

Name Code:

Kh: Khadija El-Karfi

Ki: Kiloni Quiles-Franco

M: Merriam Lrhazi

V: Vy Hoang

T: Táchira Pichardo

[intro plays]

[0:34] Kh: Today, my co-host Kiloni and I discuss how and why you should care about diversity and inclusion for BIPOC students at Boston University. We are joined by Táchira Pichardo, the President of the Minority and International Scientist Organization, also known as MISO, and we're also joined by Vy and Merriam from the College of Arts and Science Anti-Racist Initiative, also known as CASARI.

K: Welcome Táchira.

[0:58] T: Hi, I am the president of the Minority and International Scientists Organization on the BU Medical Campus, and I'm currently a third year PhD student in the section of computational biomedicine in the Molecular and Translational medicine program.

Kh: Awesome. So Táchira, can you tell us a little bit more about your organization and what you do?

[1:18] T: So MISO is a student-led organization within the division of Graduate Medical Sciences (GMS). And what we really strive to do is provide a sense of community for underrepresented minority scientists and really just everyone on the medical campus. Oftentimes underrepresented minorities and international students are left out of really important campus conversations. And so aside from providing community, um, through our various cultural celebrations and networking opportunities, we also strive to, uh, provide a voice for these students within, um, administration, by liaising with, you know, the various offices that comprise the division of Graduate Medical Sciences.

Kh: And today we're going to be talking to CASARI.

[1:59] V: Hello. My name is Vy. I'm currently a publicity manager for CASARI.

M: Hi, I'm Merriam. I'm also on the publicity team.

Kh: Can you tell us a little bit about CASARI and what you all do?

[2:11] M: Sure, so CASARI is a coalition of BU undergrads, graduate students, alumni, faculty, and staff, and we're working towards a more inclusive environment in CAS, the College of Arts and Sciences. So we're bringing these issues to the administration directly. We're basically trying to see a more accessible and equitable place for BIPOC faculty and students.

[2:29] Ki: That sounds like an excellent initiative. I'm so happy that CASARI is now on board and BU has this great team with us. So what would you say the current climate is at BU in terms of allyship?

[2:44] V: I guess in terms of allyship where we've seen the most support has definitely been from other student groups that are working on like a smaller scale, like maybe a departmental scale. In terms of climate at BU, like things that we've seen when we go to administration and we have these meetings with them, there's a lot of - on the behalf of like admin at BU - like hyper self-awareness and an amount of cautiousness. Honestly it's been extremely, um, encouraging from a student level, cause there are so many different groups that are doing so much work that we don't necessarily see because they may like be doing so many different things in so many different fields. So CASARI is trying to connect these people and see what we have in common and work together.

[3:28] T: And so I think the current climate of view from a student group perspective, um, is one that is very empowered. And so, um, kind of post George Floyd, there was a massive, massive effort across both campuses, both Medical and CRC Campus, um, to do kind of fundraising for various organizations affiliated with Black Lives Matter, um, that raised over a hundred thousand dollars. And so that was an amazing, amazing effort, um, kind of coordinated and led by Umoja, the black student union on the CRC. And so I think from there, kind of, there was this massive sense of collaboration between wide ranging groups, um, not only in the CRC, but also the Med Campus. And so it was honestly a privilege for MISO to kind of be involved in that groundswell of, kind of students waking up and saying, "Okay, even though our organizations are extremely different, you know, we have pre-law associations, you know, MISO, um, Umoja, um, we kind of have variety of interests, but at the end of the day, we're all Boston University students and we're invested in making, um, our university community as, you know, as best and inclusive, as it can be." Um, and so that was really awesome to be able to make MISO a part of that, and there is still that lingering sense of collaboration. MISO is kind of part of a cross-campus network of student groups, where we all share information, um, and distribute resources that are relevant to the various groups involved. So I think that's been a really awesome thing that MISO has been a part of. Um, I will say that the current pandemic makes it a little bit difficult to really kind of get in touch with our community. Um, and so we always encourage members of our community to reach out to us if they need any resources that they can't find on their own or just to even chat or if they need a shoulder to kind of lean on, MISO is there for that too. Um, so I will say the

current campus climate seems to me to be one of, um, kind of empowerment and really coming together across various interests.

[5:14] Kh: Yeah, that's- that's great, and, um, just to follow up on that, um, you mentioned how, like, different students came together and different organizations came together and got a lot of great work done. Um, what would you say, in terms of like- in the development of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at BU, um, who would you say is accountable to make, uh, folks care about this?

[5:38] T: Um, I think aside from just any kind of specific office, um, or person, you know, office head or anything like that, I think it's really, um, our job as members of this campus community to make sure that we are all accountable to each other. Um, and I think that's really what happened with the kind of cross-campus collaboration kind of led by Umoja. It was student groups kind of making sure that we each had the resources to get this out to our various email lists, um, and making sure that people knew kind of where they could get involved and in what capacity, um, no matter what, you know, each individual person had to contribute, and that really happened, um, very independently of administration, I will say. And so while that effort was certainly, you know, kind of on the CRC side, I can imagine that it was supported by their kind of student government that I guess, is the administrative body for all of the undergraduate student groups. Um, the kind of involvement in groups on the medical campus was us reaching out and saying, Hey, this is really awesome. And we want to be a part of it, you know, what can we do to help? Um, and so I think that happened independently of administration, um, which I think was, you know, really nice to be able to kind of liaise with, you know, groups from undergraduates, graduates. Um, you know, some faculty members were involved, you know, staff and things like that. Um, and so I think it is our job as members of this campus community, you know, not to rely on a singular office or a person, but really to be accountable to each other.

[6:58] M: I don't know how comfortable or able, like, faculty are to kind of, like, approach their bosses and like the administration. But I think that you can just start by structuring your classes differently and like de-centering whiteness and, like, stop making it so, um, like eurocentric. Like same with my IR classes. So I think that's something you can do to any faculty out there who are looking to help. That's what you can start with, start your own class and stop studying history from the white perspective, stop only assigning white authors, start learning things from indigenous perspectives, bring in indigenous perspectives. Don't just speak on their behalf.

[7:36] Ki: Who do you think is really responsible or is supposed to care about this outside of the people at play already?

[7:44] T: Yeah, that's a really good question. Um, and it's something that I've kind of been wrestling with myself this past year. Um, and I think if we kind of only rely on one person or one

office, um, you know, we definitely will face a lot of disappointment. You know, I know a lot of students were disappointed with President Brown's statements, um, immediately following, um, the unfortunate murder of George Floyd. And I think kind of looking to one person to kind of save our campus community, um, you know, it really isn't productive. And I think also it's important to remember that, you know, Boston university is an institution. Um, it is a political institution as much as it is an educational one as well. While there are certain things that administration can do to support students, um, in our various movements and in the quest for justice, I think as an institution, you know, Boston University is inherently limited, um, which is why I think it's important for students, you know, to hold various offices and individuals accountable, um, in the ways that we can. But I don't think we should really be looking to administration, um, or really expecting, you know, radical change from these kind of deeply seated institutions. I think that radical change really needs to kind of be a grassroots movement, um, and kind of make the changes that we want to see.

[8:54] Kh: Okay. So, um, as you all know, BU has the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and they've been doing a lot of great work, but as we all know, it's like one office with a limited number of staff. Um, so what does CASARI or who does CASARI think is accountable for making people care about this?

[9:18] V: There's not a single person that's not responsible. Like I think if you're an administration- in an administrative position, you're obviously doubly responsible as like a person, like that's literally your job. And also just as like a member of the community. But I guess from the CASARI perspective, like as soon as you step foot on campus, whether you are a student, like staff member or faculty member or whatever, like you have the responsibility to care about and ensure like your fellow, like, um, community members, like wellbeing, like on no matter what, on what level you have to prioritize each other's, um, comfort levels. The thing is that, like you can't just focus on your own problems. Everyone's problem is your problem, cause this is like a community. And I say this, especially as, um, in terms of like people who are in positions of privilege, I think that it is like doubly their responsibility. I think that if you can say, you're not responsible for it, then that takes a certain amount of privilege to say that

M: If you feel like you're not being affected by it, then you're probably causing the problem.

[10:20] Ki: So, I mean, in that respect, the 21 days of unlearning racism and learning anti-racism, I mean, it was a, it was a moving effort, but this isn't just a one and done type of situation. This is a recurring issue that we need to keep working on. Where do you feel like we are right now, following that initiative?

[10:40] T: That's kind of a difficult question for me to answer. And so, um, I'm a PhD student, right? Um, I'm in the midst of preparing for my qualifying exams for candidacy. Um, and so

being completely frank, I just did not have the time to attend a lot of those events. Um, and I think kind of, like I said, I think we've moved past a place where, you know, we want to hear these like very theoretical, um, kind of things from faculty. Like it is amazing that we're having these conversations. Um, and I think unlearning racism is an extremely important thing, but I think we're well past the- I think we're well past just talking about it, right? Um, because you know, as many of our students and, you know, anybody on BUMC that is an underrepresented minority or an international member of our community can really attest that, you know, these are things that we already know, these are things that we are living through. Um, and so it's very nice and well, and good to talk about them and talk about these kinds of like, your theoretical, structural concerns. But, you know, for some of us, that's our lived experience every single day, um, as we navigate on the Boston University Medical Campus. And so these are excellent conversations I think to start, but you know, I'm much more interested on the practical side, what are we doing to increase, you know, the numbers of underrepresented minorities on our campus? What are we doing to support the underrepresented minorities and international students that are already here? Um, and so while I think it's amazing to see these huge institutions kind of finally tackling their legacy of racism and kind of really making sure that this is an important conversation, I think, you know, a lot of times I'm busy working to survive. I don't really have time to be a part of those conversations that are about things that I already lived through. Um, and so, like I said, I think we really need to focus on enhancing the lived experience of, you know, our community members by supporting yes, these anti-racist efforts, but also about, you know, increasing the numbers of diverse faculty, so that underrepresented minorities and international students can have someone- can have a mentor that looks like them, that understands what they're going through. Um, and what are we doing to kind of increase sensitivity training for people that are processing applications? So I think more kind of pragmatic, practical things like that are what I'm really interested in seeing from the administration.

[12:46] Kh: What does CASARI believe that BU could do to improve their communication with students, but also with staff and with faculty?

Ki: And maybe is CASARI coming up with a solution to that issue?

[13:01] V: On a student group level CASARI is trying to approach that issue - the way that we talk about it and the way that we think about ourselves - like CASARI is trying to be like a hub to connect all of these student efforts, because there are so many that go on and we don't necessarily all know about them, but if we can gather together and we can like approach issues that are similar across departments, like across CAS, then we think that's like a better use for a time to work, like in terms of numbers. Because honestly, a lot of the time, administration doesn't want to acknowledge you because there's not enough people, if any at all, speaking about the

issues that are happening. So as soon as you can, like, amass attention, a petition and a meeting, anything like that, then they have to take them seriously.

[13:45] Ki: So I guess something that kind of stuck out to me while I was listening to you ladies discussing this was, um, the fact that communication time and time again seems to be an issue. And I know that BU has so many different campuses, so many different departments. Like personally on the medical campus, I hear almost nothing of what happens on the CRC, vice versa. This segregation of communication is- is so debilitating sometimes, especially when we all need to be on the same page as a community. Um, so I guess I'm really just wondering, like, do you feel like that occurs because BU is not putting in any effort or do you feel like maybe it's just such a gargantuan task that there needs to be like a specific person or position?

[14:32] V: So, I think it's a combination. And I think that in terms of moving parts, there are- there are so many like BU is big and CAS is big. And that's a big part of the issue that even, like, Casari has had, because like, how are you supposed to link up all of these different people? But the fact that the efforts have just started now does say something to me.

[14:49] Ki: So do you feel like perhaps there might be a cultural disconnect between the two campuses? Do you feel like that cultural difference could potentially be causing some of this disconnect in terms of the 21 days of unlearning? Um, maybe the lack of attendance from the medical campus in terms of that, uh, initiative, maybe the lack of information or advertisement of it, maybe they weren't even aware of it? Like, do you think any of these things could be playing a role in the experiences that you and the MISO community could be having on the medical campus?

[15:25] T: I would love to answer but I just don't know much about the culture at the CRC, just because I have very little interactions, very little reason to go to the CRC. And so my experience is very limited to the medical campus, and I think that's something that's not unique to myself, but, you know, graduate students and students across campus are really isolated from each other. Um, and so I know that, you know, Boston University has a very long legacy of activism. I think Martin Luther King Jr., if I'm not mistaken, was a Boston University alum. Um, you know, the Boston University Medical School, I think, was the first person to award a medical degree to an African-American woman. Um, and so we do have a legacy between campuses, of kind of, you know, these firsts, um, but I think that that disconnect really is not only kind of the proximity, you know, we're physically disconnected, but also intellectually disconnected, right? Like the medical campus is very medical and STEM-focused, um, and you know, even STEM graduate students that are based on the CRC, um, you know, we have very little interaction with each other. And so I think that improving the connectivity between campuses, um, kind of intellectually, I think would go a long way towards kind of including medical campus students, or, you know, really the medical campus community into some of these university-wide efforts



that, you know, might not be right now very targeted towards us, or might not have our interests in mind. And I think kind of with that STEM focus at the medical campus, I think people in STEM tend to see themselves as “I am a scientist” or, you know, “I’m a physician” and that is, you know, our primary identity. But I think we have to realize that there also are a wide variety of identities that intersect with those as well. You know, like I am a Latina and I’m also a PhD student. I’m also a scientist and I’m also an activist and I have all these like, wide variety of identities that intersect with each other. Um, and so I think that highlighting those identities and improving the connectivity between the two campuses would go a long way towards including the medical campus and to some of these wider efforts.

[17:22] Ki: I would also say that, um, it’s definitely something I think about always, especially because I live on the Charles River Campus. And so I’m surrounded by the community that I feel like I’m not a part of for no one set reason, if that makes any sense. Um, some of the reasons I think that does happen, that segmentation could just be like, um, technical in terms of administration. So perhaps there are two different outlets of communication that are being used. There are different priorities on different campuses, as Tachira had already mentioned. There does seem to be, um, an air of, “we need to get in and out” on the medical campus, there’s not really a lot of emphasis on spending additional voluntary time doing things that don’t directly qualify for your career path. Whereas in traditional academia, even in undergrad, there seems to be a higher prevalence of that. So something that I would say could potentially tie into it is the segmentation of comm- of, uh, communication outlets. And another one might just be priorities on both campuses. While, uh, developing a network and a community is important, it does not seem to be important to the individual people on the medical campus. As far as students that I know are concerned, their main priority is to get the job of their dreams. It is to get their PhD in as little bit of time as possible and to go and make money because let’s face it, we’re graduate students. We’re making a livable wage. We don’t plan on being forever students. We do eventually want to get out. Um, but along the way, there are some parts of our lives that I feel like are missing. But on the medical campus, I do feel like it’s more of a live to work and not work to live mentality. So that difference in how you approach even just your graduate programs could play a role in why they, why we feel so different sometimes. Um, but I do want to ask you Tachira, how do you feel like... how do we stay accountable to the work in being quote unquote “woke” in today’s community? How do we stay awake and present in the moment and continue the sort of struggle, continue the movement in this struggle for people of color in terms of following up with higher education with folks at BU?

[20:04] T: Um, so I think kind of in my own life, I had to kind of pivot away and say, okay, like in an ideal world, I would love to have these radical politics. I would love to take part in these radical, you know, policies and actions and I would love to see those implemented, but realistically they’re not going to happen. So what can I do on an individual level to support my fellow students, on, um, the med campus? And so some of those things have been kind of

advocating for administration to kind of take a look at their hiring practice, advocating for administration to increase the number of underrepresented minorities that are being accepted to these various programs, kind of what are repercussions for programs that aren't accepting underrepresented minorities, what are the trends here?

[20:44] Kh: What does CASARI or what do you all think we can do in order to stay accountable to this work? And also to the continued suffering that POC folks, um, you know, go through in higher education and specifically here at BU.

[21:00] V: I think a lot of it has to come down to, like, self-reflection. Like, you have to think about the work that you're doing or not doing, and then why you're doing it. Because for a lot of people, like after moments like this crop up, they're like super excited to get involved. They want to do everything. And then when like the movement visibly to them, like dies out, then they're done, like the work is done for them. And I think that's something that we need to think about, like, are you doing something that is productive or performative? Like, are you benefiting from this on an individual scale? Or are you thinking about the wider community? It's- I think it's being aware and going out of your way of trying to find out what's going on in your community. That's how we stay accountable. I think you need to talk to people and I think you need to go into spaces that maybe you haven't entered before. Always with like, coming from like, a place of like respect and listening. But I think you do need to go to places and to speak to people that maybe you're like- you're not comfortable with or have not like regularly interacted with. Another thing is that- like my wish, and I think like for CASARI is that like, we need to realize that like POC are like, they're human, right? And I know that we're so focused on all the things that go wrong, but like as much energy as we put into thinking about all the problems that like POC face, I think we also need to think about like all the things that they've done that are like positive and like things that make them happy, we should be centering like their joy and their liberation to like being on just the things that like oppress them. I think things are multifaceted and we need to approach them from all ways so we don't burn out.

[22:31] M: Yeah I think it's also important to, if you don't know where to start or if you are trying to continue to just like, look at what's already being done because obviously these issues have been happening for centuries and there's so many grassroots organizations everywhere, like in whatever community you're in, like, just look around and like, see what's already being done and see how you can join and like add what you have to add.

[22:54] Ki: I have noticed that, especially in higher education, there tends to be less people of color as faculty members, right? And that's something that the medical campus has addressed and well, verbalized communicated to us. Do you feel like there needs to be a different structure in order to encourage people of color to follow positions of faculty roles in higher education? Do



you feel like that would help with this situation of staying woke and present in the moment and helping with the struggles that students are facing today?

[23:25] V: I will say two things. First of all, I- I think they're justified to leave. Like I've seen people and I know people that leave in swarms because, like, the environment is just not friendly to them. There are so many professors of color that are like- that teach at BU and then leave, like, within a year, within like five years or something. And then you need to understand, like, what made these staff members and people leave. Like, it's like, again, it's like the communication thing. Like I think they're just not getting it. There's just- the people in power are like overwhelmingly white. So it's just not, I don't think it's something that like, they understand on a personal level or even on a practical level, cause like, again, they are not speaking to them.

[24:02] I think of course there should be, like, people of color in, like, higher positions, but then the worry becomes like, are they going to have to like martyr themselves? Because these people who do stay are like exhausted. Because if you're the only faculty member of color in your department, or like at that level, then all issues on diversity end up being like sent to you on top of the work you're already doing personally, on top of your teaching, on top of your advising or whatever. So I think that as more and more faculty members of color become a part of like the school system, there needs to be another system that supports them in terms of like the emotional labor that they're having to do on top of the literal, like physical labor that they're doing on behalf of BU. Like there needs to be some form of, like, compensation and it needs to be constant and it needs to be implemented like right now. People always are like complaining, "Oh my God, why can't we, why can't- Admin, why can't we keep these people?". We know why you can't keep these people. You need to change the school that you're in so that people feel welcome when they come here.

[25:08] M: Uh I think it's like the same thing with- with students too. Like you can't just keep marginally increasing the amount of diversity you have without 60 year institution too, because it's just whoever you're bringing onto campus is not going to feel welcome. And that obviously you're not going to want to stay in that environment.

[25:27] Kh: As an international student, when I just came to BU, I know I went to like a couple of sessions, uh, information sessions, and I found, um, that the information that other international students that were, you know, ahead of me were providing were very helpful to me. But also now that I've been here for about two years, I definitely can feel that, you know, um, kind of... like getting asked to do more than I possibly can, but then still I'm like, if I don't do it or if I don't provide that information or that perspective, then no one will. And, um, I feel like personally I care about making other people's experiences bettered, or like better than the one I had. But so my question for you and for both of you is how do professors or like, the administration not put that burden on the students?

[26:22] T: That's not something that I'm sure that I have the answer to, right? Um, cause I definitely resonate with what you said, you know, if I don't do it, who will? Um, and so kind of in some of these conversations, yes, it is exhausting to always be that person. Um, but I kind of think about like, well, do I want these conversations happening without my voice, kind of like without the input of a person of color? Um, and so that earlier, um, diversity meeting I was referring to, you know, I was the only person of color in that meeting. And so I kind of think about like, if I hadn't been in the session, you know, obviously the, you know, the administration in my section: amazing, wonderful, love them. They care a lot about their students and their experiences. Um, you know, but ultimately, you know, while I'm sure they have our best interest at heart, like there's just some things that, you know, from a lived experience that you just don't have, right? Um, there's just certain perspectives, you know, from everybody's different paths of life that, you know, not everybody's going to have. And so I kind of think about like, yes, do I have a million things going on? Yes. Do I have a really packed schedule? You know, all those things are true. Um, yes, is it tiring, always, you know, being part of these conversations? But I just, I think about the fact that like, I wouldn't want these conversations to be had without my voice, like without the voice of at least one person of color or one underrepresented minority. So while I'm sure the people running these conversations have our best interests in mind, um, and you know, I've wholly trust them with that, I just kind of think about, you know, what, like I'm here and I'm going to make my experience count while I'm here as one of the very few Latinos pursuing a PhD in this, you know, institution.

[27:56] Ki: I think it's an excellent question. Khadija . I think that one of the biggest issues, as Tachira kind of touched on, is lack of voices on the topic being discussed. Sometimes it's unavoidable, there are a lot of different departments and areas, especially on the medical campus, that lack the diversity. However, I see administration and I see faculty and staff trying their best to implement practices that would celebrate diversity and bring more diversity onto the campus. The only problem is they don't have the individuals present that will be able to give them the toolkit and the resources to move that forward and to really follow that, follow certain practices to make that happen. So on the one hand, as, as both of you have kind of touched on it is exhausting. It is incredibly, incredibly exhausting to have come this far and still feel like you must turn around and pull others along with you. And like, bear that burden- it's not a burden, but it's a weight. It's a, it's a stress, it's a task, it's a job. It's a whole other job on top of the job that we already have. And I definitely feel like that type of pressure can sometimes be a stressor all in of itself that is entirely unique to people of color outside of the other stressors that are entirely unique to people of color. So the efforts of trying to change history is sometimes perpetuating the issues that we see in these communities.

[29:41] [T: Yeah. I definitely completely agree, and I think you raised some good points Kiloni. Um, but just, um, on more of a positive note, like, yes, it is exhausting to do these things, but it's also so rewarding when you look at the next generation that are coming in and you see like, okay,

like maybe I did something for them, you know, or like maybe they can see me and think like, okay, you know what, like she can do it, like I can do it too. Um, and so sometimes I really feel like Kiloni and I, you know, Kiloni is also the vice-president of MISO, sometimes we're fighting the good fight alone and it's our voices against everyone else's or it's just kind of like, we're the only two Latinas in the room or kind of just like in any situation. Um, so sometimes, you know, it can feel exhausting. It can feel isolating, um, and like we're doing the work alone, but this past interview, you know, days pre Corona, um, we were at the- a poster session, um, and we met some Latina applicants. And it was so amazing to see, and we had the greatest conversation. It was like Kiloni, myself, and like two or three other, um, awesome Latinas. And like, it literally felt like we all knew each other already. Um, cause just being able to instantly look at each other and know that, you already know kind of what I've gone through to be a woman and a woman of color in this space is something really special. You know? So it definitely is like little moments of joy like that. Like, Oh my God, like, you know, during my interview days, I was like one of like maybe three Latinos that are here and now there's like five that are here, in the next year there'll be seven. So it's like these really small changes, um, but it's things like that, that in my opinion, in my experience, I think make it all worth it, you know? And my sister is eight. And so when I hear her say, like, that she's going to go to high school and then college and then grad school, because she sees me in grad school, um, to her it's kind of matter of fact, like, of course I'm going to go to grad school. Like it's things like that, like prepping the way for the next generation that for me, makes it worth it. So even as tiring as it is to be part of all these meetings and, like, committees and forums and things like that, I kind of put it all to the side when I, like, am able to meet the next generation that are coming up.

[31:44] Ki: I definitely hear you. I don't want you to think that my comment is geared towards me not wanting to do these efforts.

T: No, not at all!

[31:54] Ki: Um, on the contrary, this is a job that I take wholeheartedly. This is a job that I volunteer for, the job of being that voice. And I think Khadija and I, we both feel the same way, here we are. We're doing this podcast, it's happening, we're getting these voices out. Um, but more geared towards how MISO can help in this movement, what do you think as an organization MISO has done to address showing up for racial and social justices thus far?

[32:24] T: Yeah, that's a really good question. Um, so firstly, I'm going to say, I think there's a lot more that we could be doing. Um, and just, you know, we're inherently limited by our status as a student organization, you know, by our schedules, you know, we're student run, um, and our members are students. Um, and so that can be a little limiting at times, but I think the most important role of MISO aside from providing that community for underrepresented minorities and international students on the medical campus, I think one of the more, in my eyes *important* roles of MISO is being that voice on the administrative side. And so kind of the student advisory

group meetings, kind of adding our voice to these conversations and having kind of the ear of some of the top level of administration on the medical campus and within GMS, I think is really, really critical. And it's been a privilege to be part of these conversations, like being asked to lead, you know, GMS-wide town halls in the wake of, um, you know, the George Floyd protest that happened earlier in the summer. And so that was really, um, very, almost daunting in a sense kind of feeling like you are speaking for a wide, wide range of communities, but also kind of very humbling in a sense that I have the opportunity to be that voice. I have the opportunity to kind of speak for people who don't get the chance to do it themselves. Um, and so I think kind of continuing to hold the, you know, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion kind of accountable and work very closely with them to kind of see, okay, well, what, what are we doing to make sure that people that are reading applications, you know, have sensitivity training or like, what are we doing to increase the number of URM students that are being admitted every year? Um, and kind of being that voice and kind of, you know, let them know that as good as, as good of a job as they're doing, as good of a job as they can be doing, um, that, you know, we're kind of on them, you know, and like, likewise, you know, they're kind of on us and we hold each other accountable, um, to kind of make sure that we're providing the best community for the medical campus that we can.

[34:18] Kh: When CASARI just started a lot of students, a lot of staff and a lot of people were excited and were like, I want to help. I want to get involved. But then that slowly diminishes and people kind of, like, fade away and maybe not put in as much work anymore. So my question-like as a grad student, as someone who has been at BU I know that things can move very, very slowly and that can sometimes discourage people from, like, following up or continuing to do the work that they've been doing. So what would you say to those people? Um, why do they need to keep fighting, even though it seems like nothing is going to change?

[35:00] V: I think it's a mindset and I think it's something that even, like, CASARI members have thought about. I think we all need to realize that the work that we do now may not enact change that we see like during our time here at BU or even like during our lifetime, but it's still work that needs to be done. I think it's like understanding what other student activist groups have gone through and what other people have gone through and understanding that it's a continuous line of history. Like this is not a singular moment. We're not really that unique as like an organization. I think we're just continuing on the line. And I think for a lot of people who it's like new for, I think you need to learn how to take yourself out of it. Like you end up being like one out of a thousand instead of like one of one. And I think like in a lot of like Western society, like individualism is really important, but like we can't, we can't keep living like that. Like it's literally not a sustainable system. It's not working. We know it's not working. So I think that you need to reposition yourself in a place where you can see like where you are, where we're at and like where we need to go.

[36:03] M: Um, yeah, we basically, what we're working on is we made a list of demands that we've just been like trying to force the administration to cheer us on. So 12 things that we think need to be done immediately to increase equity and inclusion for BIPOC faculty and students in the College of Arts and Sciences. Like it mainly centers around first BIPOC faculty, like Vy was talking about earlier, they do so much. They take on so much like unpaid extra labor just by being the only people of color in their fields or like at BU, like, in their department. So we're demanding an increase in hiring and retention of BIPOC faculty, as well as their compensation for this unpaid labor that they take on. And then for BIPOC students: increased representation, but also support and safety once they get here, because you can't just increase representation and then not change anything about the institution. Like that's just... that's not making anything better.

[36:57] Kh: If you had one or two things that you would ask the BU community to do in order to show up for members, um, and to show up for social justice, what would you tell them or encourage them to do? Or, you know, consider?

[37:16] V: I think a very obvious, like, thing that I would say is like, please show up, like, please show up to events, please sign petitions, please go to protests safely, social distancing, but things like that. But I think something else that like goes along those lines is that, I think that I would like it if people understood that like activism and like academia, like activism and everyday life are not like inherently separate. Like I think they're very involved in they're super interconnected and you should be doing things on the scale that you can every day. Like, like going to a classroom. If a professor says something that's like racist, homophobic, something that's inappropriate, you need to stand up and be like, was not okay for you to say. Like, and I think that, especially if you're in a position of privilege or power to be saying and doing things like that, then you need to be putting that into practice. I know it's uncomfortable to speak up, but I promise you however much you're uncomfortable, the staff member or the faculty member or whoever made that mistake is 10 times more uncomfortable. And the only way to make them change is to make them uncomfortable. So you need to like, say something like, please just say something.

[38:20] T: Yeah, I think that's a great question and a really important one too. Um, so I think as PhD students, we are in a really unique position where we're here for a while. Um, and so we can really invest in our community in a way that some other students that are here for as long, um, maybe can't. And so I think it's a privilege, but also a responsibility in the sense that, you know, because we're here for longer and we're more invested in this community, it's really up to us to make long lasting changes, um, for students that maybe don't have the time, um, to be able to really participate in some of those processes. And I think in addition, you know, individual people might not think that they can make much of an impact, but MISO's founder Delia, um, kind of really had a vision for MISO. And she saw that there wasn't a space for underrepresented

students and international students, um, within GMS, that we didn't have a voice. And so she started it, you know, um, and that was not that long ago. MISO is, uh, you know, seems like it's been a while, but we're a relatively new group. You know, we're only, we're like less than 10 years old, um, on the medical campus, which is kind of, you know, a little sad that it took so long for a group like MISO to be started. Um, but if it wasn't for Delia, you know, there maybe still wouldn't have been a MISO. Um, and so I think that that one person had such an outsized effect on so many different people's experiences at the UMC, whether they knew of her or not. Um, and you know, the many other people that work diligently to make MISO possible, and the people that, you know, currently carry on that kind of mission of MISO, I think that's really important. And so the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is another one that is also relatively new. And so I think that, you know, sometimes it can be easy to get caught up in cynicism and nihilism, and think that, well, it's not gonna matter. I'm just going to do my time, put my head down and kind of get out. Um, but you know, BU is not a prison. We are an educational institution. And so you should enjoy your time here. You know, you should be able to be a part of a community that you feel accurately represents you. Um, and if you see something that you think is missing, you know, maybe talk with other students, talk with administration and really try to get that started, um, just like MISO and just like the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion started.

[40:32] Ki: What does success look like for social justice in academia?

[40:38] T: Yeah that's a really good question and I'm not sure what that looks like, but I think to me it looks like equity. Um, it looks like underrepresented minorities and international students not having to work twice as hard to get half of what other people have. Um, and I think that it doesn't look like assimilation. I think that our identities are, you know, an extremely critical part of the way that we see the world and, you know, that's the way that we do science and the way that we do research, um, kind of in general. Um, and so I think that social justice in academia, I think to me, means anyone who is interested and works hard and has kind of like a vision and wants to contribute something intellectually has all the resources that they need to be able to do that. Um, and so I think, you know, Kiloni's experience of, you know, having a very kind of roundabout way to academia, you know, I think while Kiloni is like an amazing person and she like persevered through a lot, like, should she have had to go through all of those things? Or, you know, was there in an, in a more equitable society, was there more- a more straightforward route that she would have been able to take? Um, and so hopefully, um, and in my own experience as well, kind of, should I have been trying to kind of fight tooth and nail to apply to graduate school, um, and having counselors not knowing what to say to me, or, or how to help me and really having to reinvent the wheel, um, to apply to graduate school, because I didn't know anyone around me that was doing that and I didn't have any family or any friends that were doing that. You know, um, should it have been easier for me to apply to graduate school? Yes. Um, and so I think it looks like equity, um, where if you want to, you should be able to have the resources



and go into academia. And there shouldn't be some of these kind of structural and institutional barriers that we currently have.

[42:38] V: I think that it comes down to understanding like when you enter a space, it is okay to listen. Like no one is asking you to like, participate or speak on behalf of anyone else. Like, I think that for people who like are not impacted or whatever, by like whatever events that are being held, I think that understanding that like you can participate without overshadowing is like a choice. That's like a choice that you can make as a person.

[43:05] M: Also like obviously there are certain spaces where you should not go if you're not part of that civic community, and I think there need to be more of those basically at BU for BIPOC students and faculty. But if it is a place that, you know, the people running the organization are inviting everyone to come to, then I think it's important to just go. And obviously you can observe if you don't feel like you have something important to contribute at the time, you know, but I think the more people will go out of their comfort zones and connect with their fellow community members, the better, the stronger our community is going to be.

[43:41] Ki: So I mean, something we haven't really talked about and I think a lot of individuals, especially non people of color, uh, have- have said in passing to me or around me is that they feel this thing called like "social justice fatigue," right? If an issue comes up and all of a sudden it's all you can see on the news, it's all they hear about, they feel overwhelmed by it. They get stressed by it, right? And then they just want to back off. They don't want to touch it anymore. It's just too much, it's OD on the social justice. And so I feel like that's kind of a deterrent to them. How do you feel like we can help faculty, staff, peers, other students, incoming students, right? From high school and beyond to really feel comfortable asking the questions that they've never asked before, uh, being in spaces that are unfamiliar, knowing when to back off and giving them the right to say, it's okay if you're tired, take a beat, but please come back. I'm not going to deter you if you say something wrong, if you mess up, always with love, I'll correct you, but I, I need you to continue. Like how can we encourage that type of behavior in our allies?

[44:58] V: I think there needs to be a way in which like white allies can disengage activism from guilt. Like it does no one any good for you to tell me, "Well, I feel so bad that I did this in the past, or I feel so bad, I'm not doing enough." Just do work, pay attention to what people are doing. Give resources when you can. I think it's a lot of like honest conversations because honestly, I don't think that, like, activists of color or people of color in general are responsible for making like allies, like, comfortable. Like I think that's something they have to do on their own. And I think you do that by listening to people who are already doing the work, instead of pretending that like, it's work that you acknowledge now just because you just learned about it. Like, I think for a lot of the issue is that people are acting like, this is a completely new phenomenon. It's conversations. Like you need to have honest conversations and you need to get

used to being uncomfortable and being wrong. I think a lot of people are not comfortable with being wrong in any situation, but especially in terms of like race and issues like that, like no one likes being called a racist, but like, if you are, and if you did something that like is fair for someone to say that, then you are, you just have to get over it and you need to like do work. I know it's hard to, like, separate emotions from it but like, I think again, because work is not about you. So I think when you can separate that, then you can find some kind of success.

Kh: Awesome. Well, thank you so much. It was a pleasure talking to you and meeting you and we hope to continue this conversation later on.

[outro plays]