

## Text Transcript of “Off the Shelf” Podcast Episode 3 with Helen Neville

**Augustus Wood:** All right, welcome back to another episode of "Off the Shelf: Revolutionary Readings in Times of Crisis," where we showcase undervalued or hidden scholarship and those scholar activists who speak directly to this particular historical moment. My name is Augustus Wood, and I'm very excited about today's show because in the, in the, topic of Black Liberation, we had one of my favorite scholar activists that's going to be joining us today, Dr. Helen Neville. And so, she's going to help us get into this, these, ideas that since we, in the African American masses, are facing so many different types of crisis now with the COVID pandemic, with the issues of state, state-sanctioned violence, and white supremacy, the economic crises that we face, um —there's just so much going on right now.

So, the question of Black Liberation continues to be both conceptualized and debated, like, what does it look like? How do we get to it? What is, what is, what does the actual Black Liberation mean? You know? And so it's very, it's awesome that we have a scholar activist on here who is going to dive deep and recommend us, not only some of the readings that can help us understand this moment, but also look at how her work actually does some very similar things. So, I'm going to go ahead and get started with, uh, an introduce the great Dr. Helen Neville. Um — Helen Neville is a professor of Educational Psychology and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is the past president of the Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race, which is a division of the American Psychological Association. She has co-edited eight books and co-authored over 90 journal articles and book chapters in the areas of race, racism, and racial identity and diversity issues related to well-being.

Dr. Neville has been recognized for her research and mentoring efforts, including receiving the Association of Black Psychologists' Distinguished Psychologist of the Year Award, the APA Minority Fellowship Award, Dalmas Taylor Award for Outstanding Research Contribution, APA Graduate Students Kenneth and Mamie Clark Award, the APA Division 45 Charles and Shirley Thomas Award for mentoring contributions to African-American students and community, and the Winter Roundtable Janet E. Helms Mentoring Award. So again, just thank you, Dr. Neville, for joining us today.

**Helen Neville:** Thank you so much, Dr. Gus Wood, uh, for the invitation. I am super excited about our conversation and having the opportunity to discuss Black Liberation, particularly from a Black psychology viewpoint.

**Augustus Wood:** And I think this, I think this, is something that we've all been wanting because we get so much, we get a lot of history; we get a lot of sociology; we get a lot of, we get a lot, of economics, and just based off of your — all the amazing accomplishments that I've just listed — one of the things that our listeners are going to already know is that you have a

deep relationship with the issues of well-being in psychology, in relation to the African American community.

So, your idea and your work on Black Liberation is going to be something that is going to be very valuable and looking at ways that we heal during these times of crisis. And so, why don't you go ahead and tell us about how you view Black Liberation and the types of scholarship that you look at or these ideas.

**Helen Neville:** Great. Thank you so much. I think I want to first start off with William Cross or Bill Cross. For those people who don't know him, Bill Cross created the Nigrescence model, or the Negro-to-Black Conversion model, and he truly is the GOAT in terms of Black psychology. In 1971, um, he published this seminal or foundational piece in the Black world. So, very similar to what Joseph White did in his 1970 Ebony piece that talks about building a Black psychology model, he wanted to make sure he contributed, or made a contribution of a psychology of Black Liberation, but he wanted to communicate to the people, um, that was his first lens, not to communicate to the scholarly audience, for them to digest, but also to speak to the people to see how they can interact with this material. So, in this 1971 article, he talks about what we now know of as being "woke" and taking action.

So, he was the first to really problematize that in the way that we currently speak about it. Of course, he's writing during, you know, the time of the Black Power movement. So, he is influenced by the work of Frantz Fanon, among others. He's influenced by Frantz Fanon, both in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and *The Wretched of the Earth* in terms of understanding liberation. So, what he does in this initial 1971 article is one: he calls, he creates a call to arms, to Black Studies scholars that our goal or what we really need to be focusing on is conscientizing our Black students to bring a level of liberation within themselves. So, really we're talking about mental liberation here. And that is our role as Black Scholars to help young Black people liberate themselves from the chains of white supremacy, in terms of mental chains of white supremacy. He proposes five, what he's calling at that time, five stages that people progress through. And again, these stages are, um, he's modified those over the decades, but the initial stages of one, pre-encounter, and this really reflects where somebody has internalized negative messages about being Black, what it means to be Black, they have adopt more of an inferiority standpoint. Whatever white folks kinda think about Black folks, that's what he believed, that's what they've internalized. They've also got this more dualistic thinking, um, where Black is bad and white is good. So, he's got this pre-encounter he discusses. And then there is this notion of encounter, which is really a process of change, and that is where individuals start to begin to realize that race and racism matter and that being Black in this, in this, society matters.

So, they begin to question things; they begin to feel guilty for their past beliefs about Black inferiority and white superiority. And then, they also began to, um, yeah, they feel cheated in some way and anger in some way by their socialization. And then they have the immersion, immersion. And this immersion reflects more of this, um, what he was responding to at that time, the way that media portrayed Black people that are involved in the Black Power movement as militant. That's the way that is in terms of this "Blacker than Black."

This, in terms of people being angry for, for righteous reasons, to be angry, upset about white supremacy. But at the same time, there's different dimensions there. There is a dimension where folks will put down white folks and build up Black, Black people. And then there is a time where people begin to renegotiate relationships with white folks. So, it's both, all of that, is in this immersion, immersion. And then there is this idea about commitment. This is where folks have internalized a positive identity about being Black. So, they understand white supremacy, they understand what being Black means to them. They feel, they not only say, um, "I'm Black and I'm proud," but they feel it, they've internalized it. So, they don't feel as though they have to perform Blackness because they embody Blackness, if that makes sense.

**Augustus Wood:** Yes.

**Helen Neville:** And then this other stage that he talks about that actually has tapered off in the literature and the articulations of racial identity. And when I tell you, you'll probably say, yeah, that makes sense. This is the internalized commitment. And this is where individuals take action where they are contributing to the development of the Black community in working toward the positive well-being of Black community. So, now the typical stages when people talk about racial identity, they leave off this commitment piece.

**Augustus Wood:** Yes.

**Helen Neville:** But, in essence, so we're talking about...he's really describing the process of becoming "woke." And then, as we know, "woke" is just the notion of cognitive consciousness, awareness of things.

**Augustus Wood:** Yes.

**Helen Neville:** And then there's the actual behavioral piece that he has. So, that's his Negro-to-Black Conversion model that he presents in 1971. It is so influential that subsequent models about other racial identity formation, gender identity, women's identity, gay, lesbian, bisexual identity really draw from the insights that he had to make during this, during this art, in this article.

**Augustus Wood:** I want to kind of touch on this piece you brought up though, in terms of the performativity aspect of it. Especially when you contextualize the idea of being "woke." This idea that you don't have to perform Blackness. That you, that you are, you are Black, you embody this Blackness and therefore, you know, it's just an organic, just an organic, way that you carry yourself and the things that you do and the work that you do, could you dive deeper into that? Because right now there's been some issues in relation to the idea that there are...

and we can always touch on the issues of these corporations like Amazon or the NFL, who put in racism on their websites. But they're, they have a bunch of predominant Black workforce that are paying minimum wage to no benefits to, or they refused to speak out when there's an actual call to redistribute funds away from how the police are getting military grade weapons, et cetera. And so, in other words, there's a lot of perform, a lot of performance around it, around Black injustice, particularly during this, during the George Floyd protests. And so there's been a lot of criticism about that. So, how do you see the issues of this so-called "woke" moment, in relation to what Cross is putting forward in these ideas about the raising of consciousness and the moving away from the performativity. What do you, what do you think of that?

**Helen Neville:** Uh, that now that is a question. I'm going to have to answer that in multiple ways. So, let me just first talk about it on individual levels than system and structural levels, and then dealing with white folks. Okay? So Cross's model is really a conversation about within group differences among Black people, particularly African Americans.

**Augustus Wood:** Yes.

**Helen Neville:** And so, the questions that you asked was more on a, on a systems and group level of white, white-dominated systems, which I will get to in just a second on that one. But for Black performativity, that essentially means where people not, I'm sure, you know, of folks who feel as though they got to wear the dashiki, they gotta wear this, they're policing other people's Blackness. They themselves feel as though that they either have to change their name or only associate with Black folks. And I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that. I completely understand that. I myself find my, I find myself in these immersion, immersion stages, when I am inundated with white supremacy and experiencing microaggressions. So, I understand that. But, what he says there is that people are performing Blackness as opposed to internalizing, just operating on who I am as a person, I don't ever have to prove I'm Black.

**Augustus Wood:** Exactly.

**Helen Neville:** There's a little bit of a difference there.

**Augustus Wood:** Yes.

**Helen Neville:** And once you've internalized it, you don't necessarily have to tell people, "I'm Black and I'm proud," because everything that you do reflects and represents that. But, sometimes people misunderstand this internalization as being a raceless identity, and that is not the case. The internalization reflects, "I'm comfortable with my Blackness, I feel connected

to other Black people, and the struggles of other oppressed groups, and I don't have to prove my identity." That is where that comes from. The question that you asked though, was really about what happens when, when the world becomes aware of anti-blackness becomes aware and is challenging white supremacy and white violence. And the way that manifests itself; well white individuals and white organizations are trying to assuage their, their guilt in many ways. And what does that process? And they are doing this performative anti-racism work.

**Augustus Wood:** Yes.

**Helen Neville:** And that's what you're, to me, that's a little separate. There is a scholar that I would love for people to take a look at, and that is Janet Helms. She is also a couns- she's a counseling psychologist, African-American woman, doing doing work on Black and racial identity development for years. And in 1984, she presents this white racial identity model. So even before, like Robin D'Angelo and other folks who are profiting off of white racial identity, she's talking about what does white racial identity mean? And she has a six stage or six phase model. And the first three phases are about abandoning, uh, racism and how people abandoned racism.

And then the last three phases are about adopting an anti-racist identity. So, using her model of white racial identity, I can, I can see this performative anti-blackness falling within her model. And that is around, she calls something called "pseudo-independence." And this is where people cognitively understand that, you know what, racism is a problem. White supremacy is a problem we feel—and I feel so guilty about it. And I want to help other people. And so that's this "white savior" kind of mentality. But, the ideas you've been talking about race makes them feel uncomfortable. So, these are folks who were, can't have an honest conversation and their entire ways of thinking about race is outward-facing. Poor Black people, I feel so sorry for them. They must be struggling. It makes me uncomfortable to talk about this, but it's always outward-facing as opposed to really beginning to look at themselves in terms of their own beliefs, their own socialization, their own levels of racism, et cetera. So, the question you raise, I see is that these organizations partly are operating under this pseudo-independence, which could be, you know, where, um, they want to appear as they get it. But, we know that they really don't get it because they haven't turned inward to look at their own policies, procedures, and practices that discriminate against people of color, lock them out and support white supremacy. It could be that, and that's a generous interpretation. Another interpretation could just be they want to profit at this moment and they will do anything to message, to have a message that seems consistent with what people want to hear.

**Augustus Wood:** I think it's yeah, I think you're exactly right on both points. And I guess I guess where I was trying to take this was- and diving a bit deeper into the class issue because I loved how you put it to it serves as the individual performativity of it in relation to Black folks. Let's go, let's go back to Cross now. And when you have some of these African-Americans usually that represent the upper classes that have that type of issue in terms of performativity. You know, like you'll have the brother who will wear his dashiki going into Bank of America as an executive on a casual day, you know, and then going out and say these things while at the

same time taking Black people's houses in the neighborhood who can't afford their payments because they can't find work. And so, it just it's just, it's always been interesting to me. That's why I love this idea of and I get got this for myself too, when I was read *Black Skin, White Masks* when I first read it. Is that how do you deal with that particular issue when you haven't had that type of self-emancipatory moments that raised the consciousness level to where the per- the performativity just kind of fades away? How do you, in other words, my question to you is, how, how, how, do the, how, how do African American upper class people who had been in a performative stage...how do they without, you know, because again, I agree, which you a hundred percent that as scholars, we should be using the classroom and other spaces that we deliver, our education, our political education to raise the consciousness level of people. So, is there a, is there a chance for these upper-class people who are so far removed from this type of consciousness level raising environments, social conditions, et cetera, has their class remove them so far away that they can't branch away from the performativity and get to that point, that Cross and you talk about, Is it possible based on where we are in this political economy, these social conditions for that they occur on a wide scale? Because I'm sure you'll get one or two who will have a self emancipatory moment, they'll actually get back into working for Black Liberation. But on the whole, what do you, what do you think about that is, is there a possibility for them to cross that bridge that we're talking about?

**Helen Neville:** Oh, what a great question, what a great question. And I would actually say that those individuals who do, the elite, who do these performative acts of Blackness don't necessarily have a Black consciousness. And to have a Black consciousness means that you are aware of the everyday conditions of Black folks, so not just you and the elite and that you have escaped somehow white supremacy or you think that you have because of your upward mobility. And so Black consciousness means awareness of the majority of African-Americans or Black folks in the context of the United States.

**Augustus Wood:** Yes.

**Helen Neville:** Yeah, and if you don't have that, you don't have Black consciousness.

**Augustus Wood:** Yes.

**Helen Neville:** And unfortunately, we can read narrative after narrative. I'm sure they are in books; I'm sure they're in people's family stories that Black folks are in these settings performing, um, Blackness in some ways and not really feeling connected to other Black people. And then they end up getting burned. They end up understanding they don't get the promotion. They tap into all of the ways in which they've been discriminated against. And then they have almost a come to Jesus moment about what this means for themselves. And, unfortunately, it takes those kinds of things to wake people up and to begin to try to, um, make some changes. But, even if you change people's consciousness, that doesn't necessarily

mean that you change their commitment to the cause of Black Liberation. And that's the key that we have to get folks to... how is it you transform this notion of being "woke" to actually to doing actual behavior, to rolling up your sleeves, to not only giving money, but being in the community and being of the community, not in the role of expert, but in the world of a community member to learn and grow. And those are the things that we need to kind of unpack in that.

**Augustus Wood:** Thank you so much. Uh, the listeners can't see me, but I'm pumping my fist in the air because that's exactly the point that I was trying to get to. And you just said it just perfectly that how do we move? How do we move certain groups of our own people from "woke" to what I call "agitated."

[CROSSTALK]

**Helen Neville:** Oh. I love that.

**Augustus Wood:** You know, I use the term "agitated" because again I come from a union-organizing background. And to be "agitated," means that you are directly involved in building movement activity, like there's something that you're doing on a consistent daily basis that is for improving the strength of your community, towards a goal. There has to be a goal and you're helping move towards it. And so, I think you said it perfectly that we're currently in a moment now where there's such an abundance of "woke" that is not spilling out into "agitation."

**Helen Neville:** Mhm-hmm.

**Augustus Wood:** And that what Bill Cross offers, and then we're going to talk about you, your work in a minute, what, what, what this, what this scholarship offers us is a lens or framework to really look at ourselves from, from, from the, from the, for lack of a better term on the inside looking out. We have to look at ourselves and understand where we are, that we're not just this homogenous bubble of Black people who all believe the same thing. There are things that both either individually or as a collective that we have to deal with if we're going to construct goals for Black Liberation.

**Helen Neville:** Absolutely, absolutely. I love the way that you're framing that. And I like this idea to toward "agitation." Love that. I think that's incredibly powerful. Um, perhaps I can share with you some work that Bill Cross and I did.

**Augustus Wood:** Please.

**Helen Neville:** Uh, building on his model that gets to this and might have some insights to be able to move people toward "agitation." And it builds on some—several years ago, I collected these racial life narrative interviews with people in United States, with people who identify as Black in the United States, Bermuda, South Africa, and Australia. And there are about 64 of these interviews, most of them individual, but a couple of focus groups. And Bill and I analyze these data to talk about this notion of "racial awakening." And "racial awakening" really is a different articulation of encounter. And the way in which we talk about the racial awakening or these "aha" moments in one's identity... So one can always know that they're Black, but this "aha" moment transforms how they understand being Black, okay?

And as we know, as people watched, I couldn't watch the George Floyd murder, but people watched that on the screen. That could be an "aha" moment for some people, the notion that they've always known that they were Black, yet they, they thought that we were past some of the blatant forms of oppression and racism and they see the life literally being taken away from a Black man. And that could be a moment of "racial awakening" and it sparks this process, so we need to tap into these "aha" moments or these racial, "racial awakening" moments. And based on the interviews and, and as analyzed in the interviews, what we found was there were three things that really stimulated a "racial awakening" moment: one was this personal experience and are observation that we've already talked about; another was taking, was education, like taking an African-American Studies course. These can present an "aha" moment. And the other piece was activism, people becoming active in their community or in school universities. And they might not come to the activism being completely "woke." But, in the process of that, they experience this "racial awakening." And then with the "racial awakening," there's multiple interlocking outcomes that could come from this. It's, you have to obviously continue to explore what that means. But this "racial awakening" through continued exploration can lead to a sense of anti-racism activism, particularly for those people who were already part of movements, and these could be non-racial movements. So, those folks who are working in non-racial movements, we need a tap those folks to racial, to, to radicalize them in terms of our interests.

**Augustus Wood:** Exactly.

**Helen Neville:** And an, another important piece there is this notion of racial pride and acceptance that "racial awakening" left, left that we can't just activate people, motivates them to "agitation" if the only thing that we focus on is oppression and the ways in which multiple forms of oppression impact our lives. We also have to tap into, we have rich long lines of resistance; we have so many cultural victories in our things, we need that tap into that cause that also assesses pride. And then the other piece is that this "racial awakening" leads to increased possible selves. This increased notion that there are multiple ways of being and extrapolating on that. We, in addition to the current struggle that we are working on now, we also need to do some dreaming within our communities about what society we want. What are the possible ways in which we can live, and how do we make movement toward that?



**Augustus Wood:** And I think, I think really that you hit on something incredibly important that other guests on this show have said in the past is that one thing that we've noticed about this current moment is the lack of a vision for what we want. So being able to dream and to create a mission and vision towards, for the "agitation" and always go back to goal-setting and movement action must have a goal. Well, you can't have that goal without, like you said, you have to dream about what you want your destiny to be. Otherwise, you're standing there and it's like I okay, so... What's next? [LAUGHS]

**Helen Neville:** Right, right, right, right. Exactly.

**Augustus Wood:** [LAUGHS] And so you get all these resources now. So, what are we going to do then? [LAUGHS]

**Helen Neville:** Exactly? And, and the notion though, of dreaming about the possibilities, I would invite us to kind of adopt almost some Afrofuturism. Some of the possibilities don't even have to be grounded in what we think is possible, at this moment. It has to be envisioning something completely different as well. So, for example, you know, I remember being in graduate school when apartheid activism was happening and people were just thinking not in my lifetime would this happen. And then all of a sudden it seemed as though overnight apartheid was becoming dismantled before our eyes. And had they not, had, hold on to the possibility of democracy in their country, they wouldn't have been able to move as quickly as they had because it was like, I don't know, two years, it seemed like all of a sudden they were having the elections. And so, we need to be prepared and we need to have that even what might seem impossible at this moment does not mean it can't be. Um, and the thing is we owe that not only for ourselves, but we owe this for our future, for our children and their children and their children's children. And yeah.

**Augustus Wood:** And I think that's I think that's why like folks like folks like you and I and others that we we've had on the show that we chose to go into education as scholarship. In that, you know, while we're also organizers on the ground, we, we truly believe in leaving remnants of education and ideas for those who come after us to build upon, you know, we're very adamant in that, and that when we create a body of work, when we create a text or an article, we create, we give a speech, we do something that's related to the building of consciousness... that we want to leave an actual material, a material relic or an artifact that we want those things to be available to build for the, for the future. And I think that that's kind of where we want to go with this, and this is why "Off the Shelf" is such an important project, and that we want this to be that type of artifact that touches on both here in the present and in the future, as we move towards this idea of liberation and what we want it to look like

**Helen Neville:** Exactly. Exactly. I love that. And there's just one other than, as you're talking about that and our conversation, reminds me of one other article, not article, but author, that

people should be familiar with is Paulo Freire. And I know I'm mispronouncing his name. I try, but I always mispronounce it. And people of course know him for his liberatory education practices. He is a Brazilian critical educator and he has a number of books. One of the books is Pedagogy of the Oppressed. He also helps Pedagogy of Hope and another series, the Pedagogy books. He is influenced by the work of like Frantz Fanon and other folks. And what he does is he introduces, I'll say the English term, he introduces or popularizes the the concept of critical consciousness and what that means for folks, and this is related to racial identity in terms as a way that Cross talks about it, um, being "woke." Although Cross doesn't use those words and having a commitment, internalized commitment. And so, critical consciousness from this framework includes becoming aware of the root causes of our oppression. So, that's the idea he's working with adult literacy, with peasants, et cetera. So what, what, what, what, what is it that you most want in life? What are some of the issues that most concern you and folks begin to articulate those and then you get to what are the root causes of you not having the money you need? What are the root causes of you... So, asking those kind of questions really helped facilitate in this context, people having a critical understanding of capitalism, of white supremacy, of patriarchy, of other forms of oppression, and how they intersect. If we talk about what is the root cause of why Black and Latinx, and indigenous people are most impacted by COVID economically dying more health-wise, why? So you get to that...

So, that's that critical awareness. But again, awareness is not everything. So, he also talks about folks then acting on that awareness. So, now that you know that these are the, these are the root causes, what kinds of actions are you willing to take to begin to address these inequities that are in the systems. But, in order for people then to take this informed action, based on our critical awareness, people must have a sense of efficacy. That is, that they can impact their lives. They can take change that's going to, they're going to take action that actually can make change. So, I see the role of Black scholars as promoting this critical consciousness, helping people adopt a structural analysis of the issues that we're facing, helping people understand there are multiple ways in which they can take action that can make a difference, developing that efficacy, and then taking that next step of actually taking that action, not as individuals, but working collectively. So, I see all of that working well. Della Mosley, who's a counseling psychologist, has an kind of an anti-Black racism critical consciousness model that she developed working, that she developed with her participants, and her participants are folks that were part of the movement for Black lives. So, she did these interviews with them and based on this, created this anti-Black racism critical consciousness model to really identify how does this occur. So, I think those, those are some of the things that I also wanted to to identify and leave you with as well.

**Augustus Wood:** So, there are two phrases that you mentioned there that I definitely want listeners to kind of hone in on "critical consciousness" as being one of those, one of those frameworks, theoretical frameworks, which you also said something a few times call "internalized commitment." I think that's such an, a really powerful way to describe how that, that bridge that we talked about earlier with Bill Cross is that you get from that moment a "woke-ness" to where there is an internalized commitment that is part and parcel to that self-emancipatory moment that you have, so that there is now this "agitation" within you and so I really liked the way you you said that because it definitely, when people listen to this episode,

they're going to walk away with this particular phrases of things that they can look up as well as looking, for those types of things in the, in the scholarship you recommended.

And so, that's something that I've never thought about myself and listening to you talk about this is to frame it in that way "internalized commitment," because that's really what it is, is that you're living your day to day in struggle or trying to build something like, it's not like you're obsessed, but there is a, there is a commitment from mentally, physically, emotionally, et cetera, to this liberation. And I've never really thought about it in terms of it being a commitment like that. But, in other words, I'm drawing back into my own personal experiences when I had mine around 2011 and how it just took over, how I thought and acted in relation to my day to day. And then coming here and working with you and Sundiata and Lou Turner, et cetera, and how they accelerate it to where I'd had my full-on self-emancipatory moment and so just just so we're hearing you go through these frameworks, it's harking me back to my own personal experiences and I really appreciate that, and we hope listeners get as well for those that are trapped in that area of trying to cross that bridge.

[LAUGHS]

**Helen Neville:** There are so many things about what you just said that I love, I love your, the, the phrase of self-emancipatory process because that's really what this identity model and developing critical consciousness is. And so, I appreciate you naming that. And I'm glad that this idea about "internalized commitment" stands out to you. I want to make sure that you know, that that is actually Cross's fifth stage that he talks about and essentially and what he, what that peace though, just to add to what you said, what's needed for that piece is a sense of collective identity, a sense of connection to other Black folks. In order for you to develop a sense, my purpose and my meaning in life is to contribute to the collective well-being of my community. That is that just wanted to clarify that.

**Augustus Wood:** No, I'm glad you did. That's well said because I think that that's

kind of what we want to get to this point of that regardless of what I do with my life, whatever skills I have, whatever I'm doing it is to the benefit of strengthening the struggle for Black Liberation. That's, that's at the core of what we do. So, I think that's, that's perfectly well said. Now, I know that we want to end this very soon, but I can't end it without you talking a bit about yourself, just a bit to give the listener somewhat of a kind of, I mean, the list— what we want to know how you got to this point of studying the scholarship you study when you, when you got into psychology, education psychology, the work of Black Liberation, what led you to your moment? What led you to your point? If you're, if you're cool with talking about that.

**Helen Neville:** Yeah, I mean, that's such a great question. Um, my lived experiences led me to wanting to study this, right? I think experiencing racial oppression is profound. And I think having that exp- and wanting to make changes, I think that has impacted mine. Um, coming from a family who were part of the Civil Rights Movement. My parents participated in the March on Washington, and having that be drawn, my dad was much more radical than my mom. And then also messages about class growing up, the fact that we don't need to have more than other people, that is unfair; the fact that my dad would, have, allow my brother to have these, um, conversations about Marx when he was in school and they would have critical reading groups in the house. And so, I think those early socialization moments, coupled with

my own personal experience, set the foundation for me wanting to explore this. But, I think intellectually, I remember, I tell Lou Turner this all the time, um, watching the movie... it's a South African movie, I keep forgetting the name. And after the movie, going outside and picking up Lou Turner's book. And he has a pamphlet on Frantz Fanon and Black Thought and Soweto, and just being like this is me. This is this notion of this radical notion of humanism, Marxist notion of humanism. Ah, this is a framework that I resonate with. So these many, many years later have the opportunity to work with Lou and learn from him has been a highlight. So, those are just a few things that stimulated my own development. But, we can't underestimate what our lived experiences are under white supremacy. They are so profound and shape us in many ways, and I wish they didn't. Um, so.

**Augustus Wood:** No, I think that's that's perfectly said. Um, I just I just Dr. Neville, I want to thank you so much for for joining me. This this has been just an absolutely thrilling episode. You're def- definitely leaving our listeners with so much to not only think about, but I guarantee you they're going to be digging for these books and these phrases, as much as possible. Because I think you, I think we're getting at the heart of a lot of questions that people are having now, particularly now that the election is over. There's a lot less, more activity on the ground than there was a month ago, five months ago, et cetera, since the George Floyd protests. And so a lot of people have questions about where do we go next? And I think that this episode answers some of those things is that we have to start asking questions and digging into the intellectual rigor of what we want Black Liberation to look like. Helen Neville: Thank you. Well, this has been incredibly, uh, rewarding for me to have this conversation with you. Thank you for hosting this podcast, and I appreciate the opportunity to share some thoughts and observations.

**Augustus Wood:** And so, yeah, we're definitely going to try to get you back on, and we definitely would it make sure to listeners are aware that the "Off the Shelf" podcast is a partnership with the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. And you can find the Humanities Research Institute and this podcast at [hri.illinois.edu](http://hri.illinois.edu) and we'll see you on the next show. Power always to the people. Take care.