ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:

Thanks, everybody. Welcome. Thank you all for coming out today's Media Lab talks. Our event today is called Undocumented Students: Equal Access to Higher Education and Freedom University Georgia. We are incredibly lucky to have a great group of people here. My name is Ethan Zuckerman. I teach here at the MIT media lab, and I'll tell you a little bit more about the event in a moment. But I want to go down the line and introduce you to some of the friends that we're really happy to have here. Right next to me is Bethany Moreton. She's one of the Freedom University founders. She's also a professor of history at Dartmouth. We've got Betina Kaplan, also a Freedom University founder and associate professor of Spanish at the University of Georgia. Going further down, we have Keish Kim. She's a PhD student at Harvard. She works with PUSH, which is Protect Undocumented Students at Harvard. Going further down, we have Gustavo Madrigal. He is one of the founding students of Freedom University Georgia, and he is an immigration paralegal and also an immigration activist. And then our end, we've got Pamela Voekel, who's a Freedom University founder, associate professor of history at Dartmouth. Did I roughly get everyone's names and affiliations? OK. Awesome! That's the main thing I have to accomplish here. But I also have to tell you ground rules of what's going on here. We have an event that is here, live in this space, but it's also being recorded. It's also being streamed live out on the web. People who are watching it are going to be tweeting at #mltalks. If you see me playing on my phone, it is not that you are not interesting. It is that I am trying to figure out what people are saying on the web and bringing them into the conversation as well. That's part of my job as well. This is the first of two events. We have the live event here. We're all going to have a smaller event, which is entirely off the record and that is going to be in the civic media space that immediately follows after this. And so, that's an opportunity for people who aren't comfortable being on-stage, or may have questions or things that they want to talk about that they don't want broadcast out to the rest of the world. And we have a space for that as well. But our conversation her is really about three subjects. It starts with the disobedience prize, which you saw lunched here at the media this past summer. That was an attempt to show some of the exciting things there are happening around pro-social disobedience. We ended up honoring four winners of that award. One of those four winner was Freedom University Georgia. We have five of the founders who were involved with that on-stage with me today. And this is going to be an opportunity for us to talk about what Freedom University Georgia has been trying to accomplish, but really around this larger question of undocumented students, access to education, and transforming the educational system so that more people have access to higher education at places like the University of Georgia and also places like MIT, and we're going to end up talking a little bit about what MIT has been doing around these issues for good or for ill, as well. So, before we jump in and start by putting some of students and some of the professors on the spot, I'm wondering if we can go to this video, and this is a trailer for a documentary that has been documenting what's been going on with Freedom University Georgia. So, if we can go to that, that would be great.

>> Why is this backwards?
>> Hello, Nathan -- we are on the plane. We're about to take off.
[Music.]
>> Ask for her phone number.
>> No. You didn't ask me. You friend asked me.
> I actually said my friend?
> Yeah. That was childish.
> So, we were like, "Nah."
> [Woman laughing.]
> [Music.]
> My dream is to be an astronaut, but.
> He's stuck with a third-grade dream.
> No, I'm not. All right. OK.
> [Music.]
> I got an education. I graduated. I've been really lucky. So, there's never really been any obstacles, and so now then, I want to go to college.
> [Music.]
> I'm a very smart student. I can mess around a lot, but I'm very smart, but yet I'm here working, wasting my life.
> [Music.]
> My grandmother will always tell me to be careful enough. If someone was to ask me, "Are you illegal?" to say that I was a citizen, that I was born here.
> [Sirens.]
> My mom got stopped. The cop pulled us over and found that she didn't have a license, and he said that he had to take her in.
> Like, what's the point? I'm going to make it here. They don't want me here.
> We are involved on a war on terror, and after all, these are undocumented. That's the point, really. We don't know who a lot of these people are.
> There are people purposely out to make your day miserable, make your life less.
> We're number one. We're number one. We're number one.
> Let me tell you, when I received DACA, I took a risk, not only for me, but for my family.
> They knew my address, so to say that they don't know who we are, it's a lie.
> One, two, three. Undocumented!
> I'm not leaving until they come and get me.
> I'm a Georgia boy. All I've ever known is Georgia. I don't really want to leave. [Chanting.]
> People united. We'll never be defeated.
> I'm not scared. Like, I'm just not. Now, we just fight harder, and we fight smarter, and we fight as one.
> [Music.]

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:

So, we're having this conversation here at MIT at a very interesting and very fraught moment in time. We have a group of people in the United States who have grown up in this country, have gone to school in this country, who, in many cases, don't know their citizenship status until they're in the process of applying to college, or sometimes in the process of looking for financial aid. We had limited protection for undocumented people in this country under DACA. Through some political machinations, we are now in a state where DACA is no longer on the books. It's suspended, and there are now negotiations happening between the president and Congress over the future of undocumented people we've arrived in this country, as children, who through no personal decision of their own, find themselves in a situation where they're undocumented. And, as educator this country, this is an enormous sort of moral and practical challenge. How do we provide the education to students who want the chance to learn but who don't have the paperwork, don't have the rights in some states to go and attend those state universities? And, so, my friends who's been involved with Freedom University Georgia have been very insistent that we center this conversation on the experience of students who found themselves, like the students in the video, looking at the situations, sort of deciding how do you go further? And so, Gustavo Madrigal, I'm
hoping that you might help us and sort of talk about your experience as a student and how that ended up sort of informing Freedom University Georgia.

GUSTAVO MADRIGAL PIÑA:

Yeah, so thank you so much. And I guess I really have to start at the end of my junior year and going to my senior year. So, at the end of my junior year, I thought that I was going to go to college with my friends and that I was going to use the Hope Scholarship, which is a state scholarship in Georgia to be able to pay tuition. Then, I found out through talks with my counselor that I was not going to be eligible for the Hope Scholarship, and that I think, I remember just sort of being in the room with her and then she stopped beating around the bush and just straight up asked me, “Are you illegal?” and I said, “Yes,” and I didn't know exactly what that meant, right, at the time. I knew that I wasn't documented in some way, but I really didn't know what the extent of that was until I found out that I wasn't going to be able to go to college, just like I had planned with my friends. And, you know, at the end of my junior year, I had a 3.9 GPA which went down to a 3.3 by the end of my senior year because my senior year, I didn't really care anymore. I saw now point of, you know, keeping the work that I had been doing going. And so, I sort of just stopped. Then, I graduated and then, in September of 2009, I had a very, very bad car accident. And when I came back I thought, “OK. Is this really what life is going to be now? Is this really who I want to be? Do I want to give up on trying to go to college?” And back then, I didn't know. Right? I didn't know that just like me, there were hundreds of thousands. There were millions of people in the same situation, and it wasn't until after that car accident, when I was recovering, I was stuck at home, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't work, which was the main thing keeping me going then, and so I did a search for illegal students on Google, and the first thing that came up was an article on the Dream Act and then a small portal on the web that was a meeting place for undocumented youth from all over the country. And that's sort of when I started getting involved with the activism that was happening in Atlanta and back then, the group was called The Georgia Dreamers, and I started getting involved with them because what they were doing is they were trying to mobilize as many people for the Dream Act as possible. And then in late 2010, we actually were able to push the Dream Act up for a vote, and we got a vote, and then it failed. It passed the House, but it didn't pass the Senate. And that was, I think of lot of us credit it to five Democrats who decided to vote against it and killed it by voting against it. And so, I remember then, there was this anxiety within the youth were a part of the Georgia Dreamers. And that anxiety was, “Can we do what we think is the most important work without having any limitations placed upon that work from, you know, an organization that we're a part of them?” And we decided that yes, we could do that, but that it would require having a different group. It would require having a different structure. And it would require having accountability to each other. And then, so after 2011, the Dream Act, you know, in 2011, we decided that the fight was no longer at the federal level, so it wasn't any more about trying to push the Dream Act at the federal level because we were fighting against many things, but, specifically, in Georgia, we were fighting against HB 87, and that is like the SB 1070 copycat law that passed in Georgia, and those laws are still in the courts, so at any point, you know, within the next few years, we could see a decision that says HB 87, SB 1070, these are all legals. Right? So, these horrible, horrible laws might actually be enforced, and so we were also fighting secure communities and HB 87, which were these programs where local law enforcement cooperates with immigration customs enforcement to try to streamline that process of deportation for as many people as possible, who end up being booked into local police stations.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:

And HB 87 was a law that could essentially require all local law enforcement to essentially act as immigration officials and demand to see people’s papers. So, obviously, incredibly threatening to any undocumented population. When these laws came around, were you at school at this point? What had
happened to you after high school? You got involved with Dream activism. Where had you wanted to go to college? Were you planning on going to the University of Georgia?

GUSTAVO MADRIGAL PIÑA:
Not the University of Georgia. I was planning to go to Kennesaw State University, and I actually was no longer in school when I started getting involved. I graduated high school in 2009, and 2009 is when I had my accident, and sort of that's where it all began. But while I was fighting these laws, while we were fighting these laws, I was no longer in school, and so that definitely was a protection that you lose once you graduate high school. Right? You're no longer a student. You're just another adult who's undocumented, and who's vulnerable.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
And what are the laws in Georgia as far as attending a state university as an undocumented student?

GUSTAVO MADRIGAL PIÑA:
Well, so, as we were fighting HB 87, as we were fighting s-com, secure communities, and what is the other one? 287G. Yeah. The ban came. There's too many things. But, yeah, then the ban came down, which said that undocumented students could not attend the top-five research universities in the State of Georgia, and it also included language that said that any college, any public school in the State of Georgia that had rejected a qualified applicant, and for the purposes of this ban, qualified meant someone with lawful status or a US citizen, that any institution that had rejected a qualified applicant in the last two years could no longer accept undocumented students. Now, undocumented students not only couldn't really go to these top-five universities, but also the ban was created so that it could spread out, right? And, you know, we couldn't pay in-state tuition. We couldn't pay out-of-state tuition. We had to pay international rates, which are four times higher than in-state tuition. And so that's sort of where, you know, the fight turned away from, well not away because we were still trying to fight secure communities, 287G, HB 87, but then it opened up another front, which was the educational front.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So, here's a law in Georgia that is significantly more restrictive than a lot of states. A lot of states have essentially said, "For undocumented students, we can't give you in-state tuition, but you can pay out-of-state tuition." In Georgia, you've gone even further and essentially said, "If you can get in, you'll be paying the international tuition, a much higher rate, but beyond that, you're not admitted to the top-five research universities in the state, and for the rest of the universities in the state, if they have rejected anyone in the last two years, you are not allowed admission, because you might be taking that slot from an otherwise rejected student." What did you yourself find yourself doing at this point? You're already at this point an activist. You're already working against HB 87 and then these other laws that are on the books. But I know the end of the story. You're a paralegal. You're an immigration advocate. Did you get to go to college? How did this end up happening?

GUSTAVO MADRIGAL PIÑA:
Yeah, so, I did end up going to college. So, what we were fighting these things, the idea for Freedom University was born, I think within the professors who are here, and Keish and, you know, a bigger group of people, and at that time, the group that we had decided to create so we could be accountable to ourselves and not to some higher power, right, that could dictate. What we did was called the Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance or GUYA, and then, I mean I think then that's sort of when the
professors and the groups linked up, right, and the idea for Freedom University become a reality. And, for me, at least, it was going through Freedom University and learning about these resources and learning about the fact that, you know, while I was no longer in school, I had been out of school for years, and I had so lost hope, right, that I could continue, that I could try to do this, that having this team of people behind me and working with me would help me and, eventually, I ended up getting a full ride to Hampshire College in Western Massachusetts, and that’s how I was about to go to college. If it wasn't for the people here in Georgia who couldn't be here, I remember one, it was 4 AM in November of 2011. She called me up, and I was still half-asleep, and she asked me, “Have you applied to any places?” And I said, “I haven’t.” And she just, she went off on me, and she was like, “No. No. No. I need you to get up. I need to start applying. I need you to start writing the essays. And, you know, at 5, I want you to send me essay that you wrote so that we can edit them and then you can continue writing them.” And so, that kind of push, right. I mean, that's the kind of push that we also needed because we were so focused on all these things that we had to push back against that we forgot to push ourselves towards the goal that we wanted to attain that I think at that point became this abstract idea of if we can manage to get to a good point here, I might be able to go to school, but now, it’s more for the people who are on their way.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So you saw yourself needing to win the movement first and then have that opportunity, and actually one of the things that Freedom University helped you do was sort of go from not being able to going to one of the most selective liberal arts colleges in the nation, now finding yourself sort of committed in the longer term here. Keish, can you talk about your story, about sort of how you got involved with this as well? And then, I want to talk to the professors about how they ended up sort of meeting the other side of this equation.

KEISH KIM:
Right. No. I think Gustavo did an amazing job laying out sort of the all the outside forces that was making us feel and being you know sort of stuck in a certain type of social and political space. Right? So, I was in a very, very similar space. I had always known that I was sort of undocumented, not really knowing the repercussions of it until it was college time, which a lot of the stories often go is when students are trying to obtain higher education or there are other stories about the driver's licenses things. Right? Trying to access just day-to-day like livelihood that we sort of meet these barriers and realize that we cannot have those access. So, I was very similar in that trajectory. I had went into my counselor, my guidance counselor in Georgia, trying to figure out how I can go to school. How can I afford school? And his answer was that I couldn't, or he doesn't really understand what should be done. So, I did my own route. I applied to several state schools. I applied to all the schools that my friends were applying to - UGA, University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Georgia State - a bunch of all the colleges around. I applied to a few out-of-state for some reason. I applied to Auburn. I applied to Emory. So, that was a private university. But it ended up being down, going down to the cost. So, how can your family who are also undocumented and working under the table 9-5, or even more hours, multiple shift, multiple jobs for low pay, to afford an international rate, which is like what, $50,000, $60,000 a year? I couldn't.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
Yeah.

KEISH KIM:
So, my frustration.

BETINA KAPLAN:
No access to loans.
KEISH KIM:

No. No access to loans. So, you needed a US citizen to sort of like guarantee and be a 
benefactor and be a cosigner. As an undocumented person, who do you have access that can be a 
cosigner to a $120,000 loan?

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:

Nobody.

KEISH KIM:

Nobody. Even with papers. Even as a citizen. So, I met that barrier. I also graduated in 2009, 
and I went into a bad place where 1, I couldn't get a job. I was helping my parents. I was working at a 
flea market. I was frustrated. I was really scared. I felt that my parents whole reasoning coming to the 
US was sort of down the drain, and that was a lot of burden that I carried on my part. I was naive. I was 
determined to go to school, so I started doing solo studying, which, looking back now, wasn't very 
effective. But I tried to redo the SATs. I tried to read more. I tried to do all these test preps on my own 
for a year-and-a-half until I started organizing. It was not a good place to be. And the whole premise on 
that, for me was, you know, once in a while you'll see in your local ethnic newspaper, so mine is Korean, 
Korean newspapers about success stories of like students who didn't have papers but went into Harvard 
or went into some super-prestigious school and got a full funding, and I think that was my ultimate goal. 
Yeah, but that's not sustainable. So, I also reached out to a national organizer. I think at that time it was 
Perla Law who was undocumented at that time, who is doing amazing work as in UC Berkeley being the 
legal counselor and staff attorney there or was. And I reached out to them and was like, "Hey. I'm 
undocumented." Or at that time, we would use the word illegal. I used the word illegal. I was like, "I'm 
illegal. I need, I want to go to school. I need to go to school. Can you help me?" And they had 
connected me to a fellow organizer and comrade, Georgina, who was a stronghold in Georgia, and that's 
when I had gone to the first meeting that led up to being the Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance 
GUYA. Yeah - and how we got involved with Freedom U, I think it was in culmination of everything. 
Right? With HB 87, with policy 416, with all this legal pressure that's happening, with a lot of students 
getting arrested, a lot of students being detained, putting in deportation proceedings, and we were 
fighting. We were trying to fight them. Right? That the professors were also concerned about their own 
students that were around them that were certainly getting pressured to 1 scope out and then 2 like kick 
out. Or one, they lost funding. Right? Because of policy 416, the institution started figuring out who were 
undocumented and started requesting funding. Right? They need to pay certain bills, and they had 
reached out to GUYA to ask for some advice. Right?

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:

So this had literally affected people who were in school at that point for whom tuition might go up 
by a factor of 4.

KEISH KIM:

Yeah.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:

Because suddenly, their citizenship status became critical as far as how it was going. For you, 
you were not in school, but you were starting to get involved with the Undocumented Rights Movement.

KEISH KIM:

Yes.
ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
With the Dream Movement.

KEISH KIM:
Yes.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
Let me now sort of bridge over to my friends who are teaching at University of Georgia at this point, and I'm sort of curious how you sort of ended up meeting and connecting at that point. So, maybe, Betina, if I can, can I go to you first on this?

BETINA KAPLAN:
OK. OK. So, in 2010, when the resolution against, the ban against undocumented students passed, many of us started considering ways in which we could protest or oppose to the ban. At that time, Pam and Bethany were already very well-connected, and they can tell a little more. With students' organizations who were protesting against the rates of tuition, and they were going up and the scholarships were going down, were shrinking. So, there was a group of students in UGA, mostly upper-division and graduate students who were very engaged with access to higher education. In my department, we had recently hired Lorgia García-Peña as the specialist in Latino studies.

BETHANY MORETON:
The only one in the entire state, right?

BETINA KAPLAN:
Most likely, yes. [Laughing.]

BETINA KAPLAN:
Now, it has changed a little bit, but at that time, yes. And it was a long fight to get this position opened, and there was a group of us within the department who were thinking that the Latino student body was growing and that we were not offering anything to them, so we were pushing for this to happen. We got it. Lorgia was there. And then we have this horrible news that would affect mostly, not only, but mostly Latino students. So, I remember once talking to Lorgia in a corridor and saying, "What are we going to do? This is affecting us. This is against us." And at the same time, I think, Pam invited me to a meeting with students and community members, and in that meeting, we just starting brainstorming on how to react directly to this ban. I was following the student movement GUYA, what they were doing. I was following in the news how young people were putting themselves to arrest, and I felt horrible that I was a grown-up person responsible for educating these people and was not doing anything. So, at that point, we met and was a community member, Beth O, who very naively said, "Well, you three are teachers." We four. There was someone else. "Why don't you teach them? They cannot go to college. Why don't you teach them?" And after that, we started thinking of options and toying with the idea and, immediately, we decided that we couldn't plan anything without asking the students what their needs were and how this idea of teaching a class would go with them, so that's when we met with a group of GUYA students, and Keish was there, and we decided that it was the way to go, and we started as a protest and also as a way to support this group of students.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So, Pam, my understanding of this is that this wasn’t just a solidarity actual. That was certainly a big piece of that, but it was also a very practical, educational, how do we help students get to the point where they can find the resources to find a school that’s willing to accept them and that they can afford. How did this actually work? Did you have a classroom? Did you meet? What did you teach? How did this work out?

PAMELA VOEKEL:

Yeah. I remember that during these organizational meeting Keish, in particular, and Gina, who she referenced really pushing saying, “You know, what we want is to be in a college classroom.” And, I think, if I'm not misreading this, that GUYA was saying, “This would be politically, incredibly useful to have this kind.” And it did attract an incredible amount of media. And, so, we taught that class, and because of Lorgia García-Peña, we were able to offer a kind of Latin studies classes as well as Latin American literature and culture and US immigration from a more or less Latinx kind of perspective or a broader perspective, perhaps. And one thing became really clear and while we were fight the ban, and while the students in the class were at the absolute cutting edge of that fight, there were people like Gustavo and Keish who had already graduated from high school two years before and were really ready to go to college and wanted to do that. And what we saw when we began to do things like SAT prep, we needed SAT prep books, and so the level of solidarity nationally was amazing. Stacks and stacks of books, not only for this American Studies Latinx Studies class we were teaching, but also for SAT prep book. And then, the kind of solidarity that came out of places that were actually under resourced like Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, a historically black college, and university. There was an undocumented student there that went into the admissions office and said, “You know, there's a lot more people like me who are being banned across the South, especially in Georgia and South Carolina. You need to open up these scholarships. You need to open up the fellowships.” And so, one of the biggest receiving institutions that we found was one of the poorest colleges in the country. And the second one that was really fabulous was Berea College, who in the 19th century was one of the first colleges to integrate along racial lines and along gender lines, and, in fact, in the 1920s, the Supreme Court came in and shut that down and said, “You can't be integrated along racial lines.” And so, Berea stepped up and said, especially when DACA passed and people were able to work, because it’s a work-study school, that they were able to provide scholarships. The alumni at Hampshire, led by a woman who was herself a first-generation student, organized to come up with the money for Gustavo's four-year scholarship. So, what we saw was a lot of intense organizing and incredible solidarity coming from the HBCU, coming from Berea, and coming from organizations in Athens, like that we mentioned Betu who was the head of the Immigrant Rights Organization, from the African American women who ran the Economic Justice Coalition and already had networks, so this logistically to run something like this, you need drivers. That’s always the issue in social movements in the South, right, is public transportation is non-existent. And so we have these teams of drivers who are coming out of the Economic Justice Coalition. We were receiving death threats from the Klan and people like that, and so the Economic Justice Coalition provided someone who was out in the parking lot while the students were meeting on Sundays for these three-hour intensive classes to watch, you know, and not to call the police, because that wouldn't do any good. Right? So, we had our own kind of protection system out of these pre-existing solidarity networks. And some of the people doing the driving were Teamsters, people from the Racial Justice Action Center in Atlanta. There were lawyers that came in from the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Southern Center for Human Rights that took on some of these cases, because some students with broken talk lights had police records, and so if they're going to leave the state to go to college, that had to be addressed in courtrooms and things. So, one of the interesting things about Freedom U was this incredible level of solidarity form these under resourced colleges and from these existing activist networks, I think.
ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So when we think of this as four professors got together at an undisclosed location and held free
classes for undocumented students, we're seeing like the tip of an iceberg of organizing that includes how
do people get there? How do you protect the people who are there? How do you think about this larger
question of what the goal is of this? And it sounded like, from very early on, the goal was not an
alternative to being able to go to a university. It was the opportunity to get in there.

PAMELA VOEKEL:
And you have to realize that the initial organizing act was this Gina that Keisha's been talking
about. GUYA comes out and does an organizing workshop for students in the Athens area, and Gina's
first thing was, "Everybody who's over 30, and everybody who is a citizen, out of the room." And so they
did the organizing. It was GUYA who was pushing this and was doing the logistical work because, you
know, social movements are the reproductive labor. Right? And so this was the group doing that labor
and having that vision, I think, and they were the ones who were connected to these activist networks and
Atlanta and things. And so, put together this, kind of took the befuddled professors and said, "Now look.
You know. This is what you need to do."

KEISH KIM:
I mean, I think that's real, because I think, I don't know about you, Gustavo, but I think a lot of us,
yeah you were too, jaded, and then very jaded. And the aspect or perspective like going being in a
classroom or going to college was far from our mind. I think there's a reason Lorgia had to you call at 4
AM, 5 AM and to ask you to write a paper and application in an hour. Right? So, I think when even when
Freedom University, before even we actually like claimed and embraced that name, we were just like,"What does this classroom actually look like? What is it actually supposed to do?" And when we were
using our networks to like let the word out so that students actually were attending, and actually taking up
space for this classroom, there was a lot of hesitancy and confusion of what this was supposed to be.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
And, Keish, what did it end up being? I mean, when people were coming to these classes, you
know, what was getting taught? Was it about doing a college-level class in Latinx and American Studies,
or was it about thinking about what it would mean to be someone who was going into higher education?

KEISH KIM:
So there was a lot, I think in the beginning there was a lot of confusion. It was very amorphous.
There was a lot of questions. Right? People were asking for all kinds of classes. For me, at that time, I
was very dead-set on like having an actual classroom, like a college-level classroom was, what I
personally wanted. And that was my personal investment. So, at that, that's definitely shown through,
that that was what I needed. So, that's what we had stated. [Laughing.]

BETINA KAPLAN:
Looking back now, I remember in our first meeting Keish was very eloquent, and she said
something like, "I have lost my personality as a student, and I want to be a student." So, after that, in the
class, she insisted

KEISH KIM:
Right.
BETINA KAPLAN: That she was already, again a student.

KEISH KIM: Right.

BETINA KAPLAN: That was a big gain.

KEISH KIM: Yeah. I mean, looking back now from where I am now, it’s really ironic and funny that there was a syllabus that was being drafted and compiled over the summer. Like, just multiple drafts. I remember

BETINA KAPLAN: 17 pages.

KEISH KIM: It was a very rigorous, it was actually a very rigorous. I still have it with me. It was very rigorous.

BETINA KAPLAN: Beyond graduate school.

KEISH KIM: It was actually beyond graduate school. And now that I’m in it, I know that it was beyond graduate school level.

[Laughing.]

KEISH KIM: The funny thing was, and then it was a very, it think a lot, even the naming of the classroom, even naming of Freedom University, there was a lot of power and intention behind it. So, the classroom, the class that was offered was titled as American Civilization, and this was a little wink at Harvard American Civilization Program at that time. We had then, since then, changed our name to American Studies. We still have a lot of work to do.

[Laughing.]

KEISH KIM: But the classroom, the syllabus and the syllabus in the class was titled American Civilization, but what happened actually behind and inside the syllabus was amazing, powerful critiques on empire, about statehood, sovereignty, about, and I was using all kinds of scholarship and sources that as ethnic studies. It was American studies at its core. We were reading. We were really ready graduate-level readings.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN: May Nai

KEISH KIM: May Nai. Right?

[Laughing.]
ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
I see Bethany laughing hard about this, and Bethany of course is an activist historian, has thought a lot about labor history and about different social movement, sort of within the Americas. How did you find yourself thinking about this sort of going into the classroom? Were you approaching this as a scholar? Were you approaching this as an activist? How were you bringing yourself into this?

BETHANY MORETON:
Well, I mean I think what Betina said at the beginning. I remember the day that we opened the New York Times and there was the picture of GUYA activists who had sat down on the street in front of the Georgia Capitol to protest these this spate of laws. Right? And you see these young people in their graduation gowns, right, from high school, sitting down and being dragged off by the same beefy cops that we're all familiar with from 100 years of Southern iconography, and the reaction is, "This is my institution that is now being directly conscripted into this particular from of injustice. There has to be something strategic that you can do with your own imbrication in the committing of this injustice." And so, reaching out to the people who were risking, and continue every day, every minute that they're up here, to risk far more than any of us could risk, right, but doing this, and just saying, "Is there any way in which our institutional location could be useful, because none of us wants to participate in executing this particular ban. Right?" And to put this in context, it was the 50th anniversary of the desegregation of the University of Georgia. And so, having fought that tooth and nail, right, the white state establishment at the time was not patting itself on the back very publicly for the open access to the plantation-style campus that was at the heart of this, and so, using those realities, strategically, we wanted to know if the activists who were, in fact, risking something, could see a use for that. Right? But when Keish came back with, actually the thing that would be useful for us would be if y'all would do this as a civil disobedience demonstration project and actually do it like you would do it, you know. The fact was that this fight against undocumented students and racialized students was part of the whole move to ban an entire branch of knowledge from public universities. Right? That while Arizona was passing these laws, that Georgia was running along and copying, it was also trying to throw ethnic studies out of its institutions of higher learning.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
Right. So it wasn't accidental that Latinx studies was really a focus of this. This was, in part, what you were trying to fight for.

PAMELA VOEKEL:
Exactly. That American Studies and Latinx studies, ethnic studies generally, African American studies, these are all branches of human knowledge that had to, literally, fight in the streets for inclusion in publicly-funded education. And so, there's an awareness at the, in the room where these things happen that that knowledge is dangerous. That knowledge, liberatory knowledge is dangerous, and I think it's fair to say that no one in the class had encountered the histories we were collectively constructing, presented in any fashion. Right? That that is part of the move. And so for us, it was really powerful to get to participate in that knowledge creation with people who were actively liberating our country at the same time.

>> I want to say that one of the effects of having such a powerful ethnic studies professor like Lorgia García-Peña was that not only did we have the four of us teaching, we had people fly in. Marco Vermaier Velasquez, Yolanda Martina Sambiel, Achio Vejas, I could go on and on, Laura Gutierrez, flew in on their own dimes, oftentimes, to give classes at Freedom U, so arguably, we had the best ethnicity studies curriculum at the time. [Laughing.] Frankly, you know, and without, you know, no budget, essentially, when you're using sometimes the University of Georgia, but these were, this was an intellectually just
over the top stimulating kind of experience to have this level. Junot Díaz, the famous Junot Díaz, MIT professor, Skyped in, and Keish got up and sort of just went after him. [Laughing.] But you know, people were empowered and dialoguing and this was really a magnet for like, you said, a kind of demonstration project in liberatory knowledge that lots of people wanted to participate in.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
But I'm sure that, please, go ahead.

KEISH KIM:
Yeah, but I was a student. So, like, on the end of classroom, we are just soaking it in. We don't, we're coming in because we have said and dedicated our time into the space. We don't know at what scale we're meeting these professors. Like, we don't know what their positions are, where they are in their like legal, I mean scholarly genealogy. We do not know these things. What we were promised, and this was a constant push that we still have to do, is actually get it accredited. So, when it was the idea was brewing, the importance was getting the classroom accredited, so that if we were to, you know transfer or go to a two-year college, a community college or even a four-year college, that the experience in the classroom that we were actually sitting on was being recognized as an actual class, which we didn't still. Right? We still haven't. And that sort of morphed, and that push was happening while the applications, like deadlines, were coming up, and we started then really pitching ideas of, "OK. What does it mean for us to try to apply? Because now that we have access to professors of a university, could they write us recommendation letters? Could they do this?" So these ideas were just forming as time went by.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So, there's an open question about could Freedom University turn into something that could have accreditation, could help people get credits that they might be able to transfer and bring somewhere else. You've built this program, which even just in the first seminar, is this sort of extraordinary Latinx Studies, and you're doing this on Sunday mornings, completely with volunteer labor, at an undisclosed location, so that the Klan, the fucking Klan, doesn't show up to disrupt your activities. So, I assume the University of Georgia was thrilled with this and was honoring the extra service. [Laughing.]

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
I assume they got rid of some of your teaching requirements for this, Bethany or Pam? I've noted that three of the four of you are no longer teaching at the University of Georgia. [Laughing.]

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
Betina, how did UGA react to this?

BETINA KAPLAN:
At the beginning, especially with tests, was trying to put us against each other, and they would go to UGA speaker and ask them, "What do you have to say about this?" And the answer that the speaker gave, the first answer was, "Our faculty can teach whatever they want outside their schedule and some professors teach Bible school, and we don't care about that.

BETHANY MORETON:
Which is true.
BETINA KAPLAN:
Which is true. So, they pretty much put it in those terms and gave us, in a way freedom, so we didn't need to respond to that.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
But that's not exactly wholeheartedly embracing.

BETHANY MORETON:
Let's be clear. There was plenty of retaliation. But up next to what other people had on the line, in the situation, it was not worth worrying about, honestly. And I will say it's important to remember that the faculty at University of Georgia, the student body at University of Georgia, same at Georgia State, same at multiple other universities around the state, Armstrong State, voted to resolutions against the ban in support of Freedom U or other actions that deal with the larger immigrant

BETINA KAPLAN:
All university councils, all university forums have at least one resolution against the ban, where faculty were involved and students were involved.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
and public.

BETHANY MORETON:
An interesting thing was that the administration wouldn't go to the Board of Regents meetings and say these things, so there were the GUYA activists confronting the Board of Regents without, with these sort of cowardly administrators not saying anything, just sitting in the audience while younger people took on this fight.

BETINA KAPLAN:
And when we have the discussion in UGA with the university council, we proposed a resolution against the ban. We have a very strong reaction against the language that we were using. In the first proposal, we were using the word discrimination. And our colleagues who were supporting Freedom University, who were against the ban, they reacted very badly to the word discrimination. They couldn't tolerate that, and luckily, we were able to change that language, and the resolution passed. But I think that speaks a lot about the position of faculty, even when they are supporters, how they do not want to make connections with the past history of the state and that creates a lot of trouble for them.

BETHANY MORETON:
Although a specialist, specifically, in the history of living through segregation in Georgia, was one of our most effective collaborators, who came and spoke and made those connections herself, Barbara McCaskill, who runs a stand-alone project at UGA about the history of anti-black discrimination at UGA had no trouble at all making those connections.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So, I want to open this up to the audience in a moment, but I just want to ask one specific question to everyone, starting with Keish. I know that everyone who's been involved with Freedom University is both very proud of it, but also very insistent that it is not the only intervention, maybe not always the right intervention, that there's a need for a huge number of interventions to deal with these questions of access to education. So, Keish, you're very involved with PUSH at Harvard. Can you tell us a little about that? And then, I'd love to just go sort of down the line and hear what each of you is involved
with right now, and maybe if there’s anything you want to urge us as an audience, both here and online to get involved with, and Pamela, when we get to you, we’ll pull up the website associated with you. [Laughing.]

KEISH KIM:
I think Freedom University as well as GUYA are still both ongoing. Things have gotten worse, right, in many ways? Both of us went into different trajectories of different institutions, at academic institutions, pursuing different interests, but I mean both of us haven't fixed our statuses yet. And, you know, while our scale and our network of people that we’re interacting with and engage with are expanding, the core issues and values are still the same. So, for me, currently being an American Studies -- student at Harvard, after the recent elections, it was actually again working closely with Lorgia García-Peña who's currently a faculty there. It was her classroom where we met after. It was actually one her, again, one of her amazing, powerful, undergraduate classrooms that was being held Monday, Wednesday. So, on Monday, before the election result, there was a very powerful performance, on-campus performance of students sort of doing these murals and decorating the John Harvard statue of just doing these really amazing and powerful resistance acts. And then, we got the election result on Tuesday, went to class, and I had went in to be with the students, and it was a very sorrowful moment. One, we had to console each other and sort of recognize each other's pain. And, secondly, that's when we started writing, drafting a letter to our president and to our deans of what we needed, and that sort of became what Protect Undocumented Students at Harvard sort of became, and we have multiple fronts of ask, which still have not been met, unfortunately, and that had to do with having an actual, a physical location, an office that is above ground. [Laughing.]

KEISH KIM:
That had actually invested money into students, protecting undocumented students. This meant in multiple fronts. Now only allocating funding to support of emergency financial aid, not only covers DACA, but maybe other funds. Maybe our parents are being deported or being detained and then deportation proceedings. Maybe we need to help our parents sustain themselves because our mom and dads are detained. Right? There's multiple fronts where financial need is actually needed that people do not always recognize. There's always the $495 for DACA manuals, but there is so much more that goes beyond that. What if we had mixed that with a lot of the students were mixed status, or the students themselves may have papers, but their parents, their brothers and sisters who may not have papers? Right? So, our needs were not only the funding. It was not only the legal need of having a very radical and powerful and insistent and stubborn attorney, a criminal and both immigration attorney who’s capable of pushing certain envelopes, right, and making certain things happen. We needed an attorney. We needed multiple attorneys. We needed a collection of attorneys who's able to do certain things. We wanted access to mental health. We wanted a capable mental health counselor and therapist who’s able to meet the needs of not only LGBTQ, low-income, first-gen students, but knowing various backgrounds of like what it means to be undocumented. So, these were some of the fronts that we needed. We’ll actually ask for more hiring of ethnic studies professors and scholars. Multiple fronts were asked.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So, it's a huge set of needs, and just thinking about how enormous these needs can be and how enormous these populations are, I was reminded when we were sitting down over lunch, that not only do we have the 800,000 people who've applied for DACA status or been granted DACA status, we have 1.3 million people who are eligible. Since DACA is not currently on the books, we have people who would be eligible for DACA, but who are now, sort of falling through the cracks. And then, as you are mentioning, you have an even larger set of students who have mixed families, so that students have papers, one or
both parents doesn't have papers, and you find students in the a situation where, and I find this as an 
educator, I have a student who will drop off the map, and what may actually be going on is that its student 
is working full-time to keep her parents from being deported or to figure out what to do with the rest of the 
family if parents do end up getting deported. This whole set of needs becomes something that, as 
educators, we have a responsibility to address up 'til the point that our government finds a way to address 
this better than they're currently addressing this now. Gustavo, what about you? How are you involved 
with this at this point? Do you continue to be involved with Freedom U? Are you involved with other parts 
of the movement in New York at this point?

GUSTAVO MADRIGAL PIÑA:
So, I'm not really involved with Freedom U anymore. In terms of organizing efforts, I've taken a 
step back. But, one of the motivations for when I first got involved was if I'm going to go out, I'm going to 
go out with a bang. Right? Like, I'm going to make some damage. I'm going to have an impact before 
they take me out. And I think that has translated into my work as a paralegal where I'm not necessarily 
working with people who are highly-skilled workers. There is demand. Right? And they want to bring 
them over. I'm working with people who are escaping, all kinds of violence, are escaping poverty, are 
running away from these puppet governments that the US installed and the sacking of the resources of 
their countries, and they're coming here for a better life. Right? They just want to work as we all do and 
lead a good life, and I think that that's sort of where it's translated for me now. Right? There are so many 
immigration cases out there. There's clean-cut ones where there's no criminal record. There's ones that 
are very, very complicated, and those are the ones that I like to work on. I like to work on the ones that 
anyone who could look at the surface details of it and say, “No. Well, this is not someone we want in this 
country,” but it's not so black and white. Right? So, that's where I am now. I eventually want to be an 
immigration attorney, and I want to keep working on this project of, you know, like people have rights, and 
people are eligible for immigration benefits under the INA. It may not be pretty. It may not be easy. 
There's going to be a lot of digging, a lot of fighting, a lot of advocating for people, but as someone who 
as of this point, doesn't really have a, or doesn't have a path to legalization, my mentally is still, "I want to 
go out with a bang." And what that means is that making sure that as many people who can adjust, who 
can try to obtain legalization do that and that's where my energies are now. And I think that eventually, 
down the line, what I would like to do, and one of the biggest goals for me is to be able to influence or 
write legislation that would go into the INA. Right? That would be more humane and not just necessarily 
look at people as what kind of economic contributions can you make to this country, but what does this 
country owe you? What does this country owe your family? How can we repay that? And that's sort of 
the impact that I want to have down the line.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
There's a law school about two stops away on the red line. I've got some friends over there. 
They often watch these events. So, they may want to get in touch with you.

GUSTAVO MADRIGAL PIÑA:
Let's talk after.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
They do some pretty good work there. Pamela, what about you? You're now up at Dartmouth 
College , a noted hotbed of liberal activism. What's your involvement with the movement at this point?

PAMELA VOEKEL:
With Freedom U?
ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
Yeah.

PAMELA VOEKEL:
I've, like Gustavo, who's being too modest, I've helped a little bit with tours of students coming through and doing educational work at places like Smith and Hampshire. Gustavo actually organized a tour of Freedom U students a couple years back in the Pioneer Valley, and they were able to tell people what was going on. Freedom U is ongoing. It's being run now by a woman named Laura Emiko Soltis, who's an absolutely fabulous job, and Freedom U students are sort of leading not only the undocumented student movement in Atlanta, but are major leads in a larger kind of network of students who've done is pretty powerful civil disobedience actions, not only at the University of Georgia, but at the Board of Regents. And so, what we do at Dartmouth, which is sort of a place that probably is not quite where MIT is yet in terms of undocumented admissions, is educational work and a lot of working with students whose parents are in deportation hearings and getting professors to write letters that go to courtrooms in Georgia or Nebraska or Texas or wherever it is that talk about that student so that might give a judge pause kind of thing. But Freedom U is very much an ongoing, you know, kind of ongoing concern and continues to offer classes on Sundays and SAT prep, and I really want to encourage people to go to the website.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
And it's an organization that really could use your support, and if we can just pull up the website here, great. And what's the URL for that?

PAMELA VOEKEL:
I think it's www.freedomuniversitygeorgia.com or .org maybe. There it is. There's MIT Professor Junot Díaz on the Colbert Report giving his FU Georgia T-shirt, a sweatshirt.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
I was going to ask whether the name was intentional, but I know Bethany well enough to know that the name absolutely was intentional.

BETHANY MORETON:
Yes, but all the students assumed that we had no idea, apparently. Like, oh, those stupid adults. [Laughing.]

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
But I've known you for a really, really, long time, and I know that FU Georgia was something that was probably intentional.

PAMELA VOEKEL:
We tried to argue that we wanted to be a freedom school to come full-circle to the freedom schools of the 60s, but everyone's like, "But if we're FU, we get to shout FU Georgia at the demonstrations."

BETHANY MORETON:
Which was cathartic.

PAMELA VOEKEL:
So anyways, I would really encourage people to, you know, touch base them, to donate if you can. As you know, most sort of donations to 501(c)3 organizations go to the left coast and not to the South. Some of the most incredible political activism is going on in the US South with absolutely no resources. Taking students in a van to Berea College to interview there with admissions officers is a $3,000 venture. $3,000 seems like nothing at a place like MIT or Dartmouth, but it can go so far. Books, you know, materials, artist materials for demonstrations, all of that, transportation, getting people on a plane to get to Hampshire to do a workshop, so I really want to encourage people if you can give to give. Share it on social media, if you get connected with them. Volunteer if you're in the Atlanta area. It really is, like we were saying, it's a social movement as much as it is a single class on Sundays now. And it's a social movement that grew with incredible solidarity with people from all over the country, people flying in, people buying books, students organizing in Atlanta with GUYA.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
I actually want to open up at this point before we lose some of the wonderful guests that we have here, and we're going to keep going on with this conversation both in a sort of open Q&A here. We're also going to move into my space in Civic to keep talking a little bit further on. But, let me just open this up a little bit. Anyone have anything you want to ask these remarkable folks - the students, the professors, so on and so forth? Don't leave me hanging her with the question cube. You know how much I desperately want to throw this at people within the audience. [Laughing.]

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
Thank you, Joy.

JOY:
Thanks. Hi. I'm Joy. I'm part of the Center for Civic Media. Earlier you mentioned that when you used the word discrimination, you got pushback from faculty, and in my own experiences of talking about issues within institutions, language comes up so much in terms of what people are willing to engage with. So I was 1, curious about how you thought about the language based on the pushback and what language you would have wanted to use.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
And I'm going to cheat just for a moment and brag on Joy for a second. Joy is a PhD student in my lab and has been doing really remarkable research demonstrating some in-built biases in computer vision systems, and this work that gets very tricky because it makes people uncomfortable. No one likes to be called out on biases built into systems, but it's incredibly important to show what these biases are so that people have a chance to address them and make those systems better. So, language and how we talk about this is something that's a big subject within our lab.

BETHANY MORETON:
We were certainly aware that we had a limited number of effective scripts available to us for the public leveraging of this, and that one of them was, frankly, do-gooder, befuddled white teacher just wants to help the kids get books. That had an audience, and we talked a lot about the trade-offs involved in playing to some of these scripts. The stand-and-deliver script that says that there's a category of innocent, deserving, no fault of their own immigrants who came here as children who are still effectively children and, therefore, it's not their fault, and it contra-ed the sort of insistent responsibilization, the illiberal narrative that whatever befalls you, you have asked for it. "Here's one category of people," this narrative says, "that we can point to and say OK, we'll give them special consideration. Right? And
they're real dangers." I think it's true, in general, that a lot of the Dreamer Movement has been incredibly, ethically rigorous about refusing that narrative and not throwing other undocumented immigrants under the bus in pursuit of that particular. I think the problem that it sounds like you're the expert on is how the technology of raceless discrimination is specifically designed to make it impossible to call out the elephant in the room. For me, it was very important that we spent time with immigration history and looked at the ways that immigration has been specifically structured around race. Everyone's been completely aware of it at the time. The discussions in Congress are all about how can we keep the country white, and yet not use the word race in this legislation. And when they figure it out, they all pat each other on the back, over and over again. 1924. 1952. 1965. They're thrilled that they figured out a way to make sure that quote the unwashed Hottentots will not be coming here to take jobs from good, wholesome Americans. I think verbatim, right, out of the 65 debates. So, the challenge is enormous to undo and refuse not leave any space for that kind of deliberate erasure of what everyone knows is actually being talked about here, and I don't think any of us has an answer on that. We would probably be coming to you for guidance.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
It's really interesting to think about the ways in which Freedom University managed to position itself, I think, very successfully as oh my God. Who could be against, you know, college professors getting together on a Sunday.

BETHANY MORETON:
The kids just want to learn.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
And giving a chance for. You got me. Right? I mean, we ended up supporting this through the disobedience prize very much around that narrative. What's been so great in sort of having you here and hearing about this is the ways in which this was a student-led movement that essentially identified something that students needed and wanted and then were sort of able to go out and reach out to some professors who were willing to do it, but it was the students identifying that this was a missing part of the experience, a part of what people were being denied at that point in time.

BETINA KAPLAN:
I would like to point out to another struggle that I think youth movements also have and, we as organizers, organizers of Freedom University, and now I'm in a different organization ULead Athens. We still have, and it's this idea of the good immigrant and the bad immigrant and how these kids who want to come to MIT are the good immigrants, but their parents or their younger siblings who did not pass the AP test is the bad immigrant. So, I think from the perspective of the organizer or coordinator of an organization that worked with undocumented students, that is a big struggle, and I think ULead Athens is working on going around that, just by working with mixed status students and working with the students who were the last ones in the classroom and never had an advisor who said, "Yes. You're doing well." We're going after particularly that student.

BETHANY MORETON:
Because people shouldn't have to be as extraordinary as these two people already were at 16 and 17 and 18 in order simply to not wake up every day with this hang-up. God knows we weren't. Right? This is not about finding just the hyper-qualified, incredible stand-out human being and the people who built this movement are very clear that it's not about that.
**BETINA KAPLAN:**
You do not need to be super-stellar to go to college.

**KEISH KIM:**
Just to clarify, and you can add on, we weren't, I wasn't either. The process of at least for me, I know my process even more, my access to my undergraduate degree which was a Syracuse University, another private institution, was actually a very strong and powerful network of transnational feminists, trans-- poly-- there within the party who are pushing their administrators to open up a private fund, a grant, a private grant. So, these are happening in multiple levels. Right? We're not only pushing for policies against, like in the public space. It's also happening back doors too. So like, it really, really means a lot for like administrators, faculties to gather up a coalition to come up with funding to support students if your institution doesn't publicly allow undocumented students to come through, so just recognizing that is really, really important, and advocating for students who does not have the 4.0 GPA, who does not have the perfect SAT score. I wasn't that student, but I had people who were advocating and advocating for me.

**ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:**
So, I'm going to come back to that question about what universities can do around this, and I'm going to put some of our friends from the admissions office on the spot, but let me just give you a chance to ask a question here.

**GRIFF:**
There's a warning label on the bottom of this that says I should read the user manual before using it, and I want to be clear that I haven't read the user manual for the microphone box. [Laughing.]

**ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:**
This is the Media Lab. None of us have ever read a user manual ever. It's actually forbidden.

**GRIFF:**
My name is Griff. I want to thank each of you for being here. It's so clear that you have a lot to teach folks who are looking to support undocumented students, but it's also clear, listening to each of you that you have so much to teach folks working in higher education and universities across the board, and listening to you speak about the ways that learning needs to be found in solidarity with the labor that it's supporting, learning through building relationships with drivers, the way you talked about co-constructing curriculum, embracing learning as a political act. You were mentioning earlier that you didn't know where the professors were on their scholarly journey because they were treating you like people. I mean, there's so much that you talked about that just seems like every university in this country is failing at. And so, I'd just like to hear from the perspective of faculty who have been affiliated with big universities and also students who probably grew up with an understanding of what university was. What are some of the lessons that really every university should be trying to take from your experience?

**ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:**
Well, I'm actually going to merge that into a question that I'm going to throw to my friend Jessica, which is I'm going to ask her to just talk sort of briefly about what MIT is doing well around this, and then maybe turn this into an open question about what we feel like the universities that we know and love, whether we're at them now or whether a proud Hampshire grad, what these can be doing to sort of transform and work in solidarity with this movement. But Jessica, I'm going to ask you first if you can.
So, that was a high hard one there that was. I more lobbed what I was going to Joy, but it's hard when you're sitting.

**JESSICA:**
Do I speak into?

**ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:**
Just speak.

**JESSICA:**
Hi. I'm Jessica from the MIT admissions office, and first I just want to thank all of you for sharing your experiences and stories. They are incredibly humbling and inspiring for all of us to hear, so I do want to thank you all. As for what we're doing at MIT, MIT is one of the five schools in the country that offers need-blind admissions, need-based financial aid, and full-need financial aid to students regardless of citizenship. Again, that's one of five in this country. There are other private institutions. Some of the institutions you all named. Private institutions, some state institutions that will provide financial aid to undocumented students or a DACAmented student, but the rules around this are pretty inconsistent. It can be really hard to navigate and find this information. So, as you can imagine, there are a lot of questions that undocumented students have to think about that other students don't have to think about as they're navigating the college application process. So, the media lab has collaborated with us over the last few months to think about ways that we can mobilize resources at MIT and around Boston to serve local undocumented students. Obviously, Boston is a place that's really rich in educational resources. There are so many educational institutions in the area. So, we've been trying to think about how can we, how can we serve this population here in Boston and in the greater Boston area. Some of the broad goals that I have for the work that we're doing together is to mobilize resources at MIT, to build a network in the greater Boston area, and to boost visibility around these movements and these resources. So, we've been collaborating with local organizations like the Student Immigrant Movement, which is an activist organization that serves undocumented students in local high schools. We've been working with Unafraid Educators, which is a part of the Boston Teachers' Union, which mobilizes educators to support undocumented students. A program that we're putting on, or working with the Boston Teachers' Union to put on, is a guidance counselor training. They're hosting a day-long training for their guidance counselors in Boston public schools. We're working with them to host a discussion and panel around serving undocumented students, working with an immigration to talk about what are the options for students, working with guidance counselors and student activists to talk about their journeys through the, through education and what are the options for students, and increasing some visibility around these issues, knowledge around these issues, so that those guidance counselors are then better-empowered to work with the students in their schools.

**ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:**
And sort of three big ideas came up when we were talking earlier today. One was looking at guidance counselors a real point of impact on this. It was really interesting to hear both of you sort of talk about not getting terrific guidance from you high school guidance counselors about where to go and sort of how to go with this. A second point, and I thought this was particularly interesting, is that Chris Peterson, a friend of many of ours in this room, talks about the fact that he often ends up seeing applications from people, sometimes undocumented, sometimes similarly students who just didn't have as much of a chance in high school as some of us did, who clearly would be right for MIT had they taken the classes they needed to get into a place like MIT. And so there becomes this really interesting challenge of for those of us here who are grad students, for those who are undergrads, is there a way that we could be involved in sort of reaching out to populations who could have the opportunity to be here,
have this amazing opportunity to be here, need-blind, citizenship-blind, if they had the qualifications. And then the third that I was really blown away by was this realization that in the same way that your movement was building everything from Teamsters trying to figure out how to drive people there to people protecting and people thinking about, but lawyers. We need lawyers. We need to help support students and their families when they're going through these issues, even if the students are fully documented, but they're in a mixed family, that becomes, imagine the level of stress if you find yourself simultaneously trying to manage an MIT course load and possibly being the only person in your house who's bilingual, helping your parents try to figure out how to stay in the country. For all of you, and we'll have this as the last question, what should universities be doing more of? What can we do better at MIT, and what can we push other universities that we love and care about to do better on this issue?

GUSTAVO MADRIGAL PIÑA:
I think probably the thing that I haven't seen, because, you know, I've seen schools add another tab on their website that's information for undocumented students. Right? And the way that I see it, there's two sides. One side is the undocumented students looking to go to college. The other one is the universities. Right? And there's a few universities that say, "Yeah. We have some resources, but," and something you had asked earlier like, who could be against students learning. Right? You'd be surprised. A lot of people. A lot of people can be against that and are against that, and that shows, between those two sides, those are the people that are blocking access to those resources, and so I think more so than just adding another tab, more so than just creating a pamphlet, I think you need to be actively recruiting undocumented students because the same way that you actively recruit other students who have a breadth of knowledge based on their lived experiences, we also have something to contribute, and going back to your question about the biases that are written inherently into the system, I think that's where these knowledge, these systems of knowledge that we have derived from our lived experiences from our contacts, not just with government, but with state institutions of all kinds, I think we can bring those into this place, and we can make good things with it. But, I think, again, you need to be able to step above and step beyond those people that are trying to block the access by actively recruiting and being public about it, because not a lot of places are public about their admissions policies when it comes to undocumented students and when it comes to financial aid. And so, I think that once you become more visible to the students who are already taking huge risk by becoming visible themselves I think that's the very first step that you can take.

KEISH KIM:
Completely agree. That's so important. That is so important. I think that's what lacking at Harvard. Honestly though, the is a really interesting audience for me to speak to because oftentimes, the things that we have to highlight is, I mean we are already in, I'm part of Harvard, and we're at MIT. It's already a very prestigious. You guys have a lot of funding and we're oftentimes talking to community college, like students who can't even go to afford community college. So, recognizing that. Recognizing that. Right? Recognizing that. I think Gustavo's point is really, really important for these -- institutions and private institutions who do have the funding to step it up. So, one thing, one sad thing to recognize is that once Nancy Cantor, the Syracuse chancellor left, and we had an administrator change, they stopped funding undocumented students. So, they stopped receiving undocumented students through their private grant. So, that's another avenue that's been closed. And a lot of the things that I plushie while I was there was to go public, but there was resistance to that. So, recognizing, and also recognizing the labor of Lorgia, who's not here, and all the faculties who are here, there was a lot of risks, a lot of labor, a lot of time that they put in on top of their obligation, as the only Ethnic Studies professor at UGA. The only woman of color. One of the few who have like how many students that they're advising that they had opened up their space to dedicate their time to make a space for Freedom University. I think that needs to happen at MIT. I think that needs to happen at Harvard. I think there needs to be a step up of
investment, a coalition building, and a little bit more of courage to contest and to stop telling us what the rules of how complex these bureaucratic and academic institutions and red tapes are. We already know that there are red tapes.

[Laughing.]

KEISH KIM:
We're asking you to step up. Administrators need to step up. Students and grad students need to step up. I think one of the most disheartening things that I've actually experienced organizing at Harvard has been this constant separation between undergraduates and graduate students. So, undocumented students. I'm still undocumented. I'm in the graduate program, but there's been a constant separation between the investment within the needs of undergraduate students and graduate students, and our needs are different, but they're still the same. Like, what does it mean to bring in undocumented students as graduate students? What does it mean for them to be teaching fellows when they don't have DACA? These questions need to be asked and the only ways you're going to get answers on the inside is as Gustavo says. Center and invite undocumented students and actually hear what their needs are and advocating for them.

GUSTAVO MADRIGAL PIÑA:
Is there still a lot of anxieties that even someone who might have the perfect GPA and might have the extracurriculars. There's a lot of anxiety because you just don't know. You don't know. And I think that part of being public would also work on this other front that I think has been very, very lacking, and I don't know if people have actually thought about it or brought it up, but shaming these other institutions into coming and living in the present, right, not staying in the past, not staying in this way of thinking where OK education still needs to be segregated somehow because that makes us feel like we still have power over the systems that be. Right? And I think that a place like MIT, with the clout that it has, and if it starts being public, and if it starts actively recruiting undocumented students, I think that can also have a domino effect or a shaming effect upon these other big institutions to step it up themselves because if there's anything that I learned about higher education is that no institution wants to fall behind another institution.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So, one of the things we talked about a little bit over lunch was the ways in which MIT will often do things right, but very quietly. And this is a place where we're doing things right. We are by being need-blind and by being citizenship-blind, that's the right step. We need to go a step further, and we need to be open and affirming about this. I will openly affirm that I welcome and encourage undocumented students to apply to my group here at the media lab. I hope that others will do that as well. But beyond that, this is something that we as MIT should have a lot of pride in. We should actually be talking up and actively recruiting around on a bunch of different

BETHANY MORETON:
I think all of us who inhabit more secure positions in these institutions need to help shift the perspective and make clear that there is not a neutral space. When what you're seeing, people like y'all, are carrying the brunt of 40 years of deliberate constriction of access to higher education in this country, and you can either counteract that process, or you can simply shrug your shoulders and enable it. But there's not actually, there's no moment where it holds still. This was a deliberate political move to make it harder for that vast expansion of education. Everyone had a full ride in California in 1960 if they could get into college. Right? And that's no longer how we do that because it stopped being simply available to white Americans, and that was a moment where it started to contract. And any of us who work in these
institutions owe it to the people who are taking the heat to figure out where our institution is in that history and what steps we can take from within to counteract that.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
I’m going to give the last to Betina, and then we’re going to welcome anyone who wants to stick around. We’re going to go and have a smaller discussion over in my space in Civic. But Betina, please.

BETINA KAPLAN:
Yeah. I just want to support what Gustavo and Keish were saying, and I want to add to that that undocumented students are not a risk for an institution. They are the best. They bring in a lot of experience, and they turn out staying in college. In Ulead Athens, we had helped around 50 students to get into college. From those 50, as far as I know, only one left. All of them are in school. They are continuing struggling. Some are them are taking two classes per semester, three classes per semester. But, they don’t withdraw, and I think that is something that all colleges need to have into account. They are more secure than other students that might not finish, might not end up graduating.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN:
So, I just want to thank my guests for coming out, talking about these issues. I just want to congratulate you all for the incredible work that Freedom University has done. I want to thank everyone who came out of the audience, everyone who’s watching us online. We’re going to continue this conversation. We’re hoping to have a very practical conversation about what we can do better here in Boston for people who are still engaged with us. Come on over to the Civic space. We’ll be there in a couple of minutes, but thank you all for coming out and being part of this.