**Lab 072 - Digital Divide**

**Zakiya** [00:00:00] I feel like there was such a push to everything digital in COVID and now that things are kind of opening up, even though the numbers continue to go up, it seems like we're getting more and more and more digital. I thought things would go back. People are saying, "No more menus. That's over QR codes only."

**Titi** [00:00:18] Exactly. You got a QR code on your table. And you know what's funny? Jimmy, he doesn't have a smartphone, so when he goes to restaurants, he's out of luck because if they don't have menus to pass out, he has to hope somebody with him will let him use their phone to be able to look at the menu.

**Zakiya** [00:00:35] It also reminds me of when people were saying, "We don't take cash because of COVID." But I'm like, "All right, y'all are here allowing people to dine maskless but still saying you don't take cash." If you're trying to go out digital and you're trying to get rid of the cash and coins. Just say that.

**Titi** [00:00:49] Right. No halvsies.

**Zakiya** [00:00:50] Yeah, but all those things I think are just indicators of this widening digital divide.

**Titi** [00:00:56] Absolutely.

**Zakiya** [00:00:57] And I think it may be in more places than we realize and we really ought to talk about it.

**Titi** [00:01:02] I'm Titi.

**Zakiya** [00:01:03] And i'm Zakiya.

**Titi** [00:01:04] And from Spotify this is Dope Labs.

**Titi** [00:01:32] Welcome to Dope Labs, a weekly podcast that mixes hardcore science, pop culture and a healthy dose of friendship.

**Zakiya** [00:01:38] This week, we're talking all about the state of Internet access in the United States and how a lack of Internet access affects different areas of our lives.

**Titi** [00:01:46] So let's get into the recitation. All right. So what do we know?

**Zakiya** [00:02:00] Well, I think we know many of us are using the Internet every day in our work lives, but definitely also in our personal lives.

**Titi** [00:02:07] Right. And I feel like everyone is online. Like everyone has to be online because of the way that our culture is set up.

**Zakiya** [00:02:16] And what we know from my episode with Christina Morillo is that there is a lot of data about us online.

**Titi** [00:02:23] So true. So what do we want to know?

**Zakiya** [00:02:25] I think we want to know who has Internet access and who doesn't. Even though it feels like everybody is online and that you have to be online, I'm sure there is not 100% online participation across the United States.

**Titi** [00:02:39] Right. And I want to know about the pitfalls with the Internet. Everything's moving to be online. Every application, you know, you're applying for a loan, you're applying for a house, anything, you have to do it online. And I'm so I'm wondering, because all of these things are manmade, are there any biases that they have found with algorithms and just the Internet in general and how it plays a role in our day to day lives?

**Zakiya** [00:03:08] I think we're ready. Let's jump into the dissection.

**Titi** [00:03:19] Our guest for today's lab is Dr. Nicol Turner Lee.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:03:23] I'm a Senior Fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution, and I'm also the Director of the Center for Technology Innovation. And I have a forthcoming book, which is on the U.S. Digital Divide entitled, "Digitally Invisible: How the Internet is Creating the New Underclass."

**Zakiya** [00:03:39] It feels like so much of life is happening online between social media, working from home, telehealth, which was booming after the pandemic. I think it's easy for a lot of us to take Internet access for granted.I don't care where you are now. They're not making menus anymore. It's a QR code for everything.

**Titi** [00:03:56] It's a QR code. Yeah.

**Zakiya** [00:03:57] The thing we have to remember is not everyone has access to the internet, and even if they do, not all Internet access is the same. Dr. Turner calls this gap in access the digital divide.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:04:10] We have had this divide way before the pandemic. Right? There were always people who were on the wrong side of digital opportunity. There was no Facebook when I was growing up, no Instagram, Spotify. So when I started in the space, I was a digital activist working in the city of Chicago, really training people on how to set up email accounts. And what we found during the process is that more jobs were going online. As a result of that, more people had to figure out ways to create a resumé in Microsoft Office, uploadit to an email account. We see now that it's gone further where you have to use certain software applications to apply for jobs.

**Titi** [00:04:50] Dr. Turner Lee says that while innovation around some of these technologies and digital systems has been fast, not everyone is using or has access to the technology. And all of this was exacerbated by COVID.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:05:03] The pandemic revealed that if you were not connected, you could not make an appointment for vaccinations, you could not work, you could not learn, you couldn't even memorialize your friends and family members who were lost as a result of this pandemic.

**Zakiya** [00:05:18] This is so important. And I think we saw this with a lot of older folks. You know, I can remember this and this disparity, even though is digital, is having very real effects.

**Titi** [00:05:30] Right.

**Zakiya** [00:05:31] In people's day to day lives.

**Titi** [00:05:32] I remember when the pandemic hit and there were a lot of kids that were, you know, trying to do virtual school and they didn't have Internet at home. And so their parents would have to find a place where they could get Internet so that they could log in and have virtual school. So there were some kids that were having virtual school in their parent's car, in a library, anywhere where they could find Internet. And that just lets you know that it's not just as easy as turning on your device.

**Zakiya** [00:06:00] Yeah. Dr. Turner Lee shared even more info about how the digital divide played out in education.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:06:05] So in March, when we had the beginnings of the pandemic, if you remember, around March through April, we were at peak numbers. We had to send 50 million school age kids home from 195,000 school districts across the U.S. And we thought it was going to be easy. We figured, hey, these are young people, they're resilient. We'll put them online and we'll make sure we give them laptops and figure that out. Two things happened: As we were scurrying to get Internet enabled devices, we realized that K through 12 students who were in public schools did not have access to Internet enabled devices as part of their school ecosystem. Generally, there was no budget right before the pandemic. Not only could we not give kids tablets, we also found that we did not have broadband service in the home. So let's talk about that. 50 million school age kids sent home, 15 to 16 million of them without Internet access in the home, 9 million without Internet access or a device.

**Zakiya** [00:07:10] That's so important because just because you have a device doesn't mean you have access. And I don't know if you remember the days of trying to do dial up and somebody is using the phone. Similarly, if you don't have really high speed Internet access, multiple people or multiple devices trying to log on at the same time is no good.

**Titi** [00:07:30] And then when you think about the impact that has on a student, these kids were being set back in their education. So then what does that mean at the end of the school year? Are they promoted to the next grade? And if so, are they behind their friends that have had access to high speed Internet with no problems?

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:07:50] And now the impact is we lost so many kids. I share this story about this 15 year old girl in Detroit, Michigan who did not log in. Her case manager came and they put her in juvenile detention because she failed to log into school. It's a true story.

**Zakiya** [00:08:08] That is terrible. You know.

**Titi** [00:08:11] It's pretty sick. In the middle of a pandemic.

**Zakiya** [00:08:15] And when we look at this type of stuff at a bigger scale, not just one-off cases, we find that the disparities in Internet access are having disproportionate effects in minoritized communities.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:08:29] What we're seeing now with K through 12 students in public schools, particularly Black and Latino students and tribal students, is that we're seeing that they're going to be 2 to 3 years behind when it comes to learning proficiencies. Some of those kids that couldn't get online, it was because 35% of those households were sharing one device among multiple siblings. Some of those kids didn't get online because their parents were serving us Wendy's and Burger King and delivering our groceries to our door, there was no adult to make sure kids were learning. And so that to me is like the most poignant moment of where we failed a particular delivery of service that is imperative to the future of this country. And I don't think we're actually going to see this generation's impact until like the next 2 to 3 years, when we're trying to fill folks in positions where the math scores are lower so we can't break the STEM divide. This is not a digital divide of shiny objects and things. This is a divide that is actually around the social mobility of certain populations.

**Zakiya** [00:09:31] Yeah, it's bigger than who has the new iPad.

**Titi** [00:09:34] Exactly. Camera resolution.

**Zakiya** [00:09:36] Right. I think people are not thinking about, what can you do with this device? What does this mean for your portal to education, access, opportunity?

**Titi** [00:09:45] I mean, you can do a little experiment. Turn your phone off for 24 hours and see how hard things get, you know, when you want to communicate with somebody. If you needed to call a taxi. How are you doing that?

**Zakiya** [00:09:58] If you wanted to just get information.

**Titi** [00:10:00] Everything that you do is connected to the Internet. And so when it's inequitable, you can see how it can have a major impact on somebody's day to day life. We're not talking about, oh, I can't get on Instagram. We're talking about, can I get food? Will, I know what's going on around me? Any time something major happens, we get these alerts on our phones from whatever news outlets that we're subscribed to. You basically won't know anything that's happening even just down the street.

**Zakiya** [00:10:27] And this is something that's changed over time. Because when we were in elementary school and middle school, Internet access wasn't a huge part of school. Like there were the computers, I wanted to play Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing. I wanted to play Oregon Trail. But that was just supplemental, you know what I mean? Now, having a computer set up, whether it's a laptop or a tablet, is crucial. And so even if you have a device, there's still so much that goes into having that device connected, having Internet access.

**Titi** [00:11:07] During the pandemic, communities came together to increase access for those in need. Libraries, churches, small businesses and emergency funding allowed some schools to access hotspots. But even with hotspots, there are still challenges, especially in rural communities.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:11:23] The hotspots have to have Internet access or some type of robust network to work, and there are still pockets, digital deserts with that exists within rural communities where we're not able to bring the type of high speed connectivity, or broadband, as we commonly define it. Listen, incumbent telecom company is not coming for you with high speed Internet if they've only served 500 to 3000 residents because at the end of the day, the Internet was built off of a very capitalist model. But with that being said, I'm really proud that there were rural communities that tried to figure some of this stuff out. I remember talking to a community in Texas where they actually deployed satellite interfaces so that the kids could get online near school. There were communities like in Roanoke, Virginia, which is very rural, where they put the WiFi transmitters on top of the construction signs, the ones you see on the highway that say, "Merge left." They actually pulled a few of those construction signs and they were able to put technology access up.

**Zakiya** [00:12:26] It's great that some communities were able to come up with makeshift solutions to improve Internet access. But Dr. Turner Lee shared that black and brown communities were often left out of these local efforts. Dr. Turner Lee is now working on a project to interview about 2500 residents of the Deep South about their Internet access generally and specifically during the pandemic.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:12:47] Some of the early findings that we're getting is that people in the rural South, the Black, Latino, Indigenous South, they went to hotels to get their access. And for me, that's a problem, because what it suggests is that we have more work to do when it comes to deployment. But we also have more work in urban areas. We have over 1 million units of public housing here in the United States where K-through-12 students lived, but yet we didn't have open wi fi access in much of our federally assisted housing here in the United States. So we have many missed opportunities to do the type of work to accelerate broadband adoption. And I think now we're still struggling to do that, even though we've had a two year lesson on the fact that we have disparate access among students and locations, particularly among the most vulnerable.

**Titi** [00:13:39] Hearing about how the digital divide is having the most impact on black and brown communities, Native communities, and rural places and public housing, it's really sad. But it's also not surprising to see the intersection of systemic inequality and technology. The people who need Internet access the most are the ones facing the biggest barriers to access and are paying the price.

**Zakiya** [00:14:02] Exactly. And people that are growing up in the age of fiber don't understand that not all Internet is created equal. Do you remember dial up when you had the phone lineto use internet?

**Titi** [00:14:14] And when somebody would call, it would knock you off the Internet?

**Zakiya** [00:14:17] Yes. Or you could hear them talking and they were sounding robotnik coming through the computer.

**Titi** [00:14:22] Absolutely.

**Zakiya** [00:14:23] And that Internet was so slow.

**Titi** [00:14:27] Oh my gosh. Everybody's spoiled nowadays. You type something in the Internet, you know, .001 seconds, Google tells you. They got the results for you. Back then, you had to sit back, have a snack, go to the bathroom. And by the time you got back, maybe half the page had loaded. You know.

**Zakiya** [00:14:44] But we were also using way too much HTML back then. Flame emojis behind your MySpace, your BlackPlanet.

**Titi** [00:14:51] My BlackPlanet was, it was lit, it had these green flames.

**Titi** [00:14:57] It was very good. I coded all of that myself. We were all little coders, man.

**Zakiya** [00:15:01] We shouldn't have given that up. But, you know, if you think back, that kind of Internet is no match for what we're doing these days. Like, most people don't even have landlines now. Imagine if you had to have a landline to get on the Internet. I'm out.

**Titi** [00:15:18] Me too. And when Dr. Nicole Turner Lee mentions broadband, she's talking about high speed Internet that is always on, not what me and Zakiya were talking about from back in the day. And the term broadband is an abbreviation for broad bandwidth. This type of connection uses multiple data channels to transmit large amounts of information. And there are a bunch of different types of broadband setups like cable, fiber, wireless, satellite.

**Zakiya** [00:15:45] All of those things. That's the kind of internet we need if we want everybody to be able to get on and do all of the activities.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:15:52] When you're not connected to the Internet, you don't know what's happening online. And as a result, and this has been researched, Uber may not come to your neighborhood because the algorithm knows nothing about your community. And if it does, there is not enough of you that actually use this type of technology for the algorithm to direct itself to your neighborhood. It's a surcharge for being disconnected. You can't get no discounts. You can't get a home shopping network and delivery services. You are off the grid.

**Zakiya** [00:16:21] And this provides a different context, you know, for being off the grid. A lot of times people say, "Oh, I'm going to be off the grid. That's my choice. I want to keep things private." But not off the grid to the extent that you don't have access to the same services that could be convenient or helpful to your life.

**Titi** [00:16:36] Mm hmm. Some people, they'll be like, "Oh, I don't have a smartphone because I like to be plugged in to what's going on around me." And I'm like, "Yes, that is a privilege that you have to be able to do that." That is a privilege because what you are also saying is that I can pick and choose when I will plug myself back in. So when you need to send an email, when you need to book a flight, when you need to do very basic things, you have that opportunity. It's not that you have no choice.

**Zakiya** [00:17:07] Right. Dr. Turner, Lee says technology is like a two sided coin. On the one side, it helps us stay connected. And it's been leveraged for activism, climate change, artificial intelligence, helped with our COVID vaccine development. But she says there's also another, more sinister side.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:17:24] Then there are those of us that go online, we watch our movies, we buy our dresses, we look for really cool hair for our braids. Hello. We do all of that. We get our packages at our door, our groceries delivered. Sometimes we even find love online. Well, guess what? All that stuff that you're doing is connected to your digital profile.

**Titi** [00:17:49] Now, we talked about this kind of data in Lab 55, Don't Get Gacked, with Christina Morillo. The more a company learns about your online behavior, the more their algorithm can predict future behavior and tailor their marketing to fit your profile. For real, it seems like they know exactly what you want when you want it.

**Zakiya** [00:18:10] Yes.

**Titi** [00:18:11] And this can lead to algorithm bias.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:18:13] And this type of market surveillance has lent itself to digital surveillance. And why that's important for people to know is that we know that computers do not discriminate. They just don't wake up as hardware and say, Hey, I will be racist today. The people who are behind the programing and execution and evaluation of these technologies, first and foremost, lack the rich diversity of folks that are part of the broader population of these United States and our global world. We're not getting those models made by us to reflect our lived experiences. But most importantly, and my friend Dr. Renee Cummings at the University of Virginia says this, the data that these models are relying on are traumatized because they come with a series of baked-in historical and systemic injustices. Things like the overincarceration and arrest of Black people get baked into models that then make decisions on whether or not you should be released or detained, or the use of mugshot data for facial recognition technology, which denies our ability to be seen not as criminals.

**Zakiya** [00:19:27] It's really a vicious cycle of the same old discrimination being reproduced and reinforced in new technology. Now the thing we have heard about and probably experienced is that for people with darker skin, you want to put your hand under the sink to get the automatic water. Sometimes it doesn't work. You got to show this side of your hand, you know? But it doesn't stop there. Multiple studies have shown that there is a demographic gap. Asian, African-American, Native American people are misidentified and given false positive rates in these kind of monitoring studies all the time. There was also a federal report that confirmed the same thing. I feel like 100 times more likely, that's not a rounding error.

**Titi** [00:20:08] You might as well just say, it ain't happening.

**Zakiya** [00:20:12] Right, it feels intentionally harmful. It feels not good. Not useful.

**Titi** [00:20:16] Right.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:20:16] And that's what we have to be really careful in terms of the evolution of these technologies and also what we believe about what people say on these platforms. You know, in 2016, foreign operatives use technology to convince us not to vote, the greatest form of voter suppression ever experienced. But the problem? We had nobody to tell and no recourse because these technologies are pretty much unregulated.

**Titi** [00:20:42] This is such a good point that I feel like is so important to remember. It's like you're either digitally invisible and paying a tax on one end, or you're hyper visible and surveilled and paying a tax on the other.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:20:55] You got it. Look, I ain't gonna lie. I like it when I get marketed my black high heeled shoes or when I get my little recommendation to go check out my local consignment shop. But I don't like it, as Latanya Sweeney at Harvard suggests, when they can identify by my name: Laquan, Lakeisha, Jose, that I'm a person of color and therefore I get higher interest credit card offerings or more predatory services. That's the type of trauma that these systems rely on, and that's where it's so inescapable. You know, and what we find is that this algorithmic amplification, half of us don't even realize that this is happening to you because it's so opaque as well.

**Zakiya** [00:21:40] Hey, very, very true. Very, very real.

**Titi** [00:21:43] Let's take a break. And when we come back, we'll talk more about what people are doing to make the Internet a more accessible and equitable place.

**Zakiya** [00:22:11] We're back. And before we get into the episode, let's talk about what's coming up next week. Next week, we're celebrating National Oyster Day and talking about oysters and aquaculture with Bill Walton. You won't want to miss this one.

**Titi** [00:22:23] Let's get back to the lab. We've been talking to Dr. Nicole Turner Lee, about the digital divide and algorithm bias and how it can further disenfranchize marginalized communities.

**Zakiya** [00:22:33] So we've talked about algorithm bias in previous labs, but the algorithm bias we were talking about then was the ability to return objective information, based on things you searched before, what Google or DuckDuckGo or whoever sends back to you. But we're thinking about algorithm bias and digital bias through a different lens today. We're considering how the way you move on the Internet, what people know about you, companies, websites, how that affects your ability to access different tools, how that affects your ability to move through in the physical world based on digital accessibility. So now that we've identified some of these issues, gaps, disparities, how do we address them? What's next? What's the policy approach, and what needs to happen?

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:23:22] I always tell people I think it's two tracks. One is the technical track. So we definitely need people who look like the lived experiences of the subject, mirror those experiences, understand them, have empathy for them, who know what it's like to be a black woman who changes your hair and then can put that technical cadence into the creation of facial recognition technology that we use to open our phones. Because if you're not in the right light or you changed from straight to braids or something like that, you know, we need people who can come with those real, authentic understandings of how we develop technology that's more inclusive, representative and equitable.

**Zakiya** [00:24:05] Remember when your phone didn't want to unlock the other day when you looked at it?

**Titi** [00:24:09] Yeah, it's because I changed my glasses. You know, I've got like 13 pairs of glasses. Changed my glasses. It said, you're a stranger, stranger danger, wouldn't open my phone. And it happened again. There was one time, I think when I set up my facial recognition, I had my natural hair out. And so I think it recognizes that. So when I have braids or if I have any type of anything different, it won't recognize me.

**Zakiya** [00:24:41] That's wild.

**Titi** [00:24:41] The second track is giving those who develop the technology compliance frameworks.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:24:45] What do I mean by that? It's a Wild West because people feel that they can break previously litigated and settled civil rights laws. When Facebook decided that it was okay in the case where they actually committed housing discrimination to check off the boxes of people that they wanted to market to, that was a violation of the Fair Housing Act. You cannot check people off. You can check people in, but you cannot check them off. What we see when it comes to algorithmic hiring, where now we see companies using algorithms to do pre-screenings. And we're learning as researchers that that forecloses on the ability of black and Latino applicants to get past the prescreen stage. Because guess what? The computer, whoever developed it said you had to look them in the eye, and you didn't look him in the eye enough times. You got to smile a little bit. You got to do these things that are very European to actually get into the door. Well, guess what? That's a violation when there is not transparency about that.

**Zakiya** [00:25:43] In May of this year, the EEOC, that's the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, released a guidance on employer use of algorithms and artificial intelligence in hiring processes.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:25:54] The same thing would voice assisted technology. We're seeing legislation when it comes to ADA compliance or being able to have the appropriate understanding of people's accents that actually go into those technologies. So on the technical side and the policy side, they really have to work hand-in-hand.

**Titi** [00:26:13] And this just takes us back to our lab on linguistics with Dr. Baugh when we talked about linguistic profiling and discrimination based on the way someone speaks.

**Zakiya** [00:26:22] And I get to hear this kind of discrimination in technology about whose accent or whose way of speaking is recognized and is able to be translated. Because when you all call us, we have a service that translates your voicemail into text so we can read it. And baby, my Southern folks, I can't tell what y'all are saying. Okay, Google doesn't know. Now, when I listen, I know exactly what you're saying because you're speaking my language. But Google translating is saying, no, ma'am, no, sir. We have no clue. Same thing for my voicemail.

**Titi** [00:26:56] Same thing. Because, you know, we do transcripts for each episode so that the folks of the deaf or hard of hearing community can still be a part of the Dope Labs community. When it's trying to transcribe Zakiya's and my voices, it doesn't know who's who, which I find appalling because I am not from that level of South. Okay.

**Zakiya** [00:27:17] You're welcome. They're complimenting you.

**Titi** [00:27:22] And it doesn't know what we're saying. And this is supposed to be really advanced technology, you're supposed to just plug it in and as opposed to transcribe it.

**Zakiya** [00:27:29] Set it and forget it.

**Titi** [00:27:29] Exactly.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:27:31] There's a place for policy legislation to come in and sort of prescribe different norms. As you said, it's a Wild West. But here's the problem. We as a community have so many issues that what's happened is these technologies intersect with voting rights. They intersect with policing. They intersect with health care. They intersect with education. And they intersect even with government benefits. In the state of Florida, they use facial recognition technology for the verification of unemployment benefits. I just said it don't work well on some folks. So there are thousands of people waiting for their unemployment while they're being evicted simply because they cannot be verified by the public sector use of that technology. So we're not just talking about technologies that are standalone, we're talking about embedded systems of oppression that come with costs that we really just have to pay attention to. Look, people can't be on Facebook like, look at me, look at me, look at me. There's more to it. Your photo is being scraped for something else and something else is something else. And by the time you get to these economic and social opportunities, people know more about you and your distinct variables than ever before.

**Titi** [00:28:48] All of these aspects of life that we're talking about are so important to feeling like you can thrive in this world. We asked Dr. Turner Lee if she had any advice for folks about how they interact with the Internet in order to protect themselves in their online presence, and how we can overcome some of these biases that are completely out of our control.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:29:10] First and foremost, this is not the European Union or other places where they have strict privacy legislation that provides some federally uniform values when it comes to what companies can collect and not collect about you. You know, my grandma told me there ain't nothing in this world that's free, baby. There's a trade off when we get these services to a certain extent for free to get into the garden, it comes with our reciprocity of information. Your ability to post a few photos on a social media network or send a text message, more and more, we're seeing just aggressive surveillance, both from the policing perspective, as well as the community perspective and now the private sector perspective when it comes to that information.

**Titi** [00:29:58] My friend says this all the time. Say it, Z: If something is free...

**Zakiya** [00:30:04] You're the product.

**Titi** [00:30:05] Exactly. You're on the shelf, honey.

**Zakiya** [00:30:08] You're what's being sold. Yes.

**Titi** [00:30:10] Are you on discount?

**Zakiya** [00:30:11] Shrink wrapped to a Styrofoam tray, okay? We're paying with our data.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:30:16] The bottom line is, people have to understand that these inequalities exist and that you're not giving away your data for free. I have a 15 year-old I don't know half of the stuff that she's on because I'm not up on Discord and all these other things that she'd be doing. And I'm like, What are you doing? I don't know. But guess what? I need to educate myself on those things because when she shows up missing or she's involved in an inappropriate conversation, I've got to know what that conversation is. So, parents, we got to step up our game, okay? We have to get on the ball about how these technologies work.

**Titi** [00:30:50] There's a lot of new technologies and Internet services popping up all the time. Remember a few years ago, before TikTok blew up?

**Zakiya** [00:30:57] I barely remember before TikTok.

**Titi** [00:31:01] B.T.

**Zakiya** [00:31:01] It feels like it's always been around. B.T. is going to be a new thing.

**Titi** [00:31:07] Before TikTok and after TikTok. Things move fast, but it's still important to stay educated on how these companies are mining and using your data. Don't just accept all the cookies when you get to a new website because your digital profile stays with you.

**Zakiya** [00:31:23] And that's wild to think. We're just accumulating all these, I imagine, I know they're not chocolate chip cookies, but just imagine a long trail of every cookie you've ever accepted just following you around as you browse on the Internet. You know, the way I'm burning through sites, okay? The way I'm typing in WWW dot into my browser. What does that mean for the future? You know, how how will I be able to maintain any shred of privacy? We asked Dr. Turner Lee what her vision for the digital future looks like and what she's excited about.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:32:01] We need to move people from just being consumers of the technology. The greatest breakthrough of innovation has been the ability of people with a great ideas, and not necessarily degrees, to create new ideas that can run off of Internet networks. There is the stage of technology that has lowered the barriers so that you don't have to just be in Silicon Valley. You can be in Silicon Alley getting stuff done. You could be in Silicon Harlem. These are the creators of the 21st century, and a lot of those people look like us. And so I would just say to people who are listening, don't be afraid of the technology. The train has left the station, embrace it. But don't be just consumers of it. Be folks that can look at that technology and take that idea you sat on for 20, 30, 40 years and make it happen. Because you could do it with an Internet connection, some broadband, wheter at home, in a hotel, at your school stoop, and an idea. And that's what I think is so wonderful, because I know if we write the right script around this, we will get more people on the production side than on the consumption side.

**Zakiya** [00:33:12] That's such an important point as we think about access to technology and the type of financial mobility and social mobility that leveraging these networks provides. If you don't have access to the network, you don't even know how to move around on it. It's going to be very hard to think of ways to create new systems, you know, and the next wave of technology. And so not only are they missing out on being consumers, it increases the barrier to being a producer in the future.

**Nicol Turner Lee** [00:33:41] We have to understand that the technology has come and is here to stay. We want everybody in this country to have first class digital citizenship. That means we have to demand digital justice. It means that we have to have equitable deployment. It means that we have to have the devices. This is a civil right.

**Titi** [00:34:02] All right, y'all, it's time for one thing.

**Zakiya** [00:34:05] What's our one thing this week, Titi?

**Titi** [00:34:06] [00:34:06]Our one thing this week, we have a joint one thing. It is Dr. Nicole Turner, Lee's book. It's called Digitally Invisible. So head over to her website, the link is in the show notes, to find out where you can get it. [12.1s]

**Zakiya** [00:34:26] Okay. That's it for Lab 072. What did you think? Did this lab help you realize that it's deeper than just access to social media? Call us at 202-567-7028 and tell us what you thought. Or give us an idea for a lab you think we should do this semester. That's 202-567-7028.

**Titi** [00:34:47] And don't forget that there is so much more to dig into on our website. There'll be a cheat sheet for today's lab, additional links and resources in the show notes. Plus, you can sign up for our newsletter. Check it out at DopeLabsPodcast.com. Special thanks to today's guest expert, Dr. Nicol Turner Lee.

**Zakiya** [00:35:04] [00:35:04]You can find her on Twitter at @drturnerlee and learn more about her work at www.drnicolspeaks.com. That's drnicolspeaks.com.[10.0s]

**Titi** [00:35:17] And you can find us on Twitter and Instagram at @dopelabspodcast.

**Zakiya** [00:35:20] Titi's on Twitter and Instagram at @dr\_tsho.

**Titi** [00:35:24] And you can find Zakiya at @zsaidso. Dope Labs is a Spotify original production from MegaOhm Media Group.

**Zakiya** [00:35:31] Our producers are Jenny Radelet Mast and Lydia Smith of Wave Runner Studios.

**Titi** [00:35:36] Editing and Sound Design by Rob Smierciak.

**Zakiya** [00:35:39] Mixing by Hannis Brown.

**Titi** [00:35:41] Original Music composed and produced by Taka Yasuzawa and Alex Sugiura. From Spotify, Creative Producers Miguel Contreras and Grace Delia.

**Zakiya** [00:35:51] Special thanks to Shirley Ramos, Jess Borison, Yasmeen Afifi, Kimu Elolia, Teal Kratky and Brian Marquis. Executive producers from MegaOhm Media Group are us:

**Titi** [00:36:03] Titi Shodiya.

**Zakiya** [00:36:03] And Zakiya Whatley.