Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness
& Professor Mehrsa Baradaran

JVN [00:00:00] Happy new year, and welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by University of California, Irvine School of Law Professor Mehrsa Baradaran, where I ask her: How fair is banking? Welcome to "Getting Curious," this is Jonathan Van Ness. I'm so excited to welcome our guest, who is a professor of law at the University of California, Irvine School of Law, Mehrsa Baradaran. You are a writer. You're a professor of law. You are. Which also, I have to get out of my system. That part in "Legally Blonde," when we meet the Law Professor, like, I just, you are, like, this, like, a young fierce version. I'm, like I object. And I want to learn about law.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:00:52] Thanks, that's, that's a good movie. Yeah.

JVN [00:00:55] It's such a good one. But you've authored, two books that have both been published by Harvard University Press. "How the Other Half Banks" and "The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap." So you're the perfect person to help us learn about what is going on with race and the racial wealth gap. So I think, you know, I remember once as a kid asking my stepdad "What is, like, what was the Gulf War about?" And I was, like, five or six. And he was, like, "Well, you know, most wars are about money." And then I, you know, when I think about it, it's, like, money, honey. It kind of, it can't buy you happiness, but it sure can buy you, like, security and safety and peace of mind. And it has a lot of value. And who gets money, who gets to store it, who doesn't? And I think it's something a lot of people have, we've talked about the gender wealth gap on this podcast before. I think I've really only started to learn about, you know, a racial wealth gap, you know, very recently.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:02:02] Yeah. So, you know, I think when we talk about wealth in the United States and we're talking about racial wealth gap, it is as exactly as you said, it's not just about how much money do you have in your bank account. It's also about what's your neighborhood like? What kind of resources do you have in your school? Is your neighborhood overpoliced? Are you more likely to go to jail? What about environmental hazards? Right? What, where do they put that sort of bus depot in the city? So all of that stuff is entangled in the racial wealth gap. So in America, the racial wealth gap has everything to do with neighborhoods, right? Why is there a Black part of town and a white part of town? Why is it that the white part of town has the nicer stores and the Black part of town has, like, payday lenders and check cashers and dollar generals? Now, it's not just a Black, the Black part of town that has those stores, but it is also that race and wealth have gone hand in hand for most of that history.

And, and the way that that history connects to the present is that you have had these things, this, you know, hundreds of years of segregation and Jim Crow and race, explicitly racist exclusion from certain fields. And that has never been actually remedied. It kind of has continued on and the legacy has stayed till today. And so when you look at, you know, the racial wealth gap, which is about ten to one right now, so white families on average, this is the average white family, have ten times more wealth than the average Black family. You put in Latinos and other sort of, other groups in there. And it's, it's similar, though not as quite as bad as the white, Black, white, Black and racial wealth gap. You also have, you know, half to a third of Black families have zero to negative wealth. And that connects exactly to this legacy of segregation and, and racism. And so it is, it is one of those things that is about wealth, but it's also about like an ecosystem of opportunities, of, you know, exposures to violence and threats and other things that kind of come bundled up in that one figure.

JVN [00:04:14] Which I think has been something that the United States has collectively, well, I mean, white America, has collectively started to open their minds and eyes to. So first of all, when we think about OK, so wealth, what, like if I think about getting my hair done, I'm going to a salon. If I think about getting my wealth on, where am I going? I'm going to a bank. Like I'm going to go to a bank. Right? So what, like what is a bank? Like in a classic sense, what's a bank?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:04:40] Yeah. OK, so this is a fun one. So a bank is, OK so the earliest banks were Italian banks where you, just basically lent to people, you know, a little bit of money to go do a business or whatever. It was very rare. The money came with a lot of interest. You had, you know, bank vaults having, like, you know, blocks of Parmesan cheese as collateral, you know, so it was very, very old school. But that, that's the earliest banks is like 14th century Italy. The modern banking system dates back to about 1600, 1700 in the U.K. and then the US. So I'll just kind of bring that up to today.

JVN [00:05:15] Wait one second. Our modern banking, like our modern banking system in 2020, was established in the 17 and 1600s?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:05:29] Yeah.

JVN [00:05:30] The same one?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:05:31] The, the sim, similar, the similar idea, the concept which is that it started actually with a big loan from the government to the market and that money kind of circulates. It's like this big government debt. It's the Bank of England, you know, lends money to the Crown and it flows in the market. And then that money, that's the nation's currency. And then the nation kind of stands behind its currency and says, OK, this is Great Britain's currency. And in America too. Right? Every, if you want to buy anything in America, it has to be the dollar. Right? Can't be, I mean, you could barter, you could use block chain or whatever. But really everything is denominated in the US dollar. And basically that's the world's currency right now. And only banks have the charter, the sort of authority to kind of spread that money, to give loans.

And so when a bank gives a loan, they're actually creating money. And this is an important concept that, that I think is at the foundation of banking. It's not that banks take everyone's deposits and that's all the money they have. And then they make loans from those deposits. Banks hold a little bit of deposits and they lend out the rest, but they also can lend out more than the amount that they have in deposits because of their connection to the government and the Treasury. So the amount of money in bank loans is much more often than, than what people could save and put it, so, so it is a bank loan that creates individual wealth. Your mortgage, your student loan, your business loan. So that's why it's important when you exclude communities from those loans, they have that block to building wealth.

JVN [00:07:18] So a bank. OK, I don't, sometimes when I learn about stuff, I think to myself, like, am I the only one that has to say it, like, 16 times in a row to, like, really understand? But what you're saying is, is that your mortgage, your student loan, what was the other one you just said?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:07:37] Business loans.

JVN [00:07:38] Business loans. So your ability to access, because it's, like, I can't go pay, like, 500,00 on the spot for a house or, you know, maybe 30,000 to get the salon off the ground, like, you need to get a loan to make that happen. But once you do, theoretically, hopefully you're going to fix that house up really nice. You're going to be able to sell it for more. You should, you know, hopefully make a little money from it. Same with the salon. Hopefully from your student loan, like, you're going to get a great job from your student loan and you're going to make that money back. So really, like, those are the, so when you say that a bank is really a wealth, it's creating money because those-.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:08:12] Yes.

JVN [00:08:13] When you, you're going to go create money with that loan you got.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:08:15] Exactly. Exactly. You're trading. So you have an income. OK? So let's say I want to buy a mortgage. Like you said, nobody had 500,000 dollars and you like billionaires' kids, in which case you don't need a mortgage. Just, you know, you have family wealth. The middle class, the vast majority of people don't have 500,000 dollars, let's say, sitting around to buy a house. But you do have an income, right? So you say I get paid every month this amount of money and I will promise you, that's how you mortgage, that, that's how mortgage works. They give you, the bank gives you 500,000 dollars, you give them the deed to the house. And then you also promise them every month a payment of whatever that, that agreed upon thing is. And then an interest rate and that's how banks make money. Is that you're, you're trading it's like a, it's a simple swap. Right? You're trading your income for their loan.

Now, there's a whole bunch of investors out there too, who want that interest income. Right? So that, so if you want to invest, you can invest in other people's mortgages through a mortgage-backed security. That's essentially what that was, if you remember that crisis that we had in those. But, but that's the basic concept. But as a person, I'm now gaining wealth because if I can get that mortgage on my home and that home can increase in value. Meanwhile, I am, you know, putting my money into an asset that is increasing. My kids are going to school, all of that stuff. Now, the important point is that a lot of those mortgages are guaranteed by the federal government. So essentially, it's the federal government that, that says if you can lend a certain type of loan, we will guarantee it. Student loans, it's all federal government. OK? A lot of business loans are also. In 1934, the New Deal kind of innovated this massive mortgage market, student loans, all of this stuff.

JVN [00:09:59] So basically the point is, is that this idea that the bank is just a place where we go, you know, put, like, "I'm just going to put this extra money in here in, like, a savings account" and then they'll go do some other stuff. Like, that's not really what banks are, like, for the wider, like for the entire, I mean, like that's what I always thought they were, like, when I was a kid. Like, I didn't know that you could go to a bank and get, like, these loans and things. So it's not really just a place where we go store our money. It's actually a place where you, with, if you have the right information and the right tools and then they agree to it and say, yes, it's actually a place where you can go make shit fuck tons of more money with the loans that you can get.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:10:39] Yes. Yes, it's leverage. Well, when rich people do it, it's leverage. When poor people do it, they say, "Oh, it's debt, you shouldn't do it." Right? So there is a double speak that we do. But yes, that's how you money is you get out a loan. That's how banks make money. Banks don't necessarily want your deposits, especially right now. Your deposits aren't doing them a lot of good. But the loans, that's where they make their money. And that's where you can if you can get a good loan on a good asset, that's how you can make lots of money.

JVN [00:11:07] Got it. OK, yes. So then, I think I understand it. So in 1934, honey, the New Deal happens. So what else happened? And, like, can you just set the stage of the New Deal kind of briefly because it's like in the middle of America where I'm from, people will literally say, like, "What does that have to do with now? That was like hundreds of years ago." Or like there's a lot of that. And there's also this misconception, I know we said this on the podcast a lot before, but if, you know, hear it again, there was segregation in all the states.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:11:37] I mean, the North invented segregation. It wasn't the South. I mean, housing segregation. Right? The South had Jim Crow, all the bad stuff there, Klan, you know, but the North invented segregation when the northern migration happened with Black southerners going to the north. So, so the reason why, first of all, it's not that long ago, people are still alive. Second of all, it is, most wealth in this country is passed down generationally. So not just like a big fortune that you get in a will, but also that home is most people's largest asset and that comes down sequentially. And then if your dad or your grandfather got that GI Bill, got to have a middle class job, then you were set up in a way that those who didn't were not.

So the background to the New Deal is that before the New Deal, I mean, for decades, there was all of these banking crashes, right? So, like, really unstable. You would put your money in a bank and it could just be gone. Right? Lots of banks failed. And there was, you know, we were on the gold standard, it's a long, complicated history. But there would be these, like, crunches. There'd be a crisis, like, every other year where farmers, you know, who would have to borrow for their tractors or whatever, and then there'd be some shortage of gold. And then the bank would retract the money and then everyone would suffer and it was just not working. So there's, there's a huge sense that we had to do something. We had to, like the federal government had to step in and back up the money and back up the banking sector.

And the Great Depression was obviously, like, the mother of all banking crises. And all the banks failed. People lost their homes. They lost their farms. And, you know, I mean, the stories, "The Grapes of Wrath" and all of that stuff, so massive poverty. And then you have FDR coming in and completely revising all of the system. So there's the Public Works Projects. We talk about the jobs, right? So you can go build a ditch and a railroad and we're going to pay you, the government's going to do that. But there's this whole banking revision too. And so one of those things is the deposit insurance. So now if you put your money in a bank. You can rest easy. You don't have to go run a bank if there's a problem, the, the FDIC is going to back up your funds.

That was huge, hugely important. I mean, I don't know if you remember in 2008, if you had a bank account and people, you know, these banks were failing and the FDIC said, don't, you don't need to go take out your money from a bank because the FDIC insurance fund has got you. And the important thing is this. If everyone goes, the bank doesn't keep all the deposits, it only keeps a little bit. So if everyone runs a bank and takes out their money, that bank fails and every other, it's like a domino. Right? And so a run is the worst thing that can happen to the banking sector. The whole thing works if everyone keeps their money in and keeps calm. But everyone individually is like, "Well, I want my money," before, because banks can only give, you know, the first five people in line their money and then everyone else loses. And so that was the big problem that FDIC insurance cured.

The other side, the mortgage loans, the federal government basically set up a massive mortgage guarantees, in the FHA, and the FHA says, look, "If you lent a certain type of loan to a certain type of person," which I'll get to, "we will guarantee it against default." So this is where every suburb in America that you see now, that's when it was created, in 1934. It created all of the nation's roads. And some people say, "Look, we took a wrong turn in 1934 because we became a suburban sprawl. All of these, you know, single family homes. We moved away from cities, but it also created a ton of wealth." OK? So say what you will about suburban sprawl, I'm not a fan, but those people that got those loans got to pay less on a mortgage and their homes improved in value. They had parks and schools and, and the GI Bill, which they could go to school using. So that, the way that the government, sort of bureaucrats or whatever, went around gauging risk around the country is that they went to certain neighborhoods and said, well, who lives in this neighborhood? And is it a risky neighborhood to lend or is it not?

JVN [00:15:39] So back in 1934, like a government agency literally dispatched out to the suburbs to say, like, "OK, we're feeling like it's 90 percent white, 10 percent Black."

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:15:46] Yes.

JVN [00:15:47] We're feeling.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:15:48] It's exactly right. And you can actually go, there's this really great website called "Mapping Inequality" and see the maps that they used and the, and the forms. And they went everywhere. There was a massive project, hundreds of surveyors. These are government, like, appraisers that went to every community across the country, cities, suburbs, everywhere. And then they looked and they said, OK, what kind of neighborhood is it? What kind of houses and what kind of people? So they would say things like, “This is a, you know, racially inharmonious community.” What does that mean? There's, you know, brown people. This is, this neighborhood is filled with subversive races. You know, Mexicans, Japanese, Polish. Right?

And then if it was Black, it was “100 percent risky.” OK, so that race was, like, the number one indicator if you look at these forms and you can see it, any community that was around then has one of these. And I've looked at all of them and, and race is incredibly prominent. So if you're in a Black neighborhood, that government bureaucrat will come in and say, “OK, we're going to mark this neighborhood red and we're not going to give FHA guarantees to lend into this neighborhood.” And that's where the origin of the word "redlining" comes from. OK?

JVN [00:16:59] So, and also, so what does that mean about those redlining zones? That just meant that, like, if you did live in one of those zones and you wanted to buy a house, you just couldn't get a loan?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:17:05] Yep. Yeah, that's what it meant. You could get a private loan. But private loans were scarce, right? I mean, why would a mortgage lender lend on a loan that they had to take all that risk for versus an FHA guaranteed loan? Or the government saying essentially we will protect you against default? So 99, I think it's like 98 or 99 percent of mortgages from 1934 until the 1960s, were all FHA insured. So there was no mortgage market outside of the government mortgage program. Right? It's like you wouldn't have a deposit now in a bank that wasn't protected by FDIC insurance. That once these things entered the market, they radically changed the market. So it meant you couldn't get a mortgage. You couldn't, you know, the jobs followed out into the suburbs, the cars, the installment, the credit. Right? So people out in the suburbs had credit cards that you could revolve that was flexible, low interest rate. In the city, you were, you know, installment credit, which is like a Rent-A-Center. Right?

So it's everything about finance and credit. You were paying more and it was a more onerous, it was, it was not just more expensive. It was also just you're getting crappier goods. You were, you were, you know, if you defaulted on your loan to Rent-A-Center, they would send repo men and take all your stuff. Whereas in the suburbs it was much more safe. Right? Your kids grew up in parks and schools and inside the city, those parks weren't created. There was public housing. And, and then after that, you know, the congestion and the smog and the environmental effects. So it really kind of, you can, you know, make a straight line from that too now. And it wasn't just the New Deal, as I said, it was a whole, the New Deal was just cementing into law the segregation patterns that existed already for, for years before that.

JVN [00:18:57] But what is white flight?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:18:59] Yeah, white flight was when, basically when white people left the inner cities and now they're, they're coming back. Right? But white flight was when, you know, that 1934, post-1934, when a neighborhood flips and all it takes is five to 10 percent of families, the white people leave and then it becomes a Black or brown community. And what that means also is that those homes decrease in value. So even if you can purchase a home, in a community that's flipping, that's experiencing white flight, you're going to make less money.

Now again, I want to be clear that this is happening in geographies that are not just Black and brown. So there are white communities that are experiencing that rapid decline, like Dayton, Ohio, and places that used to be manufacturing capitals that are now, like the housing market is just broken. You can buy a house for like 5,000 dollars. You know, nothing is coming back and the jobs are leaving. Right? So that, that was the white flight. So redlining lasts from 1934 well into 1968. But it's not just redlining, OK? It's also that each home now, each HOA, you know, the origin of HOAs were actually to keep Black people, brown people out of the neighborhood. Right? To keep those property values intact.

JVN [00:20:14] The origin of what?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:20:16] HOA. Like the Home Owners Associations.

JVN [00:20:19] Yes. Right.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:20:20] Yeah. So each home had a, like, a racial covenant in the deed or mortgage contract. And you can look up these things too. But it basically said, “You cannot sell this home to anyone who's not of the Caucasian race.”

JVN [00:20:33] And it said that until 1960 what?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:20:37] '68. When the Supreme Court said they won't enforce it. Yeah.

JVN [00:20:43] So between 1934 and 1968, it literally said in these home deeds, “You cannot sell this to anyone that's not white.”

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:20:51] Mmhmm. And then after that it was basically informal. After that, the way zoning works, it's, it's, it's, I'm, I'm not going to say it's changed that much because now you use different things like, you know, afford-, affordable housing. A lot of communities fight against affordable housing and they don't have to let in like an apartment building or a dual residence. Right? But by, even if we're ignoring the modern zoning, which has still caused harm, by 1968, so this is people's parents, right? This is, you know, people's grandparents, parents. You either grew up in the suburbs, had those schools, had the jobs, or you were kind of red lined into this, you know, Black neighborhood where the busses didn't run properly. There was, now we've got environmental toxins, were running the roads, right, as we're building roads and bus depots, we're running them through these neighborhoods.

It's, it's, it's that legacy of that segregation that still remains intact. So if you look at, there's a racial map across the country. And put those red line maps on top of it, so 1934 red line maps to today where people live. It has not changed at all. So where George Floyd is murdered. You know, I actually looked at the maps and I followed it to today. And that neighborhood has stayed a Black neighborhood. It's still an impoverished neighborhood. It is a food desert. It is a banking desert. It is where you find, you know, bodegas. And it's also where police have a higher, you know, likelihood of confronting people like George Floyd and where those deaths and those over criminalization of drug crimes occur. So, so it's not that long ago. It's not this long forgotten history. It very much affects us to this day.

JVN [00:22:48] And I mean, in George Floyd’s case, it was a counterfeit twenty dollar bill. I mean, like, that in and of itself, like, a shoplifting, a counterfeit, anything like that, it's a symptom of poverty. And so why are we arresting folks for crimes of poverty? Which leads me to the question of what does, I mean, I've heard of "food desert" before. I've never heard the term banking desert. But it's, like, if, you know, if what we're operating on is that a bank is kind of this, like, a magical place where like the American dream can come true, where you can, you know, go make your dreams come true and get, like, the money-making machine to, like, theoretically, like, shoot your shot and make it work. If there are no banks in your redlined community, is it that, you know, it's not that folks are lazy. It's not that folks don't want to. It's that, like, there's literally no, like, there's no banks in those areas.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:23:40] There's no banks and there weren't loans. There wasn't the opportunity. It is not. I don't. You can either believe in every single person in a single community making bad decisions over time, or maybe it's the system and the environment. That, that is the most obvious, simple explanation and the one that's supported by all the data. So it's not just that the bank wasn't there to give you a mortgage loan or a student loan. It's also that instead of the bank, you got a payday lender and a check casher. Banks are regulated. So their interest that they can charge you on a mortgage is like four or five, six percent. If you want to go get 500 dollars to fix your car and you're in a banking desert, if you're in a formerly red line area and you want to go get 500 dollars, you're paying 300 to 500 percent APR. So to take out 500 dollars, you end up paying about 1500 to 2000 dollars. OK?

That's not to mention civil fines. Any time you have a fee, you have to show up in court. They put in hundreds, 500 dollars. Most of the criminal violations in this country end up being for unpaid fines and fees. You can actually go to prison and get criminal sanctions now for not paying fines and fees. So it's not just, "Oh, we don't have a bank, so we can't get rich." It's also that we're now getting, you know, targeted by the worst kinds of lenders in these communities that have basically filled the void where banks have left.

And, and, and the, and the thing that gets to me, it's not just the banks. As I said earlier, the banks are supported by the federal government. So this is very much an issue of public policy. It is. If we get, we're supporting the banks on so many different levels, we're guaranteeing the loans. We as America, we as taxpayers, we guarantee the mortgages. We, you know, the FDIC guarantees the deposits. The Federal Reserve pumps millions, billions and trillions of dollars into the banking sector, and those banks aren't serving certain communities. So I think that's a problem of democracy. It's not just, "Oh, banks are choosing not to do this," this is a flaw in our collective democratic system.

JVN [00:25:57] So when, I mean, I wrote down you saying that, so who gets rich when we have these payday lending places, like, these check-into-cash type places to get a loan and they're allowed to charge you 30, 40, 50 percent like these crazy, outrageous numbers that would be illegal for a bank to do so, but they've come in and filled the void. And then we talk about the fact that you can go to prison for not paying fines, which, that also enriches people by putting people in prison beds, there's for-profit prisons all over this country. So in both of those cases, someone's getting rich. So where does a lot of the, where does that money go to? Who are these people who are getting rich off of these predatory payday loans and imprisoning people?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:26:35] The same people who always get rich. I mean, truly, truly. I mean, it's, it's not a conspiracy because it's in broad daylight. Right? It's not that, you know, it's just that the way that these corporations work is that they're just going to go where it's most profitable. And so the, all the payday lenders, a lot of the check cashers are under a few big conglomerates. Right? So, you know, like Carlos Slim, the richest man in America, Mexico owns a bunch of check cashers. There's just, you know, payday lenders are financed by some of the same Wall Street banks, private prisons or public prisons. Right? So we, we don't, I don't need to distinguish public to private prisons.

There's monopolies that sell prisoners phone calls and, like, laundry detergent. And so they're not allowed to buy from anyone but this one supplier.

JVN [00:27:23] That's why their shirts are so expensive. I actually have a close friend who is incarcerated and it's, like, to buy t-shirts, to buy anything, it's, like, insanely expensive. To call anyone, it's insanely expensive. It's-.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:27:35] Yeah.

JVN [00:27:36] I mean, it's like-.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:27:37] It's profits. Yeah. It's, it's, it's not competition. It's a, it's a total monopoly of the system. And they lobby, they lobby against. So the payday lenders in California lobbied against the Minimum Wage Bill, OK, which didn't seem to have anything to do with payday lenders. But they figured out, look, if we pay people, workers more money-.

JVN [00:27:57] They're going to pay us off more.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:27:59] Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. And we'll have less money. Right? So, so they're politically pretty powerful and they can get the things that they want and the banks are, you know, not competing in this area. So, so it's a real, like, dual system. It's, you know, the system of finance for wealthy people and then one for poor Black and brown communities. And white, rural communities too, by the way. It is, it is now a cross racial problem of banking deserts. There's a whole bunch of banking deserts in the rural Southwest, in the Midwest, in the Southeast.

JVN [00:28:32] That's one thing that I say often here that I learned from Ashlee Marie Preston is she says that, like, white supremacy will eat its own young.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:28:38] Yes. That’s absolutely right.

JVN [00:28:41] The important part is, the important part is, is that the way that wealth, banking, violence, quality of life, all of these things are inextricably linked. I wanted to ask earlier and some of my research and looking into your writings and stuff, we talk about this idea being, like, underbanked and a community being under banked. Can you tell us what that is?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:29:04] Yeah, that's exactly what I'm saying on this, is under banked to someone who maybe has a bit, an unbanked is someone who doesn't have a bank account, is relying primarily on checking accounts or payday lending. An under banked person is someone who maybe has a bank account, but they're using the other alternative services more often. So prepaid debit cards, payday lending, check cashing. And the reason they're doing that is because it's actually a rational choice. Banks will of-, will send overdraft fees. I don't know if you've ever had not enough money in a bank to, to make it.

JVN [00:29:34] Hell yes. I, like, I've gone over, I've gone overdrawn, like, for overdraft fees.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:29:40] Yes. And you know how, how, like that's like 40 dollars. 50 dollars sometimes.

JVN [00:29:45] Every time.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:29:45] They can stack up. Yes. And so, you know, if you don't have enough money to get those minimums and sometimes it's like 1500, 2000 dollars of, like, a buffer that you need to have. If one check clears faster than you've made a check-.

JVN [00:29:58] Right.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:29:58] Then you're, you know, you're screwed. And so, and those fees can come fast. Right? And the bank can choose, you know, when to issue those fees. And so you're saying, "Well, you know, I'm going to have my bank account for this money, but then when I go use my checks, I'm going to use the check casher or payday lender." And because they at least say, "You know, we'll cash your 100 dollar check and we'll take 10 dollars." Which is a lot of money. Right? And a bank will do it for free. But it's, like, you don't know about the overdraft fees and the banks, it takes, like, days to clear. And if you need to pay rent on a Friday, you get paid on a Friday, you need that money on a Friday. Right? So, so that, that, that is a big block that the banking system just isn't meeting the needs of those people. So I think that's, that's one thing. But the others are just that you don't, you don't trust them. They're not in your neighborhood. So that's what we talk about when we talk about underbanked.

JVN [00:30:48] I mean, when I think about overdrafts, and I mean overdrafts were a constant part of my life until, like, 2017, I mean, like, it wasn't until, like, "Queer Eye" and, like, years and years and years of, like, working so hard to, like, but that hasn't, I mean, that was because of, like, luck, family, like, all sorts of stuff and also like hard work, but also, like, a lot of luck and a lot of like other things. But overdrafts, I think knowing what I know now about retirement funds and how important they are and how much money I didn't have in my 20s. Off of overdrafts alone, I bet I could have had like the fattest fucking IRA ever.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:31:24] Yeah.

JVN [00:31:25] Like, I bet you I easily paid like between 5 and 10,000 dollars of overdraft fees, like in my teens and 20s, because I was just, I mean, I was overdrafting every, every week, multiple times.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:31:36] And the majority of, so banks make a ton of money off overdraft fees and only poor people pay overdraft fees. And that's one of the tricks of banking, is that it is always the same slice of customers. It's the low income people who end up subsidizing. So it's been a while since I've paid an overdraft fee. There was a time, but now, you know, I get all of the offers from the banks. If I, if anything happens, I screw something up. They will, like, comp me whatever. Right? Because I have, you know, a middle class job and enough money to, like, you know, feed them into the, into the deposit, you know, part of the bank. But, but those fees then subsidize the perks to the rest of us. So if you have a credit card with, you know, bonus miles or whatever, you know, I have a Delta card, and it's the people who, who have to roll over their money to pay that interest that subsidizes the top. And it's the people who pay overdraft fees at the bottom who subsidize all the free banking perks. So it's like reverse, right, benefits. It should be the other way around. But if you look across the system, there's so many ways where poor people pay more proportionately in taxes than does the top. Like, way more of their income goes into taxes.

JVN [00:32:51] basically what I hear you saying is, is that the system that we have, it enables, the system is punching down to keep the people that are up, up and it keeps the people that are down, down. And in order for you to have upward economic mobility, you have to, like, be working so hard, at the right place at the right time, plus a little bit of luck, plus some privilege or social capital or something, to, like, and it's like the chance to thread that needle of obtaining upward mobility is, it seems like it's getting smaller and harder for it to happen.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:33:23] I mean, it's, it's even, like, I mean at that level of wealth, I mean, Jeff Bezos' money makes more money every day than, like, half of the population make that day. You know? Like his money is making himself more money than he could ever spend. So it's kind of abstract at one point. Right? Like, it's like what, what is money? If someone has almost a trillion dollars, right?

JVN [00:33:46] So Jeff fucking Bezos doesn't pay 40 percent because he's so, because he's got so many apartment buildings? I don't get it.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:33:52] Well, he doesn't take an income, he doesn't take an income. It's all capital gains, it's real estate. I mean, it's, like, this is rich people loopholes, right? You offshore stuff, you put it in capital gains. Capital gains are not taxed like income.

JVN [00:34:05] What is this offshore shit people keep fucking talking about? What's it mean? I've had it!

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:34:14] I know, I know. Listen, we have, there's, there's, like, disappearing money worldwide. If you total how much people make and are worth and the taxes that each country gets paid, there's, like, trillions of dollars missing. And where it is is Cayman Islands. It's in Ireland. It's in Switzerland. So if you're rich enough, you actually can put your money somewhere where the US tax authorities can't get to it. And honestly, a lot of this stuff is perfectly legal. Private equity funds, they pay a two and twenty structure. So you only pay a tiny little bit of tax because you're getting all of your income as not income. You're getting a slice. So if you manage, like, a billion dollar portfolio, you're getting like a chunk of that. And that's not taxed like income. That's taxed like capital gains, which is way lower. It's like barely-.

JVN [00:35:06] I thought capital gains was, like, 50 percent or something.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:35:09] No, no, no. It's like, it's way less. Yeah, there's loopholes.

JVN [00:35:13] So how do we, so how do people that make like, like how do, how can we all just say, it was capital gains? We're not allowed to? 'Cause you have to make like a kadrillion dollars first to say it's capital gains?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:35:25] Basically.

JVN [00:35:26] I hate that story. OK-.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:35:28] I hate it too.

JVN [00:35:29] So I feel like I, I think I understand more about economy, more about the banking system. But let's go back to 1865.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:35:39] Mmhmm.

JVN [00:35:39] Let's go back to the end of the Civil War. And I know that there's a lot, we've talked about some of that history on the podcast. We had this incredible lecturer from the University of Texas at Austin teach us about some of that Reconstruction history. It's, but it was more, like, overall, it was kind of, like, what happened to some of those, like, Confederate like generals and stuff. I don't think we got to talk a lot about the financing and how things got from, like, how did things go from like post Civil War to, like, that 1934 period?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:36:10] Right.

JVN [00:36:11] Like, because I feel like that's probably important to talk about in order for us to understand, like, a racial wealth gap of what we're going through now.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:36:16] Yeah. Yeah. So one important thing I'll say about reconstruction, finance-wise, is that so you have hundreds of years of enslavement, right? So white slave owners and by the way, the northern industrialists and the people over in Great Britain trading on the cotton gains.

JVN [00:36:34] Did you listen to the "1619 Project?"

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:36:36] Yes, I was, I helped form it. Yeah, I wrote some things.

JVN [00:36:39] What?!

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:36:40] Yeah.

JVN [00:36:40] Oh my god! Devoured. Devoured. I did not know. And you are just full of hidden surprises. The transition team. This.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:36:48] Yeah.

JVN [00:36:49] This is major. OK, so basically. OK, OK, I don't want to explain it because I'm pretty sure it's wrong. But you were explaining earlier that like, you know, people can invest in the mortgage-backed things now, like, maybe you don't have a whole-, a house, or maybe you do, but you can invest in the mortgage industry. Like now.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:37:04] Yes.

JVN [00:37:05] Like, you can still do that. But back in slavery, people in England and in the North, like, people could do, explain it to me, please.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:37:13] OK, so enslaved people weren't just the labor under horrendous conditions of creating cotton. They were also the capital upon which slave owners, the enslavers, used that collateral as leverage to get more loans and more wealth. And this was a worldwide trade. So the cotton exports went to the north to feed that industrial sort of the factories up north. And then they went east, you know, to, to Liverpool and to London. And there was this whole market of trades, not just in the cotton like products, but also in, you know, investing in factories and speculating on bonds and credit, you know, that's most of the money usually in a financial system, is sophisticated, second order money. Right? But it's not just, I'm going to buy this thing and I'm going to pay you. That's what average people do. But like sophisticated, wealthy people, you know, do insurance on cotton. They do banking, they do the derivatives trading. And so enslaved peoples were the basis of the currency of that southern system.

And so one of the things that happened and didn't happen in the Civil War. Right? So the thing that happened is, is emancipation. The thing that didn't happen was justice and freedom. OK? So everyone, Frederick Douglass, you know, Abraham Lincoln, Union Generals said, look, if you are going to emancipate these enslaved people who had been working on the land for hundreds of years and by the way, the treasonous Southerners who have just, you know, staged a rebellion against the Union, you need to take that land and divide it up and give it to the freedmen. And that did not happen because the South and the British merchants and the northern merchants said, look, we need our cotton at this price. And what happened if, you know, in Haiti when they had emancipation is the, the freed slaves refused to grow sugar because they, it was a debt crop. And when you have your own land, you're going to grow things to feed your family.

So they, the, the worry was that in America that that would happen as well. And the cotton prices, when less people are growing cotton, the price of cotton skyrockets, which would halt that massive cotton industry. And so then there was this pressure on the south. It wasn't just the southern sort of racists and Democrats. It certainly was them, but it was also the northern Republicans and the, the British merchants who said we need this cotton produced the same way it was before. And so essentially, you had a recreation of that plantation economy through sharecropping. A lot of free men and women went back to work on the plantations that they were just emancipated from, often with the same master, but now it was a debt arrangement. And that arrangement with the Jim Crow and all that stuff lasts until the 1930s, 1920s. Sharecropping works, you borrow all your seeds, you're on borrowed land. You don't have the ability to grow your own goods for your family.

And then you owe at the end of the season to the, the, the sort of merchant who lent it to you. It's often, you know, the accounting is done by that person. And it was, it was a really exploitative system. You know, on top of that, you had a few Black communities that, you know, were able to get out of that system. So Tulsa is one, Wilmington, Delaware, where there was oil or something like that. And when Black men and women got property, there was often violent mobs. Right? So for many, many decades, post reconstruction, because the Black population in the south were completely disenfranchised and essentially left out of any of the governance of the south. There was a lot of vigilante violence, paramilitary, Klan, domestic terrorism. And not just like you are actually legally blocked from this, but you're also threatened by that violence. If you try to own property, if you try to build something, there might be a mob, you know, and then you won't get justice. Right? There won't be due process. So that's part of history as well.

JVN [00:40:31] So it's almost like, because in the "1619 Project" we hear in that, I think it's the second episode they're talking about the banking crashes of, like, eight-, the 1820s. And, so it's almost like once the, once the enslaved peoples were free and emancipated, it was like the cotton industry was almost, like, too big to fail. So they were, like, "Oh, we can't-." Well, like, I say that in air quotes, like, but it was, like, "Oh, well, we can't, this can't go up now because all these people are relying on it. So if we give you your 40 acres and a mule or whatever, like, well, how, what are all these people are going to do? So we just can't have that. It's going to be too expensive."

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:42:10] Exactly. It's power. It's about power. It isn't too big to fail. It's just who, who has power. And the person that has power controls the levers of lawmaking. So law isn't this abstract concept that we kind of get into? It's, you know, the carried interest loophole that we were just talking about on private equity, like, someone created that loophole in the tax code. And for us to fix it, we have to go up against the private equity firms. But who are the senators and congresspeople hearing from more often? Me and you, who are trying to have kids and have jobs and don't have the time to lobby them? Or, you know, a select group of lobbyists who are, like, you know, “We will give you campaign donations, just don't touch the things that benefit us.” And that, and that's not as cynical as it sounds like, you know, they need votes, they need to stay in power. And so power ends up recreating its own power unless there is, you know, wide scale sort of social movements. And the Civil War was won, but it was incomplete.

JVN [00:43:12] So can we talk a little bit more about the, some of the Black-owned and operated banks of the 1900s and, and the Freedman's Bank? I know you had mentioned it, but what were some of those, you know, pre-1930, like, post-Civil War, but pre-1930s, like, do any of those banks still exist? Did any of those, do we know about any of those people?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:43:35] Yeah.

JVN [00:43:36] Like do we see that in contemporary America?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:43:38] Yeah, yeah. So some of those banks still exist, like, Mechanics and Farmers Bank, was created in 1907, I think, that's still around in North Carolina. There's a couple other ones. Maggie Walker is someone that I highlight in the book because she's the first woman of any race to own a bank. She's a banker in Richmond, Virginia. She's phenomenally just brilliant and successful. Her bank survives the Great Depression. It was actually during 2008, the financial crash, that her bank goes down. She had passed long before that. But, you know, she, she, she ends up like, you know, through the Great Depression, merging a couple other Black-owned banks into hers and saving them. But these banks struggled a lot, right? Because it was, they were created because of segregation and Jim Crow and violence. And so they were really filling a niche. Right? Because you have massive exclusions and racism. You create your own sector, your own bank, your own insurance fund, your own school. And that is, you know, how you, you know, do the things that you need to do. In the, in the sort of mall of this violence.

JVN [00:44:47] So ye-, I didn't mean to say yes, I'm just like so fascinated by you because I just I, that was more of saying yes in response to you, not what we're talking about. You're just so fascinating. So what does what we're learning about this, you had mentioned just earlier, you know, the trust, that trusting in a bank is so important. And one thing I hear you saying is that as Black communities were coming into banking power and were coming into wealth, it was, like, violently ripped away. I think a lot of people know about the Tulsa Massacre of 1921, I think. And just, like, the general threat of violence in the American South, I don't pretend to know what that would be like to be a Black person going through that, but I definitely believe that that exists, and existed, probably still does in a lot of places. But what does that history say about the importance of trust in ba-, in banking? Or, and the relationship between capital and power in the United States?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:45:40] Yeah, yeah. So that violence, I mean, the way you try to describe it is, like, you know, I have never been, and this is a privilege that I think some of us share. I, I've never been beaten up. I've never been punched. I've never been physically threatened. My, by, now I grew up in a war and so there were, you know, bombs and things like that. And so that, I understand what that violence feels like, but I think that, that, that threat of that violence hanging over you, like, bodily violence the way, I just don't think we can quite capture the trauma of what it might have been like to live through, not just Tulsa, but the, the, like personal violence and terrorism that was the Klan and Jim Crow. And that how you might feel if you felt like your family members, your children, you, your body was constantly under threat.

And I think we can kind of relate this to police violence now is, you know, I don't know what it's like to walk, walk by and have, have that image of George Floyd or Eric Garner, Michael Brown in my head like this could happen to me or my kid, you know, and so I think that it's, it's one of those things where we all could stand to have much more radical empathy. I mean, you probably understand things about, you know, homophobia that I will never understand. Like, what is it like to walk into a room and, and understand that this violence, this threat of you, you yourself are are presenting a threat to somebody, whose masculinity is going to be triggered and they're going to lash out and do something to your body. And so I think that systematic violence and vulnerability to violence is a defining feature of race and, and gender oppression that I think we have kind of yet to understand fully in the psychological sense, like what does that do to your DNA, to your, just like the way you breathe. We know that your body is connected to your traumas. Right? And so how does that trauma live within?

And so I don't mean to get, you know, airy fairy, but I think it's connected. I mean, I, I focus on businesses and I focus on banks. But sometimes these bankers, like one of the bankers that I profiled in my book, had his house bombed ten times and he kept moving back in because he was, like, “I have a right, I'm an American and I can live anywhere I want.” And I just, imagine for a second, can you imagine? Like, you know, just fearing at night that your house was going to be bombed? I mean, just anyway, I think that we, we need to reckon with, with that as, as a force of terrorism that some of us understand to be this foreign force. But that was very much part of American life for some people.

JVN [00:48:31] Well, when we think about, like the physiology of our brain and like the whole thing, if you fold your thumb into your palm and then close your fingers around your thumb and really like there's like two of those are probably the size of your brain. But it's like where your thumbnail is like your amygdala, which is like your threat preceptor. And if you're constantly, that does do something to us. And I think that it's not airy fairy to link your ability to, to have upward economic mobility and to have safety and stability with, like, how much in threat you feel, because it's really hard to make rational decisions when you are constantly looking for where the other shoe is going to drop.

And then what's this idea of, well, and then it's, like, we progressed and then we come up to Nixon, who is, like, I mean, this is someone who we have on tape saying, like, "How can we make marijuana a Schedule One offense? Like, how can we imprison more Black people and more hippies because they're the ones who vote against me?" I mean, it's literally something, you know, it's on tape.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:49:27] Yep.

JVN [00:49:27] Like it's, that just still blows my mind that, like, people, like, you know, family members and folks like we can have that on tape and then people will be, like, oh, yeah, racism and systematic racism. It's not, just that really to me is like, the, like. But, but at the same time, Nixon was someone who supported the idea of Black banking. He was someone who kind of started the EPA? I think so.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:49:49] Yeah.

JVN [00:49:50] It's, but then Erin Brockovich, I'm sure would say like, "Well, fuck the EPA, it's like not really protecting anybody."

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:49:55] Yes.

JVN [00:49:56] Like, that's really just, like, a bureaucracy, it's like meant to like, you know, keep how fucked up people are actually like under the, under wraps, like they're not really protecting us.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:50:04] On Nixon, I think, he, he, we don't give him enough credit for creating, like, the modern American right and left. Like, he, Nixon did more, I think, damage to racial progress than we actually give him credit for. Because of Black capitalism part, the, his support of Black banking was, was a cynical move. It wasn't oh, yeah, these are these great banks. It was, I'm not going to push on Civil Rights. I'm not going to integrate. Right? We're not going to do justice.

But we'll just put these deposits in these Black owned banks and we'll try to convince businesses to invest in inner city. So it was not at all helpful to the community. And by the way, it came with, you know, like hard core capitalism that was, like, partnered with law and order. Right? So we're putting people in prison, but also we're, like, libertarian, free market. But, you know, hard core state violence and state policing on, on crimes that were essentially minor drug crimes.

JVN [00:51:08] So it wasn't a helpful thing and it actually kind of was, like, really more just, like, lip service to, like, make other white powerful people feel, like, less guilty about the very, like, hurt, like, the very obvious racial injustice. So then it was just kind of like a narrative to be, like, "But we are doing, like, this thing." But it really wasn't very effective.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:51:28] Yes, exactly.

JVN [00:51:30] So, got it, and so then you were named part of the Biden Harris transition team, which congratulations! What's that's been like? And as someone who isn't, you know, to take a line out of Hamilton's book, it's, like, you are gonna to be in the room where it's happening. So How could we get more progressive? How could we get a banking system that helps to, like, punch up instead of punch down so that we could actually make these things more realistic for folks?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:51:56] Yeah, yeah. So I can speak as myself. I mean, the work on the transition, what we do as teams is we basically are the bridge between the last administration and the new administration. Some of us may go in, some of us may not. It is, you know, it's not a paid job. You get called and you do it. And I'm on two transition teams. I'm on the Treasury team and I'm on the Fed / Banking agency teams. And we've just been inside, well, it's COVID, so we're, you know, remote, but we kind of study the agency. And what are all the rule-, I mean, every one of these agencies has massive rule-making and lots of personnel. And so we study the agency and we create, you know, maps and, and sort of helpful guides for the people that will be coming in.

I think, and then as a, as a person who writes about this stuff and cares about this stuff, I think we could do a lot here, Treasury and the Banking agencies to make things more equitable. I think just, you know, rolling back some, some of the big banks, you know, deregulation. I think the more power a few big banks have over the entire market, the more risk that they present to all of us. So I think reining those in, really enforcing the laws we have on the books is really important. I mean, there's a lot of, like we talked about earlier, petty crimes that people go to prison for. There's a whole bunch of, like, tax crimes and, you know, fraud. And, you know, those things need to be pursued vigorously and really just, you know, making sure that the banking system we have doesn't just serve the banks but serves the people. That's what it's for. So there's, there's, there's a lot of policy things I've written about. And I hope that we can get regulators into these agencies that have experiences. Like you just mentioned, like, have had an overdraft fee. Right? That's really important. That's one reason representation matters, not just, you know, racial and gender. I think those are really important, but also like someone who's been a real person and lived a life that understands what, you know, being on the margin feels like.

JVN [00:54:08] So this will be my last question. It's one that we didn't entirely prep for. But I just I feel like you'll be good to answer it. So for, like, for anyone listening to this. What would you say to, like, young people or anyone who just like hasn't really gotten it together. Obviously we are in a system where unless you weren't, like, born into extreme wealth, like, we are in a system that makes it harder and makes it harder to succeed.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:54:30] Yeah.

JVN [00:54:31] So what would you say to people that want to have more stability and more peace of mind that maybe are in a banking desert, that are not necessarily in a place to encounter economic mobility-, upward mobility? What can people do, like, any Suze Orman advice? Like any like?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:54:51] No, I don't do Suze, I mean, here's the thing. Look, like the best financial decision you can make is to have rich parents. Right? And if you don't, don't, don't keep shame on an already messed up system. You know, students who have tons of student loans, who feel shame and bad, like look at the generational split. Like we, my generation, I'm 42. We did not have, we didn't have to get student loans. College was cheaper then. We just had a different system. And so we didn't go around being like, "Oh, like, I'm so awesome for not having these student loans." Every student of mine has student loans because that's the system that they have. So there's no point in saying, "I am ashamed of myself for not being able to, like, make my monthly payments and all of this stuff or," or any of the, like, this generation has had two different financial crises. Right? I had a job before the 2008, I was, like, done with law school before the world collapsed. Right?

And, and people who are caught in the middle of that one and then this COVID recession, it doesn't make sense for us to say, "Oh, well, if you just had saved more money or if you just had bought less lattes and magazines," like, screw that, like you don't say, you don't become rich by saving your money. Now, you should save your money, for sure. Right? But don't have shame around that stuff. I think, you know, make the decisions that you can, you know, join political movements that push for things, like, you know, canceling student debt and making things fair and, you know, like try to get like a job with health insurance if you can. And in the meantime, like, we should work on everyone just getting health insurance because that's what's fair.

JVN [00:56:34] Yes. Shame free zone.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:56:36] Exactly.

JVN [00:56:36] I love the feedback of a shame free zone, kind of realizing where we are in this and then also realizing that we do need to make systematic change in order for us to even be on a playing field that's even close to an equitable playing field.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:56:50] I think you're exactly right. And I love that you, you know, you do, the personal transformation, but you also do politics. And I think I, you know, I commend that's why I wanted to come here, because I commend someone with your platform who goes out and is like, "Look, there's just a right decision here." Like you, like there's, there's good politics and there's bad politics. And you can't be neutral at times like this. Right? You can't just be like, "Oh, well," whatever, you know, and I'm not saying shame, but like there's, you know, form coalitions. Right?

Join up with people who are doing good work, you know, and that's what you've done. And I really, really appreciate that. And also work on your personal feel good transition, like, things, you know, like, we have to treat ourselves well in order to not have that shame. Right? And I think, so that's something that you've done really brilliantly. So thank you for being a role model and a light.

JVN [00:57:41] Thank you for being a role model and a light. And we are going to be shouting you out on this episode and people need to follow you wherever they can follow you, myself included. Are you on Twitter?

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:57:50] Yes, I am.

JVN [00:57:51] I'm going to be all up on your Twitter after this.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:57:52] Yay, that would be awesome.

JVN [00:57:53] So I'm super excited. But thank you so much.

PROFESSOR MEHRSA BARADARAN [00:57:56] Thank you.

JVN [00:57:56] And we just appreciate your time and your expertise and everything that you do. And thanks for coming on "Getting Curious." You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was University of California, Irvine School of Law Professor Mehrsa Baradaran.

You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ - thanks to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend - show them how to subscribe.

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