



Episode 39: Season Three Finale With Roxy Manning and Sarah Peyton

Transcript *(lightly edited for readability)*

Roxy Manning 00:17

Welcome to Fierce Compassion where we reach for the power of self, connection, true-telling and transformation. I'm Roxy Manning.

Sarah Peyton 00:27

And I'm Sarah Peyton, and today, we're closing out Season Three by doing something special, turning the conversation inward.

Roxy Manning 00:36

See, this season finale is a chance for us to reflect together on what we've learned, what stayed with us, and what's stirring as we move forward.

Sarah Peyton 00:59

We usually begin by asking our guests how they've been offering themselves self-compassion. So Roxy, what's one way you've been caring for your heart lately?

Roxy Manning 01:09

That's a really great question. Lately I've been trying to just slow down. I think that especially with everything that's been happening politically, and then also just family challenges, I always feel like some urgency to rush to the very next thing, and so I've not been taking time to just actually slow down and sit with my heart.

How am I actually feeling about everything that's going on? Where am I creating the time to grieve, to mourn, to let myself vent, right? So I've just been taking time to say, just pause, breathe, and feel. What about you?

Sarah Peyton 01:48

Well, since the current administration went into effect, I have been in the emergency room twice trying to deal with the level of stress that I experience. It was like having to get into a boiling hot - get thrown

into a boiling hot mineral pool where my skin was being flayed off, but my personal support - making sure I get support two or three times a week, just kind of working with each level of intensity that comes through.

Like, for example, waking up in the middle of night worrying about all the folks whose Social Security checks aren't arriving or, you know, wanting to bang my head against the wall about education and the losses that we're seeing in science. Good lord, my beloved science. And at the same time, also just really leaning into gallows humor as much as possible. Yeah...

Roxy Manning 02:41

I think we sometimes underestimate, like sometimes we just have to laugh at the absurdity.

Sarah Peyton 02:48

Oh, my God. Oh my god. And then the global media saying that there were only 100,000 people who marched in the United States on the fifth [April 5, 2025] when we got drone views that, where we can, you know, you could physically sit around and count millions. They're closer to the estimates I'm seeing that are more realistic, are between two and five million. So I mean, we need to also just be another way I'm doing self care is to be really sure that I'm tuning in to alternate sources of media because the the big media now is not a place to find realistic information about the resistance.

Roxy Manning 03:29

Yeah, and that kind of speaks to like one of the purposes for which we founded this podcast, which was around truth-telling, lifting up the voices of people who are trying to raise awareness about different ways of thinking, different sources of information, different experiences. So important.

Sarah Peyton 03:45

And different levels of wonderful commitments - folks who run for office, folks who are involved in supporting people who who are suffering in the in the aftermath of this, of this particular election. Yeah, there's been, there have been so many ways that our guests have really been on the ground - real contributors.

Roxy Manning 04:09

Absolutely, absolutely.

Yeah, you know, it's funny, like every conversation I have these days starts off with this crazy political moment that we're in and the impacts of the results of our last major election. And I know just like us, so many people have been deeply overwhelmed, feeling despair, outrage and even numbness. So it feels like this moment is actually asking something different of us. So I'm actually curious, what does fierce compassion mean in this moment that is so painful for so many people?

Sarah Peyton 04:49

Well, just recently, I was kind of appalled to get into the listserv of a professional organization that I'm a member of where I've kind of stopped contributing. It's like six years ago or so, because there was such a backlash against privilege. And I was like, no, actually, that was - I got off that listserve. And I was

like, Roxy, we got to do something. You were like, Yes, I will do something. And we, you know, you wrote your book, and we wrote our book together. And I'm so satisfied with that. That just brings me joy every day, that we did that, that you did that with me, and that - yeah, just so, so much joy.

And so I get on this listserv again. I'm like, Oh heck, they're still doing it. They're doing this same old thing. There's a protest against a DEI page for the organization. I took a look at what this letter was that was signed by 100 members of the thousand-member organization. And it was all the jargon from right-wing anti-critical race theory. And I was like What the f'in f, and I said I like the DEI page.

Somebody said to me, well, then you make a strategy with these 100 people who have joined this letter. I said, No, I am not gonna - I've done what I want to do. People want to know what I think, you can go and read the book that Roxy wrote, the books that - the one that Roxy and I did together, I said, I'm not, I'm not in this conversation with one person against 100, you know? It's not going to happen. And that was my fierce compassion - was like, no, not going to do it. Been there, done that, took a different avenue. Yeah.

Roxy Manning 06:36

I love that. Like fierce compassion actually starting with ourselves, and in these times figuring out what is it that I actually have capacity for? Right?

Sarah Peyton 06:46

Yeah, yeah, yeah. What's it been like for you? What's been, what's your fierce compassion been of late?

Roxy Manning 06:51

Yeah, well, I mean, a couple - so many different things come to mind.

You know, I actually am also a member of this organization you're alluding to. It's been interesting because it's been really clear to me that the kind of one-on-one, one-off conversations are just not working for me. They don't feel effective; they don't feel transformative. And so part of that compassion is dealing with all of the kind of stories in my head that say, Well, if you were a good activist, you would be engaging with these people - that you should be doing something. And I've said no.

I've also said no when people have reached out to me and said, Do you want to write something? Do you want to say something to this? And I've kind of said no.

But what fierce compassion, which for me, is also related to activism, has meant is I've been thinking, what is mine to do in this moment, and where do I actually feel that I will have an impact?

And I've had a couple of places where I've stood up. Like with this organization, I've actually been helping some folks, two different sets of folks who are writing a counter letter, right? Who are kind of saying, Hey, this doesn't actually stand for us, and we believe there are other people who don't stand to this. So I know there's going to be a petition coming out soon to say, Hey - if this is what you stand for, sign this petition, right?

And then giving feedback to somebody else who wrote a really thoughtful, wow, kind of like, super academic article that kind of helps to analyze the moments that we're in. But I actually want to share story with our listeners.

Sarah Peyton 08:28

Yeah. I love it.

Roxy Manning 08:30

Yeah, the other way that I remember, like, you know, our listeners probably know that I do a lot of work supporting organizations who are interested in standing up to what's happening right now. And right during the inauguration, we had that, like, amazing act of courage from that Reverend who was doing the - what was it called? The inauguration religious ceremony, right? She stood up and she spoke directly, like an act of speaking truth to power. And the day after she did that service, I got contacted by a Catholic organization that said, Would you do a workshop for us?

And I usually, you know, I was raised Catholic, and have had my own relation to that. And I usually have not engaged. And they were saying, we want to be like this. We want to stand up. And I said, Yes. I actually said, Yes, I'll do this workshop at way below my normal rates, and it was the most inspiring workshop that I've done. I just completed this last week. It was so meaningful to see these women, African women, women from Mexico, women from the US, were all saying, and these were all nuns or nuns to be saying, This is not what we believe in. We want the Catholic Church to stand for women's rights, for political rights, for gender equality. One of these women was one of the first women who came out as an out there nun, right?

Yeah, so that for me, is also fierce compassion - finding the people who are doing the work, and finding ways that I can trust that I'm having an impact on multiple people, and putting my energy there.

Sarah Peyton 10:11

Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Yeah.

Sounds like we've kind of been answering a question of how to stay human in inhumane times, and what our responsibility is as people who are practicing compassion. Sounds like really listening to our own bodies and noticing our own capacities and also noticing where do we want to put our life energy? Do you want to waste our time arguing with people who are deep in the weeds of conservative anti-critical race theory, or do we want to actually work with people interested in listening to us?

Roxy Manning 10:50

And you know, I actually think there's room for both, right? Because, you know, 10 years ago, I was that person who was like, I'm going to engage. I'm going to have all the dialogs. If someone said, Hey, let's do this public dialog about this, I said yes to many of those. And I always think, it's like there will be people who have the energy, desire, willingness to do that. Thank you so much. I am glad for people who are willing to put their energy there, because it is about showing up for those dialogs with compassion. But I also am glad for the folks who are saying, that's not my, you know, that's no longer

my baliwick. I'm going to put my energy on, you know, supporting the people who are doing the work, doing something behind the scenes, like it's all necessary. And building compassion for wherever we find ourselves called feels so important.

Sarah Peyton 11:36

Oh, beautiful. Thank you. Roxy.

So when you think back on this season, was there a moment that really stayed with you? We had amazing guests, Kit Miller, Jade Sasser, Staci Haines, Monique Gray Smith, Tiakosin Ghosthorse, Dr. Carolyn Finney, Rainbow Markel - who, what's what's lighting you up?

Roxy Manning 12:00

Yeah. I think one of the guests who've really just - I remember her interview, and I was in tears during her interview, was working with Monique Ray Smith, right?

And if our listeners remember, she is the indigenous elder at this point from Canada who writes like, just books for young people, right? Books for little ones, and then books for teenagers, books for adults that really explore the indigenous experience, but from a place of like healing and resilience.

And the moment that stood with me was when she was talking, you know, we could see behind her in her living room, the school where her mother had been held - you know, basically incarcerated as a youth, and just the power for her about the transformation in her lifetime of her parents being forced to be in these Indian schools and her family now owning property that overlooks these schools, that says we have the right to exist. We have the right to be in spaces where we previously were denied, and just the grief that she had around seeing that she had recently lost her mother, and yeah... That was a powerful moment for me around the power of reclamation and kind of the enduring, lifelong path that it is to change these systems. That was a moment that spoke to me.

Sarah Peyton 13:31

When I'm thinking back, I think about how inspired I was by Ben McBride, and when he said, we're in a - we're not in a political conflict, we're in a moment of a spiritual crisis. I thought, that is so inspiring. And I've had my own internal dialog with that over these months since we had that conversation with him, and part of my dialog has been if it's spiritual, doesn't mean we just give up and leave it to some sort of - you know, where does it... Where's the, where's the ground to stand on if it's a spiritual matter?

Roxy Manning 14:13

Yeah - like, is it supposed to be about acceptance versus, you know, doing change?

Sarah Peyton 14:17

Yeah, right. And I'm really, you know, totally interested in change. At the same time, my research this year has been about how corporal punishment is linked with conservative voting and conservative political standpoints, and just really starting to see the impact of unacknowledged trauma on our world. And just finished a beautiful summit where we brought neuroscientists to talk about what is the impact. Corporal punishment is physical abuse, and that it does impact the brain, and that it's like visible. We

can see the way that it impacts people. And so kind of standing here with this mixture of activism and kind of struck dumb-ness, looking at the impacts of trauma in our world, yeah...

Roxy Manning 15:16

You know as I hear you talk about this link, and you know, it's a link that I can imagine many people are surprised to hear, right? It also helps me really appreciate the work that our guests did, that there's so many different avenues and so many different ways that we can actually create change. So, you know, if one of the big things we did, given this link, is we helped parents be more compassionate, more gentle with their kids, to do power-with parenting, instead of this kind of domination kind of parenting - What could that mean 20 years from now, when those kids grow up and have the power to vote, right? They see themselves as more empowered citizens who are included in the decisions that impact them, who get to question things that impact them, right? Instead of thinking that, when I'm in power, I'm just going to submit and control everyone else.

Sarah Peyton 16:04

Yeah, that's a beautiful invitation. So I was kind of sharing a little bit about how I was both inspired and challenged by Ben McBride. Do you want to mention any moments during this season that you kind of chewed on or worked over, or came up against?

Roxy Manning 16:23

The coaching call that I did with Savannah, and that one was a really interesting question that was posed, which was, when someone does something that impacts us, and it's a person with some structural power over us, right? This choice around, Do I speak up when I experience a microaggression and risk losing so many different things? How do we both make that decision? How do we choose, when do I risk? When do I not risk? And then, how do we speak truth to power in a way that still preserves our capacity to do the things that we want to do in the world. And I think that was the challenge, one of the challenges that Savannah was pointing to, which was, if she spoke up about this comment that the person made, would she lose the capacity to have the kind of shelter, the kind of support that will allow her to continue to develop herself, to do the kind of work she wanted to do in the world?

And that's a question that I'm always struggling with, and that people come to me and ask about, right? They're in an organization, and there's a whole bunch of harm happening. Do I stay in the organization? In fact, the conference that I just worked with, right? That was a big question for some of the first sisters in that organization. If the Catholic Church is still very anti-LGBTQ rights, am I part of the problem if I stay in organization, or is there some value in being a nun in a system that doesn't actually uphold and see part of who I am?

And so that's one that I continue to wrestle with, and that, you know, it requires so much exploration for self compassion and then the ability to think, where am I having an impact? When I stay in this organization, am I actually creating space for more people to see themselves and to see them feel empowered to say I can actually change this organization, or am I actually just making the organization continue to exist and continue to harm? So that's one of the things that comes up for me as I think

about one of the episodes that really stood with me. Sorry, one of the episodes that really stayed with me.

Sarah Peyton 18:30

Makes complete sense to me. That makes me think about my own questions about organizations that I belong to. Should I stay with this organization? Is there enough shared value here for it to continue to nourish me and my continued participation?

Roxy Manning 18:48

Yeah, and I think like over the years, I've been looking at some of the organizations I've either been involved with or supported, when that question comes up, I think there's a question for me of hope, right? In some ways, that question is also the larger society. Wow. I'm going to say something incredibly vulnerable, because today is April 9, and on April 11, my son ended his life. And I think this actually is one of these fundamental questions about being human in the society that we live in. This has been coming up for me a lot these last few weeks. So many of us, so many young folks, are giving up, right? They're choosing to opt out of living in this crazy, horrendous world that we've been given. And so the question for me, fundamentally is, if I have to exist in this world or on a smaller scale, in this organization, how can I survive? What can I do to change it? What can I do to give myself some hope that it's not just about giving up, and I think that's where I end up, that I don't want to ever feel that my only option is to leave, to leave the organization - to leave this life. I want to find ways to continue to sustain myself and to thrive, sustain myself and resist. And you know, I honor, I honor with so much grief, the people who say, I can't. Either I need to leave this organization or I need to leave this life. And I see it as a failure of everyone around us to like, find a way to support folks. So I do honor it, and I do acknowledge that sometimes that's what people have. But for me, I need to stay. I need to find ways to stay and resist, and I want to support other people to be able to do the same.

Sarah Peyton 20:39

Beautiful - this is a real example of one of the many ways that part of the gift of doing this work, doing the books with you, doing this podcast with you, has really been something that nourishes me, being able to to kind of carry an internal Roxy with me, who has this capacity to to see with clarity and to hang onto hope, but also to be really clear about capacity.

Roxy Manning 21:08

Yeah, yeah. And it actually brings me to something that, you know, we've learned over and over and over from our guests, that this piece around building capacity is also around, what are we doing? Like, you know, we started this call saying, what are we doing to sustain ourselves? And then the other question is, what are we doing to sustain the people around us? To sustain the folks who are deeply impacted by what's happening, the folks who are at risk for being targeted right now, and the folks who are doing the work of trying to support the people, right? How are we supporting and sustaining each other?

Sarah Peyton 21:41

Yeah - part of the way I think that we've been sustaining each other and and our - the people who listen to our podcast is by doing the podcast. It's been such a pleasure to hold as a mission, the honoring of

all different kinds of activism, the honoring of song, the honoring of drum playing, the honoring of community work, the honoring of...

Roxy Manning 22:12

Of education... Yeah, yeah...

Sarah Peyton 21:41

Yeah, yeah. We've done over the years of the podcast, we've done opera and painting and just like so many. There's our wonderful person who kind of held the places of education and stand-up comedy, or one person performance art together with. Yeah. So we've gotten to touch a lot of different streams of ways that people contribute here.

Roxy Manning 22:43

Absolutely. And, you know, again, it's kind of like, I'm seeing this theme today about finding ways to lift up and support, however it is if we choose to show up. And I also like to think about some of the like, very small, practical ways, like, what are the things that we can do, that our listeners can do, that can help support each other? And I think they go like, when I ask myself that question, it goes from the really small, tangible piece, like I was talking about at the grocery store, right? You're standing in line. And, you know, sometimes you're standing in line for three minutes, you can have an incredibly empowering three minute conversation that lets another person say, I see you. I see your humanity, right? You can welcome that person, or you can kind of say, you know, I've had people tell me about horrible things that people are saying to other folks standing in line in the grocery like, go back to where you came from. So we're always at choice. Every single moment is a choice to lift up or tear down somebody. And so how can we find those moments to lift each other up and to take actions on them? Those little tiny moments that add up?

Sarah Peyton 23:58

I love the little tiny moments adding up. So that sounds like a real longing that both of us share for our - for the folks who are listening. And I also have always hoped that one of the things that we were letting people dream into and hold with care is the question of like, what is my authentic contribution? How do I - how do I want to show up? Do I, am I, you know, am I making signs? Am I marching? Am I writing a play? Am I doing a blog? Am I posting photos of the drone shots of the millions of people who participated in the April 5 marches. Yeah, you know what... that it's that it counts. It all counts, and finding our true voice is part of the beauty of it.

Roxy Manning 24:55

Yeah, and you know when you say that, I would actually ask everybody listening right now to hear my question, then pause the podcast and answer it, right? So my question is, think about the different spheres of influence that we have. So there's the personal share. What is an action you can take that supports you right in this moment, that sustains you, that helps you thrive? It could be going for a walk. For me, I take lots of pictures of beauty, of flowers, of bees, of things that make my heart remember that there's beauty in the world, right? And then think about the interpersonal sphere. What's one thing I can do to lift up one person around me, right? Can I make someone a dinner? Can I take someone else for a walk with me, somebody who's feeling disheartened and hasn't left their house for a couple of weeks.

Or can I drive somebody to the March if that's what they're wanting to do, even if I'm choosing not to go myself, right? Because we might choose not to go out if we worry about our safety and the family we have back home, there's no way I can support someone. And then when we think about that larger systemic sphere, what's one thing you can do there? Maybe it's marching, maybe it's calling your elected official. Maybe it's, you know, writing a book, you know, or hosting a podcast, or writing an opera, like, what is the one thing you can do that can reach many people's hearts and minds? So I think, yeah, I'm gonna invite you all to pause and answer that for each of these three questions.

Sarah Peyton 26:25

I'm leaving a space, even though we asked them to pause it. Yeah, yeah. So, so let's do like a forecast. Let's think about, let's think what do you anticipate is gonna happen as we're moving into this volatile year? What's your thought about what we can anticipate?

Roxy Manning 26:55

It depends. If you ask me to game out what's the worst that I can imagine happening versus what's the best that I could imagine? Right?

Sarah Peyton 27:03

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Roxy Manning 27:04

And the best is really, really, really optimistic. And I admit that. I acknowledge that. But the best is that, tragically, in some ways, that people start to notice - like everyone, regardless of your political viewpoint, starts to notice the ways like we are each individually being impacted, and that we start to see the neighbors around us who are being impacted.

And I remember reading a news story about the horrible immigration deportation laws. The journalist was talking to people who had voted for Trump, who had voted for Trump because they supported what they understood his vision of immigration to be. But those people, like one person, who really stuck in my mind was a family, a white family in the south whose daughter had married a Mexican immigrant who was undocumented, and that person had been in their family for, I think 20 years, had grown up in the community. Was a huge member of the community, coached Boy Scouts and baseball and did all of these things. And they said we never thought that it meant that person. We thought it meant the horrible criminals, right?

So I want people to start seeing that these executive orders, these laws, are impacting every single person in our community. People's access to food when they go to school; people's access to health care; people's comfort and trust that they're going to be taken care of in their old age. And that people start to say, not in my name, not in my name, and then they start to take action. And exactly the kinds of actions like I just described. Maybe they start reaching out to their neighbor who's feeling afraid. Maybe they start doing voting rights and supporting people who are trying to change these laws, but that every single person sees - really truly sees past the rhetoric and sees the impact and takes a stance to say, not in my name. And that in another year and a half - that we change the constitution of the House and the Senate. That's my big, big dream.

Sarah Peyton 29:15

I love that dream! And I'm 100% behind it. Okay, so you sort of hinted that you would do our worst case scenario. Let's do a worst case scenario and then pull out of the nose dive somehow.

Roxy Manning 29:31

Do you want to say the worst case scenario? What's your worst case scenario?

Sarah Peyton 29:37

Oh, gosh, martial law, repressive punishment, the use of the IRS as an arm of domination and retribution, the complete loss of judicial power to be used in any way except for personal retribution.

Yeah, that's sort of the nightmare. And every morning I wake up and I'm like, well, have the folks who've lost enough money started to shift yet? I mean, have they lost enough money to begin to pull the plane out of the nose dive? Are we? I'm looking for - Yeah. I'm just so interested. I mean, today I was reading about the treasury bonds, because the whole global economy is being affected. The Treasury bonds are being affected, which is where Marjorie Taylor Green stuck her money before Trump announced the tariffs. So I'm like, oh, what's gonna happen? I mean, there's a part of me that is like, what's gonna happen, what's gonna happen next? I mean, I'm just like, we've entered a world beyond predictability, in a way. Yeah...

Roxy Manning 30:44

Yeah, and so that actually brings me to and, you know, it's a little outside the scope of this podcast, but I'd love you, Sarah, to talk a little bit about what people can do to support their brains and their nervous systems in these times.

Sarah Peyton 31:00

Oh, as much emotional support and laughter as possible. I'm, myself, have upped my - in order to get my health back on track and stay out of the emergency room, I'm getting two or three sessions a week to help me mourn and worry and love and, you know, kind of get back, give myself really grounded in my love. You know, it's, it's, it's the thing that helps our brains the most.

Roxy Manning 31:28

Yeah, and I love like when people think about as much emotional support as possible - you know, this is the importance of empathy skills, of attunement, of being able to grow our capacity to hear somebody's despair and rage and pain and not get sucked into it ourselves, right?

Sarah Peyton 31:47

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Something here about really taking our own body and its response to the times seriously so that we can take care of it, rather than minimizing it and saying, Well, everybody's having a hard time, so I don't need any extra emotional connection, but actually, everybody's having a hard time, so all of us need more emotional connection.

Roxy Manning 32:10

Absolutely, it's really thinking about what are the practices I can put in place, and really leaning into community in so many ways, community for that one-on-one connection. You know, you mentioned laughter, right? Like, who are the people you're getting together with, just for play and fun? And so many people are minimizing that now. They're like, it's too urgent, right now. We're in crisis. How could you talk about play and fun? I'm like, how could you not? How could you not in these times, right? That's what sustains us.

Sarah Peyton 32:40

Yeah, yeah. And, and I know that, you know, some of the arts organizations that I love the most are losing tens of thousands, even millions of dollars. So it's like, you know, how do I also make sure to let these organizations know how much I love them, and - absolutely, yeah.

Sarah Peyton 33:02

Well, everyone, thank you for traveling with us this season.

Roxy Manning 33:13

And as we close this chapter, we want to share that the future of the Fierce Compassion podcast is still unfolding, even though we deeply, deeply believe in the power of these conversations, we also recognize that continuing this work relies on community support.

Sarah Peyton 33:31

If this podcast has touched you, moved you, or helped you feel less alone, we invite you to become part of sustaining it.

Roxy Manning 33:39

If you want to make a contribution to this work, you can connect with us by either writing fiercecompassionpodcast@gmail.com or reaching out to Sarah or me using the contact forms on our websites.

Sarah Peyton 33:55

Your support will help determine whether and how fierce compassion continues.

Roxy Manning 34:01

So stay tuned. Stay brave and stay strong

Sarah Peyton 34:06

Until we meet again. May you be gentle with yourselves and fierce when it matters most.

Sarah Peyton 34:28

Thank you for being with us. If you enjoyed this episode and are finding value in these conversations, please help us spread Fierce Compassion by taking a moment to share this episode with a friend and rate and review the podcast on your podcast app. This helps others find us, and helps make sure these conversations reach everyone who might benefit.

Roxy Manning 34:52

If you would like to receive live one-on-one coaching from Sarah or me on a special episode of the podcast, or you want to find out more, follow the link in the show notes, or visit our website. You can find our books: *How to Have Anti-Racist Conversations* and *The Anti-Racist Heart*, and learn about our podcast guests and new classes on our website, antiracistconversations.com.

Sarah Peyton 35:18

And Roxy and I love teaching, and we're always offering new classes, courses and other opportunities for learning in our own individual work. You can visit us at roxannemanning.com and at sarahpeyton.com to learn more about our individual offerings.

Roxy Manning 35:37

We hope to see you