



Racial Justice Pathways

## Mixtape 1: Finding our way in this work

TRANSCRIPT

OSU Racial Justice Pathways

This document is part of the OSU Racial Justice Pathways set of learning and reflection kits. Visit [racial-justice-pathways.mn.co](http://racial-justice-pathways.mn.co) to listen to the audio mixtape that accompanies this transcript, find more resources and guides, and join your colleagues in applying these ideas to your own life and work.

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## Mixtape 1: Finding our way in this work

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Marc Rettig Hello I'm Marc Rettig, and this is the mixtape for the Racial Justice Pathways kit, *Finding our way in the work*.

This mix comes from three recent conversations I had with Maurice Stevens, Nicole Nieto, and Hanna du Plessis. Maurice and Nicole are part of Ohio State University's Racial Justice Pathways, and Hanna is also a part of the hosting team.

Our conversations were sparked by questions. What is the work of racial justice? What is my place in it? The challenges can seem so vast and we can feel so small. What are ways to think about our place, our agency and sufficiency, that can help us navigate the inward and outward rhythms of life and work toward a world of belonging?

Four themes emerged from our conversations.

Let's step into the first theme. It's questions: what is the work? Where are we trying to go? We'll hear first from Maurice, then Hannah and Nicole.

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### WHAT IS THE WORK? WHERE ARE WE GOING?

#### Justice is access to full thriving being

Maurice Stevens

In the context of this country, racial capitalism in part has meant that to be racialized is to be objectified. To be racialized, especially as Black, but I'll say to be racialized as something other than White is to be an object. An object of production, an object of surplus value creation, an object of exploitation.

So to my mind, justice is about access to thriving. And racial justice is an access to a kind of being that is beyond human being. Because I think of human being as actually an unmarked category of whiteness. And so racial justice is about access to full thriving being that is beyond that limited category of the humanness or, you know, subjectiveness as opposed to objecthood.

3:00 One way to think about it might be to think in terms of the self and the other. There's this person called Frantz Fanon who talked about this. He was many things, a cultural critic, a psychoanalyst, a warrior for change in many ways, who was this black Martinican person. And Martinique was a colony of France. So he grew up in Martinique as a black person, reading all of these European materials about the good guys and the bad guys, the cowboys and Indians, you know. And he talked about how he grew up as a black person in Martinique, among lots of other black people, believing that he was the subject, the self that was talked about and all these materials that he was encountering. The stories and the myths and everything.

And then he goes to France. And in France, he suddenly realized that he was actually Black. He was the Black psychiatrist. He was the Black doctor. He was the Black. And he had this moment of realizing that he thought he was a Self, but in fact he was The Other. And that he himself knew he

was not The Other. He had this challenge of like, "Oh, I'm not the self. And I'm also not the other." I'm not the self as in like a subject, a person who has agency and who can act in the world. I'm actually an object. And I'm an object of fear, or I'm an object of labor. Object. Pure matter, pure instrument, pure object for the benefit of others.

So when I talk about object and subject, that's sort of what I mean. The self and other. The human and the not human. The civilized and the wild. You know, all these binaries to get placed. The primitive versus the modern being.

### **The deep why is that more is possible**

I come to racial justice work because I believe more is possible. And I believe that more is possible in spite of the message that institutions tend to give that change is not possible and that things are actually just going to keep getting worse. I believe that it's possible to create moments or pockets of liberation within the context of systems of oppression that may not be getting better.

We have to. We just have to. I'm not the first person to be aligned with making a way out of no way. My ancestors through every step everyone has taken, it's been about making a way out of no way. So I guess in some ways there's an inheritance, and in some ways there's just my belief that more is possible and that we can find it together.

The impetus to work to justice is not dependent on whether or not I get to see it. Or even whether my children will get to see it. Uh, this is going to sound a little bit spiritual, but that it's driven by a kind of direct access to my own livingness. That there's a longing that I have, or that folks have in community, or they have together in community to find The More. Even when there's no obvious pathway to it, even when there's no guarantee that it will be accomplished. No promise.

6:00

And then you do with what you have to hand, you know.

### **Building a world that our hearts long for**

Hanna du Plessis

I see it as world-building or world-creating. I see it as building another world that our hearts long for. The world where everyone, and I want to say everything from the bee to the buffalo is seen as sacred and loved, given the opportunity to have their needs met and express themselves fully and be safe.

So it's towards the beloved community. In South Africa, Mandela's term was towards the rainbow nation, where we together are a beautiful thing. That's the long-term goal. For me, Resmaa Menakem, who writes a lot about race and trauma, it says that it's going to take nine generations to get to a post-race world. And for me, the work that feels really important in the next generations is for people to start seeing the need. Many people don't see the need. And then also learn how to become engaged in creating that world.

### **Love at the center, and that isn't easy —supporting all through love.**

Nicole Nieto

I love this idea of the beloved community. I think because it has love at the center. And, one of the things that I won't hide from, I won't stray from, and I won't not include his love. To me, that is my philosophy. That's my motto. That's everything to me, is love.

And I think at times I'm challenged by people who say "Love? That just sounds so rainbows and butterflies." And to me, love is I mean it's easy and hard at the same time. And to say that love is the path of rainbows and butterflies. No! Because love, it's the hard work. Loving everyone. Loving folks who you think, gosh, I really disagree with their perspective on life, but I'm still gonna love them. Some human beings, it's super easy to offer that unconditional love to. Others that have been hurtful

or malicious, or have a worldview that's completely opposite of mine, that's the lesson I feel like I must learn during this time I have on this earth.

9:00 And so when we say, oh, it's easy to just love, you know, that, that seems like a, a flowery motto or philosophy. No. Because true love for others as we do this work, that hard. But it's necessary.

How do we show up for people while they're working through their own pathways around racial justice? How do we support those that are struggling, that have been just misinformed, mis-taught, and that have experienced things that have had them put up these shields. And to me, the only way to show up is with love and grace and patience, to create as you say, that beloved community where we can truly be in support of one another.

### **Closing the first theme, introducing the second**

Marc I'm touched by those words. From object to full thriving being. The fact that more is possible as a kind of calling with no regard for whether we'll see results in full blossom in our lifetime. And that holding hands with the longing informed by love for the deep possibility, popularized by Martin Luther King, of the beloved community.

Our second theme grew out of that conversation about the work. The question is, when we begin to respond to this longing, how do we begin? What I learned from Nicole, Hanna and Maurice is that it starts exactly where we are.

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## **SECOND THEME: WE EACH START WHERE WE ARE**

Maurice I use they and them pronouns. I do that mainly because me growing up as somebody who often gets identified culturally, socially as a male, as a person of color. But there have always been all of these things attached to that around racialized gender, and for me, you know, criminality and being a really in this country being black and male means also being a phobic object for others.

12:00 And also recognizing that part of that is internalized. My own relationship with my own body has been complex. And, I remember being young and actually referring to my own body in the third person as the monster. So for me coming into using they/them pronouns was about seeing my identity not as an object that I somehow possess and own, but seeing it more as a complicated activity of identification or dis-identifying from specific ways that I get made socially.

So all of that's to say that my identity is, I see it as a practice or an activity of identification constantly in contests or contestation with what the world says I am or who I be in different contexts. I see myself as mixed. I see myself as shifting. I often will say I'm a person of color, but I'm someone who checks "other" whenever presented with a bunch of boxes. I am a curious person seeking to return to my own livingness as much as possible and find my own mattering and belonging and safety and agency and enoughness, in ways that I try to have not be routed through external structures because they don't provide me any of those things.

### **The borderlands of identity**

Nicole For me, the identities that are most important right now are being a woman, being a gay woman, being a woman who has recently lost her father. A father who, for much of my life was a mystery to me. He was nineteen years older than my mother and of Mexican heritage. And he was taught for much of his life and spent much of his life assimilating into white culture.

Because of what he was taught, not only by society, but by his own grandparents, he hid that part of himself that I longed for. Much of this journey of my own has been the journey to know my father better and his heritage better. Which is my own, which is me.

It's a gap. A loss. And I don't want other people to have to go through that. And I know that we all do to some extent. But to know that there's that history out there, that because of assimilation, because of being ashamed, because of being scared, because of being told that that's not important or good enough. That it was hidden, it was lost.

I felt at times what culture do I belong in? What culture do I honor? Uh, how do I fill out these blanks and these forms? For me, I was often as Gloria Anzaldua says, in those "borderlands" of trying to figure out where I existed. And finally being comfortable existing in those borderlands of identity.

15:00

And then the identity of being gay is an identity that truly is so important to me because it was one that was the biggest struggle in my life. I was cautious because when I first came out to my parents, um, they were confused. They didn't understand. It was not something that they imagined. And we worked through it. We came a long way together and it took years. Before my father passed away and today my mother are just so loving and accepting. And I know that me being gay when my father passed away, I knew that that didn't bother him. It wasn't a disappointment that I thought it might've been when I was younger. And with my mother, we get to live this life together where I don't have to hide who I am anymore, or I don't have to feel ashamed of who I am anymore. I never thought it would happen. And I'm so relieved and so happy and so grateful.

I often share that story with students because for many students at the university, they're struggling through similar things of coming out to their parents or not knowing where they belong with regards to their racial or ethnic heritage. Or feeling there's expectations of what it feels like to be a woman, how they should look, how they should present themselves, what should be important to them. So, so those identities for me are so, so salient, so important.

My hope is that by weaving together all these parts of my identity and sharing it with others, and having the courage to share these very personal parts of who I am with others, is that it'll encourage others to be more vulnerable. To realize that it's okay to share those parts of ourselves that we think we shouldn't share, or maybe are not relevant in certain spaces, but it's all relevant all of the time, in my opinion.

### **Oppression harms everyone; we can be part of a different story**

Hanna

My name is Hanna du Plessis. My full names are Johanna Hendrika du Plessis. For a long time, I only knew how to locate myself from the personal aspects of my identity. You know, that I am a facilitator and I have relationships which bring me life, whether that's being a daughter or co-conspirator or a friend.

And as a white person, as an Afrikaans person who is, you know, my forefathers created apartheid which is a racially oppressive system, as a female in a male-dominant system, now as an immigrant in the US, that is how I'm perceived and treated by the world.

18:00

Justice for me is creating a world where everyone belongs regardless of their social identities. And, that's not the world that I come from. As far as I can stretch back into history, my people has either been the oppressor or the oppressed. My great grandfather's from Europe. Where we're tortured and, uh, captured as galley slaves. And then they fled France as Protestants to come to the tip of Southern Africa, where they became the colonizers. And then as Afrikaans people, they were colonized by the British, and then they took power over people of color, creating Apartheid.

And in my life as a female, I also entered into an abusive marriage. And when I got out of my marriage, the question of how do I transcend this cycle of harm was really burning inside me and I arrived at the US kind of suspecting the US to have sorted race out because I grew up watching Webster. And then being really, I remember being viscerally disappointed to see that this pattern of taking power over--the place where I thought may have solved it hadn't either.

And in my own life, I didn't know how to transcend it either. So I think seeing the pain of us taking power over each other one generation after the other created in me just a burning desire to use my life as a sentence towards a different story.

Um, and race is very, uh, I think that's a core wounding and a core hope of mine because growing up.

I'm going to cry now.

Marc Welcome, tears.

Hanna Thank you. Um, What was my last sentence?

Marc It was "Race is a core wounding for you because dot dot dot I'm going to cry now."

Hanna You know, I am home in South Africa for the first time since the pandemic. And I think the more you are in this work, the more open your heart becomes. And being here with a wide open heart, the blows land more profoundly. And in this moment, you know, the thing about race is that it creates a hierarchy where some people are superior and entitled to treat other people with disdain, dismissal, disrespect, and even annihilation.

21:00 But the thing about oppression is that you don't go out as a white male in a society for instance, and play your part in an oppressive system, and then you come home and there's life and joy and vitality. Oppression is fractal. So how you are with the world is how you are with your wife, your kids and yourself.

And so being back here is a visceral reminder of that disrespect and disregard and distancing and not seeing and not caring that is at the heart of oppression. And I'm experiencing it on the macro scale, driving through unaddressed poverty, and on the intimate scale around family dinners where you are not seen and heard. And you are told the reality of people of color as if the white guy knows, you know. So, I'm not sure how to recap other than, oppression harms everyone. And I want to be part of the way that heals everyone.

### **Summarizing Theme 2, introducing theme 3**

Marc Our past as a kind of internalized inheritance of identity. Ways of seeing ourselves and others. The cost to each of us of these old patterns. The way in which most of us hide or lose a part of ourselves as we seek to conform. Can we learn to be at home in the borderlands of identity? I heard in these conversations that the past may leave us wounded, but those wounds can themselves be a source from which we relate and create.

The third theme of this makes asks, "How?" On the heels of those first two themes, what can we say about ways of working? Ways to engage that can take us where we long to go?

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### THEME 3: HOW DO WE DO THIS WORK? HOW DO WE BECOME ABLE?

#### Outward-facing and inward-facing

Maurice

I think of it in two ways. First in an outward-facing way. In an outward-facing way, I think the work of racial justice is identifying these institutional structures or patterns of material interaction that create objects out of some people and subjects out of others. That create patterns of exploitation of many, many, many for the benefit of a few. So part of the work is identifying, imagining differently, creating new things.

24:00

To me, the work of racial justice that's inward-facing is, well first becoming aware of the habits of internal reaction, let's say. The strategies that we built within ourselves to survive that are also objectifying. Identifying those strategies, those habits, and then recognizing what they've done, what they do for us, they help us survive. But also recognizing the cost. Oftentimes, that's the sort of energetic at the level of people just get depleted. I'm constantly putting up armor or whatever I'm doing.

Recognizing the cost, and then choosing something different. Like interrupting the habitual practice or process, and then choosing something different that doesn't have that cost. So instead of depletion, let's say, or numbing or sedating, turning towards and engaging in practices that are enlivening, instead of depleting. That are amplifying instead of depleting. That enhance our sense of mattering instead of making us feel more and more like anti-matter, you know. Or simple material, you know. Mattering versus being material, maybe is the way to think of it.

So for me, the inner work of racial justice is identifying the patterns, interrupting the pattern. And noticing the cost. Choosing something that's amplifying. And then engaging in this practice, whatever that practice is that is amplifying. So the work there is noticing interrupting, choosing something different.

In an outward-facing way, racial justice practice is about noticing the structures that create this object-subject split, where whiteness equals humanity and anything else is not human. It's about recognizing the structures that produce and reproduce that. And about dismantling them. And to my mind, replacing them. Instead of structures of oppression, replacing them with structures that are based on living systems, thriving systems. Those structures sometimes are institutions that are external, like the many material institutions that we are in. But they're also internal structures. Habits of thinking, being, feeling. And I mean that cognitively, emotionally and in an embodied way. Ways of being that are death-giving, as opposed to giving life.

#### How you see is how you work

Hanna

How you see is how you work. For a long time, I was in South Africa. I was eighteen, seventeen when Nelson Mandela came to power. Very inequitable society. But I didn't really, really understand the history. So I was trying to make right with more charitable actions, you know, like helping people and feeling good that I'm helping.

27:00

And that is a direct cause because I didn't see my whiteness and the injustice of my privilege. And then I entered a phase where I'm talking about phases as if I really like know what happened, but there were definitely chapters. Another chapter was then realizing that I am white and feeling huge boulders of, of shame and guilt. And kind of collapsing emotionally when I'm in the presence of people of color. Kind of wanting to hide. Uh, and if I have an interaction with them wanting them to absolve me of my guilt. Which is not their job. And I didn't take much action either. I had to do some inner work and confront my own feelings. And be real about what I'm feeling.

And I had another chapter where I moved from shame to just anger. Like I remember fighting with my parents over dinner, evening after evening after evening about how they could do that and how they could do that. And my anger was directed mostly outward at other white people. Which is always a good sign for me to understand that, oh, I must be feeling discomfort and I'm projecting it. But I didn't have the knowledge then. And a kind of disdain for whiteness and wanting to separate myself from other white folks. Trying to be the good white person. And that's really had me confront my own sense of punitive justice, of wanting to, you know, shift people away.

The thing about liberation is that at the center is love. And I feel like I'm in a different space now where I can love my own whiteness. And I, I mean I had my traditional food this afternoon, Afrikaans food, and I loved it. And I give thanks for that. And to love and give thanks for what is, even the hard stuff, is where I'm at the moment. And so my whiteness is no longer a burden to me. And my whiteness isn't the only thing that exists for me as well. I can also see that I am immigrant, that I'm queer, not quite knowing what to make of it. You know, I'm many, I'm multiple things.

And part of this journey has also taken the weight of my shoulders to do everything because I had some sense of self-importance where I thought I should save everyone and change everyone. And I know now that my life is my business, and I want to stay in my business. The term comes from Reverend angel Kyodo Williams where she encourages people who work on race just to stay in their business. And that means, instead of being distracted by trying to change the people around me, who didn't ask for me to change them. It's not a consensual thing. What is mine to do? Or where do I give my energy? My time, my attention, my money. Let me be with that.

30:00

### **Treating complexity as though it were ordered**

Maurice

I think how to do this work is embedded in understanding that the problems or the obstacles to doing the work. And I think one of the first obstacles is that this question of really engaging race in the centrality of race in systems of oppression. (And when I say that, it's the logic of race that also informs all these other categories of difference that people use, whether it's gender and sexuality, and age, and ability, and I could go on.) We think of these things as ordered systems. And there's a sense that we have a handbook. And in the handbook, there's some best practices. So when we run into a challenge, we just need to go to the handbook and flip to the right page and we know how to do it. Or if we don't know how to do it, we can call in some outside expert to come in and tell us how to do it.

And so I think the biggest problem is that these big questions that we're really trying to engage, they are not ordered. They're not simple. And that even though we're developing, or there are sometimes so-called best practices around X, Y, and Z, but they're actually not adequate to the task of addressing this complex problem. These complex problems.

And so what we need, I think, is one that we're making a technical error when we keep approaching these problems as if they're ordered. And that what we need to do is simply stop approaching them as if they're ordered. You know. Then it's okay, now, if we think of this as a complex problem, that racial justice is a complex issue, it's related to all these very complex constantly shifting relationships between things. Then we can take a completely different approach to the how.

One way to get at complex problems is to engage in a lot of experimentation. Getting people to the table. I would say also allowing them to self-organize around the specifics of the problem that they're interested in. The different pieces. In this case, we're talking about domains of work in an academic space, like research and teaching and outreach and engagement and service. Getting people to self-organize around those things that are interesting to them, that matter to them. And then having them do a bunch of little experiments. And then seeing what's working, what's



producing more, in this case, more justice. More just relations. More amplification of people's vibrancy and thriving, right?

33:00 And if something is creating an outcome we desire, then to try and scale that up. And then if the experiment shows that it's not creating the thing we desire, then just move on to another experiment, you know. Let it go, keep it moving, try something else. But getting as many different folks together as possible around the things that mattered to them, getting involved in these experiments, amplifying what works, moving on from the things that don't work.

That kind of approach is, I think, adequate to the task of solving complex problems. And rather than just relying on best practices, the idea here is that you engage in activity that is experiential, that gives you information. So it's experience-oriented knowledge production. Practice-based knowledge production, as opposed to relying on best practices that are already in place.

You could think of that as a methodology. That you can engage externally, but then also you can engage with the internal work. I alone must do this work, but I do it in community with others, which amplifies the transformative possibility. And building collective power, the relational connection, interrelatedness. The importance of doing this in a collective. You know, that piece of my work that I do with others.

### **Introducing final theme**

Marc Our last theme engages with the way in which the work of racial justice both calls us to urgency and requires the span of generations. We can engage as we are, and we feel inadequate to the challenge. It calls us to joyful collaboration and stretches us to our limit. The long haul: becoming able to do this work, and the need for self-compassion.

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## **THEME 4: THE LONG HAUL--BECOMING ABLE AND THE NEED FOR SELF-COMPASSION**

### **This work is possible; it only asks that we stay engaged**

Hanna What I love about this work is that it is possible and there are pathways. It just asks us to be curious and to stay the path. To keep being engaged. That's very much what it asks for me. To just keep being engaged.

One of the people I hope you'll meet, Michelle King, keeps saying that to create that other world that's possible, we need to create that world within ourselves and among each other. And that for me feels much more doable, you know?

36:00 And I can see that happening in my world. Yesterday I was in a call with five beautiful co-conspirators and we were talking about how the rooms that we work in have a quality of aliveness and healing that surprises us. And it is in part because we are doing that work in ourselves. And because we do it ourselves, we can have that amongst each other. And because we have it amongst each other, we can extend that into the world. Start building it where you are with what you've got. And keep going.

### **We will make mistakes as we go**

Nicole I know that I make mistakes. That I'm going to. And the best thing that I can do is recognize those mistakes. Own them. Ask for forgiveness.

What I learned a few years ago is that it doesn't have to be perfect. I think women are taught. We've got to be perfect. We've got to look perfect. Show up in this perfect way. That then can lead to us being perfectionist. And when we are perfectionist, we're not showing up as our true selves. And to

let go of that. That's another shield that we wear. And when you let go of that, you recognize, yeah, I do make mistakes. I don't say the right thing all the time. I don't eat the right thing all the time. I don't look the right way all of the time. But again, it's enough. And if I allow myself to show up in a vulnerable and authentic way, then hopefully others will do the same. And we'll recognize that we may be messy together, but the ultimate goal is to move this work forward down that path.

### **The way of love for others and for self**

For me, the only way is with love. Love for others. Love for the work, and love for myself. Taking care of myself. Being patient with myself. Being good to myself.

It's so much about doing that inward work so that I can show up as a person that's fully present, as a person that has love at their core, as a person who is patient with those that are unwilling to move down that path towards justice, racial justice, social justice.

Years ago, I read an article by Anne Lamott. I was probably in my twenties at the time. And she was in her forties. And what she said she learned was to take care of herself. And at the time she didn't have a partner. And she said, "What a good wife I am to myself. I run bubble baths for myself." And she said all of these things in ways that she took care of herself in a way that previously she had depended on a partner to do.

39:00

And for me in doing this work, taking care of yourself is so key. Be a good wife to yourself, be a good partner to yourself. Love yourself, right.

It's so interesting because it's like we don't have all the answers, but we do have all the answers. Depends how difficult we want to make it. When we make it really difficult, we don't have all the answers. But when we return to home, we know that those answers of how do we get through this, or how do we move through this? Or how do we move forward down this pathway? We know that it's inside of us, and that the most effective tools are often those that are the simplest.

We've got to see two timelines to this work. The first timeline is this, "This have been done hundreds of years ago." Right. And it hasn't been, and we've got to move it forward and we've got to.... And then the other timeline is that piece around relationships. Around building trust, around encouraging growth. About breaking down the shields and the walls that people have put up. The misinformation that has been layered brick after brick, after brick in front of them.

We have to know that this work is urgent and that we should have made more progress. We should be further along. And we also have to recognize that we're working with people who have their own timelines. Their own stories. Their own fear. And we all work at a different pace. It's hard. It can be frustrating, but each brick that we tear down, we're getting a little further.

I also was thinking about this recently, where if we want true institutional change, we've got to have personal individual change. To move that institutional change forward, individually people have to have personal transformation and growth. And again, everybody's on their own timeline.

And so bringing those two together as best we can, and understanding the urgency yet the individual transformation and growth that people must do to move forward.

### **A dedicated practice, which we do together**

Maurice

Oh yeah. It's a dedicated practice. It's a lifelong fifty times a day practice.

Marc

Hmm. I think a lot of people feel a sense of inadequacy, you know, and, and feel, "I'm not enough. I

42:00 haven't finished my own work," or, I can say as a white guy, "Oh, I'm too white." Everybody has their own, I'm too, this, or I'm not enough that. And, I've heard this question, "What is my work to do?" Actually, none of us are enough by ourselves.

**None of us are enough by ourselves, and none of us are by ourselves. We're able to do more in diverse groups, than homogenous groups.**

Maurice Yeah. None of us are enough by ourselves and none of us are by ourselves. Like we're interrelated. And so we need to be working together. We also know that we're able to do more together, especially in diverse groups. Like diverse teaming, or I could say also interdisciplinary teaming and collaboration. We're able to do more. We're able to innovate better with diverse groups than we are with homogenous groups of experts. We already know that's true. You know? So then the question is okay, if we know that's true, how can we maximize the diversity of a group working on something?

Marc Yeah, adrienne maree brown makes the point that diversity isn't a problem to solve, it's a strategic advantage. It's a...

Maurice Absolutely.

**Our interrelatedness is able to hold all of our difference. The difference gets to matter.**

And to my mind, the interrelatedness that we have, the interconnection that we have, the relationality that we have that is able to hold all of the specificities. So that it's this really neat thing where it's like the unity, if we'll call it, that of interrelatedness actually has the capacity to hold all of our difference without having to cover over systems of oppression. The difference gets to matter, and needs to matter in order for us to achieve what we need to achieve. And it can't be held by our very inter-relatedness

**It's a question of becoming. To become is to engage.**

Hanna It's a question of becoming. Of becoming more able to. And for me to become is to engage. And to engage is to be real about what you find. You know, like when I started this work, oh I had oodles of shame and insecurity and feeling unworthy and building relationships with people of color. Making like really bad mistakes of just being the white person that controls.

45:00 But I think being committed and being engaged and being reflective, so you can see you where you are messing up and learn from that. For me, that's the path of becoming. Becoming more able. Because all of us have different expressions of the work. You know, an administrator's work is different than a lecturer's work is different than a community engaged person's work. And even in that stream, there are different expressions of the work.]

**At the heart of the work of racial justice is coming into right relationship**

Yeah. And I think something we talk about often is questions. I think that the questions that guide you kind of matters. One of my teachers, Felicia Friedman Savage, said, "At the heart of the work of racial justice is coming into right relationship." And for me, that has been an excellent guiding light on my path. You know, what does emotional justice even look like? Where I'm in regulation with all my emotions. I don't need to minimize some and be attached to others. Or what is a right relationship with money, with land, with my collaborators?

I'm reading Audrey Lorde at the moment. I won't say that's her words, but my understanding of her words is that if we want a world that is enlivened, we need to find that aliveness in ourselves. And seek work and engagements and relationships that expresses that aliveness and that liberation. So a practice for me at this moment is asking myself if my questions, if my actions, my engagements, are they leading me towards liberation? Does it feel liberated to do this or that? So that liberation

becomes a practice for me, justice become a practice, a daily practice, not a "in nine-generation" aspiration only.

### **Feeling like we don't know what to do**

Marc There's me going to my job on Monday, right? I'm ten years in to a professorship or to a staff position, or to an administrative position. And now it's striking me that this is important and I would like to move into The Work. Now it seems vague, right? It seems like I don't know what to do.

Hanna I've been there. And I can say that I was there for years. I was raising my hand as a white woman, saying pick me, I want to help. I want to do the things. And really stumbling, because the world I inherited had very clear rules and a very clear path. This is how you're good. This is how you're not rejected. This is how you stay safe. This is how you succeed. And when it comes to building a life-affirming world, it's not all that clear. And not only that, the world I was taught to exist in, other people told me who and what to be. And when I look at the world of social justice, there's many voices. You know, there's like "White people, you need to shut up and pay up". Or "White people, you need to step away, let others be."

So for a long time, I really didn't know what to do and who to be. And the only thing I knew what to do was to keep showing up. And that for me meant showing up for myself, knowing that I [00:48:00] had internalized the programming of white supremacy, very thoroughly. And seeing how I can start and learning deep habits of being, of wanting to take control, of wanting to be perfect. Showing up to learn a true history, not the one that I've been taught. Showing up to build relationships with people I've been taught to fear and demean and dismiss. And showing up with other white folks who were engaged in the work of building a just world, and learning from them.

Yeah. I think it's Tony Morrison that says, "The responsibility of freedom is to free other people." And for me, doing my thing, and doing my inner work and working in relationship with other people, that creates more freedom. That creates more liberation.

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### **Wrapping up: Chardin's "Prayer of Trust"**

Marc Thank you, Hannah. Maurice, Nicole. We will certainly make mistakes, but this work is possible. Stay engaged. Learn to love yourself the way you've learned to love others. We are each a process of becoming, and even though we may feel inadequate, none of us are by ourselves.

So. That is a lot. I feel the urge to close us out with a poem.

This is by a man named Teilhard de Chardin. He was a Jesuit priest, a paleontologist, and a philosopher, and a teacher. A busy man. The poem is called Prayer of Trust. And in some places it mentions God. So whatever your relationship with that word, I think you'll be able to provide a meaning large enough to help the poem work for.

Prayer of Trust  
Teilhard de Chardin

Above all trust in the slow work of God.  
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.  
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—  
and that it may take a very long time.

So I think it is with you;  
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,  
let them shape themselves without undue haste.  
Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time  
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit  
gradually forming within you will be.  
Give our Lord the benefit of believing  
that his hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.

Thank you for listening.