

**Bonni:** [00:00:00] Today on episode #200 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast: Maha Bali, Robin DeRosa, and Mike Truong discuss what we've changed our minds about teaching.

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**Bonni:** [00:00:23] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

**Bonni:** [00:00:51] Truly it is ridiculous to think that this is the 200 episode of teaching in higher ed. I am humbled by the people that have come on the show to share with so many of us. The gifts that they're giving their students and their teaching and I'm just excited for the next 200 episodes for all the things to come.

**Bonni:** [00:01:11] As many of you know we've been working on the transcripts for the teach in the higher ed podcast so I've had the opportunity to go back and reflect on all that I've learned and that's just been a joy. And I want to give special thanks to James M Lang who is the series editor for the Teaching and Learning in Higher Education book series from West Virginia University Press. I'd like to thank them for making a financial contribution to make those transcripts available. And I'd like to share just a little bit about the series and we'll be getting to talk to many of the authors coming up here in the next few months.

**Bonni:** [00:01:48] The series offers compact books from great writers and I can attest to all of that who provide you with practical guidance you need to help students learn and succeed. And that's ultimately what it's all about.

**Bonni:** [00:02:01] And speaking of helping students learn and succeed. I'm really excited to have the three guests with us today. Three. I guess we just decided to

really chalk it up to them for the 200 episode. Maha Bali, Robin DeRosa and Mike Truong are all here to share stories about what they've changed their minds about regarding their teaching.

**Bonni:** [00:02:21] And if you're not familiar with any of them let me just share briefly Maha Bali is an associate professor of practice at the Center for Teaching and Learning at the American University in Cairo. She's a full time faculty developer and she also teaches creative educational game design to undergrads.

**Bonni:** [00:02:41] Robin DeRosa is a professor at Plymouth State University and she is in charge of their interdisciplinary studies program and she's part of the University System of New Hampshire. She's also an editor for Hybrid Pedagogy and open access peer reviewed journal that combines the strands of critical pedagogy and digital pedagogy to arrive at the best social and civil uses for technology and new media in education.

**Bonni:** [00:03:11] And last is Mike Truong. Mike Truong is the Executive Director for the Office of Innovative Teaching and Technology at Azusa Pacific University that's out here in Southern California by me.

**Bonni:** [00:03:24] Maha, Robin and Mike: welcome back to all of you to Teaching in Higher Ed.

**Robin:** [00:03:30] Thank you.

**Mike:** [00:03:31] Thank you.

[00:03:32] You have all been on the show previously so maybe I'll just start by asking a question. What have you been up to since you were on the show? For people who want to look at the show notes they'll be at [teachinginhighered.com/200](http://teachinginhighered.com/200). And you can read everybody's bios.

**Bonni:** [00:03:49] But anyway what have you been up to? Mike what's been going on?

**Mike:** [00:03:52] Our biggest thing is we're changing our LMS for the campus so it's been all consuming for the past year and we have another year and a half to go. We want to make sure everyone had an opportunity to speak into it which involved a lot of people on time.

**Mike:** [00:04:09] And that I think we're very happy where we're at. We're in the midst of converting and we're going to actually go live this summer and we'll see.

**Bonni:** [00:04:17] And would you just share briefly even though it will be in your bio your academic expertise in terms of your discipline? And then also your current role.

**Mike:** [00:04:26] Sure. So my doctorate is an ethnic studies. It's very very different than what I currently do which I oversee the office of innovative teaching technology which runs the online learning, faculty development, teaching with technology and also the ed tech piece of the university.

**Bonni:** [00:04:46] Yeah, thanks so much. All right. Let's go over to Robin and what have you been up to since the last time you've been on the show?

**Robin:** [00:04:54] Well unlike Mike I have been staying away from the LMS pretty much as deliberately as I can since the last time I saw you and mostly spending my time with students our program. So my Ph.D. also is not particularly in play in my current position and I have a degree in Early American Literature and now I direct an interdisciplinary studies program.

**Robin:** [00:05:16] And so I have students who are doing customized majors across a range of fields. And we've been exploding in growth which is something that's happening nationally with interdisciplinary studies and multidisciplinary studies but it's also happening on our small regional public campus in central New Hampshire.

**Robin:** [00:05:35] So glad to have you here today Robin and let's pass it over to Maha.

**Maha:** [00:05:39] OK. So what we've been up to is my Center for Learning and Teaching where I worked at the American University in Cairo just had our 15th anniversary and we had a great 15th anniversary event where we had Paul Prinsloo from South Africa keynote our symposium where our faculty presented there work. And then we had a second day which is a celebration of our center and we had like booths for all the different things we do. And we had a student faculty co-designed session where we sat students and faculty together to try to figure out solutions to certain problems that we have on campus.

**Maha:** [00:06:09] And that was really beautiful. I'm going to write something

about this with my colleagues who worked on it and one of my students who did it. And our third day we had collaboration stations with - There's an organization called AMICAL of all the liberal arts institutions outside the U.S.. So they all came in and we worked together on certain things and thinking about future collaborations together. It was really exciting.

**Maha:** [00:06:31] So I'm a computer scientist who ran away from the code who eventually did a Ph.D. and a Ph.D. in education and my role I'm an associate professor of practice at the Center for Learning and Teaching so I am a faculty developer mainly and currently I'm teaching a course that I designed myself that focuses on digital literacy and intercultural learning.

**Bonni:** [00:06:53] Wonderful. It's so great to have all three of you here. I'm excited to be preparing to celebrate the 200 episode with you and I've been reflecting so much as we're also preparing these transcripts just how much I've learned and how much I've completely changed my mind about teaching.

**Bonni:** [00:07:10] And I thought what better way to celebrate the 200 episode than to share things that we each have shifted our perspectives on [regarding] teaching. So I asked each one of you to share both an example and then a story that goes with that. You know, what is a big shift that you've made in recent years? And then what kind of is [the] background on how you came to that and where are you going to start off with Mike.

**Mike:** [00:07:32] So it was a challenge, I think, to think through like all the things that I've changed my mind on and to sort of land on one. And I think for me it kind of connects with my work today in my office. Our office is focused on helping faculty teach effectively with technology. So it's that's our mission and our goal.

**Mike:** [00:07:54] And often I find myself frustrated you know like working with faculty who are resistant to the use of technology in general and specifically to space tools like invest in things that I think are beneficial for students and I can tell you many stories of faculty that said things like, "The last thing I will do before I retire is to use technology." I mean, it's one of those things that they just will not ever touch it.

**Mike:** [00:08:21] And I used to be frustrated. I used to like [think] what's going on? How come they don't want to help students succeed? Because nowadays students are on their mobile devices. They want things digitally. They don't want paper. And I would almost go to the point where I would say that they were

committing educational malpractice.

**Mike:** [00:08:39] And I would sort of go about and try to like just, you know, speak into that and say, "No, you're not helping students." I've changed my mind on that. I feel much more sympathetic to these faculty who I think are rare birds. I listen. I nod. I affirm where they are at. I don't insist.

**Mike:** [00:09:02] I now mostly invite and if and when they're ready, I'm ready to support them and to sort of walk with them. And I think the key thing for me is I have learned that I don't need to defend technology or even defend the efficacy of the use of technology, especially in today's digital world because we are bombarded with it. You know really we can't go through a day without the use of technology. And so I think I understand where faculty are coming from who want to limit the use of technology in the classroom so that they can preserve that environment for that conversation or the interactions that really I think sometimes get muted because of technology.

**Bonni:** [00:09:46] It occurred to me while you were talking Mike that both Maha and Robin mentioned not using the LMS and it occurred to me that if anyone was listening today for the first time (That would be kind of nice, wouldn't it? 200th episode?) that they might not realize that - and maybe this isn't a fair distinction or a fair way of describing it - but I would describe them as beyond the LMS. As in they've used an LMS and then are have experienced some of the limitations of it and I can can have each of you speak to that of course.

**Bonni:** [00:10:16] But as an opening up their classes more because the LMS is such a closed wall and then I can have my students share their work and get feedback from anyone beyond me or the other peers that are in the class. But it occurred to me that they are not the same kind of faculty that you were describing.

**Bonni:** [00:10:32] I suspect you're describing your faculty like, "PowerPoint is my limit," or maybe not even PowerPoint at all.

**Mike:** [00:10:37] Not even PowerPoint, yeah...

**Bonni:** [00:10:38] Yeah, just my notes from the 70s... Just [laughing] on my legal pad. Not that I work with anyone like that ([whispers] "I love you."). Yeah. Yeah. So any thoughts Maha or Robin in response to thinking about faculty who are more resistant to adopting technology?

**Maha:** [00:10:55] Well I think I was in the space that Mike was in where you know at some point you're sort of an evangelist for the use of technology and then you realize, no but actually maybe [for] some people that's not going to work for them and that's fine. But with the thing of going beyond the LMS right now. It started out that there was one or two of us in my department who who believe that, but now the ones who aren't on the LMS are the ones who are doing other stuff. They are even more tech savvy. They have even more digital literacy. So that was what I was thinking.

**Robin:** [00:11:24] I've been interested as I become you know post LMS that I'm actually starting to use it a tiny bit more because I think my pedagogy - and this really echoes for me with Mike's experience - have faculties similar to my experience with students when you really do let students fully drive. For some students the LMS is the best cyber infrastructure for them right - to borrow Gardner Campbell's term there.

**Robin:** [00:11:54] So not very often but generally about one student per semester will for various reasons choose to work in a more locked down environment or more private environment. I have a student I'm working with now who is just a really different thinker, yeah. I mean dramatically different. And we actually do most of our work by email. The LMS is too public facing really for him even. And so I kind of think about that as a win for working in more open ways actually is when students are exercising that kind of digital agency to say, "No, I want to stay in here."

**Robin:** [00:12:32] So, weirdly I've kind of come back around to respecting some of what it offers as a kind of in-between space for students who want to go somewhat online, but have reasons - really good ones, usually - for not working in public.

**Robin:** [00:12:46] Like you, Mike, I've had so many thoughts about what has changed for me and one of the big ones, you sort of hit on, which is a shift from more of a mindset of control and then more of a mindset of invitation. I talked about that in a post about laptop or device bans and instead of phrasing something like a ban. Perhaps there are times when we really should put our devices away.

**Bonni:** [00:13:13] And now I start more of these classes with, "Can we think about this instead of our enemy? For those of you that are frustrated by it, of just something we play with. Can we can we try to adopt more of that attitude?"

**Mike:** [00:13:24] I think for me it's about that genuine effort. I think if the fact that he shows genuine efforts in adopting a technology or using something that is new that may be challenging and you see that genuine effort and they realize, you know what - it's just not going to work for them - is not really relevant to what they're doing - then they don't use it.

**Mike:** [00:13:46] But I think that's that's a valid a way to kind of say no to technology. And so I think as long as I see faculty making effort towards genuinely trying to learn something and then they find out that it is not going to work for them, I think it's fine. It's only those, I think, faculty that are just blatantly, "I'm not even going to try. I'm not gonna listen to you. I'm not going to..." you know.

**Mike:** [00:14:10] And for me I've sort of... My posture for those faculty is I'm not going to engage. I would say, "I'm glad you have your convictions," and I would just leave it at that.

**Bonni:** [00:14:22] Robin are you ready to share your big thing that you've changed her mind about teaching in recent years?

**Robin:** [00:14:28] Sure. So a little challenging because in so many ways a few years ago my teaching just took such a paradigm shift that it's hard to find anything that I haven't changed my mind about.

**Robin:** [00:14:39] So I tried to figure out like how could I explain what that paradigm shift is and I'll explain it through a story of a student of mine named Tiffany which is her real name because she's blogged publicly about this. We may be able to recover that blog post and I'll be talking about - that is her domain and I haven't seen it in a few months so you know one never knows if it's still there.

**Robin:** [00:15:00] But Tiffany is an interdisciplinary studies student at Penn State and she was in a nursing program and was about three quarters of the way through maybe a little bit less when she was diagnosed with a brain tumor and could no longer pursue nursing for various reasons in terms of like dispensing medications. She had to make a shift and one of the things that really anybody who works in higher ed understands is that once you get down a certain path, if you go to change your major you can be looking at adding significant time to graduation which for students in the demographic that we serve at Plymouth State can really mean not completing your degree at all because they cannot afford to extend those time.

**Robin:** [00:15:48] So one of the amazing things about our program is that we're able to do what I think of as kind of backwards design and curriculum building which is something many of us are so at ease with in terms of instructional design. Right? Oh, I'm going to build a course. I want to start with my learning outcomes. I'm going to go backwards and build rubrics that linked to those and then my assignments will emerge...

**Robin:** [00:16:10] And that occurred to me that you know the students were getting a very bad rap for having these "bailout degrees" where they to change their majors because they couldn't complete for whatever reason that major that they started out with sometimes they are failing certain courses. But really the backwards design that they were using to re-articulate the course of their studies was producing some pretty amazing results. And Tiffany shifted her major to patient advocacy and integrated all of her nursing credits along with some new special work in sociology and health credits and started publicly writing about studying patient advocacy as a patient.

**Robin:** [00:16:56] And of course patient advocacy groups were very interested in her work because she had something to say that was really authentic. So what changed for me was realizing the stuff like when I was trained at an R1 institution, you know, with my Ph.D. and my specialty. I was truly trained that it was not my job to pay attention to these life issues that students had. And it was not my job to bend curriculum to student need and it was not my job to care.

**Robin:** [00:17:31] I'm sorry I'm getting teary because it's so immediate - like I have students right out there [outside of her office] right now. But you know it's not my job to care if they had breakfast, you know. I'm not a primary school teacher and I'm not a Head Start teacher. I am an early American history [professor].

**Robin:** [00:17:45] And I just changed completely after working with students in this program to realize like there is actually nothing that is not my job, you know? I literally can't think of a thing, related to their lives - if it comes into a class or the experience of working with them - it becomes my job.

**Robin:** [00:18:07] So now I'm just - having named that for myself - it's like oh my gosh I can build around this. You know I can build structures that allow the students to come in with their needs. Like for example: I have a student I'm working with right now and like I said this guy's just a very, very different thinker and the class that I have is over-enrolled. It's busy. We're quick with everything.

This does not work for his brain, quite honestly.

**Robin:** [00:18:36] And I realized my gosh you know you're going to be much better served if you don't attend class. Let's let's create some alternative ways for you to engage in in the office when it's quiet. You can have say six hours you know sitting and I can move in and out of discussions with you in different ways.

**Robin:** [00:18:57] I have just become so much more accommodating - that I mean not in kind of a very real way, you know, not a kind of like, "We have free accommodations and we will offer them." But like what really happens if you structurally start to build around the real world issues that students are are bringing in? And that's just transformational for me and very very different, I think, than how (especially in the U.S.) a lot of us are trained to think about teaching college in particular.

**Bonni:** [00:19:29] Maha to do want to say something?

**Robin:** [00:19:31] I was going to say that's beautiful and I have also become more like that. I don't think I was ever of that kind like, "This has nothing to do with me," but I think I was in my early teaching of the kind where when a student keeps coming up with excuses not necessarily believing them.

**Robin:** [00:19:47] But I had a time in my life for a lot of horrible things were happening to me at the same time and my boss believed me and she never questioned that. And ever since then I'm like whenever a student - I hate it when people say they don't believe students when they say someone died or someone's sick in their family. I will believe them every time because there will be some of them who are truthful and I will not put them through the disbelief and just letting them know that I'm there for them.

**Robin:** [00:20:11] The only the only issue I have is that sometimes I don't know what's going on and it's their right not to tell me but then when they don't tell me I can't judge how much I should be accommodating or how much I should be supporting. So I tried to be as little as possible. In general we've been very very broad limits. Yeah but when they do tell you then it becomes then I think you I think the almost have a responsibility to be able to support a student.

**Bonni:** [00:20:36] As you were sharing your story and you used the word accommodating - accommodation - I was just struck because I thought that is the first time I have heard those words being used in a positive way. I hadn't really thought of it. I mean, most of what I see it as: [complaining] "They need a

note taker. I got to figure out who's going to be the note taker. They need more times on tests and our testing center doesn't have enough time or they can't..."

**Bonni:** [00:21:06] So it means more time for me to and just complain, complain, complain about needing to accommodate someone in the way that you described it had nothing to do with that. How did we lose sight of the the real treasure that that can be in a learning experience? It makes me wonder though how much more of a paradigm shift do I need to make? Where are my areas where I still need to grow? Because it's just that I was so shocked by the use of that word in such a different way than I've grown accustomed to.

**Maha:** [00:21:44] I think there will always be an area that you discover that you need to grow. There will always be a person that you hadn't thought of before or a kind of difference, or disability, or ability, or just difference along spectrum - or a person in a spectrum that you've seen before who behaved differently than others and that affected they've seen before which feeds really nicely into my story.

**Bonni:** [00:22:05] Oh, perfect. Yeah. Great.

**Maha:** [00:22:07] OK. So this is a story of a flip-flop with a post-modern ending where you then realize, well of course it makes sense. How could you ever thought otherwise? So there's always this kind of thing happens to me all the time, right? So my first article on Hybrid Pedagogy (the journal) is called An Affinity for Learning. And I wrote it at a time when I did my Masters online back when the internet was just dial up, you know? And so it was completely text based. We occasionally - the students - met each other and some silent synchronous something but for the most part it was asynchronous and I talked in my article about things like - at that time Egypt had a lot of electricity cuts - it doesn't any more but it did at that time.

**Maha:** [00:22:48] Bandwidth is different here for us, of course. And I had a very young child and I talked about all those ways in which synchronous learning especially video based synchronous learning is inaccessible to a lot of people. But, also that there are affordances to the asynchronicity like promoting reflection and then just giving some people who need that extra time and so people who need to be able to express themselves at their own pace. Right?

**Maha:** [00:23:10] And then what happens? Like a year later my friend Rebecca Hogan I start virtually connecting with just completely synchronous media. And Rebecca and I before starting virtually connecting had never met synchronously

before like we did it just to do the virtually connecting thing which was at the time called e4buddy.

**Maha:** [00:23:30] And so it's all about access. Just in a different way, right? Virtually connecting is about giving people access to conference conversations when they can travel to those conferences. It does assume that they can get on the synchronous video connection that they have. And for a long time it felt like yes virtually connecting is allowing this for a lot of people. But, what started to happen is that we were researching inclusivity and whether virtually connecting is actually in some ways excluding while trying to include. And even while we were doing the focus groups for that online, there was someone like Kate Bowles, for example, who chose during the focus group to turn off her video and text even though she could have turned on her video and spoken - but she turned it off and texted and said because she was more comfortable.

**Maha:** [00:24:14] And so this last semester my students were doing intercultural dialogue via a program called Soliya and I had through Virtually Connecting started to believe that even though I think asynchronous learning has its own value but the synchronous video has value in terms of the affective side like you know getting close to someone to feel like you really know them in a way. And the other part of it is I just thought some people are not good at expressing themselves in text. Some people need the immediate exchange and I learned that in certain times of my life I think a better and a synchronous way. Like instead of talking to someone immediately and at other times of my life I need to just step back and write.

**Maha:** [00:24:55] So when my students were doing Soliya intercultural dialogue I thought I wonder what they were going to think about it and the crazy thing is this is that - I used to talk about how the problems were doing intercultural dialogue across different countries is that again people in this part of the world have slower internet connections and so they're there their ability to participate might be less. Their video might be off, while the others was on. But, I had a few students who were introverts and they were - the software that they use automatically turns off your video when your bandwidth is slow.

**Maha:** [00:25:28] And they loved it when that happened to them because they preferred not to be seen. And I've been telling them, Allow the student to turn on or off the video however they like. That should be a choice of whether you want to interact by text or talk. Whether you want you know... And so of course within the spectrum of people who have the Internet access and giving them that option.

**Maha:** [00:25:50] And what is even more interesting is that some of the students said we want pen pals, like they went from this synchronous video like the the latest technology there. And they're like, "No, we want pen pals." And so what I'm doing this semester is that I'm trying to give students different options for how they want to interact interculturally.

**Maha:** [00:26:08] And what the post-modern answer to all of this is that different things work for different people for different contexts. And how do we try to be hospitable to all these different student preferences for those things to get them to learn what we hope that they will - you know within the area of sort of what we hope they'll learn - but they also hope they'll learn.

**Maha:** [00:26:29] So I mean intercultural learning - you could do it any of those ways and I don't really care which way as long as they're comfortable with it. But only giving them one opportunity to do it means that some people feel excluded. And so this is what I'm trying to do now.

**Mike:** [00:26:44] As you were talking a couple of things came to mind. One is - this is going back to Chickering & Gamson and in their article back in the 80s about I think it was seven principles are good practices for undergraduate education - and number seven was about providing diverse ways for students to learn. As you're talking about the asynchronous and synchronous in the video on the tax area that that's exactly what they were referring to is that how can we as educators provide students as many ways to interact engage with the content and with one another and with the faculty because that's no that's really giving them the opportunity to express how they're processing and learning in the way they they know how.

**Mike:** [00:27:27] And I think fast forward to today. There's a lot of talk about personalized learning: the whole field of how do we provide each student, each learner their personalized path to understanding - to mastery. And I think in our office what we're trying to do is to adopt that sort of idea of personalized learning for faculty development.

**Mike:** [00:27:44] So, in the past when we used to say, "We build these things like workshops and whatever and they come - if we build they will come to it. That model is pretty much dead in higher ed not only for students, but I think for faculty, too.

**Mike:** [00:28:02] [Because] now when you build it they won't come and you put

all this time and effort and you get like one or two or maybe three faculty show up and then most of the time they just don't have the time to come anyway. So what we try to do is to make the opportunities available for them. So we have these phrases like "Just in time. Just enough. Just for me. And just do it." And in those kinds of phrases it's about personalizing the opportunity to gain professional development that otherwise they wouldn't have. So if you have five minutes maybe there's a quick three bullet points you can learn. Or, if you have 20 minutes, let's do a 20-minute mentor commons. If you have an hour you actually listen to a webinar we just did, or whatever the case may be. But, it allows the learner to find in their own rhythm of learning - what is best. And I think that's important.

**Bonni:** [00:28:59] I'm sure that we could all keep going and I'm just grateful for all of your continued support of the show. I probably should transition now to the recommendation segment and I found a great new podcast and I'm going to recommend a specific episode. But every one that I've listened to has been great.

**Bonni:** [00:29:17] It's a new podcast by the Harvard Business Review and it's called Women at Work and specifically the episode that I want to share about is one that they did about authenticity because I realized when I hear authenticity - I discovered through listening to the episode - I tend to think of it as a white woman. And you know should we say something in meetings, or should we you know - is it OK if we cry at work you know that those kinds of questions and the people on the podcast were very diverse and they were sharing authenticity in terms of African-Americans wearing their hair more naturally. I just thought - wow - it really struck me the limited perspective I had on authenticity and I just love that it challenged my thinking about that.

**Bonni:** [00:30:05] But it also had all kinds of things that so many of us struggle with men and women and people of color. I mean it just is just a wonderful episode that I suggest people go listen to it and I'm going to start trying to get a couple of them that were on that podcast to come on this show, too, because I think it would be a great conversation and one of them - at least I recall - is a professor at a university, so it would be fun. So that's my recommendation I'm gonna pass it over to Mike for his.

**Mike:** [00:30:28] So my recommendation is a book Neil Postman book. It's called Technopoly. I don't know if you have had a chance to read that or not, but I read it about two years ago and the subtitle is what for me is really the key here. The subtitle is: The Surrender of culture to technology. And I think that's really

where for me my change when I was talking about how I changed my mind about not to have to defend technology because in his book technology he really does go into these really important questions about what do we give up when we surrender our lives in our culture to technology.

**Mike:** [00:31:09] What is it that we're giving away that maybe unconsciously and it's sort of Faustian and deal. You think you're getting something better but really what you'll end up with is worse off. And for me it's about as an educator in the digital age as a learner as a student as person who runs a teaching with technology center. How do you balance that? The importance of the culture of the human expressions in a way that doesn't get squelched by technology or technology doesn't take away from the meaning and the richness that human cultures have. This one last thing I on to talk about this book is that he mentions about data - he doesn't use the word Big Data - but now big data is a big term that's been thrown out a lot recently. But his one point about that is that having more data doesn't necessarily mean it's a good thing.

**Mike:** [00:32:07] He's a he's given a lot of examples in his book about how having more data about our incarceration and all that hasn't changed the way our country works. Having more data about poverty hasn't changed it. And if anything it actually makes that become a way for us to just be passive. And we're like, "Oh, ok. That's an important number. But, we don't do anything with it. It pacifies the society about actually moving towards action. So that's for me a big recommendation. It's made me rethink quite a bit about our engagement in our relationship with technology.

**Bonni:** [00:32:41] Sounds fascinating. All right Robyn it is your turn for your recommendation.

**Robin:** [00:32:46] Well thanks for that, Mike, because I'm going to totally check that out. I've been engaging with some of these conversations online about assessment recently. The New York Times had an article and people are sort of debating [it] hotly. And so that sort of deflected attention of generating data is really interesting for higher ed.

**Robin:** [00:33:03] So I was traveling this week. I was out in Utah and one of the beauties of being in New Hampshire - which is really hard to get anywhere from here in some ways - is that I spend a lot of time on the airplanes. So I got to download myself a movie which felt really indulgent. I watched a film that honestly has stuck with me. It's the only time that I finished a film and I sort of wanted to just immediately watch it again. It was the Florida project and my

research before I started working in interdisciplinary studies in the higher ed pedagogy - I was actually doing kind of a project on sort of postmodern tourism because I look a lot at the American past and how it gets refigured and tourist sites that I was working on a project about Disney and Disney dystopias basically.

**Robin:** [00:33:55] So there was a piece of the Florida project that has a small sort of shout out to the symbolics of Disney. It's really telling a much more searing and quiet and incredibly moving story underneath. And I haven't read any - you know usually I walk out of... like the second I came out of Black Panther, I was like, "Great! Now I can read all the things people say about Black Panther," and I didn't want to read anything about this movie because it's a movie that so resists judgment, in a way.

**Robin:** [00:34:29] I'd like to hear people's ideas about it but sort of like critically assessing it seems so not in the vein of this movie which I think is so resistant to the idea of judgment. It's a really interesting story about about poverty and I would highly recommend checking it out and then maybe by then I'll be ready to talk to you about it on Twitter.

**Bonni:** [00:34:53] Maha. How about you?

**Maha:** [00:34:54] So I have three very quick ones. One of them is I just discovered a poet. [A] Lebanese Canadian poet. Her name is Najwa Zebian and one of the really cool things about her... Well, first of all she's capable of writing very brief poems about really deep things that really resonate with people.

**Maha:** [00:35:12] And I found - this was all on Twitter and on Instagram - and I found someone who collected some of them and each and every one of her small poems - I sent centered on Twitter and dedicated to somebody. One I sent to my mom. And one I sent on What's App to my friend. And so her poems really resonate. They're really beautiful and emotional. And I think she has a book coming out. But anyway just follow her on Twitter or on Instagram. Her poetry is really, really beautiful. And I think it will resonate with a lot of people. That's one thing.

**Maha:** [00:35:40] The other thing is you know during our event last week Sherry Spelic - who is an African-American who lives in Vienna Austria - was visiting as well. I had her teach my class and it was such an amazing experience. It's the second time I've done that with someone who - obviously I know Sherry very well from Twitter - but it was the first time I met her face to face. And I met her that

morning I took her with me to class and she taught for me and the students loved it. And I loved it. And there's a part of it where I trust her and I believe in her and I know her mind because I read her work. We talk a lot on Twitter but there's also a part where you just make a leap of faith in another person and inviting them to your class and that your students will welcome them. The students were really lovely about it and today was the first time I talked to them after she'd been there and they were you know what I said her name someone just like starting clapping and it was just so lovely you know how much they enjoyed it and she was really sensitive about... So just the idea of taking that leap of faith and inviting someone else to teach your class every now and then. It's the second time I've done it and I really love it.

**Maha:** [00:36:42] And the third thing is something that happened when Paul Prinsloo, who is from the University of South Africa, and he was keynoting our event... And you know everything was so busy because I was one of the organizers. So we didn't actually have a lot of time to spend together. So at some point he sat down and said, "How are you?" And I said, "I'm fine," and he's like, "No, no, no. How are you?"

**Maha:** [00:37:03] And then that took about an hour [laughter] and then I said, "How are you?" And that took over 20 minutes. And so I think a lot of times when you ask someone - "How are you?" - we just want them to say fine thanks even if we know they've been sick even if we know they've been through something traumatic. And I think taking the time to ask how are you a second time when we really want to know how they are not just how are you I'm fine.

**Maha:** [00:37:29] It was just a really good reminder to do that because we had been together for two days and only on the third day did we discover how we really were.

**Bonni:** [00:37:37] Thanks to all three of you for coming and celebrating. Episode number 200 with me. It means so much that you'd be here today and just get ready for the next 200 and I hope that you each will be back for more conversations one-on-one. Thanks so much.

**Robin:** [00:37:50] Thanks Bonni.

**Mike:** [00:37:52] Thank you.

**Maha:** [00:37:56] Thank you.

**Mike:** [00:37:57] Thanks once again to Maha Bali, Robin DeRosa, and Mike Truong for joining me on today's episode number 200. Thanks for your conversation and for your commitment to growing and making this community more valuable. And thanks all of you for listening.

**Bonni:** [00:38:13] I know some of you have been listening since Teaching in Higher Ed started and some of you are newer but all of you are an important part to growing the community and just helping us all continue to sharpen each other's teaching abilities and inspire and encourage each other as well.

**Bonni:** [00:38:30] It is episode number 200. There are already lots of guests in the queue and if you have yet to give a rating or review for the podcast on whatever service it is you use to listen to it, that's a great way to contribute to more people finding out about the podcast. Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.

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