

Jerry Colonna: And the gap is between the world that we know is possible and the world that is. So is it possible to build humane, life-affirming, life-nourishing organizations and businesses? Yes it's possible. Is it probable? Hmm, I don't know about that, but we are called to live in the space between those two places because if I won't give in to the corrosive cynicism or presuming it's not possible, then I'm part of the problem and I must stand like a warrior in the space in between and until I encountered the Dharma, I did not know that there was a path to do that.

[00:00:30]

[00:01:00]

Tarikh Korula: Welcome back to our many season of the Interdependence Project Podcast. I'm Tarikh Korula, a board member at IDP. If you're enjoying these interviews, we would appreciate it if you support our year-end fundraiser at sitwithidp.com. Jerry Colonna is the co-founder of Reboot, an executive coaching service that supports people in their efforts to develop more authentic leadership.

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He has been named to Upside Magazine's list of the 100 most influential people of the new economy and Forbes ASAPs list of the best investors in the country. He also sits on the Board of Trustees of Naropa University. I met Jerry a couple years ago when I was winding down my previous company. He was really helpful at that time and he forced me to be more honest and more authentic.

[00:02:00]

There's a subtext to this conversation which we never directly addressed in the interview and it's probably worth mentioning. A mutual friend of ours, a CEO at a public company had been implicated recently in a New York Times article for potentially being too soft for allowing a culture where employees were allowed to have emotions and cry and where he himself cried a couple of times.

And it was implied in the article that because of that culture, perhaps the company hadn't been as successful as it could have been. It seemed unfair and like a low blow and it raised the question for me which is as a leader, how human can we actually be? And it was something that I wanted to talk to Jerry about especially because Jerry's "superpower" is making founders cry.

[00:02:30]

Is it a competitive advantage or a competitive disadvantage? Sometimes I wonder and I think it was that question that was rattling around in my head when we started this conversation together and I think it comes out and I think Jerry does a great job of addressing a head on and personally and really honestly.

[00:03:00] There's something else I should mention. There's two guys from Brooklyn, we use some salty language sometimes and this is a high salt conversation and if you're on a low salt diet, maybe try another episode, but I do think you'll miss out on a really wonderful and important conversation. Okay, let's get started. Hi Jerry.

Jerry Colonna: Hey Tarikh, I was saying before, we're officially recording that our relationship in my mind began when you were raising your hand at the NorthSide Festival and communicating that your heart was hurting.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:03:30]

Jerry Colonna: And um, and we tumbled very quickly into a deeper relationship and I had been the better man for it as a consequence to that.

Tarikh Korula: Thank you. Flattery will get you everywhere. (Laughs)

Jerry Colonna: (Laughs). This is an attempt to get you to cry.

Tarikh Korula: Yeah. Uh, for, for those of you listening, that's Jerry's superpower and he's done it to me multiple times. He's made me cry publicly and on the internet. I'll put a link, I'll put a link to that podcast. Um, so, so thank you for fully humiliating me in public.

Jerry Colonna: That ...

[00:04:00]

Tarikh Korula: Making me vulnerable, getting me vulnerable.

Jerry Colonna: Uh, being real.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: Being real. Go ahead, I'm, I'm [crosstalk 00:04:08].

Tarikh Korula: Oh, that's good. We should just go with that.

Jerry Colonna: You were saying?

Tarikh Korula: What is that? Yeah, what is that?

Jerry Colonna: What was I talking about when I said being real? When you said being [crosstalk 00:04:17]

Tarikh Korula: Being real and what does crying have to do with being real?

Jerry Colonna: Um, so the reputation is right, if you Google my name, you might come across
[00:04:30] an article that says this man makes founders cry and that's a kind of a joke, you know, you say it's my superpower and my real response is what I ask people to do and I only ask this by trying to do it myself is to just be fucking real, like just show up to your life as it is in this moment right now.

[00:05:00] No persona, no bullshit, no, " Oh, I'm an entrepreneur. Look at me." Or, "Oh, I'm a VC, look at me." You know? Um, now, that strikes people as vulnerable.

[00:05:30] Sure, I guess it is. Vulnerability is defined as able to be hurt. I suppose being real is a form of being able to be hurt, but I challenge anybody who spends their days wrapped behind personas to tell me the days in which they have not been hurt anyway till we walk around with a mask on, we walk around kind of pretending that it's all okay and inside, we're hurting like motherfucker.

[00:06:00] We're hurting painfully, but we don't show it because we're afraid of being hurt. Maybe this isn't right for other people, but I'll be damned if I want to live my life like that anymore because I have lived my life that way and it nearly made me die. It nearly made me kill myself and I'm not going to do that. And the risk is I will be hurt. What's the second noble truth?

Tarikh Korula: Well, the cause of suffering I suppose.

Jerry Colonna: Is.

Tarikh Korula: Desire, a craving for something that [crosstalk 00:06:49]

Jerry Colonna: the wish to not be hurt. The wish to not suffer.

Tarikh Korula: Yeah.

[00:07:00] Jerry Colonna: And the wish, the actions we take to not suffer, create more suffering for me and the entire world. Avoidance of suffering does not eliminate suffering.

Tarikh Korula: So what happened after you opened up? Did it help?

Jerry Colonna: What has helped me?

Tarikh Korula: Well, you're still here. So you didn't kill yourself. Thank God.

[00:07:30] Jerry Colonna: That's an important point. Did I stop hurting? Of course not, I hurt every day. What I have learned is that I have learned is that I have the capacity to withstand being hurt.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:08:00]

Jerry Colonna: I have resiliency. I can recover and then I can lean into helping someone else. What happened after I stopped running away from my own life was I was overwhelmed by pain and here I am. What is a Bodhisattva?

Tarikh Korula: Well, somebody who helps others achieve.

[00:08:30]

Jerry Colonna: My understanding, yeah. My understanding is that it's someone first and foremost the first step is to actively choose to not escapes in sorrow ...

Tarikh Korula: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: To actively choose to stay in the endless cycle of pain and suffering.

Tarikh Korula: And to be a bridge for others to escape.

Jerry Colonna: But the first active choice ...

Tarikh Korula: Is to stay.

[00:09:00]

Jerry Colonna: Is to stay right here right now with it regardless of the fact that you can take a magic mushroom and all of a sudden attain enlightenment and be a better, I'm joking and yet countless Bodhisattvas exist in the world and have existed for a millennia.

Tarikh Korula: So our listeners don't know you, but you having stayed what I've witnessed to Jerry is somebody who's brilliant.

Jerry Colonna: I fooled you.

Tarikh Korula: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah, right. Brave as fuck and saying shit that needs to be said that nobody else is saying at the very least in the board rooms of America are in the years of the leaders of American business at the very least. What are you doing? What's going on? Why is nobody else saying what you're saying and what, what are you doing?

Jerry Colonna: Um, I think more and more people are saying similar things I don't think a lone voice crying in the wilderness as much as my ego might like to see myself as that. It would. It really relishes like I dance when I think of myself as like this brave rebel. I stand on the shoulders of giants, teachers who have come before me, who showed me the way.

[00:10:30]

Um, I think that there is something, there is something mildly unique if you can have uniqueness and gradations around what I'm trying to do which is to live

[00:11:00] in this intersection of space between say hard edge business, strong back of the worry, open heart goes two stances. Um and what comes, oh so you ask what are you doing and what came into mind was an experience I had with Pema Chödrön who I, I consider one of my root teachers.

[00:11:30] Um, one of those giants who saved my life and, uh, one time I went to see Pema, I was having tea with her and I was, uh, being recruited to join the board of, uh, a Buddhist organization and my ego is so fucking out of control, it was delightfully out of control. It was playing this funny game of, of I enjoyed being recruited, but I enjoyed better being humble and not wanting to take a

[00:12:00] seat on that board and I enjoyed even the other level of delusion which was and none of that was actually happening for me, right? There's sort of three layers of delusion that were going on.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: I enjoyed the invitation and the solicitation, I enjoyed being humble and saying, "Oh no, not me." And so I went to Pema Chödrön with a, um, a humble ego, a aggrandizing question. And it went like this, "Oh dear Ani Pema. I'm just a humble Buddhist. I just want to be a student and sit in the back of the room. What should I do about this call to being in the leadership position?"

[00:12:30]

[00:13:00] And bringing, being a brilliant teacher, she just cut through my bullshit and she went, "What are you doing? What? What are you, what, what is this thing that's going on here?" And she just named it. She just like dissected it. And then I, I, in that moment, I felt overwhelmed by being presented with the way my ego was working.

Um, and implicit in that whole thing was an experience that I've had many, many years, decades and then she gave me the advice that I was really seeking.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:13:30]

Jerry Colonna: She said, "Why are you fighting your karma? That is not a path to happiness? Your karma is this intersection between these, these worlds. You have to lean into your karma." And so, my, my challenge that I walked away with is can I take my seat as a leader? As a strong back, wise, capable of building a good container organizationally from a leadership development position without giving in to the ego of believing that that actually it makes me superior at some capacity.

[00:14:00]

[00:14:30] Can I do that? That's the challenge. That's my unique karma and by the way, can I bring forward the reality of constant cutting through the ego aggrandizement that is a natural part of my being human, being in this particular incarnation, this particular need back. So that's my work and if I can

do that work with bravery, with vulnerability, with the reality, with the capacity to be hurt, right?

[00:15:00] By my saying that somebody lives in this podcast can say, "Oh yeah, look at you. You're being ego aggrandizing even by telling us those story and look at you with your friend." Yeah, totally. And if by doing that, I can create space in a container for me to live in a way that is closer to my vows, then my ego tells me and I have to be careful here that maybe it makes it easier for you.

[00:15:30]
Tarikh Korula: Me specifically?

Jerry Colonna: Yeah, you specifically because if I get to do that, then you with whom I am in relationship, right? Get to do that because we are co-dependent, independent.

Tarikh Korula: (laughing).

Jerry Colonna: Yeah, yeah, yeah, co-dependent was the wrong term.

Tarikh Korula: Or maybe we are.

[00:16:00]
Jerry Colonna: (laughs). But we are interdependent. We are connected, right? I work towards the alleviation of suffering of all beings myself included because that ego aggrandizing trap that I brought to Ani Pema ...

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: Was just as devastating to me as it was to everybody else around me.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: Right? It had a different dress associated with it, but it was the same experience that led me to want to kill myself when I was 38 at the height of my financial success, right? Here I was super successful and yet hollow and empty inside.

[00:16:30]

Tarikh Korula: Let's pause for a minute and fill our listeners in on that Jerry.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: Because they don't know you and they don't know the guy I know who's, um, well, doing something incredibly unique. I just see somebody doing something incredibly unique and we'll get back to that, but where you came from, well, you came from Brooklyn.

[00:17:00]

Jerry Colonna: (laughs) Damn right. (laughs) You got a problem with that? You want to step outside?

Tarikh Korula: And if you don't like cursing, well fuck you.

Jerry Colonna: Fuck you.

Tarikh Korula: Okay, but you had a pretty stellar career going there in the business world in New York.

Jerry Colonna: I guess.

Tarikh Korula: I mean, you were celebrated in magazines I think, right?

Jerry Colonna: Yeah, yeah.

Tarikh Korula: You were kind of a big deal.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah.

[00:17:30]

Tarikh Korula: And you built an incredible reputation in network in the city and it was at that point that you were miserable, at the peak?

Jerry Colonna: Yeah, I mean, it was, it was, uh, I think what had happened was I, I, like a lot of folks and as I still struggle with, outsource my sense of self-esteem to external metrics of accomplishment and, um, and so, um, with that externalization, a sense of my Buddha nature, right? The, the, the, the, the sort of disconnect from my fundamental basic goodness.

[00:18:00]

[00:18:30] Um, an attachment of that to attainment of particular goals. I ended up in this, um, god awful cycle of just feeling absolute craving, feeling, uh, just, you know, kind of hungry ghost never able to be satisfied and, and, and that, uh, and, uh, uh, a voice that has [inaudible 00:18:49] the logic we've been a part of me since childhood which whispered in my ear that you're just never good enough.

[00:19:00]

You're just, you, you're never good enough to be loved, you're never good enough to be lovable. There, there's nothing that you can do. That voice just got stronger and strong and that they actually, the consequence of that was that the more externalized success that I had, the louder that voice became to the point where I felt there was no exit from that voice except to kill myself.

Tarikh Korula: I mean I just hear the image I get is a feedback loop.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah.

Tarikh Korula: Until it's deafening for you.

[00:19:30]

Jerry Colonna: That's right. That's right. That's right. And, and, um, every single means that you want is, uh, socialized to assume will push away that form or suffering failed. Right, um, and, uh, I think my karma was such that I had the good fortune to be able to at some point recognize the hamster wheel that I was stuck on.

[00:20:00]

[00:20:30] I was just never going to make progress out of that, out of that particular form of suffering and, um, fortunately, I had a good therapist at the time who was able to shake me from that cycle and, uh, it was in that moment that I was able to really open myself to, um, teachings that said, "You know, you don't have to live like this."

Tarikh Korula: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: You can get off the hamster wheel.

Tarikh Korula: I just want to pause for a minute and just acknowledge Jerry that business leaders don't have this conversation.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: Right? So when I say you're brave, I mean this alone, this is unusual that we're talking about a therapist and depression, more of depression.

[00:21:00]

Jerry Colonna: And, and, and the ways I mean, let's say I do it in the ways in which our capital structure, um, not only crushes and oppresses people, people who would marginalize identities, but even those of us who have won the, you know, Warren Buffet calls it the genetic lottery of white male privilege. Um, are crushed into something that is unrecognizable and in effect unreal and inhuman.

[00:21:30]

Tarikh Korula: Inhuman.

Jerry Colonna: And then we wonder why we live in an inhumane world. Then we wonder why businesses are a force from mendacity and inhumanity and, and we wonder why, um, these economic forces rape and pillage the planet and further crush, uh, marginalized people. I think it's a, I think, uh, it's heartbreakingly obviously why, it's because we do not allow human beings to be real, to cry when their heart breaks, to laugh when they are filled with joy, to rage at injustice.

[00:22:30]

[00:23:00] You know, our mutual friend Parker Palmer says, "Violence is what we do when we don't know what to do with our suffering." We socialize human

beings to be violent to self, violent to each other and violent to the planet all because we are afraid of suffering.

Tarikh Korula: One of the things I've been trying to figure out in this podcast, I talked to Edwin Catmull, I talked to Sharon Salzberg, I'm talking to you, I'm trying to get more and more direct and clearer about the question, but why is that violence profitable and what are we going to do about that? What are we going to do?
[00:23:30] Is it possible to create a company that has a different set of principles and values and not get crushed?

Jerry Colonna: What is the, what is the first noble truth?

Tarikh Korula: There is suffering.

Jerry Colonna: So are you asking me is it possible to live without suffering?

Tarikh Korula: Am I? I don't know. Here's what I think I'm asking and feel free to Jedi me out of this.

Jerry Colonna: (laughs)

[00:24:00]

Tarikh Korula: But I think I'm trying to figure out if there's any way out of this cycle of business that's focused so much on profit, on growth, on stock price and so little on impact on culture and human growth and abundance.

Jerry Colonna: So maybe, maybe and I'll answer more directly in a second, but maybe this is what Ani Pema meant when she said, "Live into your karma." Because to me, the answer to your question is fairly obvious. The eightfold path. When the Buddha taught the eightfold path, he wasn't saying except for business. He wasn't saying except the politics.
[00:24:30]

Tarikh Korula: Maybe not all of my listeners have pitched investors, but ...

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:25:00]

Tarikh Korula: You've been an investor, you've heard many pitches, I can't go in there and talk about the eightfold path.

Jerry Colonna: So?

Tarikh Korula: That's what anybody's interested in.

Jerry Colonna: So? What? What? I, I'm playing with you because I ...

Tarikh Korula: I get it and I'm up for the game.

Jerry Colonna: Because well, because I, I think what's happening Tarikh is that you, you are in danger of inadvertently concretizing and reifying a negative view which is that, um, living the humane life is an opposition to business and I get that every message that you hear, every, at, piece of evidence supports that point of view. I get that and I'm not arguing that you're not receiving those messages that time and time again, we are encountering ways in which people who struggle to rise above that are slapped down, crushed.

[00:25:30]

[00:26:00]

I get that. That to me is an expression of the first noble truth. We try relentlessly nevertheless because here's, here's my personal answer to that because your implicit question I think is is it possible to live worthily? Is it possible to pursue work in a way that doesn't destroy these aspects of us?

[00:26:30]

Is it possible to create businesses and to lead businesses and to lead societies in a way that do not promulgate the violence oppression. Is that right? Is that what you're asking?

Tarikh Korula:

Yeah, it's getting close. I mean, I think, I think the world needs that.

Jerry Colonna:

Well, here's my response. I don't want to live in a world where it isn't possible so I'm going to presume it's possible and work my damn tail off to make that real.

[00:27:00]

Tarikh Korula:

Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Knowing full well that I will suffer from the fact that it will not come to pass. That's brave I think. You know, again our mutual friend Parker Palmer has this gorgeous concept called the tragic gap and the gap is between the world that we know is possible and the world that is so is it possible to build humane life-affirming, life-nourishing organizations and businesses? Yes it's possible.

[00:27:30]

[00:28:00]

Is it probable? I don't know about that, but we are called to live in the space between those two places because if I won't give in to the corrosive cynicism as he calls it, presuming it's not possible, then I'm part of the problem and if I failed to recognize that it's fucking hard, then I'm irrelevant in my idealism and I must stand like a warrior in the space in between and until I encountered the Dharma, I did not know that there was a path to do that because we-, we're sitting and talking about businesses, but, but couldn't we apply this to politics?

[00:28:30]

If we remove the discussion about business from the realm, from the early realm, the human realm, then we actually unintentionally reify that belief system. Yeah, that's all well and good when you're at home, but when we get into the business world.

Tarikh Korula: Well, I guess I will put it a little differently which is the business world finds its way to the door of, you know, every new frontier.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:29:00]

Tarikh Korula: And what happens in that place when they meet is not always pretty.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: You know? And, I'm, I'm wondering after hundreds or thousands of years of this, if there are new ways for us to organize.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: You know?

Jerry Colonna: Uh, pro-, probably and be careful of presuming that changing the organizational structures are somehow going to, uh, change human, um, tendency and our human ... Yeah, our human tendency, our behavior is rooted in avoidance of suffering and as long as we act in that way and that, uh, way in which as sea slugs we were, you know, we evolved to just avoid pain and move towards things that, that felt nourishing.

[00:30:00]

A basic biology here. As long as we're ... We allow ourselves to be organized by that principle, we extend suffering. Sure, you know, do you want to adopt the holacracy in an organizational structure whereby, you know, we, we break down command and control hierarchal structures and we, sure go ahead.

[00:30:30]

Are you telling me that you're going to somehow by doing so not have a kind of, uh, negative projection of shadowed qualities, the negative aspects of human behavior showing up in power structures? Good luck with that, right? We are always going to be called to confront the demons that lie at the heart of our human experience. That is our karma.

Tarikh Korula: So the role of a leader in an organization who's growing, trying to grow, how candid can you be about this stuff?

[00:31:00]

Jerry Colonna: First and foremost, confront your own demons to yourself. You know? We have a phrase at Reboot that I coined years ago called Radical Self-Inquiry and the great question of that is how am I complicit in creating the conditions I say I don't want? Do you have the guts to look in the mirror and call yourself on your own bullshit?

[00:31:30]

Not look around the organization and, and figure out everybody else's problems, but look at yourself, the call within not to induce guilt, but to induce

[00:32:00] a kind of cutting through, that sword of Prajna. What am I really up to here? What is happening? First and foremost, take that stance. Men with open heart, with compassion, with loving kindness look to your colleagues and say, "And what are we doing collectively?"

[00:32:30] What are the ways in which we are suppressing voices? What are the ways in which we are collectively not hearing what is being said by the world? And what do we choose to do in response to that? What are the ways in which we disown our responsibility to choose? If you can meet from that place or even attempt to leave from that place, for me, life is easier.

[00:33:00] It's less painful. It's not easy, it's hard, but it's less painful. I don't want to be complicit in wiping myself out and denying my existence as a whole
[00:33:30] brokenhearted, messy human being and I want to create spaces to the people around me to be able to be themselves in exactly the same way. That feels wise to me and I could be diluting myself.

Tarikh Korula: Do you doubt that? Is that why you say that?

Jerry Colonna: I occasionally doubt it, yeah.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:34:00] Jerry Colonna: When I see friends and people raving myself when I struggle or when I note the ways in which I don't live up to my own aspirations. Um, I try every day to love what I call that crows to my shoulder telling me what a shit I am and try to
[00:34:30] love it so that it can give up that particular line and maybe transform itself into a little bit more of a gentle, lovingly kind aspect of me that says and yet you
[00:35:00] were born human and only humans can attain enlightenment and so therefore, I am worthy.

Tarikh Korula: I'm going to pause and I'm just going to say you don't have to answer this, we don't have to talk about this, but I'm curious if childhood trauma has played a part in your depression.

[00:35:30] Jerry Colonna: Sure, I'd be happy to talk about that. Of course. I grew up with enormous psychic and physical violence as a child. It created in me a hyper-vigilance and almost hair-trigger, um, which is the darker side of my capacity to radically inquire within.

Tarikh Korula: Yeah. What are you really up to Tarikh?

[00:36:00] Jerry Colonna:

Right. That's me protecting myself from what might be a stiletto knife buried deep within what on a surface feels like a kind gesture. That is an aspect of my personality.

Tarikh Korula: Because you were betrayed by the most important or intimate folks in your life.

Jerry Colonna: Because I was not kept as safe as I needed to be.

Tarikh Korula: Yeah.

[00:36:30]

Jerry Colonna: Yeah, um, I, I hesitate to say the word betrayed because I acknowledge, uh, their suffering. I have yet to encounter someone who consciously are not foster suffering who themselves have not been, uh, hurt.

Tarikh Korula: Hurt people and hurt people.

Jerry Colonna: And the cycle goes on.

Tarikh Korula: Except some of us try to stop them.

[00:37:00]

Jerry Colonna: That's right. That's right. I mean, I know that there are true sociopaths in the world. I actually have never encountered one, not to my knowledge. Um, every single person [crosstalk 00:37:12]

Tarikh Korula: Funny because you've worked with a lot of CEOs.

Jerry Colonna: [00:37:30] (laughing) I met heck of a lot of narcissists, but that's a different issue. Um, e-, e-, every single person that I can sort of name who I think, um, in my view fostered suffering with a little bit of generosity, you can see their suffering.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: [00:38:00] That doesn't mean we allow the violent behavior. Um, it's still wrong, but I can understand it. I can oppose it, but in opposing it, I don't have to oppose it with, uh, with the same level of violence. Um, and I can trust that the moral arc of the un-, universe bends slowly, but it bends inevitably towards justice.

[00:38:30]

I actually believe that every single wisdom tradition I have ever encountered, every single one of them teaches that. The moral arc of the universe bends towards justice. It's just imperceptible at times because, you know, we were talking before the recording began Sharon shared with you this notion of the timeframe.

[00:39:00] Yes, the timeframe. You know, if we, if we think about things only through the lens of this particular incarnation, this particular meatbag, you may not encounter justice. You may not encounter humanity in our organizational structures. You may not encounter the humane business, but I believe that that arc is long and bends towards justice.

[00:39:30] Tarikh Korula: Yeah. I actually think that it's more possible too in the business sense to make this more mundane. Um, we live in this sort of echo chamber of, of propaganda about how things are supposed to work.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: I don't know if that makes sense.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:40:00] Tarikh Korula: Uh, so you can have a company like say Patagonia that doesn't go public and doesn't take venture capital and really I think has, you know, a net positive impact on its employees and hopefully on the planet or at least tries to. Um, it doesn't get written about as a success story, it gets sort of dismissed and we're told in the start up world like there's one way you got to do this kid, you know? And that's not one of the ways, you know?

[00:40:30] Um, so we sort of celebrate a particular ... Gosh, I wish I could phrase this more eloquently, but we celebrate a particular style of, um, living and doing business and I don't know that that's the only way. I just don't think we get a lot of messages about other ways of doing it.

Jerry Colonna: Well of course we celebrate, uh, that because what we're doing. You see, collectively, I think what we're doing is we're projecting on to, um, those businesses that seem to personify the pursuit of financial success and self-optimization. We project on to them our fundamental wish to not suffer so for example, we believe that, um, by going public and cashing out and raising a bunch of capital, we believe inherently.

[00:41:00] [00:41:30] Let's pick on Amazon of a moment. Uh, um, um, I'm a huge fan of Amazon as a consumer. Fan is a funny word. I'm a huge consumer of Amazon services I'd like to put it out. We project on to Amazon, you know Jeff Bezos just briefly the other day was worth over 100 billion dollars so, at some level we project on to him that he must then therefore be safe, warm and happy for everybody.

Tarikh Korula: Yeah, right.

Jerry Colonna: Right and in that, what we're doing is we're concretizing the view that their path, the path that they chose is the only path of a business, but Reboot, my

[00:42:00]

company, our company is a tiny little company, we're three years old. We, um, we all make a good living. We don't make an optimized living.

[00:42:30] We don't scrape up every coin that's possible and shove it into our pockets. We're hoping to create a platform where people can do meaningful work in the world and put their shoulder to the wheel of the work that's in front of us and we have ... We laugh when people say, "Well, will you raise venture capital?" "God no." "Why?" "As long as we run a business that's profitable and the reason for that is not to extract value is so that we can pay the light bill tomorrow."

Tarikh Korula: To be sustainable?

[00:43:00] Jerry Colonna: To be sustainable so that there is a tomorrow so that when one of our employees gets ill and the health insurance doesn't pay for it, we can give them a check, a bonus check that says, "Here, pay your medical expenses." So that we can create scholarships for services, so that we can create free services, so that we can promulgate the work.

[00:43:30] There are many, many, many, many businesses the fod-, the model that I'm talking about. You know the model I have in mind? My grandfather's ice business from Brooklyn. You know? He just, he just put a roof over the heads of his seven children. He just, he just employed, you know, dozens of people and he delivered ice in the summer and coal in the winter and as the joke was and wine, home made wine all year round.

Tarikh Korula: (laughs).

[00:44:00] Jerry Colonna: And he didn't go public and he didn't die a multi-billionaire, 100 billion dollars. He's a good man who provided and he provided a service and he kept the milk cold and the homes warm and he carried 300 pound sacks of coal on his back, blocks of ice on his shoulder.

[00:44:30]

Tarikh Korula: It's a very romantic picture, your painting here. It sounds like an amazing guy.

Jerry Colonna: He was a hard worker. I love my grandfather.

Tarikh Korula: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: And so, there are these other models. Dominant [inaudible 00:44:58] my grandfather is not going to be on the cover of Fortune Magazine. Right? Well, but is he any less of a businessman? Was he any less of a businessman than Jeff Bezos? Fuck you. You walk to the streets of Brooklyn up and down stoops carrying coal and ice with a sixth grade education.

[00:45:00]

[00:45:30] You tell me what-, tell me about strength. Tell me about courage. Tell me what does it take to get on a ship and cross the ocean. Not sure what's going to happen in your life. Fuck you and your false symmetrics of what does it mean to be a business person and an entrepreneur.

[00:46:00]
Tarikh Korula: So with time running out, I think what I'm getting, what came to me when you said this, so, so help me clarify this, correct me if I'm wrong. There's a goal to escape suffering that we all share. (laughs). Um, and you could call that a desire for happiness or something, right? And there's perhaps the delusion in this country that we can measure happiness ...

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: With a single metric dollars.

[00:46:30]
Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: Share price or whatever.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: And that once we can measure it, we can focus efficiently and relentlessly on increasing that number, therefore increasing our happiness and therefore escaping suffering. Something like that.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tarikh Korula: And so Jeff Bezos is the least suff-, he's the most happy of all of us.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative). He just, he just knocked the gates out as the richest man in America.

Tarikh Korula: Right. He must be the happiest guy.

[00:47:00]
Jerry Colonna: He must be the happiest guy and the Buddha is sitting there smiling with love looking down on us and saying, "Oh, you poor suffering people." And you know, we can dilute ourselves and say, "Yeah, well, but I don't pursue that. I don't really think that. I don't believe that." I don't, really?

Tarikh Korula: No, I don't think it's possible to grow up in this country and not have a relationship with money that's been ... We determine our value of ourselves and our happiness and our friends and family look through that lens. I believe if you don't share that lens, but you can't say that it wasn't given to you or taught to you or that it doesn't come up from time to time.
[00:47:30]

Jerry Colonna: I think, yeah, I think you're absolutely right and I think the thing that would bring anyone's attention to is please find me the child who is born believing that about the world, right?
[00:48:00]

It's like when the Buddha asked, you know, the follower to go to the houses of those who had never experienced suffering and loss and gather a mustard seed and then the came back empty-handed. It's like the truth is that this is what we are taught which means that we can be untaught.

Tarikh Korula: Yeah and I see that as Jerry.

[00:48:30]

Jerry Colonna: Oh.

Tarikh Korula: I do.

Jerry Colonna: Thank you.

Tarikh Korula: I do though. That's what I'm trying to frame. That's the guy I see.

Jerry Colonna: Now you're going to make me cry.

Tarikh Korula: That's the plan.

Jerry Colonna: Well, that's the revolution.

Tarikh Korula: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:49:00]

Jerry Colonna: You know, if we do not, we as business people do not speak to this question, then we are lost because those who do not see themselves and identify as business people will not have the strength to overcome the mendacity of those forces, right? And so those of us who are privileged enough to be considered a leader and perhaps burdened enough to be considered a leader, I think having moral obligation to speak so ... I want to thank you for asking me these questions.
[00:49:30]

Tarikh Korula: I will probably continue to ask them.

Jerry Colonna: (Laughing).

Tarikh Korula: Each time getting more and more precise hopefully. Someday you're finding the answers I'm looking for. I could certainly feel I got some of them today. It was wonderful having you on.

[00:50:00]

Jerry Colonna: It was a delight my friend and I'm proud of you for doing this podcast. It's uh, it feels like, uh, it feels really connective especially since I put you through the ringer I guess about a year ago maybe. Maybe more.

Tarikh Korula: That was horrifying and awesome simultaneously ...

Jerry Colonna: No.

Tarikh Korula: It was. What happened in NorthSide Jerry was you put the microphone in my face and you said, "How are things going?" And there was a moment there, I didn't know you, you know, you didn't know me (laughs) and I had like 300 people or 500 people behind me in a room and I said, "Well, I can bullshit him or I can tell him the truth. What do I think he wants to hear and what's going to be most beneficial right now?"

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And I told you the truth which was that my company was dying. And your antenna went up and you moved in closer. (laughing) yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Uh, well, I saw suffering.

[00:51:00]

Tarikh Korula: Mm- hmm (affirmative). Maybe that's your secret power.

Jerry Colonna: Uh, well, that's the hyper vigilance I was speaking to you before.

Tarikh Korula: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I shared that one with you.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's compassion. Move towards suffering, not away from it.

[00:51:30]

Tarikh Korula: Okay, thanks for listening. If you'd like to leave a message for us on Facebook, we'd appreciate it and even better rating on iTunes. Don't forget that IDP is a nonprofit and we depend on donations from folks like you. You can go over to the idproject.org and donate. We also want to thank Bigfoot Music and Sound for the theme music and Eric Williams for editing. We'll talk to you next week.