

Transcript: Why Are White American Women Posting as Black and Latinx Women?

Producer, Angela Jackson: Warning, in this episode there are mentions of police violence and substance abuse. Please exercise caution for all listeners under thirteen.

Courtney Jones Carney

Do you remember back in September 2020 when there was all this news about an associate professor at George Washington University who was pretending to be an Afro-Latina from the Bronx?

Rosemary Ferreira

I do remember that. The professor's name is Jessica Krug and she was a professor in history and Africana studies. She released a public letter in which she apologized for being a quote, "cultural leech" and a quote, "coward" for lying about her race and ethnicity, because in truth she is a white Jewish woman from suburban Kansas.

Courtney Jones Carney

So what's really interesting here is that Krug has built her career as an academic studying African and Caribbean cultures and she's claimed activist fighting against gentrification and police brutality in New York City.

Archived Recording (Jessica Krug)

It's all part of copwatching and all part of the culture. And I realize now that I'm talking about this a little bit institutionally. How did I get into this? I had no choice really, right? So growing up there's no escape from escape from police violence. Literally, I was trying to think about this earlier this week. Some of my earliest memories in life are of police brutality. I remember one summer when I was about five, walking from the park with my brother who was about twelve at the time. And having the police throw him down on the ground. This twelve year old boy walking his sister home from the park. So that's been my whole life. When I was a little bit older, but not too much, they shot Amadou Diallo around the corner from my home. For those of you weren't in New York City at the time, or might not remember, he's a man who was shot 41 times. 41 times by undercovers, right? They later found out that the first bullet killed him, entered his chest, shredded his aorta. There were bullet holes in the bottom of his feet, right? Is there any level of this violence that's acceptable? No. But there's a particular kind of choreography in the ways in which we're slaughtered.

Courtney Jones Carney

In that clip, Krug was facilitating a workshop on copwatching, a tactic to combat police brutality at The Studio Museum in Harlem where she fabricates a childhood story of growing up in the Bronx. She even says, "Those of you who were not in New York City." Was Krug even in New York City?

Rosemary Ferreira

She was not. Not only is Krug's story grounded in stereotypes, the way she carries herself and performs this persona is also stereotypical and harmful. In the workshop she is wearing a short, tight black skirt with a black tube top and a cheetah print jacket. And I want to point these things out not because I want to police what women wear, but when you are trying to perform what you perceive Blackness or Latinidad to be, it is extremely harmful to fall on stereotypes that hyper sexualize Black women and Latinas.

Courtney Jones Carney

You know that's such a great point, Rosemary. As a Black, curvy woman I am constantly having to overthink the clothes that I wear, and how I will be perceived. And if people will look past my clothing and see my intelligence and understand the content of what I'm attempting to say. Codeswitching can be such a huge part of professionalism for women of color, for people of color in general. And so when we think about codeswitching it's not just the way that we dress, our behaviors, but it can also be about our speech. So, let's here this clip where Krugg is displaying stereotypes about the way she feels people of color speak.

Archived Recording (Jessica Krug)

I also want to call out all these white New Yorkers who waited four hours with us to be able to speak, and did not yield their time to Black and Brown indigenous New Yorkers. Who thought their sense of, "I thought cops was here to protect us, but I guess they're not." Boy, you think this sort of shock and empathy thing is the moo. Okay. So a couple of things: You was talking about Che, you was talking about moving against the gang database, what's up with that? 'Cause last I checked, that's still operating. Last I checked, that's still up. You talk about us to show up, been shown up. In all these neighborhood council meetings trying to fight gentrification, ain't nothing change. And then real quick I wanna talk about some of my experiences in the Bronx. On Thursday. So you heard from all who were there and thank you much power to all my siblings who was standing. My Black and Brown siblings who were standing.

Rosemary Ferreira

I wish you could see our faces because we're all like absolutely not. As a Dominican New Yorker I just wanna say her accent is just...No. No, no, no, no. But I think it's just it's really interesting because I know for myself, like when I get heated or I get like really frustrated like my accent comes out even more. Or like I got really excited or something like that. But to hear her like speak with this tone in her voice and this accent and like trying to call out the white gentrifies, and calling herself, part of this like Black and Brown family, is just absolutely like I want to use the word ridiculous.

Courtney Jones Carney

Look, I changed my voice all the time. You may have noticed it from podcast episodes like it's inconsistent. However, that didn't even sound like the first person. Right, like those seem like 2 distinctly different identities that are presenting two different people in that space, and so it was really difficult for me to digest because not only did she put on an accent, but then she changed her cadence. She changed her grammar. So much was different from the first clip to the second clip.

[Theme Music]

[Conversation]

Courtney Jones Carney

Hello! My name is Courtney Jones Carney.

Rosemary Ferreira

I am Rosemary Ferreira, and welcome to The Table podcast where we unpack questions regarding race, ethnicity, culture, norms, and current events.

Courtney Jones Carney

Unfortunately, Jessica Krug isn't the only white American woman to have been recently exposed for posing as Black and Latinx women. On January 7, I received a text message from Rosemary. It said...

Rosemary Ferreira

And another one. Courtney responded...

Courtney Jones Carney

...What in the world! This is an entire mess. And her sorry not sorry response shows that she has learned zero lessons.

Rosemary Ferreira

Prismreports.org had reported that Natasha Bannan, a human rights lawyer from Georgia claimed to be Puerto Rican and Colombian. But it's not just her either, Kelly Kean Sharp, a former professor of African American studies at Furman University who identified as Chicana but did not have any ancestral ties to Mexico. And of course, there's Rachel Dolezal.

Archived Recording (Rachel Dolezal)

I...I mean there weren't...on the application there weren't any boxes.

Archived Recording (Talk Show Hosts)

If there were, if there were boxes. If it said white, Hispanic, Black, Asian or other. What would you have picked?

Archived Recording (Rachel Dolezal)

I think when it comes to fill out forms, right, the form in particularly usually defines things.

So for example, on one of the forms that I filled out which was called into question this summer, it said white in parentheses, having European ancestry. Black, in parentheses, human populations originating in the continent of Africa. And you know, Native American, it defined. And it's like, OK, I've been a professor of African history black studies, so it's like when it came, you know --

Archived Recording (Talk Show Hosts)

Yeah, but which one you check though?

Archived Recording (Rachel Dolezal)

I checked white and Black because we all have human origins in the continent of Africa. I mean, that's true, right there. Human populations originating in Africa is everybody.

Courtney Jones Carney

While human population did originate out of Africa, Dolezal is a white woman who identifies as a transracial black woman. Yes, you heard that transracial, we're going to have to unpack that a little bit later. She was the former president of the NAACP chapter in Spokane, WA in 2015. Her white parents reported that she is not a black woman.

Rosemary Ferreira

After texting each other article after article with news about white American women posing as Black women and Latinas. We wanted to make sense of this consistent pattern that we were seeing. Why are white American women pretending to be Black and Latina women? And why are they mostly in the field of academia and within social justice movements?

Courtney Jones Carney

To address these questions, we spoke with Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel, an assistant clinical professor at the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, who identifies as a white woman raised in a multicultural household and community.

Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel

Hi my name is Dr. Kyla Ligget- Creel. I'm an assistant clinical professor at the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. A little bit about my background, I guess my family is a very interesting family. My mom was born in Argentina and grew up in Puerto Rico. But her parents are from Tennessee, you know, white folks that lived in Tennessee and then they went to Argentina and worked for about five years and then spent 15 years working in Puerto Rico. So when my mom was born, her first language was Spanish. And because she was born in Argentina during the Peron era, they said that she had to have a name that was Latinx, so her legal name is Margarita Anna but her parents were like we're gonna call you Peggy Ann. So it you know, even like her birth certificate and what she was called was sort of this dichotomy. My dad, on the other hand, was born and raised in Indiana, white guy from Indiana. They got married, but my dad was a humanitarian worker in Vietnam during the war and after serving in Vietnam for four years, he decided he wanted to make that his life's work is working in Southeast Asia, so he was in and out of Vietnam and Cambodia every year for 18 years. At six weeks at a time, and then when I was 18, he moved to Cambodia. And so he's lived in Cambodia for 25 years. I think I just gave away my age, but that's OK. You can do the math so you know. Here's this white guy living in Cambodia who speaks Camara everyday and so he is very much involved in the Camara community. My mom who is a white, you know, white woman born in Argentina, raised in Puerto Rico. First language is Spanish. And she lives here in Maryland and then when my parents got married they were living in Vietnam and decided to adopt a daughter. And my sister is she is Afro Amerasian so her biological father was African American and her biological mother is Vietnamese. So when they moved here to the States this was in 1975 by all appearances, she looks African American. Nobody looks at her and says, oh you look like you're Vietnamese. She looks African American, so in 1975 there were, you know, the transracial adoption with two white parents, and an African American daughter. And then

they had me, and so they wanted to make sure that my sister was raised in a community where she saw people and had role models that looked like her, and so they decided to move into Shaw, which is in Washington DC. You know, where down the street from Howard University. This was in the Late 70s, early 80s, which you know during the crack epidemic and Shaw was severely impacted and Shaw was also impacted by the uprising when Martin Luther King was murdered. We had buildings that were burnt out. We had schools that you know, were underfunded, severely underfunded, and we had, you know, crack vials in what I thought was my backyard. And then later on was like, oh, that's an alley. I thought it was a backyard, OK? And you know prostitutes that were on the corner and I was raised in a black Baptist Church, 6000 members founded by 17 runaway enslaved people. And so I grew up in a church where, you know, Martin Luther King had had preached, where Jesse Jackson had been regularly there, where, you know, it was a center of the civil rights movement in DC. So I grew up, you know, being the only white child in a all black church. You know, being an usher, you know on the Usher board and an Alto in the choir and so my upbringing was very influenced by the African American community because that was my church that was my community and those were my schools. And so, uh, when I went to college, I decided I wanted to major in family sciences, but I focused on the African American family, 'cause I knew that I wanted to go back and either work in DC or work in a city that was similar to DC. And then I went to Smith College and I chose that 'cause it's an anti racist institution so I wanted to make sure that my social work education would be with anti racism lens. And then I ended up in Baltimore and I've been here ever since, and I've worked as a therapist and now work with grassroots organizations addressing trauma and racism in Baltimore. So that's a little bit about me and sort of my background.

Courtney Jones Carney

Thanks for joining us today, Kyla. Can I call you Kyla?

Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel

Yes of course please.

Courtney Jones Carney

So like you talked about your family growing up and living in different countries, living in and among different cultures honoring those cultures but not like consuming those cultures or putting those cultures on in a way that would not be genuine and show appreciation and understanding for those cultures. However, we're kind of seeing this phenomenon where white women are posing as black or Latinx women and recreating their entire family history. And so What are your reactions to those sort of...this new phenomenon that we're seeing where white women are adopting these personas that. Really become caricatures of what it is to be Black, or what it is to be Latinx. What it is to be a Person of Color?

Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel

Yeah, you know, it's interesting when I've seen it happening and I've watched the stories about it. It brought up a lot of questions for me because I, you know at first really had to think like why, why, what, why are they doing that? Like what are they trying to get out of it? What's their purpose in it? And I've come to a couple of different thoughts. I don't know if any of them are right, but just some thoughts. I think that they may be in places where they don't understand why it's OK for them not to be in all spaces, and I think that comes with the privilege of being a white woman, right? That they're sort of like I belong everywhere. And so if you're doing social justice work and somebody says, oh, you can do this, but right now we need to have a Black space or we need to have a Latinx space so we need you not to be here, that their privilege gets riled like well, now I should be anywhere I want to be, and they're not

exploring that and saying, no, that's actually not what there should be. And so you're actually using your privilege to say, well, then, I'll just morph myself into this other, you know, expression, or this other being because I should be able to go wherever I want because I'm not used to barriers, right? So I think that that's one interpretation. I think that when, you know, if we're looking for a theoretical framework to say, like why, you know? I look at Beverly Daniel Tatum's work when she's talking about racial identity development, and I just wonder if some of these women are like in that immersion phase where they're uncomfortable with their whiteness and they're not doing the work of figuring out how can you be a white ally? Right? Like really a white ally so they become this sort of denial of like oh, I wanna do this other work and I believe in it, but I'm uncomfortable with my whiteness and I don't want to be the white person in the room doing this work where sometimes you do have to say oh sit down now? OK, stand up now? OK you know and be able to move like that and so then they kind of were like well I'm uncomfortable with it. I don't like these barriers so I'm going to morph into this other presentation. What gets me is that they don't get that that's a problem like, but like, even if you think like, well, maybe let me see that they don't stop and go, but I don't have the same experiences as the people in this room I don't like I don't live this this existence, right? I mean I can walk anywhere I go I am treated as a white woman and so the other people in this space do not have that privilege. And even if you want to tan and perm your hair and all that craziness, the reality is you can undo it. People of Color cannot undo that and be like today I'd like to be white and then tomorrow I'll go back like that's not a thing so. Those were two thoughts that I had and again I don't know if it's right, but sort of again. I still wonder like, but they still don't get that it's wrong. That's the core that come back to like, but even if that's what they do, they don't get that there's a problem with it.

Rosemary Ferreira

Yeah, your point of um, Dr. Tatum's racial identity development, and like the feeling of being uncomfortable with whiteness reminded me of like yeah, like there's this pattern as well not only are they white women posing as Black and Latinx women, these women are also in academia, in like social justice spaces, one of them is was the former president of the Lawyers Guild, which focuses on social justice in the field of law. And so I feel like there's also this thread of feeling uncomfortable with their whiteness because they're there in these spaces where like what you're saying, like People of Color have developed because these are safe spaces for them living in the hostility of what is white supremacy. But I want to just see here if there's additional thoughts on connecting these white women to academia and to these social justice spaces.

Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel

I yeah. I mean, it is interesting that that's one of the places that you see it pop up the most. That you know it, and I think it's the maybe the not understanding of how as a white person you can do some social justice work and still be white and be OK. I think it's part of it is the cultural humility piece like sit down, it's not your time to talk. Sit down right and being OK with that and even being OK with like I've been in spaces where I've looked around and said, wait a minute we don't have a member of the community here so we need to create a space for a member of the community. And when I said that somebody said, well, this is already a big group and so if we start opening up it gets bigger. So I had to say that's OK, I will give up my seat and that way it can be the same size, but you have a member of the community sitting at the table, right? So, but if you are not able to really be humble enough to be able to be like, yeah, I'll give this up right? Because it's not about me. If you're not willing to say, well, you know. Yeah, maybe I'm not going to be a tenured professor because I'm not gonna publish on the backs of People of Color, because that does well for me. Then then they may fall into that trap of like, well, I don't want to give up my seat, but I do want to fight for social justice. So maybe if I say, well, I actually

represent that community, then you get to keep a seat at the table. You know, and I just wonder if that's part of it, that there's also like the how do you move your profession along? Again, I don't understand it because to me it's so like but don't you see that's wrong? Like that's counter to what you're supposed to be working towards, so I don't. I don't get why they don't move that place. I also think that they don't recognize that there is power in being a white person doing this work. In that there are places that I can get to say things and do things that People of Color cannot, and so the difference is that I use that power to break down barriers, or I've used that power to open up doors and then I get out of the way. Like, OK, this is moved. Let me get out of the way and get other people in there. And they don't seem to understand that that we should be using that to break down barriers 'cause we can do it in a different way than People of Color can. So I think it's interesting that they don't use that privilege in a more productive way.

So thinking about this connection to academia. Could it somewhat be related to the fact that that's a place where you study where you possess expertise so you're studying and learning a culture and then you deem yourself an expert in that culture. So there might be Black studies or Latinx studies or Latin American studies right? And so then you're in academia, you're learning about the development of individuals, the foundational moments for you know, monolithic sort of large groups of people. And then you begin to adopt them as your own. And so, to me it seems like academia could be the perfect place to develop this sort of identity, because you are studying and because you've received a degree and somehow in your head, that means that you're now an expert on what it is to be Black or what it is to be Latinx. And then you try that on, but what I think is really interesting about many of these women is the comments of how their stories were so stereotypical. Right, like it was very much so. This one person, I think Krug said that she was a child of the ghetto or something along those lines and talked about having to leave an event because her parents had just OD'ed and the stories that she told where the stories that reinforce very harmful stereotypes about groups of people. Because there's a lack of understanding about the diversity, perhaps within a particular racial or ethnic group, and so you're just trying on these stereotypes and trying to figure out what fits, because that's what you study, and that's what you learned, and that's the lens that perhaps was used throughout your education was more so about deficit than anything else.

I think that there is a pull sometimes to tell like the for lack of a better term, the war stories, right? Like I came from this background and I fought my way up and you know all of this other stuff and but it's interesting because even if you go with the idea of. OK, they've learned, and so they've you know, studied, and so now they consider themselves experts. But if you're truly an expert, you know that learning is forever and that you never arrive at a destination of knowing everything and that, especially in this field as a white person, I can study everything I can read everything I can go to every. I can do all that. I'm never going to know what it's like to be a Person of Color walking down the street. Never, I'm never. I'm never going to know that right? And so, but I do think that, you know you have to be able to admit that, and I think honestly, I think there's some professors who don't like to admit that they don't know everything. I mean, I'm not throwing shade at anybody in particular, but I think that you know there is this like, well, I'm the expert so I'm here to answer all of your questions right.

I still just find it interesting that like OK, so even if you know all about African American history or Latinx History and cultural norms and rituals and all of that, that that there's some point that you cross over and say, yeah, this is OK for me to pretend that I am this person like that, that that seems like there's something else going on there, you know, like something else is happening that would make you even think that that's OK. Especially in the field of social justice because I mean, we know like we know that that is not OK, so. Yeah, I so the only thing I can think of that is some way it's like street-cred right like

oh, let me make up these stories to show that I've gone through the storm and that way I can have these conversations. But again, to Courtney's point. It's so harmful because especially when you're just using stereotypes like you know, oh, this is my experience and it's like, well, first of all, it's not your experience. But second of all, you're just grabbing these stereotypes and applying it so that people are like, Oh yeah, that's that's the reality 'cause look, there's a perfect example.

Courtney Jones Carney

I think it's such a great point. I know as someone who does diversity, equity, and inclusion work, I'm a black woman who grew up in Philadelphia in a middle-class black neighborhood, attending a private school and playing tennis and so I'm someone who has had a great deal of privilege and access, and I've had white people tell me I can't do this work because I don't know what it is to be Black and I'm like hold wait a minute. No, I walk through the world Black every single day, but because I've had privilege doesn't mean that I'm not Black. And that doesn't mean that there wasn't a time when I drove a bougie car and got pulled over by the police many times because it was not believed that that bougie car belonged to me, right? And so I do know what it means to be Black, but being Black doesn't necessarily mean that I have so many war stories about not having access right? But I still have these experiences because that black experience is not monolithic at all, and so I think that that brings up this great point of there's this idea of what it means, right? And in order to do this work, you have to have the struggle story, because that's going to inform the work.

So we back up for a second and like discuss like what is this phenomenon called like, you know, sometimes on social media people talk about like folks are black fishing, so they're making adjustments to their features. We may have seen some videos specifically it makes me think of these videos that involve Asian men who are doing like this elaborate hairstyle that involves like providing additional texture to their hair right? Which would make their hair appear to be, you know. I'm going to put this in quotes, but like "African American hair black hair", right? That's the goal. Or you know, we'll see folks like the Kardashians who are tanning who are augmenting their bodies and so that might be referred to as black fishing. I don't know if there's an equivalent for folks who are you know attempting to look as though they are Latina. I don't know if there's an equivalent term. We've heard the term transracial come up like can someone you know transition from one race to another, but does that apply to everyone? Is there only like a one way transition? Do you have to be, you know, white presenting in order to transition into a different race and if you're visibly a person of color, are you able to be transracial? But none of those terms really seem to fit. The phenomenon so I don't know what are your thoughts. Anyone wanna come up with a term that describes what's happening, or at least say what they think it's not?

Rosemary Ferreira

Well, I don't. I definitely do not have a term, but I think something that I did also want to bring up, you know, I identify as Dominican, I identify as Latina, even though I'm also like trying to move away from, you know, the problems within Latinidad. But what a lot of Black folks from Latin America were pointing out was that you know these women were able to adapt Latinx identities because within the Latinx community, light skin, white Latinx are usually the ones who hold power and who do get access and who do get you know, promoted to the President of the Lawyers Guild or, you know, get the associate professor tenured position. And so I did just want to bring that nuance too within the Latinx identity, because while it is an ethnic group, you know, even though again, it's very complex, within that identity there are different racial groups and what Black folks are saying from Latin America is that you know, these white women are getting to do that because of how whiteness is centered within Latinx identity in

the 1st place, right? So yeah, definitely still do not have a name for it. But I just find it interesting that Latinx identity is within all of these examples or well not Rachel Dolezal, but in these recent examples, and I think the ambiguity of what like Latinx means, is a way that they're able to kind of sneak in.

Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel

Yeah, I don't. You know, it's interesting because you know what Rosemary, you know. It's interesting how colorism is also a part of this conversation. Right, that there is this sort of like oh the lighter the better and so you know all of these women would be considered very very very light skinned. You know, because they're actually white, but that. So in some ways they were sort of like, Oh yes, I'm gonna morph over or I'm gonna pass as this other race? But they're still holding a lot of power because of their light skin because of their, you know, their hair being straighter, you know things like this, so even within the community they were holding privilege because of their light eyes, light skin, straightened hair. You know that kind of thing. And you know, it's interesting because of course you know the term of passing, at least in the African American community, was actually to pass so that you could gain privilege and try to avoid some of the oppression and discrimination. So if you could pass, then you would do that to try to survive in this racist society. So it's interesting to hear that white women are also are now like trying to pass in the other direction, where it's like you're passing to try to give up certain privilege, but you don't give it up because in the end you can always go back, yeah, you can literally at the end of the day be like now I'm white, right? Like so you're not really giving up any privilege, so I don't. I don't think there is a term. I also think gender we have to look at. Why is it white? Why is it women who are doing this and what is it? Is it that they're not able to get the power that the men do? And so they're not going to go that way. And so then they're going to go in this other direction and be able to hold this. What they see is power, but not understanding how damaging they are being by trying to do it that way and what they're taking away from people who are actually living the lives that they're pretending to live.

Courtney Jones Carney

Yeah, so I guess just thinking about like what does it look like to do that work and what does it look like to appreciate culture without appropriating culture which you know again is not the phenomenon that we're seeing? It's not just as simple as appropriation. What many of these women have done? Is much deeper than appropriation, but we still don't have a term for it. Maybe we should. The three of us get together and coin something because I doubt that we've seen the last of folks being exposed for whatever this phenomenon is. But yeah, how do you go about like respectfully connecting and building relationships? Particularly with cultures and communities that are different from your own.

Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel

So I think that's a great question. I mean what I've tried to do is learn as much as possible, listen as much as possible. Uhm? I regularly, you know, say like hey, I'm a white woman entering this space and so you know if there are times that you need me to exit then let me know. Or if there's times that you need me to step in, you know. And and being upfront with that to the point where some people are like, yeah, we're OK that this is a multiracial space like that's OK and I'm like yeah, I'm OK with that too. But you also you know we need to recognize that in this place. I am a guest. And this is not my space. This is your space. And so you know, recognizing that and even creating it. You know when I created the Healing Youth Alliance, which is for African American youth and they have African American social work mentors like I stayed completely out of the space and behind the scenes to do the work until they were like no, we want you here and then. It was like, OK, I'll come in so I think you know, recognizing the history and the culture and giving honor to that and then also being mindful that it's not mine. It's something I can appreciate and honor, but I didn't do the work. My ancestors didn't do the work and if anything my

ancestors were harmful to the community that I respect and honor and I recognize that I totally get it. And I don't deny it because why would I? And so yeah, I think just holding that line and just being clear. So when somebody is like, well, I said that in a meeting with I was with three African American men. And I said, I recognize that this is a movement for black men. And I am obviously not a black man. I am a white woman, so you know, let me know when you want me in or out or whatever, and one of the guys was like. I really thought you were black like I like looking at you, hearing you, I thought you were black and I was like no, I'm white. So it you know, like just owning it and holding it and being OK with it makes such a big difference, because I've never had anybody been like, you know well. No, we don't like the fact that you're here. OK, I don't have an issue with that. Like if they're just like, well, this is a black only space. Alright cool, I'm out and that's fine. I think that there have been times where there is an interpretation of a white woman doing this work that it's like, well, you're trying to take advantage of somehow or benefit from, and so I've had to be very clear and that's why I have certain policies that I hold for myself to try to avoid that, but I also say. I mean, my whole job is working in a black community with black organizations. I have a job because that's what I do. I don't work in, I don't work in white communities. I don't get paid because I work in white communities. So in that way, yes, I have a job because I work in black communities and so you have to have those conversations sometimes. But yeah, I think I'm just very I try to be very clear and very upfront about my race. And recognize when I should be in spaces and when I shouldn't be. And then honoring and you know, like the the mural behind me where I talk about, oh, here are the women in this mural. And This is why I show it is to honor the work that the Members of the Community do that is not the work that I have done. But it's you know every day you have to do it to make sure that you're honoring the communities that you're working in.

Rosemary Ferreira

Yeah, I definitely appreciate that. And I agree that you know 'cause. I worked at a organization that primarily served Latinx youth and there's we had a an event once talking about cultural appropriation with staff and staff were primarily Latinx, but we also notice that for folks who are in positions of power at this organization, they tend to be white women, and those white women were asking, you know, like OK. You know, essentially having that kind of? I don't necessarily say identity crisis, but definitely being like well. How can I appreciate, you know, Latinx culture? And I, I think that like for me, my response is essentially like what you're saying you know, like. The culture that we have is a result of or at least. I'm going to speak from Dominican culture. As a result of, you know, colonialism, and I feel like. When white American women adopt or appropriate these cultures, it's it's, I feel disrespectful, I mean I feel or disrespected, and I feel like we can't have anything for ourselves essentially right like I feel like. You know, white women can kind of like throw on the like sexy Latina throw on the spicy Latina throw on the you know let me dance bachata and like you know speak Spanish and all of that and then they get to take it off and still be seen as the you know pure angelic white women, right? In society not only in the US society, but also in Latin X or Latin American cultures as well, and so. Yeah, it's kind of I just feel like can we at least have this? You know, like can we have this for ourselves? So yeah, I appreciate it. I definitely agree with the points that you're making.

Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel

And if I can just add to to Rosemary's Point, 'cause when you said that I was like. Yep, and that's why there's distrust of white women is because when it hits the fan right then all of a sudden all of that, Oh my name is this and this is my identity an an. All of that goes out the window like Whoa, wait a minute I'm a white woman so I shouldn't have to deal with. You know, so if you're if you're sort of throwing on this like I live as a black woman and then you get pulled over by the cops, are you saying to that police officer hi police officer? I want to make sure you understand I'm a black woman. I'd like to be treated as such. I bet you anything they're not, I bet you they're not, and I've seen situations where somebody

who's white is like, oh, you know, I hang out with all black people and I'm I'm really part of that community, yeah. But when those police pulled all over, 3 black men were handcuffed and sitting on the on the curb and you're stand around walking around, I didn't see you say, excuse me. Would you handcuff me too and throw me down to the ground 'cause I'm part of the community and that's where they get dangerous because 'cause white people get in those situations. Then they're like, oh, I'm all for the 'cause. I'm all for the community. And then when something happens, suddenly they're not asking. I'm sorry, could I be treated as a person of color they're holding onto their privilege? Like, well, hold on, let me call Daddy real quick and make sure that the lawyers here. They're not saying. Well, no, I'm not going to use that privilege. They use it fast and that's why there's so miss so much mistrust. Because the privilege is in that bag, right? Like I'm gonna live this life when it's like exciting and like oh, I can wear this with a badge of honor. But then when it comes down to it, that privilege comes out real fast and there's not a like. Oh, let me let me give up that privilege in that moment, and it puts other people at risk. It puts People of Color at risk 'cause all of a sudden you're looking like did you just sell us out? And so it makes the work so much harder? 'cause I do see that as a pattern that happens.

[Music Transition]

Courtney Jones Carney

So, what do we call this phenomenon? Cultural leeching, black fishing, cultural fraud? Or maybe it's an extreme form of racial capitalism, which describes the systematic way that white people and historically white institutions extract social and economic value from people of color. While we're not exactly sure what to call this, we would like to acknowledge that the term *transracial* comes up a few times in this podcast and it is used to describe different things. In one instance, it is used to describe the adoption of a child who is not the same race as their adoptive parents. But also Dolezal identifies as transracial and suggests that she transitioned from being white to being black. We would like to acknowledge that the term transracial and the connection that Dolezal makes between transracial and transgender is offensive and damaging to the transgender rights movement as we try to figure out the right term to use to describe this phenomenon, we hope that we can agree that transracial. Isn't it? If you have suggestions for the naming of white women posing as Black and Latinx women, please email us at ile@umaryland.edu.

End Credits (Producer, Angela Jackson): The Table is a production of the Intercultural Center in the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Maryland Baltimore. It's hosted and produced by Courtney Jones Carney and Rosemary Ferreira. This episode was also written by Rosemary. The show's executive producer and editor is me, Angela Jackson, senior marketing specialist in the Division of Student Affairs. A big thank you to our guest, Dr. Kyla Ligget-Creel for coming to our table and joining the discussion. For more information about the Intercultural Center, including events where students can learn more about race, ethnicity, culture, norms, and current, visit umaryland.edu/ile. Thanks for listening, see you next time.