



Transcript of Accidental Intellectual Episode 8: Call It Like It Is

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Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to provide a faithful rendering of this episode, some transcription errors may have occurred. The original audio file is available at www.accidentalintellectual.com/jeffrey-ansloos-episode

[Intro Music]

Lee Propp 0:08

Hi, and welcome to the Accidental Intellectual, a podcast where we talk to people working in health related fields and get to know the human behind the expert. I'm Lee Propp joined today by Bronwyn Lamond.

Bronwyn Lamond 0:20

Hi everyone.

Lee Propp 0:21

In today's episode, we sat down with Dr. Jeffrey Ansloos. Dr. Ansloos is a registered psychologist and Assistant Professor of Indigenous Mental Health and Social Policy in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development at OISE. Dr. Ansloos is Nêhiyaw and English, and is a member of Fisher River Cree Nation. He was born and raised in the heart of Treaty 1 territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Bronwyn Lamond 0:44

Prior to joining OISE, Dr. Ansloos worked as an Assistant Professor at the University of Victoria, at Lesley University in Boston, and was also the interim program director in Global and Interdisciplinary Studies. Dr. Ansloos completed his doctoral residency at the University of Manitoba, his PhD and MA in Clinical Psychology, as well as an MA in Theology and Ethics from Fuller, and a BA in Counselling from Trinity Western University.

Lee Propp 1:11

We discussed the importance of listening, cultivating relationships, the concept of care and caring for others within your community, and the ethical responsibility that identity creates within a person to enact real change. If you're listening and notice that some of the concepts and terms that we use are unfamiliar to you, you can refer to our show notes for some definitions and resources to learn more.

Bronwyn Lamond 1:33

We hope you enjoy as much as we did.

[Interlude Music]

Lee Propp 1:42

Hi and welcome to the accidental intellectual. We're excited you're here today.

Jeffrey Ansloos 1:47

Thanks for having me.

Lee Propp 1:47

I should note that I think I've passed you in the hall a number of times and we emailed a whole bunch of but I we've never actually met in person. So this is, this is really lovely to all be sitting here face to face [in same room]. We've been calling it homework, when we, when we look up into our guests ahead of time and I guess it's kind of like a little bit low key and maybe high key stalking but we found a lot about... We've been finding a lot of information on Twitter. A lot of our guests are really active on Twitter, engaged in academic and health Twitter and the conversations have led to interesting areas but I think the common thread that I found weaving through all of them is that the most interesting feed and most interesting people to engage with are the ones who so beautifully meld their personal and their professional. And it often is a fine line. I wonder if you could speak to that a little bit?

Jeffrey Ansloos 2:41

In terms of... a fine line in terms of the...?

Lee Propp 2:44

What you portrayed to out. Twitter being very well use public media, [Yes.] social media platform.

Jeffrey Ansloos 2:53

Um. I'm laughing because I have – I have some friends, some colleagues, who have like two accounts. There's like the – their like, their professional account, and they have like, low key underground accounts sort of deal. And I definitely have one account on Twitter. But it is interesting yeah what, what do you share, what don't you share? I've kind of gone through different seasons of my use of those platforms, like I think there was a time when I very much used Twitter as a place to like sort of share thoughts and ideas as they were developing, or I would debate in those spaces. [Yeah.] I'd like I'd get into conversations or I'd take on issues in that public space. And I think actually once I became a faculty member I became a lot more like, I don't know if cautious is the right word [Yeah.], but – but full of care in what I chose to engage. I definitely find now, I like...if I tweet something out it's because I've really thought through what it is I want to say yes. But I retweet content like no one's business, so I don't know. I don't know. [Yeah.] But it is interesting. I think, I do think there's some, there's some ways in which like the things I like actually end up telling people a lot more about who I am than necessarily the things that I engage on. [Yeah. That's so interesting] Cause it shows up too.

Lee Propp 4:22

Yeah, I guess I never thought about that. And it does show up. And I often... I guess I never even thought about in my own... but yeah I definitely like things that I perhaps wouldn't [Yeah.] share as someone who says, you know, I'm grad student at OISE. I mean, even more so in your case as a faculty member here, but I think there is something to be said about... I mean, the all the discussions we've had here about being a human being outside of this sort of professional facade, that we all tend to put on.

Jeffrey Ansloos 4:53

Yeah, especially, I think, for, like in the work that I do, part of my research and part of what I care about is actually critiquing and calling for the abolition of some of the fields of practice that the university is upholding, and that I myself I'm kind of embedded within. And so, it is an awkward space sometimes when like the UofT office follows my account, to say things that are also critical of the institution and to say that. You know, and that that's a tension that I think scholars and students... anybody who's kind of

working in public domains of scholarship has to really reckon with. You know, “can you stand behind the things you say?” And, “do the things that you say also put you in kind of the sight of tension?” [Yes.] And, yeah, that's, that's a learning progress – a work in progress for me still.

Lee Propp 5:49

I had this noted as a question for, for later on but you brought it up, so I'm gonna also bring it up now... about the tension of working within an institution, with which you might have some disagreements with or some sort of fundamental problems with the values that it upholds or history.

Jeffrey Ansloos 6:12

Yeah, I mean that's so there's a lot that can be said there. I guess, I think for me, my starting places that I live in a society that's built upon violence, its origins of... the origins of the state, at that level, are embedded within anti-blackness, settler-colonial power and violence. And, and the university, as a social institution, has historically and continues to benefit from those types of practices. And that sort of way of living in the world. And so, like, that's where we start. We're starting at already being implicated in two of the most profound forms of structural violence that have historically and continue to wreak havoc in communities for which I'm responsible to. So I already like... to work in the academy is to begin working in a place that's, like, compromised. And, yeah, I think definitely is awkward. And then more, added to that, you know, the ways in which the academy practices relationships are something that I actively critique, the discipline I'm a part of, that shaped my thinking, is one that I'm calling to abolish or calling to see, at the very least, sometimes reform but in many ways left behind. Like, we need to abandon some of the practices that are really core to it. And that's awkward. But also really necessary because I think that's really where we're... no matter where we are in society, we're always implicated. And so, I think it maybe asks us to be more accountable, and to operate with a greater degree of kind of consciousness to the fact that we're always making imperfect movements, but that that doesn't you know get us off the hook from being accountable to work in maybe just-er or wiser ways.

Lee Propp 8:10

Yeah, I mean I think I see that a lot in myself and I guess it's a little bit of maturation, but I – I never want to sort of shy from getting riled up about, you know, social and political issues. And I grew up in a big family and it was just all the things you're not supposed to talk about, like, what is it, like religion, sex and politics. Were always just, like, everyone yelling at the dinner table, and I used to be like, like what you say like the – the Academy isn't a perfect place, right? It's an imperfect institution, but I think, more and more, I have come to realize that being a part of something that you don't agree with, is not... First of all, it's nothing you can avoid but it's also just, it's necessary to create change. You have to kind of get in there... and, I guess the fine line of like the change from the inside out. Yeah, I mean it's – it's something I grapple with a lot.

Jeffrey Ansloos 9:02

Yeah I relate to that. I think you know there's been some points when I was like rallied by that idea of like being a part of the structure or system to change it from the inside out or to reform it. I kind of feel like I am like, not actually... I don't actually run a lab where we're testing explosives, but I feel like I feel like my research laboratory, which is like a code word for, like, a safe space that I try to create with my students, is a place where we're playing with explosive ideas that threaten the integrity of the university as we know it now. And that we're trying to find an “elsewhere.” We're trying to – we're trying to create systems and structures, ways of being in relationship, that might be better, or that help us meet the needs of our communities in ways that the structures and systems right now are not... while also like getting a paycheck. And while also having like, [Yes.] you know, a place where students can get jobs at the end. And so I think like those, sort of, like practical material needs are not like on the side of this radical

political project, but they're like they're actually kind of connected. And I think a lot about... I think a lot about that. I don't know that we're doing it well yet or perfectly, but something we're thinking about.

Bronwyn Lamond 10:24

One thing we had talked about as well as it's not just the university but the discipline of psychology. Clinical Psychology, in particular, too. So, yeah, I think we it all hangs together and it's within an institution, in a discipline as well that has problematic past.

Jeffrey Ansloos 10:43

Yeah, it's – it's a salty past... and present, I mean, yeah. The, the discipline is responsible for much of the sort of functioning of anti-black racism in North America. The basis of much of colonial enterprises around the world, which are, you know, embedded in anti-blackness in Canada. You know, psychologists were implicated in the formation and enactment of residential schools, the child welfare, system. The carceral states over representation of indigenous peoples is related to assessment practices. I mean, you name it, psychologists are like in it. [Yeah.] And... we're also a discipline that fancies itself as being like very woke and very, you know, progressive and I think it's a whole idea of cognitive dissonance is very felt.

Lee Propp 11:43

Yes. Yeah, yeah, had a lot of conversations about the, I guess cognitive dissonance is a really nice way to put it. It's, or almost habituated. Like we've become so habituated to all sorts of like wild things in in politics, in the environment, like just look a little bit south of the border. And we talked about things and then we're like, oh yeah, okay, and then like move on to the next day, and like, I mean I don't think the body can sustain a state of, like, being super riled up and like getting so... yeah I guess just worked up about things all the time. But because we're like, in this siloed... like this world that we live in like everyone has their expertise, and everyone has their job, and like we're not as embedded in all of the structures. It's so easy to just not just let it just kind of wash over your head.

Jeffrey Ansloos 12:39

Yeah, I, I feel that. Yeah, I think I've sort of the last few years thought a lot about like needing to anchor my work in two kind of different domains or polarities even, I don't know if they're opposites but. So I'm going to steal a line from Donna Haraway: “Staying with the trouble.” I think like a lot of my work is about documenting the complicity – the complicity of my discipline, of -more broadly- practices in education and research, the ways in which these practices are harming indigenous and black and queer communities, particularly young people. And so, yeah, describing violence, that's hard, and that's like politically agitating it's, it's not a... It's not like a chill zone of affective space... it's like you have to, you have to speak to structures that are not interested in hearing that critique. But I think it's an important... I actually think it's like an ethical responsibility in this, sort of, maybe moment in the fields that I work with it. But then I also think like the language of desire and, and ethics of like desire and, and what we, what we do to help us imagine an “elsewhere,” is... you can't have you can't have “staying close to the trouble,” without also nourishing like that other part. What – which maybe brings or nourishes life and spirit in communities. And so, you know, I think when I find myself getting to like heavily entrenched in one, like, if we just want to talk about happy things, you kinda can become, become really disembodied and disconnected from the material realities of suffering and violence in the world. But on the other hand, if we are in a perpetual state of only reflecting on violence and failing to create something else. I think we risk being a little burned out and also been a nihilistic.

Lee Propp 14:46

Yes. Yes to both of those. For the million dollar question, what is that balance of the two?

Jeffrey Ansloos 14:53

I don't know that there is a balance, actually, I think... [It's individualistic?] No, I think that there's a movement, a constant movement between these two that's at least one

Lee Propp 15:03

Within a person or within, within us as a society.

Jeffrey Ansloos 15:05

I would say both. I think like, I can speak to it best at the level of like the personal. [Yeah.] That like there are seasons where you find yourself more invested in one or the other. I try – I'm trying in my own life to bring those, like, to hold those at the same time, more and more. I think socially... uh, yeah, I think socially, we're... well it depends where you live, who you're around, but I think in some contexts like the university is a context that doesn't like the critical... the voice that's critiquing violence in institution. Like, no institutions is going to be like, “Yes, Tell us – Tell us how violent we are.”

Lee Propp 15:51

To me it's ironic, because the university is an institution that upholds critical thinking, as like one of the highest values.

Jeffrey Ansloos 15:59

Right. Yeah, critical thinking,

Lee Propp 16:02

I guess they're not really the same but... I think, I'd say that they're very highly related.

Jeffrey Ansloos 16:06

Yeah, I think like teak. In so far as it may be, doesn't unsettle the structure, the integrity of the structure. So like, we can say like yes let's call for the reform of the Academy, that's I think something we can talk about. [Yeah.] Call for the abolition of the Academy is a very different... [We've crossed the line] Right. [Okay.] Or that we need to end certain practices in education is I think... there are there are some lines that reveal how an institution, like a university, is deeply entrenched within the broader political structure like capitalism or like, colonial practice.

Lee Propp 16:49

Yeah, it's very much a business. I came right in contact with that this afternoon when I had to go pay \$8 for a letter so that CIHR could give me my money.

Jeffrey Ansloos 17:00

Right.

Bronwyn Lamond 17:03

But they printed on fancy paper, so...

Lee Propp 17:04

They did give me the heavyweight paper so I guess I got my \$8 worth.

Jeffrey Ansloos 17:08

Watermark.

Lee Propp 17:11

So, I think, I've heard you talk about the relationship building... you mentioned that already a couple of times so how, like the relationships that we build. I want to talk about what are those relationships and then I guess we'll move into how do we build them.

Jeffrey Ansloos 17:29

The relationships we build in and out and beyond and underneath the Academy. [Okay.] Yeah. I mean I – I think relationships are, you know, there's an opportunity to relate, in almost any possible way within University, and certainly as like an academic, like, I can say most certainly I would not have this job, had it not been for somebody who opened a door for me. I wouldn't have been a PhD student without somebody, like, actively dragging me into a space. I wouldn't have graduate from high school, unless it was for, like, a librarian and a guidance counselor that like got in my corner. So, I just know that in my life, and the lives of so many people that I work with, we wouldn't be where we are had it not been for people enacting a type of care. That certainly goes beyond like the structure of like, “here's professional mentoring,” or “here is advising.” I think. Yeah, that's less... It's riskier business actually. [Yes.] It's – it's less contained or maybe constructed to a set of like defined roles but, but people sometimes have been an advocate, or people have sometimes been a caregiver, sometimes people have showed up with food and got me through, you know, seasons or periods of my work and certainly as a student. Yeah, and I think a lot about... I think a lot about that, but I also think a lot about relationships with people with whom I have profound difference, and for whom like my work questions the enduring presence of their work. Or, for whom my work critiques the structure that feeds me and my family, like, those are also relationships, and they're relationships that need protocol and need time to understand and to mature and – and rupture and repair through. And, you know, I think those are also a big part of that been a big part of my learning. Like, I think, not without conflict or not without loss or grief or tension, right? Those are all present in work as well.

Lee Propp 19:56

Yeah, I mean the way you talk about these relationships, like I... so many of the terms are so entrenched in the way that we learn to be therapists. But I think, also, in, I think I've said this already once an interview about the listening skills. Like that being the... probably one of the most valuable things I've learned so far on this journey in graduate school. And I wonder if you could sort of speak to what role that plays in cultivating the relationships with those who are so different than we are.

Jeffrey Ansloos 20:28

Yeah. I mean, I think, yeah. There's a few psychological concepts that have proven very true in my life work so far. Definitely like active listening, you know, helps you hear things that you otherwise wouldn't have heard. I think also listening to your body is like something that I've learned a lot about, like, my body feels something inside of, you know, an academic institution that it doesn't want I'm not there. It feels different types of stresses it feels different types of pressures. It processes, you know, positive and negative emotions in various ways that it wouldn't elsewhere. I also think, like, another important way that listening has shaped... is that you can, if you can really hear people's intentions or their hopes... that can go a long way in terms of bridging places of profound difference. [Yeah.] I also think you have to look... like... there's no way through conflict, unless you find some place of common ground or, at the very least, like we can meet here for a moment. [Yes.] And I think like really learning to hear a lot, and to take in a lot, to find that is... requires patience, but it also requires the ability to tolerate distress. And that's like politically loaded because sometimes, certain people in institutions are always asked to take on that distress, more than other people are required to and I think that's like that's a complex burden. And maybe a type of violence. But I do think the ability to do that is part of navigating like how you build

consensus or find a thread of connection to somebody. Sometimes you have times you have to sit at the table with somebody... I always joke about this with my students that like I, you know, I have loving caring relationships with people that really pissed me off.

Lee Propp 22:31

I can relate to that.

Jeffrey Ansloos 22:31

And like, it's the only way we can be in a relationship is that we have to find things that hold us together.

Lee Propp 22:38

Yeah, and I think those are always there.

Bronwyn Lamond 22:40

I was gonna even add to... you said intentions and hopes, but I would also add fears, as well, to that discussion, because I think a lot of reactivity sometimes stems from threat and fear. And the more I read into, like, "why, why is this, why do we have this fundamental disagreement?" "Oh, it's because they're worried about their family's livelihood being taken away." So that that fears there and like, I think, understanding that has really helped me to see things from a different light at times too.

Jeffrey Ansloos 23:07

Yeah, I mean I think the therapist, as like a... the therapist framework as like a way of negotiating tensions and conflicts, like, can be really effective. I do think though... I'm like cautious to give the perception that it's like... that there is like a happy road forward, if we just listened better.

Lee Propp 23:28

Yeah, I think there's more ingredients in the recipe there.

Jeffrey Ansloos 23:32

But I think we're also institutions that are structured to give us that illusion. And that also make us kind of like tamed to... and acclimated to the broader structure. So, I think you know to be open and to listen deeply, and to like practice like care, [Yeah.] while also being like, endlessly alert to the ways in which Structural Violence is enacted in a manner that will try to subsume even that good practice of care into its machinery. I sound like super pessimistic, but it's actually, I think it's just like – it's like a pragmatic perspective as opposed to a pessimistic one.

Lee Propp 24:22

Yeah, I would agree with that. I think if we could take a few steps back, because we skipped over this part... [Sure.] you have a background in theology...

Jeffrey Ansloos 24:31

Yes, there's an unexpected twist.

Lee Propp 24:35

How did that happen?

Jeffrey Ansloos 24:37

Oh, that's an interesting one. So I started my undergraduate focused on World Religions so I studied religion. I was like, very fascinated by the nature of religious conflict or like identity-based conflicts

associated with religious groups. So at the time when I first started getting interested I was like looking at the relationships of Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, and then looked at South Africa, and looked at Palestine Israel's relationship and the relationship between Jews, Muslims, Christians, Bahá'í people. And then what happened between indigenous communities and the catholic church there in Central America in a variety of contexts, but mainly Guatemala and Nicaragua. I think I was interested in these things at that stage because I saw like a link to something that I recognized that had happened in Canada, which was the relationship of the residential schools with religious denominations, Catholicism Protestant nominations like Mennonites and Anglicans and these different groups that, that essentially ran this like colonial technology. It, they were, they were implicated in that and trying to make sense of that. And I was drawn to that, I think, in part because, you know, my, my mother who was born in residential school, and then adopted and 1960s went, you know, was adopted into a Mennonite community, and so like I understood these like pieces but didn't understand like the history or like how something like religion could frame human relationships in such a profound way. So that's kind of what led me there. And, yeah, I got involved with lots of interesting projects during that time and then I ended up doing my Masters focused at the intersection of theology, ethics and political theory and it was just kind of bridging that. And I basically did a comparative study looking at the relationship of what happened in Canada to these other parts of the world. It was a really interesting kind of diversion how I ended up in psychology, because the more I asked questions about you know what was happening in places of, of major conflict, I started to ask like some applied questions like, "Well how do communities heal from the impact of these forms of very complex and layered histories of violence?" And I was like, "oh, psychology will have the answers!" Boy was I wrong. But yeah, I think, you know, I was, I recognize that there was like a complex social problem that needed really human and relational ways of moving forward, but I didn't know that we... and I'm still doubtful that we have like broadly the social practices of care necessary to actually help communities heal. And so that's kind of where the bridge began to happen for me into the field of psychology.

Lee Propp 27:50

Yeah, I think that... it sounds like a story that I think is probably familiar to a lot of people, a lot of listeners probably relate to that. I think I do. It's interesting that you say that, like, we don't really have the answers but... I mean, I think that that genuine curiosity is a way to help people get there within these institutions.

Jeffrey Ansloos 28:14

Yeah, I think that's, I think there's some truth to that. I also think that some of the some of the, like, practices in our field that I really see is really wonderful are our practices like this, you have to have a really deep belief in, like, one another's potential to grow, or to value, what can be possible when human beings desire something else, like those are those are deep, you know, people call them drives or her dispositions, but I think they reveal something really profound about what's possible and what's possible for relationships even across profound difference. Also, like, psychology is not all of what you know... the majority of psychology is narrated as this sort of like you know empirical science but psychology like has a very diverse and broad tradition – scope traditions, including critical psychology and community psychologists and feminist psychology. You know, indigenous psychologies from around the world. I mean there's lots of wonderful scholarship that's centering the life of communities. And that's, that's bringing a deep, I would say love and care for, I think, the very, very people and places that in many ways have been erased by sort of mainstream approaches in psychology. So I like to sort of say I'm critiquing or calling for the abolition of psychology, but really I'm talking about the evolution of a type of practice of psychology.

Lee Propp 29:55

Yeah. Yeah. Do you see a common thread that weaves through all of the things that, sort of, are called the psychology. Like they're all so very different and there's so many different things but... Do you see anything that holds that under the same umbrella?

Jeffrey Ansloos 30:15

Uh. Unbearable whiteness? No. Uh. Hetero-cisgender patriarchy? Yeah, I don't know. I think...

Lee Propp 30:25

You're giving us good episode titles.

Jeffrey Ansloos 30:31

Yeah, I don't know, I think, I think. I think there's an appreciation that human beings are very complex. And that we're multifaceted, we're dynamic, we're in relations with not just other people but the world in these dynamic ways. I think that can hold a bunch of people together at a very thin level. [Yeah.] But to be honest, I'm not sure I'm invested in that project. The project of holding us together. To me it's a, it's a... I'm not like devoted to the discipline, or its sustainability. I'm really interested in uplifting people in my life, and the communities for whom I feel responsible, and who have expectations of me. And I think I want our society to be one where young people are given a set of logics where it makes sense to stay alive.

Lee Propp 31:43

That'd be nice.

Jeffrey Ansloos 31:44

Yeah, that's what I like... that's what I'm interested in, in putting my work and my body towards. And I think I'm excited when I mean psychologists who are there. And I'm like, I'm over it if they're not there, because I think what I what I see is that like a lot of disciplines people are tired of, sort of, upholding the structures that are no longer working. But I'm really excited and nourished by people who are getting on with the business of making life better for each other.

Lee Propp 32:15

Yeah. And I think part of the idea of sort of bringing all of this, what we call things from health – like the broad scheme of health, like people coming to talk to us on this podcast and I think there was a small bit of nervousness of like who would want to give us funding or who would want to support us, if we're like, seemingly too broad. We're calling so many things health, right? Being better, becoming better people or helping people heal. But just in the last number of weeks, right, we spoke to a CEO, a neonatologist, you're here, a journalist last week, and I think that, like you said, like being sort of invested in in your discipline is... I, I struggle with that because I think that there's so much we can... like, little pieces from everything that we can learn from. And staying in my lane of psychology doesn't seem to be working to make that happen.

Jeffrey Ansloos 33:13

Yeah, yeah. A lot of people... there are a lot of psychologists who would be like, "Yes. You should do that." [Yeah.] I'm just not one of those psychologists. Yeah just... I think I'm – I'm... It's not that I don't understand the rationale for why that could be a way of working. I think it makes sense. You know you want to be good at something, specialize in something. [Yeah.] I guess just for me, my scholarship is always informed by some very stark political realities that I don't have the... I can't escape. And because I can't escape, I don't have the luxury to think in a way where I can like give myself to one thing. I mean,

there are 12 psychologists in Canada who are Indigenous and who work in Indigenous communities. I... like, we don't... we have to do, we have to do and uphold a type of work that there's just not yet other people to do. And every time we recruit another indigenous student into that field of practice, it like alters the field in a very pronounced way. And I know that I'm working in a time when like there's like all of these, sort of, critical social inequities that could be overwhelming. But I like, I just can't uphold, like, this sort of like notion of like "specialty only" because the communities that I love need me to be more flexible. [Yeah.] And I think more broadly, need the field to respond to needs in ways that are more collaborative and are more nimble and willing to bend a bit.

Lee Propp 35:01

Yeah, yeah. nimble, just in general.

Bronwyn Lamond 35:04

Yeah, feels like we're kind of trying to keep our turf and our hold on our discipline and this is what we do, and I don't...

Lee Propp 35:12

I don't know if I have enough investment in one thing to get in a turf war. [Yeah.] I do want to talk, you sort of touched on it a little bit, about identity. But you're, you're talking about I guess indigenous identity but also just a lot of other identities that we've sort of already touched on a little bit but haven't talked about directly. I want to talk about the importance of sort of clinging to labels of identity in a world that so often says that they don't love labels.

Jeffrey Ansloos 35:46

That's a very interesting question. So I guess off the cuff... [Yeah.] I would say, I'm less interested in the idea of clinging to identity labels and more interested in clinging to people. Like I think about my responsibilities and obligations in relationship to communities that I'm a part of and, and what that means to be me in the world, for all of the simplicity or complexity of what that means, but I'm only there in relationship to these other responsibilities that sustain my life and for whom I'm responsible to help sustain. I think about that being really important and that should, being – that should be something that shapes how we situate ourselves within our practices of vocation and otherwise. So, you know, I do this class where I talk about this, you know, it's becoming popular, you know -a few decades late mind you- to talk about intersectionality in psychology. I would like to emphasize this a few decades late. But you know the, the idea that like identity matters and suddenly, we have a bunch of psychologists who are learning to talk about like this like checklist of identity categories. You know, "I'm, like, I'm part of this community, this community, this community, this community." To which, I think is like interesting... but it also misses the point of what intersectionality is supposed to help us understand, theoretically, and not in theoretical ways but in material ways, the means by which Structural Violence is organized in a manner which differentially impacts people on the basis of, well in particular, the theory, black women experienced violence differently than white women, and so the interlocking aspect of race with gender reveals something that should shape the way we think about difference and, and inform how we address issues of violence. So I think a lot about that, and what I want to see in like a field like psychology is... let's actually reckon with the ways in which identity, not just makes us some more like, you know, neo-liberally wonderful, you know, pool of diversity, which a super 90s way of talking anyways but, but, but reckon with the ways in which the field is structured in a manner that upholds whiteness, and that upholds straightness, and that upholds men, and that does violence in ways across those interlocking you know aspects of identity in ways that are, are not just different but should help us understand how to intervene and to act differently. So that's like, that's like the first thing I thought about when you asked that question. But the second thing is that, to me identity should inform your politics. Like, I, I am an

indigenous person. I have responsibilities to my people that are political. I'm a queer person who lived through the epidemic and saw, you know, and I understand the loss of queer people to HIV in a way that is different in a world of PrEP. So, I have like some political difference and those, those should inform the ethics of how I teach how I practice how I engage with other queer students. I'm an academic at of university, like the University of Toronto, in a culture where men have enacted forms of sexual violence and harassment, and it's been normed. So I have like political, ethical obligations for how to act within that space are that are informed by who I am, but are also informed by who I am in relationship to systems and structures. I think, I just want us to go like one or two more steps in the analysis so that we like... we, we not just think, "oh, here we're diverse." But diversity is everywhere if you know how to pay attention to it, but that we understand how difference is really harming and creating... how certain people's lives and bodies even, are marked differently for forms of violence and erasure within the institution.

Lee Propp 40:31

So using that will, sort of, internalizing the ethics of understanding how these differences should inform how we are in all spaces. Whether we identify with, with those identities or not [Yeah.] by situating ourselves in, and sometimes that means speaking up, sometimes that means just shutting up.

Jeffrey Ansloos 40:51

Yeah, I mean I'll never... I've been like, out as a queer person for a long time, but I – I remember the moment when I decided to write queer... "Queer as fuck" on my Twitter handle. And what I noticed was that... it was not a big deal to me, but it also was like I'd never done that. So like brought that part of my life into my work so explicitly. But since then, you know, I've had like probably hundreds of students from across Canada will reach out and like, ask me questions about what navigating institutional spaces is like in that regard. I also get a beautiful collection of hate mail now which I have a file of, and I will publish one day with their names unchanged. Like, so like, it shapes and marks you in a certain way. [Yeah.] but that's also different than like, you know, the, there's that... Yeah, I don't know if that's a worthwhile example but...

Lee Propp 41:56

No, I think that's so profound how the – how something can... it can bring together such a beautiful community of all the people reaching out to you. And the exact same thing can bring hate [Betrayal.] Betrayal, yeah, that's the better way to put it. Yeah, and I think, I think I sometimes struggle with, with that. The question that I asked, that I think I... a lot of the questions that I ask to people sitting here in these rooms, are questions that I don't know the answer to and I don't think I ever expect the guests to have the answer but I just am so interested in other ways of thinking about it... in ways that I wouldn't ever think about it because you know I am who I am and other people who they are. And I think, especially the university I've found is, we love diversity. Diversity is this huge word and I think we look so much for people who can check the boxes and be in our advertisements and, you know, show that we're such a diverse community and, just like you were saying before, you just have to scratch the surface and there's so much more diversity than...

Jeffrey Ansloos 43:03

Yeah. I often ask myself this question because like I kind of... well you know I'm a, I'm an indigenous person that's pretty damn white. You know, like my in terms of how I'm like read or, you know, to use an academic term "coded" in the world. But that question to me matters because I know that I benefit from... I benefit from not just whiteness but the function of anti-blackness or, or anti-brownness in these spaces and that I think is a more interest – like to me that's a more helpful way of reflecting on racial privilege in particular space or racial identity within a particular space, that suddenly, I'd have to think

about, “okay, what does that mean and relationship to colleagues of mine whose bodies are read and marked in different ways than mine?” “What responsibilities of care and ethics of the political commitment do I need to enact with them?” But I also, I want to say I really resonate with the idea of like not feeling like I know how to do it all, because like there are aspects, especially of identity, that I don't share in the Academy. Like, I think, I think it's very Canadian to be, like, very shy about religion [Yeah.] even though we live in a very, like, multi-religious, multi-faith city like Toronto. I definitely don't ever talk about like my family very often, outside of in generic terms. Even like yeah, this so I don't know why we make certain choices to reveal or, what to reveal, not to reveal, kind of, it's a bit fluid in that sense.

Lee Propp 44:50

And I think slowly, we become more comfortable or we feel pressed that now is a very important time sharing this part of my identity that I could just as easily have kept a secret, or just to myself. I think sometimes I think about it as sort of a filter of vulnerability. Like we – we are, we're vulnerable with people in the pieces of ourselves that we share and that we give over... But understanding that that is a very filtered truth, and the truth that you now are privy to, right? It's, we're sharing those pieces of ourselves and it's, it's a privilege for you to, sort of, hear it because it is vulnerable but I can't give everything, you know, I can't, I can't sell all the pieces of my soul.

Jeffrey Ansloos 45:32

Yeah. I was just sitting here thinking about like how it's only white people, though, that have to like, that get to calculate [100%.], “I wonder if I should interrogate whiteness today or not?”

Lee Propp 45:46

Yeah, so yeah exactly. Then there's... yeah there's, there's pieces that it's impossible to... we talked about this with the CEO Holland Bloorview, Julia Hanigsberg, who was so lovely and we talked about, about disability and invisible disability... and it's, it's a privilege, in and of itself, to not have it out in the world. Just, you know, just like the color of your skin and all sorts of other things, right? This, we have to understand that, having... thinking about whether I should share this today, in and of itself is a privilege.

Jeffrey Ansloos 46:17

It's also a way people survive too.

Lee Propp 46:18

It is, very much. Yeah. So I think in the last, I want to say question but I think this is just going to open a bit of a Pandora's box. We've been asking our... towards the end of the interviews we've been asking our guests for, for lack of a better word, a call to action. So if there was like one or two things that they would leave our listeners with and, I mean, we hope to grow, a bit of an audience but I think sort of people in the health sphere, trainees, and clinicians, and scientists... and sort of actionable items that they can take with them. It doesn't have to be like call up your local rep but just, you know, ways of being.

Jeffrey Ansloos 46:59

Yeah I think ways of being so like on a very, like, intellectual, I want to call for like greater epistemic pluralism in the field that I work within and more broadly. And to do that, it means we have to pay attention to the world around us differently. And to attend to literatures and ways of documenting life in this world that currently are not considered even a relevant part of what we pay attention to. You know, I think it's, it's, you know, mind boggling to me that in a city like Toronto, you know, where we study, you

know, where psychologists for example are trained to practice in communities that are, is the one of the most diverse cities on the planet... we still, you know, its nearing 2020, read materials that are largely published by white people, and that are upholding frames of reference of life that are so disconnected from, from the context in which we live. And I think part of that has to do with only thinking and seeing the world through one particular way or that way. But in order to, like, I think the maybe the beauty if I can say that of like this kind of call to action is that in order to achieve a greater degree of like difference in terms of thinking and being exposed to different ways of thinking, you meaningfully have to build relationships with people outside of your, sort of, comfort zone your world or your site of privilege. So that's one thing. I guess I would like to see, you know, So, to me, as a queer person, everything is political. [Yes, the personal is political.] Yeah, all of it. All of it is political, I think what I would like to see is greater reflection and making more explicit the politics of the fields of health as they currently are, like let's call a spade a spade. Let's call racist practices, racist practices. Let's call, you know, the ways in which xenophobic and other forms of violence, function within our work, let's – let's name it, let's document it, let's catalog how our practices are entrenched in the structures of violence. And – and then change. And not be afraid of talking truthfully about the ways we fall short. I think there's a... that's, that's like a political skill of making explicit our political commitments, but then going a step further is like, okay so for a field of practice that's like oriented by, one, a theory of justice, like, let's start articulating what that might mean. Maybe it means that psychologists in Canada should start refusing to, to practice recidivism risk assessments in contexts where we know disproportionately impact black people and indigenous people and immigrant young people. We should make some more bolder stances on our, on our practices or the same can be applied to child welfare or education, but I think those things will flow from being more honest about how our politics are currently functioning.

Lee Propp 50:36

So if you're having a conversation and you feel uncomfortable, you're squirming in your seat a little bit, that's a good thing. [Yeah.] We should encourage people to engage with – truly engage with – more very uncomfortable conversations.

Jeffrey Ansloos 50:48

Yeah, and I also think like, we need to think about change in a deeper way than just like, “Oh, we should change.” I think we need to think about like how we achieve that, what are our... what is our commitment to... I ask regularly in PhD dissertation committees, I ask like, “You know, it sounds like you're critiquing this field; are you arguing for its reform, or its abolition, or something else?” And normally that question makes people really uncomfortable, but I think, you know, it points to what you like it points to your actual belief about change. If you have faith that this can reform, or does something need to be rebuilt, or, or whatever it may be, I want us to get to a place in the field of psychology where we can start talking honestly about what it is we're moving towards, because I think that would just cause so much less tension when I could just say like, “Yeah I'm not, I'm not here for that dance party, I'm here for this one.”

Lee Propp 51:50

Yeah, a little bit more up front, less polite, in a sense.

Jeffrey Ansloos 51:54

It's very un-Canadian, I suppose, but...

Lee Propp 51:57

No, I like it. This was great. I mean, we say this with all of our guests, I think we could keep chatting. But, um, but I think we'll wrap up but thank you so much for, for being here with us today. This was a lot fun.

Jeffrey Ansloos 52:09

Thank you. Thank you for the conversation. Yeah. Likewise.

[Interlude Music]

Lee Propp 52:120

I think that was a wonderful discussion that we just had. I still think... I think I'm still thinking about what I'm thinking about in a very meta-cognition way. I don't know, you know, I think that my thoughts will change and, and they'll grow, based on what we just talked about, but I think I know that one of the big things, and the hopeful things that I took out of that discussion was our ethical and our familial responsibilities to the communities that we are situated in.

Bronwyn Lamond 52:50

Mm hmm. Yeah, that was a big part of our discussion and personally not one that I truly think about a lot, but that I will definitely think about a lot more moving forward. [Yeah.] This community and what does that mean and how do we situate ourselves within community, with whatever identity, or identities I suppose, we align with or identify with.

Lee Propp 53:16

And, and feeling that push to be a part of the communities but when you are a part of those communities, and especially when you have power within those communities, to use it to stand up and to create change for others, but also to create love to, to hold those communities really close to your heart, and to exist within them in a loving way.

Bronwyn Lamond 53:41

And the balance between both of those things.

Lee Propp 53:44

Yeah, I think I asked in the interview, what is the balance and I think, Dr. Ansloos rightly said there isn't one. I think that... I love that idea that we as people exist in seasons, and we have seasons, you know, it's more than just day, like the seasons of what we need to nourish our soul, but also the seasons of, you know, how much of this am I going to be, and how much of that am I going to be, and where we are in our lives and, and where we are with – within our communities, politically, and within our relationships. So I think that I think I'm going to be thinking about it for a while and I also another theme that arose was that idea of filtered vulnerability and the pieces of ourselves and the pieces of our souls that we share and put up front and the ones that we can hide.

Bronwyn Lamond 53:36

And the ones that we can't hide yeah as well.

Lee Propp 53:38

Yeah. And the privilege of being able to hide certain pieces and to decide that this is something I do or don't want to share at this moment in the season of my life. [Yeah.] I think is important to recognize, but also realizing that we don't always have to have it all figured out.

Bronwyn Lamond 54:59

Right. Yeah I think this, this idea of identity and that the intersection of that with, with whatever practice is been a theme with one of the guests we've talked about and. And I've been thinking about it a lot, and I think will continue to, as you say.

Lee Propp 55:15

Yeah, I think, if we would leave our listeners with one message or something at least that I took out of this interview is that there's so much hope and goodness still in this world and that by cultivating these wonderful communities and these relationships, we can make change but also we can just be at peace like we can, we can have, you know, wonderful relationships, and sort of help that balance and care and nourish our souls.

Bronwyn Lamond 55:48

Yeah, and our communities at the same time

Lee Propp 55:50

And our communities as well. Yeah, it's important. So I, we hope you really enjoyed that. And we hope that you... that the show notes were helpful in broadening your horizons, I think that they are broadening my horizons and thinking about these issues and engaging with, with issues that I don't think about every day but now maybe I will.

Bronwyn Lamond 56:11

And being critical of what information comes across.

Lee Propp 56:12

Yeah. Yeah, critical thinking and being critical. Two different things but also both very important. Well, thank you. This was wonderful.

Bronwyn Lamond 56:22

Thanks so much for listening.

[Outro Theme Music]

Lee Propp 56:56

You've been listening to the Accidental Intellectual. Today's guest was Dr. Jeffrey Ansloos, interviewed by me, Lee Propp, and Bronwyn Lamond. Our podcast is produced by Bronwyn Lamond, Rachael Lyon, Harrison McNaughton, Stephanie Morris, Lee Propp, and Ariana Simone. Our theme music is by Alexandra Willett and our branding by Maxwell McNaughton. You can check us out on Twitter [@accidental_pod](#) and on Instagram [@accidentalintellectual](#). Our website is www.accidentalintellectual.com. We'll be back next time with more stories from the humans behind the experts.

[Interlude Music]