

Vidya Shah ([00:00:07](#)):

Welcome to season two of the UnLeading podcast series. I'm thrilled to be back alongside Jocelyn Shih and Amanda Lima to explore questions, wonderings, tensions, and contradictions in leadership. UnLeading invites us to consider not just what leadership is, but who we are as humans that deeply influence who we are as leaders. It's an invitation into the questions and to lead in ways that invite us to bring more of our whole selves, to the work, to see leadership as a practice and possibility of liberation. I'm so deeply excited to introduce this topic and the wonderful panel we have joining us in conversation today, folks who span community, who span the academy and schools. If you wanna learn more about our panelists, you can find their full bios on the UnLeading webpage at www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading. Today's topic, ugh, it's so near and dear to my heart, the inner landscapes of leadership. And when I think about what leaders in various capacities in the not-for-profit sector, in schools and academies, when I think about what they're navigating in these times in particular, and the tremendous ways in which we are often asked to lead away from ourselves, to lead away from what we know to be true, to lead away from what brings us joy and fulfillment, away from our deepest knowings. I think this podcast is extremely timely and relevant. Today we're gonna be exploring the connections between our inner lives and our outer presence and work in the world. We're gonna be thinking about how our fears, our fantasies, our desires, and our worries all influence who we are and how we lead, whether we're conscious of them or not. And the significance of awareness, healing, embodiment, joy, creativity, and liberation in leading and living. Our conversations will engage us in reflexive inquiry as we think about how do we make sense of the discrepancies between our inner lives and our outer presence in the world? Who do we need to be to live and lead with greater authenticity and wholeness towards liberation? Finally, we're gonna think about and apply our understandings of these conversations in the work we do in communities, schools and academies. On a personal note for me, leading has become a journey of self discovery, fodder for a deeply reflective experience of life. And I've been most fulfilled in my work and most connected to my colleagues, to students, to folks in community when I've had the courage and the support to bring more of my whole self to this work and to engage in the deep personal reflection about who I am in this shared space. I'm really excited to introduce Michael Saver and Jamea Zuberi. Both of whom are very dear people to me who will be opening up our podcast for today by sort of setting the tone and sharing the framework. And Michael Saver is an educator and facilitator with the Center for Courage and Renewal and Jamea Zuberi is an educator and community activator. Welcome Mike and Jamea.

Michael Saver ([00:03:47](#)):

Well, thank you Vidya, and to the team for the invitation to participate in this discussion. And we look forward to the insights shared by panelists, Yami and Sharon, who I know you'll be introducing soon. My friend and colleague Jamea Zuberi, and I will share ideas in part from the work of Parker Palmer and the International Center for Courage and Renewal, which is an organization we're both engaged with and whose mission is to support the inner landscapes of leading and living. But I wanna begin with two quotations and the first one is from Yolanda Cornelia, Nikki Giovanni, Jr., American poet writer, commentator activist, and educator, who says, "If you don't understand yourself, you don't know anybody else." And I've also mentioned Parker Palmer, activist, educator, author of the *Courage To Teach* who writes, "I will become a better teacher, better leader, not by filling in the

potholes in my life, but by knowing them so well I can avoid falling into them.” I've been an educator for a long time and once upon a time Ontario Faculties of Education stressed the need for educators to leave their personal lives at the door of the school. Aside from the fact that this advice is impossible to put into practice, this perspective advanced the dangerous fiction, that educating is a largely objective process and that the inner lives of teachers and students had little relevance for it. And this patently rational male and white perspective was held to be particularly true for educational leaders. Hence the Ontario Educational Leadership Framework, which describes school and system leadership, where it draws upon personal leadership resources to effectively enact leadership practices. So it's clear from the framework that inner resources, such as emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are foundational to educational leadership. They even sit as foundations to the columns of leadership practices that are delineated in minute detail in the framework, yet personal leadership resources are only briefly described and nothing descriptive of the intersectionality of identities is included. It's largely assumed that leaders already understand and possess these inner resources, an assumption that all too often results in misjudgments requiring damage control. If education is to be more than the transmission of information, if it's to engage students in the critical questions of our day, ecology, social justice, anti-racism, sustainability, truth and reconciliation, anti-transphobia, anti-homophobia, then it must be recognized that education is a relational process. It must respect and engage the inner lives of students and encourage there to be as little gap as possible between the identity and integrity of educators and their way of knowing and being in the classroom. Parker Palmer notes from our first days in school, we're taught to listen to everything and everyone, but ourselves. To take all our clues about living from people and powers around us and yet, teaching like any truly human activity emerges from one's inwardness for better or worse. As we teach, we project the conditions of our inner lives onto our students, our curriculum, and our way of being together. The difficulties we experience in the classroom are often the result of this. For example, if I am fearful about my authority as a teacher, I can make a student's resistance to learning appear to be about my authority and control rather than understanding what is actually going on for that student. Jamea is now going to continue to open up some perspectives on leading from the inner landscape.

Jamea Zuberi ([00:08:36](#)):

Mike's sharing leads us to the notion that as educators, that if we are not in tune about what is going on inside of us, as teachers or teacher leaders, we then bring this lack of awareness into the classroom or schools and impose our belief and practices on students and communities of students. Which then put us in the position to possibly commit what was named as spirit murder by the African American Law Professor, Patricia Williams. Professor Williams states, that schools can be institutions, which force ways of being, learning and growing on students, which is much different to their own connection to self. I would like to now turn our attention to culture and identity as social constructs and places and point of negotiation, which can lead to inner growth and even healing. Stuart Hall, the Cultural Theorist notes that culture can present itself as a site of negotiation, where power and privilege can be interrupted, where each group of people can take up and create space for who they are and what they know the world to be, and therefore, extend this notion to what they want the world to become. So it is a concept that I hold very dear to my heart and I extend with students and communities where culture is valued by the individual and the communities. In schools we have the power to create spaces for this to happen. So cultural construction can be closely connected to identity. According to Law Professor, Kimberlé Crenshaw, identity is not a singular

construct. It can be seen as a relationship or relationships between people and histories and communities and institutions. She states that schools have a social responsibility to commit to curricular development, to provide opportunities, to understand the histories that brought us here to this moment.

Michael Saver ([00:11:30](#)):

Thank you Jamea. And this really puts me in mind of students that I've seen over the years who come from Caribbean or African heritage or Indigenous heritage, and who are forced to create socially constructed identities that resemble my heritage more than their own because we only teach Shakespeare or we only teach history where their experience is absent. And this creates a gap between their true self, who they are and their expected way of being in the world if they're expected to show up somehow like me.

Jamea Zuberi ([00:12:08](#)):

Good point, Mike. Professor Crenshaw would agree and has stated that schools can indeed use their power to change the academic outcomes of students and therefore transform communities. One such example is developed by folx who include, Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings in the practice of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. I would extend this to self, the inner leadership practice in classroom starts with the teacher, as the leader showing up as their authentic self and facilitating spaces with students and communities where they can be their authentic selves in the learning process. This leads me to ask, do our socially constructed identities have an impact on our inner landscape and how we teach and therefore lead in classrooms, schools and educational institutions? I also asked the question, is it possible to decolonize or shape the inner landscape? I personally have often turned to the inner landscape to negotiate and create a place of healing, a mentor and university Professor at the University of Toronto Njoki Wane states that the source or goal to healing is to connect or reconnect with your authentic self, your knowledge of self, showing up as one's authentic self and the relationship between this process or journey with our inner a landscape can be that tool of healing. I would have to agree with Professor Wane. Speaking truth to self serves as a good practice on the journey of educational leadership transformation.

Michael Saver ([00:14:34](#)):

Developing the strength and courage to lead disruptively for anti-racism and anti-oppression emerges from a clarified sense of self as a leader. For example, I must recognize myself as a leader who is racialized as white, is cisgendered, is sexually oriented as gay and queer, who is privileged educationally, and economically. This layering of identities is not static, but changes throughout life in terms of their configuration and how I've understood them.

Jamea Zuberi ([00:15:11](#)):

A commitment to honesty, structured ongoing self-reflection is a non-negotiable for educators, especially educational leaders. As leaders, we connect who we are with what we know and what we do. This lessens the gap between our inner truth and ways of being in the world. Through this commitment to live and lead with integrity, transformation becomes possible. Resources in

pre-service teacher education and ongoing professional development for teachers and leaders should model exemplary practices in the service of clarified self knowledge.

Michael Saver ([00:16:06](#)):

Leading from the inner landscape involves recognizing that beneath the ego, super ego, ID, there's a core reality that's called by various names. Some call it the self, some true self. Our colleague Parker Palmer calls it the inner teacher, in some spiritual traditions it's called the soul. Perhaps it's best described as the being in human being. This self is the intersection of identities and integrity. It's a whole out of the fragments. And when I'm in touch with it, it enables me to be an active and compassionate leader. Dr. Richard Schwartz, founder of Internal Family Systems Therapy and whose description of the self makes sense to my experience, describes the self as having these characteristics: calmness, curiosity, compassion, connectedness, confidence, creativity, courage, and clarity. This is the kind of leader, the kind of person that I aspire to be.

Jamea Zuberi ([00:17:23](#)):

Mike, when I'm in touch with it, it also enables me to be an active and compassionate leader who is energized and feels grounded and in touch with my ancestors as an extension with community.

Michael Saver ([00:17:42](#)):

Now, let it be concluded that reflection in service of clarified self knowledge is to boost the ego, enabling leaders to self congratulate on being superior woke individuals. It's essential to recognize two things and then we'll bring our introduction towards a close. First, reflective practice is focused on gaining clarity about the whole of life, becoming more self-aware and accepting of both gifts and strengths, as well as challenges and limitations. This is a critical both/and. Much of leadership culture focuses on making the leader look good, rather than on understanding and accepting inner truth with humility. Achieving clarity about the self reveals both my humility and my courage, humility itself is both/and. To be humble is to recognize both my capacity for selfishness, fear, resentment and my capacity while recognizing those to choose not to act out of them. For example, to be courageous, even when I'm fearful, to care for others, even as I experience selfishness and self-centeredness.

Jamea Zuberi ([00:19:05](#)):

And secondly, this kind of reflective practice is rarely successful as a solitary endeavor. It requires the resources of a community as seen in circles like that of Black, African, Indigenous communities, and First Nation, Inuit, Metis, Indigenous circles. Engaging in an ongoing journey of self knowledge is kept honest and truthful by the presence of others who help create a safe and brave trustworthy space to articulate, reflect on and lean into self knowledge in service of change, personal, interpersonal, systemic, and ideological. All of which are necessary to transform educational systems.

Michael Saver ([00:20:00](#)):

Thanks, Jamia. And we're going to stop here to listen with interest to the perspectives and experience of our panel today.

Vidya Shah ([00:20:11](#)):

Wow, wow, Jamea and Mike, thank you so much for sharing those initial thoughts and words. One of the things I love the most is that there's so many ways in to understanding this idea of the inner world and in you sharing all of these different ways in, from just self awareness to ancestral knowledges and ways of being, to psychotherapy and family dynamics. All of these different ways into understanding the self provides such a rich opportunity for us to, to choose many paths in and to think about what that might look like for us. And I really appreciate centering this conversation in larger systems of oppression that we are operating in and to think about what those systems of oppression do to allow for the inner world to even show up. I think about in so many ways how fragmented and separate we are in this world and that the systems of oppression that we live in expect that, they expect us to conform to that type of separation and fragmentation. And what you all are offering us are our ideas for coming back to ourselves, coming back to an idea of wholeness which is a radical antidote perhaps to these ideas of forced separation from ourselves and from each other and from the environment. So happy to be in this conversation and so happy to continue the conversation with two amazing people. I'd like to welcome Yami Msosa, who is a strategic troublemaker and a lover of questions. Welcome Yami.

Yamikani Msosa ([00:21:58](#)):

Thank you so much for having me today.

Vidya Shah ([00:22:01](#)):

So happy you're here. And I'd also like to welcome Sharon Stein. And Sharon is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. Welcome Sharon.

Sharon Stein ([00:22:13](#)):

Thank you, thank you so much for having me.

Vidya Shah ([00:22:16](#)):

Oh, so we are ready to delve into more of this conversation after that beautiful opening, and Mike and Jamea, I will extend the invitation to continue to join in as you see fit, as we continue through this. So, you know, as we started all of the podcasts, the first question we sort of ask is an orienting question to help listeners sort of land in terms of what we're thinking about and how you are coming to these ideas around the inner landscapes of leadership. So I'd love to hear from you Sharon and Yami, what does leading from the inner landscape or taking the inner landscape into account, what does that look like in your everyday practice? Sharon, maybe we'll start with you here.

Sharon Stein ([00:23:07](#)):

Okay, thank you so much. Well, I guess I would just like to start also by kind of continuing your comment about the fact that we are not separate and there's a lot of illusions about that fact that we're separate from each other and from the land around us. And so I think in order to talk about inner landscapes, it's also important to talk about physical landscapes and just acknowledge that I

have the privilege of joining today from stolen territory. And recognizing that this question of where we are physically, really shapes and should impact how we are thinking about the inner landscapes of ourselves. So just recognizing that my ability to be here today is absolutely shaped by ongoing colonialism and that is at the expense of Indigenous peoples and asking how it's possible to support their struggles, to have their lands returned to them and the struggles of the land to have its people return to it as well. And also the colonial conditions that even allow us to be having this conversation too. The technologies and the minerals that go into these computers and different devices that are mined under, you know, very unethical and unsustainable conditions and all of that really shapes, I think, how I think about the inner landscape, because as you said, they're not really separate. So just being very aware that I'm in a particular place and also speaking from a particular place as a white middle class cisgender woman. And when I think about like, what does leading from the inner landscape look like in my everyday practice, I think I would reframe it slightly and say, you know, what does leading with a deep self knowledge of my inner landscape look like? And that is, as Mike and Jamea were sort of gesturing to, it's not just the good things, right? There's the good, the bad and the ugly inside that landscape. And there's, you know, gifts, as Mike said, and also challenges and limitations. And sometimes I would say maybe especially white folk like myself, we only wanna see the good parts of ourselves, especially those that have leadership positions and we're not necessarily always conscious of those shadow sides. And so in order to lead in a sober, mature, discerning, responsible way, we have to be aware of that full range within us. And that requires honesty, as Jamea was emphasizing earlier and hyper self reflexivity, humility as Mike noted, and also humour of, sort of, being able to see how ridiculous we can be and laughing at ourselves sometimes. I have a research collective called *Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures* that I work with, and a lot of what I'm talking about is informed by them. And we have this saying that, you know, we're all sort of cute and pathetic, and we need to kind of hold space for both of those things and understand that we're being ridiculous sometimes. And we need also people around us to calibrate that. And I think maybe why we're one of the reasons why we're in so many collective, social and ecological messes is because many people in positions of leadership are not calibrating their self knowledge about their inner landscapes. And there's a lot of clutter in there that needs to be cleared out and composted. So we are then projecting that onto the outer world from our inner worlds because we haven't worked through it and figured out what would be generative and what wouldn't be. And that, I think is really required in order to think about leadership as doing what you can do and what is needed, rather than sort of what you want to do and what makes you look and feel good. So it's not about being in self-service, but rather about being in service of something beyond yourself. And nor is it about self-sacrifice, which sometimes happens, you know, we go too far in that direction or systemically, we are sort of pressed to go in that direction and serve other people's egos and entitlements, especially Indigenous and racialized people of colour are expected to do that. So you can go sort of in many directions that are not generative, but finding that place of how we can be in service and do the most sort of responsible and effective thing in our context, which requires asking, you know, am I the right person to lead in this context? Am I bringing the right message to this context? Is it the right moment for this intervention? Am I using the right medium? Am I bringing the right vibe, right? So that what needs to happen can be moved in that space. But if we don't have the self knowledge of ourselves, if we're not reading the context and thinking about how we're being read, then we can reproduce a lot of harmful patterns in the process.

Vidya Shah ([00:28:29](#)):

I love that so much, Sharon, thank you so much. And you know, it, it, what really resonated with me, um, as you were talking is the importance of decentering the self. Even as we think, like we, it's almost like we go into the self to decenter the self. I just love that. And whether we're decentering in relation to, , land and other people, if we're decentering in relation to, we're actually not as great as we think we are, we're decentering, you know, we're, we're being honest and truthful and with humour, you know, it just, it takes a, the pressure off, but B it just, it, it allows us to show up actually as embodied humans with a whole range of experiences and expressions and realities that we get to actually bring into our leadership and not leave at the door to pretend that we're, you know, these plastic quote unquote perfect models of, I'm not really sure what so interesting. Yami, I'd love to hear your thoughts on this question, this idea of, um, and I love, , Sharon's reframing of it. So what does it, what does it mean to really show up and allow for these sorts of inner workings to, to lead you and to guide you?

Yamikani Msosa ([00:29:41](#)):

I appreciate that and I appreciate you, Sharon, really inviting us to connect with the land. I think when reflecting on this question of like our landscape one, I wanna name that, you know, I'm calling in today from the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat, the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabe and, you know, many Indigenous and like Indigenous and the complexities of indigeneity, communities who have steward this land that we that were residing on in terms of Tkaronto, and thinking about, you know, that lineage of landscape, of how I got here, being a visitor of the Algonquin territory for a better half of 20 years through forced migration, from Malawi. And really centering that that path of migration has had an important impact on how I view myself and how, you know, I'm in relationship with the outer world, as well as inner. And that my people are the Bantu people, they're the Ngonii people, they're the people of the water. And so how that also shapes my connection to water and how it moves through me and shapes how I show up in space as a shapeshifter. Consistently holding the complexities of being an insider and an outsider, even in this conversation. An insider in that I'm here with all of you, an outsider that nothing to do in terms of my day to day around education, an outsider as someone who is visibly queer, whatever the heck that means, and someone who occupies a body that is non-binary. And so, you know, when I think about the inner landscape of my practice as someone who is also embedded in the nonprofit world, quite deeply, consistently thinking about leadership and learning from the land that the inner landscape is one in which reflects the outer, that the ecosystems that we're consistently engaging with on a day to day guide how, you know, I show up, guide how I lead guide, how I'm in relationship with others as leading cause leadership is not a singular position. It's one of multiplicity and thinking about the ecosystems and how nature, you know, whether it's like thinking quite literally about the weather and how some days are rainy and some days are sunny and some days are cloudy. They all serve a purpose considering, you know, even the process of how to honour that in myself as I move through the world and honour that in others and have that actually, as I veer away from like the notions of competencies cause I think they're deeply rooted in like colonial practices of framing in the nonprofit world, but even thinking about, what would it look like to honour a rainy day in the context of showing up as a leader? And we're all leaders, right? I think part of our work, you know, Vidya, has been about decentering our conceptions of leadership within the nonprofit sector. And so, you know, the rainy days, the sunny days where I'm ready to work, I'm ready to show up, I'm ready to have the conversations, to the cloudy days where it's really hard to get up and how I can share those realities

with others. It also comes into play when I think about, I draw a lot on the work of adrienne maree brown and Prentice Hemphill and also ancestral teachings of the Ngoni people, who let me tell you resisted white supremacy in so far as there's very little, that's been documented around our cultural practices as a way to subvert white supremacy and this level of secrecy, which is like very much so embedded in me as someone who's very mindful of how much information I give, how I show up in space. But in coming back to nature as a teacher thinking about the process of mushrooms and that, you know, adrienne maree brown consistently talks about, you know, like how a lot of my work and a lot of like, thinking about leadership is about the seeds that we plant, the spores, like the early stage, there's lots of nutrients, which could be laying the foundation right, of how we connect to each other to the process of when it's like, where psyllium, if we're out here, like connecting with other people bringing different people in to have conversations. And I see this process as that, because we are talking about leadership, but we're talking about it in so many different vantage points, right. With so many intersections, not just identities, but like systems. And so that's a guide for me, right. That knowing that like the answer is not within one, but it's within all and many, and it's fractal, it's messy, it's coherent, incoherent. It's feeling, it's all of the things that my colleagues have shared at the beginning, but how we can look to that as a teacher in so many different ways. And I think that that's one element that really guides me and then not knowing, routinely staying in this space of, like, I actually have no idea. I have no idea. And being able to articulate that and continuing to articulate that as a practice of challenging white supremacy, which is always the knower.

Yamikani Msosa ([00:35:49](#)):

I just love all of that and you named two of my favourite teachers, Prentice Hemphill and adrienne maree brown. Yami, thank you so much. You know, one of the things this makes me think about is as you named sort of being an outsider to educational spaces, that's one of the things we've really tried to do with this podcast as well. When we're so insular in our own sectors, in our own spaces, so kind of sharing the same information again and again, what do we miss in that process of asking ourselves different questions, as you were saying, and kind of coming at this, you know, looking at it differently, invited to be different, invited to show up differently, invited to ask questions of ourselves from people who are, you know, connected to, but on the outskirts of "K to 12 education" or these kinds of spaces and what I appreciate so much about both of you Sharon and Yami, is the kinds of invitations you're inviting us into very much apply to leaders, aspiring leaders you know in education, but also beyond. And so I just wanna name that and say, thank you so much. And looking forward to continue to be in these questions and the messiness and all of that that comes this way. Mike, we'd love to hear your thoughts on this.

Michael Saver ([00:37:14](#)):

Think it was the reference to Prentice Hemphill and it made me think about that amazing podcast. One section was about conflict, and it strikes me in terms of leadership, that this is a major issue for most leaders on what is the role of conflict and disagreement in communities. You know, it's amazing, Pablo Picasso said that every active creation involves conflict because, you know, as soon as I put the paint on the canvas, it's no longer the canvas that was blank. As soon as I take the chisel to the marble, something different happens and that you can't build a community without dealing in some positive way with conflict. Yet, so many of our messages, I think about conflict come from early in life, where we become very fearful about dealing with people who have different perspectives

from ourselves. And so some of us were raised in very conflict, diverse settings in which conflict was not allowed. And so we get very anxious. And so we go into our heads and want kind of calm down any emotional expressions that happen, for some people conflict was always a competition that they had to win at. And so whenever that comes out in a community, the leader feels like, you know, if they somehow don't come out on top of this, that this is undermining their leadership, sometimes it's the need to get all the allies around and you see this happen in educational communities sometimes where the different perspectives comes out. And then I gather the allies to say, Hey, you know, I'm right, because look at all the people who agree with me. So I think that educators are really often called to navigate conflictual situations, in classrooms, in community gatherings with parents, leaders in schools with staff members. And so how to hold the tension of differences and listen for understanding rather than for the ways to win and dominate or to withdraw and just disengage. And so I really do believe that one important aspect of leading from the inner landscape is developing a positive way to deal with conflict.

Vidya Shah ([00:40:00](#)):

Thank you so much, Mike, and I know in work that we've done together often thinking and talking about this idea of the importance of conflict and reframing it as something that's nasty and negative to something that is actually quite generative. And for folx listening, the podcast that Mike was referring to is a podcast series called *Finding Our Way* that Prentice moderates and sort of organizes. And this particular podcast is one that they did with Kaza Haga called "Navigating Conflict", which is an excellent one. So we will link that on the webpage for sure. Jamea, I would love to hear your thoughts on this.

Jamea Zuberi ([00:40:42](#)):

I just wanted to weigh in terms of what Mike was talking about with difference and my recollection and what I've read. I think it was Jon Kabat-Zinn in their introduction to Ronda McGee's book, *The Inner Work of Racial Justice* talks about the notion of conflict and difference saying that if we, in our present state of expressing hate and differences, if we collectively, as human beings do not learn how to embrace difference in a more loving way, in a way that works, then we would not be able to sustain our existence. The amount of hate that is present and the way we deal with it is not going to allow us to move forward as humanity. So I just wanted to weigh in on that because I thought that was very profound for me, as much as we speak about being present in our inner landscape and creating that awareness once we have that deep sense or beginning, and the journey of our awareness, and we know that conflict and tension exists, we really have to embrace how we're going to exist together without actually having us all be the same. We have to learn how to our embrace our differences.

Vidya Shah ([00:42:23](#)):

I love that Jamea And it, it really makes me question, what do we need to make space for in ourselves, perhaps undo unravel to relate to difference differently? Why is it such a threat? Why is it so hard for some of us to be in the presence of very different radical experiences? And I, I, I share that also with the caveat that you know, differences in, you know, that, that, that not all opinions are, are, you know, there are some that are deeply rooted in, in the oppression of others. And so taking

that into account as well, how do we, how do we be in the practice of hearing each other being with each other, experiencing each other, experiencing ourselves. And I think so much of that is also part of what Sharon and Yami were sharing earlier about relating to, you know, decentering the human, right?

Vidya shah ([00:43:20](#)):

So now it's like, it's also, the world is happening to us. Like the, the environment is happening to us and land is happening to us as, and this idea that, you know, we are the controllers and the navigators of these spaces I think is deeply flawed. And we're seeing that with COVID 19, like COVID 19 as a whole you know, there's a whole agenda there that that is happening to us. And so to be in relation with all these pieces, I think is also such an important piece. This is so interesting. And leading us into sort of our second question, which is kind of continuing to delve in deeper. So Mike opened the, this this up with conflict and then Jamea added in this layer of difference. And I'd love to hear how, as we think about this, what does leading with integrity and wholeness towards liberation of self and community and the world, what does that disrupt in our normative ideas of leadership of society? You know, if we're, if we're thinking about this and we're thinking about the importance of the, the, the inner and the outer and the, the connections that are there and the land, and as we're thinking about all of these connections, what does that disrupt in very normative ways of thinking about the world? Yami I'd love, I'd love to hear from you on this question

Yami Msosa ([00:44:40](#)):

I appreciate this question so much in terms of thinking about how to lead with integrity and wholeness to disrupt normative ideas of how we've been socialized. I really appreciate and have been thinking a lot about this is in my day to day work around working with, with nonprofits who are thinking about racial justice and indigenous sovereignty and, and ways in which they can embed that into their ecosystems. And some of the things that have come up around leading with integrity and wholeness and disrupting that that I have been really curious about is, is that piece around conflict. Definitely. So to piggyback on that and conflicts transformation and how we can get like, super clear around what we need around the differences between like conflict and abuse disagreement and accountability, and what that looks like in the spaces that we're in. And there's, you know, I think we have a lot of, of, of teachers out there who are thinking about this, you know, in, in a way that moves away from carceral systems, because we know that our education systems, nonprofits, a lot of them do model carceral systems. And so in the context of north America, and so how can we, how can we examine how we are living that out and disrupting that by also reshaping how we think about conflict on the interpersonal, the personal and this level of systemic. And when I think about the personal, I'm thinking about that deep invitation to do self work, we always say like, the personal is political. We need to like start with ourselves. We need to unlearn, but what does that mean when we are in constant functional freeze and how that is embodied by different bodies. And there's, you know, I think we have a lot of, of, of teachers out there who are thinking about this, you know, in, in a way that moves away from carceral systems, because we know that our education systems nonprofits, a lot of them do Mo model carceral systems. And so in the context of north America, and so how can

we, how can we examine how we are living that out and disrupting that by also reshaping how we think about conflict on the interpersonal, the personal and this level of systemic. And when I think about the personal, I'm thinking about that deep invitation to do self work, we always say like, the personal is political. We need to like start with ourselves. We need to unlearn, but what does that mean when we are in constant functional freeze and, and how that is embodied by different bodies.

Yami Msosa ([00:46:39](#)):

So thinking about functional freeze , and I appreciate this teaching from Danielle Smith, who's a somatics practitioner that is local to Toronto. And she talks about functional freeze, in the ways in which our parasympathetic nervous system shuts down and how we are in a state of somewhat dissociation numbness, we feel trapped at times, and that how, like the pandemic, has been that layering. And then there's the multiple pandemics that we're in. And to acknowledge that we're in a state of functional freeze, as we're still doing things in the world, like, you know, in the work that I do, in the nonprofit sector and in community based work, thinking about how we can slow down and, and really notice even our states of reaction around conflict, where do you go? Are you someone that attacks others, attacks self, like really processing that because those conversations are really useful when it comes to talking about dismantling white supremacy on a practical level, if you're someone that is going to get activated and like freaks out, when talking about systems of oppression as a leader, that's something to notice, cuz that's gonna dictate how you show up right. So there's that deep level of embodiment that I think is so incredibly critical and taking time for that. So instead of the anti-oppression workshops terminology, what if we flipped it and actually just focused on ourselves and where we go in conflict, where we go in terms of our deep relationships, in our family of origin and explore that as a tool to be able to rethink our notions of leadership. I'm also thinking a lot about this notion of, you know, vulnerability and the vulnerability that that work takes and all of these concepts around, you know, vulnerability, wholeness, even care, collective care, they're ones that are disruptive because they don't fit into a neat package. They're not easily digestible. They require us to be committed in ways that are longstanding, no report, no recommendations from an organization, or an institution. I've worked in several postsecondary institutions doing EDI work. So, you know, speaking from that lived experience, those frameworks do require us to really dismantle the very systems in which we're operating. So it's, again, that insider outsider dance that we're consistently negotiating and the discomfort of that, cuz it's really uncomfortable. Right, in terms of not knowing just as just an antidote, I'm thinking about a conversation we had around, you know, working with an organization and them having amazing policies around equity and leadership and culture, but there was this dimension where it was like, okay, you have this amazing policies and practices that are rooted in anti-oppression that are rooted in sovereignty that are rooted in relationships. Why is it so difficult for us to enact them? And I think that, you know, part of that piece is, is really also, dismantling the ways in which we've been socialized within the nonprofit sector, around our cultures of work and how work and leadership at times our nonconsensual negotiations we have to work. Right. and so what does that mean when we're entering into spaces as a leader and navigating space?

Vidya Shah ([00:50:18](#)):

Yeah. I mean, so many, so many nuggets of gold there, you know, I, I, this, this piece around all of it, <laugh>, I I'm taking notes as you're talking the ecosystem, the functional freeze and I'm, I'm smiling, Mike and I have done some work with, with some leaders speaking exactly about this, that, you know, there's this, how do we actually do the work and be in the practice of what challenges the ways of being that challenge living in a, in a white settler state, you know, and that's, that's hard. And, and, you know, people, there's, there's a lot more comfort in learning about the terms in creating the policy. And I feel like moving through this work and the next level of this work, and maybe the first level of this work is really about what does it mean to embody and live in ways that fundamentally become responses and talk backs to how we are expected to live and navigate this world. And, and I think that's such a beautiful invitation, and I, you know, just for listeners, even if you find yourself caught up in the reading, the latest text about, you know, anti-racist education, which is important, don't get me wrong. This is my area of work. While that stuff is important. And while knowing the terminology is important, it's also questions of who are we being in this space and how do we think about the invitations to being differently so that we can actually navigate and create new possibilities for what it means to lead for what it means to learn for what it means to teach for what it means to live in community for what it means to be part of a larger ecosystem. And so, and, you know, really sort of opening up that invitation for all of us to be in that question, how do we show up in ways? How do we be, how do we be liberation? How do we be liberatory? How do we be just in human? How do we be, how do we actually be the very things that we're trying to lead for and lead as I think are some important questions. Yeah. Sharon, just checking in to see if you had any thoughts on this would love to hear from you.

Sharon Stein ([00:52:28](#)):

Sure. I think like you, I have kind of many different pathways that were activated by what Yami was saying, and also what you were just saying, but I absolutely resonate with this notion of, it's not about knowing differently or not just about knowing differently, but also about being differently. We, as you say, are not going to read our way out of colonialism, although reading is important <laugh> and I think that's like the go to, especially for white folks like myself and maybe especially white women, like we wanna start a book club and, you know, <laugh> maybe that's useful. But it's not gonna, it's not enough at the same time as you know, it's not just about knowing differently, but being differently. I know from experience how difficult it is for folks socialized within dominant systems and institutions to wrestle with the prospect of not just knowing differently, but being differently. It's really almost unintelligible because it's so deeply ingrained with us within us. And also because once we start to understand the notion of being differently, we see that number one, it's not about understanding, which is like what, we're not going to know exactly what it is before we do it. I can't handle that. <Laugh> but also we see that it's really difficult and it's painful, and it requires giving things up, giving up, not just, you know, material benefits, but also our notions of exceptionalism and entitlement and exaltedness and all these other things that we have been promised, what shifts, I think sometimes that resistance is once you start to not only know and read about, but feel a bit the costs of those entitlements and exceptionalism and other things, when you see that they are happening at other people's expense and at the expense of other than human beings and the planet.

Sharon Stein ([00:54:35](#)):

And it starts to be not just like an intellectual exercise, but rather a visceral one. Because when it's an intellectual exercise only, we're still doing the calculation the utility maximizing calculation. Well, okay, if I do this, what am I gonna get out of it? And then it's always gonna be at the very moment when you, you really need to give something up, like, why would I do that? Right. And the why is because you can't not, but that only happens if it goes beyond the intellect to your guts and your guts tell you like, no, this is not right or something else needs to be done, even if it hurts. And if it doesn't hurt at least a little bit, you're probably maybe not on the right path. <Laugh> at least again for folks in bodies like mine. But the process of seeing that it's not just intellectual work, but also as Yami was saying intellect affective and relational work is something that I, I spend a lot of my time thinking and feeling through that we, as Yami said, need to be very aware of how our responses can even betray our intellect.

Sharon Stein ([00:55:42](#)):

So we might have a, a sense that like colonialism is bad, both politically and morally, and we have this strong conviction, but once someone challenges us and say, oh, you're being colonial, or you need to give up this colonial entitlement, then we feel all these resistances in our body. So that's also the self-awareness it is needed so that when that happens, we can step back and hold space for that and not react and put that more labour on usually the indigenous and people of color who are often pointing that out and creating more and more work for them. And it's also that relational work. And again, it can't be utility maximizing relational work, where I'm doing it for a particular objective, but it's about the integrity of the relationship itself. And it, what I have come to know in an embodied way, <laugh>, although it's still very difficult is that we cannot know where we're going in this work. If we're really going somewhere different, we won't know in advance because if we do, then we're making a projection and then we're dragging everybody else with us. It has to be woven collectively relationally. And it's in that I see possibility the process and the learning and the mistakes along the way, and learning from those mistakes rather than saying, oh, we know where we're going. We just need to make a very clear, rational plan of how to get there.

Vidya Shah ([00:57:03](#)):

Sharon, I love this. And you know, what, what initially drew me to your work was this idea of fantasies and entitlements, the fantasy of safety, the fantasy of comfort, the fantasy of innocence, the fantasy of, you know, all, all these sorts of things that we are fantasies that we live in that are fake things that we're holding onto and grasping at. And it just makes me think about how, how much we have not allowed ourselves to live because we're holding on so deeply to those fantasies. And, you know, this last piece that you shared about entering into these spaces and really not knowing, I see so many examples of leaders doing and, you know it used to be non inequity, non anti-racist related work. And now it's very, you know, now it's really rooted in anti-racist anti oppressive practices by and large, but there's always a very clearly laid out plan as to how we're gonna get there. And this idea of not of being in the unknown, and the building together and the trusting the community to build, to, to trusting the collective, to build in ways that we might not know is a really scary place for a lot of people. But I hear you so loud and clear that we can't actually do this work by taking different terminology and using the same process of systems of oppression that have told us to be very linear, to be very predictive to control it. We actually have to be differently, not just in our persons and ourselves, but as collectives doing this work, we have to let go of some of that desire to know and

desire to control and desire to have power. Yeah. I so appreciate that. Yami would love to hear from you -thoughts that are emerging for you

Yami Msosa ([00:58:52](#)):

Thank you so much, Sharon. I was like dancing in my seat. You can't see cuz you're listening to this folks or potentially reading it off a transcript, but I was definitely dancing. Because it made me think of a recent conversation that I had around fantasies and imagination and the role that it has to play and many have said this about Octavia Butler, you know, the role that it has to play in our imagination, right. And right now we're in someone else's imagination. That's why a lot of things don't make sense, right? And that imagination is this white supremacist, terror patriarchal world that we're living in. Right. It doesn't make sense. So that dreaming and those fantasies that we can create, not only within our minds, but within our bodies is so powerful around, you know liberation and something that I've been leaning into and thinking about it as like a black queer femme in terms of, you know, even the power to imagine different, the power to dream the power, to fantasize about a different reality and what that in itself creates in terms of a, in terms of a different way of being an lexicon. But so thank you for that. And I just also wanted it, you know, as you were speaking, it made me think of you know, this notion of wholeness and the different bodies that are able to access whether through privilege and power, the ability to be whole, although I questioned that like to some degree we are fragmented and whole at the same time, but is bell hooks, invitation around truth telling and how as racialized folks, as black folks specifically, I'm gonna speak about black women and black femmes, but that notion of like, what, what is at risk in terms of wholeness when we tell the truth and how bell hooks invites us to truth, tell with ourselves at first and you know, how that shapes our communities, cuz we lie, right? We lie to protect ourselves, whether it's lying about the fact that like, I think about, you know, black leaders that I work with and how at times we, we lie about how messed up a meeting was or how we, we feel like it's an upward battle or, you know, we keep going and, and maybe the lie isn't that we're not telling our truth, but we're minimizing our experiences to exist within these systems and how that extends to different like dimensions of our lives.

Yami Msosa ([01:01:26](#)):

I think about the, for myself, the amount of times that, you know, I've, I've minimized or someone asked me, are you okay? Like in a leadership meeting, are you okay? Yeah. Oh, I'm great. I'm fine. You know, I can keep going. And, and so, you know, just that invitation to truth tell and how powerful that can be, but also how risky it can be for leaders who are racialized, because to tell the truth as a black body is to expose and that exposure can lead to more violence, but it's also part and parcel of our liberation to truth tell because then it lives somewhere else in our body and makes us sick. So yeah, it just made me think about that in terms of disrupting normative ideas around leadership and how we can show up as whole. So, you know, it's not this like utopian idea of like, yeah, we can talk about our lived experiences. No, there's a risk to it, but there's a greater risk to ourselves if we stay silent about our pain. Right. And the realities of how we navigate the world.

Vidya Shah ([01:02:30](#)):

Yami so powerful, so powerful. I was, again, folks, you can't see this, but I'm nodding away on the other side <laugh> talking to, but I'm conscious to mute myself. But so, so loving this conversation

and it makes me, you know, there's, there's the, the fantasy of wholeness is another fantasy and I'm so happy that you name that this fantasy that we can be in this place, and we can all just sort of be in this place where we're loving each other and whole and showing up in our wholeness, like that is, that is a beautiful dream to hold. And it is also a fantasy that we, we have to, we have to watch how we are attached to that. And I think, you know, this, this, what I, what I love about what you shared is this- I remember listening to a podcast that featured Trish Adobea Tchume and Ericka Stallings who do a lot of work around the liberatory leadership collective. And I hope I'm saying that, right, but we will link. We will link this podcast as well. And it's this idea that, you know, at times showing up in our quote, unquote, wholeness makes somebody else feel as though they're quote unquote wholeness is diminished. And so how do we think about this idea of recognizing how our wholenesses wholenesses it's a new word interact with and bump up against each other and are there definitions of wholeness that can, can capture and make space for all of that for all of the messiness and how as we are, as we are working towards liberatory futures, where we can bring more of that realness, that messiness, that ugliness, that, you know, happiness, that joy, that creativity, as we are working on, bringing more of these pieces of ourselves to the fore that we can in some way, make space for the messiness that will happen in relation between us and the power dynamics that are at play. And so I so appreciate you naming that and sharing that and Jamea, I see that you'd like to offer something as well, please jump in.

Jamea Zuberi ([01:04:38](#)):

What I was thinking was the whole notion of fantasy and how even the term does not come into my vernacular. And I do not allow myself that luxury of thinking about fantasies. I think most of the time as a black queer woman, I ground myself in such seriousness that fantasy is not an option. And because the fantasy time I imagine, or try to reimagine what was possible while I'm creating the possibilities. So it's a constant back and forth, a constant tension and liberation. I'm always working when it comes to my body and my voice, it's a constant. So when you all were talking about fantasies, I was like I don't think I could actually contribute in this part of the conversation because fantasy does not come in my vocabulary at all, including in my living and my leading. So I just wanted to put that point in there. And Yami, I wanted to, to echo bell hooks with Audre Lorde with regard to silence equals death, you know, and showing up with integrity and wholeness. One well, I don't, and I think collectively as African people and people of African heritage, we're not sure what wholeness looks like. And I would argue that by extension, most human beings, we're not sure what homeless look like, because we are trying to rediscover and go back to what was whole and not that the past was perfect, but there was a major disruption, over 400 years of disruption. So we're going back to what was whole, while moving forward to a better wholeness and that activity can present some complexities and it can also present a lot of harm. So again, Yami when you were talking about care, it brings me to education, the ethical standards for the teaching profession.

Jamea Zuberi ([01:07:17](#)):

You know, the four points we talk about are care, respect, trust, and integrity. And the conversation is just weaving in and out of that, this reality. And I mentioned to Mike earlier today that trust and the circle of trust that we have was very important to me in terms of coming into the International Center for Courage and Renewal, thanks to Vidya because it's the place where I can actually connect. And I love the phrase matching my soul to my role. And that phrase sums up the reason why I was

actually drawn to creating a community of trust, creating a community that can develop my inner landscape, not only as a teacher, but also as a human being to be able to take care of myself, to live with integrity, to be able to respect myself and by extension be a role model, not necessarily a leader per se, but a role model. So when I walk day to it's self development because I I'm still continuously learning on this journey, but also facilitating a space where students, families, colleagues can actually create their own spaces to show up on this journey of wholeness. That was what I wanted to contribute,

Yami Msosa ([01:08:58](#)):

Which is a full imagination. And I love it. <Laugh>

Vidya Shah ([01:09:03](#)):

I love it. I love it. And Jamea, thank you so much for naming how we take up this notion of fantasy differently. And while, while Sharon might mean sort of, you know, fantasies of comfort and, and, and security you're, you're also thinking about fantasies in terms of just the ability to be in a place of fantasy. And I loved what you said about how we are working towards and imagining the futures as we are trying to dismantle <laugh> what's in front of us. It's a, it, this sort of being, being in it while imagining is a really interesting place. And I so appreciate that. Thank you for sharing that. And so folks, this really nicely leads us into our final question. And this final question around the possibilities, what possibilities might emerge from building an awareness and embodiment of our inner worlds, our inner lives, our inner landscapes, and what do you hope that folks might take away from this podcast? And so maybe we'll start here with, with Sharon.

Sharon Stein ([01:10:04](#)):

I think, I don't know, <laugh> is my answer to follow Yami's comment earlier about admitting when we don't know. And I think that's okay. Because I think that's actually encouraging, right, because if it's actually something different, then, then we don't know yet. And it's something that some people call like the adjacent possible, like it's possible it's viable and possible, but unimaginable from within, you know, the systems that we're so deeply embedded in. But I, I really just wanna maybe continue also this conversation about the importance of relational work in this and how we have difficult conversations without relationships falling apart. How do we work with, and through difference and decensus? And I think, you know, we can have that intention, but again, it doesn't happen automatically because we are not actually usually prepared to do that. We bring the weight of history with us to these engagements, right? Our collective colonial histories, as well as our own sort of personal histories. So there's a lot of both like individual and collective work that has to be done in order for us to show up differently to this collective work. So we need to develop both individually and collectively the stamina to stay with this <laugh>, especially when it gets hard, because it's easy, you know, easier when everyone's sort of getting along. And usually it's when conflict arises that, where we see where we're actually at in this process, right. When things are going well, we tend to think that we're better prepared to do the work than we really are, and that we're further along than we really are. And then when the conflict arises, we see, oh, okay.

Sharon Stein ([01:12:00](#)):

When I had that resistance, when someone, you know, pointed out something I did, that was, was whiteness at play, then I see, oh, okay. I still have a lot of work to do. Right. so I think, you know, one thing that I have learned in doing this work, especially with my collective is that we, it's not that we're gonna have a blueprint to know exactly where we're going, but we precisely, because we don't have a map, we do need a compass <laugh> so that we don't get totally off track and, and the way we've conceptualized that encompass is that we need sobriety. And I don't mean, you know, the sort of metaphorical sobriety of like being able to sort of make responsible decisions. We need maturity not giving into those, you know, especially for white folks, those self infantilizing practices that tend to get us off track. We need discernment about, you know, which direction we're going in, whether it's generative or not, and we need responsibility. And so that's kind of like an orienting compass, and then we also need practices and processes to keep us, and that is something that my collective has worked a lot on. And we have, you know, for instance, a set of, we call them hyper self reflexivity questions that whenever we are trying something we use it as almost like a peer review. Right. and the first question on that list is, you know, how am I reproducing the very thing I'm trying to critique? Because you know, that that's happening in some way or another. And then there's the whole, whole set of questions that try and bring that self reflexivity, and also practise having other people point it out to us and not getting defensive and running away.

Sharon Stein ([01:13:49](#)):

We have as video was talking about in our pre-call, the, antiassholeism memo, which is sort of reminding us that we are in fact, all in one way or another an asshole. And, you know, the first step to being less of an asshole is admitting that you are an asshole<laugh>, and then trying to reduce the harm that comes from that, that, and we also have a tool that we call the bus methodology, which is this idea that, you know, each of us is not just this single coherent being, but we have a whole bus full of people, or maybe even non-human beings on our bus that are gonna have different sometimes contradictory, sometimes competing responses to a stimulus outside of the bus. So being, sort of familiar with and intimate with your bus, so that, you know, again, the good, the bad, the ugly, the, the shadow and the shine of all of that. And you can take more, responsibility for the reactions of the passengers. And it's not about, repressing them, cuz usually when you repress, they come back to bite you, but being conscious and trying to calibrate and ask what the bus is teaching you. So if you have, you know, a defensive response, when someone points out your whiteness, then sit with that hold space for that don't voice it, especially in a context where it's gonna produce more harm, but have that be your teacher. And the more familiar we are with our buses, then we can show up differently because we have a better sense of that inner landscape. And it has been a really generative tool for us, even within the collective of being able to sort of take one step back and say, okay, my bus is having this response or this is what I'm learning from seeing what's happening on my bus. And I need to be, much more aware of those things so that I can take a step back and take a step back from, you know, my it's not stepping away. Like you can't get away from, you know, your social conditioning, but, but having more perspective on how these things are influencing, your responses and your, relationships with others so that, we do move differently, move with the speed of trust and have space for making mistakes and trying to make those rights. Uknowing that if we don't have a roadmap, we are gonna step off sometimes and, and go in a, a not generative direction. So you need tools for calibrating that, that worked.

Vidya Shah ([01:16:16](#)):

Oh Sharon, thank you so much. Thank you so much. And it's making me, you know, this, this idea of how are we complicit on the very thing that we're trying to undo and, and change in the world has been a guiding question for me on, on the meditation mat, but also just, you know, in my everyday work. I, I, so I so appreciate that. And this idea of the bus, I was telling you earlier, that it reminds me of the movie inside out, you have all these little, you have all these little pieces sort of showing up. And what I love about the metaphor of the bus is that we, we obviously can't be any one of those parts, cuz they're always changing. And so there's something that's holding the constitution of the bus together that we get to kind of rest in and know that we are larger than any one of those individual parts, but that we can begin conversation with them and we can look at how they are relating to each other. And I, I think that's such a powerful metaphor. Thank you so much for sharing that. Yami. We would love to hear from you possibilities in this work and what you'd like listeners to take away.

Yami Msosa ([01:17:13](#)):

I think that some takeaways to offer is, how are you leaning into- I'm just gonna pose a bunch of questions. How are you leaning into vulnerability as a daily practice within your leading, recognizing that our different experiences, social identities, stories, family, lineages, cultivate different responses and capacity to lean into vulnerability, but how do we shape that in order to center relationships as part of this work? So how are you centering relationships as part of your leading or unleading to embrace the complexities of leadership, not as a monolith, but as an ecosystem that has different parts to play and different, different actors.

Yami Msosa ([01:18:09](#)):

How can you invite the radical work of imagination into your day to day, even when it doesn't feel possible? And so that means for me, what does it mean to believe that we can dismantle systems of oppression even as we're experiencing them? How do we center practices of reciprocity? How are you going to center practices of reciprocity with the land, with each other in the context of turtle island, right? With the multiple indigenous communities that are doing this work and how are you going to decenter leadership in leading? I don't, I don't have the answer to that, but how can you decenter it and how can you practice care? What does care look like for you? What are those, what are those day to day things that you do with community with self, whether it's sitting with your ancestors or eating a really good meal, how can you center care? Not as like this add-on, but as central to your work around sustainability and our collective work around sustainability. So yeah, I think that's what I'll leave.

Vidya Shah ([01:19:31](#)):

Yeah. Me, thank you so much. I love that we're ending with questions. I just love that, you know, this, as you're sharing again, it's making me think of this, of this idea that , the radical work of imagination. So much of what you're saying is the importance of building into our systems and structures time for radical imagination, time for care, time for relationship building, constructs that actually make these, these, these things possible. And I think that, again, going back to, to this, this podcast with Trish Adobe Tchume and Erica Stalling, that had a real impact on me about this idea of how, how can leaders create the conditions for this to happen as part of our regular day to day work, how can leaders create the conditions for us to be able to ourselves and others, to be able to show

up more, to imagine more, to be in the practice of caring for ourselves and others. And so I just love how you're framing these questions and, and, and, and a question that's making me, it's making me think of is how as leaders do we create the conditions to make those things part of, not an add on to our day, love that love that. And folks, as we come to an end of this podcast, I'd love to hear some closing thoughts from Jamea and Mike as they've been listening, as they've been processing, as they've been writing, I can see <laugh>, I would love to hear what some of their thoughts are as we close for today. So Jamea and Mike, over to you.

Michael Saver ([01:21:06](#)):

Okay. I'll, I'll go first. I, I just wanna say, I, I want to thank you Yami and Sharon, like, I just, I've written all these things down and every time I get on one that something else comes and it's like these these amazing things that I'm going to treasure for a while. It's some of the things that were striking me as we were sharing in the last two questions that we have to start where we are. I think that's one of the things I would say to leaders is start where we are, where you are, and that, that this work is aspirational. It's, it's never done. I, I never get to a place where, and in fact, I think as has been said by somebody, what if I get to that place where I say, I've got it now, that's exactly what I don't have. So it's, it's always going to be something that, but take this the first step, take the next step and do it in community. I think this is really critical for me to recognize. One of the things that came up to me as we were talking is to recognize that there are many kinds of closets. This is something that I think that often is a real challenge for leaders is that there is this notion about how a person is supposed to be. And then there's a sense that the person has that they just don't match this, this template. And so oftentimes what happens is we're encouraged to go into the closet. So we pretend that we are this when, when we're not, I think those of us who've grown up as queer have some sense of what that's about and being in situations where that happens. But I think there are many kinds of closets, and it's a particular challenge. I think for leaders that the inner life can help with this because it is coming to that sense, that being in the closet is more debilitating than actually taking the risk to be authentic. And so, and how we support one another in that journey. I wanted to talk about too, the importance of stories and stories about leadership. I feel in many ways that the stories we receive about leadership in education really tend to look still like something from some other era. And, I'm, you know, the big boss, the, you know, the lone Wolf, the, the one with all the answers, this is why I, I loved what you said, Vidya. And I agree with Yami -how great to end with questions, because questions I think are more important than answers and yet leaders so often think they have to have all the answers. Well, no. Like a community, you've got a community. Maybe in the community there emerges some way to move forward, but this is not your role. Have good questions, to not be afraid of those questions, as well. I think that all that we've been talking about also can help a leader to recognize one really foundational thing. And this was shared with me by a very experienced leader that one of the most important things that we have to come to as leaders is recognizing the difference between intent and impact. I think this is what really hangs up a lot of leaders is that they, they don't intend to do harmful things. And because they're human beings, they do. Sometimes they actually intend to do the harmful thing. But that, the question is not, what was your intention? The question is what's been the impact on that child, on that family, on that community, on the staff, like this is what is most important for a leader. And that, again, calls me into, a place of honesty, in, in looking at myself, my motivations, my expectations of self and others. And if I can move beyond that fear, then there's the possibility perhaps of some kind of healing and moving forward. Uthose

are somewhat disjointed, but they, like, I got a lot more, but I'm gonna stop because I want to leave some good room for Jamea too. So thank you.

Jamea Zuberi ([01:26:08](#)):

I just wanted to add very briefly the takeaways that I would say is start by holding space to breathe deeply additionally hold space to be non performative, too many times leadership, the whole model, and just being is a performance rather than being our honest self. I would also wanna take away to walk gently, be calm and curing with yourself. I really love the notion of radical imagination that folks are playing with here today. And that's something I will take away and go a little bit deeper in regard to my learning today and all of what I've just said. I would say do all of this, both in community and with self,

Vidya Shah ([01:27:12](#)):

Ah, what an amazing way to end Mike and jam. Thank you so much for your contributions today for the opening, for the closing and for your contributions throughout and just being amazing human beings in my life. And Yami and Sharon, thank you for the questions that you asked and for the perspectives that you shared all throughout today to really help us continue to be in the inner exploration, all of it, all of it, the messiness, all of it. It's such a gift to be able to be in conversation with folks that are thinking deeply about these things. I'm just feeling very grateful. So thank you to all of you, in this conversation today, thank you to the listeners who are hopefully engaging in these questions with us. We hope that you are like us committed to staying in the questions just a bit longer and a bit longer and a bit longer. And we will definitely be linking all of the references that we spoke to today on the, on the website page for the inner landscapes of leadership. So please look out for that. And you can delve into these. We are walking with you and we are walking gently with you as Jamea shared. And this is a journey that we are all collectively trying to, trying to make sense of. And I think education and living is ultimately an endeavor in being more and more human. And it demands of us ongoing commitments to living and working, and loving and being, from more of our whole selves, as, as complex as that is right, the magical parts, the scared parts, the joyful parts, the entitled parts, the ignorant parts, the resistant parts, all of it. And let this be an invitation for us, for our deepest passions and commitments and desires and fears to be in relation to those of our students, of our colleagues, of families, of communities that we walk alongside. Thank you everyone for listening to another episode of the unleaded podcast, we look forward to being with you again.