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So, I'm Lynx. If you translate my real name, it means beautiful refugee. So, I don't think

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I had a choice about thinking about borders. And the joke is always um, you have to understand

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00:00:21,680 --> 00:00:28,000

a little bit about the stereotype of of of Jewish mothers um. And the stereotype of Jewish mothers

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is anything that's wrong in the world is their fault. So, um I have a Jewish mother - I had a

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Jewish father. And so, when people would ask me why I work on issues of refugees or migration

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or human rights or why I always like to play at the borders, I would say I blame my

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mother, of course, because that's what we do. And so, I always, you know, in talking

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about borders, it was interesting to hear what you said about the idea of borders as

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being a boundary. I don't see borders as a boundary at all. I see borders as something

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that that should be made visible. They should be exposed. Um if exposed means visible.
And then

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they should be played with. They should be manipulated. I have my my laptop here, and
the sticker

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00:01:22,400 --> 00:01:27,600

on my laptop - and I did not put this because of the conference, you know, there's a cat

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that says 'walls get torn down'. And when I say walls, I don't just mean the political

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and geographical borders. And I am distinguishing the two between political and geographical

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borders, but also the borders between genders, the borders between disciplines, the borders

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00:01:48,520 --> 00:01:55,520

between arts and science, the borders between academia and advocacy. All of those are borders.

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00:01:58,840 --> 00:02:05,840

And it's very important to see who, for me, who makes those borders, who decides that

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there's a border. Because when you see who makes the borders and who decides there's

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a border, that's often where you can see where power is. And when I asked you earlier

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about the border between the professor and the student, I found it really interesting

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00:02:22,560 --> 00:02:26,920

what you said about what the professor obviously knows more and the professor, you know, you don't want

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00:02:26,920 --> 00:02:31,680

to look, you know, stupid in front of the professor. And as a professor, I'm like: well, I know

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00:02:31,680 --> 00:02:36,240

more about something, but there's a lot I don't know more about. And you are the expert

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00:02:36,240 --> 00:02:42,560

in what you know, right? Whatever that might be, you are the expert in what you know. And

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one of the things that I try and do as a scholar, but also as somebody who teaches - and I teach

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both in the university, but I also teach through my writing because I was trained as a journalist um,

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is that I try and level that idea of knowledge. And I try and exp- level the idea of knowledge

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00:03:02,880 --> 00:03:09,440

and expose the fallacy of borders. And you know what I mean by fallacy? The the 'fakeness'

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00:03:09,440 --> 00:03:16,440

of borders, right?. Like like we talk about borders like they're the 'truth'. Borders are created, borders are made

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Up, borders change, borders move, right? Um I was smiling a little bit when you were talking

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about languages, and I'll reflect a bit. My my academic training is I have no, no cultural

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connection um through my family to the Balkans at all, but I've been going back and forth

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and working in the Balkans in an in an academic capacity um since 2002. Um and when I was studying

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in my master's degree, I studied at the- under a sociolinguist who's fairly well known. I'm not a linguist but,

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because-that, you know, I studied under him, so he influenced me quite a bit. And um and one of the things he talks

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about, is he talks about how Yugoslavia actually broke up. He said it started in a 1971

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00:04:14,720 --> 00:04:19,720

Linguistics Convention, what? [laughter] What are you talking about? Everything for

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00:04:19,720 --> 00:04:26,720

you is about linguistics, right? And in (unclear) there had been this idea beforehand um put forward

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by Vuk†Karadûi, right? One language, two alphabets. This had been put forward in the 1800s. And

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in 1971, at a Linguistics Convention - might have been í72, I might be making it up. Check.

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See? I don't know everything! The linguists from um at that time um, the Republic of, you know,

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00:04:47,960 --> 00:04:54,960

the Republic of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, the linguists got together in

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Zagreb, actually, and they decided: ìNo, it's dead. Vuk†Karadûi is wrong. It's not one language

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00:05:03,080 --> 00:05:08,080

in two different alphabets. It's two different languagesî. And, you know, later on, in Bosnia

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00:05:08,080 --> 00:05:14,280

and Herzegovina it was three. And so, what started to happen is the creation of new words. Like,

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00:05:14,280 --> 00:05:21,280

literally, the borders got firmer. The borders got stronger, right? The politics were actually

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changing the language, which was changing the borders. And then all of a sudden, you

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have a linguistic border, right? Whereas, you know, beforehand, even though there were

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always regional differences, there was this other thing of, no, no, no, no, we're Yugoslavia.

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We only have one language. So, I found that something that was really interesting. When

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my grandparents came to the United States, they were asked what country they were from.

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And my grandma had always said that she was from Austria. Always. Austria. Okay. So fast

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00:06:01,720 --> 00:06:08,720

forward three generations. When um I started to study in central Eastern Europe, I was

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going to Budapest, doing research there. And I called up my grandma. My grandma was super

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good with computers! Like, really good with computers. It was freaky. My grandma taught

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my mom how to use computers, which is odd. And I called my grandma up. You see, there's

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not always borders between ages either. And I said 'So grandma, I'm going to be going

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to Budapest. She said 'Yes Shayna, I know you're going to Budapest. I'm not happy about

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00:06:39,800 --> 00:06:44,800

This. I said, 'Yeah, I know. That's fine. So, grandma, you're from Austria?' 'Yeah, we're

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from Austria. 'Okay. What's the name of the town that you're from, grandma?' And she said

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'Tismenits' - which is the way you would say it in Yiddish which is the language that was

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spoken among Jews. I said 'No, grandma, not everybody speaks Yiddish. What do the goyim

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00:06:59,880 --> 00:07:05,880

call it? What did the non-Jews call it?' And she says 'Tysmenytsia'. I'm thinking: that doesn't

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00:07:05,880 --> 00:07:12,880

sound very German. I was like, okay, 'Tysmenytsia'. So, this was, again, 2001 at the time. I'm

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on the computer. There was a program called MapQuest then. I'm on the computer before

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Google Maps. And I look up 'Tysmenytsia'. I can't find it in Austria. I think: eh okay, there was

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00:07:24,360 --> 00:07:29,360

an Austria-Hungarian empire. Maybe it's in Hungary. I look it up in Hungary - I can't

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find it in Hungary. Call up my grandma. 'Okay, grandma. So, you're not from Austria and you're

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00:07:37,360 --> 00:07:47,360

not from Hungary. Where are you from, grandma? And she says 'Ukraine?' Okay. And I go back

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and I'm starting to look online. And then all of a sudden the phone rings: 'Shayna' - my name

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again. 'We're from Poland. We're from Poland!' And my grandma had been making fun of Polish

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00:08:06,360 --> 00:08:12,360

people her whole life. Anything stupid was Polish. The light bulb doesn't work - it's Polish.

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00:08:12,360 --> 00:08:18,360

Like the the there's a crack in the plaster - it has to be Polish. I never understood why are we

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00:08:18,360 --> 00:08:26,360

making fun of, but okay you know, whatever. And all of a sudden at the age of 81 years old, 82, she finds

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out she's Polish because the borders had been redrawn. So, my grandma was from an area called

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Galicia, which kept going back and forth between Poland and Ukraine. But her father fought

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in the Kaiser's army, so of course they were Austrian, right? So, I go to the town. It's

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very much in Poland. It's three hours east of Krakow. We're 45 minutes from the Ukrainian

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border. And that's where we're from. Okay, fine. And I'm taking pictures everywhere.

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And I send the pictures to my grandma, because remember, she's very good at computers. And

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she says 'Shayna', she points at a billboard. 'Yep'. She said 'What language is

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00:09:17,360 --> 00:09:26,360

that?' 'That's Polish, grandma'. She says, 'I speak that language. I know that language'.

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But she never knew the name of that language. Because there was the language that you spoke

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to other Jews in- that's Yiddish. There's a language that you wrote in- that was German.

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They wrote in German. And then there was the language that you spoke to the non-Jewish

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people, the shopkeepers, you know, whatever, whatever. And she didn't know what the name

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00:09:45,360 --> 00:09:51,360

of the language is. It was just the language that you spoke to the non-Jews in. So, going

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back to the idea of what do borders mean to me, borders are something that needs to be

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exposed. They need to be made visible because we just take them off and like they're the

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00:10:02,360 --> 00:10:08,360

truth. We don't usually see them until we run up against them, until we're uncomfortable,

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00:10:08,360 --> 00:10:14,360

until we're up against a border. That's when we know that there's a border. And then you

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00:10:14,360 --> 00:10:20,360

have to ask, well, why is there a border? Who put that border there? You've got to poke

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00:10:20,360 --> 00:10:26,360

the border. You play with the border. And then you see, does the border work for me?

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Maybe the border works for me now. The border might not work for me, even in five minutes.

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The border may not work for me in five years. To have a conversation where I'm just talking

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to you, you still instinctively are saying, `mm-hmm, mm-hmm`. You are engaging. You are

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breaking that border, right? When there was silence previously, I asked you questions to try and

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break the border. And that's what we call `constructivism`. Constructivism is the idea

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that there is not just a truth out there, a truth out there, but that it's constantly

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changing. It's constantly being manipulated because of the interaction. And it can be

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the interaction of a conversation, but it's also the interaction between different parts

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of society. It's also the interaction between different kinds of knowledge. But it's also

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the interaction of time, of location, of language. I can't speak to you in the language that

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you study in, but I could speak to you probably better in the language of your parents.
Right? [laughter]

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But you may not be able to speak to me in that. So we'll speak instead in your, you know
in my

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00:11:40,360 --> 00:11:46,360

first language, which is your third, right? I mean, why not? But think

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00:11:46,360 --> 00:11:50,360

about what this conversation could be like if it could be in German.

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Of course. Think about what the conversation could be like if it was in

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00:11:54,360 --> 00:11:59,360

Croatian or Bosnian. Because it

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00:11:59,360 --> 00:12:04,360

will be different, right? Yeah. It's just going to be a different kind of truth, right?

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So, I talk a bit about my family, but then also where I grew up and when I grew up also

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really influenced my idea of borders because I grew up in Los Angeles in the 1980s. I went

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to a secondary school where there was 43 languages in my secondary school. 43 languages. And

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I thought that was normal. I had no idea that that was unusual. That was my normal. I cannot

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speak the language of my grandparents. I cannot speak German. My father's family are Jews

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from Germany. I cannot speak Yiddish. But I grew up speaking Spanish because I grew up

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in Los Angeles in the 1980s. When we talk about things like refugees, I grew up when

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the boat people were coming from Vietnam and Cambodia because of the Vietnam War. They

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Where-coming to my city. When there was the wars in Central America and El Salvador and

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Guatemala, people were walking up through Mexico. When the Iranian Revolution happened

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in 1979, almost all - no not almost all, many of the people from Iran came to Los Angeles.

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When the USSR fell, many of the people from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia came to

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Los Angeles. So, the idea of migration was not at all unusual to me. That was what was

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normal to me. And the idea of a refugee, those are my grandparents, but they would never

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call themselves refugees because that word didn't exist. And if you look at my last name,

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obviously my family has been refugees for centuries. So, when refugees to me were my

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00:14:08,360 --> 00:14:18,360

grandparents and my classmates, I guess, it was not unusual. Like so, the idea of borders being

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istable was also not something that I ever understood. Growing up in California, that

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used to be Spain, that used to be Mexico, and now it's a US state called California. But

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there was always the back and forth. But it was also the United States in a time when

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there was increased immigration policies and nationalism. And so, I understood that borders

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were something that were very politicized. Borders were something that were created again

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for power and to be used as a tool. But a tool that in the sense of I'm going to create

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00:15:04,360 --> 00:15:11,360

a them so I can protect the idea of an us. So, the border became between us and them,

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00:15:11,360 --> 00:15:18,360

but it was created not because of the *them*, but because of a fear that somehow the *us*

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00:15:18,360 --> 00:15:27,360

is going to be contaminated. And I thought that was bullshit. And I didn't like that

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00:15:27,360 --> 00:15:42,360

at all [laughter]. And I was like, no, what it's doing is it's creating power. It's keeping power

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00:15:42,360 --> 00:15:47,360

because of a false idea. Again, that word fallacy, that false idea that there's some

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00:15:47,360 --> 00:15:53,360

sort of purity, that there's a pure *us*. Well, anytime in history when you try and make a

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pure *us*, you wind up with war. And if you look at *my* people, Jews, we've always been

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00:16:02,360 --> 00:16:08,360

the *other*. But we've always been the *other* because there was some sort of fear that we

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00:16:08,360 --> 00:16:18,360

were going to contaminate the 'pure'. So, this always influenced me and interested me and

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00:16:18,360 --> 00:16:24,360

it very much influenced me and interested me in my choice of career. Now, I'm at an

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academic conference right now, so I'm going to you know, speak as an academic. But the truth of

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00:16:29,360 --> 00:16:36,360

the matter is I operate in the worlds at the borders, if you will, between journalism,

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00:16:36,360 --> 00:16:44,360

advocacy, and academia. And I'm perfectly fine there. I'm really happy at that border

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00:16:44,360 --> 00:16:53,360

between advocacy, journalism, and academia. I think that's a great place to be because

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00:16:53,360 --> 00:16:58,360

I see it as a place where the things can come together. So, I don't see the border as separation,

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I see the border as *inexusi*, okay? And it's like the *inexusi* of all of these things and that's so

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00:17:04,360 --> 00:17:13,360

Rich, right? The Balkans, one of the reasons why people have often been so fascinated by the

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Balkans is because it's supposedly the borders between the East and the West- whatever that

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means. But it's also the borders between languages. Something called- I'm going to say this badly

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in German, but the *isprachbreiten*, when the way that Turkish will influence Slavic languages,

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will influence Albanian, will influence Romani, will influence -then that mixture of language actually creates

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A rich, richness. So not border as separation, but border as nexus, as a meeting place. So, my

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00:17:46,360 --> 00:17:57,360

academic work actually has almost always looked at people, how they represent themselves,

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and specifically, people who would identify as being 'transnational'. So, people who are

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00:18:04,360 --> 00:18:22,360

a nation that go across states. So, for 16 years now, it's 2001, when was that? 17 years,

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I've been working with Romani media, Zygoni media, Gypsy media, and being like, um how do

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00:18:30,360 --> 00:18:37,360

people represent themselves? Because that's a nation that goes across many states. And

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00:18:37,360 --> 00:18:42,360

when I, and and and if you think about media, you think about how people represent themselves,

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00:18:42,360 --> 00:18:46,360

that's how people are representing themselves to tell the story about themselves. So, here's

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00:18:46,360 --> 00:18:54,360

a nation that goes across states of transnational people. And so, I started working in the Balkans

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00:18:54,360 --> 00:19:00,360

speaking, and the question became, what language should I learn? Because I'm looking at Romani

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00:19:00,360 --> 00:19:04,360

media. So, if I learn Hungarian, that's not going to do me a damn bit of good in Serbia

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00:19:04,360 --> 00:19:09,360

or Macedonia. If I learn Serbian, that's not going to do me a damn bit of good in

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00:19:09,360 --> 00:19:15,360

Hungary [laughter]. If I learn Macedonian, I can kind of get by in Serbia, definitely, not in Hungary.

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00:19:15,360 --> 00:19:21,360

And then I said, wait a minute, if I'm working on Romani media, why don't I learn Romani?

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00:19:21,360 --> 00:19:31,360

So, I became this American who could speak no Hungarian, no Slavic languages, but I could

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00:19:31,360 --> 00:19:39,360

speak Romani. That really confused people, and it made me learn about the Balkans in

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00:19:39,360 --> 00:19:44,360

a very interesting way. It made me learn about the Balkans from the perspective of people

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00:19:44,360 --> 00:19:54,360

who are on the border, like who are on the periphery. What does it mean to learn about a place,

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00:19:54,360 --> 00:20:01,360

a culture, a politics from the people who don't quite fit in? Because the only language

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00:20:01,360 --> 00:20:05,360

they could speak was Romani or English or Spanish. So, I either needed to speak with

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00:20:05,360 --> 00:20:09,360

people very highly educated who could speak English or who had traveled abroad and could

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00:20:09,360 --> 00:20:13,360

speak Spanish or I needed to speak with Roma, some of whom were highly educated, some of

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00:20:13,360 --> 00:20:18,360

whom were shining shoes. When I got lost, which I did all the time in the bazaar, I

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00:20:18,360 --> 00:20:27,360

either was looking for somebody who looked under 20, whatever ethnicity, or was shining

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00:20:27,360 --> 00:20:32,360

shoes, because that was what I was going to find out. So that was an interesting way to

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00:20:32,360 --> 00:20:40,360

look at how borders are drawn in power, because I had to be at the periphery, just because

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00:20:40,360 --> 00:20:50,360

of the languages that I spoke. And um, so, that was one part. Then I continued that by looking

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00:20:50,360 --> 00:20:55,360

at how Sami represent themselves in their own media. The Sami are the indigenous people

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00:20:55,360 --> 00:21:00,360

of Northern Norway, Finland, Sweden, the Kola Peninsula, Russia. They used to be called

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00:21:00,360 --> 00:21:06,360

the Lapps, but Lapp is a pejorative term. They don't like that term. So, I got to know

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00:21:06,360 --> 00:21:11,360

about the Nordic countries from the perspective way up in the Arctic and from the indigenous

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00:21:11,360 --> 00:21:22,360

people there. It was a very interesting perspective! And you know, now my work is is really um, and it's always been

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00:21:22,360 --> 00:21:26,360

because, again, I work with transnational peoples. So, there's the transnational peoples of the

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00:21:26,360 --> 00:21:32,360

Sami, because they're indigenous to that land. They have one place that they call their home,

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and then the countries came. Finland was created, Norway was created, Sweden was created, but

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the Sami was always there, Russia was created. The Roma are one nation, but they don't necessarily

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have one homeland, but they are one nation. So, what about refugees? Are they a transnational

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people too? Can you be a people because you've had to flee?