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Podcast transcript:

Kyra: Thank you for tuning in to the Pedagogies for Social Justice podcast, brought to you by a student-staff partnership at the University of Westminster. This is a platform for students and educators to exchange knowledge and encourage discussion about the current challenges facing higher education. I’m your host, Kyra, and, for this episode, I’ll be in conversation with Westminster alumni, Derin [Fedina], who recently graduated with a Masters in Architecture. In this interview, we delve into Derin’s academic background, what drew him to Architecture as both an art form and discipline, and his experience of studying it as an undergrad and postgrad. We reflect on his work on our project’s reading list, as well as his involvement in the “Unsettled Subjects – Confronting Questions” project in the School of Architecture. Towards the end, Derin shares how lecturers can begin to decolonise their pedagogy and practice.

Kyra: Hi Derin, thank you so much for joining me on this episode of the podcast – it’s so nice to finally meet you. How are you doing today?

Derin: Good to meet you too! Glad that we can finally do this. Yeah, I’m doing well, doing alright.

Kyra: So, I thought we could begin with just talking a little bit more about yourself, so, first things first, where are you from?

Derin: So, I was born and raised in Nigeria, and I kind of...yeah, I grew up there, lived there until I was about 13 years old, and then I moved over to the UK.

Kyra: So how would you kind of describe your upbringing in terms of how race was seen and felt in your household?

Derin: Well, as I’m sure you can imagine, race didn’t really play out in any real sort of way in a Nigerian household because, you know, everyone around you sort of looks the same, and in Nigerian society in general, it doesn’t really come up, but obviously, difference...difference persists, right, and it takes different forms. I think the form that it does take in Nigeria has a lot to do with tribalism, and, historically, that’s always been a challenge for us as a nation. Politically as well, it plays out. And, you know, shout out to the British for arbitrarily joining several tribes of people into a nation, and so, you know, we’re dealing with the consequences of that. But, yeah, typically, there is a bit of tribalism. But every now and again, you see moments where people kind of move beyond it and kind of transcend it in quite nice and heart-warming ways.



Kyra: So, do you feel like you had...? Well, I guess you did have like good representations of people that look like you growing up in Nigeria, but was it...did you ever come across representations of maybe Nigerians in like popular media or anything like that that were kind of like a different representation that you were used to?

Derin: Phew...I think, growing up, you know, this was, what, the late-'90s, early-'00s, yeah, I think...we all know the stereotypes, right, we see the way African nations are depicted and African people are depicted, and even when I moved over to the UK, I vividly remember a moment when a guy – you know, again, we were all kids, we were like 13, 14. So, someone genuinely asked me, with no sense of offence and stuff, he said, “So, did you live in a mud-hut in Nigeria?” That was a real, genuine question. And I wasn’t even mad at it because that was all he knew! His entire perception of an African person was, you know, it was rurality, it was primitivism. And I was like, no, I lived in a flat in the city, you know what I mean? So, things like that, things like that, I did start to confront slightly when I moved over.

Kyra: So, when you moved over as well, I guess adding to that, did you ever feel like...did you ever find yourself in a position where you had to navigate or like negotiate your racial identity – like what was that kind of like shift like for you?

Derin: So, I have this joke that I make that I always say I wasn’t Black until I was about 13 years old because I essentially never – obviously, like I mentioned earlier, never had to confront my Blackness until I moved over to the UK, and I found that...you know... You have these...as a young Black person, you have these young...you have these sort of expectations and perceptions placed on you before you walk in the room. You know, it’s a...it’s what [Fannel] describes where he says that, you know, Black people aren’t allowed...don’t have the luxury of trying to define who they are in the existentialist sense because, before you even walk in the room, there are certain, you know, essentialist notions that are placed upon you, and so I had to navigate that a lot when I first joined my school, and it was a predominantly white school in West Sussex. There were a few Asians and Black people as well. But, I mean, initially, when I joined, everyone thought I’d be the new star sprinter, for instance, because I was Black, so they were like, “Oh yeah, he’s going to run the 100m race!” Long story short, they were very disappointed [laughing]! But...you know what I mean? So, these things happened a lot. I had, ironically, many of the white kids would tell me that I wasn’t Black enough, right, because they had a particular conception of what it was like to be Black, right, but obviously that doesn’t exist for...yeah, I mean, you know, white people. So, essentially, yeah, that was...I did have to navigate that a lot, but, you know, thankfully, it didn’t take me too long to realise that I was who I was and just move beyond it, just got on with it, as it were, which we all have to. There’s a...there’s a mandate to getting on with it that you kind of have to, at some point, decide, and then consistently do [laughing].

Kyra: And when is it that you began to develop an interest in Architecture then, like where did that come from?



Derin: That was completely arbitrary, completely arbitrary [laughing]. I decided when I was about 12 years old. So, growing up in Nigeria, in school, we had a subject called TD, which stood for Technical Drawing, and it was...quite literally, it was just a subject that involved teaching you all the drawing conventions. We'd have something called a t-square and a pencil and we'd draw isometric and orthographic projections and drawings, just of like everyday objects like boxes. And I just...I was like...I really like this, I'm pretty good at it, and then I was just like...this is going to be the rest of my life [laughing]. And it was like...it was me and a handful of other friends of mine were like, "Yeah, we want to do this forever," and I then I think one of us came into school the next day and was like, "Oh, by the way, there's this job called architect, that if you become that, you can do this all the time," and [laughing]...and we decided there and then, like, yeah, we'll do it, and we all now study Architecture still, like some like 15 years later. Yeah, incredibly arbitrary, but, you know, I think maybe the more... the more interesting or the more useful question is why I stayed in Architecture, even after it revealed itself to me to be what it was, but, you know, I found it very interesting – my undergraduate in particular was...you know, was very...it revealed itself to be such a multifaceted thing, you know, beyond building buildings and planning cities. You know, it...yeah, it opened my eyes to a lot of interests, and lifelong interests, that I still carry to this day so...yeah, that's why I was like, well, I now know what it's about - I'll just carry on!

Kyra: So, what was kind of like some of the major differences between studying Architecture at an undergraduate level and then studying it as a Masters?

Derin: One difference that I found was...again, because there's no Architecture subject at school, so it's your first introduction to the entire profession, and in undergrad, I found that...again, because you don't know very much, you tend to, either by intention or by accident, you tend to embody and adopt a lot of the opinions that your tutors have. You know, I think architecture is a much more subjective profession than anybody likes to admit – you know, there's still a certain level of objectivity, but really, there are people with opinions on the right way to build things, just from a purely aesthetic point of view. So, at undergrad, I found it...yeah, very much, we all adopted the things that our tutors hated and the things that our tutors liked - but mostly hated. I found myself having conversations with friends, where I said, in my first year, I said, "I think Architecture is just about finding out things that you don't like." I started in 2012, my first year, and I remember the Shard, they'd just finished constructing the Shard that summer, and it was generally accepted that we should all hate the Shard – that was [laughing]...that's just what the spirit was – you couldn't like the Shard. Till this day, it's the same! It was like, you know, this was very much imposed on you, in a sense. You know, the truth is, if they'd left me, I would have come to that opinion on my own anyways [laughing], but... So, that was very much what characterised undergrad.

With Master's, I think it's different. I think, you know, you've been doing it a while, you've had one or two or three years out to work, and you are now better equipped at, yeah, determining your own position in terms of architecture, in terms of urbanism or whatever – you're more... You're also more...well, at least I found, you have the confidence



a bit more to challenge your tutors maybe if you felt that that was appropriate, and you're more discerning in terms of picking studios and knowing what you find interesting. That was the shift for me that I found.

Kyra: And when did you kind of come to understand the concept of like decolonising Architecture, like when were you introduced to that? Was it during your undergrad or was it later into your Master's?

Derin: No, I had no notion of it in undergrad at all. I mean, I was, for the most part – this is all relatively new to me. I was...very...sort of slightly apolitical in my undergrad I think [laughing]. But I think it was through my history and theory seminars in Master's that I really came to grips with these things, I think. We were reading a lot of the writers from the new left, so like Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. You know, we were looking at...yeah, the legacies of empire and colonialism and all that sort of stuff, and so this was really the first time that I came to...understand the concept of decolonisation and, you know, how, you know, through [design and thinking] about architectural history, I was able to...kind of...you know, attribute it to architecture, have to think about it in terms of architecture and architectural history. I was also reading some, you know, decolonial literature as well. And so, yeah, it was a...it was a bit of a paradigm shift for me, coming to terms with it, and that coincided that conversations that I had, and seminar groups, as well as like crits and tutorials and stuff like that. So, yeah, it's somewhat recent [laughing]...

Kyra: Yeah. Well, it's funny you say that this is kind of all new to you because you did so well in producing a reading list for the School of Architecture about decolonising Architecture, so thank you for all the work you did on that!

Derin: Thank you very much, yeah.

Kyra: Just on that topic, could you kind of talk us through the process of your research for that list, like what are some of the things you noticed...?

Derin: I believe that project, I did it – correct me, was it like January of 2020, right, is when...? Yes. So, I think I completed it around then. And what I found in researching these sources was that it was actually pretty scant for things. At some point, I felt like I was really grasping at straws to find stuff because obviously the mandate was not necessarily dense books and journal entries but like blog- posts and videos and easily digestible content, just to say that as a primer for the concept of decolonisation particularly in Architecture and Design. And yeah, I found that it was very scant. I couldn't find very much stuff. But what's interesting is that, since then, in the last year and a half, two years, I think the...the discourse has taken on...is so much richer now, so much more [pervasive], already, just in this short amount of time, and so [laughing]...and I was like, I would come over a lot of stuff and I'd be like, wow, I wish this existed when I was putting together these sources! I met people who had done similar projects, but even more so...maybe more sophisticate curricula design projects affiliated with other institutions and stuff like that. So, also, just as an example, things like the Architecture Foundation, they did a hundred day studio



thing during the pandemic, and it was essentially just a hundred days of lectures and talks, and many of those included works, lectures and like roundtable discussions, about decolonisation and things like that. So, yeah, what I found is that, just in the last year alone, the conversation has become a lot more richer, a lot more nuanced, and a lot more pervasive, and that's...it's great to see that. I'm glad to have been involved in that, in some miniscule way [laughing].

Kyra: So, what do you feel like...if you feel like there is anything, what do you think is still kind of missing from this body of literature, like what kind of questions aren't being answered?

Derin: I do wonder. I mean, I can only talk about what's missing from the list of sources that I've put together [laughing], which is...I suggested, again, yeah, just, you know, just look up the Architecture Foundation, 100 Days Studio, Decolonisation, and, you know, there were talks that were organised by an organisation called Black Females in Architecture and they had different conversations with, again, different [industry leaders], and, again, so what I found was that...yeah, this was...a lot of it was anecdotal, so this was industry professionals talking about their own experiences, and I think that that was something that I always felt was missing, was that... So, we could talk about decolonisation in the academic and the institutional context, you know, but the danger is that you can then start to treat it as a purely academic problem that only exists in the university. So, hearing views and hearing perspectives from people in the industry seemed real-world manifestations of...of coloniality and the need to decolonise. You know, you recognise that this isn't just an intellectual exercise. It's a real mission, as it were. And so, yeah, getting a deeper understanding of how it plays out, you know, within the built environment, within the profession, you know. I mean, nowadays, the statistics get, you know, circulated about the amount of women that work in practice, the amount of minorities that work in practice and stuff like that, and so, yeah, that's...it's important to get more to grips with the real-world manifestations of this stuff, I find.

Kyra: I also wanted to dedicate some time to discussing the "Unsettled Subjects – Confronting Questions" group/project which is based in the School of Architecture & Cities here at Westminster. Could you share a bit more about what that group is and how you kind of came to be a part of it?

Derin: Yeah. So, Unsettled Subjects was started by Dr Nick Beech, who's on the...he's a Faculty member at the School of Architecture & Cities, teaches on the History & Theory course, and he was actually my dissertation tutor, so much of the trajectory of my thinking has been informed by him. He's [so fundamental]. But, yeah, I got involved because I actually just emailed him after graduating in 2020. I just, you know, in the middle of the pandemic, I was feeling very lost, and so I thought I'd reach out to my tutor, just to see how he was doing, and we caught up and he said, "Yeah, by the way, I'm thinking of starting this reading group, if you're interested in joining..." and I was like I'm not doing anything [laughing], I've got the summer off, so I'll join the reading group.



I'll try and describe it the way that he says. He found that...you know, again, he's very involved in all this stuff at an institutional level, so he found that he had been to a couple of EDI seminars and things like that and he said that...he discovered that many people didn't really have the right tools and the right terms with which to actually discuss these things. You know, it's all well and good to want to be there and want to contribute, but actually, it was very important that people...yeah, he found that people lacked really the...the lexicon with which to discuss issues in decolonisation, power of identity, or race, empire, all that sort of stuff, and so he thought, well, actually, let's start a reading group so that we can, all together, collectively, actually develop a means by which we can be able to discuss to have these conversations that we want to have, that are very necessary to have. And so, yeah, that's how the group started, and it's like [free in Urban 21], it's just a...it's on a fortnightly basis, on a Wednesday, between 12 and 2 – I'm doing the promotion for Nick now [laughing]! And it's great, and out of that grew a little bit of a...like a research collective as well, which I'm an active member of, and then we did a talk a few weeks back, and we're sort of working on a group publication as well. So, yeah, on the one hand, it's reading together and it's learning, but also we're getting into the realm of like knowledge production and things like that. But, yeah, I mean, it's a really great group that's open to everybody – you don't even necessarily have to be an Architecture student. You don't even have to have a PhD either [laughing], which, judging by many of the members, it might suggest otherwise, but it's just [free and open] and non-hierarchical so just...yeah, it's great.

Kyra: Thank you. And do you think it's possible to decolonise the built environment we live in and kind of engage with? Is that something that we can...is that a future that we can imagine?

Derin: Yeah, I think it's eminently possible to do that. Yeah. I think, well, first of all, it's about increasing – I mean, you know, the built environment affects everyone, doesn't it, I mean everybody. It plays a role in everybody's lives, therefore decolonising the environment, the built environment, will involve actually allowing for the same multiplicity of voices to be in charge of making our buildings and our cities as they are being catered for. I mean, it just stands to reason that, you know, we live in diverse cities and therefore the people in charge of creating them should be equally diverse, right? And, you know, as well as that, you know, there's a need for real community engagement so that we're not just building things that serve, you know, capitalistic purposes or whatever but actually that are really, really relevant and fit for use for the people for which they are being designed, you know. And in a real like...non-tokenistic, box-ticking way – actually, you know, getting to terms with, yeah, who you're building for and who you're designing for. I think that is...that's a step in the right direction. And you see that happening, a little bit, like in London in particular, you see that happening, so, yeah, that is one route, as far as my understanding goes, that we could come to start to decolonise our built environment.

Kyra: And how would you say the pandemic, Black Lives Matter, Process, and COP-26, how has that shifted the kind of nature of discussion in Architecture, like what have you kind of noticed?



Derin: I think there is a shift generally. [I don't/And I] think it's a permanent shift, I think it's just...it's a widening of the conversation, and it's definitely, yeah, it's moving from a, you know, more technocratic, more sort of...technical thing to being more of a Social Science, right? I think that notions of...identity and race and...you know, and class and people, and the planet and sustainability as well – I mean, these conversations, they're progressing at different rates, but they are happening. You know, you do hear...you hear murmurs of people bemoaning the increase in conversations about diversity and identity, and it's like...you know, what I always say to that is there are entire generations of architects and designers who were only educated to talk about aesthetics or about technical considerations, which is, by the way, obviously, vitally important – these are conversations that we all love to have [laughing] as designers, right? But there are entire generations of people who really only, you know, talk about Architecture as a formal discipline. So, you know, I think that, in the last, I don't know, 10 or 15 years, that we're now having conversations about actually who is... To summarise: putting the people and putting the planet, you know, at the forefront of the discussion – that's a demonstrably good thing to do [laughing], you know, and seems very obvious to me. So, yeah, that is something that I've noticed. That is something that is happening. Naturally, there's resistance to that, but, yeah, I mean, it's a step in the right direction, definitely.

Kyra: And just to offer kind of like our audience...what readings would you suggest to those that are kind of just beginning to learn about decolonisation and kind of what that means in Architecture?

Derin: Yeah. I was listening back to your previous episodes and I saw that you spoke to Samir a few weeks back and that was great, so I'm glad he did a lot of the work of suggesting books. I won't step on his toes. I'll maybe try and build off of that, but, again, like I said – and maybe this is me trying to do a part two of the Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit project, but, again, like I said, yeah, there are more talks on the internet now. Just go on YouTube and look at the Architecture Foundation talks. But as far as books go, you know, going from the mandate of the Unsettled Subjects reading group, before you actually even, I believe, start to do any decolonisation work, you actually need to come to an understanding of what's at stake and what's being discussed. So, I would recommend the first book that we read as a group, which was...it's called 'The Fateful Triangle' by Stuart Hall. 'The Fateful Triangle', the sides of the triangle in question are race, ethnicity and nation. I've got the book here... it's a small, little book, a collection of lectures. You know, this...it really just...like I said, the reason it's the first book we read is because it's very, very foundational and it really does...you know, it untangles these terms, their interrelatedness, what it means, how race, as a term, for instance, has evolved over time, how we can come to understand it, and I think that's really...it's important to come to terms with that. It's important to do the foundational stuff before diving into the [projects on] decolonisation.

Another book that I read a couple of years back, during my Master's, was Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 'Decolonising the Mind'. That deals more with literature and that deals more with language, you know, but it talks about how language can be a tool through which, you



know, colonialism is perpetuated or oppression is perpetuated, and hegemony is perpetuated, you know. And there are some similarities. I mean, you can extrapolate that. We speak about architectural language. We know how certain architectures, historically, have carried certain meanings and have been used in particular political agendas. There are subtle languages that they carry, and there are things that they communicate, oppressive architectures communicate things, you know. So, yes, 'Decolonising the Mind' is also a really great read – plus it's just a really great read!

Yeah, those two books definitely...definitely... But, you know, come along to Unsettled Subjects if you are looking to read more stuff!

Kyra: Yeah, absolutely!

Derin: We're actually going to start reading bell hooks in a couple of weeks, I think...

Kyra: Nice!

Derin: Exactly. And so, obviously, that deals more specifically with pedagogy, and, yeah, so, things like that...

Kyra: Thank you. Well, speaking of pedagogy, I wanted to actually talk some more about Architecture kind of curricula. I guess, while you were a student as well, you could kind of reflect on your experience. In what ways do you feel like Architecture is still very much a kind of colonial discipline?

Derin: Well, I mean, with the profession, you know, to use an architectural metaphor, I think, when you're on the ground floor, there's quite a lot of diversity there, at the lower levels of offices, there is a lot of diversity there, but the higher up you go, it starts to look very different, starts to look – or, rather, it starts to look very not different, starts to look very "samey", you know? So, that is something that, in a sense, it does speak of a certain level of coloniality.

In terms of the architectural pedagogy, in terms of teaching, in terms of...I mean, many architecture schools are seeking to combat this, in different ways, but there are many aspects of architectural teaching that [laughing], you know, if...I don't know if it's unfair to claim that they are colonial, you know. Just, for instance, the architectural crit in its, you know, in its typical, traditional sense, it's...it's a useful thing, it's a useful part of our education, it's something that I think you develop a lot of great skills from, but I think, you know, in many instances, they are strictly hierarchical. You're very much, as a student, you...you know, you're told things – in many cases [laughing], you're berated even, you know. So, things like that, I think that trying to remedy things like that would be to create non-hierarchical environments in which, you know, you can communicate more freely, more openly, with your tutor or whatever, so start to... You know, don't dismiss them entirely because I suppose you need some level of structure in order to learn anything, but I think start to...start to soften these differences. I think there's a lot to be learned, there's



a lot to be found when you're speaking in a slightly different...em...there's a different dynamic with the conversations, and I think seminar groups, reading groups, things of that nature, hold the potential to do that, start to address some of these things that I've mentioned. Yeah, I think that, yeah, that's one way, so yeah...

Kyra: And you mentioned how, during your undergrad, like you weren't so much introduced to kind of the concept of decolonising Architecture, but did you still kind of have those questions in the back of your mind, and do you ever find...did you ever find back then that it was a challenge for you to kind of... spark those kind of conversations on your course?

Derin: Em...no, because, like I said, so much of what I thought and so much of what I did was really informed entirely by my tutors. And to be fair, I think, at some point in my undergrad, I was starting to come to terms with notions of power, notions of capital, of class, in a sense, not in a specifically colonial way, but I think that was...if I look back now, I would say that was something of a primer, and that didn't really happen until my third year, when I was starting to confront, you know, starting to ask these questions and have these conversations in the context of the design studio. I wonder, if I was, you know, a lot more aware back then, I wonder how easy it would have been for me to have those conversations, not so much that I would have been faced with resistance necessarily, but, again, I don't know if the people teaching would have even had the right understanding or the right tools to actually direct my learning in any particular way. So, yeah, so it never came up in any real way for me at that point, but, you know, again, like I said, this was only a few years ago. You know, I'm not that old. But em...but, again, a lot has changed, so much... Now, these conversations, now, for instance, I'm a visiting critic at Westminster, sort of [vocally I'm back there], and I'm critiquing student work, and so, now, because, you know, I'm biased in that regard, when someone's project speaks of a certain, you know, need for decolonial thinking, and I bring it up, these conversations are much easier to have, I think because people are aware of the importance of it, and obviously there's no resistance to it. So, again, yeah, you know, I...I think I'm an optimist – I think things are going in the right direction, at Westminster in particular. I can't really speak for anywhere else. Yeah, these conversations are slightly easier for me to have, or at least I'm better at forcing the issue [laughing]. Even if...if I face some resistance, I recognise that it's something that's really important – it's got to be done, so...

Kyra: Yeah, absolutely. And what is your opinion on kind of the politics of naming, and how important is that to decolonising Architecture?

Derin: I'm slightly cynical about it because...you know, it's like...just to give a random, tangential example, it's like Netflix deleting all the episodes from sitcoms that have Black faces in them, just to, you know, to assuage the social justice warriors, as it were. I do, yeah, I'm cynical about it. I feel like...it's easy, it's a very easy thing to do. It feels like an attempt to placate any sort of...you know...to like...yeah, to placate people who have issues with it. I think that – and by the way, yeah, like you say, deleting the names and changing names doesn't really confront the past in any real way. They're all really...you know, they're all...it's really complex, you know, history is really complex, and the histories of



naming and, you know, they're deeply complex. So, you know, take Cecil Rhodes, for instance, who, you know, his statue got torn down and there's a lot of debate around him as a figure, but then there's the Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford, which, amongst many people, this guy, Stuart Hall, studied at Oxford on the Rhodes Scholarship, and he then became a prominent, you know, Caribbean thinker in Britain.

So, it's complex. It's not an easy thing. And I don't think that...I don't the point is...or rather I don't think that the point should be that this person's bad, this person [?] slaves – change the name and then let's move on. You know, it's about...it's about, yeah, it's telling the whole story of who this particular figure happens to be, because it's usually individual figures who, you know... So, yeah, it's...it is complex, but I think I do agree with you, it feels too easy, and it feels like an attempt to shut down discourse because, really, that's what it does, because then, if you say anything after they've changed the name, they could just be like, "Well, we changed the name so what else do you want?" you know [laughing]? So, the act of changing the name, sure, might be a good thing, but in and of itself it's not...I don't think that it's anything. Yeah, tell the full story. Confront. The past is to be reckoned with rather than erased.

Kyra: Thank you. What are some of the things you feel like lecturers can do to decolonise their pedagogy and practice? What do you feel like needs to be done, especially I think for lecturers that aren't so accepting of these kind of topics or they're kind of not familiar with it yet or they haven't embedded it into their kind of teaching? What are some of the first steps do you feel like they could take?

Derin: Yeah. Yeah, going back to Samir's talk, he mentioned that, you know, it's easy to update reading lists. It's pretty easy to add new books, add new sources, to your, you know, your curriculum or your repertoire, and that's easier to do in History & Theory, for instance, but in Design, it's maybe slightly harder, speaking specifically about Architecture now.

A former tutor of mine, Elantha Evans, my Design tutor, she's actually now doing a PhD that's entirely dedicated to empathy in teaching, empathetic teaching, as it were. So...you know, and I've lifted some of the work – it's all very interesting. So, I really think that that is...empathy is the name of the game. I think, before anything, before... And it sounds like, you know, it doesn't sound like a real...it doesn't sound quantifiable, so, you know, you might be...tutors might be cynical about "What does that mean? That's not anything," you know, just like... But empathy is the name of the game. I think that, if you can be empathetic to your students' experiences, to their...to their inclinations, to things that maybe they might not even have fully formed yet but you can feel like they're going the direction of, you know, so... Yeah, beyond, you know, if you don't know anything about decolonisation, if you don't...if you're not, you know, part of that, if you haven't attended EDI seminars, if you haven't, you know, talked the talk, just being a bit more empathetic to different experiences and different drives and different wants, you know, I think it's...it's very easy, in a teaching capacity, to, again, do the thing I mentioned earlier, which is just impose...impose, impose, impose. You know, I think, in architectural education, we treat the canon as a really precious thing, and so...and the people that...that...that are resistant



to [discussions about] decolonisation, it's because they feel like...really, we want to talk about...want to talk about Le Corbusier, want to talk about the classists or whatever. And, you know, it doesn't...and it doesn't ruin that, it doesn't diminish the canon – it actually enriches it. So, to be...so, yeah, the one-word answer is “empathy” [laughing]! Yeah...

Kyra: What advice would you give to younger, kind of aspiring architects completing their studies this year, in this time?

Derin: You belong. I really don't think it's anything beyond that. I think, beyond the hoops you have to jump through to try to...literally get a job in the post-pandemic world – we all did it, I did it – but...all the things that you have to do, and the circumstances that have changed rapidly in the past two years, in doing all that, which you know how to do – you're all very competent, I'm sure, anybody listening – but always remember that you belong, even in the moments when it feels as though there is no room for you and there is no space for you in the industry. Remember that. You belong. And then, when you eventually find yourself somewhere, if you carry that mindset with you, you'll be good!

Kyra: Thank you, Derin. So, unfortunately, we are coming to an end to this interview, but as a question I like to end on: what is something you'd like to see happen or see develop within higher education in the next 10 years?

Derin: Well, more conversations like this, for one. This has been very useful – thanks for having me again. But, yeah, free and open, free and open discussion about things like this, and that's openness from both sides. I think that universities aren't any one thing, really, they can't be, that's not why they exist – there is necessarily a multiplicity of voices within any Department, within any Faculty, and so there should be an openness and a free and open exchange of ideas and positions and...yeah, that's true of everybody, at every level of academia – openness, openness...and a willingness to learn and to understand and to bridge the gap, whatever gaps exist. That, as an attitude, is what I think higher education needs more of.

Kyra: Absolutely – I couldn't agree with you more. Thank you, Derin! I just want to thank you so much for joining me on this episode of the podcast. It's been really nice just, you know, getting to know a little bit more about yourself, the work that you're doing, and just having this opportunity to discuss like these elements in Architecture, which I don't think a lot of people outside of the discipline necessarily know about or kind of take the time to really unpack and think about. You've done so well at doing that, so thank you again.

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