides in our society.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And I thought, well, that's not a theory, I need to understand people who are not like me.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And so joining a department and one of the things that was really humbling about that and I think about, in taking risks, I didn't have a clue.

Paula: *[laughter]*

Helen: And it was so refreshing to leave campus where I was, you know, a faculty where we're treated with a lot of respect and becoming more senior and feeling that at least people thought I knew what I was doing. To go to a place where I was absolutely the bottom of the pile, the last, the newest kid on the block, didn't have a clue, and people didn't care what I did in my job.

Paula: Right, right. Or what your doctorate degree is in.

Helen: Exactly. Absolutely.

Paula: Not helpful.

Helen: And so, that for me, I think about that, and I draw many lessons from being a firefighter and a first responder now, that helps me in terms of teaching. Forcing myself to take risks.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And also knowing to step back. You know, that as a firefighter, realizing that I don't have the strength anymore to do things that I used to. So when do we say, "If I continue to do that, I'm actually going to endanger other people"?

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: That it is time for me to step back from that, to create the space for other people to fill that space, so that I can, instead of being on the frontline fighting the fire, that I'm further back. I'm maybe running the pumps on the engine now.

Paula: Yeah. Yeah.

Helen: Because there are people who can do it better and to know when my wisdom is needed and when to hold my mouth shut, because it's not like that anymore. And so that's been, as I encourage people to become first responders, not literally as firefighters, but in going in and don't be afraid to learn something new and to say, "I don't know what I'm doing."

Paula: Well, and not to mention the trust, I imagine, that you need.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: In order to work with a group of firefighters.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: In an emergency. And as a lesbian.

Helen: Mmm-hmm. I shook the whole department up, when I went in.

Paula: I'm sure. I'm sure.

Helen: Yeah.

Paula: And yet it sounds like you have trust and relationships in a way that you would go into a fire.

Helen: Absolutely. I mean we have each other's lives.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: You hold each other's lives, you know, and literally have each other's backs when somebody's holding a hose, you have to have someone behind them. Literally, you're leaning

against them, holding their back.

Paula: Wow.

Helen: Because the force of the hose is so great that they don't get knocked over.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And knowing that they will do that for you, even though you will go into the polling booth, which is the fire station.

Paula: Oh, really. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Helen: And vote separately.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And I remember going to my first practice and two of the firefighters were getting to this brawl. It was this woman and man, yelling at each other, and I grew up, you don't yell at each other. I've never seen adults fight like that and they were like cats, and it was a political thing.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And the man said, because she was saying to him, because he wasn't volunteering to help in the election. He said, "I couldn't volunteer in the election because I wouldn't let those damn Democrats come anywhere near the building." And so I put my hand up.

Paula: *[laughter]*

Helen: And he said, "WHAT?" And I said, "Can we come to the building for firefighter practice?"

Paula: *[laughter]*

Helen: *[laughter]* I thought he was going to bite my head off, and then he laughed and he's become a dear friend.

Paula: Yeah. Wow.

Helen: And you know, it's that, that we're more than our political views. And I come from a country, seeing the incredible devastation of guns against my country people.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And so I just, I go into a panic seeing a gun, and I'm terrified of them and everything. But there are people who carry guns to firefighter practice.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And sitting down, talking to them, and one day say, "Tell me about your guns. Tell me your story."

Paula: Hmmm.

Helen: And hearing their story, and I've had many conversations with them. We don't usually talk direct politics.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: But getting to know their story and their complexity, and about who they are.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And that has helped me enormously in my work.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And in my life.

Paula: Well, that's part of the idea of this podcast.

Helen: Yes. Yeah.

Paula: Is to have these in-depth conversations, where we can hear people's stories and the complexity and nuances and get the layers of it's more than that.

Helen: Yeah.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: Well, you introduced, because I'm a Paula groupie.

Paula: *[laughter]*

Helen: You do all these amazing initiatives that I've benefited from so much and one of the sayings that you introduced is the quote from Rumi.

Paula: Mmm

Helen: And I'm not sure if I'll get it exactly right but at somewhere between wrongdoing and right doing there is a field.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: I'll meet you there.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: You know, I remember my sort of Gay Pride stage and my sort of when I was young in South Africa speaking out against Apartheid and priding myself on the fact that I didn't have any friends who were members of the National Party.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: Which you know, they supported the Apartheid party and now looking back on that with shame is like, how can I be proud of not knowing people?

Paula: Hmm

Helen: And not making friends with people who are not like me.

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: And I used to be so much more judgmental: what's clearly wrong, what's clearly right, and I hope that I still have as burning a passion as ever for justice and social justice but seeing that it's complicated.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And it's not a binary, and that between wrongdoing and rightdoing, it isn't that there are good people and bad people, and I don't mean to minimize it.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: But that rather than seeing it as only two things, to go and sit down in that field and listen.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And listen deeply to understand, so that we can write the injustice. Not just to say everyone's right, because I don't think so.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: But I think that when we're in the field, rather than facing off in anger, there's a different conversation.

Paula: And hopefully there's listening on both ends.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: I think that's part of the, for me, the impacts.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: Of some of, it's not just a football team and who wins and who loses. It's the impact of maybe your, quote politics, on lives.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: And it just makes it harder, unless there's listening on both sides.

Helen: Yes. Yes AND what I would also say is that part of my journey too is knowing when the listening doesn't have to be on both sides, as a white person, when I just need to shut my mouth.

Paula: Yeah. Yep.

Helen: And to listen, to be there for my friends of color.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And know it's not about me. It's not about my white guilt. It's not about anything else. It's about listening, and even when I want to defend myself, shut my mouth and listen. So it's knowing when.

Paula: Right.

Helen: When to listen. And I think of Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* from very long ago now.

Paula: I thought it was five. Are there seven now?

Helen: *[laughter]* One of them is, he says, seek first to understand and then to be understood.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And I know sometimes I want to rush in my righteous anger to confront and everything, and instead, stepping back and essentially saying, "Tell me your story," and to listen. Because what I've found is when I seek to understand people, even if I fundamentally disagree.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: But just listening. That if people feel listened to, they are then, it creates a space for them to be able to hear me, but if I want to be heard first, then that doesn't work. And I mean, I forget that in my own personal relationship, I think. You know, if my partner and I are having a disagreement and I want to rush in and be right.

Paula: Yeah. *[laughter]*

Helen: If I don't remember that and just say listen, stop, because there's a very valid reason.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: You know, that she's mad at me *[laughter]* and listen to understand. And with you, the Courage to Teach work, when you've taught us just about listening and listening not to respond or to understand. You know, it's not even saying to people, "help me understand," because it's not about me, but what do I need to ask questions so that they feel that they're listened to.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And I have massive relapses in doing that still.

Paula: Yeah, we all do. *[laughter]*

Helen: But I keep remembering, listen, but REALLY listen.

Paula: Mmm-hmm. Yeah. I wonder if we could talk a little bit about just some tips or ideas, thinking about faculty who are out there listening, who want to do more in their classroom, to be more inclusive, to be more intercultural, to include more diverse perspectives.

Helen: Mmm-hmm.

Paula: What advice, tips can you share?

Helen: I think about the work, the group we've had now, I don't even know how many years going, four years or so, the intercultural pedagogy community of practice. One of the things, a tip perhaps, is to share stories with each other.

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: That teaching is not a solitary act and that especially when you've been teaching for a while, we sort of do things the way we've done them.

Paula: Mmm-hmm. Teach the way we were taught, "My teacher says that . . ."

Helen: And also that we've found that works and, at least, we think it works, it works for most people, but the thing is most people is not everybody.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And so as a tip that I give to students is you need to teach and do things in your classroom regularly that you would not like to have done unto you.

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: So don't treat others as you would like to be treated, but part of it is trying to understand how other people would like to be treated and sort of the Platinum rule or whatever. So if you teach in a way that you wouldn't like to learn, then you are probably reaching people who are not like you.

Paula: Hmm. Yeah.

Helen: So if you always teach, "This would work, I'd like to do this," well then, you're teaching people like you.

Paula: *[laughter]*

Helen: And so being able to be willing to step outside of your comfort zone and to take those risks, do headstands, and so that as people are trying to be more inclusive and intercultural in their pedagogy, I think some people think it's content.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And that's part of it, but it's the how do we step outside of this binary, the policies that are made that advantage most? To say, how do I create a space that is a brave space for students to feel that they can step up?

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And so we need to go back and start with what we even do to connect with our students before we meet them. The email that we send saying “welcome,” and what we do the first day of class, which is not the syllabus, but it's about creating that environment where people feel that they matter.

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: And so the advice is, have people feel that they matter, and if they feel that, then the content and the skills would come.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: But that first and foremost, and they have to matter, no matter who they are, because we're in a hugely divided society and our classrooms are like that too.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: But that people know that we're not always going to agree politically or anything else, but that who they are as an individual is important.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And if we do that, if we can do that for our students, that to me is the foundation of intercultural work. It isn't, say, “I didn't know much about this culture or that culture.”

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: It's about individuals.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: And their story and how you can meet them in that field, rather than saying a policy that, it's either this or that. Does it have to be? Because people are afraid of setting a precedent. If I do this for this student, then.

Paula: Right, right.

Helen: Well, then the floodgates, well try.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: We'd be surprised. The floodgates have yet to open for me.

Paula: Yeah, yeah.

Helen: You know?

Paula: There are so many times that you've challenged my thinking about things, Helen, and one of the examples that's coming to mind is, at the point that internet became more accessible to students, and students were able to buy papers or plagiarize in big profound ways. And there was software being developed to catch it, and you said at a group, "Well, it's a bad assignment then. If it's that easy to just go find it.

Helen: *[laughter]*

Paula: Then, that's not a good assignment, because it's already been done, so come up with an assignment that cannot possibly be out there. I mean, just getting me to think about, that that's actually an adaptive strategy that is a useful skill.

Helen: Mmm-hmm.

Paula: I mean, if we go out into the world and that's the first thing we do is, what else is out there, before I recreate it.

Helen: Google it. Yes.

Paula: So it just, so many times you would say something like that, where it would just flip my thinking upside down, which is when I feel most alive.

Helen: Hmmm.

Paula: I just love those; I never thought about it that way.

Helen: Mmm-hmm. That's why community is important.

Paula: Yeah, yeah. Right.

Helen: You need spotters, because I think it's scary. And you won't think about it that way, if you don't have other people pointing out, there's another way.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: But also when you do it, that you're doing it in a community, and our intercultural pedagogy group, it feels like family.

Paula: It does, yeah.

Helen: Because we challenge each other on those things, and we help each other see things differently that, you know, we have other people, you and I, who do that for us.

Paula: Yes, yeah, get outside of our boxes and our lens.

Helen: Yeah, like wow, I hadn't thought about that.

Paula: Yep, yeah, that's a helpful strategy. Is there anything else that you were excited to talk about, that we haven't gotten to on this?

Helen: I don't think so.

Paula: I think, one of the questions about what's your It's More Than That story, and I feel like you've shared a lot about that.

Helen: Mmm-hmm.

Paula: And if there's anything more that you want to put out there.

Helen: Well, I think about, I've talked about my own, sort of, It's More Than That. There are so many aspects to who I am and who the diversity is and it's not diversity; it's about the intercultural work we do, the social justice stuff, but that constantly looking for that and asking, you know, what more is there?

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And as I look, you know, I'm coming to the twilight of my career, looking to retiring in the next few years, and very much not looking to what I'm going to do then, but leading up to that point.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: How do I exit here? UMD. I want to make, to run, you know, into the finish line on fire.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: Still doing headstands.

Paula: *[laughter]*

Helen: But that I'm thinking very, very intentionally about what I can do to make a difference with the time that I have left, and that means stepping back. I don't see, I mean, part of it, it's stepping up in a different way.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: Is, how do I create the space, so that when I leave, I am completely redundant?

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: Because I'm not needed anymore. There is so much more, and that I can use my wisdom as an elder, perhaps, to know when to speak and when to keep quiet, and how to create that space so that others step in without feeling like they have to do what I did.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And creating an empowering environment for people to step up and do things differently.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: You know, and I've always said the two reasons for me to retire: one when I can't do a headstand on the table, but the other is when I say, "It can't be done."

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: And when I find myself getting negative and sort of saying, well, you know, "In my day" and "We didn't," because that was my day. It's no longer my day and so looking at things and thinking, it's not how I would do it, but they're not me, and times are different.

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: And being really open to what is, and helping when I am needed without being paternalistic.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: I think that's the thing that's, I try to be so careful about.

Paula: Well, and it so requires us to set our ego aside.

Helen: Yes.

Paula: Which I think can be particularly difficult for academics, frankly.

Helen: Yes. Yeah.

Paula: Where the discipline, the profession is, tends to be a lot of ego involved so, yeah.

Helen: Yeah.

Paula: It's powerful.

Helen: For me, my discipline, I keep changing, reinventing myself, every few years.

Paula: *[laughter]* Because you get bored.

Helen: I'm an expert in that too. *[laughter]* I'm not an expert at anything. That's been a lot easier for me.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: But I do think that being able to let go. I mean, one of the things is aging.

Paula: Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

Helen: It's interesting, you know. I have an iPhone, and you can do Apple pay. And so, sometimes, my phone doesn't recognize my face. And so when you're at the grocery store and you wave your phone at the thing, and it doesn't recognize it, then you have to put your password in. Now being a techie, I've got a very secure password. It's not a simple one.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And so it takes a while to type in. So I'm typing in, and often, it's the young person at the cash register, who's trying to tell me how to do Apple pay.

Paula: Hmm.

Helen: And how to use my, and because, they see this, I'm no longer a middle-aged woman, this older woman who, they assume, doesn't know how to use technology.

Paula: Yeah. Wow.

Helen: And part of me, you know, my ego gets, I just want to say, "I teach this stuff."

Paula: Yeah. Right, right. *[laughter]*

Helen: You know. "I know how to do it. I just have a complex password, and apparently my face today is not what it was yesterday, because it doesn't recognize me. *[laughter]* But I recognize that.

Paula: Yeah, yeah. You're on the other end of it.

Helen: Yeah. The part of me that's, where I'm getting treated differently is because of my age.

Paula: Yeah. Yep.

Helen: And then I smack myself and say, "Oh, get back into your white privilege hole." Because I get, you know, I think about, wow, what people have to go through every single day.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: You know, people of color, and you can't just choose, and they've been treated badly because of how they look.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: From birth.

Paula: Right, right.

Helen: Now I'm getting old, and oh, poor me. Shut up. I just get impatient with myself, *[laughter]* which helps me to put my ego back in it's hole.

Paula: Right.

Helen: It's like, wow. Wow. There is so much more than what I'm going through and to realize that.

Paula: Mmm-hmm.

Helen: That helps me come back and say, "Yep, I can do this. There's something I can do."

Paula: Yeah, yeah. Well, thank you.

Helen: Thank you so much.

Paula: Listeners on the show know that a gratitude has been a dozen eggs from our Icelandic chicken flock, and it's winter and they don't lay eggs right now. So I told David [podcast producer], I don't think we can record podcasts right now, because I don't have eggs.

Helen: Icelandic chickens should like winter, don't they?

Paula: They do, but they still, it's like us. They go through a period of rest and renewal and molting, and they sleep more, like I want to do.

Helen: And lay less.

Paula: *[laughing]* And lay less. Yes. No, they don't lay at all, and we don't give them artificial light. So, anyway, long story short, I want to bring something and so I brought you a little tin of rusks.

Helen: *[exclaims with astonishment]*

Paula: The recipe that your stepmom.

Helen: Oh!

Paula: Gave me when we were in South Africa. When was that, was that 2000?

Helen: I don't even remember.

Paula: I mean, the first time.

Helen: I don't remember. I love rusks!

Paula: And I did change the recipe a little bit, so you'll have to see if they're.

Helen: *[making happy noises]*

Paula: But I stumbled upon, I've not made them before, Helen.

Helen: Oh, what an absolute treasure. I love rusks. One of the things.

Paula: I know you do.

Helen: When I go home, that's what.

Paula: Yes. Get some rooibos tea and have your, dunk your rusks in your tea.

Helen: *[reading]* All good boys and girls, is on the.

Paula: Yeah, it's a Christmas tin.

Helen: I want to show the microphone, but you can't show the microphone. Santa's holding a.

Paula: Yeah, Santa's beaming.

Helen: This is, as much as I love eggs, this is better.

Paula: Yeah.

Helen: And let the chickens rest.

Paula: It was fun to think of you and think of Lucy and Maria and your dad and just thank you for sharing your life with me and with our listening audience.

Helen: I appreciate being here. Thank you. This is an amazing series.

Paula: Yeah. Thanks.

Helen: You do amazing work. Thank you.

Paula: Thanks

[podcast music]

Paula: You can listen to more episodes of UMD's "It's More Than That" podcast on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you listen. Visit [d dot umn dot edu backslash campus climate](http://d.umn.edu/backslash/campus/climate) to find additional information on our episodes and more about what the University of Minnesota Duluth is doing to build a better, more welcoming campus community for all, and you can sign our pledge and work with us on your own personal journey.

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