

The Hum Podcast

Episode 28: "Are You Taking Up Space Or Creating Space?"

[Theme music fades in]

Simona: I just feel like, are you taking up space or are you creating space, and I think right now we're in a moment within social justice where there's still a lot of people taking up space that they don't need to.

Gilad: And I actually find out that there are more Indigenous youth in foster care today than there were Indigenous kids in the residential school system at the height of the residential school system.

[Music increases in volume]

Speaker: You're listening to The Hum.

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Gilad: We're joined here today by nobody. Sim and I, we sort of have a tradition here at The Hum where ... The tradition actually happened because we ran out of guests one year and we had to deliver on a 10th episode and so what we do is we interview-

Simona: Each other.

Gilad: ... one another. And this is also a good opportunity for anyone who's tuning in, maybe for the first time, or who's been tuning in for a while to get a sense of who you and I are.

Simona: Now, in 2019.

Gilad: I'm one half of the show. My name's The Rock.

Simona: And I am the other half of the show. My name is Jerome.

Gilad: Jerome. Jerome and The Rock. We thought, "You know what, why don't we use this as an opportunity to talk a little bit about what we're up to these days?" We can also use this as a space to get things off our chests, things we want to gripe about and scream about and complain about. I'm going to start with you, only because you complain about things nonstop.

Simona: Yes. Pretty much, like that's in my DNA.

Gilad: What are you complaining about now with human rights focus to it?

Simona: With a human rights lens.

Gilad: Let's not talk about not needing to eat sugar anymore.

Simona: Okay, so I'm also going on a 30 day sugar fast. I won't be taking in any sugar, like processed sugar at all. Just know this because I feel it will affect my mood in the coming weeks. I may be a little bit more hostile and the quality of our friendship could definitely be, go downhill.

Gilad: This isn't going to work though. All of these... Just like for full context, Simona is bestest of friends with my wife and you both tend to go on these extreme all or nothing things and then you lie to each other.

Simona: We don't lie to each other. We lie to everybody else. We are really good at lying to everybody else because one, we don't like to do things. We don't like to eat things. We don't like people telling us what to do and we don't want people telling us-

Gilad: My wife loves eating things so here you go lying again.

Simona: No, we don't like it when people tell us to do things and to eat things. That's why she had a kale moment. I was never a part of it. I didn't want to be a part of it. I think one of the things that I'm starting to really notice ... My mom was recently diagnosed with cervical cancer and this is like the first time our entire family is affected by something like this. And you kind of think once your parents hit a certain age, you're like, "Nothing's happened so far. We're in the clear." And the thing about cancer is it happens. It's all encompassing. You change everything about your life. And a lot of what I've been thinking about is I only think about

the logistics. How we get to appointments, how we get home from appointments, what is she eating. And I think about the privilege in that because if this was the United States, one thing I would also be thinking about is how do I pay for all of this?

Gilad: This is going to bankrupt us.

Simona: This could bankrupt us. And it does bankrupt people. This is why people, I think, on GoFundMe, the largest part of their campaigns are health-related. They are filling a gap where a healthcare system doesn't and what I've been thinking about as we're in the hospital every day is how are other families doing this? We are in Canada so I don't have to think about this and from the day of her diagnosis to the day of her first treatment, it was like two weeks.

Gilad: That's quick.

Simona: It's quick. But you have so many people still challenging the quality of our healthcare system by saying, "Well, we're still waiting." And when you look at the facts, that's for elective surgeries, it's not life-saving surgeries. To me, like one of the biggest things I think people are so fucking dumb is why wouldn't you want a healthcare system that takes care of you? Why are people in the United States challenging this shit?

Gilad: Power, control, they're afraid of giving something up they can't, that they think is theirs. Their money, their taxes.

Simona: But the thing is you're fine not paying into a system that potentially will take care of others when you don't need it. But on the flip side of that is, you may need it. We will all need it in some shape or form. And you don't want it to be there for others. And you know, I think one of the things ... I had a friend. You know this friend. He's from the United States and his parents have to pay a thousand bucks more each year for healthcare because of Obamacare and there was a challenge to that. And I was like, "Yeah, but can they afford this \$1,000?" And they can, so what's the problem? If you can afford it ... I pay a lot of money in taxes. I don't mind doing that because I can see what people are using it for. And that's amazing.

Simona: And now the fact that our family has to take, to use these services now. I just think I don't understand when you have people who are educated, who would vote Democrat, do all these things United States and still don't see the benefit of healthcare. Universal healthcare. I think it's a socialist, communist theory or thing that the left is trying to do. To me it's like, the crux of it, people should live and be healthy and have access to the things that will do that, but when you

challenge that and deny people that, you are killing off millions of people because of this thing you don't want to pay into.

Gilad: People, I'm going to end the argument here by saying, "Sometimes people are fucking dumb."

Simona: People are trash.

Gilad: "Because they're fucking stupid and don't know what's going on and they're afraid to give up." Like guns in the U.S., guns. Here's something you should probably be giving up.

Simona: Why do you want it? Why do you want this thing that is made to kill other people?

Gilad: Yeah, it's interesting because the New Zealand shooting just happens and then immediately their very progressive leader, Prime Minister, President, I can't remember the title.

Simona: Prime Minister.

Gilad: Prime Minister. She's amazing.

Simona: Ten days.

Gilad: She's incredible. Within 10 days, everything is banned. You are being such a great sport by the way because I know your mom was diagnosed with cancer and you've been in a whirlwind with you. We even had to get someone to jump in on a recent episode that we did. How are you doing and how is your mom doing despite all that?

Simona: We're doing good. I think I'm again, I have a job that allows me the flexibility to be with her every day. She's, you know, it's cancer. It's fucking shitty. And she's throwing up and she's tired all the time. Her taste buds have changed. She doesn't have energy. And you know why people say, "Fuck cancer." Because it's shitty. Yeah.

Gilad: Has her mortality been ... Has she been looking at her mortality in a different way? Have you?

Simona: Yeah, I think it's like this weird thing where you start to recognize I am now a caregiver for my parent who is the caregiver. And it's not her ... Her mortality is like, "What do I do? How do I take stock of my life?" It's like, "I don't want to die now." And I am now in this moment of like, "Should I give you some grandkids?"

Is that going to ... Should I be thinking about these things now?" I am very single. I am very far from children. Also, I don't know if I want children because they're very loud and they're messy and a lot of them grow up to be assholes. And I've been thinking about this whole thing of you don't have grandkids. You could die without seeing any grandchildren and that was such a big goal for you that was dependent on my uterus. I'm in this very awkward gray period of my life where I was like, "I think I need to get knocked up."

Gilad: I had the same worries. I'm 35 years old. My wife just got into a master's program, which is awesome.

Simona: Yeah!

Gilad: Congratulations. She's taking a creative writing course through Guelph.

Simona: She can be a professor.

Gilad: And she'll be awesome. Let's not kid ourselves. She'll be amazing. But, she's not going to be pregnant in the next couple of years. I started doing the math and say she graduates, a couple years, 37, then let's say right away, she gets pregnant. We're looking at me having a kid when I'm 38, which means if my kid was to follow the same trajectory, they would be 80 when they would have a grandchild which my grandma right now is 80 and waiting on her great-grandchild. It was like a reckoning, a moment of reckoning for me because I was like, "Wow, I might not ever have a grandchild to see." We're getting old.

Simona: We're so old.

Gilad: I feel like we're getting a little old. And I also feel like this conversation is going in circles.

Simona: We got to get content.

Gilad: Good luck Brandon. Good luck Brandon. Good luck. One thing I want to talk about really recently, I took a trip up to a place called Wapekeka and Wapekeka was in the news a lot over the last couple years because there's been this crazy rise in youth suicides.

Simona: Indigenous youth.

Gilad: Indigenous youth, yeah. And so Wapekeka, for those who don't know, is at the end of Ontario pretty much. It's just below the Hudson's Bay. I got to go up there with this amazing charity in Toronto called Right to Play. They invited me to go up to do this photography, social justice program that we do with these youth up

there. A lot of people refer to it as photovoice. And photography's cool because very quickly we're able to establish trust with whoever it is that we're working with. It doesn't matter that I'm 20 years older than them. Just the fact that we're holding a camera is the thing that bonds us.

Gilad: And so I'm up there and I start looking around and I notice there's just one school there that goes to grade eight. There's no doctor there. There's only one grocery store where you can buy a box of cereal and it's fifteen bucks. A liter of milk was ten bucks. A loaf of bread was fifteen bucks. No kid there is living off of fresh produce because there isn't any. And I started questioning the kids there. I was asking like, "Have you ever been to a McDonald's or a restaurant or a movie theater?" And they all would answer, "No, no, no, no, no, no." And you'd start to ask, "Have you done this very common thing that I used to do when I was 10," and they would say, "No." It sort of reminded me, their childhood sort of reminded me of what a child living in East Africa, when I was in Kenya, it sort of reminded of the same reality. Not the reality that I had. And so this community is facing so much trauma. Not just from residential schools and the Sixties Scoop but there's also this dude ... Have you ever heard of a guy named Ralph Rowe?

Simona: Um hum.

Gilad: You have. That's surprising because a lot of people haven't. I didn't.

Simona: Yeah, I took, I had Aboriginal Studies as my minor.

Gilad: Yeah, so this guy Ralph Rowe in the 70s and 80s, he's this Anglican Priest and he goes up to the north and he rapes. Estimated that he raped over 500 young Indigenous boys, which would make him Canada's-

Simona: Number one serial rapist.

Gilad: Ever. And no one's heard of him. And probably because most of his victims were young Indigenous boys. And so I started questioning everything that's happening around me. I work for a human rights charity so I know, I get the gist of how hard it is to be an Indigenous person and all that intergenerational trauma, but I started digging around and man the things I learned just fucked my head up. I had to sit on this panel, so I'm gathering data about these Indigenous youth and I actually find out that there are more Indigenous youth in foster care today than there were Indigenous kids, and by Indigenous, sorry, I mean Indigenous Metis and Inuit, than there were in the residential school system at the height of the residential school system.

Simona: Well I think that's the new norm. The next phase of after residential schools is the child welfare system. It is a new mechanism of displacement and assimilation essentially.

Gilad: And we're calling the same thing by a different name, you know, and the foster care system too is, it blew me away because Indigenous youth only make up 8%, Indigenous Metis and Inuit kids make up 8% of the total youth population in Canada, yet they represent 52% of all kids in foster care. That's bananas to me. It's just absolutely mind-numbing. It blows our mind. A lot of these kids, for people who don't know, are pulled away from their Indigenous families.

Simona: And bused to Toronto or bigger, larger cities, and put into group homes and disconnected completely from their communities.

Gilad: Yeah. And that's happening because they don't have access to clean drinking water or food or adequate housing or access to school or education.

Simona: Mental health services.

Gilad: And instead of investing money into fixing those things, we're just investing our energy into plucking kids away, Indigenous kids away from their families and just perpetuating and continuing this insane cycle of abuse. And so, it's funny because here's what I'm getting at is, "reconciliation" seems like such a buzz word and you go up to places like Wapekeka and you're like, "Is anything even happening here?" For six of us to get up there it costs us \$16,000. It's impossible to get there. It's impossible to leave. It seems like reconciliation is nowhere in sight for those folks and many other communities across Canada I would say.

Simona: I think it's just Canada still doesn't acknowledge the existence or the current existence of Indigenous peoples. What is the lived reality versus what they want to happen? And I think the liberal part, the federal Liberal Party is going through challenges right now but they continually will send someone up to look at the situation but nothing happens. But they then will use resources and time and money to fight certain communities and organizations who are making a rightful claim to previous land claims, or bring it to the attention that they don't have clean drinking water, or the fact that their school in Attawapiskat had an oil leak under it for 30 years and nothing was done except to close down the school.

Gilad: Yeah, so then it's no wonder that you have these Indigenous youth as young as 10, 11 and 12 who are killing themselves because it's just a cycle of trauma that can't stop. I was looking also at the youth suicide rate and Indigenous boys commit suicide at a rate 10 times higher and Indigenous girls commit suicide at a rate of something like 25% higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts. And it's no wonder because life seems pretty hopeless sometimes.

Simona: That's like what I was saying. I did a workshop in Moose Factory a couple years ago and that was kind of a theme of one of these healing workshops, it was hopelessness. The idea of what is the point? What is the point? Nothing is going to change for my grandpa's generation, my dad's generation, my current generation, nothing changes so what's the alternative? Leave the only place that you know or engage in that cycle of hopelessness and unfortunately a lot of them are.

Gilad: Yeah, I get afraid that buzzy, buzzy things like land acknowledgments and all this talk around "reconciliation" is just like hot air coming out of people's mouths and nothing's actually happening. And I've actually been noticing something else, I want to see if you've felt the same thing, but I often feel like I don't know which circle I fit into. I'm on this WhatsApp group with a bunch of creatives. They're all artists. And it's an amazing resource of people and I work in the arts. I run an arts charity. But I feel like I'm not connected enough to them. And then I also have a bunch of activist friends who do incredible things in activism, but I also don't feel they're not artsy enough. And so an interesting thing is happening because I feel like I sit on the side of both, arts and social justice, and I'm starting to get pretty fucked up right now with intention. This is my question to you, it's around intention, and so here's an example. I find that social justice and human rights, and this is part of that "reconciliation" thing that we were just talking about, has become very buzzy. It's become brandy.

Simona: Like "woke."

Gilad: Yeah. And by brandy I don't mean the liquor, I mean it's part of someone's brand. And so in the same way, and I threw this question to Jeremy, Jeremy Dutcher, in the same way that you could be a lifestyle photographer or you could be a food photographer or an athletic photographer. You can also now be a social justice photographer. I'm wondering, are you a social justice person or are you a photographer because to be real, this question's coming out of a place that I don't sense that it's with the heart.

Simona: Genuine.

Gilad: Yeah. And that these people aren't actually ... They're there for the social justice if there's a paycheck and they're there for the social justice if there's the recognition but they're not there for the social justice without those things. Meaning, that they're only going to do it if it's a paid thing. And so I get challenged by that because social justice is not about that shit and I find like people are doing it just because it's the in thing to do. We're having so many more social justice conversations now than ever with Trump and Me Too and Black Lives Matter, which is awesome, and reconciliation, which is awesome, but is it real?

Simona: I think it's real for a lot of people. I feel it's real for those who've been doing this work before the rise of social media and the access that it gives you to what people are doing. But you're right, I do believe that people are moving from this idea that to be woke, when "woke" was coming into the vernacular, the way we were using it, it was supposed to be about this is another level of consciousness. If you're conscious and you're awake and you're seeing it, you'll do something about it or you'll learn more about it. But then "woke" started to move into this space to they were using, "Oh, you're not woke enough." It was like, "Now I get to gauge your effort. Your level of engagement interest impact." I think that's definitely happening as well and I don't agree with it too, but I think with the idea of social justice, it's sexy. People to be social justice but they don't want to be social justice warriors because then you're a laughing stock. But it's sexy to talk about you wanting to devote your life to helping others that you may not know and change it.

Simona: People, because we live under a capitalist society, people are recognizing that they can make money off of it too, so that's I work in tech and now every tech organization is diversity and inclusion is our sexy term, but it's the same thing. It's falling flat. It's just putting a woman of color on a podium and saying that she's our new director. Diversity and inclusion doesn't change the fact that the tech industry is overwhelmingly white men. It doesn't change anything. It only just makes it apparent that we needed this.

Simona: I do agree but I also agree that more people are talking about shit that they should be talking about. More people are recognizing that, "Hey, I thought we were allies but you keep voting for this fuckhead that keeps oppressing other people. Your feminism is different than my feminism." I do think that there is value in us knowing that and having it being so present but then recognizing, "Tell me something that isn't polluted by assholes trying to make money. Tell me something that hasn't been corrupted in that way and then I'll tell at least there's 50 more people doing really cool shit and you never hear about it."

Gilad: Are you able to see through it though? Can you tell when something that's presented as a human rights, social justice-y thing is actually just a box that someone has to check off or are you able to tell when it's authentic?

Simona: Yeah, and this is with the tech and inclusion diversity thing, I'm always asked ... Any time I've joined a new organization, I'm always asked to join their inclusion and diversity committee or working group or subcommittee and I was like, "Why? I don't have a background in this. I don't even have a technical background. Why do you want me there?" And then you recognize this because the only people that really show interest in changing policy just happens to be people that have benefited from that policy not being in place. And it's usually white woman who run these. And I'm not saying they shouldn't, I'm just saying

that there is definitely the minute you enter a space, you recognize that this is a token issue and we're not going to talk about real shit.

Simona: And then, or you go to an event and it could be the Woke series, the Woke dialogues, the Woke discussions and then you recognize who's in the room and that this is not actually about challenging the system. It's about patting everybody on the back and saying, "It's okay that you play a part in the system. It's okay. Change will happen. We just need to not be so volatile or be in conflict with one another." I think you see it. People see it. You go to an event and you're like, "No."

Gilad: It's funny because I still can't pick up on that stuff. It's like I'm wearing blinders and I think it's, I've been doing a lot of reflection on it, it's my Jewish guilt. It's like guilt just drives everything I do and so a lot of times I just feel guilty that I would even question or judge somebody else, so I always just assume that they have the best intention in mind.

Simona: No, I know you do that.

Gilad: I get heartbroken.

Simona: I just feel like, "Are you taking up space or are you creating space?" And I think right now we're in a moment within social justice where there's still a lot of people taking up space that they don't need to. And I don't give a shit if you think, "Oh, I can be vocal. I can be impactful in this space." Are you actually asking yourself, "Who else could I invite into this space? Who else could speak at this event? Who else could do it?" When I hear people talking about that, I was like, "Okay, I'll fuck with you." But when I hear people putting on the wrong event with the wrong people and then having to apologize for it, I was like, "Never again. You had your chance."

Gilad: This conversation around taking up space reminds me of something that just happened four days ago. I was on this panel, I was on this mini speaking tour.

Simona: Oh, you went to Hamilton right?

Gilad: Hamilton the Hammer. I got to go there and I was also in Montreal the day before. And I'm on this panel about child protection with Emmanuel Jal, who as you remember we interviewed.

Simona: Beautiful. Beautiful.

Gilad: The incredible man who also was a child soldier. And then there was also a gender specialist who was ... had a lot of offer. But there was this funny

question. We were taking questions from the audience and there was this one university student who said, "I'm a white woman and even though some of you on the panel might not be white, each of you carry some sort of privilege and so how do you carry that privilege into spaces where you're trying to do development work? How do you reconcile your privilege with the communities in need of help?"

Simona: That's a good question.

Gilad: Great question. The gender specialist, just in front of everyone, she's known me for five minutes, looks over at me and says, like literally she knew me for five minutes, she looks over at me and goes, "Hey, you're the white guy. You take this one," in front of everybody. And so I was like, A, I was blown away that in a professional setting she could do that. I was very physically taken aback. I was like, "Um, yeah, I'm white but not white. That's inappropriate." And then I answered the question. And just for anyone who's listening, yes, I am white. But also I'm Jewish and I've spoken at length about the anti-Semitism and the hatred and stuff that I have felt, so it's not as simple as saying I am white, therefore all of the privileges-

Simona: Or white-passing.

Gilad: Right. I answered the question and the funny thing is, the next day, now we're in Montreal. I felt like I had to take her aside and explain why I reacted that way. I pulled her aside and I said, "Listen, I was very awkward when you said that. Here's why. I'm Jewish, Holocaust, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." She goes, "Oh, it's not even a thing." And so we, minutes before we have to go on this panel, we go out for a drink. We're out at the bar. She's loosened up a bit. And while we're walking back she says, "Listen," and I'm sure you can relate when this happens to me, she goes, "Listen, I'm going to tell you something and I hope it's not going to offend you." Automatically, you're like-

Simona: It's going to offend me.

Gilad: ... I'm about to fucking be offended. She goes, "I don't want to offend you." And she goes, "But, I don't really have many Jewish friends. I guess I had one." And long story short, this one Jewish friend tried to ruin her marriage and her career. I'm like, "Wow. Thank you for opening up about all these details," but then I go, "You can't shut out all Jewish people as a result of this one person." And she's like, "No. Well kind of. I don't know-

Simona: You're a gender specialist?

Gilad: ... well, sort of." And then I'm thinking, "How fucked up is it?" Can you imagine, I'm walking with a friend of my mine who's black and I'm like, "Hey, I don't really have black friends. I kind of have one but I had this really terrible experience and now-

Simona: We're not that close.

Gilad: ... I kind of hate all black people but I don't." It's like flying way the fuck over her head.

Simona: Why do people open up to you? What is it about your faith that people want to tell you the deepest darkest details of their racism or-

Gilad: And then shit ... And then micro-aggressively be racist or be-

Simona: No, that's aggressively be racist. She's basically said, "Hey," one, when she said, "Oh, it's not even a thing," to what you told her, she dismissed your experiences, number one. As a gender specialist, you shouldn't be doing that.

Gilad: This is not even a matter of gender, but you would think a gender specialist would understand race and culture and-

Simona: Or privilege. But also for her to say, with no real provocation, "Hey, the reason I may have called you out and made you, kind of put you on the spot is because you know 38 years ago," because I'm sure it's not a young woman. If she is, tell me differently.

Gilad: Go on.

Simona: And she had her marriage, which I'm sure was already on the rocks. It wasn't because your best friend was Jewish. It was because probably you and your husband don't communicate, ex-husband don't communicate and then she decided, "Hey, I'm going to carry this kind of ... The only thing I can attach to this person is their religion, so the only way I can make peace with this for myself and have 'closure' is to hate all Jewish people." That's very, that's such a privileged place to occupy.

Gilad: It's, to me it's just bonkers. And so I'm, my question to you is, I'm going to give an opinion and then my question is, in that moment I have to go up on a panel in a few minutes so I have to get ready. Be stage ready. And also it's the second day of this tour. We've been flying. I'm exhausted. And so in that moment I was like, "Do I fix this? Do I call it out? Is this a teaching moment?" And honestly I just let it go because I didn't have the mental space to carry forward. Sometimes, it's just really exhausting. In terms of teachable moments, do you jump on each of

them or are there ever times when you're like, "Man, I'm a brown-skinned woman and you just shat on me in a certain way and I'm going to let it go because I'm tired."

Simona: Yeah, I've had to ... You can't fight every fight and I've recognized that. And I can't be everybody's teacher. What I can do is first listen to my body. Be very clear about where am I holding this, am I triggered, is this causing a physical reaction, is this more emotional, mental, all of these things swirl in my head. And I don't take every action or opportunity to teach. What I do say, I do have to say, "That was inappropriate. You should go get more information," and I've also started pulling out the Google card like, "Oh, you need to know more about white privilege, www.google.com, just enter it in, you'll find all this information." Because the thing is to ask the individual, the victim, to teach the oppressor differently, to un-train them, that doesn't happen. That's like saying one person has to dismantle all racism so white people can understand why it's problematic.

Simona: No, you can't take every moment and teach. But then I also carry, but what if this is the moment that changes this person's perspective? That person's in a position of power. Now with their new information or knowledge they'll make different decisions for the community. You can't carry that because it's not true. It's not true. All you're going to do is make someone ... All you can do is just say, "I can't engage with you. I've already seen that you are not trying to have an open dialogue or discussion. You're not here to change your mind. Why you're here is to discontinue your actions and continuing to perpetuate the benefits of your privilege."

Gilad: Which I myself also carry around. I am white. I am a man. I am straight and able-bodied and all of the amazing things that come along with this privilege that I understand, which is also what makes these situations so awkward because it's also like, "That was shitty. You shouldn't have said that. It made me feel like crap. You oppressed me in whatever minor way. But, on the other side, I am white and able-bodied and duh, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh."

Simona: Yeah, but that's like not ... She wasn't going after you being a man. She wasn't going after you because, she didn't say that thing because you were white. She didn't say those things because you were a man. She didn't say those things because you were able-bodied. She said those things because you were Jewish. She chose. She made a choice. It's not because of just your existence. She actually made a choice and then she felt comfortable enough to share that with you so first of all, that's not right and second of all, you can't really hold on to something ... It's like one of the first things I recognize as you start to become more aware or woke is how triggered and angry you feel all the time and how exhausting that feels. And then because you own it, it's on you and you have to really start shifting. It's like they made that choice to, they made that choice. I'm

not their keeper, I'm not their whatever. You have to recognize it's not because you have privileges doesn't mean you can't experience shit.

Simona: I think that's something we also need to talk about. It's very dismissive on how you feel. But I also think that you have to give power where it is and that's you took power, instead of you saying, "I'm not going to carry this for you, fuck it, I'm not here to also change your mind. I may give feedback to the organization that brought us together to say that this is what happened." That's what you can do. But you can't fight every fight because you gain to lose more than they do.

Gilad: Right. Yeah. That's very true. We should start a show called Updates on Microaggression. And then we can jump in.

Simona: In microaggressions today.

Gilad: The forecast for microaggressions today seems light.

Simona: I was called Paki on the subway and was not given a seat. And that happened two weeks ago.

Gilad: It did?

Simona: Yeah.

Gilad: Wow. Okay. What?

Simona: It was like a drunk dude. It always, to me, first of all I'm not Pakistani, okay, number one. Number two, it's nothing wrong with being Pakistani but it's 2019. If that's the only slur that you can throw at brown people, come on, update your vernacular. But that happened-

Gilad: F for creativity.

Simona: F for creativity but that's like, I've been called Paki, I think the first time I was seven years old and I routinely get called Paki at least once or twice a year to this point I was like ...

Gilad: I can't believe, I can believe, unfortunately I can believe that that still happens. Do you laugh it off?

Simona: I'll laugh it off. I'll look them in their eye. I'll say, "Fuck off." Or if it's a drunk dude, it's like fighting a brick wall. Nothing's going to happen. And if you're also drunk at 1:30 in the afternoon, that drunk, you have a lot going on that I don't. But I just feel like, yeah, people think, it's so funny when people are like, "This is

Canada." I'm like, "Canada's still fucking racist. It's racist every day. It's just not at your front door. It's at someone else's."

Gilad: It's much more hidden.

Simona: I don't even think it's hidden. I think it's pretty out there. It's just we don't really talk about it and everyone thinks it's happening at a Tim Horton's where someone's flinging their shit at each other.

Gilad: And no, don't get me wrong, we obviously talk to so many people who experience human rights abuses or racism or discrimination. We've had them on our podcast. I mean hidden in the sense that Canada still has this amazing PR where people don't think that's Canada.

Simona: We're too nice or exactly. It's always the anomaly, it's not the reality. This is just an isolated incident.

Gilad: This is not us.

Simona: It's not us. It's them. You know who, it's them.

Gilad: We're better than this.

Simona: We're better than them at least. And that's the thing. At least we're better than the United States. That's like saying, "At least this restaurant is better than the dumpster outside so we should be grateful we're eating at it."

Gilad: We're wrapping up. We have a couple minutes left. Is there anything you need to take it off your chest?

Simona: If you're driving on the DVP, fucking learn it. Do it properly. And if you can't do it, then don't use it.

Gilad: What's happening on there?

Simona: People are no t... If you can't operate your vehicle in stop and go traffic, then don't drive in traffic. But if you are keeping too big of a gap, slowing everybody else down, we could all be going at a faster pace but you made that choice, minivan with your Dodge Caravan 2019.

Gilad: And speaking of 2019, if you're smoking a cigarette and you need to do it out in public and you feel like doing it on the sidewalk in front of me while you're walking very slowly-

Simona: Or vaping.

Gilad: Vaping I can't, A, I can't get behind. It's not cool enough. It still looks weird to me. It's kind of funny.

Simona: No, but they're doing it in big plumes of smoke.

Gilad: Yeah, but it's-

Simona: Strawberry flavored.

[Theme music fades in]

Gilad: ... so offensive. You might as well just shit your pants in front of me and walk ...

Gilad: My name's Gilad Cohen.

Simona: I'm Simona Ramkisson.

Gilad: This podcast is edited and produced by Brandon Fragomeni and Alex Castellani. Our associate producer is Ron Ma.

Simona: This is an initiative of JAYU, a charity that shares human rights stories through the arts.

[Music fades out]

Gilad: If you enjoyed this podcast, help us make more of them by donating whatever you can. Visit us online at jayu.ca/donate.