

Become A Good Ancestor Podcast

Ep09 - Layla Saad's Changemaker Journey with Layla Saad & Reema Zaman

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Layla, Reema

Reema 00:02

Hello and welcome. Thank you for joining us. My name is Reema Zaman. I am the author of the memoir I Am Yours and the forthcoming novel Paramita - A Dystopian Matriarchy and I also have the honour of being the book club facilitator for Become a Good Ancestor. And today I am joined by the CEO and founder Layla Saad of Become a Good Ancestor. Layla is also as you know, the New York Times bestselling author of Me and White Supremacy. Welcome, Layla. I am so excited to be speaking to you today.

Layla 00:37

Thank you, I'm so excited that we're doing this. This is an exciting thing. I've been podcasting since 2015 but this is the first time that I'm ever doing a live experience. And it's been a while since I've been interviewed on the podcast itself. So, this is exciting for me, and I couldn't choose a better conversation partner to have you Reema. So, thank you for agreeing to do this. And I'm really excited to be having this conversation with you. I also want to give a shout-out and thanks to our team at Become a Good Ancestor. Specifically, Kim David, our Chief Marketing Officer who supported us so much with helping us bring this together. With a shout out to Toy, our customer support member, I want to shout out to Brittany, our online business manager and so many other people. And I also want to give a very specific shout-out to a woman who has helped us to rebrand and relaunch this podcast. So the person I'm talking about is Hannah Pillow, who is our Podcast Producer. She has helped us to plan and script this episode. She is truly a woman who has claimed her space in her work. She is the founder of Wildfire Purpose Podcast Production company and has been, you know key to the rebranding and relaunch of the podcast. Hannah's purpose and mission are to amplify the voices of women entrepreneurs through her work and become an advocate for greater change. So it's such a pleasure to get to work with Hannah. If you are interested in finding out more about her and her work, you can visit www.wildfirepurposeproduction.co.uk.

Reema 02:26

Wonderful, thank you, Layla. Thank you for the shout-outs. And yes, Hannah and her team are incredible. I wanted to start with your beautiful timeline. So in 2017, you wrote a wildly massively viral blog post called I need to talk to White Women About White Supremacy, and a resume resonated with

so many people and went viral all over the world. That led to 2018 when you created the Me and White Supremacy Instagram challenge, which became a movement where hundreds of 1000s of people began to interrogate their relationship with white supremacy. Naturally, that segue to January 2019, when you launched your world-wide known, worldwide renowned, good ancestor podcast amplifying BIPOC authors and changemakers, and I've had the honour of being on that podcast, yes. And then in 2020, January, you publish Me and White Supremacy, and it spread your anti-racism work even further around the world. And then in April 2020, you launch Become a Good Ancestor, which is where inner work meets social change. And you have pivoted from primarily anti-racism work directed towards a white audience to supporting changemakers of every time to find their right work to create lasting change and how to take care of ourselves through this process. So yeah, I am so excited to talk to you about your journey, your backstory and how it led to your present moment and especially to shine a spotlight on your new self-study course, which is called claim your space. So, let's start with the backstory. Okay, so your evolution from life coach to writer. So that Became a Good Ancestor podcast rite of passage. Who are some of the ancestors living or transitioned familial or societal who have influenced you on your journey?

Layla 04:30

Yeah, yeah. I was going to say a great question, Reema. I asked it. It's how we start, right? And it's so important to be grounded in the past and who we come from, who's influenced us how they've influenced the way that we show up in the world. So I always start with my parents because they've had a huge influence on who I am, how I see myself, how I show up in the world, and the lessons that I pass on to my own children, and I just really want to acknowledge and give gratitude to them for everything that they give, they've given me and my brothers and all of our children, all of their grandchildren. They have taught us so much. I was just saying to them recently on our family WhatsApp group, hey, you guys, I just realised you've been married for 40 years, and my dad corrects me. And he's like, it's actually 41 years. And I'm like here's too many more. And I really thank them for giving all of us their children, a model of partnership and love and relationship that is so beautiful to have that is echoed in my own relationship with my husband, who is my biggest team member, my biggest cheerleader, and my best friend. And also, everything that they've instilled in me about excellence and character, and, you know, integrity. And a lot of the work that I do in Become a Good Ancestor. And it's funny because my mum I have a lot of the time she doesn't really get what I do. She's like, I don't get what is deepen. What does that mean? What is claim your space, what does that mean? But truly, actually, it was both my parents who taught my brothers and I that you're not just here for your own benefit, it's also important to be enhancing other people's lives and supporting other people. And so that's been baked into me. It's a seed that's been planted in me, and I just want to thank and acknowledge them for that. I also want to acknowledge my grandparents on both sides, putting whatever they put into their children that it then gets passed down to me as well. And then from a societal level, I'm very influenced by black feminist writers, both past and present, a lot of the well-known ones, so Audre Lorde, Bell Hooks, Toni Morrison, Sonia Sanchez, Lucille Clifton and so many others. I think what I take away from it is that for each one of us, it's both our privilege and our responsibility to show up fully as ourselves, loving ourselves. And from that place, really, really being able to support other people as well. And bringing together a community that is authentic, and that is about practising love. And so that's where I root kind of my thought leadership in.

Reema 07:45

That's so beautiful. Thank you for sharing that, Layla. And I mean, it makes so much sense that all of your influences and inspirations we're all people of love, and role modelling how through love, we create social change, and it begins at home, and how you have created now a safe space in a safe home and haven for so many other people to create their social change and find their voice and yourself.

Layla 08:17

Love that.

Reema 08:18

And yeah, and whatever you so generously share parts of your story and parts of your family story with us. It helps just cement that further. For us, and especially the way that Sam shows up for you and whenever you generously show photos from your life with your children. It's so evident. It really is.

Layla 08:41

I'm just here for love.

Reema 08:43

It's a legacy. It's a legacy of love. Yeah, it's very, it's very resonant. We feel it. And I think that's a huge part of why people want to be part of anything you create.

Layla 08:58

Thank you.

Reema 08:59

So authentic.

Layla 09:01

Thank you. I take that in. I receive that.

Reema 09:05

Good. Thank you. So, I wanted to go back to the very beginning. Before when your anti-racism work first became public and the article you wrote, which is I need to talk to spiritual white women about white supremacy. And were you always a writer, or did you transition from another background? What motivated you to write this?

Layla 09:34

I think I was always a writer in my heart in the way that I feel like being a writer for me is my God-given gift as opposed to something that I trained in or have an academic background in. It was just who I am, but it took me a really long time to recognise it, accept it, and own it. You know, I talked about my husband he was the first person in my life that was like, I think this is what you're here to do. I think you're here to write and I was like, no, I'm here to be a life coach. That's what I'm here to do. And you know, years later, I'm like, you're right. But in terms of like, the actual career path that I took, it was, like

many people, it wasn't a straight line, it was me trying out many different things. I studied law as my undergraduate degree, did not enjoy it, but came out of that. Very clear, I didn't want to be a lawyer, but not clear what I wanted to do, quite by chance, ended up working in corporate tax and did that for five years, I felt like this is something I could do in the same way that you could do. I don't know just anything where you're like, yeah, sure, I can learn the skills of how to do this, but my heart isn't in it in any way. And I think it was when I got married that, I had that first affirmation of I think you're here to do something else that it was confirming something inside of me that knew that but didn't know how to claim it. And so, then I decided to get trained, get training in coaching in life coaching. And then, so where that came from was, I had struggled with depression and anxiety in university. And what helped me essentially save myself from that was personal growth books and CDs. And in those times, we didn't really know what coaching was, it wasn't very widespread, especially here in Qatar, where I was living. And so, I was like, I want to do this thing called coaching. And my parents are kind of like, what are you talking about, you have this amazing corporate job, right? In tax? What is this thing? And I'm like, I just want to help people. I just want to make the world a better place. And they were like, no, like, go do your job, right? So, it took a while. But I really was like, no, I'm going to invest in this training, I'm going to do this work. I also was very interested in learning how to get good at public speaking. So, I started investing time and energy into that, and slowly ended up transitioning myself out of corporate tax into kind of part-time, one on one coaching very early on, it didn't sustain for long, because I just didn't have resources and support. But the job that I ended up moving into was corporate soft skills training, so leading trainings, workshops in companies on things like interpersonal skills, and time management and things like that. But I would sneak coaching into it. So, I was like, to giving these trainings in companies. But then I was also like, sneaking this, like personal growth, leadership stuff into what I was teaching. That wasn't in the curriculum that we were supposed to be delivering, but it was just where it was going.

Layla 13:19

I did that part-time for about a year or two. And then, as an introvert, it was very draining. It's very draining, leading two, three, four days of full-day workshops, you know, 8-12/14 people. And you have to hold that energy, and you have to hold a very high level of energy for the entire day. And I essentially just ended up burning out like it just wasn't sustainable for me. And before I knew how to pull myself out, my body pulled me out because it just shut down one day. And so, I stopped doing that. And then I tried to find other things to do and ended up working in. I ended up studying health coaching because I was receiving health coaching. And I was interested to learn about that. And I did some work around that. And then I ended up in what was my last job ever, which was working at a non-profit in their marketing department. And I ended up leading that department just before I left, so I ended up becoming the marketing manager there. And in all of these different things that I was trying, I was trying to find what's my thing because I can't seem to find satisfaction in anything that I'm doing. It would feel interesting for a while and then I just would flop and feel like this isn't the thing. And then one day at this job that was my last job. It was like I went into work, and I had this moment of like floating outside of my body and looking down at myself and thinking this is it and you know what it is? Which is that you're here to have an impact in a big way and you're almost 30. And you haven't even gotten started on that path yet. And if you don't do something about it, now, you're going to be 40 and you're going to be in great regret. So very soon after that, think a few months after that, I quit and embarked on this journey of being a solopreneur, being self-employed, I started life coaching, supporting women entrepreneurs

who were trying to build purposeful, meaningful values-aligned businesses and that was great. I really loved it. But essentially, what ended up happening was my writing ended up somehow going viral. So, I would write things that I felt strongly about, and then it would go viral. And I would be like, oh, I think this is actually more what I'm supposed to be doing. You know, and what I found, you know, is that actually what I'm here for? It's not even so much about like the vehicle, it's not so much about, is it writing. Or is it coaching? Or is it speaking, it's more about what is the overall umbrella of what I'm here to do? And that I believe, is healing work. And I believe where I am now is that I have this bestselling book, I have this podcast, I do speaking engagements and of course, I have this beautiful business. And we have courses that are here that we're sharing with people, and all of it is about healing. It's about liberation. And whatever I continue to do for the rest of my life, whether it fits I decide, what I want to become a mindfulness teacher, or I want to like, you know, do whatever it is like, whatever path I go down, whatever next modality I choose to get training in, my work will always be about healing. That's what I'm here to do.

Reema 16:59

That's beautiful. Thank you, I can see the clear thread of the narrative through-line through it, too.

Layla 17:04

We can always see it looking back, but when you're right, yeah, when you're in it, you're like, I don't know what I'm doing. But when you look back, you're like, oh, right.

Reema 17:13

Yeah, and that you struggled with anxiety and depression in college, and that led you to self-empowerment books and self-healing books. And then, of course, you know, it's interesting, it's almost like you have so many talents and skills that could have very well given you a satisfying career elsewhere. But if you kept on being called to purpose, and the ultimate purpose being that you are going to use all of these skills, whether it's marketing or leadership, or running a business, all in service of healing and liberation and restoration. So, it all makes sense. You found this beautiful alignment. And again, I hear that that's all of the things you just touched upon are also the things that you offer in the self-study courses, whether it's deep in or claimed or space, so it just makes you worried. You're like workshopped all of those things on your own cell. And then you find them perfected everything, and are now offering these things to everyone else? Because what I do know is that the thing you know, it's the beautiful quote, from Kiese Laymon, which is, we are the second person feeling this pain. We are always the second person in that pain. To know that you have had service and one other person's life is to know that you've lived a life worth living. That's the accumulation of why we're even here. So, thanks. And yeah, and it just, it makes so much sense that if so, when you and I left that who were like me, I kept on writing, and they went accidentally viral. I don't even know how it happened. Obviously, there was a need for your voice and this particular way you were delivering that message. It was like the perfect storm of timing, content, and the person delivering the message, I think those three things go into something becoming viral or massively popular. And I've seen that in your posts on your Instagram posts in your challenge, the Instagram challenge, and certainly in your amazing book. And so that was my next question, which is how did you evolve all of this into Me and White Supremacy it seems pretty like a simple evolution. What for you was the kernel of like, oh, this is how I'm going to package it or shape it. This is the container it will hold.

Layla 19:53

Yeah, so I used to say that there's no way to like to predict or engineer something going viral. But I think now in 2022, that is not the case, I think people don't know how to like, make those things meet each other and create things that go viral. But that doesn't necessarily mean if something has gone viral, that it is meaningful, we have so many different trends at the minute of things that will go viral, but they're kind of like flash in the pan moments, but they're not necessarily something that has a deep, deep impact or that is intended to be that might just be entertaining, or just designed to be purposely provocative, or whatever the case may be.

Reema 20:46

Something to remain evergreen too.

Layla 20:48

Yes, I can absolutely tell you Reema that I had no intention, or desire or design to go viral. That was not where I was coming from. I also wasn't ready for it. I think something that people don't talk about is, we have this belief sometimes like, Oh, if I go viral, that will be amazing, then I'll have more business, I have more followers. And we're not prepared for what happens to you emotionally. When you go from being you know, okay, the people around me know who I am to suddenly hundreds of 1000s of people know who you are, and want to pick you apart and want to scrutinise you and, you know, say all kinds of things about you and have expectations and assumptions about you that are not true. And if you don't know how to hold you with care. And so it's quite an intense experience, and I was not prepared for it. And so I have never tried to do that. And I wouldn't want to either because it just, it's a lot. It's just a lot. But the thing about me and white supremacy that still amazes me is that I didn't do it, it was done through me. You know, it was a thing that was done through me, because, you know, I've shared my experience with you. And nowhere in that experience, did I say, Oh, yes. And then I got a master in like, you know, decolonization and, you know, critical race theory, or I went and did this course about, you know, white supremacy, culture, or whatever. That was not my background, right? It never has been, I never want to claim it. I'm not a historian. I don't have that background. I had my own experiences. And I had my own thoughts and feelings that I felt very strongly about that I wanted to share. So that's how we got the viral article, from the viral article came all of this attention. And then I observed and I observed what I was seeing, and I observed over time that people would become more comfortable with these conversations around race and white supremacy. And then I had my curiosity of okay, what shifted like, what have they learned about themselves and white supremacy. And I believe that those things when they come to you if like, Oh, that's interesting, or a curious moment, when we choose to, like, follow that thread and see where it leads, very miraculous things can happen.

Layla 23:27

And so this Instagram challenge, which I've talked about in several interviews before, which came to me wholly packaged already, it was like a download, right? Where it was like, I want to share this post, about asking people what they've learned about themselves and white supremacy. And then okay, what do I mean by white supremacy? Let me break down some of the terms and then deciding, okay, maybe this isn't one post, maybe it's a series of posts. Hey, I know, let me share it over the course of a month, we can start tomorrow. That happens within the space of an hour or so. At 2 am at night, the

night before we begin the challenge, right? Like I truly believe that there are moments in time when something will come to us. And we have a choice on whether we choose to go on that like whether they call it in the hero's journey, the call to adventure. We hear the call. And then we can decide hey, yeah, I want to go on this adventure or No, I don't. And there was just something inside of me that was like keep pulling on this thread. This is important. I remember we did day one of Me and White Supremacy on Instagram. That's 2018. And the first question was, what is white privilege? And I give it a short explanation of what it was and then I invited people to comment in the comments about their own understanding of their white privilege. And as soon as I started seeing the comments of what people were writing, I was like, oh, oh, wow, I think I may have just tried to eat an elephant, like, I've just taken on a humongous task. And I don't think I have recognised how big this thing is. And at that moment, I, that part of me was like, you don't have to do this, you know, you can decide that you don't have to do this. And then there was another part of me that said, something very important is happening here. You need to pay attention. And you don't have to know everything about what's going to happen next. But it's very important that you show up faithfully to this work. And, and steward it, steward this moment. And so my one job that I have felt throughout my journey with me and white supremacy, whether it was the Instagram challenge, the workbook, which went viral, and then the published book, even the young readers' edition, and the journals at every stage, all I have thought is this is coming through me, this is not me, I'm not doing this, this is being done through me. And my only job is to allow myself to be used for this work. That's my one job that I'm this is the assignment that I've been called into. And at no point was I like, Oh, I'm being forced to do it, or this is something that I don't have, say, or agency in, it felt more like I'll use the terms that I use because you know, I believe in God. So that's the languaging that I would use is I felt God was like, this is something that I'm calling you to do. You don't have to do it if you don't want to. But if you want to Let's go, right? And so I did. And I did. And what has been really fantastic about this whole thing. Is also knowing when the assignment was done. And I knew the assignment was done last year, 2021 towards the end of 2020. So the young readers' edition came out last year, I finished that and published it, and we did the whole promo for that. And I was like, There's nothing more that I need to do. With this work. I have completed the assignment, and I have done everything that was asked of me to the best of my ability, with all the love and care I could in the world. And it's complete. And that's such a good feeling to know as well.

Reema 27:46

That's incredible.

Reema 27:49

Incredible.

Reema 27:52

You are the container and the challenge. The container and the channel of the challenge. And we get to experience that through you.

Layla 28:03

Yeah. And it's, you know, it's, I'm done with the assignment. But the work is not done in the world. And I know that it will continue to because it's not me doing it, it will continue to have whatever impact it's supposed to have out in the world with whoever it's supposed to meet. And I'll certainly I'll certainly you

know, I also think it's very important not to say, Well, I'm done with that. So I never want to think about it again. Never want to speak of it. No, that's my baby like that's something I poured years of my life into. And it will always be a part of who I am. But there's a difference between not abandoning our journey and not abandoning a body of work that we've built versus trying to continue doing it. Because you feel like you should write. Why right beyond the point of like, when you should and you're just like, No, but I can't leave it because I have to keep going. And I was like when I start doing that. Now everything gets scrambled inside of me, I can't do this.

Reema 29:16

And you answered the call, and you brought it to fruition and it's what you're talking about, you're using the same languaging you're talking about a relationship. In a relationship with this body of work. You brought it to fruition and now it lives on in the world as this evergreen message and workbook you created a workbook you created a step-by-step journey for people to follow. And that is like you said like you did everything you were told, you were asked to do, and now lives on and other people as they go through the journey. Yes, it's really beautiful and so that naturally and I'm fascinated by not only did you know that this was the work, you knew its completion. And you didn't hold on to it from any kind of scarcity mindset of the fear of now that's something else to go on to it. Yeah, that's what it's you because you've had such faith in the work, you also had faith in the moment when you knew is complete?

Layla 30:22

Absolutely. Faith is exactly the right word, faith is the right word. Because I'm very much a faith-led person and leader. And that's how I show up. So I recognise, for me, my beliefs are that it's important for us to show up for the work. And it's also equally important for us not to think that only we know everything of what it's going to look like, right. And I think it's so important to leave moments open for spontaneity, for miracles for things that are you know, opportunities, luck, Grace, things that we can't again, engineer or predict. But there's, they just show up and you're again, you're like, hey, this thing has shown up, like, what do I want to do with it? And that piece around agency is very important to me that we always have a choice. We don't have to go on every adventure that we're called into, you know.

Reema 31:25

Because without agency, you don't have authenticity. Right? Yeah. So to take Yes. Or an authentic No. And so that's hand in hand. Yeah, right there. That's so fascinating and so beautiful. And it makes so much sense to me that then once you knew that part of your work had been complete, naturally, the next part that came to be was become a good ancestor. And I want that to ask you, what did they experience of writing and promoting me and white supremacy? What did it teach you about your own journey as a good ancestor? And that how, because I feel like we touched on the burnout and, and anxiety and depression, you felt that in your college years, that then led you to see a life of life coaching for yourself and then to become one? Did you have a similar kind of turned around or turning point to the promotion and marketing of Me and White Supremacy that then activated this next chapter?

Layla 32:34

Yeah, I mean, cycles of depression and anxiety and burnout have happened to me throughout the years. Up until I think, I mean it's been many years now since I've experienced that in a sort of

prolonged sense. And I think, I think one of the great hidden gifts and, like the internal gift of whites, me and white supremacy, for me, is how it almost forced me to have to do my inner work around internalised, you know, oppression. And a lot of these ways of showing up in perfectionism in performing in masking impostor syndrome. Right. And internalised inferiority came from me really looking at how does white supremacy show up within me? That was some of the hardest work that I had to do was realising, you know, I am the biggest agent of whites of white supremacy in my own experience of myself, right? Because if we were to wake up tomorrow, and white supremacy doesn't exist, I would still have this internalised stuff that I've been living with all my life that influences how I think about myself, and also how I show up. And so that has been a great lesson to me. And I can't, in the same way, that I think so many people who work through me and white supremacy can't go back to a former version of themselves pre the book, I also can't either, like, I can't unsee see ways in which as a black woman the world expects me to behave, and the ways that I have internalised that I think I'm supposed to behave, right. And so when I actively fight against that, so I'll give you an example. We talk a lot about the importance of rest and joy in *Become a Good Ancestor*. And that's because I recognise that those two things are things that the world is telling me I'm not supposed to have, as a black woman, I'm supposed to overwork and constantly be in a state of trauma. And it's also something that I internalised that I didn't know how to make how I didn't know I had to let myself rest, I thought I had to overwork to prove that I was worthy that I belonged. And I believe that joy was something that was frivolous. And I had such a visceral, visceral reaction to the word joy, that it was like what's going on here? Like, this doesn't make sense, right? To have to be so angry at the word joy. And then the idea of allowing myself to be joyful. And so I did my work on that and recognising like, yeah, because you that's never been given to you is something that you're supposed to have. So that's, you know, that's what writing this book and kind of delivering it has done for me. And then the piece around the promotion piece. So I this is pre-pandemic, right, it came out in 2020. But I did my book tour two book tours, right before the pandemic was announced. So I came home for my second book tour. And within three days, the world was in lockdown. And so, in that in those two tours, I mean, the bigger one was the US one, I toured the US for three weeks straight, basically by myself, and went from city to city almost every day, a different city every day talking about this work. And I'm really glad that I got to have that experience because what I learned through that was actually, I'm a lot stronger than I think I am, I'm a lot more capable than I think I am. And it allowed me to really own my work in a way that again, I think white supremacy had had me thinking I was an imposter. So going through this almost like training of like, okay, next day, get on a plane, go to a different city, talk about this work, answer questions, all of that kind of stuff, allowed me to really own the work. So I'm grateful for that experience.

Reema 37:07

That was phenomenal. Was there a specific moment? I mean, it sounds like you gain so much for sure. But was there ever a specific moment where it also taught you about how to take care of your well-being used touched on how Joy felt? You felt anger towards that word? And what was the turning point? The other thing I thought of while you were talking is like not only as a black woman, have you been given the message that you're not allowed to rest, not allowed to seek or accept joy, but then also being such a publicly known world-renowned public figure that that spotlight of scrutiny and hyper analysis that not only do you have to be perfect as a black woman, but then as a public figure. And so it's like having that multiplied on a whole other level? What did that teach you about? Because I can hear how you know, this work you're doing now to help change makers, rest and restore ourselves.

There was such a through-the-line and there yes, I believe you learned a lot in that journey, as you were promoting and marketing me and why supremacy? How did that teach you about well, being rest, joy, and then your next offerings?

Layla 38:30

Yeah, so I shared a post recently on Instagram, where I talked about this idea of like, embracing the soft life. And I was saying that I'm all for that because, in fact, I feel like year upon year, I'm becoming softer inside like something is happening in me where I'm softening. But I also really recognise that I'm very strong. And that's really important as well. And so holding the both and of I'm a soft woman, and I'm also a strong woman. And both things exist at the same time. And I've learned sometimes softness is what is called for and sometimes strength is what is called for, right? And so I say that to say yes, I gained a lot from you know, both externally and internally writing and promoting and sharing this book, but I also lost a lot right like the experience I don't want to like romanticise this in any way. Being a black woman writing a book on racism is it's a practising reliving trauma, your own trauma, and also collective trauma, historical trauma, and present-day trauma. And that's also part of the reason why I knew the assignment was done because I knew if I continued to do this kind of work in this way, I would be living with trauma as a normalised part of my life, right. And, you know, I can't speak for anyone else who does anti-racism work, I can only speak for myself. That is not something that I wanted, I wanted something more for myself than that. And I really credit, the support that I received through mentorship and therapy, teaching me to really expand the vision of what was possible for me and what I could have. And so, yeah, you know, and we can't wait, we're not here to do everything alone. And sometimes when we're in it, we need someone who is outside of it to give us the perspective of what being in it is doing to us. Right. And so that's why it's very important for me to do this work to support changemakers. Because we give so much of ourselves, we're so passionate about the cause and the call the work, we know it's important to it is and we can sacrifice ourselves to beyond the point of what is good for us if we're not careful. And so sometimes we need somebody who's gone through it to be like, hey, you know, yes, this work is important. And I'm not asking you not to do it. But it's the way that you're doing it, taking care of you. Right. And so the shift from anti-racism to the work that we do in become a good ancestor isn't a rejection of the work of supporting change making it's a pivot to how could we do this work differently, that makes sure that I'm also taken care of, while also supporting other people. Right. And I just, I just want people to know, like, you can pivot, you can shift, right? You can, you can change, and you don't have to abandon what's important to you. You can just choose to do it differently.

Reema 42:05

Right. And it's an evolution that helps you protect your well-being. And also gives deeper to the calling.

Layla 42:14

I also think it's more aligned with who I am at my core. I am at my core, an optimistic, idealistic, visionary dreamer. I am very strong, but I am not a fighter, I'm not a destroyer. I don't use that word in a disparaging way, I think these systems and these paradigms need to be destroyed. So we need destroyers. Right. And I know that me and white supremacy have helped incredibly with that. But what you know, is, if you read me and white supremacy, you know, what do I say at the beginning, I say, you'll need three things to do this work, right. And they, they, funnily enough, follow the acronym of

TLC, right? And so you know, you need truth, you need love, and you need commitment. And so my work has always been wrapped up in that love healing. Energy, yes. And so that's who I am at the core. And so it, it feels very good to return to the essence of who I am. So that as I'm leading this work, I no longer feel like this is something where God is like, hey, I want you to go on this journey. Just be the channel for it. Right? I actually feel like it's more like, I want to create this thing, God helped me to do it. This is coming from my essence now. Please support me in this work. So it feels it feels very different.

Reema 44:02

That's beautiful. Because what I hear is that everything you learned in your journey of bringing me and white supremacy into the world, from the Instagram challenge to the viral posts, the viral post, the Instagram challenge, and then the writing of the book and the promotion of the book, what I hear is you learned as well, the impact of the work on you. And therefore you felt called to then talk to us about how to take care of our well-being whilst being, you know, channels of change in this world. So did that. Then, how did you get the idea for this course? So I feel like there's a connection there.

Layla 44:42

Yeah. I think the connection, as well as like, I was really thinking about, I'm thinking about my next stage, like, what's my next evolution? And how does it make sense within where I've come from, right. I've just finished this assignment. I'm not enough. place anymore where I'm like, I have no idea who I am. Let me go study cooking or something. It was like, No, this is this is the work that I'm here to do. And how can I steward this next stage. And so I was thinking of two things, I was thinking about myself and what I'm here to contribute. And I was also thinking about the 1000s of people who had either come through me and white supremacy or who had been activated by it, right. So they were either in a place where they were like, I want to become an ally, or I want to practice allyship, or I want to become more of an activist in this work are an advocate in this work. And for me, what I started to think about was like those two terms like ally and activist, there's nothing wrong with them, but they are things that we do. They're not who we are. Right? We are either an ally for a specific group, a marginalised group, or we're an activist for a specific social justice cause. But what I wanted people to do is actually think about who they are. And I started to use this term changemakers because that's not something you do, that's who you are. That's, that's that calling again. And it makes me feel all of these like, passionate, excited feelings inside. And I wanted to connect with that within myself. And I wanted to connect with other people who, when they hear that word, they think, either that is me, or that's who I want to be in the world. And so the business have become a good ancestor. And the course the courses we have created is how can we support people who are change seekers who want to become changemakers. And who are changemakers, who want to become sustainable changemakers. And so for supporting those kind of two groups of people, we have created two offerings. The first is our self-study, the course that's called Claim Your Space. And this is a programme, this is our level one programme. This is for people who are change seekers, they want to become changemakers. They hear that term, it means something to them, but they actually feel like, but I don't really know, like, what is the change that I'm here to make? You know, I know I'm passionate about a lot of causes. I know many things are important. I even know that there are various skills and strengths that I have. But I'm not really focused. And I wanted to help people have focus because distraction is a huge part of how systems of oppression function. If we can be distracted by nonstop horrific traumatic events that are happening in the news, then we don't know how to continuously build a body of work and a legacy of work that is

going to have meaningful change. We don't know how to be strategic and coordinate with each other and in the community to do this work. We're just in that overreaction or overstimulated state.

Reema 48:17

A state of reactivity as opposed to responsiveness.

Layla 48:21

Absolutely. Absolutely. And for me, Reema, like, when something happens in the news, that used to be me, that used to be like, Oh, my God can't believe this racist thing has happened. I'm going to go post about it, I'm going to go talk about it. I'm, I'm actually going to be in a state of trauma for the next few days. And I don't even realise that that's what I'm signing up for. And I have no plan of how I'm going to take care of myself through this process. I just know, I'm fired up. And I have to say something. The difference between where I am now is, I know what we call in the Claim Your Space course is I know what my right work is, I know what my right channel is. I have an understanding that the work that I'm doing is helping to fight that thing that I'm so angry about. And so my focus is how can I how can I make sure that I don't allow this thing that's happened to get me into such a spiral state that I forget about the very work that it is that I'm here to do? It's not to say that I don't get angry, I don't get upset. I don't. It does. It doesn't mean that it just means I'm more strategic. And I think that when we have when we have claimed our space, in our work as change makers, it becomes easier to do that. We know what we're here to do. This thing happened up there. I'm doing the only thing that I can do right now, which is to focus on this work that is to fight the very roots of that thing. And so we wanted to be able to have help and support aspiring changemakers to figure out Like, what is your work that you're here to do? And how are you here to do it? And also, how can we support you in overcoming a lot of the fears that come up for changemakers? Around? You know, using our voices around what will people say about us? What will people think about us? How comfortable I am with risk-taking? And how do I make sure that I'm taking care of myself through this work as well. So we would pack you know those things in there as well because we don't just want to, we don't just want you to know, okay, yeah. So I'm here to focus on climate change. And I'm here to do that through, you know, joining this particular, you know, cause that's, that's supporting that work. Right. Okay. But then when challenges show up, do you know how to navigate those? Or do they end up scaring you so much that you end up just backing right out of the work? Right? How do you navigate those moments. So that's what claim your space is about.

That's that level one. And then level two is a more targeted programme. It's actually a group experience. And it's for people who are in their right work, they know what they're doing. They've there maybe, you know, we give some examples of where they may be at, they may be coaches, consultants, DEI leaders, healers, space holders, facilitators, whatever the case may be. They're doing change-making work, but the way that they're doing it is really is the way that they've set themselves up to do it is almost requiring them to have to sacrifice themselves, for the courts. And something that I learned, as we've discussed in this journey, something I learned through me and white supremacy was, I cannot do that. Because if I am doing that I'm actually upholding the very thing that I'm trying to fight

Reema 52:06

Completely, and you're going against the very roots of this, which is to be a good ancestor of the legacy of love. And you by the ancestors transitioned and live living our parents beginning with that, right? So

what I love is everything you've talked about is it a relationship with this calling, and how do we make this a sustainable relationship?

Layla 52:29

That's right, and so that's a group experience called deepen, which will run a couple of times a year only, it's an ongoing evergreen thing that people can sign up for. And it's a really beautiful container. You know, it's led by me, sharing both my experiences and my tools and things that I've learned along the way. It's also supported by our care team, and these are trauma-informed liberation coaches because the work of change-making can be traumatic, right? We're dealing with the trauma of the world, the collective trauma and our own as well. And we want it to be able to hold a trauma-informed space that engages our mind, yes, engages our heart, but also takes care of our body. Right, takes care of our emotions and kind of make sure that as a changemaker, who may be exhausted through this work, that you feel nourished in this space, that you feel like this is a space that is here to take care of me, protect me, fill me up, help me connect with other changemakers on the journey, and come out of the container feeling replenished, focused, and having what I want is for people to walk away with their own blueprint, like their own unique blueprint of how they're here to show up as a change maker.

Reema 54:01

Incredible.

Layla 54:03

I'm excited about it.

Reema 54:04

Thank you for creating these. Yes, because thank you, again, not only offering the tools but the sustainable practices that allows us to continue to be to answer this call.

Layla 54:17

Yeah, and we need sustainability. We cannot. We're not here to burn bright for a short while and then fizzle out. Right?

Reema 54:29

And that's martyrdom. Absolutely, change-making gets a significant difference.

Layla 54:36

Absolutely. Absolutely and you know, when some of the things that I had to tell myself on the journey like I love that use of the word martyrdom because I had to tell myself like, you are not here to martyr yourself at this altar of white supremacy, right? That's not what you were made for. This is not what you are created for, right? What you've created for is love, is healing, is joy, is liberation. So how you move in this work is just as important as what you do. How you experience yourself, and how you be matters just as much as what you do. And I think that's a lot of times the shift that we need and sometimes we just need to hear it from other people who've been on the path for a while. I think all of the things that I've been able to experience as somebody who has had a "big platform", have kind of been like, what do you call it, like an incubator experience, like, we're going to throw all these things at you, you're

going to have to figure it out. And I never want my experiences to not serve others, like why go through it if it's not intended to be of service to others as well. So that's what I'm hoping to do through this work.

Reema 56:05

Thank you, Layla. Well, you are doing this. Thank you, for sharing, giving us and how you give is part of what you give. Thank you. It is all love. It's all love. And as our closing note, I would love for you to send out a message, what's your call to action to our audience? I can't think of a more special thing.

Layla 56:30

I love that because I'm like, seeing myself on a hill with a torch. And I'm like, calling all the changemakers. Anybody who hears that term and goes, that's me, something jumps in your heart and says, me, me, me, I'm here to do that. Like, I want to call out to those people and say, let's go on this journey together. The first place that I want to invite people into is our programme Claim Your Space because I truly believe we have to know what it is that we're here to do. And how it is that we are here to do it. Like that is ground zero foundation must know, right? That's important. So, we don't get distracted, we don't get confused. We don't give up because we don't know what we're actually fighting for. And why. Right, like that's the first level. And I think that the more we are activated in that understanding of like, this is my space, I have claimed my space, the greater longevity that we have, right and the more focus that we have as good ancestors. So please do join us for Claim Your Space. If this sounds like something that resonates with you, it is an evergreen course that's always available at www.becomeagoodancestor.com/claim-your-space. And I think it is something that will help so many people lay the groundwork for the legacy that they are here to create.

Reema 58:12

Beautiful, thank you so much, Layla. It has been an honour and a joy to talk to you and to hear about all of this exciting growth. It is such a privilege to know you. It is such a gift to love you.

Layla 58:27

Thank you, I love you too friend I am so grateful that we get to journey together that we get to do this work together that we get to be on each other's teams really and supporting and cheerleading for one another and you know it's just really speaks to the power of community finding your right people, you know that you're here to connect with and journey with and every person that is a part of Team Good Ancestors such a bright light and all the people that are coming into the offerings that were offering is I just know that they're attracted to that light. So thank you for being the light that you are because it is the light you know that saying the light in me sees the light in you right and it really does.

Reema 59:15

It really does to our work as good ancestors and change makers. Thank you, dear Layla, and thank you everyone for joining us today. We will see you next time.

Layla 59:27

Thank you. Bye.