

Intro music: Bags are packed, are you ready to go?...This time tomorrow we'll be on the road...riding with you into sunnier days...I wouldn't want it any other way.

Julie: It's time to name the neglect from typical food advice. Welcome to the Find Your Food Voice podcast, hosted by me, Julie Duffy Dillon. I'm a registered dietitian with 20 years of experience partnering with folks just like you on their food peace journey. What have we learned? Well, cookie cutter approaches exclude too many people, and you don't need to be fixed. It's not you. It's not me. It's all of us. Only together we can start a movement and fix diet culture. And we will. Let's begin with now.

Transition music: I want to see how the world turns round...Let's go adventure in the deep blue sea...home is with you wherever that may be...home is with you wherever that may be.

Julie: Hi and welcome to episode 291 of the Find Your Food Voice podcast. I'm Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. Welcome to a book review podcast, where I'm going to be discussing the book *If The Shoe Fits* by Julie Murphy. So Julie Murphy is the author of the *Dumplin'* series that I loved so much. And so when I heard about Julie writing a book, she just happened to be contacted by Disney to write a new um, a newer kind of spin on Cinderella. I knew I had to read it, but I was expecting something different. So I unpack my surprise and all the different things with Yeli Cruz. Yeli, if you don't know her, she is the person that makes this podcast happen. She does all the things behind the scenes and also is our resident bibliophile. So we do this book review podcast about once a month. So if you have read this book, or you are going to read it now, if you're listening to this episode, join us over on Instagram at my handle is @foodvoicerd. And let us know your thoughts. Did you have the same experiences? Did you like it? Did you not tell us all the details? So without further ado, let's go ahead and get this episode started, but we'll have a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad): If you have a complicated relationship with food, I want to help. I have a number of free downloads that you can get on my website at julieduffydillon.com/voice that can get you started. One in particular is my PCOS Power roadmap. This is the road map that gives you the first three steps to move away from diets and improve health while living with PCOS. If you don't have PCOS, I also have some downloads for you as well. Another popular download is my diet-free doctor visit handout. This is one that you can print out and customize so you can tell your doctor via this handout what your boundaries are in session. The cool part on the flip side is if you planted a seed, which many of you will with this interaction, it has a list of resources in case this doctor is ready to let go of diet culture as well, which we are all rooting for. So there are those two handouts and a number of other downloads you can get there. So the website again is julieduffydillon.com/voice.

Yeli: After having graduated with a degree in shoe design and trying to get her feet on the ground. Cindy is working for her stepmother, who happens to be the executive producer of America's favorite reality show, *Before Midnight*. When a spot on the show needs filling ASAP, Cindy volunteers, hoping it might help jump start her fashion career, or at least give her something to do while the peers land jobs in the world of high fashion. Turns out, being the only plus size woman on a reality dating competition makes a splash, and soon Cindy becomes a body

positive icon for women everywhere. What she doesn't expect that she may just find inspiration and love in the process. Ultimately Cindy learns that if the shoe doesn't fit, maybe it's time to design your own.

Julie: Hey Yeli, I'm excited to talk to you about *If The Shoe Fits*, it's nice to see you all cozy in your kitchen.

Yeli: Thank you!

Julie: So I know that you and I picked this book, and we both had already read it, but we really want to talk about it. And as we got closer to recording, we both reread it. So we have like, I don't know, like I think there's something about reading a book twice that is not like, my norm. Like I don't normally like, want to read a book again, but reading this book the second time, I actually enjoyed it more. So anyway, just one of the things I want to unpack, but is there something that you're thinking would be a really good place to start our discussion with?

Yeli: Um well, first of all, I also really enjoyed reading it the second time again, more so than the first time and I can't tell you why, but I definitely did enjoy it more and just picked up on more of the cute little things that were happening.

Julie: It's so cute! Sorry to interrupt you. But like there were so many parts of it where I was like, oh, like there's, my daughter is 14, and she, you know she's all about like romance stories and things like that. And as I was reading and I was like, basically felt like a 14 year old, you know, like oh it's so cute.

Yeli: Yeah, you get like the giggles and the butterflies. Yeah, so cute. But yeah, I guess to start off, I have to confess and admit that I am like a big Cinderella story person. Um.

Julie: Oh, you are?

Yeli: I am! Growing up, Cinderella was my favorite princess. So I have always been all over the Cinderella retellings. Um, and something that I really loved about this one that was very different to me that I've never read before, is that the relationship with her family, like, her step family was very positive and sweet and loving and she and her stepsisters just love each other so much. And that's something that I really enjoyed. That was just so, like, light and like, delightful to read.

Julie: It was. And you know, I had heard that the author Julie Murphy was picked to write this rewrite by Disney. Like, I had heard that that was like part of um, what was going on. And so I assumed it was going to have the typical kind of experience of the step mom and the stepsisters hating Cinderella or whatever, making her life miserable. So, I was like, going into it, like, kind of bracing myself for that. Like, eye roll of like, oh God, another like um, way of describing a character in that way, just like, especially women hating other women, like, and not supporting each other, I was just like, waiting for that. And so, that was something that surprised me. I kept getting further and further and further where they were just supportive, you know, it was just really, it was really nice, and I did not know that Cinderella was your favorite princess.

Yeli: No, it was really nice and I think that it was, I also really liked how Julie Murphy didn't shy away from writing, like, like, her relationship with her stepmother was still complicated, and I think that they had a couple of moments where you could tell that, Erica is her stepmother's name, wasn't like as far into like, body positivity as um, Cindy was. And there were some really good examples of just conversations that the two of them had where Cindy either had to like, set a boundary or just um, I guess, like, express that um, that she's body positive to Erica, that I think probably resonates with a lot of people who have like a similar relationship with their moms or parental figures.

Julie: Mhm. Yeah, but the one thing that I noticed with that dynamic is that push to diet from the parental figure, it wasn't there. Like, it was um, I got that Erica wanted to protect um, Cindy from people, you know, saying mean things about her or putting her down, and yet there wasn't this like, well if you just lost weight, then. Again, just another thing I was just like, waiting for. Um and I think, you know, we hear a little bit about Cindy's um, upbringing with her father, and that was another thing that I didn't hear either, it was like um, references to like being pushed to diet or be smaller, like the, the world told her that her body was too big, but yeah, I didn't get that her dad told her that, and I just think that was something unique um, in this story, and um, I wonder if that was, like, more of the norm, how that would be for other people, especially as they're advocating for themselves and setting those boundaries, that at least at home that they felt at home, you know, in their body, that they didn't have to diet, just like performance diet even at home. So, I don't know if that's something that you've seen in other books or if you had any reaction to that, but that was something I thought was like, a really, a difference in this.

Yeli: Yeah, I mean, I honestly can't name off the top of my head another book or a story where that was just not um, like a story about body positivity specifically where um, the main character didn't have that kind of dynamic where they were, like, pushed to diet for some reason, uh, in their own household. Um, and I think that that's also really interesting that, like, even just by removing that from their relationship and like, not making it a part of her life that is um, also, like, radical in a way to, like, have built this little world where it's just not something that she ever encountered from her, like, intimate loved ones.

Julie: Yeah, there was, there were many parts of this book that were radical, but also in a subtle way and yeah, that I think that was just one of them. So um, yeah, that's a big difference that I know that talking to other people, they crave, like they wish they had that their own life, and then as they're raising either their own kids or just relationships that they have with young people in their life, wondering what they can do, and like, this is an example, like, you know, providing a spot for someone where they don't, where dieting is just not part of the equation, is one thing you can do that can help that person then eventually be able to advocate for themselves later on when the world tells them otherwise. So, so yeah, very good point. Any other part with the, with the relationships with the mom and sisters that you found interesting are different in this book?

Yeli: I think that, I mean, I will just say that I loved that Erica is just like, a baddie, like I love that she's just like, a powerful like corporate woman who just like is so good at her job and has like so much respect and like I love seeing that and like the majority of the big like kind of power players in this tv show were like, just really strong like women and femmes and that is something

that I found so much joy in. Um, they, there's like a storyline or I guess just like, Cindy mentioned it a couple of times that Erica has, so there's like Cindy and her two stepsisters but then Erica also has a set of triplets and it's kind of a through line throughout the story that she needs to like hire help, that she needs to hire like nannies and like somebody to like help her take care of all of the kids, while also balancing work and trying to figure out how to be like a good mom while also being good at her job, and that's kind of like a tension point for her, and I loved that, like I love that um, like positive rep of Erica being just this like powerful woman who is like fulfilled in her job, but also just like trying to learn how to juggle all of these aspects of her life.

Julie: Right? Yeah, as someone who's raising kids, that I've never really felt like a maternal kind of instinct of like, how to do the mommy stuff, I could relate to her struggle with, like or just like needing a coach or someone to help teach her how to mother. Um, and it felt really good, it felt like a normalizing of like, hey some of us are just not built knowing. It kind of reminds me of uh, experiences like trying to breastfeed, like so many people like oh it's so natural, it will just be instinctual, and it was not at all for me, and it can feel really icky and shamey to be like why can't I do this like thing, just natural thing. So yeah, the Erica and her like, wanting to be a good mother, but also like normalizing that it's okay that she didn't have this instinct, you know, and I didn't think about, I kind of thought about her mostly in that way. But you know, when you were mentioning how this was a really common theme for women and femmes in this book, I'm reminded of one of the contestants. Was it Sarah Claire, is that her name? Who also was like an executive, I think of some sort, um, she was like the southern person and I say, I'm the way I'm thinking about this novel is um, the second time I read it is really in quotes "read" because I did the audio version, and the person who reads it has like different um, ways of talking for all the characters. And so Sarah Claire had like a southern kind of drawl, and I remember her talking about her work and it's like the, just the type of like high exec type things that she does, and how connecting that with her like southern drawl, how that even was like challenging some, some norms and conditions. So yeah, I love that. Um there's some other things I want to mention too about subtle radical things that Julie Murphy did in this book. But, Yeli, we need to take a really quick break. So we will be right back.

Julie: All right, welcome back. And we are continuing our discussion on *If The Shoe Fits* by Julie Murphy and um you know, Yeli and I are talking over a video chat so she can see the book I'm holding up. But after I read *If The Shoe Fits*, I lent it to my 14 year old who loves romance novels. And Yeli can see all the little sticking out post it notes from Karina. I just think it's so cute and things, see the things that she highlighted and made notes about um is just so cute. But yeah, the two of you have a lot in common because she loves to take notes of what she's reading. So, so yeah.

Yeli: I love it. We need to have our own little book club.

Julie: I know, I know well she is listening to your podcast now. So um, we'll make sure we put your podcast in the show notes. But yeah, she loves your podcast. Um, and we have this book, you know, there's, there's a little bit of like um, making out scenes, but it's really not that much. So, you know, if you have someone who's like into like, into like, YA in your house, then this is a book that could fit just fine. So, but one, before we hit a break point, I was thinking about like

the radical things that I noticed Julie was doing. Um, but one of them had to do with race, and I noticed when she interviewed, not interviewed, when she introduced characters, you know, she would describe people, and I don't think I've ever read a book that would describe a person who was white as white. You know, if someone was not white, often there was that was a part of the description, but she would say, you know, I am, Addison, a white blonde, like so, the descriptions were um, including in that way, which I found to be just different. I don't know if you, how you felt about that or if it was something that came across your radar at all, but I just was like, I don't think I've ever had that experience reading a book before where like actually um, whiteness, like I get the sense she was trying to make whiteness not the default.

Yeli: Yeah. 100%. I also noticed that in the descriptions of the characters um, and I 100% think that that is like, the work that Julie Murphy is doing in identifying that, because I think that like, like you know, like I work in publishing as kind of my day job and there definitely is this like default narrative that kind of happens where a character is like, white unless stated otherwise in a lot of situations. And I do think that it's very cool that Julie Murphy, I think, was I agree that she was subtly challenging that in kind of slipping that in there. Yeah, super cool.

Julie: Yeah. Yeah. Just another part that um, I hope, yeah, becomes more normal, and then the other one was with pronouns. Um, not everyone was cisgender and like, how it was again, the part of it was just like it was normal. And um, I found that to be really refreshing instead of like that being like this huge exploding kind of part of the book. It was just like, you know, "they are walking across the street", you know, it was just like a part of the normal way of describing the scene. So, I really, really appreciated that. So um, reading through some of our, our notes for the meeting, I know you mentioned um, kind of like how the book models, how to advocate or be an ally um, what did you notice that Julie was doing with the characters in that regard?

Yeli: So like, I personally am somebody who really kind of needs social scripts a lot, especially when it comes to having difficult conversations, or having necessary conversations like that or conversations with any sort of tension, and I think that what I really appreciated, like I'll give an example near the beginning of the book. Um, Cindy and her two stepsisters go shopping. Um, I think for a new wardrobe for this show that they're all going to go on, and they go into the store and Cindy can't find anything in her size, and she has to like explain to her thin stepsisters that even though the size, like they have like a 3XL or whatever on their website, they don't carry the larger sizes in store. Um, and on their way out the store, like associate asks them the typical, like, oh, did you find everything okay? And one of her stepsisters, like, whips around and marches up to the store associate and is like, actually, no, like, my step sister wasn't able to find everything she needed because you didn't have her size and um, and Cindy then kind of chimes in and it's like, I like, no, she's like, does the typical, like, I know that you can't control, like that's not your choice, but like, if you could pass it along, that would be great. Um, and I think that just like, kind of seeing that in action and seeing that as kind of a script of like, something that you could say when that situation arises was really empowering for me in that moment. Um and again, it was just like this little moment in the book that like, it wasn't super long, maybe took up like two pages but was really impactful in that way for me.

Julie: Yeah, I agree. That was, I really enjoyed that part of the book too, and how I think the sisters even decided not to buy anything at the store, they were just like, we're leaving, you

know, we're not going to, to buy anything, and they weren't necessarily known for their like progressive thinking, you know, they were kind of like described almost as like, what I would, I was kind of picturing like a Kim Kardashian type or just like, maybe not quite that famous, but just someone who is spending a lot of time on Instagram, um, and they're influencers or something, right? So it wasn't, they weren't described as people who were like, super invested in social justice, but they loved Cindy, that was their sister, you know, so they were like, no, um, you know, another part that, um, kind of like self-advocacy that I noticed was that, you know, throughout um, filming for the show, um, part of reality TV that's probably not a big surprise, is that a lot of it is scripted and stuff like that, and um, there were scenes where like, the contestants would be wearing something and then if they were selected to go on a special evening or something, they would um, give them an outfit and, you know, hair and makeup and stuff, and there were many times where they just didn't have something from, for Cindy or anything really, um, good enough, like, she was given like really lesser options and one of the things she said is like, hey, you all said you wanted me here, so you need to give me options, so that I actually have the same access as everybody else. And um, it took repeating this many times to like the head of wardrobe, but um, I think the head of wardrobe near the end was kind of like, I get that I have to try harder on this. So um, and then, you know, hopefully it's not too much of a um, leaking of the end, but you know that costume or the wardrobe person comes through and helps out, but that, you know, Cindy basically saying instead of like, oh I should just make do, you know, just really even saying like, hey, you wanted um, representation and you're getting a lot of positive feedback and attention because you're including someone that looks like me. So actually, like give me clothes to wear like, you are for everybody else. So um yeah, that was, that was really great to see, I can imagine that being able to script of like if you want me here, you will provide me what I need to make sure that I am, I'm not naked.

Yeli: Yeah, literally! That is something that I think I kind of glossed over the first time that I read it. Like, obviously I was like, oh that really sucks that she doesn't have anything to wear, but I think that the second time I read it, that's something that I picked up on more, is that it really deals a lot with these examples of clothing or lack of clothing as like, an accessibility issue. Um, like if Cindy could not, did not have anything to wear, she would not be able to participate in the same way as all of the other people there who were thin, and that's a huge issue and that was like a barrier to her in order to be able to have the same access as everyone else. And I think that that is something that and not a lot of people tend to consider when it comes to like, for example, there was a like a big store recently who expanded all of their sizing in store to include their entire size range. And it was huge, and then recently they announced that they were kind of going back on that and not making that standard for all of their stores anymore. And it's like, in a lot of the conversations that I've been hearing about it just like online in like media or whatnot. That's a point that I don't think people are necessarily hitting on is that like, people like, it's not just an issue of people wanting, like plus size people wanting more options for the sake of like vanity, it's that like, if plus size people can't clothes themselves then that is not accessible, or even like, um if plus size people can't clothe themselves and present themselves the way that they want to. That's also just another issue, like for me personally I um, started going into my office building recently for my day job, and I realized that because over the pandemic, I have gained weight, I have a lot less options to go into the office and that's been a huge issue that I've kind of been navigating recently is like, how to buy more clothes but also like in a way that is accessible to me and my price point that I'm looking for, and just being able to present myself the

way that I would like to present myself um, and that was really affirming as well to see in the book that like, Cindy is also navigating all of these things, and I think was a great way to like bring awareness to the fact that it is like, an access issue, without I guess, in a kind of subtle way as well.

Julie: Yeah, yeah, so many subtle things but really powerful. I think I know what store you're referencing, and um it's just so shitty that, because it was such an important decision to offer in the store, and then to go back on it just so shitty. And uh, you know the thing about Cindy is um, you know if you read this book you'll see that she is like trained, and she went to Parsons so she can sew, and you know do things like that, so she would just like make things um, put different outfits together that were in the smaller sizes, so they would fit her body and, and look the way that she want to want to look, or good enough really for her, and so um, not everyone's going to have that, you know, not everybody is going to be able to sew and like do that kind of stuff. So um, when I think about that part is like, so many people will share with me how they feel like, annoyed that they're still struggling with their body image, you know, like, okay, I'm not dieting anymore, I'm moving away from all of that. I need to get a swig of water - so I'm not dieting anymore, and I'm rejecting diet culture and I'm accepting my body and all these things. But then why am I still struggling? I think this is a piece of that. Like if the world is not giving you tools to access the world, it's not about your body, it's about how that's broken, that the world is broken.

Yeli: Exactly. And it's really hard to sit in that, like it's hard to sit in that feeling of knowing that it would just be easier to have access if you were smaller. Like that's so tough, and it's like a consistent reminder, and it's a lot of work to consistently pull yourself out of that feeling.

Julie: Oh yeah, yeah. Like that was something that the other contestants just had this extra, not really extra, like they had a lot more um, access to different I guess tools to woo this guy, because they had all these extra clothes and stuff. Um well, I know we're running out of time, but um, something I was thinking about as I was like finishing the audio version of it is, this is such a sweet story because so much of it was not just about Cindy, like being swept off her feet and um, just doing what the man wants to do, but really about choosing what she wanted, and if it worked out it worked out, I don't know, it's kind of like the way that I was kind of seeing it and I don't want to spoil it all because like, I want you to read it, but I don't know if you what you think about that dynamic of even just like how her and Henry connected and how that relationship kind of evolved.

Yeli: Mhm. I think that um, it's difficult, I think that this was kind of a different romance because typically with romances like, the entire time you just follow the two characters or for a lot of it you follow the two characters, but because this was set in that dating show um, like scenario, you really only get, like they only really talk to each other like a handful of times throughout the story, it's really mostly about Cindy, and she makes a big decision at the end of the book. That I won't spoil, but she makes a really big decision that like, I am really respect and loved that she made um, and I really love that, that's the direction that Julie Murphy, kind of took the story as well. Um yeah.

Julie: While still having all the warm, fuzzy Cinderella kind of stuff to it. It was like, I felt like it was a type of book that did have like a happy ending. You know, and it was like, it was put in a pretty package and it just had all that cuteness. So I also appreciate that. Well, we're out of time. So any, any final thoughts before we close up, or did we unpack everything we need to unpack?

Yeli: I think so! Just, Julie Murphy. We love you.

Julie: I know that she's you know, she wrote all the, what was the other series, like the trilogy?

Yeli: *Dumplin'*.

Julie: *Dumplin'* and *Puddin'* and I don't remember the third one. Yeah, those were so cute too, um and I, is it right that she's moving away from like YA type of work and doing more um, I just, adult novels I guess. I don't need adult like XXX. But like, adult.

Yeli: Yes I think that she has, if I'm not mistaken, a romance, adult romance coming out soon that she co-wrote one of her friends.

Julie: Oh fun. Oh good. Okay. I can't wait to see that. All right, well thanks Yeli. Um, it was so great chatting with you about this book and all the things we mentioned. We'll put in the show notes. So have a great rest of your day.

Yeli: You too. Thank you.

Julie: So there you have it. I hope you enjoyed my conversation with Yeli Cruz about the book by Julie Murphy, *If The Shoe Fits*. Let us know what you thought about the book. Hop on over to instagram @foodvoicerd. @foodvoicerd is where we will be hanging out today and all this week talking about this book. And we are so curious if you have the same experience, something different. And also let us know what other books are out there that we need to include. They can be fiction, nonfiction, any genre, we are open to it. We like to do about one book review episode a month. So let us know at info@juliedillonrd.com. And I know it is time to sign off. I just heard the biggest bang of thunder. So that's probably also the universe letting me know it is time for lunch. So before I sign off, if you enjoyed this episode, I would love it if you would share the episode with someone or subscribe. Maybe even both. Doing that really helps more people find the show, helps the show grow. It supports the show in so many ways. I don't even know if you can imagine, it helps us a lot. So thank you in advance, and also remember this episode of the Find your Food Voice podcast was sponsored by my free downloads over at julieduffydillon.com/voice. Be sure to check them out, and I hope they help you on your food peace journey. Alright until next time. Take care.

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