



Episode 16: Cultivating Love in the Workplace: Inclusion, Safety and Community with Rajkumari Neogy

Transcript *(lightly edited for readability)*

Roxy Manning 00:14

Hi, I'm Roxy Manning.

Sarah Peyton 00:15

And I'm Sarah Payton. We're the hosts of the Fierce Compassion podcast. In this episode of Fierce Compassion, we talk with Rajkumari Neogy, the innovative culture whisperer in corporations, who brings relationality and love without sacrificing revenue and sustainability.

Roxy Manning 00:37

In this session, we get to hear about the necessity of being with our discomfort in order to have the capacity to reflect and grow and become more and more our authentic selves in today's workplace.

Sarah Peyton 00:52

We also explore the importance of relationality and inclusion, to create antiracist, antioppressive environments, and how to work with our internal blocks so that we can access power and choice.

Roxy Manning 01:08

We'll learn how Rajkumari identities have both informed and supported a powerful capacity to bring people together and invite deep vulnerability.

Sarah Peyton 01:18

Join us to celebrate the convergence of true authenticity and belonging in corporations.

Roxy Manning 01:36

Welcome to Fierce Compassion, the podcast that explores the power of compassion in creating an antiracist society. I'm Roxy Manning.

Sarah Peyton 01:45

And I'm Sara Payton. We are delighted to have as our guest today Rajkumari Neogy, MA, who has spent 25 years at the intersection of technology and culture, bringing antiracism and leadership

training to executives in Silicon Valley and internationally. Rajkumari is the author of [*The WIT Factor, Shifting the Workplace by Becoming Your Optimal Self*](#), and is the creator of the epigenetic coaching framework, which integrates interpersonal neurobiology, culture, technology, and empathic language for business.

Roxy Manning 02:21

Wow, thank you for being with us. Rajkumari.

Rajkumari Neogy 02:25

Oh, my goodness, Roxy, Sarah! It is such an honor, such a pleasure. I am absolutely delighted.

Sarah Peyton 02:32

We'd like to begin with a question we ask all of our guests. How do you define self-compassion?

Rajkumari Neogy 02:39

Oh, my goodness. How do I define self-compassion? It involves a slowness, and a tenderness and a willingness -- oh, wow. So much emotion is coming forward -- And a willingness to allow the difficulty to be present for myself.

Roxy Manning 03:13

Well, I want to build on that. How has it been important to you? How has self-compassion been important in your journey?

Rajkumari Neogy 03:21

Well, you know, I have realized over the years that being from the childhood experiences that I come from and learning from Sarah over the years about a trauma brain, that in order for me to truly connect with and understand my reactivity and my triggers, I have had to learn myself. And in that learning process, I came to find that I was actually quite unkind to myself. There was a moment in my healing journey where I realized that I was bullying myself into healing and that was antithetical to the healing process. It was not working and yet I was so confused. And so that self-compassion has shockingly rewired my brain.

Roxy Manning 04:50

What are some things you've noticed in this rewiring? What changes did you notice in yourself?

Rajkumari Neogy 04:58

It's such a great question. The willingness to sit with discomfort in the rewiring. The willingness to allow shame to surface and to connect with that shame. And in that discomfort and in the feelings

that would arise, I got to witness the wounded aspects of me that were crying out for help. And as I connected with the parts of me that longed for a parental figure, a caring figure, a kind figure, I got to be that person. And there was a moment in my career that really stood out for me that showed me that all of the hours of watching the Sarah Payton webinars that I have done, paid off. And it was when I was working with an executive team on Zoom during the COVID... I think it was back in 2021, perhaps. And I was delivering some content on exclusion. And one of the executives raised their hand to ask a question. I love questions. And started to ask the question, but then very quickly derailed from the question into an incredibly painful insult to me. And that continued, and as the insult continued, might have been a two-minute rant, perhaps, I started to witness myself dissociate and pull out of my body. And as I watched myself leave and literally went, "No. Come back!" I still have to be the consultant in front of an executive team and, you know, show up professionally. And when the person was done, the fact that I could ask the following question was one point of growth that I had witnessed, which was, "Does anyone else feel that same way?" And someone else did feel somewhat of the same way. But it turned out that they were just not appreciative of the first person's comment. And then, the senior executive on the team, of the executive team, paused the conversation and said that we would, we would close here for today, and we would come back. And the fact that I could handle all of that, thank everyone for their time, and then get off the call and then fall apart and go to my therapist, in tears, showed me that I did not get defensive. That I did not get reactive. That I could actually still hold a lens of compassion for the person who was really struggling. Because it might have been the very first time that they themselves were being confronted with their own trauma and their own experiences of exclusion. It turned out when we did a restorative, reparative session after that fact that this person's childhood was horrific. And so, it started to allow the tenets of empathy and compassion and self-regulation to kind of surface themselves for me in a way that I got to see my own growth.

Roxy Manning 08:46

There's something in... First, I love the story around how much more capacity we have to show up for challenges like this when we can hold self-compassion. But there's a phrase that you said about sitting in our own discomfort that feels so important to me, especially when I think about doing antiracism work, because we're so often trying to flee away from it, not sit with it, and it prevents us from having the opportunities to connect.

Rajkumari Neogy 09:19

Absolutely. The ability to truly be uncomfortable is such an invitation to witness oneself. And such a gateway to vulnerability and connection. Both to self and to other.

Sarah Peyton 09:48

Yeah, well, when you think about this self-compassion journey, which you yourself have been on, and which you take your clients through, what kinds of patterns do you see in people's growth into self-compassion? What are some of the stages that you find that your clients go through?

Rajkumari Neogy 10:13

So, one thing that sounds maybe very surprising and not very welcoming, is anger. And what's so interesting, and I think what many of my clients get frustrated with me, is that I leave them in their anger for many weeks. Because when they come out of this collapsed freeze state of their life for years, oftentimes it's decades. And they're feeling an aliveness. But this aliveness is being punctuated with all of the injustice and unfairness and violations that they didn't have a voice or a way to speak, and to even bring awareness that they finally now are willing to and able to see within themselves; there's rage. And I get so excited when they arrive there, because I'm like, "Yes!" And I remember one very senior executive who had had incredible violation in her life, finally arrived at a place of anger. And I left her there - And when I say "left," we met every week and we just kept you know, assessing and really holding space, and her giving me you know, kind of where she was - for two months. And, and she finally came to me said, "When do I get to be out of this anger? Is now a good time?" "I think now's a good time." And then, taking the nervous system to the next level. And that's when the tenderness is able to be present. That's when the mindfulness, the caring, the levels of self-care and self-thought are present, and then can be navigated with a lot more forgiveness.

Sarah Peyton 12:33

Sounds like it gives Roxy a deep breath, too.

Roxy Manning 12:41

It does, it does. And I am so tempted to just stay with this topic. I think we could have an entire masterclass on the importance of being able to be present with ourselves. But I also want our listeners to get to know a little bit about you. So, I'd love to ask you, what are some of the various identities that you hold? And how have they informed the work that you do?

Rajkumari Neogy 13:04

Mm hmm. Well, I definitely identify as a corporate human. If I could live in a corporate world, I would. I do live in the corporate world. But I don't know. Since a very young age, I have loved companies and I have loved culture. My sister used to work for Myspace ...for those of you who know what that is... And then she went from there to Skechers. And I remember visiting her in Los Angeles, and I begged her to take me on a tour of Skechers. And she's like, "Really, of all the things we can do in Los Angeles, that's what you want to do is go tour a building facility?" I said, "Yes, please!" So definitely that. I also identify as a trans, nonbinary human. I also identify as someone

who has walked a trauma journey. I also identify as someone who has been disowned. And I also identify as someone who is incredibly loving.

Roxy Manning 14:26

And now I'm very curious for you to add the second part of that question, because those identities, it's wide and varied. And I'd love to know how does it impact your work, especially in corporate America?

Rajkumari Neogy 14:42

All of those intersectionalities, is your question. Yeah. I have been very fortunate to have been very welcomed in the ways in which I present, in all of the facets in which I present. I don't know how that came to be. But however, that has come to be, has been truly a blessing. It has given me such flexibility. The biological nature of my body has given me a proximity to men or humans who identify as male, in that I'm able to hug them very comfortably. It has allowed me to also show up in this very kind of male oriented way with them. Simultaneously, being someone who is fiercely loving and who holds love as a, as a pillar in the ways in which I walk this earth, it allows me to connect to those humans who identify as female. So that there's this empathic lens that that I hold, especially as my dear friend, Shawna Zolotow talks about is the wounded feminine, the wounded, divine, feminine energy. And so being able to hold the different facets, I think, in terms of gender, allows me to connect with individuals across many intersectionalities. There's also the fact that my father's family comes from India. He himself was born in Uganda. And my mother's family comes from France. And she herself was born in the French part of Canada. So part of my identity is also a person of color, mixed race and an Indian body, and a French body. It's why I love coffee and croissant, but it's also why I love a good, you know, dosa. So, being able to hold all of those multidimensionalities, I think has really allowed me to connect to individuals, no matter their story.

Sarah Peyton 17:29

And I imagine it informs you, DEI and inclusion, exclusion. You have a boot camp called The Biology of Belonging, for goodness sake! You want to say a little about it?

Rajkumari Neogy 17:44

It's an awesome bootcamp, you all should come. I think this work has invited me to really reflect on this concept of safety. And being someone who comes from a childhood that lacked safety, almost 24/7, there was really an opportunity to create a way of understanding what safety meant, how to go get it, and how to live in it. And because I loved companies so much, I thought, well, how can I figure out how to do what I love around the curiosity of safety in companies, because that's where I feel as though I am most fluent is speaking the corporate language.

Roxy Manning 18:51

I'm really intrigued by this. And part of it is that I'm thinking about, and it's been a couple of years now, but even some of the things that we've heard about in Google, for instance. Where that wonderful researcher who was doing the AI work ended up leaving, right? And how much talk there is about people not finding belonging in tech companies, in some of these corporate spaces. And so, when I hear like you are saying that somebody who's holding all of these identities, that I don't think of as identities that are particularly welcomed in some of these corporate spaces, but you found belonging. So, I'm, I'm thinking everybody listening is going, how did you do that? Like, what is that missing step? Because it sounds like you were doing this before you started your healing journey? That you had already started thinking about how to be in corporations, how to be supporting this culture of belonging before, for instance, encountering Sarah's work. So, what are some of the things that made that possible?

Rajkumari Neogy 19:53

I started off in Silicon Valley as a technologist in startup companies. My first two companies were Japanese companies. The first company was called Zapex. I don't think the engineers spoke English; I certainly did not speak Japanese. And yet, I had a blast with these guys. They were all men. And I don't know how we got along, maybe we just drank a lot together, and then, you know, that was probably a huge component of it. But I loved working for this company. I then went on to a company that was a client of this company. I went on to this next Japanese company, Daikin. Daikin is very famous for their air conditioning. And they had a kind of a R&D facility that was doing work in DVD, digital video disc, and that's where I kind of really took off in terms of my career and what I did as a technologist. But what I very quickly came to realize was that I couldn't stand the technology, especially when I realized and found out that it took 750 years for one DVD to decompose. And we were burning through them like crazy trying to get Titanic on this DVD. And what I did realize was how much I loved the human aspect, the communication aspect. And so, as my career evolved, over time, I felt less and less drawn to the technology aspects, but more and more drawn to the human aspects. And then I started to notice something called relationships, and the dynamic in-between people and how difficult it was for teams to truly just get along and collaborate and be cohesive. And so, over time, as I went through my time with Adobe, I was very frustrated at Adobe. But I loved what I did in terms of the training, and I was really challenged with the technology, because it wasn't feeding my soul, at all. When I got to Facebook, I truly fell in love with what I was doing at Facebook. My boss was an absolute phenomenal human. He still is. And to this day, we still keep in contact, which I'm so humbled by. He was the best boss I've ever had. And the reason why is he prioritized relationality. I didn't know what relationality was, at the time. What I saw it to be was every sentence that he would, or every email that he would ever write, he would always add an emoji at the end of it. And this really helps me with my anxious attachment

because I always wanted to make sure that I was doing okay, and that I was liked, and that he wasn't mad at me. And that taught me the power of relationality. Because when there wasn't an emoji at the end of the email, all my antennas went up. And when I left Facebook to start this company, I wanted to understand how it was that there were moments that I would feel very included, and there were moments that I would feel very excluded at work, through all of my employment. And that began the journey of exploring and understanding this need for safety, which took me down the rabbit hole of neurobiology and epigenetics and building this coaching framework. And then I thought, "Well, gosh, this is so fascinating. I'm really enjoying learning all of this stuff. Might there be anyone else who might be also as fascinated by this as me?" And because of my robust network within companies and corporations, I decided to just start making some phone calls and was able to very fortuitously get invited to many a meeting. And for the first year and a half, it was very difficult to talk about epigenetics and neurobiology and relationality. There was a moment where I was invited in a meeting where I was asked to leave 10 minutes after the meeting started because I brought up epigenetics and the CEO just said some pretty unkind things and left the meeting. And I was escorted out. And yet I persevered and here we are arriving at this juncture, at this precipice where people are hungry for relationality, people are hungry for kindness. People are hungry to learn who they are, and how to hold themselves in all of the turmoil that exists currently in the world.

Sarah Peyton 25:27

It's so tender and so wonderful to hear it, to hear you find it in corporate America. It's inspiring and very, very inviting. I'm thinking about our listeners, and that they might not have much of a sense of epigenetics. Would you say a little about how you define epigenetics, how it supports your exploration into safety and belonging and inclusion?

Rajkumari Neogy 25:58

You can think of epigenetics as the stressors in your environment that are impacting your cellular biology. Rachel Yehuda, in 2016, through an interview with NPR kind of came on the scene talking about her research. And not only do the stressors in our immediate environment start to impact our nervous system and the ways in which we show up, but with Rachel's work, what she showed was that we carry the traits, tragedies and traumas, transgenerationally up to 210 years, according to Rachel. According to Dr. Joy DeGruy, who's the author of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, it's 300 years. And according to Resmaa Menakem, who's the author of My Grandmother's Hands, it's 490 years. No matter the amount of centuries that we are carrying, all of us on the planet are holding our lineages in our cellular biology. And so, kind of rewinding and thinking through what your parents may have gone through or what your grandparents may have gone through. And to kind of then, fast forward to your present-day moment at work - what triggers you? What upsets you? What frustrates you? What annoys you? What causes you to flee or to avoid a conversation? If

we're able to start to investigate and surface that curiosity, what we very quickly find is how it titrated through to that generational thread. And that's the work that I do, is to really explore what is it that the executive is currently facing that is either an impediment or a blockage or a frustration or a trigger? And how do we start to work with that?

Sarah Peyton 27:47

Do you have a story of a through line from epigenetic trauma to executive function?

Rajkumari Neogy 27:56

There was a founder who was in the process of fundraising. And every time she would have a conversation and present her deck to an investor it would go fabulously well. And they would be interested, they would have curiosity, they would leave the meeting very excited. But what we found was that after so many conversations, and so many meetings, nobody was really getting back to her. It was I think, a round two of funding. And we decided to kind of take a look at that, and what we found was that in this person's lineage, there was a survival of the Holocaust, and specifically around Oskar Schindler, and the fear around being seen, but then the also, the welcoming of that sense of safety, right. So, it was kind of a bit of a complicated way of showing up in the world. We did some rewiring around being seen, and funding came through, I think it was eight weeks later.

Sarah Peyton 29:05

That's great. Wow, that's fun.

Roxy Manning 29:11

I want to take you then, especially when I think about - You're describing epigenetic as part of what we're carrying in our lineage. And then some of the work that Sarah and I are focusing on is around antiracism, and the history of like, what's been happening in this country and really, throughout the world? How do you see... what are some of the challenges that some of the corporations that you're working with are facing in relation to DEI and how is that connected to the epigenetics? How do you see that through line showing up?

Rajkumari Neogy 29:43

I think the challenge that I'm that I'm witnessing right now is how to bring a sense of relevancy to trauma from an epigenetic lens, in the corporate world. And how that relate to the corporate world is around performance and productivity. Right now, according to both McKinsey and Gallup, the research shows that workforces are disengaged by 68%. According to McKinsey, it's 67.7 - close enough. And where that is incredibly frustrating is that companies want to reengage their workforce by having them come back to the office or having them, you know, be more present or perform more or produce more, or do more. And I think that there needs to be an awareness

around safety, and how different communities experience safety differently. And as we in organizations start to prioritize cultures of inclusion, and as we say at I Belong, resonant and inclusive cultures, how do we start to modify our culture so that the different members of different communities who perceive safety differently feel included? It's very complex, being human, as you both know. And that complexity must be a foothold in our culture. We have to prioritize that for some people, safety is a threat. For some people, empathy is a threat. We have to prioritize that because it's a truth.

Sarah Peyton 31:51

Let me just check something here. So, when people experience empathy and safety as a threat, are we kind of talking about, like the very work that you do? Where you're - kind of the story that you told us about the executive who went on a two-minute rant? Was he in protest of emotions, of expression, of empathy?

Rajkumari Neogy 32:16

Of relationality.

Sarah Peyton 32:17

Of relationality. This is a big thing to balance for corporations.

Rajkumari Neogy 32:27

100 Percent. Because when you think about the tenets of white supremacy, there is productivity, there is hustle, there is urgency. And so, when we move away from that, that productivity, that hustle, that urgency lends to this nervous system fight-flight stance, right, which creates then even more alarm in the body. When we move into relationality, what we're asking for is connection. But if I'm already in a state of alarm, I don't have time to build connection with you. I've got to get stuff done! So how do we begin to shift that urgency from this paradigm in which we build companies for revenue, for profit, and really start to understand that at a very core level, humans need connection. And what is intrinsic to that connection is safety. Not everyone is able to digest safety. So how do we start to create ways in which we engage that allow us to titrate layers of safety for different communities across an organization? And for me, the answer is actually quite simple. It's A - make it known that is the goal and the prioritization and the value of the organization. Preferably when you start to build your organization. And B - provide the resources that are around connectivity, connection, and a willingness to self-reflect from a place of accountability about my resistance to being in connection, my resistance to being in relationality and my hunger for isolation because that's a trauma response.

Roxy Manning 34:40

Something is coming up for me, and I'm taking it a little bit back from where you just ended, but it just felt so clear how white supremacy and the origins of white supremacy have infused how we're working in the corporate world. So, it's still this idea of productivity at the expense of human lives, at the cost of relationality. And it's so easy to have that model and to think about it as, "This is the right thing to do." You know, like, if we're a corporation, we should have profit, and we need to have profit at any cost. So, this is a huge paradigm shift, I could imagine for some of the organizations you work with.

Rajkumari Neogy 35:20

Well, it's a huge paradigm shift within my organization. I was working with my head of growth many weeks ago. And we were crafting an email about regarding how we were going to launch [ibelong](#). And so, we were taking, and how we're going to welcome the community for the very first email, the very first ibelong email. And, you know, Sarah knows this quite well. I'm very particular about language. So, I wanted it to be just right, a balance of transactional language as well as relational language, just a really nice, sweet moment. It took us over an hour to write this three-paragraph email. And at the end, I was so elated! I was so happy with it! I just was like, "This is awesome!" And he looked at me and he goes, "We spent an hour and 15 minutes doing this email. Our meeting time is two hours, what else are we going to get accomplished today?" And I said, "Nothing. Because we accomplished this. And this, in of itself, is a celebratory moment." And he had to really pause and go, "You're, you're okay as the CEO that this is the only thing we do today?" And I said, "100%, because it's, it's exactly what I was hoping would bring resonance, as we announced ourselves on the global stage." And he had to take that one, and it took him a moment.

Sarah Peyton 36:51

So, he's learning what you're modeling, and what you're encouraging and something very different than productivity at the expense of human bodies.

Rajkumari Neogy 37:04

At the expense of human bodies. And I think that this is such, I think, Sarah, I've learned this from you around, you know, where are our boundaries? And how do we even know that we are not honoring our boundaries when we are so conditioned to not honor our boundaries?

Sarah Peyton 37:35

And so conditioned, speaking of white supremacy, and the epigenetic inheritance of enslavement, not just for black bodies, but for white bodies, the assumption that it's okay to do this to other people's bodies.

Rajkumari Neogy 37:52

Yeah, exactly. Consent is not part of this paradigm. It's part of the new paradigm. Today, I was in a photoshoot. And I had the honor of working with the photographer and the makeup artist. The makeup artist had her table with all of her makeup stuff. Now, just to be clear, I only got a haircut. Okay.

Sarah Peyton 38:19

I was looking, did they make Rajkumari up?

Rajkumari Neogy 38:22

They did not. We had a three-minute conversation about, what was it? Chapstick. And after the chapstick was applied, I had to run to the mirror to make sure I didn't look too feminine. I asked if it was okay that I placed my phone on her table. It's her space. Yes, of course I'm paying for this time. Yes, of course, I'm the guest. Yes, of course. It does not for a moment discount that I am entering their space.

Roxy Manning 39:04

There's something that, like I could imagine if I were that makeup artist, I would almost be taken aback. You know, it's almost like giving myself permission to say "No, I don't actually want your phone on my table," would be so hard to say, even if I didn't want it. So, it's not... There's some combination of you honoring and noticing these boundaries, and inviting the other person to notice; what is your truth? What is it that you need? And that it's okay to have that. It can be almost like an earthquake, just really shaking the foundations of how we think the world works.

Rajkumari Neogy 39:47

And then the question becomes, even though I'm asked consensually, how do I say no if I was never allowed to say no. Because I'm in the moment of being taken aback that someone cared enough to ask, but I still don't want that. How do I navigate that for myself? And hopefully, the invitation is an opportunity to reflect at a later moment, right? We don't learn from experience; we learn from reflecting on experience.

Roxy Manning 40:22

This piece that you're naming around, giving ourselves permission to notice, like, what is it that would prevent me from taking, using this opportunity that's being offered to me. I think it's connecting back to what you're saying about safety's a threat, or maybe consent's a threat. And how we don't even - if we haven't done the reflection, we don't even know where we've internalized some of these messages about, you know, what's allowed, what we're able to do.

Rajkumari Neogy 40:53

Gabor Maté says it so beautifully. Gabor Maté talks about how we'll sacrifice authenticity for attachment any time of day, or night. I'd rather stay in connection with you then find my own voice.

Roxy Manning 41:13

Absolutely heartbreaking. And I'm also connecting to another layer of challenge when you're talking about doing this in a corporate setting. Because there is also this idea that if I told you no, am I going to lose this client? Am I going to lose my income, my sustainability, my well-being? So, so many layers to navigate.

Rajkumari Neogy 41:33

The classes that I have the incredible honor of bringing to organizations allows me to, for some folks, introduce things they've never had considered before, like feeling feelings. Reflecting on what it might be like to say no. Reflecting on what it might be like to speak up, and actually voice a need. What it might be like to leave a class when it became uncomfortable. All of these are very warmly welcomed in my class, all of it. When I asked if I can do some coaching with someone in class in front of their peers, I always say that "no" is a full sentence. "No, thank you," is my full sentence, but that doesn't have to be for them. And even if they still can't say no, because we're just talking about that, someone was offering an option to say no that they might be able to reflect on in the future. One of the things that I that I take away from my time with NLP Marin, where I spent many, many years, is we are always faced with options whether we are aware of it or not. And that when we make a decision, it is about us noticing the options in front of us. Sometimes we notice that there are no options even when there are options. And that might be a survival mechanism.

Sarah Peyton 43:29

Yeah, that the price has been too high. The price we've had to pay has been too high for options. Well, you mentioned the pushback from the one executive in that session. But in a more general sense, what kinds of pushback do you receive to the ideas that you bring about the importance of inclusion and atmospheres of safety? How have large corporations and organizations you've worked with responded to the antiracism and inclusion elements of your presentations and coaching?

Rajkumari Neogy 44:07

The most common way is a dismissive or discounting way. The way in which I define gaslighting is discounting, denying or diminishing in any capacity. And it's always an interesting dilemma or complexity to navigate in the moment how to then reposition the potential experience for someone who might not be a member of their community. That there are other members who

hold very different memberships to their communities, to different communities, that have to navigate layers of oppression. I was recently asked last week, and I had not been asked this question in, I would say, 10 years, to be very forthcoming. And when it came up, I was like, "Ah, yes, there it is." I was asked by a straight white man, "Well, wait, what does, can you give me an example of exclusion?" I had only been asked that once before, when I was hiring, by another white man. I don't know his sexuality, because it was an interview. And I said, "Yeah, sure, I can give you many examples. What might it be like for the only woman in the board room with men? Might she feel excluded in some capacity? What might it be like..." - I can't remember the other examples I gave, but I gave like two or three like that. And, and he got very quiet, it was very sweet. He got very quiet, he looked down. And he looked back up. And he said, "You know, I think you might be perfect for this speaking engagement."

Roxy Manning 45:24

Wow.

Rajkumari Neogy 46:11

And I thought, okay, great, excellent, good.

Sarah Peyton 46:22

I'm enjoying the modeling of unthinkability.

Roxy Manning 46:28

There's something that's coming up for me around... like, with this example, you talk about coaching executives, people in positions of power. And this example is an example of how easy it is to not consider the perspectives and experiences of people who are not part of your community, as you named. And so, as I think about people engaging in this work, you know, this person who was in anger for several months before they were able to heal enough to move out of that, I also wonder about, almost like the backlash that the people under them with less power might experience as these folks are going through their healing journey. I'm not sure if that question is really clear, but there's something around, how do you create safety for those with less power in relation to these people, as these people are going through what can be a pretty, destabilizing, dysregulating experience?

Rajkumari Neogy 47:25

That's such a fantastic question. You know, I was so humbled. Two weeks ago, I was invited to do a keynote at Gallaudet University. And I had no idea what Gallaudet University was - I had to do some research. It is the university for the deaf and hearing impaired. And I was like, whoa, okay, cool. So, we've set up a time via email to meet on Zoom. And, you know, the day is approaching, and I'm thinking, well, wait a minute, we're getting on Zoom? How? Does that even? Like it hadn't

even crossed my mind for a second. And then the email started coming through about the translators, and I was just mind blown. But I was mind blown because of how my privilege had been so in the fore, that it never even occurred to me what it must be like to be someone who is of the hearing-impaired community having to have a meeting on Zoom. And I will tell you, that that meeting on Zoom was probably the most relational and empathic meeting I've ever had in my life. It was amazing. I bonded with this guy so much, I cannot wait to have lunch with him. This guy's amazing.

Roxy Manning 48:59

What made it so amazing?

Rajkumari Neogy 49:01

The care that was involved in the nonverbal communication and the resonance that was prioritized in that communication. I've never experienced anything like that.

Sarah Peyton 49:18

As you're speaking, you're so often coming to the idea of inclusion. I wonder about this concept of Beloved Community that both Roxy and I love so much that comes from Martin Luther King Jr., and of course that Roxy speaks about as being a fierce loving of principles and a warm inclusion of all people, no matter what they're doing. It feels a little bit like this is one of the things you live by, Rajkumari. Is this true for you? Has this been an important concept for you?

Rajkumari Neogy 49:56

100%. And I want to go back to Roxy's question about how do we create and invite those with less power in organizations to start to have that experience. And I think it's all about community. I think there needs to be a movement and a shift and a transformative way of understanding that the new world of organizations has to be designed within the paradigm of community. That we must come together to build and create and innovate. That we absolutely can make profit. There's no issue with making profit. There's no issue with revenue. It is how that revenue is generated and created. I was speaking with Karen Taylor, a few months ago. Karen Taylor is the head of DEI over at Workday. And we were getting very excited on our interview together, our conversation. And she said something brilliant, and I said, "What you're talking about is love." And she's like, "Yeah." And I said, "Yeah! How do we bring love into organizations?" And she's like, "That's exactly right. And the way in which we bring love into organizations is through community." Because when I feel a sense of purpose is when I have community, right? Community is because I find my sense of purpose, whatever that is. And it could be a sense of purpose for an hour in that community. What is so interesting about belonging is that in organizations... people don't permanently belong in organizations. They temporarily belong in organizations. This is a concept that is really

challenging. Because belonging is in your heart. Belonging is in your body. Belonging is what you bring, where you arrive in the community, that sense of connection, that sense of who you are. And so being able to foundationalize the community with purpose, with conviction, with a sense of compassion, and with love, I think this is a really interesting opportunity for organizations to explore.

Sarah Peyton 52:35

What a delight. What a delight to have love brought into the corporate world! I'm just enjoying this very much. Yeah, Roxy, as we're sort of moving right towards the end, is there something that you'd like to ask?

Roxy Manning 52:52

Yeah, so I'm listening to this conversation. I have a 24-year-old who's just started his first job, and it's in a tech company in Silicon Valley. And so, I'm... we're talking all three of us, kind of like near the ending, or the middle of our careers. What advice would you give to a young person entering corporate America, and how they can do it in a way that really helps them thrive? That brings in all of these elements around love and community and belonging, and safety? What advice would you give to somebody at the early stages of their career on how to make it thrive?

Rajkumari Neogy 53:33

Find the right organization for you. When you are going through the interviewing process, if you can, ask the questions that have the most value to you. I was being interviewed for a consulting position, years and years and years and years ago, and this person was asking some really difficult questions that almost felt a little contentious. And I had to slow the interview process down. And believe me, I needed this job. This was not something that I could just dismiss and move on to the next thing - I needed this job. And so, I took a deep breath, and I looked at this person directly in the eyes, and I said, "Just so you know, I'm also buying here. I'm not just selling." That shifted the conversation dramatically. And I got the job. But my point is, find what's important to you, and find the courage to be able to ask the questions, so that you can land in a place that feels most aligned with your own personal values.

Roxy Manning 54:55

There's so much more we could go here, because I have questions around, well even if I knew my personal values, what are the questions I would need to ask to discern whether or not that organization aligns with my values. I wish we could have your organization support every young person out there before they entered the workplace.

Rajkumari Neogy 55:18

It's a goal.

Sarah Peyton 55:25

So, you had advice for people coming in. Since our focus has been on changing corporate America or inviting corporate America to new heights of possibility, what's your advice for people who want to contribute?

Rajkumari Neogy 55:42

I think how we get to the new paradigm, I think how we get to the new heights, is that we really look at how our own stories of trauma have conditioned our nervous system in ways that are creating us to withdraw, to diminish our own voice, to diminish our own power, and to diminish our own light. Once we start to allow ourselves to be who we are fully, that's when we can thrive and flourish.

Roxy Manning 56:29

Well, the last kind of advice question I'll ask then that's related to that is, what's one action you would invite our listeners to take that would get them started on this journey of discovering who they are fully?

Rajkumari Neogy 56:48

What's preventing you from sitting in discomfort?

Roxy Manning 56:52

So just that reflection.

Rajkumari Neogy 56:55

Dive deep into that. Because that avoidance is also preventing the relationship with yourself.

Roxy Manning 57:09

Wow. Rajkumari, thank you so much for spending this past hour with us. I wish we had twice as much time.

Rajkumari Neogy 57:19

Likewise. It's been such an honor to be with the both of you. It's so good to see you after all these years, Roxy and Sarah, always so wonderful to be with you. Thank you both so much for having me on your show. Such an honor.

Sarah Peyton 57:33

Of course. Thank you everyone for being with us. Please support this work in the world by going to our website antiracistconversations.com. You'll learn how to purchase our new books, *How to Have Antiracist Conversations* by Roxanne Manning and *The Antiracist Heart* by Roxy and Sarah and learn

about upcoming podcast guests and new classes. And we'll also have some information there - Rajkumari's contact information so that you can find Rajkumari's offerings. Rajkumari is continuously generative. So, stay tuned and we're just really glad, everybody, that you're listening and sending us little notes appreciation. We love them. Thank you.