



Episode 22: Mindful Travel and the Compassion of Discomfort with Dr. Anu Taranath

Transcript *(lightly edited for readability)*

[00:00:00] Roxy Manning:

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

[00:00:25] Sarah Peyton:

And I'm Sarah Peyton. We are delighted to be joined today by Dr. Anu Taranath. Dr. Taranath is the daughter of immigrants who grew up between two cultures. Her mission is to connect with and amplify the voices of those who have historically not been heard. As a scholar and academic, she also knows that racial equity work is challenging, emotional, institutional, and personal. She has taught about global issues, race, gender, identity, and equity to thousands of students, presented at high profile as well as more humble events, and collaborated with social change agents and innovative thinkers around the world.

[00:01:15] Roxy Manning:

Sarah, I was so loving the conversation that we had with Anu, because as an immigrant myself, talking with her about her experience of navigating all of the ideas that we have, that we learn as immigrants, about how to manage our position in society, and then dealing with all of the cognitive dissonance and shame that comes up when we realize we're doing to other people what's been done with us. It was amazing to have that conversation.

[00:01:43] Sarah Peyton:

I was really excited when she described her experience with global travel and how she came to write her very unique travel book, which is called *Beyond Guilt Trips* and invites us to travel with an open heart in an entirely different way than anything I've ever seen anyone else offer.

[00:02:07] Roxy Manning:

There was a story she told that you were super excited about, right?

[00:02:11] Sarah Peyton:

I loved the story. This unexpected long-term friendship that arose for her with a tailor who had a little, a little stall on the street that she was on in Ghana and how to this day she continues a connection with him.

[00:02:27] Roxy Manning:

Mm hmm. And part of why I like that story was it really lifted up the importance of like really seeing and hearing and valuing people when we're wanting to do anti racist work and work that's around essentially building beloved community. So, when Anu talked about how we move past all of the checklists, you know, like, here's what we need to do in order to be antiracist, to really focusing on the kind of contemplative inner practice that's necessary and essential, I felt a lot of resonance and hope that this is somebody who's doing work that I want to lift up in the world.

[00:03:02] Sarah Peyton:

And Roxy and I hope that you, the listeners, enjoy the conversation with Anu as much as we did.

[00:03:21] Roxy Manning:

So Anu, welcome. The question that we ask every guest is, how do you define self-compassion and what role has it played in your work and your life?

[00:03:31] Anu Taranath:

Thank you. I love that you start out with that question. Self-compassion for me has looked probably different at different stages of my life. I'll tell you a little bit about what it means for me now at this stage. It means grace. It means honor. It means openness to sit in discomfort. self-compassion means knowing some things, not knowing everything. And being perfectly fine with that, without any guilt and shame and hiding and fear. Self-compassion feels like strength.

[00:04:20] Roxy Manning:

I'm hearing this huge degree of self-acceptance as part of self-compassion for you. Like really accepting what is.

[00:04:27] Anu Taranath:

Absolutely. Yes. What about you? How would you say it for yourself today?

[00:04:34] Roxy Manning:

Yeah, you know, actually for me, self-compassion is that combination of self-acceptance but also of patience. Like there's a part of me that so wants to get everything right, to do everything, to support everyone, to create change in the world. And self-compassion is also holding that with a lot of tenderness and understanding why that's important to me and just having patience with where we are now and the slowness that change can take.

[00:05:04] Anu Taranath:

Yes. Yes. I like that. Thank you.

[00:05:08] Sarah Peyton:

I like Roxy's definition too. I also add the self-accompaniment, the sense of just walking beside myself and being a support and a acknowledging voice.

[00:05:19] Anu Taranath:

Oh, beautiful. We often think about life as walking alongside others. There's something so lovely about being able to walk alongside ourselves, no?

[00:05:31] Sarah Peyton:

Yeah, absolutely. So here you are. You told us at the beginning, before we started recording, that you were in Ghana for a month. Today you're in Salt Lake City. You're all over the world and you wrote about being all over the world in the book, *Beyond Guilt Trips: Mindful Travel in an Unequal World*, would you be willing to speak about what moved you to write this book?

[00:05:57] Anu Taranath:

Yes, thank you. I wrote this book for a few reasons. One, because I had never seen anything like it. I had been shepherding students, college students, to different parts of our vast, complicated world, especially the black and brown parts of our vast world, for years and had been noticing and teaching them to notice how the travel felt, what it means to be a somewhat more privileged person in an unequal world, in some ways, and what one does with these experiences when one comes back, how it connects to racial justice here in the U. S.. What are all these links and conversations that we were having on my programs, but I didn't really see and hear too much about elsewhere. I started having students who I did not know line up in front of my office during office hours saying my roommate was in a class of yours or someone I know was in a program of yours a year ago, and I just came back from Peru, and I really need to talk about my experience. I really need somebody to help me process what I felt and saw and heard and experienced there. And not seeing something like this in a book form made me step toward it, somewhat hesitantly, because though I am, as some people say, a world traveler, I'm not always sure how to do it well. I am an expert in some ways, but I'm also learning alongside the people that I'm with.

And so, what would I say in a book? I don't quite have the ten steps to be the most mindful traveler ever. But I do have stories. I do have thoughtful questions. I do have tools and strategies to stay more present in the discomfort and not fall in the discussion, fall through the discussion, and fall away from the discussion. I've got some skills to help keep us at the table with some strategy and some grace. And so I started writing. I did not know that this would turn into a book. I started writing because the stories were in my head and they were just so present. I needed to

type them out onto my computer into a file and at some point realized, I got a lot in this file. I wonder if I can do something with it. So, that's the book that you have in front of you.

[00:09:02] Roxy Manning:

I'm really curious, and I bet our listeners are too, what were some of the challenges that the students were experiencing when they went on these trips? What were some of the stories that they were telling themselves that made it hard?

[00:09:17] Anu Taranath:

Well, the book is filled with stories of many of young college age students. It's also filled with many of my stories throughout my life as a traveler and many other travelers of all different ages. What unites many of these stories is our good intentions. We are not trying to be harmful when we travel. And yet, in an unequal world - an unequal, unjust, and unfair world - we are already positioned as people who have more, or people who have less. People with that blue passport privilege. People who will never be able to come to our place the way that we are entering into their place. People who have enough for a plane ticket, people who will, again, never be able to amass that kind of wealth and dream of going elsewhere. And these experiences can feel complicated for those of us that are thinking about justice and identity and belonging and integrity and creating more spaces where more of us have dignity and safety and spaciousness, right?

If you weren't thinking about any of these things, then, you know, go and have a good time and people come back. We have plenty of travelers like that, but we also have plenty of travelers who are wrestling with questions like this, and are also catapulted by their curiosity and their desire to connect in however small ways with people both like and unlike them.

So there's a lot that connects many of the stories, no matter what age the traveler is or what kind of travel they're doing. And another thing that I thought a lot about as I was writing this is that one need not get on a plane to be a mindful traveler. Mindful traveling for me is any time that we are seeking to connect with somebody who is not ourselves. There's travel involved in that. I need not go far to find myself confronted with differences in experience, in identity, in values, or perspectives, or ways of living, culture, language. The world is anywhere we want it to be. The world doesn't necessarily mean we have to go far. We have to think about what kind of lens we are bringing to our everyday so we can see more of the world in our everyday.

[00:12:06] Roxy Manning:

And there's something really powerful, as you say, this piece, because I think there are a lot of people who think about inequities as it's us here versus all those folks over there, and they don't recognize or even see that those exact same inequities happen right here and that we can bring

the same critical thinking to how do we engage with it and how do we engage with it in a way that creates change and isn't about collapsing and guilt.

[00:12:33] Anu Taranath:

Yes, you know, the things that we see abroad - based, of course, on where you are going, and also from where you are coming, right - the things that we see abroad, yes, might look different than the context from which we're coming. I don't doubt that. There are some pockets of the globe that are so over resourced, and some pockets of the globe that are woefully under resourced, yes. And when you are crossing that kind of divide, there is a stark difference between public amenities, the condition of a road, healthcare facilities, the quality of life and life expectancy of people. These differences absolutely do matter. In some situations, our travels to places unlike ours might be less stark. Right?

So this lens, this traveling lens that the book is inviting us to play with, this traveling lens allows us to engage with a sense of ethics around it. To engage with a sense of history, but also to engage with deep, deep curiosity. Nobody can solve everything that's in front of us. That's not the point of being a mindful traveler, to solve it all.

[00:14:01] Sarah Peyton:

So true. How old were you when you started to notice the injustices in the world? Where did your mission begin in a way?

[00:14:11] Anu Taranath:

I would say I noticed difference as a young person being from an immigrant family in this country. Being a person of color, being not black and not white in a black-white framework was a odd place to be. The racism of my youth was certainly an odd place to be, and the self hate that I was unfortunately consumed with at different stages of my youth also contributed to my sense of noticing. That's not how I feel now, thankfully, and I've done a lot of thinking and growing and stretching from when I was a child. But I've noticed. I've always noticed who's in the room, who's not in the room, what this feels like, who's uncomfortable.

Of course, I had no language for this as a younger person - it just read as a knot in my stomach over and over again - and only in my college days did I realize that there were whole fields of study on these issues. I couldn't believe it. It was unbelievable, gold-pot-at-the-end-of-the-rainbow joy to know that there are people around the world who had been thinking and studying and discussing these kinds of topics. It wasn't just me and my thoughts on my own. And that really just pushed a lot of these ideas forward in my head. So that's probably where some of this started.

[00:15:55] Roxy Manning:

There's so many questions I want to ask, and I think I want to stray a little bit from where I thought we were going to go, because I'm really curious. This piece that you name about being an immigrant who is not Black or white in a world that's framing a lot of racial injustice or racial inequities as black and white is something that very few of our guests have touched into and, you know, don't have their own lived experience. And it's also one that I find fascinating. I had a little bit of that experience. I am black, but I was an immigrant black person and there's another whole layer of what it means to be a black American versus an immigrant black person in the United States. So I'm actually wondering if you could speak a little bit about some more about that experience of what it meant to you and how you saw that difference happening as a person who wasn't fitting into this dichotomy?

[00:16:46] Anu Taranath:

You know, as a younger person, I had a very strong sense of family. My family was very loving, very supportive, very sweet. They also did not have language to talk about any of the things that we were experiencing. People yelling at us in parking lots, "go back to your own country," things like that. Being pushed down the stairs. Children wouldn't give me space to sit on the bus. I mean, all of that, again, I had no language to discuss and also no place, no container, to hold all of that.

In addition to my own experiences, which were peppered by those painful moments, as well as lots of love and connection in my family, there was a sense also as I grew up that the kind of brown that we were was different than, say, the kind of brown that Mexicans and other Latinos were. That was clear to me in the worst way possible, I think, as a younger person. There was a sense of confusion around what it meant to be this kind of brown, while we might be thought of as a different kind of brown. I see in retrospect how easily I had imbibed the hierarchies of the United States, where, unconsciously, white folks were on top, black folks were on bottom, and we brown people were trying to sort ourselves out in that hierarchy. And we as immigrants from India imagined that we were somehow different than Mexicans and Latinos in our community. And again, I had no language for that. As a younger person, I remember feeling this, but no language for it.

And so part of my political awakening and my expansion into self-compassion, as well as empathy with and for others, and practicing solidarity, was really staying with myself to unpack some of the hate and fear that I had been taught about different communities and different groups, to unpack those hierarchies and binaries that had felt so present in my youth, and to really kind of think through the shame that that stems from. Right? Trying to say, "No, no, we're not like them." If you are self-actualized and have a good sense of self, no one needs to say that. Right? Those statements are statements of insecurity and fear. And so unpacking that, kind of getting, getting

right with myself felt really important before I was able to hear and appreciate the stories of others. I had a lot of garbage inside of me that I needed to tend to and really sort and sift through for me to have more of a clean heart to then invite others into companionship with me. Yes.

[00:20:01] Roxy Manning:

I am so... It's so resonant, everything that you're saying, because in my sense that's part of the challenge of being an immigrant, and especially a Black or Brown immigrant, is this idea of how do I find my belonging? How do I find my place where I know that I have value? And we are taught that you can get your belonging if you, you know, kind of put yourself in this hierarchy and make everyone else less than. And it's such a painful... and like you said, it engenders so much shame in recognizing that we have become part of the problem and that we have to do our own work in order to cleanse ourselves of that poison. So I'm so really moved that you spoke this.

[00:20:45] Anu Taranath:

And this is, you know, there's a little bit of nervousness in even saying some of this out loud, right, because that's not my politics now. And yet I can't pretend that those hierarchies and that shame and that hate wasn't a part of my coming up years. Nobody sat me down and said, "Anu, let's make sure that we are more like these people and less like those people." Nobody had to say that out loud, and yet, how is it that I and you and so many of us have internalized this? Where does that come from? It's so powerful and yet it's unspoken, unstated. Right?

[00:21:27] Roxy Manning:

And I think that's why it's important that you're saying it. Because when we don't say it, I think the shame becomes so much when we notice ourselves thinking it, that we don't have a framework to make sense of it and to unpack it and to work with it.

And so I'm so glad that you're naming; this is not unusual, this is part of how the system's designed. And we have to be able to talk about it in order to change it.

[00:21:50] Anu Taranath:

Yes, I think that's a great point. The system is absolutely designed to make us feel this and to stay silent about it because that's how it continues and perpetuates.

[00:22:00] Roxy Manning:

Exactly.

[00:22:01] Sarah Peyton:

One of the things that you talk about and you write about is the importance of becoming more comfortable with discomfort. And obviously we couldn't even be having this conversation unless you'd done a lot of work to get comfortable with discomfort. Say a little more, if you have anything

to say, about why this is important and also, kind of, what are some tools for people? How, how do you invite them into becoming comfortable with discomfort?

[00:22:28] Anu Taranath:

You know, as I think about my own journey, I'm not quite sure how I became so comfortable with discomfort. I don't have a particular defining moment where I thought, Aha, now I get it! I think it's a collection of small moments, deepening awareness, and also a desire to do something different than what I was taught. There are many things that I have loved, uh, being taught about, there are also many things that I have felt impoverished because I wasn't taught, uh, it well or properly or deep enough. And sitting with discomfort I think is one of those skills, strategies, and realities that many of us have not had much practice conceptualizing or learning how to be okay in.

You ask about tools and ways to invite a little bit more comfort into our discomfort. I can share a couple of them that have been really useful for me. Well, it connects to what we were just speaking about before that silence, shame, and guilt is rooted in fear, it's rooted in power, it's rooted in hierarchy, and it's rooted in disconnection. So part of becoming a little bit more comfortable with discomfort is knowing that the things that we are thinking and feeling are probably not so unique. We are wonderful and special in our own way, and we're just regular, lovely, flawed humans doing the best we can with the context that we come from. There's something so base about us and really tapping into that non-specialness has helped me feel more brave in my discomfort, because I know that I'm not the only one feeling uncomfortable, how could I be? There's no way that I could do all that work in my own head by myself.

There are systems that are designed to make us uncomfortable because it protects the power. It makes sure that we don't ask critical questions and labels those critical questions as uncomfortable to make sure that we steer away from more truth-telling. And once you start seeing that, stepping into discomfort becomes not simply an individual act, it becomes something powerful and collective for me, right? I still might not like it, let's be clear. Just because I'm more comfortable navigating my discomfort doesn't mean I necessarily love sitting in discomfort. But I know that I will be okay through it. I have faith and trust that I will be okay through it. That I've got a good foundation underneath me. And it will help see me to the end of this moment. I have faith in that. And that's for me, something as a facilitator and teacher that I seek to inspire in the people I'm working with. I've got faith that you're going to be okay, baby. You'll be fine. It won't feel good. You won't love it, but you'll be okay. Let's go there. We'll be all right. Come, let's go together.

[00:26:12] Roxy Manning:

There's something powerful, even in this piece, about the role of accompaniment, of being able to say that you don't have to do this alone. And one of the things that you do is help people learn

how to have these conversations, not just in the discomfort, but to actually speak about the topics that are really challenging. Could you share a bit about the kinds of conversations that you model and teach for people?

[00:26:35] Anu Taranath:

Well, I do a couple of different things, which means I have a couple of different kinds of conversations. In my undergraduate college classroom, I am inviting students to think about global issues. I'm inviting them to think about feminism and international feminism. I invite them to think about travel, belonging, difference, who they are.

I'm also inviting them to pay more attention to what's happening in their minds. We are very noisy these days. Our minds are very noisy and, more and more in my classes, I am somehow steering perhaps away from the formal curriculum of what's on my syllabus and really having conversations with young people about holding steady in conflict, navigating discomfort, how anxiety lands on us, and strategies to move through that with a little bit more sweetness. These are the conversations I'm having a lot with young people.

As a consultant and facilitator... actually, now that I think about it, I'm having the same conversations with many of the people I partner with, even if they're not in my classroom. As a facilitator, I am in and out of a lot of different organizations that have their own histories and their own dynamics, and as an outsider, it's a really beautiful experience to step into something that I don't know too much about, and to get really good at reading the room and feeling and sensing dynamics between people, and somehow knowing, on a really good day, the conversation that the group really needed to have that they hadn't been having. And I do that a lot in different spaces, kind of spend a little time, get a sense of what feels really sticky and why and gently bring people toward that stickiness with a few more skills and a sense that I've got them - that container. I try to create really solid, yet flexible, container for us to travel the road of that journey.

[00:29:00] Roxy Manning:

When you support these kinds of conversations, and especially when, again, accompaniment keeps coming to mind, when you're able to let people know, "I got you, baby, you're not doing this alone. You've got support." What do you see coming out of these conversations? What kinds of transformations and shifts have you noticed?

[00:29:18] Anu Taranath:

The shifts that I see are tremendous. I can't think of a single person that I've worked with that isn't looking to be more seen, heard, and valued for who they are. And when we are able to step into difficult conversations, sensitive spaces, spaces filled with hurt and harm and history, but also

spaces that might have a little bit of openness for some healing and repair, people feel seen, people feel heard, people feel valued. And that is not a small thing at all. That is *everything* I have come to learn. It's *everything*, right? That is what I'm wanting to do more and more and what feels so relevant in this particular moment that we're in.

[00:30:14] Roxy Manning:

You know, when you said that, "seen, heard and valued," I connected back to what you were talking about in terms of shame, right? Being able to have these conversations where shame comes up. And I think that's what prevents so many of us from going into the discomfort; "But if I tell you the truth about what I was thinking or some of the beliefs I had, I'm not going to be valued or you're not going to see me for all of who I am." And so, like you said, this is not a small thing. I think this is the essence of what it takes to be able to help people have these conversations.

[00:30:46] Anu Taranath:

It's a hard time right now to speak openly and honestly, right? It's a tough space that we're in to be able to say, "Actually, I don't know enough about your experience." Or, "I'm so consumed by the noise in my own head, perhaps I don't even know my own experience very well." Or, "I don't really get how history isn't just history." Or, "I don't know what it means to live in an actual multiracial, multicultural community, together." These are difficult questions. They're not an easy yes-no answer kind of question. They're questions that invite us to shed some of our armor and to be more vulnerable and honest and open and human with each other, but it feels really risky to be human. It feels really risky to be a learner these days because somebody can take a sentence that you say out of context and say, "See what Anu said? See that? See how racist she is? See how... whatever... she is?" And it's not that I don't have things to unpack. I mean, who amongst us doesn't have things to unpack and learn and stretch and deepen, but we are shaming one another for not knowing everything. And that feels so dangerous and damaging. And so in all the spaces that I'm in, I try to protect us to be able to learn together, learn without shame.

[00:32:24] Sarah Peyton:

So we've been talking about discomfort and about the importance of creating an environment where people really can feel that their own voice matters, in every case. As you think about this experience, do you have a story you could tell us a little bit about how someone responded to someone else's story, or an opening that you saw when you were accompanying undergrads traveling all over the world? Is there anything that comes to mind that takes us a little bit into your world experientially?

[00:33:00] Anu Taranath:

I can tell you a story that I was just thinking about earlier today. This happened on a previous trip to Ghana a few years ago. This time I wasn't with students or with a group. I had gone on my own to have some meetings with people in preparation for something that I was hoping to lead the following year. And the place that I was staying, a small, little, temporary cottage in a compound, there was a tailor who was on the compound, and I was in a small little room. Most of the other people who had rented small rooms were white. I was the only person of color in that rental place. And every time that I would walk by to go to the shared bathrooms, he would kind of take a look at me, I would take a look at him, and he acknowledged that I was different than the others. I was also a good 20 years older than most of the other white folks that were there. So I think because of age and race, I was seen as a little different. So this tailor nodded me over, I went to him, and over the course of a few days, he said to me, "You are like us. Your people are like us." And after some questions, I understood him to mean, because I wasn't white, because I was... my family is from India, that in his mind, Indians were closer to Africans than white folks were to Africans. And so he said, "See, you're not an Obruni, you're not a foreigner, you are a woman of the soil, you are like us, you are here from here." And it was a very confusing statement because there was some pride in being seen as someone different, there was some sweetness in the ways that he was sharing his camaraderie with me, but I was also insisting to him, "But I am an Obruni! I am a foreigner! This is my first time in your country. I have been in Ghana for a total of five days. I know so little. I'm a learner." And that conversation, we continued. I stayed for two weeks in that small place, and so we became friends there and I've seen him every subsequent trip that I make to Ghana and we are on touch weekly on WhatsApp. So it's a very sweet relation that we've cultivated from that original little stand that he had his sewing machine in.

But it's really inspired big questions in me about what it means to belong, what it means to be seen as an insider or an outsider. What does it actually mean to have solidarity for others? Who we are is not only about how we think of ourselves, it's also about how others see us. So I might think of myself as a foreigner and a Obruni and a learner, but if my friend is imagining me as something different, who's right? Who's right in that? So my friendship with him over the last six years has just opened up lots of big, big questions. So I love that that small little nod that he made for me to come over and talk to him kind of has led to all this. And I'm so grateful to have done my work and my heart cleansing to be open to sweet little spaces and sweet little moments like this, and to not shy away, not be worried, not think, oh, no, no, I don't want to, I'm gonna offend, and all of the noise that we often get caught up in, I'm so glad sometimes to have the wisdom to have a heart scrubbed of all of that and to just stay pure and clean and open to the moment in front of me. Because who knows? You have these little tender exchanges and they stay with you for a long time.

[00:37:20] Roxy Manning:

I'm kind of smiling as I hear this story, both for the sweetness that when we're open and we don't have these preconceived notions, just this idea of possibilities, when we're really just drawn to being with someone, what could emerge?

But I also... when you said, "Who's right?" I'm kind of going, "Both of you are!" Right? And it's how can we sit in that complexity, that nuance that there doesn't have to be one or the other that's right. You're both speaking to different things.

[00:37:45] Sarah Peyton:

Now I'm starting to wonder how the world has, has made use of your book and what kind of reception you've received and, and whether there's been any pushback or whether it's been open arms.

[00:37:58] Anu Taranath:

I would say that I had a lot more pushback before the book was published, because it took me eons to get the book published. I sent it to a gazillion different presses and agents, and nobody was keen to pick it up. Uh, or if there was interest, there was some questions about how an academic like me could write an accessible book filled with stories and no footnotes throughout it.

How is that possible? Where will we sell it? Where will we place it? Is it academic? Is it trade? Is it... who is this for? I think that confused and tripped up a lot of potential publishers toward the beginning because they didn't quite know what to do with a book like this. It's multi-genre, there's a lot going on in it, and yet it's a clear narrative voice, creative non-fiction, along with a workbook and a guide.

After the book was published, however - by a very lovely small social justice press based out of Toronto called Between the Lines - after the book was published, a few months later the pandemic began, and nobody was traveling, and oddly, the fact that the travel industry ground to a halt enabled a few key readers in the travel industry to pick up my book and share it with their communities.

So my book, within a few months, became book club books for some big travel organizations who were already thinking about some of these big questions and who were looking for some resources and a guide to help them navigate some of these tricky, sticky questions. The book is being used in numerous international education and study abroad contexts, both at the high school, the college, and the graduate school level. It's being used as a racial equity and a DEI book for offices to come together with, for DEI committees to read together so they can strengthen their vocabulary and get on the same page. I just presented it at a big travel conference yesterday.

Tomorrow, I'm going to keynote a different conference that's filled with emergency room physicians and health care providers who are working in indigenous native lands across the country, and they are reading my book as a way to deepen their conversations about race and power and all of this. So it's the most delightful thing in the world to have something that was in your head first and to now see it on a page and to have those pages circulate in such different sectors. It's pretty astonishing, it's humbling, and it fills me with incredible, incredible joy that people are resonating.

[00:41:14] Sarah Peyton:

I feel such delight hearing this!

[00:41:17] Anu Taranath:

Thank you! Me too! You can see the big smile on my face.

[00:41:22] Roxy Manning:

And I love the idea of the pandemic actually slowing everyone down enough that people weren't doing the kind of, we're just traveling and we're traveling and we don't have time to think. It's like, we get to think about this. And then we really get to think about how it applies much more. Exactly like you said at the beginning, it's not just about the travel out there, but also what are we doing here locally? That's another form of travel.

[00:41:44] Anu Taranath:

One of the things I've heard is that there are few spaces where we are not shamed and not blamed in this learning journey of ours. And my focus on providing that space has felt very welcoming to some readers.

[00:42:02] Roxy Manning:

I think this is one of the reasons I was so keen to have this interview with you because one of our mutual students slash colleagues was really talking about the resonance of both of our approaches in terms of holding a lot of care, a lot of compassion, and a commitment, a fierce commitment to creating this space for people to have these explorations without judgment and shame.

[00:42:25] Anu Taranath:

Yes, absolutely. Yes.

[00:42:28] Roxy Manning:

So, Anu, you know, I'm definitely hearing that your book is providing huge opportunities for reflection and thought for people who are interested in this kind of work. What advice would you have for people who are wanting to support change in our world?

[00:42:45] Anu Taranath:

Change in our world is never just out there. Change in our world is also stepping into ourselves with more tenderness, with the self-compassion that we began our conversation with, with more inquiry, with more deliberation. As a younger activist, I thought that social justice work, human rights work was all out there. We would see it realized in our policies and our procedures on our streets. That's where it took place. And the more engaged I am in this work from multiple levels, the more I now know that nothing out there is happening unless it's also happening inside us. So there's a very contemplative approach to my social justice work, to my activism, to my facilitation or teaching, where I am inviting people to be able to slow down enough to even notice how things are landing. To notice what feels sticky. To notice where there's resistance, judgment, shame, fear, guilt. Because if you and I are operating from the judgment, shame, fear, and guilt, how do you think our policies are going to turn out? How do you think our organizing is going to turn out? How do you think anything that we're doing so called in the real world is going to turn out?

There is such a deep connection between our energy in and what comes out. Such a deep connection with that. So that's some of how I begin my work with people, really inviting them into this kind of a conversation and seeing where they're at. Right? For some people, this will feel like, oh, it's too inner focused. It's not action oriented. I love that, because I hear it from a lot of different people I work with; "Yeah, yeah, yeah, let's not talk about all that. Just tell us the 10 things we need to do to, like, not be racist anymore." And, humans, unfortunately, don't run on lists of 10. We run in a variety of ways. We run amok in some ways, and we can also run toward the light with some guidance. So it makes me laugh when I hear potential clients or people I work with say, "Yeah, just, give us the five tips. Just tell us what to do." And I say, we will definitely talk about what to do, but you're going to have to slow down a little and talk about what's coming up for you and what's going on and what you're not talking about that needs to get talked about first before I look at your DEI plan and give you some suggestions, because there are connections and links between them.

[00:45:45] Sarah Peyton:

Well, here we are having had this amazing conversation and we're sort of coming towards our close. What actions would you want our listeners to take? Reading your book seems like a wonderful action. Do you have a website that you have people sign up on to follow you?

[00:46:01] Anu Taranath:

People can find me on Instagram. They can find me on LinkedIn. And I have a website also, if they'd like to learn a little bit more about me and my work, yes.

[00:46:13] Roxy Manning:

And we'll make sure that all of our listeners get those links when we share the podcast.

[00:46:18] Anu Taranath:

Great. So delightful to be in conversation with you both today! Thank you so much! It feels so generative and there's a deep calm in my body. I can feel it somatically, the energy of the three of us in this conversation, thank you so much.

[00:46:37] Roxy Manning:

I think you've spoken exactly the words that I would want to share in closing. I felt so much resonance in the approach that you're bringing to this work, and especially this invitation to slow down, to self-connect, and to really have our consciousness be the place where we start. So I'm so glad you were here with us.

[00:46:55] Anu Taranath:

Oh, thank you so much, Roxy and Sarah.

[00:46:57] Sarah Peyton:

Thank you, Anu.

[00:46:59] Roxy Manning:

And then for our listeners, we'd love to have you support this work by both going to Anu's website, and we'll make sure that you have that link, and then also going to our website, antiracistconversations.com, where you'll learn how to purchase our books and you'll also find information about upcoming podcast guests, new classes, and as I mentioned, the links to all of the places where you can connect with Anu. Thank you.