

## **Transcript for S2 Episode 1: “We’re Back!”**

*Run Time: 26:06*

BL: B. Lopez (host, co-executive producer)

BK: Ben Kuebrich (host, co-executive producer)

*Cue music: “RSPN” by Blank and Kytt*

BL: Welcome to this rhetorical life. A podcast about radical pedagogy, counterstories of rhetoric and composition, and the rhetoricity of our personal and political lives. We’re your hosts B. López...

BK: ...and Ben Kuebrich.

BL: B. is a queer PhD student of color, an archival enthusiast, and a cat dad above all else.

BK: Ben is an organizer and a teacher of journalism and writing. Join us here every month as we talk with educators, scholars, and activists about their research, their classroom interventions, and their struggles for a more just world.

BK: Hey B, how’s it going?

BL: It’s going good.

BK: This is cool. Do you have the recording and everything setup there?

BL: Yes. I’m just recording with my phone. So I did start it just it’d be nice to have a little before-we-get-started kind-of recording.

BK: I did too.

BL: Nice.

BK: I hit the record just ‘cause you never know what you’re gonna use.

BL: Yeah. Exactly. And I like those kind-of very informal/candid conversations I guess.

BK: Yeah. Me too. That’s cool. We both had the same idea. Umm.. What should we do?

BL: (Laughter)

BK: Should we start? I’m sure we’ll use some of this recording we’ve just done, but...

BL: Yeah. For sure. Let's get started.

BK: Okay. I'm trying to get happy to say an intro. You know how you're supposed to get excited at the start of a podcast?

BL: Yeah. Kinda have to hype yourself?

BK: Yeah, exactly. And I'm excited but it just doesn't always come off on the audio.

BL: I totally relate to that.

BK: Hey! Hey everybody! This Rhetorical Life is back and I'm here with the incredible B. Lopez, our new co-executive producer. B. can you introduce yourself?

BL: Yeah! Hey everyone! I'm really excited to be part of the podcast and to be recording today. Should I say a little bit about myself?

BK: Yeah. More about yourself.

BL: Okay. So I'm a first year CCR PhD student at Syracuse University. My research interests are queer archive work, specifically looking at kind-of audio archives, trans oral histories, so that's kind of my current research interest right now.

BK: That's great. And in the notes we had gone back and forth about you had talked about that – that was episode 32 or something – the episode is “Queer Public Cultures and the Rhetoricity of Sex Museums.” That's sort of in you like research scope, that sort of work, right?

BL: Yeah, definitely. And that's why I really enjoyed hearing that interview. Just 'cause looking at how archival work can be I guess spiced up in that sense because my first exposure to archival work wasn't in this kind of light so it was just really encouraging to continue to do archival work.

BK: Yeah, right. Because when I think about doing archival work I think about going into the SU special collections and you have to put all your stuff in a cubby and like you sign out one document at a time to look at.

BL: Yes. It is a pretty intense process. We actually, I went with my class, my rhetoric and policy studies course, to New York City and we went to the national archives there, and we actually got our researcher card, and went through kinda the process, the steps I guess, that one needs to take to even start working in the archives so it's a really intense process just to even get to work with the materials that they have available there. You have to like request the materials at least a week in advance, it's this whole thing.

BK: Yeah. The coolest experience I've had with archives is when Minnie Bruce came into one of the grad courses and talked about how her archives are I think at Duke and preparing them to go over there. And she was running through her record keeping over decades of movement work and it was movement work and letters and it was some of Leslie's stuff was in there or it was back-and-forth with Leslie in there. It was so cool to think about.

BL: I guess that's what I really appreciate about that is seeing folks talk about their process in going through archives and getting all that together. Because hearing that there's something special about hearing folks do that live, like in person, because I think then seeing certain archives and things that have been curated there's, you know, you can see the archivist's voice in what they've curated but there is something really special in hearing them talk about their process, and what they decided to include in perhaps their own research of the specific archives.

BK: Yeah. That sounds like an amazing project.

BL: Yeah. I'm excited. I did want to say something earlier that I feel like I needed to say in my introduction. I need to say that I'm from Southern California. It's a part of my identity. Because I didn't say that when I introduced myself I just focused on my academic stuff, but I'm from Southern California and I have a cat named Kahlo, and yeah.

BK: Describe your cat to me.

BL: He's a sweet, playful, and soft cat that doesn't present his softness, but only with folks that he's comfortable with.

BK: That's a cool thing about cats, about a lot of cats, is that they've got that fierce public presentation.

BL: For sure. (Laughs.)

BK: I love cats but I'm so allergic to them that I can't have a cat, but I'd love to meet Kahlo.

*Cue music: "RSPN" by Blank and Kytt*

BK: So we, we're doing a new season, a new chapter? Of This Rhetorical Life. Something? We're bringing it back and it's been two and a half years since episode 33, the last one, was posted. In thinking about how to do this show now, we both looked through the first set of episodes that were done in what maybe was 2012 to 2016, or so, and typed up some notes. Should we go through those?

BL: Yeah. Let's go through out notes.

BK: Okay, so, the first thing I noticed was that the first episode was a two-part episode with Minnie Bruce Pratt, and that kinda took me back to it being a live recording of a presentation she was giving about the relationship of words and action. And it was just a really powerful presentation, and it was at the tail end of the Occupy Movement and there was an Occupy Syracuse group that Minnie Bruce would visit at times and that I was involved with at the time, and so it was powerful to be with her in that moment and hear that presentation. And now I've assigned that podcast to some groups of students, so it was just cool looking back at that and remembering that moment.

And then when I was looking through I saw some other things that I thought speak to the political urgency of some of the episodes. Like the Steven Salaita, Vincent Lloyd and Carol Fadda-Conrey episode on Palestine and academic freedom because this is obviously an issue that is still alive. Netanyahu was just re-elected in Israel and Trump and Netanyahu have been really together in denying human rights to Palestine, and so that was at a moment when they had just rescinded his job offer at U of I – that's Steven Salaita – and just before the legal process ended in his favor. So I'm glad that This Rhetorical Life was able to take those little risks to do that kind of work. It's just not really safe anywhere or on campuses to talk about Palestinian human rights. In New York there have been multiple attempts to try and criminalize the BDS movement, so that was one that stuck out to me in thinking about that I was proud of us in that moment for doing that episode and it was Vani Kannan and Karriann Soto that interviewed Salaita, Lloyd and Fadda-Conrey. So that was a really cool episode to go back to.

And then I saw that there's a Black Lives Matter episode, there's an Occupy Wall Street episode, both during those movements and then there was an episode that I thought the topic was politically urgent now it was the last time that the U.S. was trying to back a coup attempt in Venezuela. Me and Yanira Rodriguez did an episode about that and we've been talking about maybe doing a follow-up on that. So those are things that are politically timely and urgent topics. And for me that's one of the reasons to do this podcast. You could write about something that is politically urgent for an academic journal, but it won't come out for a few years. But we can hit record and put something out in a few days. And talk to scholars in the field who do politically relevant and socially relevant work and have it come out almost immediately after in the moment that it is relevant.

BL: Completely agree that you can really just hit record and capture what is going on in the raw emotions that are coming through folks who are being interviewed, or especially getting to hear what that sounded like and being in that space at that specific time. Going back to archives, that's the beauty of that too – really getting to experience. Especially for folks who maybe weren't part of the event or didn't get the chance to for whatever reason. They could go back to one of our episodes and hear our experiences. And I feel like that's what's especially powerful about listening. And I think that's what I was reflecting on as well with the Queer Public Cultures and the Rhetoricity of Sex Museums" was just hearing about one I think

thinking of Dr. Jennifer Tyburczy's work with queer public cultures and thinking about the kinds of archival work that's available. With sex museums in particular my experience with going to the Museum of Sex in New York City, thinking about the sounds that I'm able to remember what I heard while I was there and I think it was a mixture of people laughing at artwork because of maybe their discomfort. Or kind of hearing a pleasant silence and then hearing people sigh or gasp was I think really interesting in the way that they were interacting in the Museum of Sex, so that's something that I definitely appreciated about this episode was in hearing how just like the significance of doing this kind of work was really valuable to hear about because it's a different experience to hear from the person who wrote on this, so specifically thinking about queer liberation and that's something that would be great to talk about in this new chapter. Queer liberation at least for me is definitely a topic of interest. But it's super important to discuss during the Trump era and I think how it impacts teaching as well, so super relevant.

What I really liked that was in the episode was this important of the praxis of queer curatorship, that's definitely something they discuss in displaying the resistance that is necessary in the survival of queer folks. The visibility of that or just having those conversations are super important.

BK: You had listed out a couple topic idea, and can you talk through those? What are some future episodes of This Rhetorical Life that you're interested in doing?

BL: There's some ideas that I've been thinking about around political literacies. So I think it would be really interesting and also fun to have a conversation with Dr. Eric Pritchard around his book *Fashioning Lives: Black Queers and the Politics of Literacy*. Another person who came to mind as well is Steven Alvarez and his work on taco literacies. He's been going to different campuses to discuss his work and he actually came to Syracuse so I think it'd be great to have a conversation with him about his work and specifically how he taught taco literacies in his classroom. I really enjoyed hearing him talk about that. There's so much with those folks in particular and I'm sure there's other folks that we can bring on to the podcast.

Another thing I was thinking about was teaching while being visibly queer as fuck. I don't know if we can cuss on this podcast or what.

BK: Yeah, we can.

BL: Yeah, so I guess that's the way I bring it up with friends. That's something that I've just in general I've had with BIPOC comrades about our visible identities. That it doesn't matter how we present ourselves in our classes but there's still a way that we're going to come across for our students. I think this goes hand-in-hand with another topic I'm thinking about of respectability/disrespectability politics. And tying that in with another idea I have as far as research methods. So I think it'd be really great to hear from Gwen Pough. It'd be awesome to talk to Brittney Cooper as well and just have a conversation, an intentional, unapologetic conversation about

their viewpoints on disrespectability politics. Thinking about the kinds of research methodologies that they incorporate into their work and how they present that either intentionally or unintentionally. So those are some of the things that I've been thinking about. What about you, Ben? What ideas have come to your mind?

BK: One that I've been thinking about for a while now, because unfortunately he's been around for a while now, is teaching during the Trump era. And what writing teachers are doing around the country. How have they changed their pedagogies in the Trump era to talk about different issues? Are they directly talking about Donald Trump and some of the politics that he has brought with him? Are they directly talking about white supremacy in the classroom, or anti-Muslim rhetoric or anti-immigrant rhetoric in the classroom? Or, because students are getting defensive, or because there's some sort of resistance toward those topics, are they trying to get at those topics through sort of a side door.

I've thought of that a lot in my own teaching. When do I specifically talk about an issue and when am I trying to get at a relevant issue but through an entry point that gets around the defensiveness or resistance that I'm expecting from some students. And also how the Trump era is just affecting teacher's lives. I had a student last semester with a Make American Great Again laptop sticker, and it affected me in the classroom in ways and I'm sure it affects a lot of teachers and a lot of teachers in different ways. There's a student who lives across the street who has a confederate flag sticker on the back of his truck, and those sorts of things that I think are particular to living in the Trump era. And I spent a lot of time thinking about what to do or not do with that student and his truck. And that's a little bit outside of the university but I know he's a student, so. And I'd really be interested in hearing from teachers around the country about that and about a lot of different takes on what that has meant. And then I kind of mentioned earlier an update on the Venezuela episode from 2014.

And another one that I was thinking about: I have a colleague who during my first semester he sent me Fred Moten's chapter "The University and the Undercommons" and it is kind of about creating this subversive undercurrent in the university and I'd like to read through that chapter more deeply and have a conversation with him about that.

The different ways of colleagues being in solidarity with one another or of mentorship too if we're thinking about – because I'm a faculty member now when I was doing most of these podcasts I was a graduate student – there it would be either different sorts of maybe subversive mentorship in the university or subversive collegiality in the university. Whether that's among graduate students or among faculty members I think that chapter might help get at those questions.

BL: I did want to respond to what you were just saying about teaching in the Trump era. Those are definitely things that I think about pretty often as well. Especially just given my visible identities and I think it is something that is subconsciously always

on my mind and the ways it impacts me even if I don't want to actively think about them, and I think that it weighs heavily in the classroom.

I haven't had a student wearing MAGA stuff but I have seen it all throughout Syracuse in very public spaces. So thinking about the kinds of entitlement, I don't know if entitlement is the right word to describe this but in the ways that people feel so confident in wearing MAGA gear. I went to Wegmans the other day and saw this older white man wearing a MAGA hat and I sort of froze, but my instinct was to run in the other direction. I was like, hell no, I'm not trying to interact or even let that person see me. I mean, he's going to see other people of color, but it's just that was my immediate reaction and I thought about that a lot. I was just thinking how I would react if I saw one of my students displaying MAGA gear. I wouldn't run anywhere because I can't just leave the classroom, right. But thinking about how certain teachers are forced in that same space with people who wear gear that is violent, right, symbolically violent and also violent in just witnessing or seeing that kind of gear so it brings a certain energy into the classroom. So I also would be really interested to hear how folks are thinking about that in their classroom spaces for sure. Some specific folks come to mind: Aja Martinez, James Sanchez, and Genevieve García de Müeller – two of them here in Syracuse and I can definitely reach out to them.

On the note of mentorship. I thought of a recent publication by two folks from the Latinx Caucus and their text "Advocating Comadrismo, a feminist mentoring approach for Latinas in Rhetoric" – it's just an amazing text and I would love to have a conversation with them about comadrismo. It would definitely be great to have a conversation with them about this.

BK: Yeah and something you said going back to the MAGA hats and Trump, I think that's something that could be its own episode or part of an episode just trying to break down that. And what you said about the mentorship sounds amazing too. We've got a lot of work ahead, then.

BL: We do have a lot of work ahead of us. I'm super excited.

*Cue music: "RSPN" by Blank and Kytt*

BK: A thing that came to mind that we didn't talk about was who we think the audience is for the podcast. Should we talk about that? Or what do we imagine the purpose is of what we're doing and the audience for it?

BL: The first thing that came to mind was just thinking about the previous episodes I think of the audience being folks in academia. Mostly folks in rhet-comp but not specifically just rhet-comp, but I'm thinking about folks with English backgrounds as well, and I would like to say just folks teaching in general because the kinds of topics that we cover, folks interested in social movements and talking about those things, activists. I think I'd also be interested in hearing the reactions of folks in the

podcasts. I hear a lot from the folks being interviewed. I don't think I've heard as much from the people being interviewed. I think maybe some of their reaction to the things that are said. I wonder about that and how that might change up the audience. So I'm curious to hear your thoughts.

BK: You were wanting to hear more of what the interviewers are thinking about, or more participation of the interviewers in the conversation. I think it is nice to have more of an exchange with each other.

I've gotten the feeling from doing it the first three or four years that one of the main audiences was graduate students and it was a project made by graduate students that were specializing in rhet/comp that ended up being the main audience as well. And it was a lot of doing interviews with faculty members at different places, and with a focus on different things, mostly based around the interests and the connections of the people working on the show had. And so they were kind of themes in feminism, critical pedagogy, social movements, anti-racist work, disability studies, themes that came through in those first episodes. But then I also hope there's episodes for graduate students who are entering the field and not seeing themselves or the things that they're interested in represented in the mainstream of the field that the podcast gives an alternative sense of the field because it can be overwhelming at first when you're trying to find yourself in something that speaks to you and your identity and your political identity, yourself your interest. That's the experience of first coming into a big academic field. Maybe this is a place to find other folks who have similar interests outside of some of the mainstream of the field.

BL: That would be great. Definitely agree with your thoughts about the audience. And it would be great to have one or two more episodes centered around graduate students, maybe their experiences specifically getting at folks who might not see themselves represented in the mainstream of the field, so talking about that and what that's like and their experiences in graduate school. I think that'd be great to have conversations with different folks because being in a graduate program now those conversations come up for sure.

BK: Yeah, definitely. Cool. How do you feel, B?

BL: I feel good! I just feel nervous just talking but I feel good. How do you feel?

BK: Good, I think this went great. I'm excited about this. Thank you for reaching out about doing something and about being energized to get this going again. This energized me and I've been thinking about it a lot since you reached out and been getting excited about all the different things we could work on.

BL: Thank you so much for letting me be a part of the podcast. I'm really excited and have felt this calling to want to do podcast work specifically so I'm just really eager to get started and really nervous but excited to work with you on these awesome



ideas I think we have a lot of different things we can include in the podcast. So I'm really excited and I just can't wait to see how this all turns out.

*Cue music: "Drums and Bass" by OLC*