

## Episode 246: No Box to Check

**Lisa:** Hi, I'm Lisa Hernandez

**Lizzy:** And I'm Lizzy Ghedi-Ehrlich

**Lisa:** And we are your hosts for Scholars Strategy Network's No Jargon. Each month we will discuss an American policy problem with one of the nation's top researchers without jargon. And this month we are talking about adding a box to the US Census and other surveys for Middle Eastern and North African Americans. I freaking love this conversation, Lizzy.

**Lizzy:** No, I'm very excited, I have to admit, um, the census in general, not an area I've given a lot of thought to, but it's one of those really foundational things that has a lot of meanings for how you experience being a citizen or living in America.

**Lisa:** Oh my gosh. I - I don't know why the census is such a fascinating topic for me. Mainly because being Puerto Rican and being a part of a community that has such a large diaspora in a, like, in the Central United States area, um, sometimes the identifying markers, when it comes to the census, don't really fully apply to people who are from different countries.

You just feel like you don't really know what to mark. It becomes really hard to actually just check one specific box. So I'm fascinated with the, like, the suggestions and like the research that backs up how expanding, the way that people identify in the US census can maybe help people either like feel more identified, more seen, more visible, and also help people get resources that are needed to those communities

**Lizzy:** Right? I mean, that's the material aspect of it. Like you have to be seen first. And representation is nice, but when we're talking about the structure of all of us, policy really, really matters to your life.

**Lisa:** Mm-hmm, the census controls a lot. And it really is one of those, like, trickle down policies that really affect people on like the actual local and state levels. I'm really geeking out about the census right now, but I'm looking forward to everyone learning so much from our guest for this week's episode.

I spoke to Neda Maghbouleh, a Canada Research chair and associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto. Maghbouleh's research focuses on the racialization of immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa in the United States and Canada. She is also the author of the book *Limits of Whiteness: Iranian-Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race*.

Here's our conversation...

**Lisa:** Hi, Professor Maghbouleh. Thanks for coming on No Jargon.

**Neda:** Thank you so much for having me.

**Lisa:** Of course. So your work focuses on Middle Eastern and North African Americans, their racial identities, how they are treated in the US and how their lives as Americans can be improved. So I wanna ask, what led you to do this kind of research?

**Neda:** It's certainly connected to my own personal background. Uh, I am the daughter of first-generation immigrants to the United States from Iran, and so many of the research questions that I've gone on to study both deductively and inductively really came from those original inductive experiences of observing the world around me and seeing how the world interacted, for example, with my parents versus with me.

But also, uh, some of these research questions are as much tied to my identity as an Iranian American as they are to my identity. As an American who grew up in Portland, Oregon, Oregon is a really fascinating state, uh, within the broader US because of its history as a place where, um, you know, the originators who founded the state thought of it as a white racial utopia for white Americans who were traveling west or traveling north from places, um, that they felt were not as racially pure anymore as they had been previously.

And so, although we have a sense of, you know, particularly Portland and other places in the Pacific Northwest as being very progressive on issues of race and inclusivity. Uh, in fact, that hasn't actually been the case. And it goes all the way back to the founding of Oregon as a racially exclusive place.

So I like to think of my own connection to this kind of work as having as much to do with my identity as a person of Iranian and MENA origin as it does with some of the local issues, uh, that were relevant to where I grew up in the US.

**Lisa:** Right. So it does sound like you had a lot of personal experience that sort of informed your research. So I do wanna talk a lot about your research the past few years, um, what have you been examining within this population that you've been focusing on?

**Neda:** Yes. Uh, so my first major project, uh, was about the specific case of Iranians in the United States. I was curious. If we look back a after about 40 years of a critical mass of migrants from that country arriving to the US, particularly after the 1979 revolution to take stock after one, two, and then a third generation was being born in the States to think about what were the experiences of this group in particular around their relationship to race and ethnicity, in a nutshell, as with many other communities and societies outside the U.S., uh, Iranians are

socialized in and grow up with a different understanding of race and ethnicity than the kind of common narratives or categories or language that we have here. And so, for example, um, for this particular community, they are coming as immigrants, with a very strongly formed sense of themselves.

White, uh, we could say if we use the language they're using there, *Ariyayee* or *Arian*. And so these again, are words that are really specific there. They have different connotations in the United States, and I was very fascinated. What does that mean? When someone is trying to carry over racial ideologies or myths or categories that may not resonate in their new host country or that may have a different resonance altogether.

And so that was the keyhole, uh, that opened up a series of research questions for me. So my first book was very, um, ethnographic, meaning that it was really about me embedding with ordinary people, following them in their everyday lives, doing long form interviews with them to really understand the experiences, particularly of youth who have an Iranian background.

And so my book, uh, which is the output of that first project, really follows young people through their experiences at home, right? Where their parents may have been socialized into a different understanding of race than they themselves as kids born in the US have, I follow them into local American schools where they're having a variety of different experiences, both affirming in some ways and also exclusionary in other ways.

I go with them, uh, sort of conceptually on their travels to and from Iran, uh, where these young people are directly confronting some of these ghosts and these shadows of how races is thought about, in their country of origin. And then finally, I end at a summer camp where a number of young people in my study, uh, attended.

A kind of progressive social justice-oriented camp for Iranian youth. And that's another place where they're doing some critical work to try to understand where they fit in the tapestry of the US.

**Lisa:** So for our listeners, you did mention your book here, called *The Limits of Whiteness*. Um, can you share some of these stories that you collected from your qualitative research that you conducted? Um, stories of Iranian Americans, about their experience, maybe living within that contrast?

Um, especially for those young people that got to visit and try to figure out their own identity throughout.

**Neda:** Yes. Uh, so I opened my book with two vignettes that I tell side by side. The first story is about a young person named Roya at the time that she was involved in my project. She was a high school student in Northern California. And she recounted for me, uh, this moment, which

kind of came to be a classic, almost like totemic moment that many young people shared, which was when she was confronted for the first time in public school with a demographic form that asked her to ethnically and racially self-identify.

She described to me that she didn't see herself in the available boxes. And so when she turned to her teacher to ask for some guidance, Roya said that her teacher had a very kind of cut and dry approach to it. She said, you know, people from the Middle East, like you are identified as white, uh, on these boxes.

So it's very clear to me that, you know, this is what you should be checking. And Roya, in recounting that to me and reflecting on it, said, you know, I wanted to say, look, I'm not white because have people from white countries been vilified the way Iranians are vilified? Are they sanctioned the way Iranians are?

Am I white like you when I'm at the airport? No, I'm not white. And so, this is a kind of signal experience that the majority of young people in my study, uh, shared having. It was on the ground. Frontline confrontation with where they fit and what, what box they're gonna check. The other antidote that I opened my book with is, a description of this barbecue restaurant outside Houston, Texas.

That was at the heart of a controversy, around 2011. Uh, so when the restaurant opened, this was around 1978, the time of, you know, the Iranian revolution and especially the hostage crisis and the kinds of wall to wall news coverage that was happening of that geopolitical moment at this barbecue restaurant, which has like all of these mementos lining the wall.

One of the mementos, which came to have a very particular resonance at the restaurant was a poster that was a staged photograph of a man with a turbine and a kind of robe, and he's hanging from an old oak tree. So, it's a staged photograph, right? So this isn't representing a real act of violence, but it is a performed and symbolic act of violence.

And so, yeah. it's this image of a hanging a lynching. There's the flag of the US, the state flag of Texas and surrounding the man who is hanged is a number of almost 20, uh, men who are dressed as cowboys. They have 10 gallon hats. They're wearing jeans, belt buckles, the whole nine. And at the bottom of this poster is this caption that says, let's play cowboys and Iranians.

And so the way that this poster evokes the lynching of African Americans, the Cowboys and Indians trope that is gesturing to indigenous genocide and land dispossession, these sorts of things are, they're about race in the United States, right? And so when you juxtapose the lived experiences of young people like Roya, who are told by, you know, whether it's their own parents or staff and faculty in their local schools, or even through forms, from the federal government that they are white, but then they're confronted in this other domain of their lives in terms of pop culture, in terms of just the discourse that follows them around in their everyday lives, getting these messages right?

That no, you're not part of the white US, you, you know, are being excluded and othered and racialized to the point of non-recognition. My book really tries to pick up on that paradox.

**Lisa:** And, I know we just talked about the people checking the checkbox trying to figure out like where their identity lies within especially, the US census.

So could you talk a little bit about some exciting policy changes that are underway as a result of your research and trying to, um, figure out how people need to identify within, um, US counts.

**Neda:** Yeah. Thank you for asking that question. Uh, I think other researchers, can relate to, um, this experience that I'm currently having right now where I've produced a variety of research outputs throughout the last 10 years of my career. So the book that we were just talking about, used mostly qualitative evidence, so interviews, field observations, you know, analyses of news and other forms of archives.

And it was very profound for me that the book was picked up, especially, you know, outside of academia by people who are community organizers who, for example, organized free no barrier workshops, uh, connected to No Asian Hate and Black Lives Matter. So it was very, compelling to me to see the book be picked up by community organizers.

It was also entered as evidence by lawyers and advocates who were arguing against Trump's Muslim ban. And so I had this, uh, really surprising and affirming experience of the book being picked up particularly by those, um, types of actors in society. But as, as you mentioned, I've had a recent experience of publishing some quantitative work that's again, really, um, connected to these same topics.

They're effectively confirming qualitative research findings through quantitative means. And so I've had this interesting experience of the quantitative work really being picked up and utilized, especially by policy makers and by, um, people within the government who are looking for evidence to help support policies and different sorts of, you know, proposed revisions that are under consideration right now, so I'm happy to talk to you more about that because that's actually part of my most recent journey as a scholar is really coming to understand how providing a variety of different research outputs with different forms of evidence, um, can be so productive for multiple audiences.

**Lisa:** Yes. And congratulations on getting to delve into this other part of your journey as a researcher. I think it's really exciting to create a whole picture of folks in like a quantitative sense and also a qualitative sense, and their experiences. So definitely wanna talk a little bit about what exactly your policy proposal is, and how you envision it being implemented, if you have any opinions on how that should be implemented as well.

**Neda:** Yeah. Thank you. Uh, so I sort of alluded to some quantitative work that I've been doing, and I'd love to tell you more about it and the policy recommendations that come out of it. So I'm so grateful that I have two long-term collaborators who are also sociologists. They're Ariela Schachter, who's at Washington University in St. Louis and Rene Flores, who's at the University of Chicago. And together, two summers ago in 2021, we fielded a survey experiment with over 1000 Americans. We recruited Americans who identify themselves as white and also Americans who identify themselves as Middle Eastern or North African in their family roots.

And we conducted a survey experiment with those respondents where we presented a variety of different kinds of cues. And these are the sort of the cues that as sociologists and as researchers, we've collectively agreed are some of the most important inputs that ordinary people use when they're making external classifications or when they're socially assigning a racial identity to other people.

These are the things that are going through someone's mind, and so some of those cues are, for example, skin tone, if you know someone's name, what language they speak, uh, any knowledge about their family ancestry. Um, a variety of different things that all kind of come together to give us suggestive ideas about what someone's race and ethnicity might be.

And so, we presented fictitious profiles of different individuals to our respondents, and we asked them, what do you think this person is? And we provided some of the conventional, uh, sort of identity options that Americans are really familiar with, white, Black, uh, this proposed category of Middle Eastern and North African.

And so, in our survey experiment, we found that respondents really strongly distinguish profiles of people who they think of as Middle Eastern and North African, or MENA from profiles that they perceive of being about people who are white or as Black, and they're using in particular skin color and notions of family ancestry

to classify another person as MENA. They are also on a secondary level using names and language. And so this is a really important insight because I think for over 30 years, advocates and community organizers have been petitioning people, or you know, persons like the federal government, their own, you know, local and uh, state, authorities to say, we have this evidence, right, that, for example, Middle Easterners and North Africans are not being treated the way white counterparts are in housing markets, in rental markets, in employment discrimination.

We were able to, in this study, provide additional evidence to show that no, there is some sort of sorting that is happening where ordinary Americans are picking up on cues. And in particular, these are cues that are really important when we're thinking about street level discrimination, right? That really has to do with the moment of encounter of what someone looks like.

And what that perception is queuing for someone. This also, again, with names and language, has a lot to do with housing and job markets where it's really, you know, someone's name on a

resume or on an application that may trigger discrimination. And so that was one side of our study. And then the other side of our study was to dig in a little bit deeper with those respondents we had in our project to identify themselves as Middle Eastern and North African. And our goal here was to replicate the US Census Bureau's own internal testing they've done, from 2015 when they themselves, produced a really rigorous study showing that Middle Easterners and North Africans do identify with that box when it is offered to them.

And so the internal recommendations of the Census Bureau in 2015 were that there was sufficient evidence to move forward to revise the federal standards to offer a MENA category, but for a variety of reasons that was not, um, a recommendation that was ultimately taken up at the time.

This was under the Trump administration by the time the decision was made. And so, uh, myself and Ariela and Rene really wanted to go back and in the context of 2021, rerun the Census Bureau study, effectively, uh, replicate it with our group of respondents and to see if those insights still hold.

And so in that side of our study, which is about people's self ID, we found tremendous evidence across a very diverse group of MENA people that they will go for the box when it's offered to them. And so we put these two pieces together, which have to do with how MENA people are seen by others, but also how they see themselves.

And that research came out in February, 2022 as an article. In PNAS, which is the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States of America, which is a very, um, sort of general and quite high profile scientific journal. And it's been tremendous, the kind of uptake that, uh, being able to publish our results in that

type of a venue has had, because, fairly quickly after that, our research was picked up by Hansi Lo Wang, who is the census reporter at NPR, and a variety of different, groups who work in different levels of government, uh, reached out to us for further conversation and consultation because ultimately, We land, Ariela, Rene and I in terms of a policy recommendation is to say, um, that this is very fulsome evidence that this is a group that does not see themselves as white, nor do other people see them as white.

And so, with support from Scholars Strategy Network, we wrote an op-ed that was published in Newsweek, where we made a strong argument for a MENA box in the proposed, uh, revision of the Federal Race and Ethnicity standards. And so a lot has been happening in the less than one year since our, since our, article was published and since this Newsweek op-ed has come.

**Lisa:** So what do you hope will happen, after hopefully a MENA box is added to government forms? Do you see it making an impact throughout the United States?

**Neda:** So the impacts, if we do see a MENA identity category added to the federal standards, the impacts are tremendous. Off the top of my head, I'm thinking about ensuring voting rights. This is something that's enshrined in American law, but there's evidence that MENA people are not being allocated appropriate resources to help facilitate their voting.

That in fact, in places across Michigan, uh, these are communities, where in terms of where the districts lie those district lines get drawn. It's a community whose power in numbers is actually being cracked, right?

In very strategic ways by different actors. And so, simply put, the fact that we don't have an accurate count of this community means that their legal right to vote, which is enshrined in American law, is not being protected to the fullest extent that it can be, and it should be.

So there would be tremendous impacts in terms of voting, with Covid still raging and, and producing harmful health effects for different racialized communities. I think researchers and folks who work on the ground are acutely aware that, again, not being able to count this community has had really negative impacts in terms of allocating resources

to help ameliorate the fallout from Covid. And in fact, I've recently published an article with a collaborator, Mina Sharif at the University of Washington, and my collaborator here in Toronto, Canada, the physician Andrew Boozary, where we show that in a setting like Canada, that does count Middle Eastern and North African people using their own census categories.

And there's sort of a, you know, flow down from that, which means that local public health units and everybody's sort of using the same categories typically. And so there's this really important downstream effect, uh, here in Canada, that's suffice to say, with Covid here in Canada, we were able to quickly see that some of the highest rates of Covid infection and also age adjusted hospitalization and premature death were happening for MENA Canadians.

And so the fact that I as an American who happens to live in Canada was able to help crunch those numbers with our public health and get those necessary resources to these marginalized communities. -- but my, you know, colleagues in the US who are doing similar kinds of work simply didn't have that data at hand and they weren't able to show that.

I mean, you don't have that many chances kind of as an academic to say, hey, this thing I've been studying for 10 years, the life and death stakes of it are, are right there. And so this article with Mina and with Andrew really shows what it means when there's a community that's invisibilized and we use that Canada US comparison to help think about what does an equity oriented strategy look like in the US when MENA people are masked or hidden in administrative data sets.



And then further, you know, in terms of, sort of everyday life, um, when people are interacting, whether it's like in healthcare or in different bureaucratic offices in local schools. Uh, you know, if we have a demographic count of where MENA people live, we can ensure that people have cultural and linguistic resources that can help families, children, elderly people.

I mean, the downstream effects would be tremendous if there is a MENA identity category added in this, uh, you know, proposed, uh, federal standard revisions, coming up soon. And so the government has said that they are looking to wrap up any kind of revision to the current race and ethnicity standards by summer 2029.

And so it's a particularly exciting and auspicious time to be a researcher who literally studies this because, um, you know, it's, it's one of those moments where there's been tremendous interest and uptake, from different, you know, agencies and, and groups in the government who are actually seeking out like the, type of projects that I've been able to, to contribute to and to help.

**Lisa:** That sounds super exciting and definitely exciting, to some of our listeners who are academics who want to impact policy. So, is there something that you can share more about maybe some of the conversations that you have had with stakeholders about your research? Following your op-ed following, sharing more about your policy suggestions.

**Neda:** Yes. Um, so I'll start with I think the most recent and exciting thing, which is just a couple weeks ago on January 27, OMB, which stands for the Office of Management and Budget, they put out a federal register notice. Uh, they were seeking public comments right now on initial proposals from a federal interagency working group.

They're the people who were tasked with thinking very critically about the race and ethnicity standards, and thinking about what a potential revision of those could look like. And so we're at the stage right now where the Interagency Working Group has created their proposal for what they think a good revision might look like, and OMB has put out a public comment period.

So any American is welcome to, go to the Federal Register notice and to provide their feedback on these proposed revisions. And so the thing that's so exciting is that takeaways and language from our research that I described, that article in PNAS and our op-ed in Newsweek, that takeaway and language appears in the inter-agency working group's MENA proposal.

And so that is super affirming and super exciting. And in the lead up to this, I would just say like three things occur to me that I've been able to do in the past year is, um, I got to speak with staffers in Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib's DC office about the advocacy that she congresswoman, Carolyn Maloney and others are doing on the legislative side.

To urge OMB and Census to include a MENA response category. I was lucky to consult, for example, with the Health Equity and Research and Data Use team at the American Medical Association. Uh, they've had an ultimately successful proposal to add a MENA category in their own data practices at the AMA.

And so it was really cool to help support them as they did that. And then, um, also, last summer, I was invited to give a two day seminar to the US Census Bureau through their Summer at Census program. This is where they recruit academics and scholars to connect directly with their staff in leadership. And so, uh, for any listeners who are also academics who are working on, categories or data practices, uh, involving the Census Bureau, I can't recommend enough the Summer at Census program, uh, because it was so, um, incredible to speak directly to different, folks at census and to also come away with such a deeper appreciation of the work that they do there. And that was sort of, you know, explosive for me in a really exciting way about thinking about my own intellectual questions.

The future projects I would wanna work on, I think have really been enriched by me understanding their own internal practices as researchers and as policymakers too.

**Lisa:** Yeah. That's really interesting to hear. I mean, it's really exciting to have a No Jargon guest, uh, share their policy recommendations that are already set to be implemented, right? Um, and you're building these really important relationships in the process. Um, I do wanna know, what needs to happen next?

Maybe something that isn't currently happening in order to account for identities of the folks that haven't been able to document themselves however they feel they most identify with.

**Neda:** Yeah. You know, I think, um, although it would be so tremendous to see this, be part of the big federal revision. Um, because again, it's, it's very downstream. Once that establishes, uh, the minimum reporting categories, then that flows down to, if you think about like local school districts, and then there's just so much there and so, local areas and, and private institutions can have their own data infrastructure.

And so it is really cool to see, for example, where I went for my PhD degree in the University of California, at the time that I was in graduate school, it was really student activism on the ground that successfully campaigned to have a similar box called SWANA, which stands for Southwest Asian and North African.

The student activists at UC were successful in getting the UC's own application and their own internal data practices to accommodate and include this group as a sort of separate group that then they could collect, you know, demographic data and make sure that there were appropriate resources for members of those communities

on the different UC campuses. And so, although I think it's so exciting that there is some energy and momentum around this revision at the federal level, I don't wanna discount that this is already happening, in, for example, certain public university systems, but also in different kinds of organizations, uh, around the country.

And so there's this really important kind of grassroots movement that I think informs and ultimately does help move the needle, uh, when we're talking about that broader federal revision too. The most important thing right now is that, those who, both kind of professionally and maybe personally, feel that the MENA identity category or the lack of that has been a hindrance to the kind of work that they wanna do.

Um, and the, the full set of, you know, equitable practices to which. US citizens are entitled. Um, that this is the time to go, uh, make your voice known again through that public comment. And the Federal Register Notice that is online right now, it's open until April 12th. And so, uh, this is a great time to participate in that process as well as join some of the listening sessions that are part of the process there. Um, and again, yeah, collecting these kinds of evidence about where this campaign has been successful in local context, um, is really cool too.

**Lisa:** Yeah, that is really exciting and I'm, I know we've been talking a lot about identities and basically having people have these opportunities in order to see themselves, in order to have more visibility, within this country that they're living in. So I wanna talk a little bit, if you don't mind, about the Iranian Americans, um, that we have been talking about through this conversation, but mainly the movement that is happening right now with the Women Life Freedom Movement and um, how that has maybe increased visibility for Iranian Americans, especially with big Spotlight, into the protests and

you know, the recent Grammys that just happened a couple of days ago before this conversation and, um, Shervin Hajipour winning a Grammy recently for his social movement song. So I, I wanna get a sense of how does this at all impact the sense of identity that Iranian Americans have, are they feeling more visible in this country now that it's definitely a big topical conversation.

**Neda:** Yeah. Thank you so much for connecting, uh, the themes that I study to this, um, incredibly important phenomenon that's happening right now in Iran, which is, Women Life freedom, the murder of Gina Mahsa Amini and the incredible uprising of so many people across, you know, uh, different genders, ethnicities, social situations.

There's this tremendous energy right now where ordinary Iranians are pushing back to say that, um, their autonomy, their bodily rights, their right to dignity and to live a good life, has been impeded on by the state and by the government. And so I think this has a really big impact for, for example, Iranians in the United States.

Uh, as I mentioned earlier, this is still relatively a young immigrant community in the US although, um, for several, you know, hundreds of years, there have been Iranians, uh, who have come here. We're really talking about a critical mass, like a first tremendous wave would've been in the 1950s, uh, people who were recruited to come as international students, uh, to universities in the United States, and then a much more heterogeneous or diverse flow of people by the late 1970s.

And that migration wave was tied again to the Iranian revolution. And so you have this incredibly diverse group in the diaspora. Um, they have different political leanings. They have different, you know, ethnic backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, lots of different reasons why they've ended up in the United States. And so I think sometimes we think of diasporas like that as necessarily divided as not being able to find a common sense of identity or unity and that they might shy away from right, these old attachments that they've had, uh, in order to, to build, you know, different identities for themselves in a new country.

But, looking at the way this has reinvigorated the Iranian identity, just in terms of the protests that are still to this day. You know, this is months after the fact, but there's still protests every day in DC in New York, in Los Angeles on the weekends. People are still coming up, uh, you know, coming together and trying to bring visibility to the bravery and the struggle of Iranians within that country.

And it just shows that even when there's these complexities of exile where people have been, you know, forced to, to look elsewhere and to build homes for themselves elsewhere. There are still these deep emotional attachment, these feelings of, of belonging and also feelings of responsibility that you might have

um, and so I think the affirming thing here is that this isn't about a responsibility to a government or to a regime. This is not something people are being forced to do, but Iranians in America and across the diaspora are connecting with this very, very basic notion that people's freedom and their bodily autonomy should be honored.

And so it's, I think, very affirming for me to see. Although there's so many reasons in some cases to leave those kinds of attachments and identity behind because perhaps they've been othered or vilified or excluded, immigrants can still have those attachments and be fiercely proud of them and to stand up for them.

Um, and that I think is what the case of, uh, the Iranian uprising right now. That's the resonance and connection I think it has with my work.

**Lisa:** Absolutely. Thank you so much for sharing that. I mean, speaking as myself, I am Puerto Rican. I am not an Iranian, but we have the saying, uh, of people that migrate where it's, um, you're Puerto Rican, no matter if you're on earth in another country or on the moon because they just build solidarity within the diaspora.

People like leaving everywhere and feeling disconnected from their home country, but you still have some sort of connection. Um, you still have family somewhere that you're going to be calling. Or even if you don't, you connect via the culture that you share. So I think thank you so much for talking about the connection within the identities.

Um, especially like Iranian Americans at home right now. So I do want to ask you if you have any last thoughts about your research or anything else you'd like to end with as we close this conversation?

**Neda:** I would just close by encouraging people, um, if they feel any kind of a pull towards, outreach to policy makers or communities, that are invested in the topics that we study, but are perhaps doing a different type of work, whether that's like, you know, person to person or, or community organizing or, um, you know, working as advocates within the organizations that they might be embedded in, um, to take that leap and to do it.

Um, I think you probably have gotten the sense from my enthusiasm and my excitement that like, I, I always had strived to do work that was relevant that could serve people outside of academia. And so publishing my book and having, you know, ordinary people connect with those stories, um, was like one level of that.

But then to, be able to actually provide evidence and you know, like academic research for people who were looking for that, in the kinds of advocacy and policy work that they're doing. Um, that has also like been equally, exciting and affirming for me. And so I just wanna encourage people who think that they might be interested in extending past academic audiences into these other audiences, um, to take advantage of SSN, uh, and the different kinds of expertise and resources that are there to help you bridge that gap.

**Lisa:** That is fantastic advice. So thank you so much for coming on No Jargon. It's been such a pleasure talking with you today.

**Neda:** Thank you, Lisa. I have loved every second of it.

**Lisa:** And thanks for listening. For more on Professor Maghbouleh's work, check out our show notes at [scholars.org/nojargon](https://scholars.org/nojargon). No Jargon is the podcast of the Scholars Strategy Network, a nationwide organization that connects journalists, policymakers, and civic leaders with America's top researchers to improve policy and strengthen democracy. The producer of our show is Mandana Mohsenzadegan. Our audio engineer is Peter Lenane. If you like the show, please subscribe and rate us on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your shows. You can give us feedback on Twitter at [@nojargonpodcast](https://twitter.com/nojargonpodcast) or at our email address, [nojargon@scholars.org](mailto:nojargon@scholars.org).

