

Natalie Avalos TBR Interview

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SPEAKERS

Ann Gleig, Natalie Avalos, Adeana McNicholl

Adeana McNicholl 00:00

Hello, my name is Dr. Adeana McNicholl. I'm an assistant professor in religious studies at Vanderbilt University. I'm here with Dr. Ann Gleig, Associate Professor of religion and cultural studies at the University of Central Florida. We're here today as part of the Teaching Resources for Buddhism, Race and Racism Project hosted at teachingbuddhism.net, and funded by the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Center at the University of Toronto. We're joined today by Dr. Natalie Avalos. Dr. Avalos is Assistant Professor of Native American and indigenous studies in the department of ethnic studies at University of Colorado Boulder. She's also an affiliate faculty member in religious studies and gender studies, and she's a Chicana of Apache descent. Dr. Avalos is an ethnographer of religion whose work in comparative indigeneity explores urban Indian and Tibetan refugee religious life, healing, historical trauma, and decolonial praxis. Dr. Avalos has graciously agreed to join us to talk about her syllabus, "Coloniality, Historical Trauma and Decolonial Healing", as well as her pedagogical approaches, which are informed by decolonial theory, critical ethnic studies, and critical indigenous studies. So welcome, Dr. Avalos, and thanks so much for joining us.

Natalie Avalos 01:10

Thank you so much for having me, it's so nice to talk to you both.

Ann Gleig 01:15

We are really thrilled that you've been able to make time for us, we really appreciate it. We thought we'd just start by asking you to tell us a little bit about your own kind of research interests, and speciality, and particularly in relationship to the topic of Buddhism, race and racism.

Natalie Avalos 01:36

So I was initially, as an undergrad, really interested in Buddhist studies, and I think just personally as a young person interested in Buddhist studies. I was taking a lot of religious studies type classes, I was an undergrad at Cal, I had been a transfer student, and I ended up taking a Native American philosophy class, and it's like, my whole world is totally shifted. I was like, "oh, this is actually what I

want to do". But I was still personally exploring Buddhism and became a Buddhist, and was in the process of trying to understand what that meant, to have a practice. When I went off to grad school, I wanted to work and explore and understand Native American self determination, relationship to healing, and I was really trying to understand, I didn't have the words for it the time, but historical trauma. But as I learned more, because in the program that I went to a UC Santa Barbara, there was an incredible Buddhist studies program within religious Studies, and I got to know José Cabezón who became one of my advisors. As I learned more about what was happening in Tibet, I began to think about the colonial relationship, the kind of colonial mimicking, or even parallels that were operating in Tibet and in impacting Tibetan people, and I thought, well, if I'm trying to understand how the legacy of colonialism is impacting native people, urban Indian people, and how they're using religion to heal themselves and to empower themselves, I'm wondering if that might be the case for Tibetan refugees as well. So that led me to my ethnographic project, and I did research in New Mexico, actually in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. So since that time I've worked in a religious Studies department and taught courses on Buddhism and native and indigenous religious traditions. I now work in an ethnic studies department, and haven't had an opportunity to bring in a Buddhist studies class that's "dedicated" Buddhist studies, but now I can integrate some discourses, some context into ethnic studies, and I'm kind of improvising what that looks like.

Ann Gleig 04:03

Yeah, well, we were actually super excited to talk to you because we knew that you kind of have this comparative orientation, and that you are outside of Buddhist studies proper, in a sense. You're kind of familiar with Buddhist studies, obviously trained in that discipline, but you've got this whole other world going on, and so we're really interested in like what does it mean to teach Buddhist material in a kind of non-Buddhist classroom in a sense, like a non-traditional classroom and the kind of opportunities that that kind of opens up. Can you tell us a little bit about your kind of typical classes where you are now, your student body?

Natalie Avalos 04:53

I'm at CU Boulder, and in the ethnic studies department here we actually have a fair number of majors. We get lots of students from across the campus that are interested in just kind of the basics of like, what is ethnic studies, and trying to understand things like what is anti racism, especially in the last couple of years, right? There's was a major interest from students of all backgrounds and all economic levels, you know. So, I'd say, CU Boulder is essentially a big research university, it's also a PWI, that you have a fair number of underrepresented and first gen students, ethnic studies attracts a lot of those students. But you really do, I was kind of impressed to see that you really do get students from all walks of life coming through. So far I've taught intro/foundations of ethnic studies, and Native American religious traditions, and I developed a new grad seminar on healing historical trauma. So that has been a very different experience, every class has been a very different experience in the sense that the times that I teach about Native American life you get students that are very interested in wanting to consume native life. They're very curious, and I think it's kind of an American curiosity, like we've been socialized to be fascinated, and to exoticize native people, right. Then oftentimes those students are rudely awakened to the realities of native genocide, the legacy of boarding schools, the impacts of relocation, and really genocidal policies have continued well into the 20th and 21st century. So you get a lot of anger, and frustration, and hostility, not necessarily directed at me... sometimes, but students are

processing a lot of pain. I think in those classes, students have a tendency to feel like the story they've been told is a lie, right? And so they might say like, oh, wow, so I've been taught this one, sanitized history and now I'm learning another. That's essentially what ethnic studies does is to try and disabuse you of that sanitized history, and we do a lot of that, you know, across the board. But my sense is that the students that are drawn to us are, even though they do get upset, this is part of what they're looking forward to. So there's conflicting emotions in these sorts of classes, yeah.

Ann Gleig 07:58

Yeah. I mean, one thing that, just as you're talking, that's kind of coming up for me is just a sense that you're really kind of used to, and I'm sure skilled, at being in a classroom of heightened affect. You know, like there's a lot of emotion there. I think that one of the things that we've discovered is for some professors there is a kind of fear or hesitancy to address race, because they know it is going to be a topic that does bring emotion up in the class, and the professors have various levels of [unclear]. But it sounds that you're kind of right there with them.

Natalie Avalos 08:44

I think you really have to be. Part of it is setting up ground rules, and even at the start saying, we're going to talk about things that are difficult, partly because you didn't know about them, or you may have known just a bit, and what you have learned may have misdirected you or led you to very different conclusions, and so we have to be patient with one another. Like, I'll even explain to them we're just going to check in throughout the weeks, we'll just have short check ins like in the start... Alright, how did this material land for you? and what was great about doing it over Zoom this last semester, this last year, is like, share how you're feeling in the chat, and I think hearing what other folks were feeling and the similar frustrations, you build a sense of solidarity. I think especially when you're talking about structural violence, right, and helping students understand well, structural violence, something like racism is a structural violence, it's an ideology that gets enshrined in law and policies, in our way of being, ways that we interact and negotiate power, and understanding that that structure is not necessarily any one individual's fault and that you can't take any individual responsibility necessarily and say, oh, well, it's, you know, it's Dan's fault. You know, it's like, well, no. This was a diffuse mechanism of power, right? These dynamics and relations of power, and you have to go over that I think a lot, again, and again, because students start to shut down, I think they get overwhelmed, they feel deeply guilty, horrified, complicit, and how do we move through that and say, okay, well, this is our shared history. We, from our different position points vis a vis this shared history, it impacts us differently but we're all together in this space, and how can we understand it collectively, and then understand well, what are solutions that communities themselves are negotiating and exploring, and what can we do? Because I think that becomes the secondary emotion later down the road. It's like, well, I just feel frustrated and helpless, and I'm powerless, and what can I do? So really walking students through, actually, you're not powerless, you have a lot of power, and that maybe you've been socialized to believe that you're powerless for the purposes of structural violence, maintaining that kind of structurally violent power.

Ann Gleig 12:00

Yeah. Wow. I'm, like... can I take that class? Can I come to your class, it sounds amazing. I'm just really, really feeling it and really admiring the community building on multiple levels, between you and

the students together, and the kind of we-self, you know, just even as you're describing it it just feels really palpable. So I'm going to move to the Buddhist stuff. We could talk about that forever. So in terms of the syllabus that you shared with us today, how have you interweaved the Buddhist material? What did you use specifically?

Natalie Avalos 12:41

So let me pull up some of the readings. So I guess I'll start by saying that really, we didn't get to the Buddhist studies reading until week 11, which is quite late, and so really, like the first five weeks/four weeks are talking about colonialism, and then decoloniality, you know, so we're reading things like Frantz Fanon, Walter Dignolo's "Darker Side of Western Modernity", Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who's a Maori scholar, her texts on decolonizing methodology. So setting up the context, what is coloniality? What are settler colonialism? What is the relationship between these discourses? How do they help us understand, really, colonialisms as global projects that operate in different ways, and then thinking about, well, what is decolonization? Then we move into texts around native approaches to psychology, liberation psychologies, approaches to psychology from the Global South, and there I actually do introduce a text on indigenous psychologies and approaches to well being in East Asia, this is by Boon-Ooi Lee, and it's from a larger text on psychology in the Global South. So we then start talking about historical trauma, partly because what we're trying to link in this course is the relationship between colonialism and historical trauma, that one begets the other, right? So just getting a sense of well, what is trauma more generally? And then what is historical trauma specifically, right? How is it that these kinds of structural mechanisms, colonial structural mechanisms, and including this, orientalism, how might they impact people psychologically? How might they impact people in an ontological level? So, in week 11, we start talking about mindfulness and its relationship to race. There's a short article, "Buddhist Orientations to Mental Health," by Hillary Rodrigues. A section of "Mindfulness, Ancient Wisdom Meets Modern Psychology", really its first chapter, "Unpacking Mindfulness," this is by Zindel Segal, Willem Kuyken, and Christina Feldman. And my pronunciation isn't perfect there, but it's close, and one of Ann's articles, "External Mindfulness, Secure (Non) Attachment, and Healing Relational Trauma," that to me, you know, part of when you're talking about trauma, you're talking about ways in which people's relationships to themselves and one another become compromised, they become severed, and when we're talking about developmental trauma, we're also talking about attachment trauma. I think that that article does such a great job helping us think about why doing the work around trying to understand our attachment, in a non-attached context, could actually help heal some relational trauma, like this is really critical. Ann actually suggested to me Rima Vesely-Flad's work, "Black Buddhists and the Body," which was fantastic. I think students really responded to that. But I also include a reading by Sarah Lewis, she actually teaches here at Naropa, and I haven't had the pleasure of meeting her yet, but I really love her work. She has an article called "Trauma and the Making of Flexible Minds in the Tibetan Exile Community", and what I think is so important about that article is that she talks about how trauma is not necessarily universal, it's culturally specific, and for Tibetan people, because of their Buddhist worldview, their particular view, especially around karma, they have a tendency not to develop trauma in the same way that other Westerners might, partly because trauma doesn't get codified, it's part of their identity. I think it's so helpful for when my students, especially the ethnic studies students that are students of color, when they read that article I think they were most blown away, many of them had no introduction to Buddhism. So it was the first time they were like, oh, this is what mindfulness is, oh, how great, oh, this is interesting, you know. But it's tough to kind of cram

in, in one week, but I think they were so inspired by the Lewis article, because they realize that trauma was not something that's inevitable. I think for a lot of students of color, or students that have been impacted by trauma, they may feel that, you know, trauma is inevitable, and that they're stuck there, and this isn't the case. I think it's become a really powerful means to help deconstruct that assumption.

Ann Gleig 18:38

Yeah... when can I sign up for your class?

Natalie Avalos 18:40

I would love for you to Zoom in.

Ann Gleig 18:42

That's incredible. Like, I'm just really kind of struck by the kind of creativity of tracking trauma in these different contexts and showing the trauma in these different cultural contexts, and then this kind of encounter with the trauma but a sense of possible healing and freedom, you know, like a non-fatalistic way, but a way that also totally disrupts a romantic version of Buddhism, you know, like the transcendent white meditator. I can really see there's so much work, well, you've done all the work that you kind of bring them through, but even just in that short encounter with the Buddhist material, there's so much work happening, I can really see there's so much work happening. Alright, I'm going to pass you over to Adeana so I don't hog you, although I wish I could, sorry.

Adeana McNicholl 19:42

Alright, so everything here sounds fantastic. We definitely want to take this course, and it sounds like the students are really into this course and it's helping them think through a lot of really difficult issues. One thing that we were wondering about is if there's any sorts of challenges or difficulties you've had in teaching this kind of material. Are there instances where you've thought, you know, maybe I would do something a little bit differently next time, like that didn't go over so well?

Natalie Avalos 20:12

Yes, I think this one in particular, because at this institution I have grad students and at my last institution, it was a small liberal arts college, I only worked with undergrads, so I got pretty used to doing the affective work with undergrads, and it's actually really different with grad students. Partly, I'd realized that you have to have some ground rules up front that I thought might be a little more obvious to grad students, but I realized that we're all coming from very different places, and I think when you have a class where you're working on the theoretical at first, and then you go into the deeply personal, you know, we read a book, "How the Body Keeps Score" by Bessel van der Kolk, and you can't not dive deep into your personal trauma after reading that book, and I think what happened is that some students got so deep in there that they had a hard time having a conversation. So saying things like, okay, we're just going to talk about the theories for the first half, and then we might do a little processing and trying to understand how some of these theories can link up to some of the structural context, we built around colonialism, settler colonialism, coloniality, and possibilities for decolonization, because otherwise we can get lost in the processing and just the intensity of the emotions, you know? There are also moments when I think you have to stop and let someone just share what they're feeling, because that's a normal very human thing to do too. So finding the balance between that, because I

think there is a couple of class sessions that we had that it became more sharing and processing than doing the analysis. But part of what's difficult is saying that there isn't really a clear binary, part of the analysis is actually doing the processing and figuring out where's the stopping point to reel yourself back in a little bit so you're not getting flooded, you know? So, yeah, this was it was really challenging. But I mean, ultimately, I think, what I would do a little different, add up front a section of Edward Said's "Orientalism," I think it's really important for folks, especially because I had one grad student who's a psych grad student, and she was working on mindfulness. She actually had a religious studies MA in Tibetan Buddhism, and so she had a great context for the class, but for some folks that were more familiar with the ethnic studies discourses around colonialism, and maybe less engaged with Said's work on Orientalism, I think it really helps us when we get to the Buddhism's material to think about how Buddhism's are also deeply steeped in these kinds of structural violences that are specific to orientalism, right? So linking those and then unpacking that a little more analytically, like, okay, so we could talk about mindfulness in the West, and then with Rima Vesely-Flad's work let's talk about some of the relation to power around race and positionality in western Buddhists, and I think Ann, your work does that as well, right? Like, who has the power? Who has the power and the positionality to do what here, and I think that it would be more productive for students to add that, and even I think what I'd have to do is build two weeks to do this because I would want to bring in, Adeana, your article on... I just had it, but let me remember the name of it, this is "Being Buddha," "Being Buddha, Staying Woke: Racial formation and Black Buddhist Writing," because I think for some students of color, one of the things that they asked about and noted as we're learning about these, you know, Buddhist studies in Buddhism in general is, well, it seems like a white Western consumption, right? Like it's maybe it's a white Western thing, how do I negotiate this as a BIPOC person, right, Black, Indigenous POC person, and so it can add a little bit more and I think compliment Rima's work to help us understand that some of these conversations and even trying to reorient yourself, well who am I in relation to this kind of tradition in the world, and then what are some of the relations of power around it that I may not even see? How might I be perpetuating orientalism in my consumption or exploration? Or how might I be perpetuating some just stereotypes or how might I at least see them and uncover them and unpack them? I think that's where the work of decolonization comes in. The aim is denaturalizing all of those ideologies and structures.

Adeana McNicholl 26:34

Yeah, and I'm glad you brought that up in terms of decolonization because one thing I've increasingly wanted to do with that kind of scholarship is think about how we can shift the focus away from these white racial frameworks, how can we acknowledge the hegemonic nature of these white conceptions of religious and racial categories, while also kind of shifting the focus away to acknowledge other people's understanding of religion and race, and I think it intersects with these discussions of decolonization, the shifting away from this white racial gaze. I love that you brought up the point about teaching graduate students these themes of race/decolonization might look different than teaching undergrads, because I think in a lot of these conversations we've had we've focused a lot on the undergraduate classroom, and of course the graduate classroom might not look the same and what it means to incorporate decolonization and critical race theory into an undergraduate classroom might look very different compared to if you're running a Buddhist studies graduate department or graduate program and you want to start incorporating critical race theory and decolonization as part of your training of graduate students.

Natalie Avalos 27:55

Yeah, for sure. I mean, my sense is that it was a really good mix. I had a handful of students that had some religious studies background, had some psych background, had some Buddhist studies background, and then another handful that were more steeped in like the critical race, more traditional ethnic studies discourses around decolonization, decoloniality, and so it allowed them to kind of meet and work through and struggle, and what's great about a grad seminar, you struggle through together. I think if you set it up correctly, because the way that I facilitate it is that you are not competing vis-a-vis your your peers. I asked students to write a one to two page write up, bring it to class, workshop it in pairs, and then process it together, and it becomes really a co-learning space, and that I think really helped create a sense of solidarity, and that can also buffer some of the intense affective, you know, like potentially explosive affective dimension. So yeah, I think with with grad students they're really interested in trying to connect the dots, especially for folks that are outside of ethnic studies that are working in more traditional fields. I had students in like dance, theater, literature, and education, and they were trying to think about how all these discourses are operating in their very specific worlds, and I think the act of struggling through together helped them put those pieces together more clearly. Yeah.

Adeana McNicholl 29:52

Yeah, and I want to dive into thinking about decolonizing Buddhist studies within the classroom. So we've briefly mentioned, we've kind of touched on this in this conversation, but at the time that we're recording this decolonization and Truth and Reconciliation have been in the news a lot more, particularly in Canada, this is going to be hosted at a Canadian university, because of the discovery of unmarked graves at Canadian residential schools, and so I think a lot of professors are starting to wonder how can I incorporate decolonizing pedagogy? How can I address the colonial context in which we're situated as a learning community within our Buddhist studies classrooms, even in primarily white institutions. So I was wondering, for somebody who's just starting off, and then maybe people who have already been thinking about this for a while, where do you suggest we begin in thinking about decolonizing Buddhist studies in the classroom, and what what might this look like?

Natalie Avalos 30:56

You know, there are so many different ways to go about this, and something that I generally tell folks is decolonization is really about framing, and it helps for students to just get a sense of, well, why is this framing necessary, and I usually ask folks just to add a chapter of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's "Decolonizing Methodologies", usually chapter two or three, where she basically just talks about the history of knowledge production and how it's deeply tethered to race and power and imperialism, and when we understand that knowledge production is not neutral and that what we even talk about and learn about and the texts that we use in the classroom, none of them are neutral. Just providing a context for that conversation, then I think in any classroom, specifically the Buddhist studies classroom, where you might want to talk about things like compassion and loving kindness, right? That in itself could be an act of loving kindness, an example of compassion, like, well how might we think about these relations of power, these impacts of colonialism, and really, the very material impacts of boarding schools, thinking about the loss of life, how at one time boarding schools were seen as the kind of humanitarian and most ethical option, versus just outright genocide and extermination, right? These were the debates taking place in the 19th century. Well, assimilation versus extermination and not just in Canada, but in

the US and in other parts of the Americas. So really helping students think about that the decisions made at that time, were also made within the context of developing race science, these anthropological explorations of who is fully human vis a vis one another, right, these hierarchies of personhood, but also hierarchies of belief, philosophy, religion, and that can help students understand well, how do orientalism then operate? You can link that to orientalism in Buddhist studies, but also to just how people in the West, you know, why might there be specifically BIPOC Sanghas? Why might there be an interest or need for specifically African American Sangha spaces, right? I'm actually going to an indigenous peoples' mindfulness retreat at Spirit Rock next month. Like, why might there be specifically one for Native peoples? Well, truth and reconciliation is really about trying to uncover the history, very similar to what ethnic studies does, disabusing you of the sanitized history that many of us have been fed and grew up on. But also, the reconciliation piece is, there's all these action steps, and unfortunately, the US has no truth and reconciliation process, but at least in Canada the reconciliation piece is driven by the action sense. It means teaching about indigenous peoples' histories, teaching about residential schools, teaching about that those impacts are still very real and material and with us, teaching about things like historical trauma, right? I think there's this fantastic interview between Thich Nhat Hanh and Bell Hooks, and I forget the name of it, let me pull it up, I have it here somewhere... "Building a Community of Love". In it, part of the conversation is Bell Hooks saying, as an African American feminist scholar I've been working on trying to deconstruct oppressive forms of power for the last 20-30 years, you know, my adult life, my entire career, and what does it mean to do this from a Buddhist view, and Thich Nhat Hanh is saying, really we can understand this kind of learning and this kind of work and this kind of deep responsibility and challenge as an act of loving kindness, right, when we are challenging one another to actually see, fully see the other, fully see their history and the kinds of reality that they live in, right, what is their their real material circumstance, and what kind of affective outcomes are existing for them, that actually is a radical act of love. There's a kind of deep connection there, and it prevents us from being able to fully other others, those that have been othered, and I think the possibilities by cultivating conversation around that, the possibilities for not only healing some of this, because I think we're carrying the collective wounds, but from our different position points, healing some of that, but also really I think it would help connect the dots for students, undergrads and grad students, that these ideas are not just ideas, it's actual praxis, right, and there is really incredible and radical possibility for social transformation here if we really take these ideas seriously.

Adeana McNicholl 37:36

I think I was mentally making notes on what to go back through as I'm revising my Buddhist studies syllabus for the fall, I'm like, okay, let's check for this, and let's maybe add this, and so that leads me to my my final question, which is if you got to add additional readings to your "Coloniality, Historical Trauma and Decolonial Healing" syllabus, specifically related to Buddhism, what would you add? Or if you were to get to design your dream course, that's entirely on Buddhism, and decolonialism, what kinds of things would you want to include?

Natalie Avalos 38:16

I actually really would like... I touch on this a little bit, like what I would change with my coloniality and historical trauma class, I feel like you really need to have some work on, bring in at least chapter one of Edward Said's Orientalisms, because we have to link that to coloniality, to colonialisms, because how orientalism operates is this structure very much in the same way, and it totally shapes the way that we

understand Buddhist studies, we understand the East, and the ways in which we even, as westerners, decide to consume and negotiate whatever the East produces, right, Buddhism. But you know, I think what I would do is actually add an additional week because part of what I found really amazing was that there was a handful of students of color that had never read anything about Buddhism before that were just fully getting so inspired by the philosophy and they wanted to know more, and so I think we have to have a week of just okay, well what is Buddhist philosophy, simple, but just one week of it simple, and then the second week get into some of the deeper articles around race and positionality and then adding yours, Adeana's, because we can link to racial trauma, we can link to attachment disorders, developmental trauma, relational trauma, but you do need the foundation, and I think that it became very obvious that there were several students that were very, very hungry for that foundation, and I had a couple students, ethnic studies students write on Buddhism and they were like, I've never had any exposure to this before, and now I'm really on fire to try and understand more, and I think as someone that was an outlier in Buddhist studies... and I think that's why I became a Buddhist is, I was so deeply inspired given my own history of trauma, given my own kind of very personal circumstances of dealing with structural violence, trying to understand well, who am I in the world? Am I a broken person? How do I function? What does it mean to live now and build myself in a racist, sexist world? How do I exist? Well, and I had that response to Buddhism, and so of course there were some students who were just so inspired. So I think, actually, I would like to build a class specifically in ethnic studies on Buddhisms and race, and how the thinking about Buddhism as a kind of liberatory Project that again is not just about ideas, but deep praxis, and I'm really inspired by socially engaged Buddhism. So bringing in work on Thich Nhat Hanh's community I think would be really critical there. There's this really beautiful article that... let me pull up this syllabus. So I had a socially engaged Buddhism syllabus that I had taught at my last institution, and there's this great reading by Patricia Hunt-Perry and Lyn Fine, "All Buddhism is Engaged: Thich Nhat Hanh and the Order of Interbeing", and this was a reading in Christopher Queen's "Engaged Buddhism in the West", and that was such a profound article for students because they, for one, understood colonialism actually operates in other countries like Vietnam. Surprise. And that, you know, surprise the US is like one of the main imperial powers in the world, and there were resonances. There's this internationalism, it's been operating especially in the mid 20th century, and that, you know, Thich Nhat Hanh was in conversation with Martin Luther King, and some of the work that they were doing in their specific religious worlds was very parallel. So thinking about Buddhism as kind of liberatory praxis that is not even really about like an individual liberation, but really could potentially be radical collective liberation that is specifically anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and I think that would shift some of the conversation that we have in an ethnic studies about what's legible here. Yeah. In short...

Adeana McNicholl 43:30

Yeah, I mean, what I love about that is a lot of our conversations and a lot of the conversations in Buddhist studies right now is what can Buddhist studies learn from critical race theory and critical ethnic studies? But I think that a lot of what you detailed and what some of your students are reacting to is also the flip side to this, which is what can critical race theory learn from Buddhist studies? I think that course just sounds so exciting, because it starts to get at some of the potential answers to that question.

Natalie Avalos 44:01

Yeah, yeah. I think one of the big pieces that students were so inspired by, again, especially the students of color that were ethnic studies students, was there's so much struggle over the trauma and the violence and resentment and anger, and people get really stuck. They get really stuck there and they don't know how to move through it, and there are very few tools that help you work through all those feelings, and again, it's just thinking about Buddhism as a kind of really incredible toolkit, or even it's been described as like a psychology, right, and a view, and that there are so many tools there in terms of praxis to help folks understand but also not personalize. I think that was a big piece. Not personalizing some of these violences, because I think for those that are racialized, it feels pretty personal, you know, and to take it back to moving between the personal and the structural, when you can actually go, this isn't about me as an individual. I've been racialized for political purposes, but I am not innately, right, I don't have to internalize these ideas about myself because I've been raced, right, and I think that's such a big piece for undergrads, but grad students especially. Yeah.

Adeana McNicholl 45:39

I think that was such a lovely note to end up on. So I want to thank you very much for taking the time to talk about your syllabi with us, about decolonizing pedagogy and Buddhist studies.

Natalie Avalos 45:54

So happy to chat with you. Thank you.

Ann Gleig 45:58

So inspiring. Thank you, Natalie. Always inspiring to talk to you.