

Jerry: Hi Amy. How are you?

Amy: Hi. I'm good. How are you?

[00:00:30]

Jerry: I'm good. Good. It's really a delight you're smiling highly caffeinated face.

Amy: (Laughter) This face is ... You too.

Jerry: Um, so I really appreciate your taking the time to do this and, and to spend sometime. Before we get started, I like to ask, um, I guess to start of introduce themselves. So, could you take, take a moment to do that?

Amy: Yeah, so my name is Amy Nelson. I am the CEO and founder of The Riveter, which is a coworking and community spaces built by women for everyone. Um, we are 16 months into our journey so I am a new founder, and a first time founder. I was a corporate litigator for a decade before I jumped into this world. And also a political fund raiser. I was on Barack Obama's national finance committee. And the other piece of my life, which is very critical, so everything I do is that I am a mother of three daughters who are aged four, two, and one.

Jerry: Oh, tiny tats, munchkins.

Amy: Yeah, little girls.

Jerry: And what are their names?

[00:01:30]

Amy: Sloan, Reese, and Merritt.

Jerry: Um, folks who listen to the podcast know that I have three children who are adults. My children are adults. They're adults, I have to remind myself. Um, Sam, Emma, and Michael.

[00:02:30]

Amy: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Jerry: And, um, I do appreciate, uh, see that little smile, (laughter)The- the- the listeners don't know this, but Amy is smiling deep, deep, deep as she thinks of Sloan, Reese, and-

Amy: Merritt.

Jerry: ... M- M- Merritt. I can't even read my own handwriting.

Amy: (Laughs)

[00:03:00]

Jerry: So, well, let's, let's jump in. Tell me, uh, what would be helpful to, to, to talk about today?

Amy: Uh, well, I mean I think you know, as a, as a quickly scaling company, I face a lot of, a lot of challenges. I am ... The Riveter, we built five locations in 16 months, which is faster than We Work, it grew in the first two years. And, um, and we had an investment plans to continue the scale. I mean, I think we've hit a moment and time where thinking about women and how we amplify women's voices is

[00:03:30] incredibly important, important and meaningful. I don't think it's a trend. I think it's a change we're seeing in society.

Um, that said, you know as a female founder, I face really different ... a really different landscape, um, than my male counterparts. You know, women received in the past two years less than 3% of venture capital dollars. And I didn't know that before I started the company, and I definitely know it today. And we did raise a series seed of \$5 million. So we've had a lot of success, but I do have to go out and raise more money and it just feels daunting.

[00:04:00]

Um, and it's hard ... The- The part of it that feels daunting is how am I expected to show up in the world to do this? Um, and it's a world where you know, I'm talking with mostly male investors. I mean, 90% of these, these are men. And I'm convincing them that there is a lot of money to be made taking women seriously.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:04:30]

Amy: Um, and that I as a female founder can do it, which is not you know, it's, look, when you're talking about women getting 2% of VC funding like there's something amiss in the world.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: There's something different there and I don't really know ho- how to think about it in my own mind, how to overcome it.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: How to change it for other people. Like these are the big questions. And then in tandem with that, something that's happened that I didn't anticipate at all, you know, when I started this, I thought, The Riveter would be The Riveter and yes I would be its founder, but because it's so rare to see women building scalable companies, and I think it's particularly rare to s- uh, rare to see women with young children doing it, I've become a very public figure.

[00:05:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: Um, I'm published across the country and everything. I was just on Inc.'s female founders 100 list. I, I wrote an article for Forbes' um, Work Life Balance, and it had 300,000 views in a couple of weeks. Um, and so I'm getting messages from women around the country of, "We're rooting for you. You can do this. We need to change this." And so that, that pressure feels immense, uh, um, when you think about it.

[00:05:30]

Jerry: So, I just ... Uh, first of all, I wanna say that, um, thank you.

Amy: (Laughs)

Jerry: Yeah. Um, and, um, I'm gonna encourage you to stay slow as you've been.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: Because there's a lot of pieces in here.

Amy: Right.

[00:06:00]

Jerry: And before we sort of "discuss a solution," because I'm not sure that we're moving in that path, I just wanna reflect back some of the things that I've heard. Um, so like every entrepreneur, you carry a burden, and the burden is, "Hey kids, let's put on a show. We're gonna go out and raise some money and build a company and try to convince humans, other humans to join the company, to buy the service, and to put money up to support it."

[00:06:30]

Amy: Yup.

Jerry: And there's that challenge. And then there is the demographic, uh, challenge, which is, and as daunting as dif- and difficult, and disheartening as those statistics are that you just rattled off so quickly, um, I'm old enough to remember when it was worse.

[00:07:00]

Amy: Yeah, and I know. And I know there is stand on a shoulder of giants, of people who did this when there was no chance, so.

Jerry: Eh- And, and so, and so we honor that fact, and we recognize the fact that it remains challenging.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: And then there's two additional challenges that Amy in particular carries. One is and so I'm a mom of these munchkins, these, this tater tot, tiny tots, you know?

Amy: (Laughs)

[00:07:30]

Jerry: Um, yeah. And then there's the wrapping.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? Because if I fuck this up, am I gonna fuck it up for the next female founder?

Amy: Totally. Yeah, and that's like, that is just something I didn't even think about.

Jerry: Right.

Amy: It's like you think about when Hillary Clinton lost, I thought, they'll never let a woman run again. We- We got one shot.  
[00:08:00]

Jerry: Or when, or when our ... When Barack Obama won, and if he had one slip where a tan suit instead of a gray suit, it might set back, right? Because the truth is, and I speak from a place of cognizant, of my power, and privileges, a white cisgendered male.

Amy: Yup.

Jerry: Regardless of the poverty with which, in which I grew up, I was born with, uh, uh, having hit the genetic lottery, okay? And I speak from that place. And the truth is from what I have come to understand for my, uh, uh, siblings in the human community who identify for marginalized social locations, the challenge of representing-

[00:09:00]

Amy: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Jerry: ... whatever that social location is, whatever that identified social location is, that challenge is relentless.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: And, and what I just said was, grammatically tortured (laughter) and yet super important for a white male of privilege to recognize and understand.

[00:09:30]

Amy: And, and I say you know, I say too like, I come from a lot of privilege. I had two parents that worked. They sent me to college.

Jerry: Right.

Amy: Uh, I had a family friend who was able to cosign a loan for law school. A lot of people don't have those things, right? So I even come from this place of great privilege. I'm white.

Jerry: Right.

Amy: Which gives me privilege in America.

Jerry: Right.

Amy: And I think that I ... You know, I think about all of those things when I think about how hard it is for me, because it's a lot easier even for me than it is for a lot of other people.

[00:10:00]

Jerry: Right. Right. And yet, it's still hard. And so, so what ... What this human incarnation known as Amy Nelson is carrying, is this particular alchemy, this mix of heart. And we're not gonna say it's harder than, it's just your mix of heart.

Amy: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Jerry: Am I hearing that right?

Amy: Yeah. It's just where I am. It's the cycle [crosstalk 00:10:23] I'm dealing with today.

[00:10:30]

Jerry: And so your core question is, how do I show up as a leader?

Amy: Yeah. It's how I show up as a leader and then also I mean, eh- it's how I show up as a leader to the world. Also, how I show up within this, this realm of raising money, because I feel like, eh- the questions asked of me are different. I feel like, um, women don't get the benefit of the doubt. Um, I feel ... And I don't know how to address it if I do address it or if I just try to operate within it.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:11:00]

Amy: You know, you, you, ugh ... Yeah, I mean, you have to get through the system to change the system.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And so how do you ... How do you do that? Do you acknowledge that it's different to the people you're talking to or just not, right?

Jerry: Well, let's ... L- Le- Let's dive into that, okay?

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: Um, how does not getting the benefit of the doubt show up say when you're fund raising?

[00:11:30]

Amy: I think you know, what I've noticed, uh, it's two, it's two things, right? Um, I am often asked about my ability to be a parent and be a founder. And I am pretty sure that no man is ever asked that.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: I had my last baby, um, August 28th of 2017. And when I was raising my Series Seed in the winter of 2017, early 2018, I had a very young baby that I was breastfeeding.

[00:12:00] And, um, uh, at the end of one pitch that went really well, um, a VC said to me, "I just have one more question." And I said, "Okay." And he said, "Are you physically up for this?" And I said, "I don't understand what you mean, could you explain?" And he said, "Are you physically up for building a venture scale company? You've got three little kids, one's a baby. Can you do this?"

[00:12:30] And I said, I mean, the way I handled it, and I don't know if this is right, but I said, "You know, I know that you have not had this opportunity because you're a man, um, but pregnancy is hard and I built this company while I was pregnant, so I think physically I can do anything."

Jerry: Hmm.

Amy: But I don't know, did that come across as aggressive? I just meant to lean into the fact that I think there's something really powerful about motherhood, I am convinced we need to reframe motherhood in this country. Mothers are warriors, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And I think they're very good leaders, uh, leaders. I think that it brings a different, um, set of skills. But, but can I say things like that or should I not? Or I could ask a lot-

Jerry: Yeah, that, that-

Amy: Sorry, go ahead.

[00:13:00]

Jerry: Sure. So, so why don't you answer your own question? Can I say things like that or is it too aggressive?

Amy: I mean, I'm just ... I'm going to say it, because I don't .... (Laughter) Like I don't, I don't have any other way and it's the way that I am. And, um, um, you know, but,

but at the same time like I can't appear to be angry person, right? We can't ....  
Women can't be angry.

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy: And I think this ... We're, we're in a moment in time in America right, that when  
we're talking ... At the moment in time that we're talking. Um, we're dealing with  
[00:13:30] the judicial confirmation hearings of Brett Kavanaugh.

Jerry: Right.

Amy: And there is a righteous anger of women in this country and many men who are  
angry for women and on behalf of women. Um, but that doesn't translate into the  
business world. And so, you just have to approach it as like, I'm going to explain  
where my power is and why I am powerful, and why I am the right person to do  
this, um, but I can't be angry. And there are days when I wanna be really angry.

[00:14:00]

Jerry: Yeah. So, hmm, you know, I sit in this chair and sometimes the implication is like I  
am a Wizard of Oz, and I am just you know, (laughter). And I know that my ego  
structure is such that I play into that. Um, and I will set that aside for a moment and  
[00:14:30] just say that, um, you ... There's a wisdom in what you're saying, um, that I think  
that in this, in these kinds of moments, the best thing I can do is reflect that  
wisdom back to you rather than necessarily "give you the answer."

Amy: Yeah.

[00:15:00]

Jerry: And the first thing I'm gonna say is, um, I recognize, um, that the display of any  
emotion for a leader who identifies as a woman is particularly challenging eh- in our  
society in 2018. And I don't know, I suspect it's been challenging for a 150, 200  
years for two millennia. I don't know for sure, but I suspect that that is true.

Amy: Yeah.

[00:15:30]

Jerry: Because in my experience, what I have observed, and I'll use this term "my sisters"  
struggling with this, I can't cry.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? Um, oh it's great Jerry that I can, I can, I can work with an entrepreneur who  
identifies as male and they can connect with their feelings and they can be  
authentic and I can say to them, "Just be yourself in those situations."

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: And it's liberating, because we do socialize our boys not to be themselves.

Amy: Right.

[00:16:00]

Jerry: We do do that. And we also socialize our girls to not be themselves too.

Amy: We do in a really different way, and we did it.

Jerry: In a really different way. In what way do we do that?

Amy: I think we teach boys to be brave, and take risks, and we teach girls to be good.

Jerry: And how do we k- ... What is it that we teach them with regard to their own feelings and their own authentic state?

Amy: Be quiet. Don't-

[00:16:30]

Jerry: Be quiet. And so you, you-

Amy: The women- The women or girls cry, they're hysterical, right?

Jerry: If women or girls cry, or if Dr. Ford testifies and loses her cool, right? Or if, um, you ... There's a bind that that investor inadvertently put you to. And let's give them a small benefit of the doubt and think that they were thought, that they were being open and mindful.

[00:17:00]

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? I have a feeling they ... That- that- that the question came from a place of a kind of, um, beginning awakening.

Amy: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Jerry: Where they would say, "Hey, this might be hard for this person." But they didn't necessarily understand that the question puts you into a box from which you could only respond in a place that was a kind of fierceness.

[00:17:30]

Amy: Yeah, I mean, because you have to ... I mean, your job as an entrepreneur and when you're raising money is to, is to tell why you're the best person to do it. And if there's any doubt about your ability to put off, the whole bets off, right? And so ...

Jerry: And, and I'm gonna ... So, I'm gonna s- uh, uh, I'm gonna, I'm gonna challenge that. Even though I recognize all of the challenges that we've just played out. I'm gonna challenge that by taking you back to that moment where I s- where you were sort

[00:18:00]



of, you were asking the core question, "How should I show up?" And you noted before that you're about to raise your series A. So, so this is very live for you.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: How should I be in the world, right? And, and I, I asked you a question, which was, which implied, well, did you really actually have a choice, but to show up as ... and your concerned was, "Was I too aggressive?"

[00:18:30]

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? And let me ask you something, if you're faced with that question again, what true choice do you have? Do you have the choice of saying, I'm going to be silent," and not say something like, "Shit yeah, it's hard to juggle work and life. Damn, it's hard." I imagine, I see that wedding ring on your hand. I imagine that, that you have a life partner in some capacity where they might find it hard if you have children too. And you might find it hard.

[00:19:00]

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: What prevents you from doing that?

Amy: Because I feel like if I acknowledged that it's about gender, I make them leave with a bad feeling, if I make them feel like they said something inappropriate or biased that they leave with a bad feeling about it.

[00:19:30]

Jerry: And if they feel ... If they have that bad feeling, then it's toxic and I don't wanna ... I don't wanna touch it. I don't wanna go there.

Amy: Right.

Jerry: So, what if it's not about gender?

Amy: I mean, what if the question isn't about gender?

Jerry: No, if the question comes from a place of gender, and the response is, "Yup, being a parent is hard." You see what I'm saying?

Amy: I do. I do, yeah.

[00:20:00]

Jerry: I mean, f- for me, the bind that we place our children in, our boys, our girls, however they identify is going to repeat itself ad infinitum until we recognize that how we socialize around struggle and challenge, and suffering, and the messages that we imply that in one way or another, you're supposed to be perfect, or to take

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it right back to entrepreneurship and leadership, that one way or another, you're supposed to have it all figured out.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: Until we break that cycle, we're going to perpetuate fortuitous suffering.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: That fortuitous suffering manifest in gender specific ways, but I will tell you that that you know, statistics like the number one cause of death among men ages 35 to 60 is depression and suicide. Like what the fuck is going on with that?  
[00:21:00]

Amy: And I think ... I think there is a lot to that, right? Like we talk a lot about how we view women in society, but there's a lot of question about how we view men.

Jerry: Exactly.

Amy: Like men feel like they have to be the provider. And if they can't, where does that leave them?

Jerry: That's right.

Amy: Who are they? Right-

Jerry: That's right.

[00:21:30]

Amy: It's hard. I acknow- but I acknowledge that that's really hard as well. I mean, my husband and I talk about that a lot.

Jerry: Yeah, it- it- it's- it ... I don't wanna fall into the trap of false equivalencies, because they, they are not the same. On the other hand, there is an opportunity that's available to us to in this moment in time, to broaden this discussion to say, "How the hell do we make it possible for really, really smart committed, dedicated entrepreneurs to launch great ideas like The Riveter?"  
[00:22:00]

Amy: Yup.

Jerry: How do we do that and support each of them in manifesting the work that they're meant to do in the world? That doesn't mean that everybody deserves funding or every business deserves to stay alive, right? But it means how do we create a system where, where every individual gets to actualize in the fullness of who they are? I don't know if this is resonating or, or, or [crosstalk 00:22:34].  
[00:22:30]

Amy: No, I mean it is. I think it's really, it's really, it's really important. And I don't think the way that it's currently set-up gets us there.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: You know, I think it requires a lot of acting and selling in a way that it's, it's a prescribed formula, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: It's ... You have to show the business. We'll get to X revenue, you walk in knowing that and the VC knows that 90% of the companies they say yes to will fail.

Jerry: Right.

[00:23:00]

Amy: And 10% will succeed in that mixed in women, but is that winning? Is that system the right system?

Jerry: Right, so-

Amy: Or, or is it something different?

Jerry: So, let me ask you something. You know, um, I did a little background reading and I read it. There's a, there's a wonderful article in Forbes, not the one that you wrote, but the one where you were interviewed.

Amy: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:23:30]

Jerry: Um, and, um, I wanna bring you back to a couple different thoughts, because I think maybe the answer out of the conundrum that you're facing lays in some of the things you've already as- uh, uh, asserted. The name of the company is The Riveter. Why?

Amy: Yeah, because of Rosie The Riveter. Um-

Jerry: So, tell the story.

Amy: Yeah, so, uh, in World War II, uh, most American men of working age were abroad fighting, but we needed to keep the economy afloat, and we needed to build the machines of war. And so the US government came up with a propaganda campaign to ask women to go to work, really for the very first time. Because before that, we asked women to stay home. And the government made it happen. And they made kind of the iconic figure of that era in American history was Rosie The Riveter.

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She was the woman with the red bandana who went to work in ammunition factory with the rivets, uh, putting planes together. And you know, the American government needed women to work so badly that they actually found a way to

[00:24:30] subsidize childcare during that era and history, which now they say they can't do now.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: Um, but it was really, if you think about it, that moment in time is the only time when American women defined the workforce. And I want a future where women at least have a quality of opportunity and that's what The Riveter is built for. That's how we're calibrated in what we're working toward.

Jerry: And, um, I'm gonna read a l- so, I wanna hold that as a backdrop. And I'm gonna  
[00:25:00] read something to you. And this is, you're telling the story about, um, launching The Riveter.

Amy: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Jerry: And you wrote or said, "Around that time, I went to a lot of coworking spaces to attend classes on how to write a business plan, raise funds, and more. I was working at the foundation of starting my own business. And while these spaces  
[00:25:30] offered a lot, it wasn't what I wanted. I didn't want pool tables, I didn't want kegs. I wanted to hear from women who had walked the path into entrepreneurship. I wanted to walk into a room where I felt like I belong." Tell me what that means.

Amy: You know, you, you wanna be surrounded by people who have common experiences and common goals, or recognize who you are. I think I spent most of my career before starting this company in rooms full of men. I was a corporate litigator on Wall Street. I was more often than not the only woman in the room. And I think part of leaving to go out of my own path, part of being excited about that was the ability to be around people I had commonality with, um, who could talk about the struggles, the joys, all of those experiences and support what I was doing, who believed in what I was doing.  
[00:26:00]

And I, I think many women do think corporate America in the entrepreneurial world should look different for women. And I wanted to be with those people.

[00:26:30]

Jerry: And, and tell me about belonging.

Amy: I think belonging is incredibly important. It's like the main thing other than love that I hope I give my kids, right? That they have a place that they belong with, with our family and also within society. Um, when you feel like you don't have the same opportunity, you don't feel like you belong. You don't feel like you're supposed to be in the room. I think, I often think about women, um, we talk about how you know, women are welcomed into the work, workplace, right? In the '70s with the first real wave of feminism.  
[00:27:00]

And I think that we were allowed into the room, but we were never given a seat at the table.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And that's exhausting.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: It is exhausting to constantly feel like that.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Um, folks who listen to the podcast will probably get sick of me repeating something, but I often say that our basic human needs boil down to love, safety, and belonging. And I was really struck by that, and I'm struck even now by your distinction between being folks being allowed into the room, being given a seat at the table, but not actually belonging at the table.  
[00:27:30]

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: And you know, it's the same challenge I have with the word "empowerment."

Amy: Ugh, oh I hate the word empowerment. We don't use it here.

[00:28:00]

Jerry: Totally. Right.

Amy: No, because everyone is like, when people- a lot of people they talk about The Riveter, they're like, "It's for women's empowerment." And I'm like, "Women don't need to be given power. Women have power."

Jerry: Exactly. That's right.

Amy: Like we're built to accelerate that power, but we are not built to give people power. I hate that. It feels so ... It feels like you're minimizing me.

Jerry: Right. Well, it may or may not be conscious that, uh-

Amy: Right, I agree with you. I don't think many people think of it that way. Like that's a very kind of-

[00:28:30]

Jerry: But I, I think ... I think that there's, what we're talking about right now are subtle and important nuances.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: There is allowed at the table. There's g- even, even given a place at the table.

Amy: Yeah, and-

Jerry: Versus, uh, being at the table because you, because the table should not exist without that voice.

Amy: [00:29:00] And you know what? That's exactly how I feel when I go down to Silicon Valley and I walk into these rooms, is I feel like I am allowed to come in, but I'm not gonna be-

Jerry: Because ... Because it's, because it's, it's actually trendy right now.

Amy: Oh, it's super trendy. It's trendy to support women entrepreneurs in some ways.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: I was at ano- like this is another example I was at a fireside chat with the VC, um, a man. And I, it was four female founders. And I raised my hand to try to give him the softball question. He knew he was walking into the room with female founders. And I said, "Why do you think women don't get more VC funding?"

[00:29:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And he said, "Well you know, there's a really big difference between supporting someone and writing a check."

Jerry: (Laughs) Oh God, I'm sorry I should not laugh.

Amy: And I was just like, "Our, w- w- what?" Like I didn't even know. (Laughs)

Jerry: Right. Right.

Amy: But I think that like, I think he voiced the sentiment, right that exists them on many.

Jerry: Right.

Amy: And that is, I was floored by that.

Jerry: Right.

Amy: But yeah, I think that's really how I feel. And I think-

[00:30:00]

Jerry: So, I- I- I wanna, I wanna bring your attention back to that. And, and when you get back into that reflecting mode. So, what I'm hearing is this warrior like stance. And by the way, warrior is my terminology adopted from my Buddhist lineage, it is one

of the highest compliments I can give another human being, when I say, "You are a warrior." You are a warrior.

Amy: Thank you. Thank-

Jerry: Strong back, open heart. Strong back, open heart. Sorry, I don't mean to make you cry.

[00:30:30]

Amy: No, it's okay. (Laughter)

Jerry: But it's a powerful image. And, and I wanna recognize that there is a strength in the assertion that you are making in this moment. And I want you to know that I'm hearing you into this subtle but important distinctions that you are making between being allowed at the table and the table doesn't even have a right to exist without that table fully with the right warrior seated at that table.

[00:31:00]

Amy: Yeah, I mean, and, and even like I know I keep going back to the Brett Kavanaugh hearings, but it's that moment of like you're watching the people making the decision. And it's all white men.

Jerry: Right.

Amy: And it doesn't ... That just makes absolutely no sense.

Jerry: Right.

[00:31:30]

Amy: Like it just makes no sense and it's, it's, uh, that change, the change we need it's hard. And I think that's you know, so much of what gets me up is that like I want to be part of that. I want to change that. And it's a huge responsibility.

Jerry: It's a huge res- responsibility and I want, I wanna be careful, 'cause now I'm gonna stand shoulder to shoulder with my friend Amy. I'm not gonna stand in front of you and blaze a path, because that's not m- that's patriarchy.

Amy: That sure is.

[00:32:00]

Jerry: And I'm not gonna stand behind you and push you, because that implies again that I have more power than you do. And I do not. I have a vantage point that is different. That is it. And so standing shoulder to shoulder with you looking forward, I see the challenge that you have. It's subtle and it's important.

Amy: Right.

[00:32:30]

Jerry: And we are standing on the shoulders. You and I are standing on the shoulders of feminist, giants who came before us, who pointed the way and said that the old structure didn't work.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: And that even as much as I adore the Rosie The Riveter image, there are whole women of color who were not welcomed.

Amy: Yup.

Jerry: There are our sisters. Now, I'm gonna cry.

Amy: Yeah. (Laughs)

[00:33:00]

Jerry: Who, um, did not participate in that. And there were a whole bunch of women who thought that they had broken through, that when the men came back from war, were told to go back into.

Amy: I know. Like you think about even it's e- It might seem like a silly example, but you think about a league of their own.

Jerry: Yes.

[00:33:30]

Amy: Right? Like these women were given a chance or invited to provide the sport and the entertainment and they, and they loved it right? They had this power, and was exciting. And then when the war ended-

Jerry: Right.

Amy: ... they were told it was over.

Jerry: Right. Well, it's, it's in ... To go back to our earlier terminology and this is relevant in this moment in time, because there is a movement, there is genuine wishes for change.

Amy: Yes.

[00:34:00]

Jerry: But if, if support means, if- if- if someone of power and privilege can say, "There's a difference between support and writing a check, then they're not necessarily getting the distinction that we're talking about here." And when, and when we're talking about the, a league of our own or we talk about Rosie The Riveter, what we're talking about is I'm empowering you to step out of the old role. Thank you

[00:34:30]



very much. Now, please go back into the old role, right? There is not equity. There is not equitable sharing. And this-

Amy: No, there is not.

Jerry: And this is true of all of us who operate from different vantage points of privilege.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: This is a moment in time where we have the opportunity to address this.

Amy: Yup.

Jerry: And I'm gonna bring your daughters to the table.

Amy: Oh, yeah.

Jerry: Well, sorry.

Amy: No, I mean, uh, it's, it's-

[00:35:00]

Jerry: Your- your- your wer- yeah, I mean, we're laughing, because you know, 'cause, 'cause I'm imagining, I'm putting words in your mouth. You're imagining, "Oh great, Jerry's gonna bring my daughter."

Amy: No, it's just, I mean, it's like they're he- They are huge part of the reasons, but I am part of the reason too. I alone, just because of myself, not because I am someone's daughter, someone's wife, someone's mother. I matter enough to do this, but there is no way in how they're gonna deal with the, what I, what I have dealt with or what women in my generation have dealt with. It's, it's not going to happen.

[00:35:30]

Jerry: Right. I need to internalize that same sense of responsibility for future generation not merely for our daughters, but for our sons as well.

Amy: A hundred percent. I mean, the world will not change unless we all change it together, unless we all give our children the same messages. It can't be on women to change it. I mean, that was a thing about watching Dr. Ford testify.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: The burden she carried was the burden of all women, which is if you want change, you have to fight and claw, and demand for it, and share your worst stories.

Jerry: Hmm.

Amy: And your hardest stories. And it shouldn't be that way.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: It shouldn't be that way.

[00:36:30]

Jerry: Hmm. And, and so at the risk of asking you to represent, and acknowledging that my question is coming from that place, as I stand as kinda like your brother shoulder to shoulder with you, what is the right answer to the question? Implicit in the distinction between supporting women entrepreneurs and writing checks, what is support?

Amy: Support, when you're talking about building a venture scale company, support is a check, right? And it's not a charity donation. It's a belief that you can do this, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: It's saying, "I think these are the right people to do this. I think they can pull it off." And moving past whatever pattern recognition or implicit bias is in front of you. [00:37:30] And I think that's the thing you know that's, that's hard, right? Is that I wonder with the questions I get and studies, studies will show this, right? That women get more questions about the downside.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And men get more questions about the opportunity. And but at the same time, like just last week, I was walking through my pitch with a female founder and she was like, "You've got to be careful not to seem boastful." And I was like, "What do you mean?" And she said, "Well, you should have your Chief Marketing Officer [00:38:00] introduce you and you introduce your Chief Marketing Officer, so you're not seeming boastful."

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And I was like, "So you think, me listing my credentials (laughter), of going to like a top five law school-

Jerry: Right.

Amy: ... and you know, building a political organization seems boastful? Like then I'm screwed. Like how can I then go sell a vision, uh, for a company that can be a billion dollar company, which is what my company can be? Like how- Like what, like how am I even supposed to operate in this world?" (Laughs)

Jerry: Right. Right.

[00:38:30]

Amy: Um, so that was you know, and she said to me, she saw my face when she said that to me. And she's like, "Hey." She's like, "I'm not saying that is right. I'm just telling you how to get through this."

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And that is something that is so important. Women tell one another how to survive the patriarchy not how to change it. We are conditioned to this point to do that.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). And so, um, as I internalize that,  
[00:39:00] uh, I can feel my own bias of wondering what you would tell me about how I could help change the patriarchy. And as I feel my way into that, I realize that actually, it's my responsibility, because the truth is, I don't want to live in a world where men and women however they identify are handcuffed by a patriarchy.

Amy: Yeah.

[00:39:30]

Jerry: I th- uh, it- it- first of all, just as a capitalist, it seems stupid.

Amy: (Laughs)

Jerry: I mean, it just seems like it's not about seeing the potential and possibility, let alone the morality and the ethics of it, that there is an opportunity here to create the world that we want to live in.

Amy: A hundred percent there's a huge opportunity. And the other thing is, is that like,  
[00:40:00] results show that diverse teams get better results. Like I think it's just silly to not-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: ... to not take that risk if, if a studies show that the likelihood that you'll get better results is if you have diverse teams, why wouldn't you take that bet?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: Why would you get against it? Why would you have doubt?

Jerry: Right. Just study show that first time entrepreneurs who get coaching do better, right?

Amy: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Jerry: Um, so you know, uh, you know, as the CEO of a coaching company, I often speak  
[00:40:30] about, yeah there's a value in doing this. It's the same statistic. It's hard enough to launch a business. Why not? (Laughter) Why not stack the odds in your favor by

building a diverse workforce? Why not stack the odds in your venture portfolio favor by supporting a wide range of entrepreneurs from a wide range of backgrounds in social locations?

[00:41:00]

Amy: Yeah. I mean, I don't know. I don't have an answer for you.

Jerry: Hmm.

Amy: And you know, and this is ... And, and I feel compelled to say you're too right. I'm not like ... I am, I am lucky. I ... And maybe I'm not lu- I have a good ... I'm also smart, I have a very good business, and I was able to be part of that 2% this year.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And I know that I will get funding to continue to build this, because partly because I'm relentless and there's no way that we won't get there.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And the world needs this, but I don't want it to be this hard for other women. I don't ... I don't want to, because, uh, uh, it will stop most women at the gate as- as makes sense, right? If you had ... It's very unlikely for any entrepreneur to get funding.

[00:41:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And then if you put, (laughs) if you say to someone, and 98% of those available funds will go to men, like why would you even try?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And so, uh, the world is missing out on all of these ideas that could make the world a better place.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And I just ... I need that to be different.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: We all needed to be different.

[00:42:00]

Jerry: And that's a heavy burden to carry.

Amy: It is. And I think like that's the, you know, sometimes I look at Hillary Clinton a lot as this kind of remarkable example for us, I'll have to look that too, but you know, ho-how ... You know she ... She took on this enormous risk and the enormous burden of the hopes of millions, not just women, but men and little girls. And when the election was over, she had to get out of bed the next day.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:42:30]

Amy: And she did. And she's still there for us, right? And that gives me the kind of like when I think about that, I'm like, "Okay, you need to not be afraid of public failure."

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: Because it's not the end of the world.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: But it does feel like a big burden to carry, to, to publicly say, I'm going to take this risk. I'm going to pull this off. And then if you don't ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: ... what does that mean?

Jerry: Hmm.

Amy: At the same time, I've made a very conscious decision that you have one life to live. You have one bat to swing, and you might as well take the hardest swing you can.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:43:00]

Amy: And if I have just this time, I'd rather try to do something big and change the world. And if, if I fail, I'll fail very publicly and spectacularly, but I'll at least have taken the chance.

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy: Because my husband was a college ice hockey player, and he always hearkens Dr. Wayne Gretzky's, uh, quote that you miss a hundred percent of the shots you don't take.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: So, you know, it is burden to, to try to be at the forefront of something that's very  
[00:43:30] hard and, and maybe impossible, but it's also a privilege and that's really what I should lean into that I'm fortunate to get to do this.

Jerry: Well, as I, as I said before Amy, um, there's a powerful wisdom in all that you're  
saying. And I recognize that. And, and, and yet I also would like to give you an  
[00:44:00] image that I find, that I, I find comforting. Um, and it comes from my dear friend and mentor, Parker Palmer who I often speak about and he's probably been the single most repeated guest on the podcast, maybe he and Brad Feld. And he has this image called, "The Tragic Gap." The Tragic Gap is the gap between the world that we know is possible and the world as it is.

[00:44:30] And all of us are called to stand in that gap between the world that, that is possible and the world that it is, that is. And it's a hard place for us to be, but if we don't stand in that gap, then we run the risk of tipping over either into what he calls, "Corrosive cynicism or fuck it, why bother, or irrelevant op- idealism." And irrel- the  
[00:45:00] idealism is irrelevant, because not recognizing how difficult the world is right now takes us as he says, "Out of the action."

Amy: That's so powerful. (Laughs)

Jerry: It's a really powerful image. And, and I remember several years ago, my daughter was, um, in her, I believe her first year, uh, teaching at a charter school in East  
[00:45:30] Nashville. And it was the summer, uh, where Michael Brown had been killed in Ferguson, Missouri. And she said to me, um, "Dad, how, how do I stay focused on helping kids?"

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: "When some percentage of them are going to be shot simply for being brown?"

Amy: I mean, how do we even breathe in a world where that is reality?

Jerry: Right?

Amy: Like that's the-

[00:46:00]

Jerry: And, and, uh, and we sat together and we watched my friend Parker, an old white  
dude (laughter) who, who gave us that teaching, which is that to con- I do not  
wanna live a life where I am taken out of the action, because that's not my life.  
[00:46:30] That's not my karma. And so my dear friend Amy, you are called to stand in this tragic gap, in this moment, and it sucks that only 2% of funding goes to founders who identify as women.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: And it sucks that you have to carry that. And I wish to God that you didn't, but I recognize that that burden is on your shoulders. And if we're gonna get closer to that world that we know is possible, then we all have to stand in the tragic gap.

[00:47:00]

Amy: We do. Yeah.

Jerry: Is that helpful that image?

Amy: No, I mean, that's incredibly helpful, because even, even me right who I was fortunate to be raised by parents who believe in civic duty-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: ... who participated in the community, it's funny, they would never tell me who they voted for when I was little, but they took me, now I know you know, now I know they took me to union halls (laughter) to set up my bag. You know, it's-

[00:47:30]

Jerry: (Laughs) That's sort of a mix in. (Laughter)

Amy: And I took ... My dad was a lawyer and my mom was a teacher, a public school teacher. You know, they took me to union halls to stuff bags, and hang the elections and I just thought that's what you did, because my parents gave a shit. And-

Jerry: They stood in the gap.

Amy: They did in their way you know, which is powerful.

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

Amy: But there are days where even I want to just say, "Fuck it," because it's hard.

[00:48:00]

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah. It is hard. It's exhausting.

Amy: But I think you know, you look at how women exists in America and this is a true statistic, 43% of women with college degrees off ramp after they had children.

[00:48:30] These are not women who set out to start a career and then quit. They're women who over the course of years had all of these things that happened, right? That women are less likely to get promoted than men. And women with children are less likely to get promoted than women without children. And white women makes 78 cents to a man's dollar and women of color remarkably less.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Amy: And all of these things pile up and they get exhausting.

Jerry: Hmm.

[00:49:00]

Amy: Right? And, and that is not a world that anyone should accept.

Jerry: Hmm.

Amy: Because A, hey, as a country we could be so much stronger. As an economy, we could be so much stronger, but we've chosen to say, "Hey, this is the world and we're just gonna take it as it is."

Jerry: Hmm.

Amy: And it's no wonder that women leave, because why would they stay?

Jerry: Hmm. Hmm.

[00:49:30]

Amy: And so the question is how do we change it? And I think the answer is you stay under the gap and you make it so, and women cannot do it alone. Men have to be there with us.

Jerry: You know, um, the, the image that comes to me, I, I'm gonna go back to this line your own words, I wanted to walk into a room where I felt like I belonged.

Amy: Yeah.

[00:50:00]

Jerry: Perhaps that room is the gap and perhaps that room is filled with brave warriors with a wide diverse expression, the full expression of human identity, standing together in the gap saying, "Fuck it, this is not the- the ... We're not yet there and

[00:50:30] we're gonna keep trying even though we know that perhaps not in our lifetimes will it change, but we're not going to give up."

Amy: Yeah. It's- it's- it's really interesting that you say that, because I have found myself constantly kind of in awe of the women that I get to talk to now that I've started this company. You know, I had Anne-Marie Slaughter who was at The Riveter the other day. I talk regularly with Ilyse Hogue who's the president of NARAL. Um, but you realize the commonality, right? Is that we're all standing in that gap together. And we know that there are kindred spirits and that we're in the fight, and that we all have to do it together.

[00:51:00]

Jerry: That's right. And I think tha- I think it's that if we can borrow from our elders like Parker, and understand that the opportunity, it's not even just a moral obligation, the opportunity to alleviate our suffering is to stand together in that gap and to



[00:51:30] create that place of belonging in our suffering. So that we're not divided by that suffering, but we're actually united by the fact that yup, we're gonna roll up our sleeves and human development continues and we have work to do as a species.

Amy: Yeah.

Jerry: And so like Rosie, you roll up your sleeves, you put a bandana on your head, you put a kerchief on your head and you say, "Let's get to it cause..." what does your button say? "We can do it."  
[00:52:00]

Amy: We can do it, yup.

Jerry: We can do it.

Amy: We can and we will.

Jerry: The fruits of our labor may not show up for generations to come, but I'll be damned if I stop trying.

Amy: I think that's right.

Jerry: So.

Amy: Well, I needed this today, because I woke up and didn't wanna try today. (Laughter)  
This is awful.

[00:52:30]

Jerry: Well, you know, when we start these things, I'm never quite sure what it is that's gonna show up.

Amy: (Laughs)

Jerry: And, um, I just wanna thank you for showing up as you did in the fullness of who you are. Um, it's been a delight, um, that you know, uh, so often of our entrepreneurial conversations in these podcasts are, "Jerry, help me figure out this problem." In this case, it felt like what we ended up was standing in the gap together.  
[00:53:00]

Amy: I agree. I feel like you're there with me and I appreciate that.

Jerry: I am my sister.

Amy: Thank you.

Jerry: So, thank you very much.

Amy: Thank you.

