

TW for Ep 3:

Racism

Racialized gender bias

Misogynoir

Misogyny

Chronic illness

Transphobia

Xenophobia

Sexual assault

Karel Green 0:00

A quick announcement before we start the episode today. On our Twitter there will be links to a questionnaire that we would ask anybody at any stage in academia to fill out, to do with our upcoming episode about the different career paths in academia and the general knowledge known about them. The questionnaire is completely optional. You don't have to fill in any of the questions if you don't want to, and it's completely anonymous. Welcome back to the POCSquared podcast hosted by Sehher, Pruthvi and Karel. Today's episode is about the problems with the Athena SWAN charter. But please be aware that the following topics are discussed: racism, racialized gender bias, misogynoir, misogyny, chronic illness, transphobia, xenophobia, and sexual assault. A transcript and show notes for this and all episodes can be found on our website www.poc2.co.uk. That's www dot POC, then the number two dot co dot uk. And if you have any comments or questions, we can be found on Twitter and Instagram at POCSquared, that is POC and then the word squared with no spaces. You can also contact us via email.

POCsquared@gmail.com. That's POC, then the word squared @gmail.com. With all that said, we hope you enjoyed the episode. Today we're talking about the theme of Swan charter. And the problem is it has the clear and obvious problems it has. But I think a good place to start would be talking about how you like found out about the Athena SWAN charter and our personal experiences with it before we talk about the website and the stuff on the website. So how did you first learn about the fetus on charter?

Pruthvi Mehta 1:56

Okay, so I think what would be helpful is for people who don't know, read the site definition of what the Athena SWAN charter is. Read the goddamn like Wikipedia definition here. So, this is what they claim to do. The Athena SWAN charter is a charter established and managed by the UK Equality Challenge Unit in 2005 that recognizes and celebrates good practices in higher education and research institutions towards the advancement of gender equality, representation, progression and success for all and I think we can all say that we don't think they've done that don't

Karel Green 2:30

Nope. Does not, especially the "for all" section.

Pruthvi Mehta 2:35

Yeah, yeah,

Sehher Tariq 2:36

That definitely almost made me crack up.

Karel Green 2:38

Exactly. Oh, God. It's just so bad, it's just so bad.

Unknown Speaker 2:44

I first came into contact with it when I was literally just searching up universities, when I was thinking of applying for my degree. And I think I came across it when I was looking at your university websites. And I always noticed it either had this, this Athena SWAN thing attached to the, you know, curriculum and or the degree certification or whatever. And I just felt it was just sort of like a badge they slap on there to say, hey, you know, we, we are part of this, you know, scheme to get more equality into STEM and physics, but it was literally just a footnote. And it didn't explain what it was, like the university website barely explain what is it? You know, I didn't think anything of it I didn't think it was particularly good or what it was doing. It was just something that was there and not very well explained. What does everyone else think about it? How did you first come into contact?

Sehher Tariq 3:40

So, I think I first heard about it, I think, first of all, it was JUNO, it was initially called JUNO or it was like a different kind of charter that was called JUNO and then it kind of progressed into Athena SWAN. And I think...

Pruthvi Mehta 3:59

I think I think erm just a little little tiny correction. I think project JUNO, is it's like a different thing from specifically the Institute of Physics. But I think the SWAN charter is something that's more for general across the board.

Karel Green 4:11

That makes more sense, because in case this is your first episode you're listening to we are all like physics graduates in some capacity. So that's probably why because I definitely remember hearing about JUNO a lot.

Pruthvi Mehta 4:24

Yeah.

Karel Green 4:24

And it doesn't it go along with like Athena, Juno... what are they Greek Gods or Roman gods? I don't know. I'm just upset.

Pruthvi Mehta 4:31

Yeah, different name depending on... The same thing.

Sehher Tariq 4:33

Erm I can't remember how I first heard about it, to be honest, I just remember when I was like, I hadn't heard of it before being at university, that's for sure. It was probably... It always. I always seemed to find out about things in my last year. So, in my master's year, or in my third year, third or fourth year. I probably started getting more into like equality and diversity then and then, yeah, I just heard about it after like kind of looking at the website, the... Our University website and seeing that we had like the silver Athena's SWAN award or whatever and just like seeing a page full of white white women and like yeah, cool, nice. That's probably just how I kind of first came into contact with it. It wasn't exactly like... I didn't really care much about it initially, I was just like ugh and then went about my day.

Karel Green 5:28

Yeah, exactly. Like similarly for me, it was like a footnote. They'd mentioned at the end of an announcement or when they're like bringing somebody in, but... it never actually impacted my like... I can never say that this happened to me because the Athena SWAN charter was there. And I vaguely just remember hearing about it during our time at uni, again, I think probably in the last year when I was getting into diversity stuff. But I think the main reason I've heard about it was that when we were trying to get into diversity work, we didn't begin diversity work, because we wanted to make change that came afterwards it began because we needed help. We were women of colour, and we were in STEM, and we were struggling because of several different reasons. We were looking for help. And I remember sort of, us looking up and like the Athena SWAN charter had nothing that would help, especially me as an undergraduate like there was nothing that it actually did. And I remember it getting thrown around a lot when we'd go to places and ask for help from EDI teams and stuff like that.

Pruthvi Mehta 6:42

Yep.

Karel Green 6:43

They'd be like, oh, but we have the Athena SWAN charter. And yeah, I just... It's never done anything good. I fear to think what things were like before the Athena SWAN charter because as far as I can tell, I'm agreeing with you guys, it's just a bunch of white women running around every single academic I've spoken to is... The only women academics I've seen, and white women who've gone to Cambridge or Oxford, and they're all just like I'm so tired. I'm so unhappy. The workload is crazy, and none of them are happy. So like what? What's happening? And that's pretty much my experience with the Athena SWAN charter.

Sehher Tariq 7:24

I'd like to point out as well as that we... When we went to talk to people about equality and diversity, because at one point, we me and you, Karel, we... We were trying to, kind of, see if there's any way we could actually kind of do this as a job.

Karel Green 7:40

Yeah.

Sehher Tariq 7:40

Erm and then when we were talking to people, whenever we talked about the Athena SWAN charter, everybody would just hate it. They'd always say like, they didn't like the charter.

Karel Green 7:50

Yeah, the consensus. The consensus is the... That a lot of universities will find their singular like maybe white woman, singular brown man or whatever that is in the department who's already dying, and give them a bunch of paperwork for the Athena SWAN charter, or the JUNO award or whatever it is. And that's... Yeah, and again, a lot of people I remember them saying "box ticking exercise". They don't get any extra allotted pay or time as far as I can tell. They literally just get given more work. So it's already it's doomed to fail because people already massively overworked in academia. And then they get... getting given this thing which is supposed to help but then not getting any help with it. So nobody could even like the Athena SWAN Charter. And yeah, I am my my most lucid memory of this charter though, was in... So again, back in our very first like foray into EDI work, back when we were tiny, we didn't realize it was a sector wide issue, we thought, oh, we'll just go to the people in our department. It must be an issue here, if we could sort it out, that's, that's all good and done. We can wrap it up and be done with it. And we had a meeting with the EDI team, all three of us were there, along with a lot of our other friends. And we were talking about the issues we had as women in STEM, because we are women in STEM, and they were just like, oh, but we have the Athena SWAN charter. And we were just like, yes, exactly. We're women. And we need help. We don't think the Athena SWAN charter does, you know what it says on the tin. Here are some things we're gonna need to change. And a lot of those problems were related to the fact that we weren't white because we are all women of color. And the... wasn't it... was she? I'm not gonna say her name. But was she the head of the EDI team is it or was she just the person on it?

Sehher Tariq 9:51

Erm no, she was the head.

Karel Green 9:53

Yes, so the head of the EDI team, who I believe is no longer at QMUL literally said the words we are focusing on women first and race later. And that has stayed with me since she said it. That is such a... I remember her hand movements, I remember it all such like a vivid memory I have. And that has just completely destroyed whatever like small hope I had for the Athena SWAN charter to be effective.

Pruthvi Mehta 10:24

I'd like to say this is like literally, erm very representative of the like... Her actions and words there were very representative of the actual Athena SWAN charter and how they treat intersectionality. And by that, I mean they don't have any.

Karel Green 10:42

Exactly.

Pruthvi Mehta 10:42

The way to deal with different minorities and different minority groups and the problems they face like their meant... They say they deal with it in a sort of hierarchical way and it's not in non in an all inclusive, holistic way where they tackle everything at once because they realise that that, you know, minorities have intersections, we are all women and we are all of color, we are women of color. That you can't just treat us, you know, our our problems the same as what white women in STEM face because that's not, that's not, the same you can't equivocate the two.

Karel Green 10:46

Agreed.

Pruthvi Mehta 10:50

That's what the SWAN Charter seems to be doing its work. And I think that's a really bad way of approaching diversity. I would also like to say that, um, the the whole idea of and this is just a personal thought, I want to hear what you guys think. The whole idea of having a top down approach, like a sort of thing that universities can slap on to their degree classifications, rather than listening to students, especially those who are who belong to those minorities, and then taking on their ideas about activism. Instead of you know, looking at a government initiative or looking at like a initiative developed by hierarchy. Those within... Some of those who aren't even in academia will have come up with the Athena SWAN and then the universities... I think that's a really bad way of doing activism. I think it's much better to have a grassroots approach, look at what the students especially are suffering with, and do their work instead. Instead of slapping a badge on to random degree courses going "look, you have government approval, because you know because of this" but that's not how activism works.

Karel Green 12:17

Exactly. I completely agree.

Pruthvi Mehta 12:20

Like that's not how anything is going to be solved. Go ahead.

Sehher Tariq 12:24

But I think this does come into the fact that they are already work... Overworked and being told that they need to do the Athen SWAN stuff. So when it comes to

someone bringing forward another idea that they're not really going to take that on board because they always already have to do something else. So obviously like grassroots it should be the way to go but that is just not going to happen. As long as the Athena SWAN is there and they have to do it. Because it is kind of a department expectation to to put in an application for Athena SWAN because it looks good. Like oh we've got a silver award. We've got a Gold Award. And that's another thing that I wanted to point out before, is that when we were talking about how it's just so set of like women and men, like the statistics of Athena SWAN, I can... I saw that when I was when I was sitting in on EDI meetings, and I was seeing the data that they were going through for their applications that they were putting in and it was literally just like, this is a percentage of females and each in each pay grade and this is the percentage of females in each PhD, postdoc and all that kind of stuff. And it was it was just so it was just wasn't representative at all.

Karel Green 13:37

I am right now trying to get data that is not just male and female. Because as we will talk about this further on in the episode, but there is a lot of issues already with just saying male, female, let alone other intersectionalities. Every single application I ever put in for universities, undergrad, masters, PhD, whatever it was, all of them asked for my nationality. All of them off my race. Some of them asked for my parents like nationalities and race. All of them ask for my gender. So they have the data, but they find it difficult to get the data. So I'm working with the head of the EDI team right now at my university. And she, she... I will give her credit. She's listening to me. And she's trying to get the data. And on top of that, she's an actual... She's an academic, she has a job to do like everyone else. And she has access to the gender diversity statistics, but she doesn't have access to like all the diversity statistics. And it just shows the way that they're built like because she's the head of the EDI team, she has access to it, where she can go and get the data and just the data that that isn't gender diversity just isn't in there. Like I'm just like, why would you not even put in there. Because they they have it because we know they have it? Because they've asked these questions, but they... You literally can't even get a hold of the data. That's how they don't even think about putting it somewhere accessible. You know, I'm not saying that random people can just find it online, but I would like head of EDI teams to have access to it, should they want it and they don't. And it's really really, really bad.

Pruthvi Mehta 15:10

Yeah.

Karel Green 15:11

I'd also like to point out, we'll decide if we're going to do a separate episode on this or if we'll just mention it here. But there is a race equality charter. And this... As much as it's good that it's there. It completely rubs me the wrong way. Because the idea of splitting of gender and race is so problematic...

Pruthvi Mehta 15:31

And like can I, can I say that the Race Equality Charter...

...Is from the same people are bought you Athena Swan. It's called the Equality Challenge Unit, if you go... Like on the page. So we're gonna talk about the different things that Athena SWAN believes that they are fixing, they're like 10 different like little manifesto points, which we are going to deconstruct later. But on this page, if you look, there's literally like the Race Equality Charter button.

Karel Green 15:33

Yes.

Go ahead

Pruthvi Mehta 15:34

On the webpage. So it's the exact same poepl and I'm gonna be honest, I don't trust it. I don't trust like that.

Karel Green 16:03

We don't trust like that. And obviously this will be in the show notes, links to this will be in the show notes, but we are going to read all of it and we are going to die together. This is what the episode's gonna be. Oh my gosh. You might want to read along with us. But if you go onto the page, I'm gonna just quickly read out the paragraphs before the actual... There's 10 principles of the Athena SWAN. And when you first open the page, it says about advance HE Athena SWAN charter, advanced HE Athena SWAN principles form the basis of the charter. They relate to the May 2015 criteria and process. Don't know what that means. There's no links to what the May 2015 criteria process was. So there we go. And no, I'm not willing to read the page that says history of Athena SWAN pre may 2015. I just don't trust like that. So. Exactly. So, the first paragraph, it says in May 2015, the charter was expanded to recognize work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law, AHSBL, and in professional support roles, and for trans staff and students, the charter now recognizes work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly and not just barriers to progression that effect women. Okay, so we have one small mention of trans people, but not very well. No mention of STEM despite the fact that STEM has this. So I don't know why that's not in there. And that just again leads into more of I think we said it in previous episodes how STEM think that it's, like, inherently objective and apolitical and just self removes itself from things like this, which is not good as we all know it isn't. So big yikes. And then the next paragraph before we get into the 10 principles, say the Athena SWAN charter is based on 10 key principles. By being part of Athena SWAN, institutions are committing to a progressive charter, adopting these principles within their policies, practices, action plans and culture. Has anybody felt that they have adopted these principles within their policies, practices, action plans and culture in any of the institutions you've been in?

Pruthvi Mehta 18:23

Um, well, I mean, we're gonna read the principles. We're gonna find out they don't mean anything and neither does that sentence.

Karel Green 18:33

I cannot wait. Okay, so number one, we acknowledge that academia cannot reach its full potential unless it could benefit from the talents of all. Okay, that's kind of, I don't know how I feel about that. Unless it could benefit from the talents of all. I don't like how they're kind of just gonna suck the energy out of every single person we could get kinda deal.

Pruthvi Mehta 18:59

That sounds... Yeah, sounds weird.

Sehher Tariq 19:03

I mean, I think that's a pretty generally good point that...

Karel Green 19:06

Yeah.

Sehher Tariq 19:07

Academia needs diversity. I think that's generally what they meant that it just needs diversity from all areas. So like, I think first point it's okay.

Karel Green 19:18

Yeah. You know what, I think it's just really a bit awkward. I don't think it's a bad point...

Pruthvi Mehta 19:24

I think that the, the "all" isn't fleshed out at all.

Karel Green 19:28

Exactly. Yeah.

Pruthvi Mehta 19:30

Who are they?

Karel Green 19:31

Who are they? But yeah, no. Valid. I mean, like the point we are here to pick apart the Athena SWAN, which is fine. But yeah, I feel like it's like you said, Sehher, I agree that it's a generally good point. I just think it could have been worded a bit better. I don't know who wrote this, but it wasn't well. Number two is that we commit to advancing gender equality in academia, in particular, addressing the loss of women across the career pipeline and the absence of women from senior academic professional support roles.

Sehher Tariq 20:04

I mean, there's definitely an absence, all right.

Karel Green 20:07

Yeah, definitely. So it says...

Pruthvi Mehta 20:11

So, I think we talked about it mainly before, either during a podcast episode or like, you know, just general conversation, but the idea of like, the whole career pipeline, I feel like that's very much a kind of, like, comparable to like, leaky pipeline idea.

Karel Green 20:26

Yes.

Pruthvi Mehta 20:26

I don't like it because, well, first of all, like, sure there are women who go through academia and you know, leave because of circumstance but there are also loads of women who just don't get into it at all.

Karel Green 20:39

Exactly. Yep.

Pruthvi Mehta 20:40

Like this is this is, this is a issue that starts from the moment, you know, someone thinks about even going into education or even higher education or even secondary education, just education in general. This is... These are, these are barriers, you know, you know, institutionalized misogyny and racism etc. Like barriers from literal birth, right? It's not like it suddenly starts affecting you halfway through academia.

Karel Green 21:08

Yep.

Pruthvi Mehta 21:08

So I feel like that, like the sentence didn't acknowledge that at all.

Karel Green 21:13

I agree, yeah. Like institutionalized racism, you know, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, all of that comes in. And like you said, none of us here are a big fan of the quote unquote, leaky pipeline or career pipeline, or the, and it says the absence of women. And it's like, again, they're not absent, they've been forcibly pushed out. The amount of people, right, they say it's a leaky pipeline, but I'm telling you, the amount of people who are women who are also like other minorities as well, who have actively applied for whatever roles and not got them is not a leaky pipeline, that is a barrier. Those are completely different things and it hasn't actually addressed that at all. And it says I don't know, it just says we commit to advancing gender equality in academia. But it doesn't say how it's going to do that. Yeah, what means by gender equality?

Pruthvi Mehta 22:08

The final point is that the senior academic, professionals and support roles. There are roles that, you know, women and the intersections they're of, they face... the problems that they faced before, like I said, before they reach these three roles, and the role outside that as well, and that isn't mentioned.

Sehher Tariq 22:24

I think, I think that is a big problem that they have that they don't... So when we first started talking about equality and diversity with the EDI committee, they were... they told us that they were mainly dealing with issues related to the actual staff. And then obviously, we're... we talk about the problems that there are in PhD and even before that as well, and then they don't deal with that at all. So why, why does Athena SWAN think that there is no problem or they just can't be bothered dealing with another problem like that, but it's under the same, I don't know how to describe it, but it's like that their whole idea of what they want to achieve is applied across the board. And it isn't just applied to, like you said the senior roles. We had to basically force the EDI committee to start considering the, like, the other aspects. Let's actually start considering that there's problems not in in the top tier, but there's also problems in the undergraduate and postgraduate.

Karel Green 23:30

Exactly. Start from the bottom and work your way up for things to actually have sustainable change. Because I remember, Sehher, you had to... We had to actively sort of campaign to get undergraduates and master's students on the EDI team in a university.

Sehher Tariq 23:50

Yep.

Karel Green 23:51

I don't know the numbers, but I'm pretty sure that there's more undergraduates than there are staff in the university.

Sehher Tariq 23:57

Yep.

Karel Green 23:58

And they didn't want them on the team. And the EDI team at my university now is invite only. And there's already an EDI rep for PhD, which is again better than QMUL...

Sehher Tariq 24:12

Actually no in QM, they had PhD representation, but they didn't have undergrad or master's students on there.

Karel Green 24:19

Yeah, well, it seems like a standard. And that's weird to me. Because I can, I can understand not wanting to have like 40 people in a room or whatever, but at least have like a separate one where you have like 10 undergraduates and like 10 master students, so you can talk to them and be like, what's going on? And then you can have the dialogue between the two teams kind of thing. Maybe a small idea. Weird, very weird. I don't. That's, again, you're right, that's built to like cause biases and it's an it's not a good look, lads. It's ugly, it's not a good look. So, number three says we commit to addressing unequal gender representation across academic disciplines and professional and support functions. In this we recognize disciplinary differences including the relative under representation of women in senior roles in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (HSSBL), and the particular high loss rates of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM). So, here we go first mention of STEM, which was not mentioned in the opening paragraph when the rest were...

Pruthvi Mehta 25:33

Literally.

Karel Green 25:34

So yikes.

Pruthvi Mehta 25:38

So I think like my main criticism about this particular sentence would be... Would kind of echo what I said for number... The second one, which is, you know, the loss, it's not a loss rate. And even like... thinking back to, you know, our first year of undergrad, in forgetting intersectionality right, it's not like there were equal amounts of men and women. Like literally like our our own group own tiny group of women maybe like, I would say less than 10% of the actual entire cohort were women. And we all like, we all sort of had our own little group and that and the rest were literally literally man. And, you know, that's not, that's no loss rate. It wasn't equal to begin with how is it a loss rate it wasn't high in the... High in the beginning.

Karel Green 26:22

Exactly

Sehher Tariq 26:24

Okay, so I looked at, there's a tab of history of Athena SWAN pre may 2015. And Athena, Athena SWAN actually began by looking at science, technology, engineering, medicine and mathematics. So it started off focusing on that and then in what we're looking at, I said that expanded to other areas, including like Humanities and Arts and Business. So I think that that's what that first paragraph meant that it began with STEMM and then expanded on to other areas.

Karel Green 26:58

But it doesn't even mention stem first paragraph. This is the first mention of step number three. So that's the whole mess because I will keep repeating it. STEM has really, really bad issues of self excluding from decolonial efforts. And it's, it's a very, very bad habit that happens. So I Oh, gross, gross. Like, I had no idea that the Athena SWAN was started in STEM and then expanded into other subjects, which is problematic in itself because you'd think they'd be like, okay, we need to tackle everything because everything's bad. But I don't like that. It also says in this we recognise disciplinary differences, including so it's split it into like the AHSSBL, and STEM and doesn't mention what the differences are or how they're gonna like tackle them differently, like it's so vague.

Pruthvi Mehta 27:55

So many degrees that fall on the umbrella of being within both. Yeah, like, example like a history of medicine degree where, like, where would that be? Do you know what I mean like,

Karel Green 28:07

Or like I'm human and physical geography like yeah...

Pruthvi Mehta 28:11

Exactly

Karel Green 28:11

Those are two sides of the same coin.

Pruthvi Mehta 28:16

There's, there's no need for this distinction. There's no need for this divide. But as we look at it with, you know, slight differences they majorly faced same issues, I don't like the splitting. You know, I think that's one of the main things that we can talk about, like in another episode, this whole, you know, arts versus science mentality is where a lot of the actual exclusion comes in as well. Like it, it will make the whole facts versus feelings thing is something that is really problematic. And yeah...

Karel Green 28:44

And I know, obviously science is more than one degree, humanities is more than one degree, social sciences more than one degree and whatever, but if you just take the things they've listed, they listed like 10 things. There's more than 10 degrees like just say all. They are both too vague and not vague enough. Oh, bad, bad.

Pruthvi Mehta 29:09

It mentioned support functions. It doesn't list support functions in the in those areas, that's not... Sad.

Karel Green 29:17

You know, and again, is it up to the overworked stressed out white women who already are in roles where they get given the work of the Athena SWAN to work out

what support functions are, that's not fair. I'm... No bad. Number four is a lot shorter. It's just we commit to tackling the gender pay gap. I am a big... Well as a woman, I already do not like the gender pay gap. But okay, somebody else speak about this real quick. I'm gonna do some quick googling.

Pruthvi Mehta 29:51

Okay, well, I think you know, the gender pay gap, you know, first of all, they they need far more words on this. It's in a quite complicated topic. So I think the one thing people forget about the gender pay gap is that, you know, there are intersections within gender. And when most people think about the gender pay gap, it's literally always like, you know, it's always the pay of white women versus the pay of white men, they... We've seen charts, we've seen loads of charts where people have broken down income by race, right, and, you know, women being... women of color even farther, even farther disadvantaged, and so that's not on anyone's mind when they talk about the gender pay gap. They don't, you can't, you can't tackle something like pay gap, right, which has a lot of intersections inside it, you know, and a lot of different reasons as to why... you can't just like, lump it together as like a gender pay gap because that's, you know, only taking it as very one dimensional approach.

Karel Green 30:56

Go to our website, www.poc.co.uk/media, where we have a whole list of links to resources, right? But if you break down the quote unquote gender pay gap, it literally is tiered, in that it goes white men, white women, black men, black women, and then usually it just says like, Asian, Asian men and black women usually changed quite quite often depending on what year or wherever it's been done in. And then then usually just get down to the Asian women if you're lucky. And then other because they list, you know, it's black, white, Asian, that everybody else gets lumped into other. Yeah, and whilst that's already problematic, it's literally when... You're right, when they're thinking about the gender pay gap it's always white men versus white women. It's usually white women getting stressed out, they're not getting paid as much as white men. But the second you take even one, we're just talking about ethnicity into account. The pay gap between white women and everyone else is huge. And it's really bad, I would say because race especially you can't hide race, depending on how severe like a physical or mental disability is, or if you're trans but passing, or you're like your background, so they don't know if you come from like a rich or poor background. These obviously have effects on how much you get paid overall, but you can sort of hide some of them more than you can hide others, and you can't hide your race. Well, this is like a phone interview and you get hired on the spot and you happen to be born in the country that you're applying for. You know, we don't have accents, that's one piece of privilege we do have. Yeah, but

Pruthvi Mehta 32:49

Or if you're even whitepassing like you can't...

Karel Green 32:52

Exactly exactly or like I said, like if you perhaps you have like a bad back, but you can't see it because obviously people wear shirts and stuff like that, you know, you can solve get away with other things. But ethnicity especially is something that really cannot hide. And it's a lot of implicit bias as well. It's not overt all the time. So you can't just say we're committed to tackling the gender pay gap, because there are so many issues within the gender pay gap. And clearly you're not tackling any of them from the previous points that we read. Other than quote unquote gender because as we know, gender is not even just male and female, but that's not even been mentioned. So there we go gender pay gap, this does need more words.

Pruthvi Mehta 33:38

Yeah, exactly. Cuz they haven't. I mean, this is a running theme throughout all of these but they haven't listed how they're gonna... So, what is the point?

Karel Green 33:47

Yeah, so we commit to tackling the gender pay gap how? When? You could say that every year till the end of time and never actually do it.

Sehher Tariq 33:55

I feel like that applies to like, every single point in this charter as well, like we commit to it. But will we actually do it? I don't know.

Karel Green 34:03

Stay tuned to find out. So number five is we commit to removing the obstacles faced by women in particular at major points of career development and progression, including the transition for PhD to sustainable academic career.

Sehher Tariq 34:17

First problem is that is that there's also a problem in getting into PhDs in the first place, especially in STEM.

Karel Green 34:24

Exactly.

Sehher Tariq 34:25

Or at least physics from what we know.

Karel Green 34:28

This hits differently because this is what like we based in the entirety of POCsquared around so yeah, you're right, like getting a PhD is already very, very difficult. Very difficult. We could tell you from literal experience, the experience of all the other people that we've spoken to, and the literal statistics, getting a PhD is so so bad, and for them to then say the progression including the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career, academia is fundamentally unsustainable. White men are complaining about trying to survive in academia. So it's not good. We've got a

whole episode coming up about jobs in academia in the future, but as far as I can tell, you literally just have to get random postdocs from year to year. Some of them aren't even like a year long, some postdocs. I've seen are like a couple months and I'm just like, you want people to move countries in some cases because you're not just moving within your country. You have to move internationally for like eight months. And then well, there you go. That's the postdoc done bye.

Pruthvi Mehta 35:40

And can I, can I just say like you have to be in.. Especially if you're like someone who's surviving as like an academic and even just survive like in a postdoctoral role. There has to be a certain level of like welfare in the first place for you to have such a, like, tenuous position at... In different locations around the world at different institutions. Like my, I... So, you know, you two know about this, a lot of close friends know about this but my... I have my secondary supervisor who is a who was a postdoc, left academia because of how he had, and he was a white man by the way from a working class background, but he was you know a white man. He had like chronic illness he had Crohn's disease and he found the whole you know the instability of the job the the the like traveling he had to do like Japan multiple times a month and he was like, I can't you know, even even me with my privilege, can not settle down, cannot you know, cannot not do what I want to do with my life cannot move forward cannot acquire property. Cannot you know, you know, like be okay for a bit and can you blame him because postdoctoral positions are really honestly unethical. A lot of academia is... they are expected to work insane amounts and have no job security.

Karel Green 37:08

And can I point out, Pruthvi, you say that this man he did his undergraduate at Liverpool, his master's, then his PhD and then got a postdoc. So he hasn't even moved that much anyway. Yeah, just the fact that he had to deal with because you have to reapply for funding for your postdoc every, I've seen them around 1-3 years more on the lower end, though. Yeah. So like the fear of never really being able to fully settle down because he might not have a job in eight months, or whatever it is. And that's a very, very lucky person. Most people aren't in the same university, from undergraduate to postdoc, and again, as far as I understand, and we will have an episode on this because a big scam in academia is that they don't tell you how it works. But to get a sort of tenured professorship, you literally have to wait for whoever's tenured to leave or die, because the point of tenure is that you don't, don't lose the job. But then the funding body and the university might be like, well our tenured academic's dead. We don't really need another one. So like the tenure might not even come back. It's so bad.

Pruthvi Mehta 38:17

Definitely problematic.

Karel Green 38:18

Exactly. There are so many issues, in general with getting a career in academia that starts way before PhD, as we have pointed out in our BME Climb to PhD episode, which we hope you've listened to, if not listened to it, please. And there are big, big issues with a sustainable academic career again, for literally everyone. Like I said, white men can't survive in academia regularly. So this has not been even touched in our opinion. So number six is we commit to addressing the negative consequences of using short term contracts for the retention and progression of staff in academia, particularly women. Yikes I feel like I'm saying that for every point but my gosh.

Sehher Tariq 39:08

That's a whole that's a whole postdoc problem right there.

Karel Green 39:11

Oh my god. Oh my god.

Pruthvi Mehta 39:13

What are they gonna do overhaul postdocs like, that's not something that you would... They're saying this like it's nothing you know what I mean? Like you have to decon... To dismantle everything of academia is to like get rid of postdoctoral positions that... You know I'm stating it right. They say short term contracts, say what you mean like which contract. I hate it.

Karel Green 39:37

It says negative consequences, what negative consequences? I want to say we pointed out as well we've talked about people leaving academia and it's like it's so so rancid in academia, it's so vile, because it's like if you leave for like more than one year or whatever it's like impossible almost impossible to get back in. Say somebody can't get a postdoc because you're not willing to like fly to like the middle of whatever country it's in from your own home for a six month position, you quote unquote left academia and that looks negative on your literal career track. That's... None of that's been brought up. What are the negative consequences say them, face up to the truth and particularly women again like what do you mean what, what disproportionately affects women? What about this is extra bad for women like I want to hear it. I want specifics.

Pruthvi Mehta 40:33

So vague I hate stuff like this. You can't have mission statements that are so vague and commit to addressing stuff, but don't say what like what's the point of this entire page.

Karel Green 40:43

We're only on number six maybe number seven will completely fix it for everything. Oh number seven, we commit to tackling the discriminatory treatment often experienced by trans people. So, from this, it means that all of the previous things did not apply to trans people. Because they would come under within.

Pruthvi Mehta 41:14

Exactly. Oh, that's really problematic trans woman are women. It seems like someone was just like, let's shove it in a bullet point number seven, I guess. Yeah, didn't mention intersectionality at any other point or even in the opening paragraph, which is where if I were writing, this is why I'd introduce this from the get go. Right. Like we... This is i don't know I don't like, again, it seems like a random addition that someone in the goddamn boardroom would like

Karel Green 41:47

yeah, we need 10 points. Not nine lads. What could we put in? Or we could we get

Pruthvi Mehta 41:52

It's seven so it doesn't seem like it's it's the 10th point.

Karel Green 41:57

Exactly, because that would be too much. That'd be too bad. And what discriminatory treatment, I can think of a lot of things that trans people go through. And like, how are you going to help trans people, the the treatment of quote unquote, passing transgender people and not passing transgender people are like miles apart. Like, you can't just lump them all together into one group as well. So number eight, and we acknowledge that advancing gender equality demands commitment and action from all levels of the organization, and in particular, active leadership from those in senior roles, but I don't like the idea of particular active leadership from those and senior roles.

Pruthvi Mehta 42:41

Yeah, it should be more thought of like, instead of focusing on higher ups doing work, it should be focusing on making sure that the higher ups recognize and listen to those who are in those intersectional minorities and the you know, the concerns they have and listening to them and then doing what they tell them to do, right? Like if you'd like go to some, it's not like, you know, like you go to a higher up with the problem and then they tell you what the course of action is, right? Generally, someone who's been affected by something will have what they want to do in mind when they should have the support and backing of the higher up. Right, that's what that's what really should be happening. We're not asking the higher ups to fix everything themselves, because they don't know how, that's what privilege does. All this stops you from having to have the you know, knowledge, you have to work at it. And we recognize that we're saying, you know, listen to us, we have solutions...

Sehher Tariq 43:34

Yeah, that's definitely something we're not seeing at all. Like when we, when we kept having those meetings with EDI, it was always like the senior members who were just like, well, I don't know if we can implement that. And then we'd say another solution and it's like, well, I don't know if we can implement that as just a constant, constant cycle.

Karel Green 43:52

You're right. We need more support, because it's the idea that those who are marginalized should not have to do the extra work to fix the marginalisations right? Literally just go to these people being affected in this way. Here is what we think is a fair and reasonable way to fix this for everyone and just do what they say if you have the power to do so. Don't try and like Co Op the entire movement because if you knew how to fix things, they wouldn't be as bad as they already are. Number nine is we commit to making and mainstreaming sustainable structural and cultural changes to advance gender equality, recognizing the initiatives and actions that support individuals alone will not sufficiently advanced equality.

Pruthvi Mehta 44:37

Something that is very vague and sort of true in a sense but not explained well enough. So they understand that you know, there is a... There is like stuff like misogyny and you know, intersections and msyogyny and misogynoir etc. These are... But they haven't mentioned that. They don't care about race in this charter apparently.

Karel Green 44:56

No, they have a separate one for that.

Pruthvi Mehta 44:57

Yep. They understand that it's structural right they understand the system... It's systematic. There are systems in place in academia to hurt certain minority groups. Um, but they they they like and they, they realize that you can't just you know, help one person and you know fix the system you have to fix the system to help people which is right. But no there's like, I don't know, all I see I mean it's all I don't even see initiatives form them I don't see any initiative. I can't think of a single event these people have held. So they're talking big game about oh we understand, you know, can't have initiative action, you have to change... You have to change the structure. You can't even do the first two.

Karel Green 45:44

They're talking about making structural changes. You can have as many you know, events and conferences and whatever it is you want. Yeah... understand. Yeah, exactly. We've been to a lot of them, and they're full of the people who already understand the issues and intersectionality and whatever. And it's like, we don't need another conference telling us that gender equality is bad, and that women have the epitome of oppressed. Like, I don't need another conference, they need to actually just make changes. What have they done for the actual academia that has changed? I don't see any women in my curriculum. I see any women in other than like, again, like very privileged white women who are all very, very stressed under massive workload in roles. You know, I don't understand what structural changes and initiatives they have done. I don't understand how they've managed to mainstream them. I don't know how they've managed to make them sustainable and they've kept it vague. So they haven't committed to actually doing anything. I just...

Sehher Tariq 46:51

And how do you actually award a school on that? Because obviously, you've got the different like bronze silver and gold awards. If you've got this in your charter, surely you need to have like that as part of your award system. But what changes have there been that can warrant like a silver award in terms of like, creating a sustainable structure.

Karel Green 47:14

The history of the Athena SWAN pre May 2015. I would love to see what actual things have the Athena SWAN done now that is in place. What is different about a student's day to day life? Or a anyone in academia's day to day life? Now that the Athena SWAN is there, what positives has it made? Because I really can't see any, you know, I can't point to a single thing and be like, that job exists, and that job is attainable. And that job hires several people and gives them a stable, reasonable quality of life. And that only exists because the Athena SWAN is here. Like that didn't happen. I don't hear about any women. I mean, I know you talk about women of color, but I've actually only heard Mary Curie in... Not even during my degrees, just in school. And she only has a mention because she has two Nobel prizes. And the men in her life actively campaigned to make sure that she, along with her husband, because they worked together, were getting credit for things. If you go and read the story about Mary Curie every other sentence is, and then her husband had to go in and actively tell them to put his wife's name on the work because she helped. That's literally every other sentence. So you have to... The baseline for any woman, you have to get you have to be white enough that you didn't get murdered, so you can go to school, you have to get two Nobel prizes. And then you have to have a decent husband and all of his friends shame the other men into putting your name on the work that you did. This doesn't sound great to me. Athena SWAN, what else have you done? I would love to hear it.

Pruthvi Mehta 48:56

Like this literally. Like I bet you can view the Athena SWAN as like... It's all this what they are it's all antithetical to what what they're trying to say and the same number nine right like this. Like this is an initiative this entire thing is initiative it's not structural change. Same thing before like initiative like Athena SWAN and Race Equality charter and Project JUNO and what have you, these are these are fundamentally just the commodification of activism right. These are basically values you can slap on degrees and it's sort of you know, it's the whole idea of having a bronze, silver and gold for this is also kind of weird like you... change has either been made or hasn't within an institution. There's no point awarding someone a bronze, gold star whatever it's one gold star Wow. Wow. Like saying that they've ticked the right box and some paperwork, you shouldn't you shouldn't reward stuff that hasn't been done, in the hopes that it will make the university popular and people will keep applying. It's a really sick way about going about diversity you know you know and and you know EDI work in general I just think I just think it's a really really like heinous way doing activism I think it's honestly contradictory to its goal if you do it like this.

Karel Green 50:15

Exactly it's making more bias and more separations even though it's supposed to be helping and reducing bias and separation. We have finally made it to the end I'm just I'm less than the person then when I started. Number 10 is all individuals have identity shaped by several different factors we commit to considering the intersection of gender and other factors wherever possible.

Pruthvi Mehta 50:41

The word intersection has entered the chat.

Karel Green 50:46

It's corpse has rolled in. I'm gonna die. I'm I'm gonna, this this this number 10, fully states that they don't care about anything that isn't a Cis Het white woman from a place of privilege, this is just the epitome of garbage. I am ready to fight forever. I'm so upset. First thing I'm going to mention and I'd love to hear your thoughts. Wherever possible, wherever possible. I hate it. So if I wrote, all individuals have identities shaped by several different factors, and we commit to considering the intersection of gender and human beings named Patty, wherever possible, right? That would not be on there. Because then every white woman named Patty you'd be like Wait, so did numbers one to nine not apply to me. Like That's so mean. That's just so mean. Women of Colour. Women who are disabled, LGBT+ women, you know and anything else women from poor backgrounds have a marginalisations that I can't remember or indeed the people who belong to more than one of those things you know there is like a black lesbian somewhere who's in a wheelchair and comes from a poor family but wants to study physics like she is a woman the same as everybody else. And the idea that you only sometimes wherever possible consider these these other marginalisations as well as her being a women quote unquote is so mean. It's so mean.

Pruthvi Mehta 52:32

I think also like this maybe like a more like a way more about semantic thing but the the first line which states all individuals have identities shaped by several different factors, like this sounds like a white girl co-opting like whatever religion she wants to be that day. You know, I mean, like, like you. This is your identity you really think like, you know, being... My my identity isn't shaped by being a South Asian... woman of South Asian descent. Right? I am a woman of South Asian descent, it's not shaped by anything. What does it mean?

Karel Green 53:11

And it's like, I'm just so upset. I don't get to ever not be racialized. Okay. I'm always black, there is never a chance for me to be like, well, today, I'm not going to get racially abused. And it's so gross, because then it's just like, now I'm thinking, I'm just like, where are they not considering people of color? Where are they not considering women who are LGBT plus, what where? Imagine going somewhere and they saying, well, it's been too difficult. So we didn't consider black people

today. Or it was too difficult. So we didn't consider disabled women today. Like, disgusting.

Sehher Tariq 53:50

That's literally what happens though.

Karel Green 53:52

I know.

Sehher Tariq 53:56

Like when when they were like, when they were like... When we started pointing out that you need to start considering women from minority backgrounds, and then they were like, yes, but we've got the Athena SWAN charter, and we have to focus on on women first, because race is a lot harder to kind of, you know, work on, that's literally them going like we don't care.

Karel Green 54:21

By considering women, we literally meet the criteria, quote, unquote, and so heinous the way that they... Number 10, that the rest were bad, but a lot of it could be put down to the way that they... How vague it was for like government purposes or whatever the hell but number 10 is just actively mean, I'm so upset. That actually hurts.

Pruthvi Mehta 54:44

Yeah, I don't like the use of the word consider in that.

Karel Green 54:51

Like, if somebody said that to me at University, I'd be like I'm reporting you because that's messed. We consider the intersection of gender and other factors, wherever possible. So every single time you start something under the Athena SWAN, you're like, we're going to help women and women are white women who are, you know, cisgendered and if they're LGBT plus, they don't quote... and are able bodied and don't have any, like, massive mental health issues, so we can ignore it basically. And every single time they sit down, and that's what they're thinking of with women, and then they're just like, Okay, so we've made this, you know, event that doesn't actually do anything for the white women we always consider. Now can we bring in an Asian? Will we wheel in somebody in a wheelchair? Is that possible? Hmm. Well, there's no lifts in this building. So I guess they can't make it. Like, imagine. I could go on. That's so messed up. That's so bad. It's so bad. I'm going... I can't say that so I'm going to edit that out, but

Pruthvi Mehta 56:06

No you're not.

Karel Green 56:10

I'll just bleep it out and then leave it in it's fine.

Pruthvi Mehta 56:12

Lovely. Oh, I think maybe we shouldn't go... Well, that was just awful. I think we need to move on to some solutions quickly.

Karel Green 56:19

I think we do.

POC Squared 56:21

Solutions.

Pruthvi Mehta 56:23

If you were to revive this entire terrible, terrible, terrible page, you know, how would you even know you don't really... We don't really buy into hierarchal systems of you know, making diversity... How would you try to rephrase what's written here so it doesn't come off like actual garbage.

Karel Green 56:40

The first thing that I would say is that cancel race equality, cancel Athena SWAN, cancel everything. Because they should all just be one thing. You can't split up different identities because they are human beings that belong to each and multiple. And if you do then you are by definition, making yourself like against the identity that you're splitting it away from. The fact that the Athena SWAN is separate from the Race Equality charter makes it by definition racist, because there are women who are not white. And which one do they go to? And if you actively say, Well, this is for women and not for you, because what about the race equality charter then you're being racist. And that's just race. And others.

Pruthvi Mehta 57:22

This is written on the literal you know, the notes that we're using to help us guide... The guide for the podcast, but um, there's a bullet point here, which is in bold and it literally says if your feminism isn't inflectional it isn't feminism, it's poorly disguised white supremacy. That is this.

Karel Green 57:41

The whole mood of today's episode. Literally...

Pruthvi Mehta 57:44

Don't bother having any sort of diversity scheme, if it doesn't mention... If it doesn't say it's intersectional in the first breath. What is the point?

Karel Green 57:52

Exactly. You're just setting yourself up to get wrecked like Why? In terms of practical changes, If I was writing anything like this, I would start with a paragraph that like defines what you're talking about, sort of akin to if you go onto our website, we have a whole page called our politics. And those are the things that we believe in.

Following is explicit breakdown of the politics of those who run POC Squared. And there's like a rest of the paragraph, how we're against racism, against colorism. We're against ableism. We're against transphobia, that's on there twice. We're against homophobia, you know, against... stuff like that. And if I was writing the Athena SWAN charter, the first thing I would write, I'd be like, you know, as of today's date, this is what we believe. This is subject to change as we learn new things, but as of today, we'd be like we define a woman is anyone who identifies as a woman. So this includes cisgender women, transgender women, and anybody who... Anybody else who wishes to be a woman, you're a woman. And then we also include the that women on all multifaceted. And this includes that women of color, you know, blah, blah, blah, I would go on I'd make... I'd write it better than I'm saying. But then I'd be like an all of these amount to the word women, and that's who we're referencing when we say the word women. That would be the first thing I put before anything else. Trans as number seven, and maybe everybody else is number 10. That would be that that would be number zero, a whole paragraph explaining what I mean when I say the word women.

Pruthvi Mehta 59:30

That was a real kick in the teeth. Exactly.

Karel Green 59:33

Exactly.

Pruthvi Mehta 59:34

What I would say was, I think, what was really missing from that was just a whole... What's really missing from this page was just any sort of substance, any sort of facts to back up any of the, you know, anything they were trying to say. So I think, you know, analyzing... Like so basically just including the data doing statistics, involving, you know, gender, race and all the intersections because we talk about important matters. You know, analyze the goddamn data and share it, share it, like attach it, attach it as a PDF file or what have you to the website. Right? Like I... There's no point having any of this for making any statements. If you can't see why you have to make these statements,

Karel Green 1:00:15

I'd perhaps have less bullet points but be more specific. Each one is we commit to you know, advancing this or changing this and I'd explicitly say how I will define what I mean by success or you need to define what you mean by success. What what are the statistics, like you said, you know, how many black women are there, how many Asian women are there, how many disabled women out there, how many disabled black and Asian women, you know, and so on and so forth. I would... You have to actively be like here are my goals. They are like quantifiable and they are easy to understand. And we have not succeeded until we have reached them and you can change them you can be like we've done this but we now realize that you know it didn't do this, this and this so I'm going to add on new goals. Just you could constantly be trying to make things better. There's nothing wrong with that. But you

can't, you can't just have some vague statements and then say that 4 women have a job. So things are better.

Sehher Tariq 1:01:12

Maybe you could change the whole award system as well to kind of encompass that. So when you get to a goal, you don't get like a medal like a bronze, silver gold medal, but you get like a maybe like a number rating. Say like, okay, this is how many of out of 10 goals we've achieved, like, fine. I mean, no one's going to be passed, like 2, let's be honest.

Karel Green 1:01:40

call them out, do it.

Sehher Tariq 1:01:43

But yeah, then that actually shows you what kind of progress people are making.

Karel Green 1:01:47

It makes it more transparent as well. Obviously, different universities can be better at different things because they're full of different human beings. And that will change over time and there's nothing wrong with that. Because you know, people that people And, you know, nobody's perfect. But just being more transparent with things would be very, very, very helpful. Things that I would mention as well. Like, again, it's not been very intersectional I forgotten we've not talked about like xenophobia, especially with the things that are happening now like the goddamn I'll leave it in, but like the coronavirus, and how just Chinese people are just getting destroyed. And by Chinese, I mean, anybody who looks East Asian because people don't seem to care, you know, that China and the Philippines and Japan and Vietnam and Korea are all different countries and are different human beings have have different groups within each of them. But you know, I guess they can all get wrecked. And none of that's been talked about.

Pruthvi Mehta 1:02:47

Yeah. I think I think like a, like I think a very solid change that maybe that could be... Something something that should really be implemented is like... Something they could actually include in the charter tm is ensuring that there are certain number of women of color on like EDI like boards right, like, you know, and not just you know, one single Asian woman, I'm talking about actual you know, actually like you know properly having a diverse pool which have multiple women of color of different ethnicities, different backgrounds, represented, especially dark skinned ones, you know, don't tack on colourism as last, you know, colorism is you know, very deeply ingrained. So yeah, that's something they should include as one of the, you know, one of these mission statements and one of the things they want to actively enforce in universities because let's not forget, right, the only... the thing that university that this this chartered as well is that it applies itself to university as in you know, all universities want to have it because it's a badge of honor. And they use that power

to do that...you know make actual change, and one of the changes could be this, but you know, I guess they're not gonna do it.

Karel Green 1:03:59

It's a terrible mess. But there are... the white women aren't getting paid to do this. Yes, they're getting paid to do the rest of their job. But you know, God forbid they pay somebody who isn't white to do some work. Like we all need a job to survive under capitalism. And that would be such a good change. And you're so right. I'd also like to mention, again, along the lines of just dismantling this weird, like, sectioned approach that they're taking, first of all, the massive, massive, pervasive issue of like, and content warning for sexual assault, maybe skip for a couple minutes, if you don't want to listen to this. But things are MeToo STEM and how there's been massive amounts of sexual assault in academia. And there's been no attempt here to even like recognize it, that alone talk how they're changing things, because that's like a massive, massive issue. No, no, none of that has been even like approached, and that's like a massive quote unquote women's issue. Again, you know, I'm not a big fan of the men versus women being like a thing. But here we go, you know, if they want to have the gender binary, they're going to live by it, and they're going to die by it.

Sehher Tariq 1:05:15

But that's very true, actually, because I've never, I hadn't actually considered that that should be something that's part of it. That, that, you know, like sexual assault is actually such a it is, is it's a very big issue in academia, and that definitely needs to be addressed. So...

Karel Green 1:05:34

There are many, many legitimate quote unquote men's rights issues. And like I said, non binary issues and trans issues and you know, all these things by enforcing one: a gender binary and then two: only women. You are just completely like chopping out all of these other people who actively need legitimate help like LGBT plus men. Men with mental and physical illnesses. You know, we talked, we talked to the previous episode about the pervasiveness of drinking, and how it's an anti social behavior. People are actively depressed. They're not okay. Many issues that can affect women can affect men and I don't see why you'd be like, okay, we're helping disabled women and not disabled men and not disabled non binary people. Just help everyone who needs it. What's the point? What's the point of?

Pruthvi Mehta 1:06:26

Yeah, I mean, there's a conversation we have about how men of color. I mean, we've talked about this and I've come across this with in my own life University, which I might get into at another point, but you know, men of color sometimes complicit in you know, suppressing the first of all like, being sort of allies more to white women than women of color with an institution due to how you know, toxic masculinity affects men of color in a very different way to white men, a sort of shoulder off like their responsibility and try to act like everything's okay. Even if they're

not Okay, and you know, I mean there are instances where women of color will, will have something happen to them, have a very negative first with a racialized you know, in some way and do nothing about it because, you know, they, you know, don't want to seem like anything is wrong. And they don't want to they don't want to rock the boat. I think that men of colour, you know, they do need help. A lot of the time you know, it's the reason why a lot of people on EDI teams who will do the work are women of colour that something needs to be done about what's happening. a lot of men of colour in institutions say just gonna have to grit my teeth and get through. So there's a whole conversation to be had about that.

Karel Green 1:08:00

Especially men of color and the way that they can like sort of assimilate into whiteness differently. Yeah, and sort of get through things differently. But yeah again, maybe that conversation should be on the Athena SWAN instead. But just the way they're doing things are not good. Be intersectional. And if you're not helping all women, don't pretend that you are. The word woman and white women are not synonymous. It ain't the same thing.

Pruthvi Mehta 1:08:27

One final final point before I get in, like yeah, include undergraduate for EDI teams. We've mentioned this before, but I want to say quickly, undergraduates are part of academia. They are also going through the process right? If you're, if you if you exclude their opinion, you are not they are honestly the ones who are hurting because a lot a lot of the time, they're not getting paid, they are paying for their degree. There are people people don't realize how much stress undergraduates go through. Right? We worked nine to five,

Karel Green 1:08:56

no, no nine to nine, don't pretend.

I said in the beginning of the episode, they're literally the most people in the room. Yeah, I can't imagine doing an EDI team and not talking to the undergraduates. It doesn't make any sense to me just immediately saying that, well, this EDI team is built to help those in academia in like, again, postdocs and above apparently, I'm just like, so you don't care if anything happens to your undergrads. That's what you're saying. That's what that means. You're so right. And yeah, again, we all started this because we were undergraduates who were suffering. I've said it a million times. I have never been more sick or more overworked than when I was an undergraduate and that includes right now. I am in less pain, physically, literally less pain than I was as an undergraduate and it was really, really bad. They are suffering, they are suffering.

Pruthvi Mehta 1:08:59

Because we had problem sheets to afterwards. We had like a three hour commute each way. We were always dying. Like undergraduates suffer. And those who are undergraduate and minority suffer even more if you don't include them on EDI

teams and don't listen to their concerns. You're not helping people who really need it.

The babies are suffering, help the baby.

Karel Green 1:10:04

And that's why you're losing them because you're not giving them jobs afterwards and they can't afford to pay their bills uglies. So there we go.

Sehher Tariq 1:10:12

There's definitely a culture around the whole, like, if an undergraduate comes comes to like a senior person with a problem, then there's like a culture of, especially when it comes to racism, that they're just kind of taking things out of. They're just looking at... Making a mountain out of molehill rightly. So a lot of times that they whatever is said is swept swept under the rug, or they say like, that's not something that we can easily change, which is something that happened to us a lot when we were doing this work in our school, they would just say, well, we can't implement that because of so so and so and they kind of talk down to us. Because because we were undergraduates like it was they kept acting like we didn't really know what we were talking about. So I think including undergraduates on your EDI teams and actually giving them a voice and actually trying to listen to them would actually make things way more better. I think my final thought is scrap Athena SWAN.

Karel Green 1:11:20

There we go.

Pruthvi Mehta 1:11:23

Okay, fair enough self care. I think we need it. Well, yeah,

Karel Green 1:11:26

I'm very upsetty. So time for literally self care. We're going on to our media recommendations where we talk about things made by people of color that we used to actually combat burnout. And just stop thinking about how bad academia is because all we wanted was to study space, and apparently we're not allowed to do that. So here we go.

Sehher Tariq 1:11:53

I will recommend a YouTube channel called Nappy Headed Jojoba. I think that's how you say it. It is either hohoba or Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe Joe ba.

Karel Green 1:12:05

Joe Joe Ba.

Sehher Tariq 1:12:09

And she does like YouTube commentary. She does a lot of like beauty related videos but she also talks about misogynoir and law and racism issues. Really interesting to

talk... the things that she kind of talks about and yeah, I thought that that's a good one if you're interested in like beauty or YouTube, YouTube drama, maybe. But yeah,

Pruthvi Mehta 1:12:37

I recommend that. I would like to, we're actually not gonna recommend a video game. Character development. Stay tuned.

Karel Green 1:12:46

Can always go back, don't worry.

Pruthvi Mehta 1:12:50

That's what we're gonna do next episode, what you on about.

Karel Green 1:12:54

Same.

Pruthvi Mehta 1:12:54

I'm basically gonna be recommending a book. It is called This Book Will Save Your Life. It is a fictional book. It's it's written by a white woman. I'm sorry, AM Holmes

Karel Green 1:13:08

You're cancelled. I'm bleeping this out.

Pruthvi Mehta 1:13:13

Well I'm recommending is a book called this book will save the life by am Holmes. And in it she talks about the life of a well she talks about this rich white dude who lives in LA and I know this doesn't sound very diverse but I'm getting I'm trying to get somewhere. See there are those his entire family mentioned the book, which are really well fleshed out who sort of live in LA, like quite close to him. And why really likes how the characters, they're not tropes. They're not like tropes about immigrants. They're not about you know, people who come over to America especially LA to start their life. They are really well fleshed out People of color. The main guy, the dad of the family he basically run a doughnut shop. And he has some incredible takes on like white rich white people in LA and he just makes fun, spend of a lot of the book making fun of them. And you know, how privileged whites are, in general, I think it was just a really nice way of seeing. Seeing a character of color who isn't, you know, isn't the main character, but who isn't like just a shoulder for the main, the main white character to lean on. Like he actively you know, criticizes his actions, you know, criticizes how, like, badly coded race is within the country he's living in. And he's just a really strong like, good character. I love how his like family is described so his like, one of... So his wife's sister, who also in the book, came over from Iran to study at MIT with like a PhD in mathematical like physics. And she's really nice and she's in the book, and I just love the family and how they survived..

Karel Green 1:15:00

Yeah, I'm going to recommend the book and not video game even though that's what I'm gonna do next episode. So yeah, back on my bs soon, don't you worry. But I'm going to recommend a book by a man called Edwin Arthur Blaire most commonly known under his pen name as George Orwell, called Down and Out in Paris and London. And this is probably my favorite book written by Orwell. And Orwell was actually I'm reading this Wikipedia I thought he was. So he was born in India or British India. I'm just dying the whole whole thing. He was born in India, he is a man of color, got some white names, things are bad, but just... Please, please read the book. It's a really, really good memoir about part of his life where he was like very, very poor in Paris and London. And it's so like, it's so good because you get to see what it was actually like... See like period dramas and stuff like that on TV. Then you read like a history book. And you remember that people were like throwing feces out the window and you're just like, none of these people look like this. But he just calls them out. He just absolutely destroys all of Paris and all of London just reads them to death before reading to death was a thing. It was so good. And so I remember reading I'm reading in a couple years, but I really loved the book. And some of my favorite chapters. One was where he was working in a hotel in Paris. And he was just it was just a whole chapter screaming about how disgusting they were. And how like, it doesn't matter if you're British nobility because it's all a scam. Because it's like a rich hotel where people pay hundreds of pounds back in 1993. No 1933, I can read, to like stay in this hotel. So that was a lot of money. But then they'd ordered like a steak and the steak was like licked by 10 different chefs as it went down the line. Because they were tasting for seasoning. So like, you'd get that steak that cost him like 50 quid. And it was like, had the grime of like a man who's just like burn or whatever, just like screaming in a hotel kitchen, just rubbing their hands all over it. And he was just like this disgusting and so bad, and how much he hates the rich because they're just fools. So that was hilarious. And he also talks about how, cuz he traveled a lot around London, but he was like a tramp, because he was homeless and stuff. And he was just just like, how we met people, and how people were a lot nicer than you think they were... would be, and just just paragraphs of how dirty London was. And it was such a funny read. So I'd really recommend, I'd recommend all of George Orwell's work. I know a lot of people read Animal Farm in school and got put off his work because you have to like over dissect in my opinion. And even though it's a really good book, I can understand why that would wreck you. I'd really recommend reading Down and Out in Paris and London by George Orwell. Very very, very good read.

Pruthvi Mehta 1:18:02

Yeah. Okay, nice.

Karel Green 1:18:06

We've done it. We have done it. We've made we've made it through the Athena SWAN episode. And that was bad. Okay, it was bad. POCSquared podcast was written, recorded, edited and posted by the POCSquared team, it will always be available for free in some form. If you wish to support us, please consider becoming a patron on Patreon. Patrons get special perks like having a shout out at the end of

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