

H.E.A.R.D S1 E1

0:00:01.20	12.0s	Ingrid Nuttall	You're listening to H.E.A.R.D: Higher Education and Real Diversity, a podcast for the AACRAO community sponsored by AACRAO. This is episode one who we are. Let's get started.
0:00:18.65	12.2s	Portia LaMarr	Hi, AACRAO Community. Welcome to the first episode of H.E.A.R.D That is Higher Education and Real Diversity. I'm Portia LaMarr.
0:00:31.10	1.5s	Tashana Curtis	I'm Tashana Curtis.
0:00:32.61	1.2s	Ingrid Nuttall	and I'm Ingrid Nuttall.
0:00:34.0	38.9s	Portia LaMarr	On our show, we'll explore topics of diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education. Our goal is to talk about the intersection of DEI and our profession from our own lives. We are not DEI experts, but we are real people with real experiences and a commitment to this topic. You'll hear us be vulnerable, make mistakes and hopefully learn and grow with all of you. Let's give the people the background of who we are and where we come from and why we are passionate. Get a little bit more into this. Where's your current institution and your position now?
0:01:13.30	100.2s	Tashana Curtis	Currently, I've been in Higher Ed for about 22 years. I've worked my way up the ranks. I'm currently an Associate Registrar. However, the structure here is a little different because our registrar is also an assistant VP of Enrollment Management. So that really puts me in a lot of doing registrar duties. So, you know, it's been a struggle within my path of higher education and I think a lot of that has to do with the color of my skin. I am at a place now that I am comfortable. My color does not matter here. There are a lot of people here in high positions that look like me. So I feel more comfortable but it took a struggle to get to that to, to this place. So with that said, like I said, I've been in higher Ed for many, many years, I'm still learning, I'm still growing and I do wanna get to the top of the, you know, not President status but I, you know, like a AVP or, you know, something along those lines. And I don't want my color of my skin or even my gender to get in the way of that. I want my, what I can bring to the table, my mind, my thoughts to take, you know, to outshine what I look like.
0:02:54.72	43.0s	Portia LaMarr	I feel the same way and I don't know how you feel Ingrid, but for me and what I felt like I just heard Tashana say is the color of our skin is first and then it's our gender, you know, and I think that's very interesting because there's a lot to this spectrum of diversity and we can't put ourselves all in one, you know, we're all over the place. That's where the word intersectionality comes from. Like we can hold apart in different sections of diversity. And how do we, why, how and why do we categorize that? Like where does that come from? You know, Ingrid, what is your current position?
0:03:38.30	185.3s	Ingrid Nuttall	So I am the Deputy Registrar of the office of the registrar at the University of Minnesota. So I am a cis white woman and as a white person, I would say, like my relationship to my race has been in a different way invisible to me because of the way that whiteness does work in power structures. So, right, like I have been in many conversations about DEI with white people where people have said and I'm sure I have felt too like, oh, we can't talk about, we can't talk about race or like the impact of race and power without a person of color here. And that is like evidence

			<p>of the way, like sort of the pervasive nature of racism and white supremacy and how it functions sort of for white people almost, it feels like it's in the background. And so like I've been trying to kind of in a really uncomfortable way I think for me, push it forward without pushing it forward and having it erase the places where I can find commonality and relationships with like with other women. So for you, when you say like your race comes first and your gender comes second, I think prior to sort of understanding the complexities of intersectionality a little bit, I would have said, well, my gender comes first and I might have not thought about my race at all because it, for as a white person, it has been so invisible to me. And I would say now it all feels very mixed together in my identity. And so I like Tashana, you know, I, I worked my way up through the ranks as a, I actually started out in communications first and was able to kind of get progressively more and more experience and really had doors open for me. I would say in some ways that for a long time I thought were because I was just like super great at my job. And I think it's complicated. I think it's because I was good at my job. And I think I also made people in positions of power feel comfortable with promoting me because of my identity. And that's like, it's a weird thing to deal with. So here I am, like I took a brief stint exit from the registrar's office still in higher education and worked in information technology, which I know we've talked about Portia and I did that to kind of prove to myself in some ways that I could do something radically different. And I would say that like the fact that I could even get in the front door, there was with no bona fides and of technology was in part a result of my like privilege. I know it was because I know how it happened. Now I did a good job when I was there but someone opened the door for me, someone opened the door for me.</p>
0:06:43.95	3.4s	Tashana Curtis	I wanted to hear Portia like, you know, your background.
0:06:47.91	130.5s	Portia LaMarr	<p>So right now I am as of 6/24 I'm still a program coordinator and business analyst. 7/1, I will become a product manager. So I'm going to be switching over to the IT field. Yeah, excited about that. Still in higher education, still in higher ed, still helping in student services. But just more of the products to help students um student led experience be better, you know, helping on those products. So, and I, I'm thinking about both of y'all and this is the beauty of this and I hope people take this away. Everybody has a different experience, you know. I don't know if my color was such a forefront in my mind as a struggle when I think about it, I think about, I think I was just, I think it was, but I never really realized it until later on in my life. I think I was doing the things to make people happy and be comfortable with me, you know, like, oh, I'm going to laugh at all your jokes. I'm going to do whatever you need me to do just so I can get some advancement. But when I think about that was I really being my true self. Yes and no, you know, I was doing the straightening my hair so I can get into the door, you know, and then maybe I'll go into my curls or whatever, but I didn't think of that as a wrong thing. I thought of it as a, that's what you have to do to make it to the next level. It wasn't until later when I realized and questioned those things. Like, why, why do I have to do that? You know, because these were just the things that were taught to me. You gotta wear a skirt and stockings. Why it was again, wasn't till later, like, wait, that doesn't make any sense to me, you know. So I think now I'm going through the realization of, oh, wow. I was doing a lot of excuse the term but stepping and fetching just to make it. And if I really look, think about it, I'm like, I didn't even really make it anywhere.</p>

0:08:59.46	35.2s	Ingrid Nuttall	Well, I, so that's so interesting because you said the things that you just thought you had to do and I guess the, that's, that's that pervasive nature of like who and what is setting the quote unquote like normative structure that you're supposed to align to and who says that that's the thing? And I think that, like, questioning that and interrogating, who said that? And why is kind of what this conversation is all about? Portia you said you didn't think you got anywhere, I wanna hear you say more about that.
0:09:35.34	136.7s	Portia LaMarr	Um, I just, I guess my goal was always to be the registrar, right? I don't care where it was, it was like a registrar. A part of that, I'll blame me and my mindset. So I came from a high school being a registrar, which is very rare. So I thought naturally, oh, where are the registrars either in the DMV or college. So I said easy. I'll just go to college and be a registrar. This is perfect. I didn't really understand the depth of that word, registrar. Registrar can mean something different in different institutions and they perform different jobs, you know. So, and it was me trying to learn that. That was, that was my part. Right. The other part was all the things that I felt like I was doing. I was still feel like I was just making lateral moves, lateral moves and it just being in the registrar world, it weighs heavy on, being a supervisor a lot. And if you don't have that experience, then you can't rise up. But it's like, well, how do I get that experience? If you never even helped me get the experience. So it's a catch 22 in that matter. Because as we know, registrar road is like a pyramid, the higher you go, the narrower those positions become. So it was just like I can never really find a place in which I can say that I managed some people just so I can get the title of Assistant Registrar and then, you know, make my way on up. That was hard for me. And I can honestly say I don't, it wasn't a lot of people of color to guide me in that until my late position. And they left, you know, because of the work environment. So it made me wonder, like, is there even hope for me? Is that a possibility? I didn't know any Tashanas out there who are registrars like that. So it's just like, and not even Tashanas, but Ingrid's, like, I didn't see a lot of women in my path that I can be like, oh, I can, I can, I just how, you know, so that was why I felt like I kept making a lateral move.
0:11:53.41	102.9s	Tashana Curtis	I can totally understand that because speaking back when I was the registrar at that institution, um you know, how we have regional conferences. So I would go to these regional conferences and there were only two black women. I was one and there was another one out of like 100 to 200 registrars within that region. Um It kind of was a, a benefit for me in a way because people knew who I was because it was only two of us. But it also was a hindrance in a way because I had to scream a little louder, you know. So there's like you said, there's a catch 22 with all of that. And to Portia, I actually, when I started out in higher ed, I started out in student services and then I became the assistant to the registrar and then I became an Assistant Registrar. And then from there, it just took off, you know, so I actually learn, I can sit at each seat in my office and do that function, which is what I want because I always tell my daughter in order to own a McDonald's, you have to know how to operate it, whether you're scrubbing the floors, flipping fries, flipping burgers in order to become that manager or to own it, you have to know how every piece works. And the only way to know that is to sit in that seat. Yeah, every position has been a step of a lateral move. I have actually, I can say I actually climbed the ladder.
0:13:37.86	4.2s	Ingrid Nuttall	So Portia, why do you wanna be a registrar?

0:13:44.98	89.2s	Portia LaMarr	I think I gravitated. So I was a teacher. Teachers are they do a lot, you know, I mean, and I just, I got burnt out in the area that I was teaching, not even in the area it was in the school that I was in, it was just, we dealt with a lot of, a lot of students that got kicked out of the public school system, so it was a lot of taking the time out to figure out what is best for this student and it could just be exhausting. So that's when I became the registrar and I just really liked that type of work. Like, you know, you're helping but you're not helping in the, it's like a different, there's different ways of helping and to see the grades collect, excuse me, accumulate. And, and in the end result being graduation was just like, oh, that is exciting, you know, and doing that again, learning the path of what registrar means in different institutions. It was like, how close do I want to be to that process with, you know, a bigger institution? Sometimes you're not as close to that process. And in my mind I just thought, you know, it's a career that I like and that's the pinnacle of the, of that area is to become a registrar. So, I guess that that is why I don't even know if I actually gave a good answer, but that was the goal, you know.
0:15:14.34	68.3s	Tashan a Curtis	That's a great answer because I agree with you and to know, you know, just like one of my work study students from my past, he became the mayor of Birmingham, Alabama. And I, you know, when I got the message, I felt like I helped that, you know, he was my most consistent student. He talked to me, I helped supervise him and I had a percentage, I had a small percentage in shaping that man into becoming who he became. And that is why I've been doing this for so long. As many tears I've shed, going home, talking to myself, cursing myself out. But I still get up and I come here the next day because I know that whether it's 2%, 1%, 100%, I had something to do with that student walking across that stage in some, in some shape. I had something to do with it. And that's what I love. That is my passion and that's why I'm doing this.
0:16:22.86	3.9s	Portia LaMarr	And that's, and I think that is why we put up with what we put up.
0:16:26.73	0.7s	Tashan a Curtis	Correct
0:16:27.50	17.4s	Portia LaMarr	Because it's not even just about color or gender. I mean, let's be honest, the money isn't there either in that sector of higher education, you know what I'm saying? But we still do it. We still do it with a smile on our face and pride in our heart.
0:16:45.52	73.3s	Ingrid Nuttall	Yeah. Yeah. It's funny how it does get you. I never knew that. I didn't even really understand what a registrar position was like a lot of people until I started working there. I didn't know what a business analyst was until I started working in the registrar's office. I had no idea. Until the early aughts what that work even was. But I think it is a like specialized, it's like an area of specialization where you can dig into details and own a body of knowledge that makes it so rewarding. I, you know, it's funny, I know that people say that like the money isn't there and I know that in the way the world works that that's very true, especially comparatively. You know, I mean, part of the reason I worked in IT was because I wanted the opportunity to explore that kind of potential. But, at the same time, I will say that my own background and my own experience being a registrar was a way where I thought that I could make a really good living to support my family. Like it is sometimes I'll hear, people say like, well, we're not in it for the money and I'm like, aren't you? Because it actually pays pretty well in some of these positions.

0:17:59.77	4.7s	Portia LaMarr	You're right. It does pay pretty well when you look at all the people underneath you.
0:18:04.73	0.8s	Ingrid Nuttall	That's right.
0:18:05.51	10.4s	Portia LaMarr	But then when you start looking at the people above you or in other departments, you're like, wait a minute, do you guys really know this whole school shuts down if I don't do my job?
0:18:16.58	4.7s	Tashana Curtis	That is so true. So true. If I don't think that but
0:18:23.46	1.4s	Portia LaMarr	nobody graduates.
0:18:26.52	2.1s	Tashana Curtis	That is so funny. Yeah. The thing
0:18:28.63	8.1s	Ingrid Nuttall	that separates our work from a, a bank or any other industry is the work that registrars control.
0:18:44.88	17.2s	Portia LaMarr	Thinking about our journeys and our careers and how we're maneuvering in them. Has it been anything that you guys have done in the name of DEI within your institution? And how do you feel about that?
0:19:02.52	51.2s	Tashana Curtis	For me? No, not yet at this institution. Um But I am willing and open to it. And it's funny that you say that because this institution which I love, they have a lot of learning. Well, we have an LMS system and there are tons and tons of classes. And I remember you sent the email out Portia about the DEI and I actually went on our LMS system and I registered for a few of them just so I can learn and have a more understanding and more clarity and to have more conversation on those topics. So I appreciate you sending that email out because it definitely made me do some homework and some research on it.
0:19:54.68	5.2s	Portia LaMarr	Yeah, I did the same thing. Ingrid, what about you? I know you have already done some DEI stuff.
0:20:00.45	86.6s	Ingrid Nuttall	I started, same thing what Tashana said, that I started doing the certificate here at the University of Minnesota. I facilitate a kind of community of practice coffee hour for my office where we talk about a variety of DEI things. I was the chair of the Social Concerns Committee, which is part of university governance here. But, you know, funnily enough, I would say that like my time on that committee while like incredibly enriching, we did not like we, we did not dive deeply into DEI topics that you would think of like that we're gonna talk about here. I'm sure we talked a lot about sustainability and the environment which is important and is related and I'm really proud of the work we did there. And I um I'm part of a collaborative, I co-founded a collaborative on campus called Just Education, which is working to figure out how the University of Minnesota can reverse the ripple effect of incarceration in the state. And that's probably the area, I mean, that's definitely the area where I've done the most work because of my own experience and relationship to the impacts of incarceration because I have family members who have been incarcerated. But what about you, Portia?
0:21:27.81	170.9s	Portia LaMarr	This past year, I was our department's DNI chair. So this position just led a group of council members to, you know, spreading some DNI activities and practices in our department. We did a lot of brown bag lunches where we would, you know, focus on a subject matter for everybody to just, you know, take time out once a month and learn about um ranging from the LGBT Q plus community, Juneteenth to the deaf community, you know, during their month of celebration, you know, talking about all the, the things that they have gone through, through this time of COVID

			<p>and everybody making everything online. You know, there were things that you just didn't understand. Like, oh, wow. Like, you know, it was really easy for me to jump online and just listen and focus where it's not that easy for someone who may be part of the deaf community. And also another takeaway was the range of the community and how everyone does not feel like they're part of the community. And it was just interesting things that it was a great takeaway with that one but yeah, did all of that. And how I got to that position was because it was something that again, someone opened the door for me to be on the council and then their current chair left during all that going through the George Floyd thing, I struggled with what my role was and all of this, marches going on, protests going on, felt on the fence about all of that because I just felt like I'm a parent, I don't know if I could put myself out there like that, you know, I was struggling, but then also the same time wanting to show my, my child, you know, be proud of who you are. So I just didn't know what my lane was. And when you look at this word diversity and equity and inclusion, it is so huge of all the things that need to be changed. You can be so overwhelmed and not realize like your little part can make a huge difference. So it was just like, what was my little part? And I felt like, you know, as it opened up with the council that, that was my little part, you know, to help educate everyone. But I, I asked the question of how do you all feel about doing that or whatever your position was in? Because sometimes you're like, God, why you keep coming to me? But then at the same time, you also feel like, well, why you didn't come to me, you know, like it's a hard balance. So, you know, I don't know if you guys have, you know, felt that.</p>
0:24:19.32	125.8s	Tashana Curtis	<p>You know, yesterday I attended the AACRAO Collective gathering and the topic was actually walking the talk, effective strategies for advancing diversity and inclusion in their education. And I can honestly say the conversation just, it was so good. I really, really enjoyed it and I learned some things from there because you know how we have, we have the HBCUs, we have the PWIs, but I've never heard of a HSI, a Hispanic Servicing Institution. That totally opened up my eyes to something different because I never, I didn't know that. I didn't know that. And to hear the person speak from her perspective, you know, she was a registrar at her institution and it was just, it was, it just, I was so amazed, I was really amazed and like you said, with the word biases, that was one of my biases because I didn't even know those existed. You know, they always say black and brown, they put us together. But actually we're not together, we're suffering, we have our own identities, our own stories, our own stories. But society always puts black and brown together. I was amazed. Yeah, it was, it was very good. And, you know, I always say, you know, we can take the classes, get the certifications. But what are you doing with it? What are you like? You can only advance your mindset if you acknowledge what's going on. You know, if you, I can read all of the books I want on DEI, but what am I doing with it is the question. You can take all the classes, attend all the sessions. But what are you doing?</p>
0:26:25.92	35.9s	Portia LaMarr	<p>Yeah. Yeah. I think that that is a great point and, and, and doing doesn't have to be a huge gesture. Doing could be simply what we just talked about bringing it up to someone who, having a conversation, having a tough conversation with a family member or it could range to going out and picking it out in front of the Capitol. I don't know, but it, there's ranges to the doing but I think that is the difficult next step. And Ingrid, you had a great session at AACRAO about that next step of the doing.</p>

0:27:03.7	241.7s	Ingrid Nuttall	<p>Yeah, about action. And that's um, so I, I just, I'll say in this training I was doing, I watched, there was an interview that was included with Brittany Packnett Cunningham. And there was a question that was asked of her, of what should white people do to be, like, how should white people show up in anti-racist work? It was something specifically about that and her response generally was spend a year learning, spend at least a year like listening, just listening and then figure out how you can be an ally, like take a step to be action but be directed to do it, right? And she wasn't saying, don't go to a protest, don't try to change something, don't try to do something. She wasn't saying, don't try to act, but for white people, she was saying, follow the lead of where you are needed. And I think in that session in AACRAO, what I was talking about was my experience, my personal experience for myself and also with other white people has been a deep, people who are committed and want to learn and want to learn more. And I think there's a desire to get comfortable and to be comfortable before you act. And I think that is a mistake because I think for myself, I know that if I feel comfortable, that means that I am sort of sitting in the soup of power structures that are comfortable for me and my identity and that you have to move into action and do so mindfully in a way where you are making a difference and it can be small but where you don't sort of set yourself up, like I have to know everything before I do something because DEI space seems to be a kind of unique place where, where some people are like, well, I just need to know a lot. I need to know like everything before I do anything before I make a mistake. Whereas you might take a job and not know how to do five things in that job and you will learn and you will learn by listening to people who know what they're doing and then figuring out how to follow along. And I think if we could take that paradigm, understanding, it's much more complicated than learning how to process transcripts or do registration, right? Because it's dealing with people's lives and livelihood. But I think taking that idea that there isn't, there isn't a, a finish line of knowledge that you're trying to, like, run through before you do something, but that doesn't mean you run forward without spending a lot of time listening. And so like when you say, how do I feel if people come to me and ask me for things I would say, um I sometimes I feel really happy and really grateful and really honored. And then at the same time, I'm kind of checking that for myself to be like, but remember I am this, I am a white woman coming from a position of power, close to power because of my identity. So when you ask me what, I think I'm coming at it from a framework that I am at the same time trying to disrupt and that's the complicated that, right, like that's the complicated part of it. And also not trying to, even when you say that to people, like particularly when I say that to other white people, you get a lot of like, that is great and I kind of want to be like, it's not, it's basic and it's just don't give me a cookie for it. It's just kind of trying to undo hundreds of years of oppression that have been created. Like, let's not give praise and recognition for that while still recognizing like, OK, that, that seems good. Let's move, let's move forward.</p>
0:31:05.18	47.0s	Portia LaMarr	<p>Yeah, that, I mean, that's excellent. And I think that is a good way for us to close down this, this session of what we just talked about, we got a lot of work and by no means, are we wanting this podcast to give you all the answers of what the work is? We want to figure that out together and hopefully that what we are talking about helps you think forward and move forward on what your action is in higher ed and helping, helping with diversity equity inclusion. So I can't wait. I'm excited about all the different things that we can talk about in different subjects. So like, I mean, hopefully we're here forever,</p>

0:31:53.55	1.6s	Ingrid Nuttall	forever and ever,
0:31:55.14	3.1s	Portia LaMarr	ever and ever with just more things to learn and grow.
0:31:58.27	3.6s	Ingrid Nuttall	Tashana will be VP. Portia will be President
0:32:04.56	4.2s	Portia LaMarr	and Ingrid will be telling all the white women chill. No cookies,
0:32:08.81	6.9s	Ingrid Nuttall	no cookies, no cookies for white women. That's gonna be my cookie brand.
0:32:15.71	3.3s	Portia LaMarr	Yeah, I love it.
0:32:23.86	15.8s	Ingrid Nuttall	Thanks for listening to H.E.A.R.D. A podcast sponsored by AACRAO. We'd love to hear from you. Share your episode, ideas or feedback for us at heard@aacrao.org . Episodes are produced by Maya Own. Thanks Maya Own.. We'll see you next time.