

Jerry: Good morning.

Regina: Good morning Jerry.

Jerry: It's so, um, delightful to have you both on the show, uh, with us today. And before we jump in, um, let me just ask each of you to introduce yourself. Amanda, I'll just pick you first.

Amanda: Okay. Uh, yes. My name is Dr. Amanda Aquilera and I am a turnaround consultant in a lot of things, but mostly power dynamics, restorative practices. And, uh, I work in partnership, uh, with Regina.

Jerry: Yeah. And which leads us to Regina.

Regina: I am Regina. I currently work at Naropa University as the executive director for Mission Integration and Student Affairs. And Amanda and I work there together as well. And also I'm a power dynamics consultant and a specialist in human connection.

Jerry: Oh, I just love that title. I'm gonna steal that title, specialist in human connection. Um, and before we jump into the conversation it's, it's worth noting kind of as a disclaimer, uh, uh, Regina and I are colleagues, uh, at Naropa University where I serve as a trustee and I'm now in my 10th year as a trustee.

Regina: Yeah.

Jerry: So, that's how old I am. But, um, I first became familiar with your work, both of your work through Naropa. And, um, I will note that, um... I'll say it now at the start of the conversation, whatever progress I've made in uncovering my own biases has come not only from direct conversation that we've had, but in watching the work that you do, um, and how, um, beautifully you hold, uh, this work. And I am deeply and profoundly grateful to each of you. So thank you for that.

Jerry: So I reached out and asked, uh, you to join in in conversation because it feels like we're in an incredibly important moment in time where, um, because of the powerful work of activists across the country, we are having conversations that have been needed to have convert to tap and had for decades, centuries, millennia. And, um, my deep, profound hope is that the movement and the spirit and the feeling is sustained because I don't know any other way for us to create change.

Jerry: And so, um, my hope was to talk about what I often think of as the sort of unspoken, unexpressed portion, uh, uh, factor in the entire complex calculation of, uh, racial inequity, uh, in, in our societies and in our organizations. And that is the notion of equity, the notion of power. Um, and, and, uh, that f- uh, and, and my firm belief that, uh, however well-intentioned you may be in

overcoming unconscious biases until we address, um, power dynamics, um, the system we'll just go back to it's a good. In its old ways.

Jerry: Um, and we won't be able to change economic inequality and we won't be able to change ways that we other people until we really address power. So like Regina, tell me about power and how power works.

Regina: Yeah, well, um, a lot of my understanding around power has been [inaudible 00:17:03] and shaped by the work of Dr. Cedar Barstow who wrote about the Right Use Of Power. Um, she specifically set forth a framework for helping professional, um, but in my encounter with it, and I think other folks who've encountered it, um, couldn't help, but see its value of using that framework to look at what she calls status power or the power that comes with the identities that we don't get to choose. The identities that we're born with.

Regina: And some of the things that I learned from her that were groundbreaking are even though I'd grown up looking at power, seeing power portrayed as only one way, which is like power over or people exploiting other people, uh, for their own selfish need, that's what I thought power was, or that power was only something that a very select, uh, few people, uh, were given when they were born. Power is actually energy and it's neutral and we all are born and have a birthright to claim our personal power.

Regina: Um, and looking at personal power has been, uh, I think, um, a lifelong journey for me of how I can actualize and make greater use of my personal power. And then we do look at the fact that there are groups of people who are born with more power than others. That our culture confers power on certain groups of people and allows them access to greater resources and opportunities than other groups are afforded. And that again is, that is status power.

Regina: And then there's also role power, which is the temporary power that we think of as earned, um, that comes with a position. But, you know, of course the positions you're afforded are also influenced by these social groups that you're born into. And also by how much access you are given to your personal power. But that's a general framework that we work with in terms of dimensions of power. And then we get to structural power and institutional power. And of course that's what this current Black Lives movement is about.

Regina: It's about the ways that institutional power has been abused, uh, specifically by the police force, but of course that's also condoned by the justice system and reinforced by other, um, institutions like the media. Um, so when we're talking about power, we're talking about, um, kind of the intersectionality or the ways that all of these types of power are showing up in this present moment.

Jerry: Amanda you, uh, you, curious if you had anything to res- to add to that and build upon it?

Amanda: Yeah. I mean, I think that what Regina outlined, uh, for me and, and what Dr. Barstow offered is really, uh, a useful language. It gives us a framework and organized language for talking about all of these different types of power. And it feels fundamentally empowering. I think a lot of conversations that are had about power, I feel really disempowering. Whereas this, when we start from this neutral non-dual frame, it can actually feel empowering because, "Ah, I actually have personal power that I can use no matter what my role or status power is and I can cultivate that personal power."

Amanda: Um, and then also the concept of collective power, which we see like the Black Lives Matter movement and many other movements. I c- we can use the power that we do have collectively to influence that systemic power, that structural power, that institutional power. So for me, it is, um, it is a very empowering way of looking at this very serious issue that is causing a lot of harm because people don't understand the frame. They don't understand the intersectionalities. They don't understand how they fit in with that frame of power.

Jerry: So I'm gonna take my seat as a student here and really ask questions around that. And so jumping back, Regina, to, to some of the things that you shared, the status power that I have, that was conferred upon me by society by way of my birth stems from, uh, having been racialized as white, um, being cisgendered. Um, and, uh, so much flows from just simply that simple act of [inaudible 00:22:52] birth.

Regina: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Um, am I getting that right?

Regina: Absolutely.

Jerry: And th- and then, um, and, and we can talk about the word privilege in a second because I know that there's a correlation between those two, uh, relationships. Um, and, and, and, and what I'm also hearing from each of you is that... And this feels very Buddhist to me, um, is the notion that we're each born with certain kinds of power. Um, and I'm imagining that, um, it's not the existence of power or non-power that's the problem. It's the way in which the collective responds to the status power that, um, is born. Do I have that right?

Amanda: Yes.

Regina: [inaudible 00:23:46] If there is a right, then you have it.

Jerry: (Laughs). Beautiful. [inaudible 00:23:52]

Regina: But Amanda and I spent a little... Just as a sidebar, we spend... And we're not the only ones, but just the inherently in our desire to even get it right is a cultural value, you know? Um, so one of the things that we're working on and

Evolving Dynamics is really moving beyond the binary in our thinking. Uh, right wrong. You know, white, black. Having power, non-power. Um, and just really trying to work with our thinking into this a non-dual, really working with a non-dual perspective, um, because of the need to be right and to be on the right side, um, or to be seen... You know? Get it all right, be correct, check all the boxes, be linear in our thinking, all of that. There's a cult- there's cultural values embedded in that.

Jerry: Uh, I love that you just brought that in. I'll, I'll make a note to, to that Evolving Dynamics is the name of your consulting firm.

Regina: Oh, yeah.

Jerry: And we'll have links to all of that, including Dr. Barstow's work-

Regina: Yes.

Jerry: ... in our, um, uh, podcast notes. But, um, Regina, you also just said something super important. It, it feels really important to me, which is this notion of the desire to be right, to get it right. Um, feels, uh, like a cultural value and of course the corollary to that is, "Oh my goodness. The shame of getting it wrong and being wrong." Right? And, um, leading... And, and, and so closely allied to a concept I often, um, speak with clients about, which is this output-driven mentality. Um, you know, at the end of the day, how many pairs of shoes did I make? And were they good shoes as opposed to did I live well? Did I live with kindness and compassion?

Regina: Absolutely. I mean, one of the things I'm constantly monitoring myself for is, uh, is this internal voice that's speaking to me right now, "Is this my voice? Or is this, uh, the voice of white mainstream heteronormative socialized mind? Um, I work with a lot of white people and sometimes it's hard to tell what is true for me and what I am kind of receiving as expectation and messages. And Amanda and I have spoken about, um, perfectionism as an example of I work with folks, um, white women, cisgender women, who I feel like are very, they're bad asses. I hope we can say that. And [crosstalk 00:27:12]-

Jerry: Absolutely.

Regina: ... like they're very i- they're very driven, they're very ambitious, they're very detail-oriented and there's a certain level of perfectionism. And one day when I was feeling really overwhelmed as their supervisor, (laughs), and really like I wasn't getting it right and I wasn't living up to their... Potentially, this was a story in my head. Their expectations of me as their boss. And then I slowed it down and I realized that they were holding themselves to, um, the standard of perfection that they might have been socialized. Again, trying to live up maybe to the white male standards. So their socialization was then impacting me and what I thought I should be and how I thought I should show up.

Regina: And then I realized that that didn't have to be true for me. It didn't have to be my cultural standard. I could look to, um, other ancestral lineages that were aligned with my culture. Um, Audre Lorde, one of my favorite teachers from beyond, um, she says the white man or the white father, she might say says, "I think, therefore I am." And the black mother, which lives in all inside of all of us says, "I feel, therefore I can be free." And so I had to say, "Well, which one of those two... " (Laughs). You know, not that I always have to choose, "But which one of those two is my lineage? You know, my lineage of punk and hip hop and jazz and, uh, spirituals and black Baptist churches. And, you know, like, "Um how is that living in my work? And, um, can I align myself with that rather than some other cultural standards, um, that I, that I can barely see because I'm the fish in the water." You know?

Jerry: Uh, I just need to pause. Um, that quote from Audre Lorde landed in my heart in a really powerful way. And, um, as well as your identification that the black mother lives within all of us. Um, which causes me to see the ways in which I, as a status powered... I don't know if I'm using that phrase grammatically correctly. There's that rightness [inaudible 00:30:01]. Um, uh, relates to the wish to feel and not really think and how it can trap me in a structure that doesn't sure anyone.

Amanda: Yeah. And just thinking about... You know, Regina and I laugh all the time about my perfectionism and I wear a, a bracelet that "Says progress not perfection," which is a common phrase. But I think what is more appropriate is maybe, "Connection not perfection."

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Amanda: So, if we can center connection and come from that place, not only connection with ourselves, but connection with each other, if we can start from there, it's a very different conversation.

Regina: Absolutely. And so we look at our... I mean, you know, I ended up in this work of diversity and equity and inclusion and power dynamics, um, somewhat by accident, um, because I've actually... And my first degree is in poetry. My second degree is in Buddhist psychology and contemplative psychotherapy. Um, and, you know, and then being in the body that I'm in, I've always been, um, kind of pulled into conversations around power and justice and equity. Um, because in order to seek my own liberation, I came into contact with all of the barriers to that, which have to do with other people's misunderstandings of their identities and understandings of their identities.

Regina: So I got into this conversation and to this work somewhat, um, happenstance just like the causes and conditions that, (laughs), led me to doing this and finding that I had, uh, some gift and some skill around navigating difficulty and being with this comfort. A lot of which I think I owe to my Naropa education 'cause that's what we, we train in. Is being with the difficult and not turning

away from suffering. But what I realized when people are like, "Well, what does poetry have to do with counseling and have to do with justice and equity and how... You know, how does it all fit together?"

Regina: Um, and it's all about connection. No, it's all about what's in the way of me feeling like I truly belong here, wherever here is and what's in the way of other people feeling like they truly belong here. And what's in the way of us connecting. And, uh, the ways that we've been socialized in our culture, the ways we've been taught to relate to our power have been barrier. Um, have kept us feeling separate. And though, you know, that's not the reality. The reality is that we're interconnected. The reality is that no one is free until we are all free. Uh, and so we're kind of trying to help people to experience reality, but first we have to be able to see and name and to navigate all of the ways in which what we've been taught about identity and power are in the way.

Jerry: I love that image.

Jerry: Um, last year, my version of a book tour, I was just, I just was shocked; the number of people who presented. Or I saw it as different who found connection in words. And, um, I take... People ask how I can be optimistic even at this time when it feels like the world is a dumpster fire. And I'm realizing here and, you know, both that it's, um, my desire, my, my primordial desire for connection and my ability to find that connection that gives me optimism, even in the midst of what feels like overwhelming, uh, pain and suffering.

Regina: That reminds me of a training. I think Amanda and I were there together, um, or they had us, uh... It was one of those exercises where they say a statement and if you feel, if you agree with the statement, you're on one side of the room. If you disagree with the statement, you're on another side of the room. And one of the statements... And, and again being older, the room was primarily white. Um, one of the statements was about like, do you have faith or believe or trust, or something like that. That there will, that we'll be able to do this. We'll be able to figure out how to dismantle systemic racism.

Regina: And most of the people were on the side of not believing that it's possible, not having the hope. And I was on the side of having the hope and believing it's possible. And I was also livid that so many white people were on the side of not believing it was possible because I felt there was a certain amount of choice listeners in my hope. There's a certain amount of choice listeners in my optimism. If we don't learn how to do this, what else is there? So even though I do think that I'm an optimist, uh, I consider myself radically optimistic, but I don't, I also feel like there's a certain amount of choice listeners in it. Because what would it mean to my, um, you know, to my children, my children's children... And I mean that not, not just biologically, but, um, to the generations that are going to come after me, if I don't have a kind of radical optimism about what is possible?

Jerry: I, I, I hear you. I, I don't wanna live in a world where, um, I've given up. Th- that feels irresponsible. Um, a- and it feels like, uh, uh... I do feel like my optimism is a choice. Um, and for me the optimism, it has to be beyond words. It has to be an action as well. It has to be, um, what am I willing to confront?

Jerry: One of my, uh, one of my favorite teachings from my college days is that systemic problems require systemic solutions. And, um, if we're talking about systemic racism and institutionalized structures that need to be overcome, whether it's white supremacy or patriarchy, then, um, we cannot... But a- a- approach that work without a systemic holistic view, which includes optimism. But not bou- bound into an idealism that then, you know, it's like a fair-weather friend and just disappears when the wind blows in the wrong way.

Amanda: I think that the systemic problems come from a paradigm. You know, and that paradigm is dualistic. It is us versus them. It is competitive. Uh, and I don't think we can offer systemic solutions if they come from that dualistic paradigm. So, well, it is true that we need to address systemic issues with systemic solutions. It first has to come from a paradigm of non-duality of cooperation, of inclusion. Uh, and of, of conflict positivity, which I think is not often, it's not the term often heard or used. But, um, we have to be willing to engage intention in conflict and be, and have the skill to make that tension or conflict generative. Otherwise we're going to recreate the same system in different clothes.

Jerry: Uh, uh, c- can I, uh, ask you to elaborate on that? Is that, is that what you mean by conflict positivity?

Amanda: Yeah, conflict positivity is understanding that when difference is present and we are showing up fully as ourselves and we are speaking up. If you and me and Regina, if we look at each other, we are very different, right? We have different needs. We have different beliefs. We have different expectations because we're different people. And that is true for every single person on this plante- planet. Right? So if we are all showing up without different needs, beliefs, expectations, and commitments, then inevitably there's going to be conflict.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Amanda: So to me, the definition of conflict is just the presence of those differences. Right? So if we are surprised or ashamed or avoidant when conflict arises then we are not going to... And either we're not going to engage with it at all or we are not going to engage with it skillfully. Whereas if we, I have a conflict positive frame then we understand, "Hey, if we're all allowed to show up as we are, then conflict is inevitable. So let's just learn how to do it well, let's learn how to minimize the harm." Right? So, so it is part of what we are learning and not just part of changing the system, the systems. Right? Um, we have to learn how to engage skillfully.

Jerry: Uh, that's super helpful. It, it reminds me of some of the work I did in Nonviolent Communications Training. And, um, what, what occurs to me is the, um... And I often did it kind of ham-handedly when, when say two clients come in and they're in conflict. Um, uh, I can s- feel the need to elevate the conflict to, to, to highlight it, to bring that tension out into the open. Um, and I can feel the desire to make the conflict go away as quickly as possible because the, it just doesn't feel, um, safe in, in so many ways.

Jerry: But this conversation is also helping me understand that, um, when we apply, um, or, or, or, or when that impulse to make the conflict go away is applied to, uh, inequality and inequity, uh, it exacerbates that there are harm in the, uh, that has done to those who might come from a marginalized position relative to others. Relative to the dominant paradigm.

Regina: Yeah, [crosstalk 00:43:38]-

Jerry: You're both nodding. Yeah, Regina.

Regina: The cost of peace or not having conflict in our daily lives is usually, uh, paid by the the persons in the down power role.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Regina: But we are usually the ones who are silencing ourselves or squeezing ourselves into a frame that the dominant culture has provided in order to avoid conflict. Because neither h- group necessarily has be- had the skills to engage in conflict in such a way that it's been generative. And of course, historically that conflict could have been, or has been, uh, life-threatening. You know, and that's what the current protests are also, are about. It's like, "Yeah, we haven't been able to afford conflict. It's been deadly." And so to expand our capacity to be in conflict, um, as Amanda was saying, is the path, is, is the path forward. Um, so that folks in down power don't have to pay a disproportionate cost or, or there to be an artificial sense of peace or agreement or not upsetting those in power.

Jerry: Do you, do you see the Black Lives Matter protests as, um, elevating the tension and, and making, uh... You know, my experience, I would use the word unavoidable, undeniable. The, the conflict that is actually been brewing. So it's, it- it- it's like there's been silenced conflict and now there are, are pockets 'cause it's still just pockets. Pockets of v- voiced conflict. Am I seeing that correctly?

Regina: There's the correctly.

Jerry: (Laughs). Well, I do wanna get it right. (Laughs).

Regina: I can't tell you the truth with a capital T about the Black Lives movement.



Jerry: (Laughs).

Regina: I can't tell you how it's impacted me and what I, you know, well, how I have related to it. Because I'm sure that there's about a mill- you know, there's as many-

Jerry: Yeah.

Regina: ... different stories as there are human beings engaged in conflict.

Jerry: Yeah.

Regina: But I do think the conflict is generative. Yeah.

Jerry: Yeah.

Regina: I think that it, it has, um, once again, put forward reality in a way that because I think of the conditions of the pandemic-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Regina: ... people couldn't turn away from. Or they were more, more, there were more people watching. And I think also people's hearts and bodies were in very different places, um, when they did come in contact with bearing witness. They were in a place that they were or easily mobilized, impacted, um, but there's still a lot of mystery to it. And I think far greater minds than mine are analyzing why this time, why now, what exactly transpired to kind of, "Yeah, wake the world up again.

Amanda: Again.

Regina: Again.

Amanda: All right.

Jerry: Yeah. Which reminds me-

Regina: [crosstalk 00:47:19]-

Jerry: ... is it that Rumi line, "Don't go back to sleep."

Regina: Yeah.

Regina: Think a lot of poets have told us to stay awake.

Jerry: (Laughs).

Regina: Um, recently I watched a Ram Doss documentary and something. There was a line in there that I found helpful where he said, you know, from a long enough view, even going to sleep, going back to sleep is a part of waking up. Um, you know, and we humans have our sense of time, I think, is, uh, particular. And I hope that, yeah, the times that we've gone back to sleep around racial injustice, we're still a part of an overall awake. Yeah. Yeah, I'm hoping that this is a longer span of being awake than we've had, than we've ever seen. Yeah.

Amanda: Yeah. It reminds me of, uh, you know, uh, waking up, of going to sleep. The going to sleep part is a privilege, right? And it's heard a lot by white people or people, uh, in, uh, power, uh, positions of role or status power. And I was thinking again about that line at that training where people were on the side of hope or hopeless. And I think that is also, uh, based on people that have been asleep because I think a lot of white people, uh, believe that somehow we were making progress. And so if we've made so much progress, how can these things still be happening? So it feels hopeless.

Amanda: But I think the point is that we haven't made as much progress as the myth or the belief that we have. And I think that is a really important thing to understand. That, um... And I think people of marginalized groups know this, (laughs), a lot better than, than us white people. But, uh, yeah, I think in some ways the myth of this progress that has been made, uh, is kind of dangerous, uh, because it makes us believe that we are in a place that we are not. Um, so...

Amanda: And that's, that in and of itself sounds, (laughs), hopeless, but it is not. Uh, I don't think because we are, uh, we are capable of working up over and over again. Every ti- I can fall asleep multiple times a day and this is what I do for a living, but so I have, um, in every moment I have the opportunity to wake up again. And that is determined based on I'm I connected to myself and am I connected to other people? You know?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Regina: I think it's a both a yeah and right?

Amanda: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Regina: Like we haven't made as much progress as we-

Amanda: Yes.

Regina: ... have the capacity to make. And yet I think about, you know, in the microcosm of my relationship with my mother.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Regina: And, um, when we'll talk about work, when we talk about work, when I talk about the work that I do, when I talk about the things that come out of my mouth in boardrooms, (laughs), that Jerry has heard me say in the boardroom-

Jerry: (laughs).

Regina: ... and other places where I'm able to say the words white supremacy, where I'm able to say to someone who has significantly more, uh, power than I do, uh, I think that was a microaggression or, um, the way that, "Here's how you impacted me with what you said." Uh, when I talked to my mother about having choice that I could speak to my boss, if my boss feedback in a particular way, um, that I don't have to work at this job, that if I want to do something more with my life, that if I want more pleasure and enjoyment and fulfillment, and my mother just looks at me with this face of like, "Have you lost your mind, child?"

Jerry: (Laughs).

Regina: Like that's just not the reality, um, that she has in her body. And, um, what she, what her cells know is different from what my cells know about what is possible, about, um, it being relatively safe at times for me to be confrontational with people who have more power than I do. Um, yeah, so, so my life and the potential of it and the capacity of it, which she sacrificed to make possible, is almost dreamlike to her and probably even more dreamlike to her ancestors. Um, I'm, I think of when I read the poem "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou and there's that line, I am the dream and the hope of the slave. Just saying it. I'm already about to bring myself to tears. (Laughs).

Jerry: You've acclaimed. (Laughs).

Regina: Yeah. I mean, so there, there is that progress in, in the area of personal power. Um, the personal power that especially black people are actualizing and that we're seeing, um, on the television and the solidarity, you know, that people are demonstrating around our right to express and to lay claim to that personal power that's everyone's birthright. Uh, that, there is some progress there. Um, a future that we can imagine is progress.

Jerry: I think about so many, uh, of the folks who listened to the podcast and some of the folks who are, are clients. And I think about the, the conflict and, and even, uh, the tension that exists between hope and hopelessness and the sense of overwhelm. And I think about, uh, that, and I think about... In m- in, in, in, in my own w- wishes to get it right, uh, th- the desire to what to do, what to do, what to do. It's almost like a, you know, a frantic little mouse running around, "What do I do? What do I do? What do I do?" And, um, Regina, you used the term ancestors several times and, uh, perhaps there's a need to stay connected to our ancestors. Because, um, perhaps our ancestors know what to do, what to do, what to do.

Regina: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And I think in our frantic little lives of, of, of whether or not we feel the power that we have, we s- we can feel small in the face of all of these things. Um, Amanda, you spoke of the, uh, staying connected to your own body, staying connected to your own experience and connected to other people. Perhaps the call at this time, the deep profound call for transformation is a call to remember our ancestors more so much and, uh, fought for our birthright.

Jerry: And that, that informs a feeling I have, which is what is my work to do when I think of myself as someone's ancestor? May two, three, four generations down the line someone say. "That one made a difference."

Regina: Well, I think what we do is different depending on the bodies we're in and the power we're afforded and, yeah, I mean, I think our ancestors have prob- have probably given us different assignments. And, uh, I'm imagining Jerry, that your assignment is different from mine and mine is different from Amanda. Um, I feel like, uh, yeah, black people, people of color have very different work to do right now than white folks do.

Regina: And in the conversation around race, um, Amanda and I even talked about... You know, so our relationship is basically, um, the, the best, the most fertile soil for this work. Even as we were preparing to have this conversation with you on the podcast, Amanda had a very different idea of what her work was in order to prepare for this podcast. And my work was to, um, decenter whiteness. Um, my work was to not work too hard. I was like, "I am not going-"

Jerry: (Laughs).

Regina: " I'm not going to " My work was to monitor what Whiteness wanted me to do-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Regina: ... on the podcast. How Whiteness wanted me to prepare for this podcast, the messages Whiteness was telling me about my work. I remember saying to Amanda like, "If I can't, you know, show up knowing that my basic being is a value, that all of the work I've done, all the preparation I've put into my life is a value, and I can say it in my way and I can speak my own language around it." You know, which is not what Whiteness says.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Regina: Um, so that was my work to do. My work is to rest. My work is to nourish. My work is to, to find the path for my liberation, you know, to continually decenter whiteness and focus on liberation. That's very different than what white people need to be doing right now.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Regina: And I won't even speak to that. I'll let you all... (Laughs).

Jerry: (Laughs).

Jerry: My work is to figure that out. (Laughs). Yeah, I'm sorry.

Amanda: And I think... It's okay. Even among white people that work looks different, right? Depending on where we are developmentally. So, uh, one person's job right now might be to educate themselves.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Amanda: Another person's job might be to work on noticing when guilt or shame is getting in the way of actually doing the work. Or, um, yeah, maybe the work is being willing to give up something. Being willing to give up social capital. They are saying something risky, uh, being willing to give up time or money or... Yeah, so I think it looks different for everyone and, and part of the work is figuring out what that is for you.

Jerry: Yeah. I was just gonna say that I love the framing of that because I am endlessly and, uh, repeatedly fascinated by the question of what is my work to do. Um, and I am reminded of two things. Um, an encounter I had with Ani Pema Chodron, the Buddhist nun many, many years ago in which a very frantically, um, little mouse-like came to her for the wisdom and I said, "You know, I've been offered a board seat by a Buddhist organization." And I said, "Oh, I don't know what to do. I just wanna be a student and I wanna sit in the back of the room," and she kind of looked at me. She didn't quite say this word, but it was in her eyes. She said, "Bullshit." And what she said was, "Um, your karma is not to sit in the back of the room. Your karma is not to deny that you have power."

Regina: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: "Um, the path to happiness is that does not fly through denying karma, but to use that karma. To, to step into that in a way that furthers the, the creation of the world that you'd wanna see.

Amanda: Oh, yes.

Jerry: And, um, the second thing I'm reminded of is, uh... I'm gonna read a little bit, by my good friend Parker Palmer

Amanda: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... beautiful, beautiful poem called The Harrowing. He wrote, "I have plowed my life this way. Turned over a whole history. Looking for the roots of what went

wrong. Until my face is ravaged, furrowed, scarred. Enough. The job is done. Whatever's been uprooted, let it be. Seedbed for the growing that's to come. I plowed to unearth last year's reasons. The farmer plows to plant a greening season."

Jerry: Um, I think of that, uh, he wrote that as he was during the '80. And I think of that as part of that question of what is my work to do? And when will I know that my work is done? And I re-read that line now, after this conversation with an awareness that sometimes the work to be done is on our thing. It's turning the soil so that the soil can become a seedbed for something new to grow. And maybe, maybe I'm experiencing this time as a turning of the soil finally, so that a seedbed can be laid, so that something new can grow out of this. Maybe. That's my wish.

Amanda: And you don't have to do it alone. Even though it is your work to do and everyone's work is unique to them, you don't have to do it alone. And that is as important as figuring out what your work is. There's this concept called collective care that I think is so critical right now that we actually think about how we are coming together, how we are supporting each other in this work, um, in our different circles. And that will look different for White people will look different for people of color, et cetera. But, uh, that is really important.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Amanda: We have to do it together, you know?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Regina.

Regina: Yeah. I was looking at [inaudible 01:04:04]. I love, um, Adrienne Maree Brown. She wrote a book called Emergent Strategy, and she also wrote another book called Pleasure Activism. And she talks a lot about a radical collaboration and the fact that everyone is needed in th- in this work and no one is special. And, um, so she says, and I'm quoting her, "Uh, if love were the central practice of a new generation of organizers and spiritual leaders, it would have a massive impact on what was considered organizing. If the goal was to increase the love rather than winning or dominating a constant opponent, I think we could actually imagine liberation from constant oppression."

Regina: And so again, I think, you know, putting love and connection at the center of the work as the reason that the work exists is essential for the kind of social transformation that we're hoping to achieve. Um, so looking at how we can, as Amanda was saying, uh, do it together. And that requires, um, knowing what your work is, being willing to discover what your work is, um, being willing to speak the truth to each other and engage in generative conflict. Um, but not kind of letting go of one another no matter what. Uh, you just don't stop trying to [inaudible 01:05:40] other. E- even in the middle of the pain, the discomfort, uh, uh, microaggression, you just keep coming back to the, the practice of love and community and connection.

Jerry: Yeah, that was brilliant. I wanna thank you both for taking the time to be with me today and to be with all of us today. I know in my heart that the folks who listened to the podcasts are gonna be moved for our conversation. And, um, I love the fact that we did some work together and maybe we continue to do work together. Um, this work feels generative and thank you for helping me and helping the people listen to this show. Um, thanks for coming on.

Regina: Thank you Jerry.

Amanda: Thank you Jerry.