

Transcript for Episode with Carmen Jarrín

SPEAKERS

Joe Aguilar, John Galante, Carmen Jarrín

+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++

INTRODUCTION

John Galante

Hi, I'm John Galante, I'm a historian of Latin America who specializes in migration and relations between South America and southern Europe. I also teach history and global studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, otherwise known as WPI.

Joe Aguilar

And I'm Joe Aguilar, a fiction writer. I specialize in speculative fiction and Chicano literature. I also teach creative writing and literature at WPI.

John Galante

And you are listening to *Crossing Fronteras*.

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++

BRAZIL AND THE BODY; PLASTIC SURGERY

John Galante

Today we have with this Carmen Jarrín, an anthropologist and a scholar of especially tans and travesti activism in Brazil. They're also a professor at the College of the Holy Cross. Carmen, thank you for joining us today.

Carmen Jarrín

Thanks for having me. It's an honor.

John Galante

Tell us a little bit about sort of how you became interested in studying Brazil.

Carmen Jarrín

So I grew up in Ecuador, and Brazil was, I'd never been but Brazil has a lot of cultural influence, surprisingly, in Ecuador. For example, my mom and I would watch a Brazilian soap opera every night at 8pm. And I was fascinated by by it. And of course, soap opera's give you a very weird, biased view of what Brazil is like. But anyway, I was interested, we would watch the carnival parades in Brazil in Rio, every February/March, we would listen to Brazilian music. I think my mom is just into Brazil. And so it rubbed off on me. She'd visited once when she was younger.

And so when I became an anthropologist, I thought about doing research in Ecuador, but it felt too close to home. I thought about doing research in India, of all places, because I'd been there for study abroad, but it was a little daunting. And I did a short trip to Brazil, and I fell in love with it, and I was fascinated. I started being becoming fascinated with how complex of a country it is. And so a lot of it was just I want to study a complex place that has a lot of interesting questions that need to be

answered. I love it. I love going back every year to do research. It's also like a place where I have really good friends. I like the music. I like the people. So even though it's such an unequal place, I enjoy doing research in Brazil.

Joe Aguilar

And you were saying something about some questions came up for you that you wanted to investigate, as you were studying anthropology and thinking about Brazil. What were those questions initially? And which did you decide to pursue?

Carmen Jarrín

So in grad school, I was very interested in questions of the body, sexuality. So I knew I wanted to study something related to the body. And I did a short preliminary fieldwork trip to Brazil, in I think, 2004, if I'm correct, 2005 maybe. And mostly Rio, and I immediately noticed there was a plastic surgery clinic on every corner, there were entire magazines dedicated to plastic surgery, there were shows. Whenever I turned to the TV, they were talking about plastic surgery. So I was like, hey, this really matters here.

And then I went to talk to plastic surgeons. Initially, my thought was I was going to study cosmetic tourism, because there's a lot of foreigners that go to Brazil to get cheaper plastic surgeries. But the surgeons were very hesitant to let me talk to any of their private clients, either foreigners or Brazilians.

And it was a surgeon himself, who told me like you should study plastic surgery in public clinics. And I was like, What do you mean in public public hospitals? And he was like, oh, yeah, in Brazil, public hospitals offer plastic surgery for low prices, or sometimes for free to working class folks. And so that became my research question immediately. I was like, How the hell did this happen? Because it's actually pretty unique, almost in the entire world.

Which led me into a lot of historical work. I didn't expect it but a whole chapter of my book, *The Biopolitics of Beauty*, is more historical to try to figure out sort of how that happens, but also sort of how do wider working-class people willing to take risks, because they say, they themselves say, we're guinea pigs for these medical residents where students learn in training. So why are they willing to take the risk was a huge research question I had. Why do they value beauty so much that they're willing to take those risks? And also, why are plastic surgeons so invested in this right? They want to learn from these people, but also they were really invested in improving the nation through plastic surgery, they see themselves as improving the nation through plastic surgery. So I just became fascinated with all the plastic surgeons and the patients, and I really wanted to do a very critical ethnography of sort of the medical system in Brazil, sort of how this came to be.

There's another book called *Pretty Modern* about plastic surgery in Brazil, which is a good book. He's a good writer, but he's much less critical of the plastic surgeons. So that was also how, I wanted to distinguish myself from his work, which was a struggle when a book comes out before yours about the same topic, it's always tricky. So but I think it made my book in some ways more interesting, because I was able to push that other kind of critique.

John Galante

That's super interesting. I think it's your bio page actually that mentions this, this notion of aesthetic hierarchies. And you mentioned that, you know, you kind of looked at some of the historical origins. So

as a historian, if I can ask you some questions about the origins of those kinds of things. So what are those aesthetic hierarchies? How do they manifest themselves, I guess, in Brazilian society, but then also, how do they then potentially generate certain activities outcomes within this bio political or even just the aesthetic kind of sphere? Yeah.

Carmen Jarrín

So what surprised me talking to one of the plastic surgeons is he used the word eugenics. He said miscegenation improved the eugenics of the population, and plastic surgery sort of furthers that work, sort of the way that he put it. And so immediately, I was like eugenics, like, there's a 21st century people talking about eugenics, plastic surgery as eugenics as a completely okay, thing, right? So that's one of the reasons I began to do more historical research because it really went to, Is this tied to the eugenics movement? And it was.

It turns out that the founder of the Eugenic Society of Sao Paulo, Renato Kehl, has a whole book called *The Cure of Ugliness*, where he talks about ugliness being a product of disgenic, or degenerative kind of processes, and therefore beauty is a sign of the whole nation improving. And he has a whole chapter dedicated in the book to plastic surgery, even though this is in 1923, I think he published that book. Plastic surgery hadn't really arrived to Brazil, but he was already extolling plastic surgery as the way to fix these problems of too much racial mixture. So very much a white supremacist that believed that white people were superior to indigenous and black people.

But it's this kind of very Latin American eugenics, where mixture is good, as opposed to bad, because it's somehow weeds out black and indigenous people. So beauty was the way that you measure whether people have mixed too much or whether they're whitening enough. And plastic surgery takes up that mantle.

So the first plastic surgery in Brazil cites Renato Kehl as the reason why he became a plastic surgeon. Snd sort of Ivo Pitanguy, who's the most famous plastic surgeon in Brazil, talked about eugenics frequently, right? So they all follow that kind of thought, like, we're improving the entire nation by improving, by beautifying the nation, by beautifying its people. And it also ties into beautifying the working-class people, right, because you can't just focus on the people with money, everybody has to be beautified in this national project.

So that's the way that I sort of realized, particularly the medical discourse, where it was coming from and how they justified it to the state, and why the state probably said yes to, let's expand this into public hospitals, because it was thought of as a basically as a sign of national improvement.

John Galante

Yeah. And so when you say, when you think of that aesthetic hierarchies, is it as simple as favoring sort of white features, in that sense? Or, like classically white, like, you know, phenotypical features? Or is it more complex than that? Because as you say, Brazil and other countries in Latin America have this 20th century tradition of *mestiçagem*, *mestizaje* in Spanish, right?, racial mixing, racial democracy, etc, etc. So is there a, are there certain aesthetic qualities? Or is the aesthetic hierarchy in Brazil different?

Carmen Jarrín

There's a difference between how patients talk about this and how plastic surgeons talk about this. Right? So plastic surgeons talk about producing this beautiful brown middle, right? But there's a catch to that, because they say we need to create, like they say very openly, like, European features in the face are just more desirable. So a thin nose is more desirable, right, sort of European features. They do all these weird things to give people like more defined jaw lines, which they see as a European, I'm not even sure if that's a European thing. But again, racial thought is never very logical anyway. But they're constantly talking about about sort of whitening people's faces, but they talk about it as browning, right?

So they would say I remember that a surgeon had a patient who was a teenager, and she just complained, and her mom just complained, about I get teased at school. My my nose is *larga*, it's too wide, I don't like it. Right? So she didn't racialize it in the same ways. But the surgeon specifically said, this girl has a negroid nose, they use that term to medicalize it, it needs to be corrected, because she is this is a miscegenated country and she's actually *Morena*, she's not black. So we're bringing her to the brown category, right?, by fixing her nose, which is basically too black So that's how they would justify.

But they say then we're Africanizing people's bodies by giving women more curvy bodies, right, sort of bigger butts and stuff like that. Right? Again, most patients that I talked to did not think of their bodies as becoming blacker by becoming more curvy. It's more of the imagination of the plastic surgeons who, again want to portray themselves as, Oh, no, we're not really about whitening. It's all about creating this mixture. But again, it reduces black bodies to their sexuality or their hypersexuality, in some ways, right, sort of these stereotypes of super buxom black bodies, this sort of plays into the imagination of plastic surgeons. And they're whitening people's faces, but they're African raising people's bodies, right, which is already a problematic thing, because the face is such a more important place of identity than the body.

And again, most of the patients agreed, I want a whiter nose. But they did not agree, I want to blacker body, right. So there's also a lot of contradiction about what plastic surgeon said and how patients actually talked about it.

In fact, most of the middle and upper-class patients I talked to saw things like liposuction and sort of body procedures as putting them away from blackness because they would say, black women are naturally super, super curvy. And they would say things like black women cannot do this naturally, especially middle class and upper class women.

Working class women, some of them especially those who were black are identified as Black. But they didn't racialize it in the same way, their role models were sometimes black models. So I want to look like Beyonce, I want to look like Tais Araujo, which is the famous black person actress, right? So they would have different role models of beauty and they had a different conception of what's beautiful than plastic surgeons. Plastic surgeons always when you ask them who's the most beautiful person in Brazil, they would always say Gisele Bündchen, like, white supermodels. And they would say, Oh, but they're very Brazilian, because the way they walk. It's like a black woman, right? They do always try to say but it's it's about mixture at the end, because they know that the critique is there. So they try to say we're not whitening people. But the project is very much about bringing the country closer to whiteness, in some ways.

Joe Aguilar

Why is there this difference between the way that surgeons perceive what they're doing and patients perceive what they're having done? Like, where does that gap come from?

Carmen Jarrín

That was one of the coolest insights that I had, because some people who talk about plastic surgery assume that patients simply internalize what plastic surgeons have to say. But of course there's a gap. Plastic surgeons are talking to themselves, mostly right, in conferences, creating these weird terms like negroid nose, which actually don't make much sense to the patients.

The plastic surgeons need those terms to justify some of the surgeries, like if you medicalized something then you can justify it in the eyes of the state. Right? So they do weird things, I remember there was a girl with small breasts and they call it a hypertrophy of the mammary glands, right? They give it this fancy technical term for small breasts and suddenly it's medicalized and it requires an intervention, right?

The patients, first of all, they were much more critical, they will talk about the dictatorship of beauty. So working class patients would say this is an unequal thing, and it sucks that I have to participate. And I wish we lived in a society where we didn't have to transform our bodies, but I have to, because otherwise, I won't get that job, otherwise, I won't marry the person that I want to, right? So they would see, upward mobility in particular was very, very highly tied to appearance. And it's a reality in Brazil that there's a huge amount of discrimination based in appearance still.

And so people see getting a thinner nose as something that could get them a job. Getting the appropriate appearance in any kind of way is giving them an opportunity, getting a leg up, particularly for women, women have a lot of pressure looking the part if they're gonna get a nice office job, or they're gonna get even like a job working at a mall.

John Galante

And is, are they trying to look in some ways or at some times like they have had plastic surgery, in the sense of it's a status symbol? I mean, I've certainly seen Brazilian television shows where it's so clear, right? that women especially have had a lot of plastic surgery or other surgeries to augment their bodies or faces. And I wonder, you know, if it's not just an appearance thing, but also like, a status thing.

Carmen Jarrín

It's definitely a status symbol a form conspicuous consumption in some kind of ways, right? You want people to know. There's a stigma for men to admit that they've had plastic surgery because men are supposed to achieve beauty in other ways, by going to the gym working out. Women also workout a lot, but there's no stigma for women to get plastic surgery. So women, I have no problem whatsoever getting women to tell me like, Oh, I've had this and that and got this surgery or 20 and this surgery at 30. When I turn 50, I'm gonna have this. So they also have this like life plan of surgeries that they have to get. And yeah, there's no stigma.

I mean, celebrities talk about their plastic surgeries in Brazil in a way that is very atypical in the US. I'm sure most of the celebrities we know have had some sort of surgery, but most of them will never admit it. Because there's so much stigma here. It's tied to vanity, while in Brazil, it's so normalized, it's almost

seemed like bodily upkeep, right? Like somebody told me once, a Brazilian told me like, oh, it's like, you brush your teeth so that it looks nice and white, right? Like, why wouldn't you get a facelift, if you have wrinkles. It's that normal to them in some ways, because it's so accessible.

John Galante

We've talked mostly about women so far. And I just wonder how maybe some of these things manifest themselves in terms of masculinity and if that was a part of your research, are you focused mostly on on on women, at least for for your initial work.

Carmen Jarrín

I would say, probably 10% of my interviewees were men. The patients at a particular hospital tend to be 90% 95% women. So for men, usually they have to tie it to an aspect of their masculinity for it to be okay, and particularly in the public hospitals. I remember I saw a man who wanted a facelift and he literally got turned away by the psychologists who was kind of a gatekeeper of who deserves surgery and she said, Oh, he wants a surgery that's for women. A facelift is not for men, right? so she already gendered surgeries in a weird way.

So it was okay for men to get gynecomastia, which is if they have too much breast tissue, which is seen as feminizing then they can have the surgery to reduce that to have a flatter, more defined chest. Liposuction to get more defined abs was seen as okay, because it's a masculinizing procedure. So any procedures that masculinized men were thought of as okay and approved regularly in the public hospitals.

In the private in the private hospitals, men have more access to whatever they want. But again, it's men tend to hide it much more, right? In some kind of way, they don't talk about it as much. And I had much less private clients who were men who are willing to talk to me about it.

The other thing that's fascinating is that plastic surgeons were obsessed with the gender binary, which sort of ties into my my new project, but the plastic surgeons wanted to reaffirm masculinity in certain people assigned male at birth and reaffirm femininity in people assigned female at birth, right sort of just reaffirm the gender binary. And they would make it very, very hard for trans and *travesti* people to get access to any kind of surgery.

There are specific clinics that offer gender affirmation surgeries, but it's very hard, you have to do two years of counseling. So what ends up happening is a lot of trans people either have to go to private clinics, which is expensive, and already usually, particularly for working class, very difficult to get access to as a trans person, or do it themselves, right? So like hormones in particular and other bodily modifications they do themselves because it's just very hard to go through the medical system that cisgender people go to to get access. So that's the other thing I noticed is not only this weird racial hierarchies that are aesthetic hierarchies, but also the reaffirmation of the gender binary.

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++

TRAVESTI AND MEDICAL CARE/MEDICAL DISCOURSE IN BRAZIL

Joe Aguilar

Yeah, I was really interested in this in your article on “Translatable Subjects: Travesty Access to Public Health Care in Brazil,” and wondered if you might talk a little bit about the position of *travesti* folks in particular in relation to medical care and medical discourse in Brazil and also surgery.

Carmen Jarrín

So *travestis* are the most common transfeminine subjectivity in Brazil. There's definitely a very long history of sort of people assigned male at birth, but identifying with female pronouns, female names, right, sort of female dress in Brazil. But it's interesting because it's a very specific trans identity where they very rarely desire gender reassignment of their genitals in particular, right? They want to feminize the rest of their body. There's no category that sort of fits everybody forever. But, but that's generally sort of the notion

And plastic surgeons and these gender affirmation clinics in Brazil, tend to exclude any *travestis*, because they like I remember one plastic surgeon telling me, these are not real women, because they don't want to fully shift, right? And they would use the sort of definitions of transsexuality that are used by American and European doctors. It's like, well, this person needs to have 100% gender dysphoria and wants to 100% shift to the other gender, otherwise, they're not valid, otherwise, they don't qualify, and we're not going to give them access to anything, which sort of unfortunately, right, I argue in that article really disqualifies travesties.

And it's, it's one of the main ways that they get discriminated against in the public health system. Not the only way, there's many other ways that they're discriminated against, but it's one of the main ways. And it sort of delegitimizes *travesti* identity, which again, we could maybe think of as a non-binary identity. I've heard some *travestis* saying like, *travesti* is technically a non-binary identity, because we're not trans women were something different. But no matter how you define it, from our point of view, the point is that they're their own thing. And they're not allowed to exist as their own thing, or they're not getting access to healthcare as they should. Even though it's the most common transfeminism, like everybody knows what a *travesti* is in Brazil, right? more than what trans women or trans men are. So it's a purposeful use of transnational medical terms to discriminate against a group of people.

John Galante

Yeah, I find this like intersection a really interesting aspect of your scholarly profile across time in the sense that there's this surgical intervention to create these like extreme forms of femininity and masculinity with cisgendered people. And then then there's this not always the same, but sometimes the same type of procedure that is potentially affirming of a gender identity. But it really complicates I think the whole thing, right?, in really interesting ways.

Carmen Jarrín

So a lot of my new work is with *travesti* and trans activists in Brazil is talking about sort of how are beauty norms working or working against you. most of them would say, no, beauty norms are incredibly cisnormative, incredibly racist, if I'm a black *travesti*, right? incredibly, fat phobic.

Right now I'm working on an article on black fat *travestis* who identify proudly with those three categories and say, We are the opposite of what's considered beautiful in Brazil, but we beautiful. And they're trying to decolonize beauty standards, but not through getting access to surgery at all, but rather

through doing glamour in different kinds of ways and insisting on sort of gender non-conforming bodies, right.

There's something about fat bodies, that's also, it's they're interesting because they transcend binary, they're already kind of non-gender normative, by definition. So there's some really interesting ways that they're doing work on sort of trying to decolonize beauty standards. And in general, black feminists and black transfeminists in Brazil, I think, are at the forefront of critiquing plastic surgeons, critiquing this entire beauty industry that says only some type of bodies are beautiful, others are not, right? And trying to say no, like, let's celebrate the entire diversity of bodies that exist in Brazil.

It's true that *travesti* bodies are considered incredibly beautiful by cisgender. I love some of cisgender women I talk to they were like the fact that people assigned male at birth are able to do this to their bodies and have these incredible curvy bodies, is meaningful to even cisgender women and a lot of *travestis* are admired for that.

They're also there's a huge market of straight men who sort of want to have sex with *travesti* sex workers, because they're thought of as attractive, beautiful, desirable. But there's a contradiction where it's also the country that most kills trans and *travesti* people in the world, right? So there's this incredible contradiction between desiring these bodies and hating the bodies at the same time, because they don't fit the standards, the cisgender standards of beauty and of being that people have. So Brazil is a very contradictory place in that sense. But but the activists are fighting back.

John Galante

We can't assume, right, that that the trans community is any more any less diverse than any other community? Therefore, we can't assume solidarity, right, in all things, either.

But I was wondering about the 90:10 thing maybe within the trans community, like, you mentioned that femininity or cisgendered women tend to be 90% of the cisgendered people who pursue these types of surgeries. Do you see what I mean, is femininity still being favored, right?, within the trans community in terms of intervention, surgical intervention?

Carmen Jarrín

I would say largely, yes, but part of it has to do with the fact that if you're trans-feminine and you're seeking gender affirmation surgeries, you need a lot more surgical work to be done.

Testosterone is this incredible thing that does incredible things to the body. So transmasculine people, transmen change a lot, just by taking testosterone right? They gain muscle, they gain a beard, right? their physical features, their face literally changes.

That's not the same thing with estrogen in the other direction. Transfeminine people, their faces will not change that much unless they get something like feminizing facial procedures. So there's more work that you can do as a trans, or that you need to do as a transfeminine person, if you want to pass, right? Not everybody wants to pass. Again, a lot of people don't want any surgeries because there's so much diversity in trans the trans community. But those who do, do end up doing a lot of surgery. Transmasculine people need less.

The main surgery that I saw transmasculine people looking for is top surgery. And top surgery is a relatively easy procedure. So it's actually pretty accessible in Brazil. Same thing, you have to go through psychological counseling for two years, prove prove that you're a transman. But if you do that, you are able to get top surgery through the public health system. And of course, if you have the money, you can get into the private health system at any point, which is the same thing in the US. And so top surgery tends to be, because it gives a huge amount of gender dysphoria, if you're transmasculine, usually, not everybody, but a lot of people. So they top surgery, getting rid of breast tissue, is something very important to a lot of trans men that have interviewed.

But I would say that's the only one. Very few of them are interested in bottom surgery. Very few of them seem interested in other types of surgeries. Some of them may be trying to get some implants to get fuller beards. That's the only thing I've seen. But again, even that is rare, because usually testosterone is pretty transformative in a lot of ways. Yeah.

John Galante

This is a public healthcare system, like universal health care type of thing, right? which basically is supported by the government and the fees are low. Right? And is that typical in any way? Or is that actually quite particular?

Carmen Jarrín

No, I think most of Europe that has, most of European countries have universal health care systems, I think you can get your gender affirmation surgeries approved through the public health system seen as a public health need, right?

Argentina has one of the most progressive laws in the world, it's called the Gender Identity Law, that not only lets you change your ID, like you don't need a doctor to say you're trans for you to change your name and your gender in your ID. And it also gives you access to gender affirmation surgeries through the their public healthcare system. So in fact, I would say compared to Argentina, which is a close example in Latin America, Brazil is actually behind because there is a lot of discrimination. And just talking to trans people, like they always talk about like other ways, like they get misgendered, when they try to get go to these gender affirmation places that you don't get treated fairly, right. So they, they hesitate, and a lot of them go outside of Brazil to get access, because it's cheaper if they go to Europe or they go to Thailand to get gender affirmation surgeries. Or it's like they get treated better by doctors.

It's and it's interesting because Brazil is the only, one of the few countries in the world, that has plastic surgery for free, or for low prices, in the public healthcare system. And yet gender affirmation surgeries are not accessible at all, compared to plastic surgeries for cisgender people.

John Galante

That says quite a lot, actually.

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++

SCHOLAR-ACTIVIST RELATIONSHIPS; BOLSONARO; ARTIVISMO; CATHOLIC SYMBOLOGY

John Galante

How did you become interested in these topics like your transition from the focus on, you know, biopolitics and beauty to a greater focus on the trans community and *travesti* community, you know, what, what brought you to that?

Carmen Jarrín

Well, part of it was, personal, to be honest. I began doing research on trans issues in 2016. And at first I was like, Oh, I'm just really interested in this group of people. Like I, you know, it started with the article on them getting access to surgeries, which I saw when I was doing my research and plastic surgery.

But then I began talking to activists and they became friends of mine, and I began to realize, I just need to admit that there's a part of me that's trans, that's non-binary, and I began experimenting with my gender clothing and I changed my name and pronouns. So it's been an interesting mixture of research/personal journey, where I've learned tons about myself by doing research with Brazilian *travesti* and trans activists. And I admire them so much, and they gave me.

I remember, there was a particular time I was talking to Erika Hilton, who's now a congresswoman in the National Congress, so Brazil has two *travestis* in the National Congress, it is incredible. And Erika Hilton is like this powerhouse and she's, like, incredible in all these ways and she. I was asking her, like, how are you not scared? I assume you get death threats. And she was, oh yeah, I get threats all the time. I don't know, anytime I leave my house, I don't know if I'm coming home that night because I get so many death threats and I'm a huge target. And we're talking about Brazil which killed Mariela Franco, a big lesbian activist, right, and politician got murdered. So this happens, but, you know, if you're too progressive or too particularly LGBT, you're in danger. Other LGBT politicians had to flee the country.

So then I remember being like a moment of clarity for me, like, if she can do this, I can come out. I can, I can sort of transition as well. So they're a huge inspiration for me. And then Bolsonaro got elected. And, and they were trans activists, *travesti* activists, they were telling me he's gonna get elected, it's going to happen. And I was like, No, there's no way, just like Trump here, no, it's not gonna happen. And then it happened. And they were ready like day one, I remember Linda Quebrada, who's a famous *travesti* singer and activist, she said, this seems like a terrible loss, and yes, it's scary. But this backlash is a backlash to all the advances we have made, and we can fight back. Right? So she was, day one, she was ready to come back. So I was very impressed with how they reacted, even though of course, it was incredibly depressing time. And a lot of my interlocutors were definitely depressed with Bolsonaro's election, and the four years were very difficult. But they were also fighting back constantly. So I wanted to write about them.

And as an anthropologist, and other colleagues of mine, we were just interested in how did this happen. Because it's quite surprising for Brazil to go from almost 12 years of a center left government to, 14 years I think, before Dilma got impeached, to first a very neoliberal government of Michel Temer and then to kind of a right wing government with Bolsonaro. The shift was very intense and very quick. So we published a book called precarious democracy. Its 17 anthropologists and we're trying to explain how did this happen,

And we came up with really interesting kind of, all these micro ethnographies of different places to explain, for example, why did Japanese Brazilians vote for Bolsonaro? Why did formerly working class now middle-class people who benefited from Workers Party programs vote for Bolsonaro? So it became a really interesting collection.

I mostly wrote about the resistance. None of the trans and *travesti* interlocutors I talked to voted for Bolsonaro at all. Some gay white men did, though, which is interesting. And how they were fighting back. which was really interesting to me, because Bolsonaro won in part by demonizing LGBT people and saying, we've gone too far, we've destroyed family moral morals, right? These people are dangerous. The people in the government are groomers, the groomer discourse that we see in US now was actually used by Bolsonaro way before that, and, to a very effective way.

John Galante

Sorry, groomer discourse?

Carmen Jarrín

Yeah, this idea. So Bolsonaro, for example, said that the candidate for the Workers Party, Haddad, had created a program to sexualize children in schools and was sort of brainwashing them to become LGBT as if you could do that. And therefore, right, the Workers Party was the party of groomers in some way. So it's very interesting. They're always talking to each other these right-wing people. So Bolsonaro learned from Trump, now, right-wing people in the US are learning back from what happened there. It's, we tend to think of these places as isolated, but they're not, in the same way that trans activists in Brazil are seeing what trans activists do in the US and vice versa. Right? Like these transnational tactics are always interesting.

John Galante

Even just like stepping back a little bit, you mentioned that you become friends with these people, right, that you've studied, what's that relationship, like, in terms of, like, they are aware that you're their friend, and maybe you're going out hanging out, whatever, going to events, and so forth. Nevertheless, you're in some ways, studying them. Right? But also providing them a platform. Ehat has been your experience with that being so close to your subject?

Carmen Jarrín

In general, trans and *travesti* activists that I talked to, I allow them to shape my research. So for example, initially, I was mostly going to focus on issues of health, because I'm a medical anthropologist and I was interested in issues of health. And they're the ones who pushed me and said, yeah, the health stuff matters, but it's really a tiny sliver of what we're fighting against. Like, we're fighting against the rise of right-wing politicians. And so I really let them shape my research. And I really let them inform sort of what I was doing.

They're very critical of how they have been portrayed in anthropology. Right? So there's a couple of books, two three books about *travesti* experience in Brazil. And it tends to portray them in a very apolitical way. It's very strange, even though they're clearly political beings that have always been fighting for their rights, most of the books written about *travestis*, in particular, just portray them as, Oh, they're sex workers. And this is how they transform their bodies. And it's all true.

But it sort of brackets how they're trying to change society, at all, altogether, right? So part of my work, I feel, is correcting that huge gap. It's like, why are we not thinking of these people as activists and as people who are political and interested in changing society and doing this incredible activism? So they're happy, you know, when I explained that that's what my project is, they're happy, like, oh, yeah, we agree. We have been portrayed in this really, kind of diminishing ways. It's not diminishing, but incomplete ways and, and ways that really focus on our bodies, right? There's this obsession that cisgendered people have with trans bodies. And what if we talk you talked about our activism.

So in fact, most of my recent work, I completely avoid talking about their bodies, because really, it's irrelevant. What's relevant is the work they're doing the activism they're doing, the fact that they're running for Congress like it. And it's more interesting, to be honest, it's a much more interesting topic, how they're trying to change society and sort of are fearless and all these ways rather than did they get top surgery or not, right, so. So it's been really pleasant to see them as collaborators almost.

Now I'm trying to edit an entire collection of essays written by Brazilian *travesti* and trans thinkers, scholar-activists. I'm translating I think it's like 10-12 essays by them into English and trying to publish it as an edited collection. Because one of the main things they told me is like, Okay, we are writing about our own experience all the time in very incredibly theoretical, interesting ways. And nobody's reading us in the US, we wish that was the case. Because they're reading Judith Butler and Jack Halberstam and all these trans thinkers in the US, but nobody's reading them outside of Brazil, even though in Brazil, they read each other all the time.

That's actually really important. I have the skills to actually translate these essays in a way that sort of makes justice to the complex arguments they're doing because it's really complex thinking about trans issues. So I'm super excited about our project.

John Galante

Can you talk through maybe some examples of that activism, that, you know, you've written about.

Carmen Jarrín

So activism, *artivismo* is a term they use, right, they say we are artists and activists at the same time. So it's very, very political art. It's in theater. It's in film. It's in fashion. So there's even fashion which you don't think of as being political, there is this incredible fashion designer that does this incredibly, puts political messages on the clothing about trans lives and *travesti* lives sort of mattering, etc. There's the place that I've watched incredible plays, musicals as well, in Brazil, that are specifically focused on *travesti* experience during the dictatorship, *travesti* experienced during the AIDS crisis. So they're literally reclaiming their past by writing plays about it films about it.

Linn da Quebrada and Jup do Bairro all these other musicians do very political music about the trans/*travesti* experience, so all their music tends to be highly charged political and sort of celebrating their lives, talking about the state sort of killing them, talking about transphobia. It's almost overwhelming to me trying to figure out how to write about it in a way that makes justice to how vibrant it is.

Whenever I go to Sao Paulo, in particular, which is like the center of the trans and *travesti* activism, there's like so much going on. It's just fascinating. They've also have a huge ballroom scene now. You

know, like, voguing and all that stuff. So now there's a huge ballroom scene, there's all these different ballroom houses, right with mothers and fathers, you know, so it works to create these alternative kinship systems. Like *Paris is Burning*. Sort of like right now, Sao Paulo is burning, they have all these incredible houses happening. So there's just so much going on. And they like having an audience like. What's interesting to me is like, all those things are made for a public consumption, which is one of the reasons why I feel this weird writing about it, because that's what they want. They want people to talk about it and reflect on it. Right? So it feels much less othering than than previous projects on *travesti* experience.

Joe Aguilar

You talked about this in your research, but the role of joy in trans visibility and the key importance of that. You quote Benevides as saying, we need a visibility that leaves behind that paradigm of pain and violence. I'm wondering what joy looks like in terms of *artivismo*.

Carmen Jarrín

Oh, yeah, it's it's wonderful. So the main thing that Bruna Benevides is talking about, and she's a famous trans activist as well, is that when the media in particular covers trans issues *travesti* issues, it reinforces the violence by portraying travesties either as as dangerous people that deserve to die, or sort of, oh, you know, like tragic figures that sort of don't have anything to look forward to except death and sort of, or just terrible lives, right sort of reinforces this general idea that these people are just going to be unhappy.

So trans people, *travestis* have really galvanized around the idea of joy and sort of celebrating who we are in celebrating our lives. So for example, and it's interesting, because even in the US, I think we trans activists sometimes focus too much on death. So if you think about it, one of the biggest day we celebrate is the Trans Day of Remembrance, where we talk about all the trans people that have been killed that year. And it's a depressing event. The effect I see it having on my students who are trans is that they are scared because they're like, Oh, my God, all these people are being killed. I'm in danger, right?

So for example, they really avoid that. But even when they talk about people who died, they celebrate their lives in a different kinds of way. And they really focus on who's living, right. So they talk about our transestors who are still alive, like so they focus on older travesties, for example, who are in their 40s or 50s, which is actually given the violence, right, it's sort of amazing if people reach their 40s 50s 60s and celebrating their contributions to activism and so they're constantly talking about joy talking about sort of survival resilience community focusing on things like the ballroom competitions are incredibly joyful events the fashion.

Even the plays that focus on dark days, like the dictatorship, which was incredibly violent against *travesties*, they find ways to insert joy in those narratives. You don't go out of the theater and say like, oh my God, I'm just terribly sad for what happened but rather like, regenerated, by like, oh my god, they resisted this in incredible ways. If they resisted that dictatorship. We can resist Bolsonaro, which was basically the message that they were trying to impart, right like we can make it through these dark times.

And so now that Lula was elected, there's a lot more actually like joy, hope, right resurgence now that there's two travesties in Congress, there's a huge amount of like people are saying like now Erika Hilton is going to be the next president of the Brazil, right. So people are putting really big hopes into a very big national transformation and some of the right wing craziness goes away. It's always going to be there, the backlash is very intense.

John Galante

But this connection between or cycle even or integration between backlash and progress. It's fascinating that Bolsonaro and his supporters were anti-trans and anti- so many other elements of maybe trans existence in some ways, but nevertheless, lead to this mobilization of progress and change, and activism and creativity and joy.

Carmen Jarrín

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. The activists were doing amazing work before Bolsonaro got elected. But there was definitely kind of this urgency, like, we need to speak up, we can't stay silent, we need to, right now more than ever, activism is central, and we need to keep doing it. As dark as the Bolsonaro days were, I think it definitely galvanized the trans and *travesti* community to sort of be louder and more outspoken than before.

John Galante

Yeah. And you mentioned in some of your work, the focus on religion. Which, you know, the Bolsonaro ideological kind of point of view is highly traditional Catholic Christian kind of view of Brazil and the West. So did that help, the trans and *travesti* community make an additional effort to incorporate religion, then, in their resistance? You see what I mean? Like there's a conversation happening there potentially, in the symbols that are used in, the subjects that are talked about.

Carmen Jarrín

Yeah, they're constantly borrowing from Christian Catholic imagery in their work, because they're trying to have that conversation. They're trying to speak back to these incredibly conservative Christian ideals, and they're trying to say, but there's more to that. So for, just to give you a quick example, Renata Carvalho, who's a very famous playwright and an actress in Brazil, who's *travesti* has created this play called "Jesus Christ, Queen of Heaven," which imagines Jesus second coming back as a travesty.

And in fact, the play if you saw, it was not incredibly, right, sort of raunchy or wrong. It's actually pretty like, respectful of Christian narratives, just really trying to make people think. Didn't Jesus say he was for the downtrodden and everything right? Wouldn't it make sense for Jesus to come back as a *travesty*. So the play really pushes, I think, even Christian audiences, and she claims that even though she got death threats, there was protests in front of the theatre where she held some of these plays. She says when I actually held them, once you can actually engage with it, I had pastors and I had other people tell me, like, actually you have some valid points here. Right?

So they're really trying to sometimes they're more irreverent in the way they incorporate religious imagery. Sometimes it's more like actually really seriously want to engage with this. There's also Viviany Belebóni crucified herself in a Sao Paulo Pride Parade, right?, I mean, she didn't actually harm herself. But she was a crucified *travesti*. So they're doing really smart things that, of course, cause a lot

of controversy, but I think, do make people think right about like, Qm I being a Christian if I'm demonizing trans folks?

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++

LULA AND TRANS ACTIVISM; TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS; MUSIC; FUTURES

Joe Aguilar

So now that Lula has been elected, and Bolsonaro is no longer in power. What's changed?

Carmen Jarrín

So yeah, a lot of things have changed. Immediately, Lula reopened and the LGBT Office of Human Rights that the government had under his first government. That completely disappeared, right? So the Workers Party was always at least very friendly with the LGBT movement in Brazil. And in fact, sort of, there was significant progress in terms of gay marriage, in terms of getting people access to health care. Bolsonaro closed that, right. He's literally erased all LGBT programs from the federal government. Now that Lula's back in power, he reopened that, he's put in a lot of very important positions LGBT people, including a very famous *travesti* activist is now in a very important position within sort of the Office of Human Rights in, in the federal government.

So of course, it's early to say, activists are normally skeptical, right? Well, particularly because Lula has a difficult balancing act to do because Lula does not have a majority in Congress. So he had to ally with the Centrão, which is the center right kind of parties, that have a bloc, a voting bloc in Congress. So there's a question of how much legislatively he'll be able to do for for actually progressive causes, particularly social progressive causes, right?

And he's also very focused on the economy because the economy really tanked under Bolsonaro. So he's just trying to get unemployment down and stuff like that. So I think that his main concern as president, but he's definitely talking to LGBT partners. That's such a huge change from a president who said LGBT people are demonic and should be eliminated, basically. Right. And it literally means, in practical terms, less murders, right. It really matters how for symbolic and practical reasons where the president is in terms of LGBT issues.

John Galante

So do you think that the activism has then changed if if Bolsonaro's election caused this flourish of change in trans activism and the types of activism and so on and so forth that you were describing earlier? Does the election of Lula cause any shifts in that type of activism.

Carmen Jarrín

I didn't see less vibrancy, I think there's still this, and people remind each other all the time like, well, the right wing fascists, basically, are still very much in power in Congress. There's a huge bloc of Evangelicals that are very anti-LGBT, we can let our guard down. Look at the US Trump is trying to come back, right. I think the activism was last time I went in June was there was just as an amount of plays and fashion events and poetry readings. And like, I didn't see less events. I go during Pride Month, because it's when it's more it's most active. But yeah, it was pretty vibrant still.

John Galante

But you just talked about the sort of Trump-Bolsonaro, you know, kind of connection. And I also wonder about the transnational component in terms of, you know, trans activism and that sort of thing. How is this activism transnational? Or in what ways, or.

Carmen Jarrín

It's really interesting. There's a lot of dialogue not only with US activists, right, so Brazilians are reading again Judith Butler Jack Halberstam, All of these like scholar...I wouldn't call them activists necessarily but yes, scholar activist. But there's also a lot of dialogue within Latin America. So Brazilian activists are in dialogue with *travesti* activists in in Argentina, and *travesti* activists in Chile and sort of trying to figure how are you doing things there? Right.

So for example, Brazilians feel like oh, *travesti* activists in Argentina, they got the the Gender Identity Law that passed, they're clearly ahead of us. Like we need to catch up, like we need to get inspired by what they're doing, and figure out how to get there. They think of things very transnationally. I think in the US, we don't like I wish we did. you know. I don't know, many trans activists in the US who are thinking about Brazil or Argentina or Europe even right? But in Latin America, they don't have that luxury. They're always thinking transnationally.

John Galante

So if there was a young person in Ecuador these days, would they see trans people, *travestis* in Brazilian soap operas on television, potentially?

Carmen Jarrín

Potentially, yeah. And potentially that would make a difference in Ecuador, which has come a very long way since I was living there, but still pretty conservative country. And I assume some people are listening to likely Linn da Quebrada and Jup do Bairro and all these singers in Ecuador, right? I wouldn't be surprised probably not as much due to the language barrier, but definitely. They're pretty transnational figures now.

Joe Aguilar

You've talked about some but the gender nonconforming artists, especially in Brazil, that have sort of taken the music scene by storm. Yeah, I'm curious if you might talk about some of the those sorts of artists who are doing interesting things in Brazil and and really breaking through in sort of a mainstream way.

Carmen Jarrín

Yeah, yeah. One of them even won a Grammy. Lineker won a Grammy for Best Latin pop album recently, because it's a beautiful album. It's just they're really producing also producing really good music. Just very pleasant music to listen to. But yeah, there's so many like Linn da Quebrada, Lineker, Jup da Bairro, like I could keep naming names of trans and *travesti* singers who have broken into the mainstream and are literally listened to across the entire Brazil. It's interesting that the American music tends to not be quite as political about, they could talk about LGBT rights much more openly in their music, and they don't, Latin America has such a huge tradition of protest music, so I think it just makes sense in Latin America, right?

John Galante

I was gonna ask you about whether you're optimistic or not right about some of the things that you've kind of researched. But you do talk about in some of your research, how trans activists and *travesti* performers can often be using futuristic kind of imagery, oftentimes thinking about the future as kind of a way to produce hope. So there's an optimism there, I think, right, and that the future will be better. Because it does seem not clear, right, like violence is increasing, right? Backlash is always there. It's always threatening. Even if it's not your opinion, what are you noticing on that front?

Carmen Jarrín

So the way Linn da Quebrada put it on the day Bolsonaro one is she said, this is a backlash, because they're scared, because we're actually winning. And we need to keep fighting, because we're going to win in the end. When we all come together. And she had this very intersectional kind of analysis. She said, if we all come together, not just trans people, but black people, working class people, like we're just a majority in Brazil, which it's true, she's not wrong. If we all come together, like they can't beat us this, the people who are part of the backlash are definitely a minority. So she was immediately thinking long term, and this is the day Bolsonaro won, which is a hard day to be optimistic.

So they're cynical, but I think they're optimistic about the long run. And I think that's one of the reasons why they look really long term. And they think about like, Oh, by then gender will be irrelevant and gender will just be playful and awesome. So they have these really amazing utopian long term visions of what their work is about. So I like their optimism is very contagious. It can be quite depressing and defeatist as a trans non binary person to, to not believe that society can change. And and the thing is society is changing, right? It would be impossible not to say that, just from my experience in the last 10 years, just people using they/them pronouns, learning how to use them, and using them, for me and for other people, has been a huge amount of progress in a short amount of time.

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++

TEACHING AND CURRICULUM AND NEW ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT

John Galante

Yeah, so how is this translating maybe to the classroom for you? Embedded in that question, I'm wondering, like, how you work on these issues with your students? And how do you reference things that are new to other things in the past or other forms of activism? How is this manifesting itself in terms of teaching and learning, when you're teaching undergraduates especially I would think are the primary students who are who you're teaching. And that's got to be fascinating just to be a part of.

Carmen Jarrín

Particularly at a Catholic institution. So I work at a Catholic institution, College of the Holy Cross, which is a very progressive Catholic institution, thankfully, like. I've been surprised about how accepting my co-workers have been about using a different name for me, different pronouns for me, like they switched immediately. So it was, it's been very amazing.

The student body can be more conservative than the faculty body, because they're coming from conservative Catholic high schools, conservative Catholic families, a lot of them don't have never met a trans person before, or even a gay person before coming to Holy Cross sometimes. So a lot of queer and trans students gravitate towards me, because of that, they're sort of looking for a safe space to talk about these issues.

I teach a class called Global Queer Activism, which I really love. It's an upper-level seminar, but I try to sort of make it accessible for a student from any level. And so it's 12 of us. And we have amazing discussions the entire semester, we start with sort of a bit of the history of like the Stonewall Riots, and even earlier the Compton Cafeteria Riots. The central role that trans people like Marsha P Johnson had in those events, and were kind of erased from it. And then we talk about the AIDS crisis and Act Up and the amazing success it had and sort of how radical it was in all these amazing ways.

And then we sort of start talking about activism in different countries. We spend a week talking about queer activism in China, then queer activism in India, queer activism in Latin America, it's a lot of fun, and students get a lot out of it. And their final projects are more creative projects where they're allowed to even do activism as part of the final project. So some of the queer students will actually do events based for the campus. So that's one of my favorite classes to teach. And it's a direct way that my research influences that class.

But I try in all of my classes to include queer trans content. And of course, now that we started a new department of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, there's a lot of focus on racial inequality in my courses, so the other thing that that's happening at Holy Cross is it's a very much a predominantly white institution. And most of the students are very wealthy as well. There's a dissonance right between the more wealthy students who are mostly white, and very privileged, who don't understand the students of color, they're in the minority. So students of color also gravitates towards me.

I developed a new class called Race, Racism, and Anthropology, which I love to teach. And it's sort of it's very critical of the discipline of anthropology for its complicity in sort of racism, but also tries to think about how do we do it better. And, and we read a lot of amazing new anthropological texts by mostly anthropologists of color, that are really trying to do anthropology differently in a way that actually fights towards racial justice, right. So like, actually not simply analyzes racial inequality, but actually says, Okay, this is how we push the needle forward.

John Galante

Do you find it challenging to, to when you bring those students together, whether they're trans, or students of color, and you're creating curriculum for them, creating elements of solidarity among them, and identification among them. But yet, you don't want to reify the categories necessarily, Right? And you don't want to make it us-them.

Carmen Jarrín

I mean, it's interesting, because I think it's self-selects. Right? So I've never had someone who's homophobic or transphobic take my class on Global Queer Activism, which is unfortunate, in some ways, right? I wish that I could push those students to take my classes a bit more.

But so but I get amazing allies, right, I get people who perhaps are not super well informed, but are interested in learning, right? And so yeah, I definitely get straight students in my queer classes, I get white students in my classes about race. It's the dynamic is very different, because they're in the minority normally, right? So it changes the dynamic. And they think that's what makes the students of color more comfortable, because they're like, Okay, we're in the majority, we can actually have real conversations, that in my economics class, when I tried to bring up race just got shot down, right? Not

because the professor is not wanting it to happen, but because the other students are like just not interested or, or they actually come back with really close minded kind of interpretations of what I'm saying.

So just creating a space where everybody can have a conversation, and I really encourage students of any backgrounds to sort of participate So I, you know, if they're not talking, I call on them. I ask them, like, what are you thinking? Right? So and try to make them comfortable to participate and sort of collaborate in some ways? I think I'm able to create a space where we can just have difficult conversations about difficult topics, like let's say police violence, but in a way that we're students of color feel heard about their point of view, particularly because a lot of what we're reading agrees with what there's. A lot of the black anthropologists reading are not going to say police violence is not a problem, but they're going to talk about structurally Right? It's not about bad cops being racist. It's about structurally the state has an interest in policing black bodies, right? So it when you make it a structural, it also makes students more comfortable about looking at okay, this is a structural issue, therefore, I might be white, but I can participate in this discussion.

Joe Aguilar

I want to make sure that we have time to talk a little bit more about the new Department of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. And you'd mentioned it in passing, but it's a big accomplishment. And I wonder if you could talk a bit about this.

Carmen Jarrín

Yeah, super, super proud of that department. It was seven of us pushing for it, most of us faculty of color, who saw the need in in particularly among our students, right. So we have a very healthy Latin American Studies program, Africana Studies program, an Asian Studies program, but they tend to be very regional focused, right. So the Latin American Studies program studies Latin America, it doesn't really focus on Latinx issues of race, right? The African Studies program is very focused on Africa. It's less focused on racial inequality in the US, right? So but we didn't want to call it American Studies either because most of us don't do American Studies. We do transnational work, but we are interested in racial inequality.

So we decided to call it the Department of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. This was the summer of 2020, when we first had the idea. So we pushed we pushed it was, it was definitely an uphill battle, because we wanted a department, we did not want a program, we wanted a department. We wanted it to be funded, we wanted tenure lines, we wanted like a serious structural change to the college.

Thankfully, we're not alone. We also, the same year, we passed a new Environmental Studies department. So and their argument was like climate change is an emergency, we need to look at this as a department, we need the resources so that students can study this as a major and a minor. So we made the same argument for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. So again, racial inequality is clearly an emergency, it's obvious, like we need a department for to study more seriously and give students the skills to target this. And so it was successful, after a lot of campaigning, basically, meeting every department to convince them only 10 faculty of more than 200 faculty all across voted against it.

John Galante

And what were the arguments of that campaign? When you're trying to make a convincing argument about restructuring a university, let's not say it's impossible, but it's, it's hard. So what what are the main arguments that you all developed to say, this is needed.

Carmen Jarrín

Yeah, part of it was sort of making a serious argument in the proposal about the history of the three strands of thought that we were sort of borrowing from Critical Race Theory, Ethnic Studies, and Decolonial Studies, three very different disciplines that are in dialogue with one another, but that sort of come from different places, right. So explaining, what they were. This is what we do. This is why they're super important strains of thought that basically don't have a representation at College of the Holy Cross. If a student wants to study this, any of these three things, they can't, it's very hard. Let's give them a space.

But we have a huge amount of faculty that actually work on this. So aside from the seven of us, who are the founding members, there's other faculty who teach classes about race, And so if we put all those classes together, you have this incredibly vibrant major and minor. If we're doing this already, we're just giving them a structure. And we're giving them mentors that specifically know about this issue and sort of can give them this, students will absolutely, given the demand for our classes, they want to know about police violence, they want to know about structural racism, they want to they want to understand the world they live in. We need to give them that. So that was basically our pitch.

This serves the students and it serves faculty in the sense that we have a very hard time at Holy Cross, keeping a faculty of color hiring and keeping faculty of color. So hopefully our department is going to co-hire people, with people in other departments and make it a bit more attractive for faculty color to be like, yes, you're going to be let's say in a mostly white Classics department. But you're going to have this amazing other group of people that are mostly faculty of color, they're going to help mentor you and are going to be you're collaborators when talking when writing about race.

Because sometimes a lot of departments as even if they're really invested in diversifying their, their faculty. they're not experts on race, none of them are. And it's so when you want to hire a Black expert on race, and you don't even understand what they're doing, it'd be like we can be the experts. So that was also our pitch like, this is a structural change that would really help us diversify the entire faculty body. Thankfully, I think the faculty are progressive faculty that see the problem, and as losing faculty of color over and over again, are saying, Okay, how do we fix this? And so they, they saw the department as a step forward.

John Galante

Then, but you also have to design a curriculum that works, right for the students that is presumably interdisciplinary, that must have been a real challenge as well to develop the curriculum that's can achieve the objectives you want them to, but within the existing structures, yeah, or working with the existing structure.

Carmen Jarrín

Like I said, when we put together all the courses on race that are taught at the college, it's like an incredible list of courses. And so we created like, these are going to be the gateway courses, these are

going to be the intermediate courses, then there's four different tracks that we created. One's intersectionality, the other one is representation and culture, the other one is social change.

And it's incredibly interdisciplinary. So thankfully, we have people in History in the Arts, in Sociology, Anthropology, Economics, like almost every department except not the sciences. We're hoping, that's our one gap, we're hoping to hire more people in the sciences who are. But that's hard, to find a biologist who is like an expert on racial inequality. That's very, very niche. So I don't know how successful we will be with that. But given everything that we have, I think we have an incredibly interdisciplinary and vibrant major minor,

I think we'll, as we, as we run it, we'll probably find more gaps. Like for example, we already know, we need someone who does environmental racism, because we don't. But that's the point, we're gonna hire people that sort of fill the gaps and sort of see it as this department has needs.

John Galante

Yeah. And have you told your your activists in Brazil?

Carmen Jarrín

Oh, yeah, no, they're excited. I mean, I think especially the ones that are academics themselves, get it, right.

John Galante

Well, congratulations. We certainly wish you the best in that. And I want to thank you so much for talking to us today. This was a really fascinating conversation and appreciate your time and your insight on this really important and, and fascinating scholarship that you're doing.

Carmen Jarrín

Yeah, thanks for having me.

Joe Aguilar

Thank you so much, Carmen.

Carmen Jarrín

It was a pleasure.

+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++
CREDITS

John Galante

You've been listening to *Crossing Fronteras*. I'm your co-host John Galante, a historian of Latin American and an Associate Professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute as well as the creator and executive producer of the podcast series.

Joe Aguilar

And I'm your co-host Joe Aguilar, a fiction writer and an Assistant Professor at WPI, and an executive producer of the podcast series.

John Galante

This show surveys the unique ecosystem of contemporary scholarship and art being generated by scholars and creatives in New England who are working in Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

Joe Aguilar

Our series producer is Jill Ruby. Original music for our series was written, performed, and by Carlos Odria. This podcast was recorded at PRX Podcast Garage in Boston, Massachusetts, with the help of Magdiela Matta. Additional support came from a fellowship provided by the Global Labs at WPI, with special assistance from Steve McCauley, Varun Bhat, and Sam Ollari.

John Galante

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