

The Accessible Stall Podcast

Episode 42: Language and Disability

Emily: Hi, I'm Emily Ladau

Kyle: And I'm Kyle Khachadurian

Emily: And you're listening to another episode of *The Accessible Stall*

Emily: What are we gonna talk about today, Kyle?

Kyle: You stole my line! Before we get to the topic at hand, I just need to talk about *Speechless*. Spoilers for *Speechless*. We're recording this on October, 25th so that means the Halloween episode of *Speechless* just aired and it was the stupidest thing I've ever seen, I just need a minute!

Emily: I haven't seen it yet so...go ahead and ruin it!

Kyle: Do you care about spoilers? And by the way if *you* care about spoilers stop listening about right now and just fast forward to about five minutes.

Emily: We're gonna talk about this thing I haven't seen for five minutes? I feel excluded!

Kyle: No, I just...Okay don't worry cause you're missing nothing. In fact, it's probably better if you don't see it.

(Emily chuckles)

Kyle: The first five minutes of the show, first of all they made one funny joke. The first five minutes of the show is a parody of *The Exorcist*. Have you seen *The Exorcist*?

Emily: Have *I* seen a scary movie? Evaluate that question...

Kyle: Okay, so you haven't seen *The Exorcist* but do you know what it's about

Emily: Exorcism? *(laughs)*

Kyle: Okay, so you don't know what it's about. It is about exorcism, it's about a girl who's possessed by the Devil. Okay? Long and short of it that's a one sentence version

Emily: I could not make it through five minutes of *The Ring*

Kyle: *The Ring*... whatever. So they parody *The Exorcist* by making it so JJ, the main character in *Speechless* loses his board so, his board that he uses to communicate with... you all watch *Speechless!*

Emily: What if somebody doesn't? Do we really think that everyone in the disability community watches *Speechless*?

Kyle: So the replacement board...They've at least heard of it and know about the premise of the show. So the main character's communication board is replaced with a Ouija Board, which makes every word his interpreter speaks, as if he's possessed by the Devil. And if that's not dumb enough, and boy is it...(chuckles) JJ, the main character, now has...he's possessed by this Ouija Board, Devil. So he can, he's evil now. Okay?

Emily: Okay

Kyle: So he does evil things, like he throws his physical therapist out the window with his mind. And he tells Kenneth that he's fat and ugly or something. And that's....dumb. But what's really inexcusably stupid...inexcusably stupid, I should speak right if I'm going to criticize something is that the Devil, Satan, has a moment of clarity while being Satan. About how his eyes are now opened to the struggles of the disability community, are you f*ckin kidding me?

Emily: Well. That is not how that works. (chuckles)

Kyle: And..And his mother, and this is one of the two funny parts, I know I said one but thinking back this was kind of funny. His mother being the over-protective special needs mom that she is, finds his newfound, Devilish independence, invigorating! So she's actually all for this because the Devil is a loud, smart-mouthed talking person like she is. So he starts to run away in his wheelchair and they notice that the school is too accessible, and the principal, he hears this because the principal is also the exorcist..cause of course! And he's like, "Haha you're welcome!" As in like, "Of course the school's accessible!" So then the family tries to make the school unaccessible. And like, that's funny cause that's like the opposite of life. But then, oh it was so stupid! They do the two famous scenes from *The Exorcist*, and then it was all a dream, and then the next five minutes was *Freaky Friday* between the other two kids no one cares about? So the younger brother and the younger sister swap bodies. And the other funny joke I mentioned was when Ray talks to his dad he goes, "Dad what if I was born in the wrong body?" And he says, "Aw man, I don't know enough about that subject to answer that question, but just know that your mother and I will love you no matter what!" So then he goes, "Thanks Dad!" And then the Dad goes, "Honey, I think I'm woke!" And I thought that that was really funny. But that does not excuse the other fifteen minutes of this stupidest thing I've ever seen in my life!

Emily: So...this was *Speechless* according to Kyle, nobody needs to watch the Halloween episode now.

Kyle: No, you should all watch it because it's ridiculous.

Emily: You just told...Didn't you tell people not to watch it because it was terrible?

Kyle: It's so stupid! It's so stupid, you should definitely watch it. Or not

Emily: Well, I suppose that this is an excellent segue into the actual thing that we were gonna talk about today. Because you said the word "stupid" so many times

Kyle: Oh God, yes I did.

Emily: ...In that rant and guaranteed someone is going to clap back at you for that as ableist language

Kyle: I disagree with you

Emily: Well, we're gonna talk about why

Kyle: So, this episode is on language. We've been meaning to do this episode since we've started the show, quite frankly. Emily and I touch on language on pretty much every episode. Um, The most recent episode I can remember was, "The R Word" with Ellen Seidman as our guest. And you know, we got a little heat for it there but it's time we do a proper episode on it.

Emily: Yeah

Kyle: And this is hard to do in 45 minutes but we wanna try to talk about the full spectrum of disability in the English language, all the way from innocuous words that can be deemed ableist by people who believe that, like "stupid" and "idiot" all the way to colloquialisms that everyone uses, that have disability in them that may or may not be ableist to you, but it's more to point out the prevalence of disability in our language. So...yeah, that's what we're doing.

Emily: So, I think that this conversation is particularly important to us because we are passionate about language in general. I was an English major, Kyle was Linguistics major, we love talking about language, we love analyzing language, we love picking it apart, we like talking about connotations and denotations and we tend to get wrapped up in how disability and language are so inextricably linked. Um, and I don't necessarily mean the two of us, I think the disability community as a whole, often gets hung up on language choice, and sometimes with good reason, sometimes I think it's a little overkill so we are finally gonna talk about it thoroughly as opposed to just sort of peppering it into to just about every episode. So, I guess let's start with "stupid." I mean, I'd be lying if I said I didn't call things "stupid" and "dumb" all the time and call people "idiots" probably more than I should. And I also, although I'm getting better at this, use words like, "That's crazy!" or "That's insane!" Actually, now that I think about it, are those on

different levels? Like, is “stupid” as much as an insult or a slur as something is “crazy” or “insane?”

Kyle: Well, maybe. I think just to make this easier on ourselves, we should just treat all words that could potentially be offensive in this episode as the same. Surely, there’s some that are much worse than others, but just so that we don’t spend the whole episode getting into what’s worse, you know? Um, but I think for things like “stupid” and “idiot” and things like that, you know? Those used to have medical meanings that were tied to IQ...along with I think “moron” and “imbecile” were the other two notches on that little ladder?

Emily: Mhmm, yeah.

Kyle: And over the years, they have lost that. And I am all for recognizing a word that you use, and it’s history and how it got to be where it is. Having said that, in the year 2017, the word “stupid” is no longer tied to cognizance

Emily: Right. When I say “stupid” I don’t envision like...

Kyle: I know, I know. Yeah, surely not.

Emily: When I’m calling somebody “stupid” or something “stupid” it’s not me saying that I’m passing a judgement on your cognition or mental health.

Kyle: Right The other thing is, that is the argument when people say, “Oh you shouldn’t say stupid because it used to mean something bad.” And that’s true, it did used to mean something that is today, objectively wrong. But it no longer means that. And if you’re going to judge words by what they used to mean, then you’re gonna find yourself with a limited vocabulary. There’s very few words with a pretty history. I’m serious. Take your favorite word for something...especially adjectives, Oh my God! Take your favorite adjective and go to Etymology Online and look it up, and you at the end of your ten hour journey will not have any words left to say.

Emily: Are we sure about this? What about like, “beautiful?”

Kyle: I think like...Okay, maybe. But things like, “blacken” used to come from the Latin word, “to brighten.” Like so, words take a trip, right? And they sometimes literally mean opposing things.

Emily: So I don’t even think so much that it’s an ugly history that we’re talking about, more so that they evolve over time. And sometimes they have a “horrible, awful, dark history” But other times I think it’s just that they come to mean different things by way of linguistic evolution that have nothing to do with them having a positive or negative history. It’s just that language changes.

Kyle: You are absolutely correct, and a good example of it would be a word you just said, it has nothing to do with disability but you just said the word, "awful." The word "awful" and "awesome" are synonyms...

Emily: Right

Kyle: By the dictionary. But they're not. They're not synonyms in colloquial use because you will never say anything positive using the word "awful" and you will never say anything negative using the word, "awesome."

Emily: Well sometimes you'll say like, that's, "awfully bad." Or you'll say, "That's awfully nice of you!"

Kyle: Ok but that's

Emily: Hey man, I'm here to poke holes in your argument

Kyle: No no no no! But that doesn't... "Poop all over" is that what you said?

Emily: Poke holes in your argument! (*laughs*)

Kyle: Oh, poke holes!

Emily: Poop? Okay..

Kyle: Dammit I misheard you!

Emily: Let's talk about the etymology of poop! No let's not...

Kyle: I'm just...No, but that just adds another layer of nuance. And I think that with a lot of these cases and a lot of these idioms, that it's not even intention that matters, that it's the entire context in which you are interpreting the word...all of it. And I would say that if you are on the receiving end of a word, usually, not always...usually it is more on you as the interpreter on that word than it is the person who presented it to you in...eh, in writing. In speech you know, it's 50/50 because you can hear an interact and you can feel the intonation. But when it's in writing, unless someone's being deliberate with a certain word in a certain way, which often they are, if they're a good writer their intentions should be fairly clear. Obviously there's ambiguity everywhere, but...

Emily: Well, it depends on what you're trying to convey. I mean, if I'm insulting you in writing it's pretty much equal to me insulting you in person or through spoken word.

Kyle: For sure, but the way that I address you in spoken word is never how I would address you in written, or even on this podcast. Like, you know how many times do we call each other, “bitches” like, to each other?

(Emily chuckles)

Kyle: And yet, I never use that word in any other context, and that’s because you and I have an “in” joke in how we address each other

Emily: Sure

Kyle: But if you’re hearing that you might think, “Wow those people are terrible!” And you’d be wrong. But you wouldn’t know that!

Emily: Well, I suppose that would then cause you to dig into, “bitch” as a slur against a woman and...

Kyle: Well, that’s what I’m saying like, that’s...every word has that.

Emily: Every word?

Kyle: Well not determiners, not pronouns, not words like that...but you know, most nouns have that.

Emily: I guess I just get tripped up because...

Kyle: Ah!

Emily: “Tripped up.” There you go. I’m concerned about intent, my intent. As opposed to how someone interprets it. And I have to realize, and I’m not saying this all the time, but sometimes I have to realize that people can interpret things in ways that are different than my intent. But that being said, I’m starting to recognize that sometimes the interpretation of a word can be deeply personal. Which is why I asked the question in the beginning about things like, “stupid” and “dumb” versus “crazy” and “insane.” Because as much as I agree it makes sense to keep everything on a level playing field for the sake of this episode, I still associate “crazy” and “insane” with mental health more so than I do, “dumb” or “stupid.” And so I find myself shying away now from using words like “crazy” or “insane” just because of my own experiences with mental health, and people that I care about and their experiences with mental health. And I can see where that would feel like a slur.

Kyle: You can what?

Emily: I can...Oh.

Kyle: You can what? You can what?

Emily: (*unintelligible*)

Kyle: I'm sorry. And are you being discriminatory towards blind people right now? Okay so that's actually very...I love that you did that. So, the words "crazy" and "insane" can absolutely have very ableist connotations. But, me saying "Emily, you're driving me f**king crazy!" or "Emily, you're crazy!" is a lot different from me getting off a rollercoaster, running up to you, grabbing you by the shoulders and yelling, "Emily that was so insane! You have to try this!" The words are the same, but the intent, the intonation, the context of where we are, of what we're doing, every single one of those things changes the meaning of words. And for someone to say that like, and by the way this is not exclusive, like everything I'm saying applies to words that are not explicitly slur words. Because those are, they have one purpose and they are slurs. And I suppose we can get into a discussion on when a slur becomes a slur on another day...But all of those things plays a huge part in the meaning of the word in the context. So I would never ever look at you and call you crazy to your face, because that would be an insult. But, if I get off a rollercoaster and scream in your face about how crazy cool it was, that's different! It is!

Emily: I...okay. So it's different, yes, but I still shy away from those words anyway because..

Kyle: Well of course, yeah

Emily: And you know this is really hard for me cause it's not even like I've thought about the fact that these words could be insults or slurs up until maybe a few years ago... 'cause their just part of the lexicon. But (*sighs*) You know, then I start thinking, okay...What about "bonkers?" What about "nuts?" What about "bananas?"

Kyle: Yeah, where should we draw the line?

Emily: Because those are all synonyms for "crazy" and "insane" I'm using them to mean that..

Kyle: Mhmm

Emily: So, am I indirectly using a slur? Very serious question. I truly don't know where the line is.

Kyle: I mean, I don't know the answer to that. First of all, you have to make an argument that those two words are slurs and for the purpose of this podcast I am, I'm saying that they are. To make it easy. But, if saying "bananas" to get away with saying "crazy" is the same thing, then that means that every newscaster who has ever said the phrase, "The N word" on the air, is really saying the other word...and I don't think anyone would say that. I really don't. I don't think anyone would say that saying that phrase is the exact same thing as saying the word.

Emily: Yeah, but I think...I guess those are two different things because the "N Word" or the "R Word" those are just shortened references to the actual word to avoid saying it, whereas it's not a synonym. Because there is no appropriate synonym for either of those words.

Kyle: Well I agree with you but I think the reason is a little different. I think the reason that that's more acceptable than using "bananas" as "crazy" is because those words, the "R" and "N" word, those are slurs. Those are slurs. And you'll be hard pressed to find people who...In fact, the people who disagree with you about those two words being slurs are probably people who use those words very freely. So, you know...

Emily: Wait I'm not following you...

Kyle: Like racist

Emily: No, no, no, I understand racism (*chuckles*) I don't understand what you mean about um... Are you saying one is worse than the other?

Kyle: No, I'm saying one is definitely a slur but I think if you ask people if the words "crazy" and "insane" are definitely slurs, you will get mostly "Nos" from people until you provide a context by which you're actively using that word to insult somebody. Because you see how I'm using the word "crazy" right now? I can't do that with the "R" or "N" word on this show without getting heat from everybody.

Emily: Well, I guess the other thing too is if you say the "C" word, it's not made it to that point yet. The "C" word means something different to a lot of people than "crazy."

Kyle: The "C" Word? Yeah...That's also a variational thing like people in Australia just say the word "c*nt" just to say it.

Emily: They do?

Kyle: Yeah. "What's up c*nt?" Like, they'll do that.

Emily: Do we need to um.. We should probably bleep that

Kyle: I'm gonna bleep it.

Emily: But okay

Kyle: It's the worst word you could say

Emily: So here's the other thing. I was listening to a presentation by somebody who included a quote, I believe it was from Steve Jobs? It's like, "Here's to the crazy ones?" And this presenter

literally bleeped herself on the “C” word, being “crazy,” she bleeped herself on that. And then later in her presentation she got really excited talking about something and she’s like, “It’s crazy, I’m telling you!” And I’m like, “Did you just hear yourself?”

Kyle: I think that that’s...I agree with you, like it’s a little hypocritical but I think that that’s her separating intent and usage into two different domains in her mind.

Emily: No but I don’t think that’s reasonable, I think it needs to be an all or nothing approach in some ways, because on the one hand she’s preaching that you know, “Here’s to the crazy ones!” When in fact, the quote from Steve Jobs is “crazy” in a good way if there is such a thing. Like, “Here’s to the ones that don’t align with this stereotypical neurology and blah blah blah blah blah, and here’s to the ones who think outside the box and all that stuff.” And so, I don’t think that’s meant to be an insult, and yet she wa on her high horse about it being an insult until it slipped out of her mouth.

Kyle: Right, which proves the point that it’s probably not a slur no matter how much you want it to be one right now. It might get to that point eventually, but a slur is generally never okay to say unless you’re specifically talking about the word as a word. That’s the only context by which anyone might give you a pass for using a slur. But, if she does actively and regularly... cause this was a one time occurrence right?

Emily: That I know of.

Kyle: Right, okay. But if, let’s say you did a case study on her. And if she actively censored “crazy” in using it in whatever negative way she thinks, but not using it in whatever positive way she thinks...That’s proof that in her mind, the context is what drives, whether or not it’s considered negative.

Emily: Right.

Kyle: Which I disagree with, but I wouldn’t be surprised if there was plenty of words like that, you know?

Emily: I guess this is also probably an opportune moment to bring up reclamation of words as well.

Kyle: Oh yeah, for sure

Emily: Um, even earlier I was editing something for work, and at one point mental health was referred to as “madness.” And that is absolutely something that has been reclaimed by many people with mental health disabilities, much in the same way that people have reclaimed words like, “cripple.” And so I know one thing that’s been beat to death pretty much is the idea that you

know this reclamation is only okay within the community that it belongs to. And I would say I agree with that for sure, um but I guess how does a reclamation come to be? And I guess how does a reclamation become normalized when it is still community inspeak? I'm not saying that I want people to go around calling me a "cripple." I guess I'm just saying, how can we get people to understand that we're calling ourselves cripples, because it shows just a thing that we do, but if you do it, it's insulting?

Kyle: Well I'm offended because you said, "beat to death" and that's offensive to people who are victims of bludgeonings.

(Emily chuckles)

Kyle: You laugh! You laugh, but it's the same argument!

Emily: I mean, we didn't even get into what I said about "tripped up" or "I see"

Kyle: I know but like that's the thing. Alright, but like so real quick...I'll get to your point because it's a great one and I'm trying to find information about that while I'm speaking. Um, there is a line.. And I don't think we really know when it is, but we all know when we've passed it.

Emily: *(chuckles)* Ok not all of us. I...

Kyle: It's true

Emily: I'm relatively sure that some people don't know

Kyle: No, no. You and I. You and I, I don't care about anyone else, I'm talking about me and you. Everyone knows there's a line somewhere, but no one knows when they've passed it. Except for us, we know everything

Emily chuckles

Kyle: Now as far as when does reclamation become reclamation, when does it cross over from insult within a member of a community, or within an ingroup of people? I don't know. And I just tried to look that up using the word, "queer." Uh, I'm not having much luck but I promise by the time this episode comes out, I will have found something that will tell me the answer at least partially to your question.

Emily: That is a perfect example

Kyle: Yes, it...yes.

Emily: And probably a more mainstream one than “cripple” by a longshot right now. But I think the other thing is that not only has “queer” undergone a reclamation within the community, but now Queer is an acceptable term for an identity.

Kyle: So is Cripple.

Emily: So now you can actually call someone a Queer person and that’s an identity and not an insult, even if you’re calling them that. Depending on the context, of course it’s all contextual, but right now the same is not true of something like “cripple” at all.

Kyle: Eh. You said a “queer person” that’s the difference. You can’t call someone “a queer” that’s rude. That’s *very* rude

Emily: But calling someone, “a cripple” or “a crippled person,” either one is not particularly nice.

Kyle: I know. I’m just saying, I think the reason...you can definitely say one, you can’t say the other. I think that that difference depends on the group. And that’s why none of this is universal. Um, but I used “queer” as an example because like you said...

Emily: Yeah, and I don’t want anyone to think that we’re conflating minorities here. Um, but I just think that this is a minority issue.

Kyle: For sure. Yeah, we’re not conflating minorities, it’s literally just the labels guys.

Emily: But, in regard to the thing that you said earlier before we were just talking about reclamation for a little bit, idioms are probably the other things that’s important for us to talk about. Because it happens *so* much. I do it *so much*. I have to stop myself from saying, “Falling on deaf ears” or “turning a blind eye.”

Kyle: *(sighs)* Here’s the thing...*(laughs)*

Emily: Kyle is just having a conniption over here.

Kyle: This is just, this is one of my pet peeves. It is totally awesome that you take the roots of the words you use and the phrases you use into account before you use them. If everyone did that the world would be a better place. But there’s a *huge* difference between know what you say and where it comes from, and just using that as an excuse not to say something.

Emily: What?

Kyle: “Falling on deaf ears” is a completely natural idiom. Everyone knows what it means even if you’re deaf. Everyone knows what it means! And yes, there is probably a minority of deaf

people out there that find that offensive but you know, you'll be hard pressed to find a group that's not offended by any idiom. And you know, I just...for idioms that are so ingrained in our psyche, this is different from individual vocabulary words like, "crazy" or "insane" or "cripple." For actual phrases that sound one way and mean something different like, "Raining cats and dogs" but somehow that means, "It's raining really hard" And we know that. You don't see PETA marching in the streets. Everyone knows that, just how everyone knows "falling on deaf ears" means, "I'm talking to some idiot..." You see what I did there? "...Who's not listening" See what I did there and there too? And there?

Emily: I just have, I have a hard time with that one. Because as naturally as they come out of my mouth, I can understand. Because it's the same thing like, "Using something as a crutch."

Kyle: I do that all the time! I used to use crutches! You have my blessing.

Emily: Oh, well if Kyle says it's okay, it must be okay.

Kyle: No, I'm just saying, if that's what you're angry at, you have a good life.

Emily: Well, that I agree with, That goes back to pick your battles, I mean *really* pick your battles, because I do not think that, even though I personally try to avoid anything that might be ableist with sayings or idioms, I also feel that, you know it's not that hard to avoid saying them but, if that's what you're getting mad at, seriously pick your battles. I seriously mean that. Like, I would sooner get angry at the use of "crazy" or "insane" than I would at something like, "falling on deaf ears." I'm not quite sure why, it's just, "falling on deaf ears" has no insulting context...it doesn't. Or it does, but to the person that you're...never mind, I can't...ugh!! This is hard!

Kyle: (*laughs*) No! You were right the first time. It doesn't, and that's why idioms are unique. Idioms are different than individual words. Idioms are unique because they're idioms! You say a phrase that means something completely unrelated to...

Emily: No, no, no, I changed my mind! Cause "falling on deaf ears" literally is insulting a deaf person because you're saying like, you're talking to them and they're not hearing you, and it's their fault.

Kyle: Okay but it's not really falling either so I mean how deep do you want to go?

Emily: This is such a rabbit hole

Kyle: But it's not, it's a discussion. Are we gonna stop saying "rabbit hole" now?

Emily: Haaaaa...

Kyle: Do you see what I mean? You see what I mean?

Emily: I totally, it's just challenging

Kyle: I know, I know, I'm sorry.

Emily: I think

Kyle: I know I know... you first!

Emily: But honestly this like how we have real conversations, like this is as real as it gets. Because neither of us can articulate a thought fully and then we get all excited. But anyway, somewhat related to this, I know I have seen it get really awkward when someone is talking to someone who is blind. And they'll be like, "I'll see you later!" And then they'll be like, "Oh my God I'm so sorry!" And nine times out of ten, the blind person will be like, "Uh, yeah see ya later!" Because it's just a saying, and nobody's actually trying to insult the person by being like, "See you later!" And you make it worse when you say, "Oh my God but you can't see!"

Kyle: I have a friend, and I'm pretty sure I have several friends that do this but I just know of one in particular who for sure does this, she uses a wheelchair, and every morning she walks to work. She doesn't, but that's what she says she does.

Emily: Yeah! Me too, I always say going for a walk. In fact I've had people...You know what? I should've used that as an example I didn't even think of that, that happens to me *all* the time when people are like, "Let's go for a walk!" and then they're like, "Oh...oh wait... what do you call it?" And so I have personally settled on, "Let's go for a stroll."

Kyle: A promenade?

Emily: Yes, like I don't know how much more British you wanna get here, but that's what I say. But technically strolling is a synonym for walking, but somehow it makes people more comfortable because I haven't said, "walking."

Kyle: I would say that's sooner their problem than yours

Emily: Oh it's not my problem at all. But it's just, it seems this silly thing to me, and then I guess the other thing too is that when you're talking to someone who's deaf or hard of hearing and you say, "Do you hear what I'm saying?" When you really mean, "Do you know what I'm saying?" Or you say..

Kyle: Or...

Emily: Go ahead..

Kyle: Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you but you triggered something in my head

Emily: Go ahead

Kyle: Or, or the contradicting other ableist phrase, "Do you see what I'm saying?" because you're probably signing to them so they probably need to see what your saying

Emily: Right

Kyle: You see what I'm saying? No go on sorry, I really didn't mean to interrupt you. That like, that hit me right in the frontal lobe, man

Emily: I actually, I think that the problem is that you can just go on, and on, and on with this, and I'm aware that we're covering different issues in that there really is a difference between something that is a slur and is an insult, versus something that's just an idiom. And I don't want people to think that this episode is a tacit endorsement of like, "It's okay to say whatever you want to people!" You know? Because don't do that!

Kyle: Yeah, don't be a di*k!

Emily: Like, don't be douche. Did we just offend both genders? Did I just offend...

Kyle: Did you just say both? Oh no!

Emily: Oh boy...

Kyle: Oh no!

Emily: Oh boy...

Kyle: But that's another one! That's a colloquialism

Emily: No, that's not a colloquialism that was just ignorant of me

Kyle: Even if it is a spectrum. Yes it is! It's on a spectrum. Because the majority of the population is one or of the usual set of two, even though there's an infinite spectrum between them, and even though there's people who exist outside of it, that is a colloquialism, and you shouldn't beat yourself up, unless someone is gonna beat me up for saying, "You shouldn't beat yourself up." I don't know.

Emily: I feel worse about that than the disability things that we've been talking about. Like because, there's a very big difference between completely ignoring gender expression and

identity versus using a term for something. I think, I don't know, I'm just digging myself a hole right now.

Kyle: No, you're not, you recognized your ignorance and you corrected it. No one should beat you up, everyone makes mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes! Even you, listener, and even us.

Emily: I think there's a song...is it from *Hannah Montana* or something? It's like, "Everybody makes mistakes. Everybody has bad days!" (*laughs*)

Kyle: I have no idea what you're talking about but I'll be sure to find it and splice it in. Yeah so, I guess, I know we went down a huge rabbit hole, but like Emily said...

Emily: Can you stop? That's offensive to rabbits! Stop it!

Kyle: Rabbits are delicious!

Emily: Ew!

Kyle: *That's* offensive to rabbits!

Emily: Ew! (gasps) I have a question!

Kyle: Yes?

Emily: Since we're talking about language, I actually texted this to someone the other day as a shower thought. Um, you know those things that you just think about in the shower? Go to Reddit "Shower Thoughts" everyone. But here's my shower thought: Why do you call chicken still "chicken" when you eat it, but you call cow, "beef" when you eat it, and you call pig, "pork" when you eat it? You look like you have an answer...

Kyle: I know the answer to this one!

(*both laughing*)

Emily: Of course you do!

Kyle: You like picked the one linguistic question that I know the answer to.

Emily: Kyle is absolutely just like bouncing up and down right now

Kyle: Oh, my God.

(*Emily laughs*)

Kyle: Okay, this is it. Okay, the reason is, way back in 1066 during the Normandy Conquest..Oh yeah. *(Both laughing hard)* Oh yeah it's time. It's time man, here it comes. When English and French both met back in those days, it was decided that the elite would use French words for things, while the measly peasants would use English and Germanic words for things which is why we have synonyms such as, "understand" and "comprehend." And one of the ways to show that you had wealth back in 1066, when even the poorest person in America lives better than the richest king, was um, in the food you ate. So if you referred to food by their French name, it showed a higher social status. And that, is why we do that.

Emily: But isn't it, isn't it like, "buff" and not, "beef?"

Kyle: Yes. Well, cause we still speak English, Emily

Emily: And what is it, "puff" and not, I'm just kidding!

Kyle: I don't...

Emily: I'm just kidding. What is the French word for "pork?"

Kyle: Someone tell us

(Emily laughs)

Kyle: That's totally why we do that. Thank you so much for indulging me in that story!

Emily: I asked a question. I was being serious!

Kyle: Thank you for being serious

Emily: It had to do with language. It was completely relevant, nobody judge me.

Kyle: I have a question, why do "throw up" and "throw down" mean not only completely different things, but why are they only separated by one word?

Emily: Or also, like "I'm totally up for that," or "I'm totally down for that"

Kyle: Exactly the same thing

Emily: It means exactly the same thing

Kyle: "Slow up" and "slow down" same thing!

Emily: Ha ha! Language, am I right?

Kyle: Yeah. I think that..Oh! You know what we didn't cover? I was about to do final takeaways but just an aside...

Emily: Oh my God, what did we not cover?

Kyle: Um, historical license.

Emily: Go on

Kyle: "One small step for man and one giant leap for mankind."

Emily: That is so ableist. So ableist! No it's not

Kyle: And sexist!

Emily: Oh yeah

Kyle: But yeah, right? It's not though, we all know it's not because...historical license. I think that's the only thing I'll say about it, is that you know, you shouldn't erase language that has already been written or spoken, because that's a great way to forget where you came from and to just deny progress as a society. So like, just as a current example of this in the extreme...Some school board in I think Mississippi, recently banned *To Kill a Mockingbird* because it makes them feel uncomfortable. Or, the schools that banned I think, *Tom Sawyer* or "Huck Finn" for having the "N" Word in it.

Emily: Oh yeah, that was Biloxi Mississippi?

Kyle: Yeah, and they replaced it with, "slave" which totally, completely dilutes the whole idea of the book, which is ridiculous. And I think when you do that, and this is *really* tangentially related, but that is a problem. I am completely against that, because what you're doing is you are erasing history, way more than taking down a Confederate statue, can ever do. Which by the way, you would think, tangentially also, that the people that were really angry at taking down those Confederate statues you would think they'd be up in arms about erasing history with *To Kill a Mockingbird* being taken off the shelves, but funnily enough, they're silent! Weird, right? It's almost like they're complete hypocrites.

Emily: So

Kyle: Sorry, that was way off

Emily: Yeah. Far be it for me to go full on Jew here, um and I'm very Jewish, except not at all. I'm just culturally Jewish.

Kyle: You're whole existence...Emily!

Emily: My existence is Jewish.... (*unintelligible*)

Kyle: Thank you.

Emily: Anyway, I'm not insulting Jewish people, they are my people, I am one of the tribe. The point that I am trying to bring up here is that every year on Passover, basically part of the meal, the service, if you want to call it that is called the Seder, which is like our ritual dinner. Part of it is that we say, you know why are we telling this story year after year? And it's because you know, if you forget it will repeat itself. And that's basically the same thing that is repeated throughout Jewish history and culture, but you know especially on Passover, and then at the end of the Seder it's like, next year in Jerusalem. And I realize I'm about to anger people with a mention of Israel so please do not think that I'm bringing up Zionism here, I'm merely mentioning you know, there is a constant...there's a continuity in Judaism where they're always trying to retell the history of our people, and you know, may we all be together next year to retell the same story. And so, I think that is related to your tangent in that we cannot erase certain facets of history. I think we can recognize that language evolves, but to change the way that language is presented, if we do that then we'll forget ourselves, we'll forget who we are, we'll forget our identities, and we will forget some of the horrible things that happened and some of the reasons why we don't use certain words anymore. So, I think that we really need to be conscious of not forgetting language even as it changes and even as we determine that certain things are appropriate or not appropriate, we have to remember the words that held so much power at different points in time.

Kyle: Y'all ever read *Harry Potter*?

Emily: No...Now I'm about to get eggs thrown at me for that! Ugh! I can't win.

Kyle: I'm sure that somebody has. And you know, Harry was one of the first people who was not afraid to say "Voldemort." And his reasoning was, if you say it you show him reason not to be afraid. Turns out, spoiler alert for like this fifteen year old book, that he had a spell on everyone who said it, so every time somebody said it like he knew where they were. So it was actually kinda really terrible, but it was the thought that counted. And by the way, to your point about Israel, I think you inadvertently caused the Streisand Effect by saying you should or shouldn't do something, or should or shouldn't invoke something, that you wouldn't have, had you not said that. That's what the Streisand Effect is.

Emily: Why is that related to Barbra Streisand?

Kyle: Uh, something to do with something she said in an interview once. Don't worry, I'll put it in the show notes.

Emily: You know something? I think the fact that I even brought it up just points to that I have spent way too much time on social media, where everybody gets angry at everybody for everything. And I guess I was just trying to reference an aspect of my religion and my culture that I felt was relevant to remembering history and words and language. I am so trained. This is related to those articles on why social justice has become like this toxic culture, but the fact that you have to sit there and catch yourself on everything. So I guess that's why I immediately went to clarify that I'm not trying to bring up any allegiance one way or the other because I'm so worried that I'm going to offend somebody and I'm really trying not to. But it's hard, like the way, and I hate to bring up my own mistake again, but when you say both genders, that's an egregious thing to say, but not meant to be egregious. But it's just really hard to shake things like that from your vocabulary when you hear things like that all the time. And it's a constant effort and a conscious learning process.

Kyle: Saying something ignorant and correcting yourself like you did, is a lot different than defending yourself preemptively before saying something.

Emily: Right. But they fall along the same lines of fear that you're going to upset someone...

Kyle: Oh sure!

Emily: ...And create an irreparable divide.

Kyle: There's no such thing. I don't believe that. There's no such thing as an irreparable divide, if there is, it's the person hearing you that makes it, You know, say what you wanna say, mean what you mean, clarify later, try to be as clear as possible the first time, and if someone gets angry at you for what you had to say...you know, it could be that you're a jerk, ya might be. But I'd never look at you and call you a jerk, Emily! And not just cause I know you, I really wouldn't. I really wouldn't! You know, you carry yourself well, you do the right thing, and you know you shouldn't have to revise your beliefs...and you didn't. But you know, you don't gotta hide in a virtual turtle shell just because of an angry Tweet.

Emily: Don't worry everybody, a White man told me it was okay, so it must be. *(laughs)*

Kyle: I am Olive! I am Olive! I am not white enough to be White and I'm not "Person of Color" enough to be them so I say I'm with Greek people

Emily: Kyle's Armenian everyone *(laughs)*

Kyle: The weirdest...I get mistaken for Jewish a lot which is cool.

Emily: You could totally pull that off! No, but Kyle is *full* blooded Armenian

Kyle: Have you ever gotten mistaken for something? This is completely tangential, we're leaving soon guys, but I just have to know, on the air. Have you ever gotten mistaken for an ethnicity that you're not?

Emily: I am the most Jewish. Everybody always thinks I'm Jewish. Occasionally...Very occasionally, someone will say something ridiculous like, Italian because of uh, the thick hair or whatever...I don't even know.

Kyle: I get the weirdest stuff. It's never Armenian. It's *never* Armenian. But I've gotten Arabic, I've gotten Greek, I've gotten Jewish, as if you're an entire race of people. But it's so bizarre because whenever I meet somebody they do this thing where if they're White they go...I'm making a face, no one can see it but you. It's like, "You're almost there, not quite though!" You know, and if I meet someone who's not White they go, "I don't know what you are!"

Emily: You're super white to People of Color

Kyle: No I know, it's bizarre. I call myself white. But if I'm being honest with myself I don't really fit in anywhere and it's really funny. Cause I don't really care, but everyone around me cares more than I do. (*Unintelligible*)

Emily: No, I don't think there's any mistaking that I'm Jewish, although when people hear my last name they get a little confused. I don't have a Jewish last name. Although my college roommate, and if you're listening to the end of this I am either happy for you or I feel sorry for you because at this point you're just listening to all our random rants. But um, my roommate created a Jewish alter ego for me since my name is not Jewish at all. It was Phyllis Ledawowski Burgewitzenstein

Kyle: And on that incredibly lovely note...

(*Emily chuckles*)

Kyle: I bid thee farewell because I am done. Emily, if you have any final things you want to say, by all means, you have the floor.

Emily: No...We have no Final Takeaways?

Kyle: Oh God, how could we? I mean, I just said, "Oh God." What if you're not religious, can you say that? I mean, when you say "Jesus Christ!" like that, like if you're not really religious, what are you really saying?

Emily: Oh my God, I do that all the time! All the time! And then I feel bad.

Kyle: Everyone does that. The only people who don't do that are Christians. Or people who are variants of Christians, and even some of them do that

Emily: I've heard many Christians say that

Kyle: Of course! Cause of even some of them do that. But you know, it's all related. It's all related. Yes, this show is about disability and language but my goodness, you can do that for everything! Forever. It never ends!

Emily: You know what makes this topic both complicated and rewarding to talk about? Is the fact that there's no answer here but that's okay. There are some things that are just right and wrong, and hope that everyone knows that we recognize right and wrong, but also like some things really are gray areas.

Kyle: This entire podcast is something that we strive to be in that gray area. Not in terms of whether or not something is okay, but it's blending the black and white of certain issues to unpack them, as Emily would say, or to deconstruct them and to see why they are the way they are. You know, if you were offended by anything we've said, and you know we didn't end up at a point, we're sorry.

Emily: Sincerely! But please know that it was not for the sake of insulting or offending, it was for the sake of talking about thing in the gray area that people don't really want to approach.

Kyle: Mhmm. And some of the things that are so gray that they're normal. Like most of the examples that we gave, you know? It's just so ingrained in who we are and what we say that we don't even think about it at all

Emily: What is normal?

Kyle: It's a word that means something. I know that's our favorite thing to say like, "What is normal anyway?" But it's like a real word that has an actual meaning.

Emily: And so it is. On that note, you know now that my brain has just been knocked around by uh, Mohammed Ali over here.

Kyle: I... *(laughs)*

Emily: No, not you!

Kyle: Oh good!

Emily: You know, like just getting punched around a little bit. I'm not calling you Mohammed Ali, although that would not be an insult either. He's a great man. I think. Is he?

Kyle: He was. He was. Well, depends on who you ask. If you ask the government he wasn't

(Emily chuckles)

Kyle: But that's another story for another day

Emily: Oh my Lord!

Kyle: And on that note...I am Kyle, she is Emily

Emily: I am Emily! I talk for myself!

Kyle: By all means

Emily: I'm Emily *(laughs)*

Kyle: What are you laughing at?

Emily: I don't know, myself! I'm funny! Thanks for listening!

Kyle: Goodnight everybody