

# EP6-Dawit\_Justin Chu\_Emily (Part 1)

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(upbeat music)

Emily

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-Hi and welcome to "Untold Hong Kong Stories"

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Multimedia Narratives from the Margins.

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This is a podcast series where we hear the stories of people in our community

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from Hong Kong's non-Chinese locals to marginalized members of our community.

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We hope that by sharing their stories we can think about the way we live ours

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and create a more inclusive and diverse society.

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I'm Emily from the Department of English Language and Literature of Hong Kong Baptist University

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and our guests for today's podcast are Dawit, a youth worker and educator

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focusing on social and environmental justice

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and Justin, an MPhil candidate at the University of Hong Kong who is also a sex educator.

Justin

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-I'm Justin, I'm currently an MPhil student at HKU.

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Aside from my research which is related to sex, tort and obscenity,

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I'm also a sex educator in Sticky Rice Love A Register charity

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that does sex education predominantly for youth.

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So my technical title is Curator of Public Programs and Education

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so I'll deal with public programs for women from the age of 16 to 27.

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So it's a one-year online program.

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Some of them we will of course we will do physical events,

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say for example yoga as well as body exploration, that kind of stuff will be online.

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And the other side will be focusing on micro domestic workers' sexual health

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so we'll be we have been collaborating with NGOs like Pathfinders to talk about

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to eliminate taboo within the migrant domestic worker community when they talk about sex

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as well as we were going to have another podcast in fact on enlightening

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or to change the idea of sexual taboo within the migrant domestic workers community

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regarding sexual health as well as other sexual taboos.

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So yeah, in short, I'm a sex educator and I do things all about sex

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and I try to make things fun I guess.

Emily

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-Great, that's really fascinating.

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I think that's a really rich profile that you're talking about.

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So just to clarify a little bit, so you were born and raised in Hong Kong, am I correct?

Justin  
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-Yes.

Emily  
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-Great, so locally born and raised in Hong Kong.

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So Dawit, would you like to tell us a little bit about you as well?

Dawit  
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-Yeah, so thank you first for having us over here.

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And my name is Dawit and I'm an Eritrean which is a country in the eastern part of Africa.

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I was born and raised there and I've worked for most of my life there

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but I've also lived and worked in different African countries,

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visited like more than eight African countries as well

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before I came to Hong Kong to study, to do my master's in education.

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I started as an educator back when I graduated university in Eritrea

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but then I've also worked in different industries mainly on manufacturing of medical devices

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but I was always passionate about education

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and that's why I went back again to do a master's in education here in Hong Kong.

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And then after that I started, actually when I was studying, I started working

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and get involved with the Africa Centre Hong Kong

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which has started actually its space in 2020

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and the mission of Africa Centre is of rebranding blackness, black consciousness

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and also connecting and creating bridges between the different communities in Hong Kong.

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It is in 2020 when I was still actually in HKU

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that I got introduced to Innocent, founder of Africa Centre Hong Kong

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and then he was establishing centre which works on rebranding blackness

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and also like introducing black consciousness in Hong Kong

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and also of course creating a bridge between the different communities here in Hong Kong.

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So this was something that really resonated with me

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and I started to get involved there especially in producing different educational programs

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of course to promote and also to introduce African culture, black history

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because there was this lack of consciousness that we found out in Hong Kong

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and also like me as an educator even when I was still a student researching on

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and comparing different educational systems between Hong Kong and other countries

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I realized that a lot of people do not know about Africa in general

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and also about black history so there was a need

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and I immediately said okay and then start to get involved the centre

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in building different programs and then after that of course I also work in polyU

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service learning as well.

Emily

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-And that's how I got to know you, I mean as the Africa Centre as well.

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So for audience information Innocent was actually also interviewed in our very first series

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of the video cast that is nationally available on YouTube

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so if you're interested do go ahead and have a listen.

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Yep so going back to our episode today so I think it might become apparent to our audiences

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that what is the theme that we're looking at today is actually education right

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so which is a really important thing that we I think in Hong Kong and over the world as well

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so obviously both of you are educators right and I'm curious what brought you to education

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in the very first place so you talk about you know how you involved it in what you're working

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currently but at the very beginning why are you interested in working in the field of education?

Justin

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-I think we have to go I have to go back to the point that when I was studying in associate degree

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because that was the first time I know that doing stuff in gender and sexuality is something that

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could make you money or as in a fact like yeah I'm not kidding like because like I found out

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what cultural study is and then in fact I'm quite prudish when I was a secondary school kid

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when I hear about my one of my closest friends who lose his virginity in secondary two and I

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was gobsmacked and I was like ah cannot it's so scary but but when I go to second like associate

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degree when I study media cultural studies I found out that all like  
all those like theories

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Judith Butler this and that and then later on like I have I read more  
I research more and then

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I build up my entire repertoire of theories understanding of  
sexuality and how to research

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in an anthropological sense and then later on I know that like I  
need to do something to teach

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other kids who who may be like us or who are lost in the in the  
vacuum regarding like sexual stuff

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or maybe they are currently curious about their own sex and  
sexuality and then maybe because of

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their curiosity that people might manipulate that I have my own  
experience regarding like being

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manipulated gaslighted in relationship as well so I do more research on it so in my own teaching

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I would incorporate this kind of like theories into especially for secondary school kids actually

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so yeah the reason why I got into this is that like I just love talking to people I want to

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you know mend the wrong that the society has done to us a systematical issue that we haven't been

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able to address since 1997 because the sex education guideline was established in 1997

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but haven't been amended since what I want to do is to stop be a bystander and try to educate

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what is the current situation in Hong Kong what are the real life of people in the LGBT communities

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or even with so-called deviant sexual behaviors most of the bashing or gay bashing or discrimination

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is come from ignorance and the there is a word in academia which is part of my research is called

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anatology so the research or the philosophy of culturally induced ignorance my education

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philosophy or or my pedagogy is to tackle this problem and try to bridge the gap between the

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different knowledge and I want to bridge the gap of knowledge that most people have and try to

Justin\_Emily

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eliminate that kind of like you know discrimination stigma all this kind of stuff -that sounds really

Justin\_Emily

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-broad -that sounds like yeah that's that's a report but then that's almost like a call to me because

Emily  
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-it sounds like you know you have this is something that's instinctive that is something that you

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import you're born with with this kind of compassion with this kind of critical eyes

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and also this kind of ability to stand in other people's shoes in order to look at you know what's

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their face and to get them prepared for that. Dawit, is that something that you see from your

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from your work before coming to Hong Kong or after coming to Hong Kong as well?

Dawit  
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-Yeah I think it's a it's very similar in many ways because for me also like it's after traveling in

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different countries that actually I started also getting my passion back education and then that's

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when I wanted to have my master's here in Hong Kong and because like I do talk to people whenever

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I go wherever I travel and many people are like not happy with the current situation in our planet

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wherever you go and people want to change that and I think education is one of the best way because

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like income inequality is very high in different societies there is discrimination and there are a

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lot of marginalized people, like because of what happened to black people and enslavement

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and also colonization racism still exists in different countries and  
the planet our planet

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is not healthy for what for what we did we abused the ecosystem  
so everything is not

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is not right especially coming from countries that are still trying to  
develop and you see this

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very very clearly and education like you said is one way to bring  
this to light and to change

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some hearts to change some minds of course some people will  
resist and you need that deep learning

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around that line and also for many people who have been  
colonized as well we need to decolonize our

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minds that's why we promote like black consciousness we need to  
be aware of the things that we've been

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told which is not right and it's up to us to do that because many things have been unlearned

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all these negative things all this imagination about ourselves especially for people of color

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we need to change that and I think education plays a huge role and that's why also I tend to work in

Dawit\_Emily

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-that area. -Your sharing I think reminds me a lot of the United Nations sustainable development goals

Emily

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-you know I think in many ways we're trying to work towards that but I think many people

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you know of course NGOs you know we take a lot of work in that and governments etc etc but I think

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what would really fundamentally change people's mind would be education obviously and I think

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that would be something that's shared you know between both of you as well and I'm also thinking

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about decolonizing the mind right so and the Googies you know very you know very famous line

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of you know talking about you know English you know British imperialism etc etc so we're not

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going that way but I'm just thinking I think a lot of what I want to hear you know what you have said

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and our people's conversations and I think what is really interesting and also the very reason why I

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I invite both of you here today is that I think both of you aspire to undo something in individuals

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and that's enduring could be could actually could be quite difficult I mean you know as a also as a

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as a person born and raised here I think there are lots of things that I would like to undo

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and educate myself and then you know absorb something new but that's actually quite difficult

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so I'm just wondering Hong Kong is also a you know trilingual or multilingual city

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in terms of language is that something that would catch your attention when you're teaching because

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obviously both you speak you know different languages so I'm just wondering what you know

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what languages do you use you know as individual what language do you use when you teach and do

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you have any preference or are you asked to have any preference when you teach certain groups of

Emily\_Dawit\_Justin

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-students? -Yeah -oh actually I just did one of my first Mandarin sex education sessions like a

Justin

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-couple weeks ago like in a in a local secondary school originally it plans to be a full English

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session as it was a international school but because some of the students actually not born

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and raised here or they haven't been in the international school system for a very long time

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they actually come from Mainland China or other parts of the town most of them don't really

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understand English that well even not to speak like the like terms related to sex and sexuality

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so in that sense I have to like shift my mind into like doing Mandarin and think about like

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Mandarin things regarding like the human anatomy and then the diseases and it was quite an experience

Emily\_Justin

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-and the terms you're using are very specific and informal -yeah yeah yeah I mean like I tried I have

Justin

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-to try like thinking like whether because like you know Mandarin it's a relatively written language

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like it's more or less the same in terms of written and the spoken language and that's why

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it's easier for me to convert regarding say like certain diseases and so on but yet the pronunciation

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is a problem but like if going back to the question regarding like teaching different language

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because for for Sticky Rice Love my usual task is to deal with international sessions so I will

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usually deliver the English sessions which I don't usually deliver the Chinese ones simply because I

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don't want to deal with teachers that are not as you know open like I don't want to go into

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confrontation mode but actually like later on like I've been to different schools and sometime

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like most of them most of teachers are in fact local teachers even in the international sessions

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I was like okay sure I might want to try but for in terms of teaching in Cantonese I usually teach

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Cantonese when or to do outreach in Cantonese say for the women's activities as I just mentioned

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as well as other outreach events regarding sexual pleasures then I will usually speak in Cantonese

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but in in terms of in high school I usually or even in primary school I teach primary school as

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well in terms of like body boundaries they you know the traffic lights of all this we cannot

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touch you cannot touch a breath area this kind of stuff then we we have to teach like you know like

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there is some video on on on kids channel like on YouTube I have to you know I have to get all those

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reference and get the attention then I I look like those like oh can I name blue school I don't know



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whether you heard of it blue school is like oh kids where is your  
like this area like can I say

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penis here okay good good good great so where is this actually in  
fact I I have I have a full slides

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of the human like like a cartoon version of a human anatomy and  
then and then a cartoon version

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so I'll ask usually like primary school one to two I have p1 to p2 kids  
to like you know speak it out

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loud with me like penis vagina we have to speak out loud and then  
the kids won't it's not a problem

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the teachers are so teachers will in English so so the teachers will  
be ah blush and then and then

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but the kids are fine because like some of them knows that these  
are like forbidden words that

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they cannot speak out loud but I have to tell them that okay in this space and time with my presence

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I give you the authority all right so in my in my classroom there is no limits regarding language

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if you dare ask the question I'll have the answer for you most of the time it's like that I don't

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sometimes like in terms of like the language use of course I have to tune down my language

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I could be more you know crude when I'm teaching adults because like sometimes they need that kind

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of crudeness in order to loosen it up but for kids I think of course like sometimes the word of

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the word stupid is already too much for them so so I have to be very sensitive in terms of my

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language use as but especially as a non-native speaker sometimes like when I adopt into speaking

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English in a more casual manner it's really hard to go back to a point that that language or in

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fact like my language is made particularly for academic use so it is really hard for me to speak

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to kids like primary school one to two in language that is easy for them to understand

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sometimes I'll go to all academic terms okay or even like or even like really hard

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language English words and and I'll say I have to let you know like dilute it down like to explain

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to them so that would be the hard part but in terms of like speaking about taboo both language

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have their own problems and and it's just that like but the thing is like if I talk in speak in

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English or or the most of them the English audience they are more open than to can we speaking

Justin\_Emily

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-audience I that's what I observe at least -that's very interesting because I think you're on one

Emily

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-hand you're talking about you know the different personas that you're taking the different kind of

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dictionary you're using when you're talking to different students and on the other hand you're

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also speaking about the fact that you also use this kind of language differences to empower them

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for often in English that is there's something that is not so close to them I mean imagine

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saying penis or vagina in Canada would be even harder I imagine and is that something that

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echoes various experiences as well because is your native language is it's not like English

Dawit

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-yeah true true I mean English is my my second language and the same as everybody in Hong Kong

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I guess most people in Hong Kong and you can relate to I can relate with what you what you

00:19:32.960 --> 00:19:43.200

were saying and yeah sometimes it's not it's not easy especially like also like I do work like with

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young kids and sometimes with all the university like students as well and you you you have to

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to leave certain certain certain things certain words because I'm like it would be too big to

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for the students to comprehend so so like okay they might ask me for example okay we need the

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students to learn a little bit about Africa today when you first come in and yeah well you have one

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hour or 90 minutes and then these kids have never heard about colonization never they have no

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understanding of why they think like for example Jamaica is in Africa if I ask them they would

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definitely say it's in Africa but which is which is not true and it would be very hard to explain

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all this historical background which is very important because that's what shaped

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the current African countries and the current social structure of African people so

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it played a huge role so it's very you don't feel comfortable leaving that part out but it would

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it would not be right as well to bring those words because like I said they missed that in

00:20:52.320 --> 00:21:01.040

their textbook so you want to use certain certain elements like maybe a game or a card or something

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to to help them understand the relationship among like for example African people live in Africa and

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also the Afro-Diaspora because it would be very hard to to bring all this stuff at the same time

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and they're like in a very short period of time it would not be right especially for for for

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your kids but for the older kid for the older students it's easier but also whether you need

00:21:23.520 --> 00:21:28.720

also to to be careful not to to propagate certain stereotypes that you might have so

00:21:28.720 --> 00:21:32.640

they you also need to be very much be careful especially when you're talking about

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about the history of colonization the history of black people some people do have their

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their prejudices and their stereotypes so creating an environment where they can speak freely

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ask questions what they whatever questions they want to ask you want them to ask so that you can



00:21:52.640 --> 00:21:58.400

you can talk to them and ease their mind and then build their understanding but also you don't want

00:21:58.400 --> 00:22:03.600

to propagate certain stereotypes so you'll be challenged in that part I've been challenged in

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that part so you have always to be careful on your on your languages and the other part is also

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of course language is changing every day and trying to use like inclusive language so I still

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have to build myself and learn myself because every time it's changing and we have to be very

Dawit\_Emily

00:22:22.560 --> 00:22:27.920

-inclusive in the way we speak and how we interact with students as well. -Yeah I think that's really

Emily

00:22:27.920 --> 00:22:33.440

-fascinating because I echo that as well I mean as a nonnative English speaker I think very often

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when we when we speak just like what Justin was saying when we're speaking in English we are

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adopting another personality in a sense and it's very important to not to you know betray to some

00:22:44.560 --> 00:22:50.480

extent who you are indeed and just when you're you know shifting towards the other dimension too

Emily\_Dawit

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-much then that might be the case. -The thing is that the hardest part is like many of the books

Dawit

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-that describe us generally are written by other people who are trying to change so using their

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words using their ideology using their lens to explain our experiences is not right but we're

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still using that language so we have we have to find that that  
middle ground where we are really

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really sharing our experiences our livelihood to other people but  
also not trying to use their lens

Dawit\_Emily

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-which they have used to portray us negatively. -That almost  
sounds like a logical fallacy that

Emily

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-you know you keep looping that logical kind of thing but that's I  
mean that's also exactly

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what makes you know you're doing and the Africa Center doing so  
impressive because you're using

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you as mentioned it is not something this is something they're  
going to talk about in other

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questions later but you are not in the mainstream sort of education  
so to speak but still you're

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able still able to do that so that's really that's really something and  
and for me as a

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you know person who have been to Africa Center lots of time and  
also pushing my students to go

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there as often as they could be I think I think apart from games and  
books and music and and food

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of course is also something that would really be the language that  
you use to to talk to the people

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to really start this kind of genuine cultural exchanges and just like  
what you're what Dawit

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is saying pushing them to ask questions I think that would be  
something that is very much like

Emily\_Justin

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-you know saying penis and vagina out loud. -I think something that I could add on upon Dawit's

Justin

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-comment would be the idea of literacy in fact so like language is one thing but how to read or

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literally have the literacy or have the you know the rolodex of language that it's usable in in a

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certain concept in say for example in terms of race in terms of sex or even for us like even for

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a sex educator we have to constantly update our own cultural literacy because like as I mentioned

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beforehand I'm currently working with migrant domestic workers as well as other ethnic minority

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non- I prefer to use non-Chinese Hong Kongers like if I'm usually okay so communities in Hong Kong

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so the thing is I have to in only about the language that they use  
say for example like I

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have to learn some like Indonesian language regarding that Filipino  
words I have to know

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their own context as well in order to situate them their  
understanding in order to make them

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understand in their own language because their literacy in terms of  
sexuality might not

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may be influenced by religions or even other cultural means so for  
now like I even I

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forced myself to do more research on laws related to regarding like

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marriage marital rights and all this kind of stuff simply to let them  
know that okay

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this is that and then whether I have the literacy or the language to talk to them in

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in their own context is important because like for a person like a you know like a Chinese

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person in Hong Kong like I have all the context I need for teaching Hong Kong kids but the language

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regarding say for example as you mentioned the coloniality maybe I have to talk about this what

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I can use to say I can do talk about this to local kids no problem because like I'll tell them about

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like the decriminalization of sodomy law British related colonialism but whether I can talk about

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this more or less the same using the context of other people and people from other cultures even

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other countries is completely different so like for us educators it's as you mentioned you have to

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keep on updating our own repertoire and words regarding languages languages used as well as

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how could we incorporate or to update our own pedagogies and teaching materials because we

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don't want to let me rephrase I think we should right the wrong that people have done especially

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those who written their texts in a relatively colonial or even orientalist mentality so we

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have to write our own history and write our own teaching material to teach the kids that okay

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these are the things that people are literally encountering and then these are the realities



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although there are multiple realities from different people's point of view but we are

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just telling them these are the things that are relatively objective or we are or for us

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sexual educator what we are trying to do is to do harm reduction at the end of the day we just

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want you to know what your right is and what you can do when you need to seek help for example so

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I don't know like literacy regarding like different cultures sexuality anything it's important in

Justin\_Emily

00:28:18.400 --> 00:28:25.120

this day and age regarding education -and I think what just in your question just now is actually

Emily

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-how language empowers a person specifically language relevance to the view that you you

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work in sex education and for that we how blackness have been understood and should be understood

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in Hong Kong and the far so but these are actually very niche area allow me to put it this way this

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is a kind of edgy kind of mentality do you consider yourself as a minority in Hong Kong

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as a person your individual identity and also as a as a teacher

Dawit

00:29:02.080 --> 00:29:09.120

-yeah definitely so yeah I mean legally I'm considered part of the ethnic minority in

00:29:09.120 --> 00:29:15.360

Hong Kong and culturally I'm very close with them we work close with them and

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the type of education that I do especially intercultural learning as well is basically

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bringing this ethnic minority culture to to the mainstream in Hong Kong so you need students to

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understand India and they have to bring you your own brothers and sisters to engage with the students

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and then create an environment create a space where they can exchange their culture their tradition

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their language in different ways in different forms and yeah and what I do who am I is of course part

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of the ethnic minority in Hong Kong and but to add to the language part usually like you also

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highlighted it's especially when it comes to intercultural learning cultural sensitivity

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you it's usually creating an experience because language by itself would not be enough so when

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when people do experience other people's culture could be the food could be the dance

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could be anything that you're learning from that other person when you create that environment then

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people really experience that sometimes you don't even need to speak it could be through drawing it

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could be through drama so there are many many ways where you can share your culture your tradition

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and it depends on on the space that you create and that experience really really stays with you

Dawit\_Emily

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-more than the words that you you've heard around the time yeah  
-that's brilliant because I think

Emily

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-what you're saying is actually the fact that with the experiences that they have they're actually

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creating their own taskbook if you like creating their own very own knowledge that they that

Emily\_Justin

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-link there with them and then would breed something even greater yeah and -right because we are living

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in in such intersectional age it's really hard to define what minority is in a sense that like

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whether our social status actually become makes us less of a minority but you know in other status

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like our sexuality or what we do could become you know like useful in in this day and age because

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um for for I don't know like these for now like being niche could be something that is um

00:31:46.160 --> 00:31:52.320

popular should I use this word like being niche is have its own niche market let's just put it this

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way being niche have your own niche market and then when the market is small then if you dominate

00:31:58.960 --> 00:32:04.720

the market then you know like you can you can have your voice heard because people will find you to

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speak on certain things or certain on behalf on certain issues think and and I think like

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simply because we are put into a more socially like marginalized placement that actually makes

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us more powerful in a sense that we have more space we have people are more

00:32:26.720 --> 00:32:35.600

willing to give us space to speak our truth and then we because they see that all this is not so

00:32:35.600 --> 00:32:42.960

much talk I'm talking about this is not a popular topic that's why what you guys are doing are

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in fact important the thing that it is because we are niche that actually bring us a lot of

00:32:51.360 --> 00:32:58.160

opportunities and people invited us to talk on certain issues or to you know help with changing

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certain education because what we for Sticky Rice Love we do teachers workshop as well they invite us

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because we are the few that do sex education in Hong Kong so somehow I think like the so-called

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minority being niche somehow could be beneficial but at the same time it is relatively hard to let

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the say the institution governmental bodies to listen to us simply because they don't they always

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say that we don't have to mandate to support it so in that sense we are the minority but at the

Justine\_Emily

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-same time can we survive or can do we have a voice yes we do have a voice -that's very uplifting

Emily

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-honestly because I think yeah of course and I think what you have point I just know is that

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being so-called minority quote unquote could be something that give you a a good perspective

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and a kind of good position that allows you to to undo certain things right so that's also what

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sits at the core of both of you as teachers and this episode is going to end at this point



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but we're going to dig much deeper into your teaching into your education in the next episode

Emily\_Justin

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-so thank you so much for listening and we will have you back in the next episode thank you -bye

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(upbeat music)