

Layla: Hello everybody and welcome back to Good Ancestor podcast. We are here for Season 2 of the podcast. We've got a whole new look for you and I'm really excited that our very first episode today is with somebody whose work really has meant a lot to me and has really been something that I reference a lot. I'm talking about Dr. Robin DiAngelo and her work on *White Fragility*. So, Dr. DiAngelo is Affiliate Associate Professor of Education at the University of Washington. In addition, she also holds two Honorary Doctorates. Her area of research is in whiteness studies and critical discourse analysis. She is a two-time winner of the student's choice award for Educator of the Year at the University of Washington's School of Social Work. She has numerous publications in books including *What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy* which I have read this brilliant book. In 2011, she coined the term White Fragility in an Academic Article which has influenced the International Dialogue on Race. Her book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* was released in June 2018 and it debut on The New York Times Best Seller list. In addition to her academic work, Dr. DiAngelo has been a consultant and trainer for over 20 years on issues of racial and social justice. Welcome to Good Ancestor podcast, Robin.

Dr. DiAngelo: Thank you so much.

Layla: So good to have you here. So, we're gonna get into a lot of interesting conversations today. We were just speaking about something that we are both itching to talk about just before we hit record. But before we dive in there, we're gonna start with our very first question that I ask every guest which is about who are the ancestors living or transitioned, familial or societal, who have influenced you on your journey?

Dr. DiAngelo: I'm gonna start with my mother and not because she influenced me in direct social justice way, but because she died when I was a child. She was 37, I was 11. She died of leukemia and at that time, we actually didn't talk about cancer. We were told, my sisters and I, were told not to tell anyone that our mother had cancer. And up until the day she died, we were told she was getting better and then after she died we weren't to talk about it. Obviously, it was a traumatic experience but I think what has really influenced the work that I do is that I recognized very early that there is a relationship between silence and suffering. That there was suffering going on and we weren't to speak of it which only intensified that suffering. So, there's this elephant in the room and it's called white supremacy. And we are suffering from it in different ways. I think it's the biggest elephant of all the elephants and by God, I'm going to talk about it. And within that I'm gonna talk about the hardest part for white people which is internalized superiority, right? So, if you've been in a lot of these kinds of workshops and educational forms, there's a lot of like well, why do people lose and you know, we need to gain our roots and we gave up our ethnic identity, you know, maybe that works for somebody but white folks, we're wily. We'll do whatever we can to get out from underowning our positions and our investments in them, right? So, I don't wanna go to what I've lost or the victimization. I want to go to what's the hardest to look at and that's from the time I took my first breath even before I was born, the forces of white supremacy were operating on me and

they basically told me you are superior and that message circulated and circulates 24/7, 365 and I wanna talk about it. It's not talking about it, protects it. So, I would say that ancestor and then there are two black women in particular that were incredible mentors to me. They never gave up on me. I mean I started as a clueless, classic white progressive liberal who thought I knew everything I needed to know because I was a vegetarian. I was just classic in that way.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And so I applied for a job to teach other white people how to be open-minded and I just was in for the most profound learning of my life on every level, but those two women I was working side by side with, they challenged me in a way I wanna called loving accountability, right? They loved me. They held out compassion for me and they also held me accountable. I think the reason they were able to stay in with me and not give up on me is not because I didn't run racism at them. Because of course I did and I still do.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: But because of the way I responded when it surfaced. And I always struggled to see it, to incorporate the lessons they were offering me and then to grow and do different and do better.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And because they saw that, they hang in with me.

Layla: What were their names?

Dr. DiAngelo: Their names are Deborah Terry-Hayes and Darlene Flynn. My book that you mentioned, *What Does It Mean to Be White* is dedicated to those two women. There were of course many other people of color who were powerful mentors but they I think were just the strongest for me and the most long term in terms of our relationship. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* was really a powerful read for me. I will admit that I have never been able to get through *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. That is a huge admission. You know, I doesn't mean I can't get through it. *The Racial Contract*, I just consumed. There are certain books you just drink it down and he's a black sociologist. I believe he is still living. But he talks about white supremacy as the social contract that underwrites all other social contracts. And yet is the only social contract that is not named. So, we named Democracy. We named Capitalization. We named Socialism, Fascism and we don't name White Supremacy which underwrites all of them.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: It's really, really powerful.

Layla: And when it is named, its name is this sort of very fringe, very extreme, very rare occurrence and not the, as you said, the social contract that underlies everything else.

Dr. DiAngelo: Right. It's look at as an event. I have a quote, "Racism is a system not an event."

Layla: Mmm.

Dr. DiAngelo: And we look at it as a kind of an event driven, right? It occasionally occurs but only by bad people.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And we can get into that. But I think the way that mainstream culture defines racism couldn't protect it more effectively.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: It's just a perfect way to protect the system of racism is to reduce it to individual acts that must be intentional and are meant to hurt people across race.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And that is why basically nobody is racism.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: You know, even Richard Spencer is not a main racist.

Layla: Right. It's so interesting hearing about the ancestors, the living and the transitioned who influenced you on your journey with your mother, it was about what not to do, right? How the silence actually creates the suffering. How not speaking this thing that we know is so terrible, what, is this idea that not speaking it will protect us from it?

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah.

Layla: Right. And it doesn't in the same way as you said you made that understanding between that's exactly how it is with white supremacy. Not speaking it doesn't make it go away. It doesn't make it not hurt people. And then with the two black women who you named, I loved to get some links to link to their work if they have any work and I will include them in the show notes, it sounds like they were relentless in keeping you accountable from a place of love for themselves first.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah. For their own liberation, right.

Layla: For their own liberation and not from a place of martyrdom or from a place of walk across my back. What did that teach you about doing anti-racism work especially as a white person?

Dr. DiAngelo: You know, it's really similar for white people in the sense of doing this for our liberation, right? So, there are three top questions I get whenever I give a talk, I don't like any of them. But one of them is going to be some version of how do I tell my co-worker about their racism? How do I tell my family about their racism? And I have learned to just pause and look at the person and say, well, how I would tell you about yours? Because the question presumes that it's not me and I need to go forth and wake all these other white people up. And when I'm in those moments of some other white person has said something and everybody is cringing that nobody says anything, I think about it as this is about my healing because my silence is not healthy for me. It colludes with white solidarity. It upholds white supremacy. It protects this person, you know, it privileges their momentary feelings of embarrassment over freakin' racism and they come up racism and I hope they shift us result of my speaking, but I can't control that. I have to speak because that's how I heal my conditioning to collude. And so I guess I think about it in that way and I'd like to assume that when Deborah and Darlene were speaking it was like to not collude with their internalized oppression and their conditioning to protect and keep white people comfortable. Because, one, it's safer, right?

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And so yeah I think it's a really empowered thing to do for everybody.

Layla: I really love that shift in perspective, both for myself as a black person and I know that there are many white people who listen to this podcast for them to hear, it's actually not about performing I need to show up as an ally, I need to this because I need to be that ally but rather it's for me to be an integrity and not collude with white solidarity, I have to say something regardless of how it's taken, regardless of how it's received or not received I have to do it for me, for me to be an integrity. That's really powerful.

Dr. DiAngelo: Thank you. And you know, for just that moment, that person also had to be accountable for what they just said whether they like it or not. I mean that's kind of another benefit of it, right?

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: But mostly it should be for me.

Layla: I also said it was helpful for me as a black person, I know that as black people and people of color when we hold white people accountable, we are putting ourselves in a very vulnerable position because what can happen is white fragility, a term which you have coined. So, I'd love to go into what is white fragility. Give us the very brief definition and then if you can give some examples of how it shows up.

Dr. DiAngelo: I think about it as the inability for white people to handle any kind of challenge to our positions, our perspectives, our assumptions, our behaviors racially that it results from several different dynamics. One is I think more and more being white means not having to bear witness to the pain of racism on people of color. And to not have to ever be held accountable for the pain I've caused people of color. And so because I move with society in which I'm not held accountable and in which I am deeply separated from people of color, so I don't bear witness to their pain, I haven't built the capacity to handle like how uncomfortable that is, right? How unsettling that is. That's one piece. Another piece is straight up internalized superiority. You will defer to me to use kind of a harsh metaphor, you will step off the curb when I walk by. You will not look me in the eye. You will stay in your place and I am in my place just so to challenge me is to again if I may is to be apathy, right? I think that's inside of us too, right?

Layla: Yeah.

Dr. DiAngelo: I think also inside of us is a sincere wish to not cause harm so then there's guilt and this was what makes white people so freakin' irrational, I don't know if you've ever noticed.

Layla: Maybe just tiny bit.

Dr. DiAngelo: You just throw us together throwing a little individualism and then throwing a little universalism, right? And yet it's not an innocent or benign mess. It's a highly effective way to maintain the racial hierarchy and our positions within it. So, the fragility part was to capture how little it takes for white people to meltdown. There may be white people listening right now who are upset because I'm generalizing about white people.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And if I just knew how they speak four languages and their parents is this then I would know that they are different, right?

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: So, it doesn't take much to cause us to erupt in umbrage, but the impact of that umbrage. It becomes weaponized as, you know, because it marshals behind the weight of history and institutional control and legal authority. And so it's a weaponized tears and defensiveness.

Layla: It's really destabilizing to be on the receiving end of it.

Dr. DiAngelo: Only imagine the gaslighting.

Layla: Right. Because it stopped you kind of like, I kind of see that you're trying to do the right thing but also, wow, this is so abusive or violent or manipulative and what it

does is it makes me then question, am I being irrational or am I blowing this out of proportion? It's incredibly destabilizing. The fact that you use the word fragility is just, there's something about it that's so poignant to me about it because the actual way that white fragility shows up is very violent.

Dr. DiAngelo: You know, I'm just thinking that and I hadn't thought this one when it kinda came out of my mouth in a moment of frustration. Again, it's not fragile at all and it's most like shattered glass.

Layla: Yes.

Dr. DiAngelo: Really just shatter and then we just cut.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: With those sharps.

Layla: Right. And so I would love to hear about you getting to reflect back on your own white fragility, you know, knowing the journey that you've been on in this work where you started from. Looking back now, how did you see it showing up for you and maybe it doesn't still show up for you?

Dr. DiAngelo: Fragility less and I think there's something about just the convergence of my background that had me hanging there like I mentioned that I was hired to do this diversity training and we started with 40 trainers, about half of them white and by the end of the contract, I was the only one left. So, there is something that enabled me to hang in there. Honestly, I think it's my class background and I'd love to talk a little bit how I see my race in class intersecting. I could name my racism probably easier than white fragility because I didn't have a lot of it. So, here's a moment, we get hired, there's big group of trainers hired to go forth and do this huge contract on racial equity training and we have to go through a 5-day train the trainer ourselves. This room filled with all these people who just got hired to do this big contract because an organization have been sued for racial discrimination.

Layla: Okay.

Dr. DiAngelo: So, they required every employee to have 16 hours of mandate diversity training and there were 5,000 employees, so they needed to hire all these people to go out and do these trainings.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: I'm like, oh, I can do that, you know, like all the other white people who got hired. And so we go through this 5-day train the trainer ourselves and by that afternoon of the first day, the shift has hit the fan and it was so tense in that room and I can remember the white people just turning to the people of color and saying, okay, so this is where you teaches about racism. Like I literally thought, okay, now

they're gonna teach me about racism and they look at us and said, oh, hell no. You know, no, I don't probably have to explain to you but maybe to some of your listeners, that is not our job. I mean I also wanna point out the lack of humility that we have as white trainers, we just got hired to do a job that were basically saying we are not qualified for with no hesitation to say they aren't qualified for. This is the mediocrity white people get away with. And yet claimed that you're not qualified.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And I remember I'm so angry like, well, how am I supposed to know? And people were arguing and then this white woman yells out into the room. All the white racist raise your hand. And a whole bunch of white people raised their hands. And I was like, okay, clearly this is the party line I mean I'm a stewed enough to ignore that, but I'm not raising my hand.

Layla: I'm not racist.

Dr. DiAngelo: I'm not racist and I didn't raise my hand and I went home, you know, thinking, damn, I was the good one.

Layla: Right. Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And then look back and I think what a smart move she made just like that thing, she surfaced where all the white people were in their understanding that what it meant to be racist. What I was showing is I had no idea of what racism was. So, she exposed us so the people of color could look and say, okay, that one over there, I don't know that's an example.

Layla: I'm smiling because I can imagine in your mind you are like, well, I have now shown myself as the only safe white person in here. In reality what happened was the opposite which is she has no idea the harm she is causing. She has no idea about what's actually going on. And that is so reflective of so many people who are coming into my work, who are coming into your work that just don't have that understanding. You talk in your book about the good/bad binary. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah. Let me just say I mean the very things that we think are showing that we get it are rarely convincing.

Layla: Right. Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: You know, I think that I'm showing you I'm down and you're rolling your eyes, right?

Layla: Right. And probably that confusion of why is she rolling her eyes.

Dr. DiAngelo: The very things I think still that I get it or I don't and this is why I spent time in my presentations like breaking down all of the evidence white people give for why they are not racist and how ridiculous that evidence actually is.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And for the rest on definition of racism as individual conscious acts of meanness and racist apparently can't handle proximity to people of color.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: That is probably the number one piece of evidence is some version of my proximity either a family member I work in a diverse environment and that's very revealing. What do I think racism is? Or I mean racist that my evidence that I'm not racist is that I have proximity. Okay, well, that must mean a racist can't have proximity. So, let me ask you Layla, could a racist have proximity to you?

Layla: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. DiAngelo: Hell, yes, right? Your life might be a lot more comfortable if racist couldn't have proximity.

Layla: Right. Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: It's just silly. The good/bad binary is connected to that. It's this idea and I see this coming out of the challenges of the civil rights movement in the US where what happened for white people in the north is suddenly all these images were televised and in all these living rooms across the US, you see images of black people being beaten at lunch counters and I think there was a kind of shock for a lot of white people. Same shock we feel today when the same things that are going on have always gone up but now they're videotaped.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: You tell me man, you know, they called the cops and I didn't do anything and I'm like well, you probably did something.

Layla: Right. Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: Now, you got a video.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: I don't think these incidences are increasing, I just think we can now record them and document them. But suddenly it became very bad to be racist like that became the art type of a racist. It's some stubborn person in a white hood beating somebody and they'll become very bad to be racist and if you were good you weren't racist. So, they became mutually exclusive, right? Good, nice people



cannot be racist. I mean if you look at again how white people respond, it would appear that we can't hold that you could be a good person, a nice person and perpetrate racism.

Layla: And yet *Me and White Supremacy*, my book is actually for those good, white, liberal progressive people who would self-identify definitely not racist, definitely believe we are all one race, the human race, definitely believe that we've been all created the same and we don't even seek color. The harm that is perpetrated by people who self-identify in that way cuts so much deeper. Sometimes I get really weird emails from very right wing, very extreme people who are commenting on my work, I don't even read it. I open it. I see what it is. I delete it. Right? It doesn't affect me. It's when I'm in spaces and places with people who they believe they are safe, they believe that their ideals and their values make them an ally and perhaps who've developed some level of trust or there's just kind of feeling of harm isn't gonna be done here and inevitably it is. That always cut so much deeper and it's so hard for as you said classic liberals to understand white cuts deeper. What do you now understand about white cuts deeper?

Dr. DiAngelo: I don't know if you've heard me say I think I say it in the book. I actually think white progressives and I don't mean democrat versus republican. Any white person who is just, oh, you know, it's not me or it's less me or I think we cause the most daily hostility and toxicity in the environment for people of color particularly those who are working and living in primarily white spaces and maybe the example is that hopefully your listeners know who Richard Spencer is. He is kind of the head of the alt-right movement. I can only imagine as a black woman to run into a Richard Spencer potentially could be terrifying and yet odds are on a daily basis you're not gonna run into Richard Spencer. On a daily basis, you're gonna deal with me.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: We have agreed in which I think I'm good to go for all these nonsensical reasons I'm gonna give you that I'm good to go. One, I'm gonna be--

Layla: I'm vegetarian.

Dr. DiAngelo: Exactly. Right? My second cousin married a black man. I was in Teach for America, you know, just on and on. One, I'm gonna be completely complacent so I'm not gonna be involved in any way in my continual growth. Every moment that I push against the messages of white supremacy, they're pushing right back on me. I can never like relax and just say, you know, it's not happening, right? So, one, I'm gonna be completely complacent and two, when the topic comes up my energy is gonna go into making sure you know that I'm not racist. That's where my energy is gonna go and if you push back on that, it's gonna go into full blown white fragility, hurt feelings, defensiveness, how dare you assume I would be racist, you don't know me, right?

Layla: You don't know the contents of my heart, whatever, you know, just so many reasons. There's so many reasons we could list.

Dr. DiAngelo: Or I start to cry, I feel so bad, so now you have to console me or I begin to avoid you. You're gonna get punished in a range of ways for having done that. And so you may not do it again and then I may assume that everything is fine.

Layla: Fine. Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: What's really happening is we have nowhere near the authentic relationship I think we have because I have conveyed to you that I cannot go there with you. I can't hold that conversation. So, gaslighting you mentioned if you put all of that together into the water, it's just the water of whiteness where you can't bring your authentic self, you can't talk to us about what you're experiencing and that works great for us. I mean I'm definitely gonna claim you as my diversity cover as long as you don't fundamentally challenged me. Because when you do that, you have a personal problem.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: It's a really powerful form of I think every day white racial control and I have been noticing lately in young people like under 30 who most would say, oh, this new generation they are completely incapable of answering the question what does it mean to be white and when you bring all of that collective lack of any critical thinking or awareness into the water and you have to be in that water like, you know, that most white people can't answer that question. And if I can't hold what it means to be white, I cannot hold what it means not to be white.

Layla: It's so interesting you are talking about this. Before we hit record, we were talking about where I live, so I live in the Middle East. I was born and grew up in the UK. I've actually lived here more now than I've lived in the UK but I was completely raised in the sense that is white supremacy and it has impacted the way that I see myself in ways that I'm still healing from. So, you talk about internalized superiority that white people have. As a black person, I absolutely have internalized inferiority and it comes out in all these weird ways where having poster syndrome, I don't think I deserve to take up space. I questioned myself constantly and so when you were talking about how young white people, I'm not able to answer this question of what it means to be white, I know for myself from a very young age, I had to understand the question of what it meant to be black in Muslim. My daughter, I would say I have 2 kids, my daughter is a bit older, my son is younger, still we are not having those conversations yet. We've definitely had conversations around race. She goes to a school that has kids from every nationality basically around the world. And yet we still have these conversations because I'm a third culture child, I didn't grow up in the culture from which my parents are from. She will likely not grow up and live in the culture that my parents come from. She could go anywhere in the world and she will have to understand this is how the world sees you as a black person, it's not right. It's not okay and these are the ways in which you can advocate for yourself and speak for

yourself, but you have to understand that that's there. And so it's really interesting because we recently went on a family vacation for about a month and a half around Europe and it's the longest my kids have ever been in Europe and they saw especially my daughter who is 9 years old she saw a number of things that were just like wow, the things mom has been saying to me are actually true. These things do exist, you know. She saw waiters overlook us or kind of like give us the cold shoulder. She is still at breakfast one day at a hotel, a woman after I told her we are in a line to do something just sort of reach over me and do what she wanted to do, ignore the fact that I was ahead of her and because I had prepared her by having these conversations prior to these incidents, we were then able to have the conversation of why it has happened. Now, with the lady at the breakfast if you had asked her, did you do this because you think that you are better, that you are superior, she would have absolutely said, no.

Dr. DiAngelo: No. No. No. Yup.

Layla: But her actions showed I'm gonna ignore the fact that you've politely explained to me that we are in a line and just reach over you and do what I wanna do because I'm entitled to, because I'm white.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah.

Layla: And so that sense of superiority is something that I just want so many white people to understand that at a conscious level if asked most white people would say, no, I don't think I'm better than anyone else. In fact I struggle with my self's confidence. I have a lot of self-doubt. But when it comes to their positionality with people of color, especially black people, there is this huge sense of superiority that comes out in these really strange ways.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah and it doesn't have to be conscious. I mean this is the other piece, right? And so one, it is this idea that to say that one has white privilege or benefits from the system of racism, a lot of white people think that means you are saying white people don't suffer, don't face barriers, don't feel pain and no, of course we face barriers and of course we suffer. But we don't face that barrier and that barrier is huge. Not facing that barrier helps us face the ones we do have and other people dealing with that barrier if you will also help me through my life. So, that's really important I think for us to understand. Again I repeat it's not saying we don't suffer or face barriers, right? I would ask any white person listening who has another identify, a saline identity that's oppressed, they're queer, they're women, they have a disability, how does being white shaped? How you experience queerness? How you experience womanness? How do you experience your disability, right? Could you look anyone in the face and say to be poor and black and poor and white is the same experience, please. But there's another piece in here. So, I guess one piece is unconscious bias and this is why even somebody who calls a police because somebody is sitting at a Starbucks without ordering a coffee is gonna insist that their race had nothing to do with it. There's no way I get the cops called on me for that. But also part of being white is just the entitlement to not to attend to impact. Let's imagine that woman would have reach over

anybody. Let's imagine she is kinda rude and domineering and she would have reached over anybody. When she reaches over you, the impact is racism and this was a lesson that Deborah, I mentioned Deborah Terry-Hayes really helped me with. So, we went to lunch one day and she said Robin you're always talking over me and that is your racism. And I was like, no, it's not. It's not my racism. I talk over everybody. I had this classic idea that if I do it to everybody it's not racism.

Layla: It's the same. Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: Hang in there with me, she keeps saying, when you do it to me because I spent my life being talked over, being rendered invisible, fighting to speak, fighting to be heard and part of your whiteness is that you don't have to notice the impact from your position as a white person if that makes sense, right? Let's think about a cisgender man. He always raises his voice when he debates. Okay, great. You raise your voice to me as a woman, there's a very different impact because there's a history we are bringing into that room and it's a history of harm. And so you raise your voice at me and that made me feel very threatening and intimidating and I would like to think that as a man you're paying attention to that.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And I'm speaking to a woman now and so there's a really different dynamic here. It mean is that so hard? Is that so hard to just pay attention like, okay, but she is reaching over a black woman now and you know what, you don't get to indulge yourself in your personality if you wanna be attentive to challenging racism, the same with introverts. I'm an introvert I never speak in groups, great, you don't speak in this group, you don't speak up when we are trying to talk about racism, I'm sorry. The impact is you're upholding racism.

Layla: This is so--sorry to interrupt you. The point that you're making is so salient because I think so many people who hold white privilege do lean back then on their personality to explain why they have done what they have done and it's a very neat and tidy cover that protects them from having to look at the actual historical context that's being brought into the interaction. I know many people would hear what you're saying and think well, no, why do I have to like walking on eggshells around people of color. Why can't I just relax? Why can't I just show up as me, I wanna be authentically me? And there is something about that that is so I think attractive as an argument to so many white people that it's about authenticity, it's about showing up as their true selves and it's this really cover way of being able to ignore the impact of what happens to people of color. Go a little bit deeper on that.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah. So, there's a question that has never failed me in my efforts to uncover how does this keep getting reproduced? Individually, every white person is gonna tell you I'm against racism and yet by every measure we have racism.

Layla: It's like the book *Racism without Racist*.

Dr. DiAngelo: Oh, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, I love that book. And so the question for me when I'm trying to figure out a piece of racism is not is it true or is it false? Is it right or is it wrong? The question is how does it function? How does it function when white people when you bring up the impact this is having on you and they move to it's just my personality or they move to, gosh, do I just have to walk on eggshells. That question functions to one, prevent any engagement with impact, but also to say I'm going to continue to engage in my most comfortable mode which basically I don't care if the impact on you is racism. I'm not going to be careful. I am not in any way gonna give up anything. It's just so fully functions to protect the status quo because the status quo is racism. If I'm telling you that when you say that phrase to me it completely invalidates me and you say, well, I don't care it's my favorite phrase like seriously. Is that who you wanna be? So, that's one thought I had. But also this is gonna be a little bit hard for some white folks. My psychosocial development was inculcated in the water of white supremacy. There's no space outside of it. So, when I think of it as my personality developed in a society in which white supremacy is the foundation. So, I've internalized it. It's not just because of the color of my skin. It's the person inside my skin. That doesn't mean I can't challenge it, but there is nothing that could have exempted me from having to deal with it. In the same with gender. You can resist all you want the gender binary. You have to resist it. You can't move through life without dealing with it. It's the same with white supremacy. So, to say that's just my personality.

Layla: It's very helpful. Your personality has been shaped and molded and influenced by white supremacy and I think many people got stuck there and so stuck in the shame and the guilt and if it's inside of me then what's the point. How can I change it? If it's who I actually am and this is why I wrote the *Me and White Supremacy* because it's about reckoning with how does it show up for you, not for all of this people out there, but for you in your daily life. And I know many people go through a stage of grieving almost of understanding who I am is not what I thought that I was. And I have got this thing inside of me it's how my brain has been shaped. It's how my values have been shaped. It's how my personality has been shaped. How do I reckon with that? How have you reckon with that?

Dr. DiAngelo: I'm gonna assume that you could not and could not have written that book if you didn't think change was possible, right? Whenever I go to hopelessness and discouragement and trust me I may not think you would know dealing with white people on racism every day brings up lot of hopelessness and discouragement but I can't go there. How does that function? Give up. Stop talking about it. Stop doing it and then you perfectly protect everything.

Layla: White apathy.

Dr. DiAngelo: So, I would do as a black woman navigate, hope and hopelessness is different. Me as a white person I can't go there. I wanna talk a little bit about shame.

Layla: Yeah.

Dr. DiAngelo: Any narrative that white people go to very quickly and easily for me is a red flag. And shame is one we go to very quickly.

Layla: Very easily. Very quickly.

Dr. DiAngelo: Even more than guilt like shame is better than guilt because shame is a little more precious. It invokes a little more sympathy, a little more victimhood. Oh, you feel shame. Nobody should feel shame. So, I've been doing things lately in my workshops where I have a white person turn to another white person and just share on a daily basis what person in your day do you feel racial shame? Be honest. Okay. Zero?

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: 2% and I kind of facetiously say yeah, well, I'm on my way into whole foods and I have to step over a black man in the gutter. I feel a rush or shame but then I get into whole foods and cherries are on sale. You know what I mean? It's only in a flash usually when we are in some kind of session to challenge racism.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And that tells me that it is functioning problematic.

Layla: Right. Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: Shame is a drug. It's not a good feeling, but build your capacity to bear it and you'll probably move through it faster.

Layla: Right. It's something that I know I get frustrated with but also I understand so because, you know, I understand that we are all one race, the human race. We do react to situations very similarly when we feel that who we are, our identity is being challenged, it doesn't matter who we are. We all have a similar response to that and we all have a similar-ish process for how we work through that and at the same time I know that when it's in a situation where it's me and white person or person of color and a white person just because of the function of white supremacy, it's just acting out very differently and it has a different kind of impact and it is definitely I'm really glad that you highlighted it because it is something that I think is used as when I have seen critics of anti-racism and anti-racist education, something that they go to very easily is while, you know, they're just trying to make white people feel ashamed of being white.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah.

Layla: And that's this very terrible thing that must not happen.

Dr. DiAngelo: What's the answer, let's not talk about it, right? I often say what social problem or ill would anybody ever say the best way to deal with that social problem is to never speak of it.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: Let's not talk about suicide. Let's not talk about drug addiction. Let's not talk about any disorders or sexual assaulting. Nobody would say that. But when it comes to racism, the answer is never to speak of it. Well, that's the answer if you wanna protect it, you know, consciously you're not.

Layla: How critics often go to that as that's the main criticism. This is just a scam, this is just brainwashing white people to be ashamed of themselves.

Dr. DiAngelo: I would think listening to me, you see that I'm quite clear that I've been conditioned into white supremacy and I don't struggle with guilt. I really don't. Because I would never have chosen to be conditioned into white supremacy. But I was. I had no choice I was. Guilt is just not useful. It is I think a natural part of a process we are moving through it. But if it's functioning to say I can't do then you need to challenge it.

Layla: Yes.

Dr. DiAngelo: Now, while I don't struggle with guilt, I absolutely feel responsible for the result of my conditioning.

Layla: That's right.

Dr. DiAngelo: Now that I know, I have it and know it what am I doing with it. It's like Howard Zinn says, "There's no neutral place on a moving train." The default of the society is white supremacy and racism. And so there is, you know, to not do anything about it is to support it.

Layla: Absolutely. We were talking before we hit record about how white supremacy functions outside of the US and I had shared some examples of what I experience in my holiday but also just, you know, my experiences growing up and studying in the UK, I know that it functions there but it doesn't matter if the person is from Canada, from the UK from somewhere in Europe, there's always this excuse of, well, we are not like America though. In America, that's where you have a lot of racism. Right? How have you seen that play out?

Dr. DiAngelo: Well, the first thing that I understand is that white supremacy circulates globally. It's been exported globally. It impacts the entire world. It may have been an idea created in everywhere I've ever been, every movie I see advertise are US movies like all of our culture has been exported. And everywhere I go outside the US, I hear the exact same thing from white people.

Layla: Oh, yes, yes.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah that this is American problem that's one. Two, you don't know of the culture here so it's not legitimate for you to speak about it. And everywhere I go people

of color are, oh, my god help us, oh my god this is right out of your book, it's textbook. So, the specific history might be different but the outcome is white supremacy, white fragility and hostility and suffering and inequality for people of color. And then some of these cultures like the UK and Canada, I think the less they talk about it, the higher is the white fragility. The less capacity, the less skills and therefore the more hostile environment for people of color to bring their experience in reality to the table. And I actually don't think I need to be an expert on every other culture. I do my research before I go but what I say to white people is get some skin in the game. And figure out what this looks like in your context. That's on you. That's not on me. Take this framework, this basic frame work, the clear, empirically-able-to-be-shown outcome, change your question from if. White people's number question about racism is if you are or you aren't and if the always question is if, the answer will be no.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: Change it to how. How is racism manifest in my life, in my work, right? How does it manifest in my context? It may be different than it manifest in yours but it manifest.

Layla: I think it's so important for people in all countries where there is white dominant or white supremacy is very dominant to understand, to study the racial history of that country and to look at what is going on with the situation with migrants and immigrants like what is happening there and how is that shaping racial stereotypes. It's so interesting that you said you hear from the white people in those countries is nothing to see here and the people of color were like, oh, my gosh this exact thing you wrote is in the book and I had a very similar experience that when I was traveling I got to meet up with the number of woman of color who I know online and got to have coffee with them to dine with them instead of hear about their experiences and the things that they are experiencing, the things that have happened to them it's like the white people who live there would say no that could never happen. That would never happen. That happen now. That happen in 2019 and it's like, yeah, it's happening. Just because those people are not feeling safe enough to speak up or because it's not a national conversation in the way it is in the USA or at that level that is in the US doesn't mean that it's not happening that people of color are not experiencing racial aggressions every single day and having to monitor themselves and minimize themselves in order just to get through the day.

Dr. DiAngelo: I feel frustrated when I hear you say, gosh, I had no idea that was happening and I'm white. I just wish I want to let your white listeners to just take this in. The impact of you just like marveling at your surprise that this happens, that's a microaggression, right? What that tells I would imagine. Lyla is like I have never had to understand your reality and then you have to be reminded of that. You have to look at that in the face and you have to explain and convince, it's happening. It's part of being white is to be able to move to the world with just complete ignorance covered up as innocence. White people are not innocent on race. I think it's a kind of willful refusal to see or to know because people of color



you've been telling us forever. The information is everywhere. You know, the number one question I get when I give a talk is what do I do? And that question also really bothers me.

Layla: That's why I just say MeAndWhiteSupremacyBook.com.

Dr. DiAngelo: Oh no, well, no, thank god now I have that too. But I wrote about this in the forward. It's just like I never thought about this in my life. I've just listened to you for one hour and now hand me the answer. Just be in the process for a few minutes here and also for me to just hand it to you like as if I could.

Layla: Right. Because even my book handing it actually isn't the answer, you actually have to do the work.

Dr. DiAngelo: You make work.

Layla: You actually have to like dig deep inside of yourself and go through this process and we will know that people buy books, not everyone reads book they buy. When it's a book that you have to work to really it's not enough to say I bought the book or I read the book. You have to do the book. You have to actually involve yourself in the process and that has nothing to do with showing to the world. Look at me I'm trying my best. Look at me I'm making an effort because that again is just putting yourself at the center.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah. I can imagine Americans going to other countries and saying, oh, we don't have racism in America. I mean there's so many white people say there's no more racism. And so just take that in, right?

Layla: Wow.

Dr. DiAngelo: We know that, right? But you know, maybe when you are in Canada you change it to indigenous, right?

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: In the US, I've centered on anti-blackness. In Australia look at the history of the aboriginal people, right? In the UK, take a look at where do you think we purchase and slave out, right?

Layla: Right. We colonized all those countries.

Dr. DiAngelo: Oh my god, India, right? I'm always thinking I wonder where their wealth came from. But also with the anti-immigrant sentiment. But if you don't understand racism, if you have no awareness of it, if you don't talk about it, if you don't look at it, if you are shock when Layla tells you about an experience of hers, it means one, you have no critical thinking. Two, you also have no skills at all to navigate a pretty complex nuance and uncomfortable conversation and three, you have no emotional capacity to endure the discomfort of the conversation. This is why so

called innocence is not benign. The impact of that all of those inabilities is again I repeat you can't bring your authentic self to me because I can't hold it.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And my thought about the walking on eggshells I mean, one, the entitlement of that you mean I have to watch what I say, yes, oh my god, you may have to give up a little tiny bit of something here, yes. But there is a difference between carefulness and thoughtfulness.

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: Be thoughtful but carefulness and here's another story with Deborah again, there should be this exercise we would do in these trainings where you would pair up with someone and you would choose an oppressed group that neither of you belong to and give your first uncensored thought. So, another white person I would pair up, we will do black people, so I would say black woman, black man, African Americans and then they would just say their first uncensored thought and you can imagine what's that.

Layla: Right. I can imagine. Yes. Yeah.

Dr. DiAngelo: So, I was debriefing this exercise with Deborah and I'm like that exercise makes me so uncomfortable like I know I have all that stuff in me, but I don't wanna loosen it up because what if it just, you know, I think this is a really classic fear of a lot of white people, we are just gonna blurt some horrible thing out. I said I just thought that it was more important to be careful about that. She just look at me for a long pause and she said, Robin just think we can't tell when you are being careful. What do you think white people look like when they are being careful around black people? It was one of those moments where I just go, oh my god, what do we look like? Stiff, inauthentic, racist quite frankly. It feels awful then you watch me over there with all my white friends over by the water cooler laughing, joking, and relaxed. Yeah, I know carefulness is not overlooking. Thoughtfulness, right? The ability to repair when we step in it. I have so many people of color say to me we don't expect you to be free of your racist conditioning and we are not gonna give up on you because you have racist conditioning. We really be isolated if we did that but what we are looking for, we are looking for something and that is where can we go with you in those moments when it surfaces and if we can't go there with you we are not having an authentic relationship.

Layla: Yes. Because there isn't an expectation that we think, I'll speak for myself, as a black person I don't hold an expectation that if you have read all of these books and taken all of these courses and done all of this work that you will never do anything racist. That you will never say anything racist. I wanna talk about this next but I know that you've been in this work for 20 years, I have no expectation Robin that you have not reached the status of exceptionalism where you can never say something out of your mouth or do something that was unconsciously racist. What I do know is that if it does happen, when it does happen, I can have

that conversation with you in a very honest way without having to try to protect your feelings about having to use ways to explain what you've done which actually minimize the harm that has been caused me so that I can protect you. We can really go deep and have that conversation and that the repair that will be done through it because I understand that you've been in this work for a long time so you understand a level of authenticity that's required and that repair will be so much more real than if you are somebody who is really grappling to come to terms of this and is really just doing the work at the surface. I have many people who emailed me, messaged me to say, you know, well I have been in this work since X year and I'm like but the way that you are showing up tells me I don't know how you have been doing it, but you haven't been doing it. You may have been a diversity trainer. There's this great essay that I quote in *Me and White Supremacy* by Ellen Pence and I think it's from the book, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*. And she is a white feminist writing about her coming to an understanding that even though she understood that she wasn't racist like her father who is outwardly racist and she would save her money and send it to Martin Luther King, Jr. and she would go the black church, she couldn't understand why still women of color resent her that you are still white, you are still racist, you are still part of the problem. She couldn't understand why. And it wasn't until she was able to really listen to the women of color and begin doing her work that she could see the same way that white man would treat her as a white woman is the same way she was treating people of color and black people. And we take that analogy to make that connection, but that level of like even though she had been working alongside woman of color feminist that proximity to those people and those relationships did not mean that they would necessarily have been safe with her when her white fragility surface. Because she had no understanding.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah. You know, sexism has been an incredibly effective way in for me because I identify as a feminist from very, very young. It's very easy to see where one has oppressed themselves but I was in my 30s before I recognized how I colluded with somebody else's oppression, right?

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: That question of how does it function has been really useful but also when I can't figure out a piece, let's say you give me some feedback and I feel defensive, I just in my mind change the roles and imagine that a man is saying to me I've just called in a man and I'm sexist and usually just instantly, oh my god, I get it. That's why I challenged white people who say we need to feel safe in order to talk about racism like seriously? If there was a group of man who I was trying to get them to talk about sexism, they'll say we need to feel safer. I would just be like FU basically. Like seriously? That is the really useful way but I wanna say something to all the white feminist out there. Stop using sexism as a way to protect your racism. Right? Because so many white women use sexism as a way out.

Layla: And a way to build women of color into a sort of solidarity which doesn't necessarily exist, we shouldn't be fighting against each other. We should be

supporting each other as women and it's like you're not understanding what's actually going on here.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yes. So, that was a thought. Another thought is what you were talking about when people write to you and say I've been doing this for a long time. I called that credentialing.

Layla: Right. It happens a lot.

Dr. DiAngelo: Oh my god, in my workshops I make white people turn to the person next to them and just answer how do you credential yourself. We all do it and if I told you that they notice when we are doing it, how do you think it's actually impacting the conversation? What do you think is actually going on when they noticed that we are credentialing, right? If there is people of color I have them answer have you noticed white people credentialing and doesn't work? But one of the things I say when somebody says because sometimes people try to credential themselves with me by saying I read your book.

Layla: Yes.

Dr. DiAngelo: And I do say, well, how will people of color know that you read my book? And I just wait, right? Like how would people of color know that you have been in diversity training for all these years if you didn't tell them. Well, I think if you had truly internalize this understanding, you wouldn't need to tell them because it will come through on how you work.

Layla: Precisely.

Dr. DiAngelo: And the very thing that you think is showing that you get it is again where white people were so unqualified to determine how well we are doing because we are so invested in not seeing where we are not doing well.

Layla: I know you got this question a lot because you are a white person doing anti-racism work, how do you answer the question around your positionality as a person holding white privilege doing this work? And how do you hold yourself accountable so as not to slip into white exceptionalism?

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah. It is the master's tools dilemma, Audre Lorde's beautiful quote. I am so clear that I center whiteness in my work that when I stand on a stage in front of a thousand people granted credibility and authority like almost every other white person who stands in front granted credibility, I am reinforcing whiteness, conscious or not. And do not use this platform, do not use this position to break with white solidarity, to expose whiteness because it stays protected by not being named or exposed. And as an insider, I think you understand whiteness and white fragility to a degree I never will and as an insider, I have an understanding that you can't have.

Layla: That's right.

Dr. DiAngelo: And when you move those pieces, the tension is in that both end. And the way I think about it is to not use this platform is to really be white. And I wanna be a little less white so what does that mean to me? It doesn't mean be more Italian American, okay. It doesn't mean be more ethnic. To be less white for me means be a little less oppressive, a little less arrogant and ignorant and complacent and silent and be more humble and open and vulnerable and courageous. So, that's one piece. And I name that at the opening, I tried to be transparent about that tension. I'm also really clear that while I hope my work is valuable and affirming for people of color, I'm speaking to white people as a white person. I also in terms of accountability financially donate a percentage of my annual income each year to Racial Justice Organizations led by people of color. All my public workshops, whatever it is that I am paid, that exact amount goes to local Racial Justice Organizations led by people of color. I try to promote the work of people of color if I'm doing longer work. So, those are some of the financial ways that I seek to be accountable and I have started to ask white people again turn to the person next to you. Given this, given what we've just laid out and made visible about white supremacy, what are your current accountability practices? And of course be honest because most white people the answer still aren't any. None. Right? Part of mine or I have white people in my life who have a strong analysis, who I definitely work through, I go cry with them, I go help me I'm struggling, I wanna think through something. But there are also people of color in my life who have agreed to be there for me in that way and I paid them for their time or I offer to pay them for their time. Some of them our dear friends will not take that, who aren't gonna accept it. Then I donate to a Racial Justice Organization for the time spent getting their expertise consulting services. We have to start understanding what you are giving. And not just, hey, I'm sure you get emails. Hey, I'm just wondering about this. I love to pick your brain. I love to have coffee and hear what you think. I've never offered to pay my white friends who have this analysis. But there's such a history of the uncompensated labor of people of color and such a sense of entitlement.

Layla: To that time and to that energy and to that history and to that pain, yes.

Dr. DiAngelo: That emotional labor and that psychic labor.

Layla: And the intellectual labor.

Dr. DiAngelo: Oh my goodness, right? And what you risk because I might say I want it, I actually see there's a kind of colonialism, right? Okay, give me the fruits of your labor but let's face it, I don't agree with that one. I agree with these but I don't think so.

Layla: I don't think this applies in my unique situation.

Dr. DiAngelo: I'm still conditioning myself as the qualified arbiter of whether your thinking is legitimate, right? And you know, that you are up against that when I ask you for your thinking. There's just so much that goes into that. We are back to my opening story of how am I supposed to know about racism if you won't tell me.

Layla: Right. Right. Exactly. Yeah. I think it's important, thank you for sharing all of that, I think it's so important to acknowledge the kind of tension of being an anti-racist educator who is white and everything that comes with that and because of that acknowledgement you've also made very clear the ways in which you stay accountable. There is no perfectionism in this and there are criticisms that maybe valid or not valid or you know that there's all kinds of nuances to them. But I really appreciate what you said about the fact that you understand, you do actually have this platform and that you feel that this is the way for you to be less oppressive. I think that's really important that you said that because I know that there are so many white people who come into this awakening of their racial superiority and that positionality and white supremacy and the first thing that they wanted to do is jump into leading, training, teaching, writing a book, getting a contract or something and then becoming the face of the movement and that to me is just white supremacy continuing to function. You talk to me before we hit record, you've actually been in this work for a very long time before getting to New York Times Best Seller, right?

Dr. DiAngelo: Yes, definitely, 25 years.

Layla: 25 years that you've put in the work in yourself and behind the scenes where you didn't have the fame, the kind of public exposure that you have now. As you are moving more into that, I mean this is your third book so it's not your first time writing a book but it is the first one that's really shut up in the way that it has and it came from this term that you coined a long time ago as well.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah.

Layla: How have you been sort of navigating being in a position of more public exposure and more people knowing who you are, being more familiar with your work and being seen as this leader who is also white in social justice work? How do you navigate that and there might not be a clear answer so I'm not looking for it. This is how I do it, step one.

Dr. DiAngelo: It's always I think the community keeps you humble because, yes, I get a lot of accolades and I get a lot of really beautiful affirmations and I am now paid well and well, do you have to have a thick skin, the public critics, the national news stories that call you out.

Layla: There's a lot that comes with it?

Dr. DiAngelo: Yes. I think the average person cringes if they get one evaluation from their manager, now you know, half the New York Times critic you and critic your work and you get it from both the right and the left and like you I get shockingly awful emails which, you know, I think you kind of just set aside but critics from the left and critics from people of color, you know, that's of course much harder but you do have to engage with it and grapple with it as part of accountability and this kinda deep challenges of being white in this work is where is that place for you,

you say I need to take this and I need to learn and grow from it but this is theirs and I don't need to take that. Well, that's tricky across race, right? Because I'm using my white brain if you will to make that determination and yet I have been doing this work long enough to know that people of color have issues too. We are all confused by racism and so I almost have to be able to stay center, take what I can and leave the rest or I probably would be immobilized.

Layla: Right. From a black person's perspective, there isn't even a single monolithic black experience of you and your work that this is how all black people and all people of color and indigenous people feel about Robin DiAngelo and her work. Everyone has their own perspective in way that they're engaging with it or not engaging with it and so I hear you about having to stay centered. Do you surround yourself with black people and people of color in your sort of inner circle who are in the work who you can--

Dr. DiAngelo: Definitely yes. To this day Deborah and Darlene are two of those people. Do you know, Resmaa Menakem?

Layla: Yes I do and actually he sent me his book. It's on my to-read list.

Dr. DiAngelo: You would love to interview him.

Layla: Yes. I'll make sure I read the book though first before I invite him.

Dr. DiAngelo: Well, he is beloved to me and he is someone who I can also check in with. There's other people in my life that you wouldn't necessarily know and I'm aware that there are people who don't think white people should talk about this stuff or lead this stuff or be paid to lead this stuff. I don't agree with that. But that's hard and you come up against that. What I think is interesting is I doubt Brene Brown ever gets asked what she is doing with her royalties, right?

Layla: Right.

Dr. DiAngelo: Well, Brene Brown doesn't talk about race. She should. I don't know how you can talk about shame without talking about racism.

Layla: Right. Her work is referenced by a lot of white women when it comes to--

Dr. DiAngelo: Well, I don't know that. Let me just say I think she is really good at what she does and I think the fundamental message is kind of accepting yourself and within that she started to do maybe 2 minutes on privilege but it's clear that that's not--

Layla: She doesn't really like to talk to this.

Dr. DiAngelo: I mean she is good at what she does but when people, oh, you should check her out, I'm always like I think she fills stadiums because she doesn't challenge you on where she kind of tells me that you are okay the way you are kind of stuff. But if she began to then maybe she begin to get questions like, you know, why are you

being paid and I just think that's really interesting, right? Like I don't know how any person can talk about anything without talking about how race informs it. But as long as you don't talk about race, you're not gonna be challenged on making a living. I just know that's also worth noticing.

Layla: Yeah. Although there is that, I think the difference however is that when you are leading or seen to be leading in an area from which you benefit inherently because of your privilege that question always has to be grappled with. I don't necessarily have an answer, but I think it's some of the things that you talked about especially around financial accountability are really important for people to understand because otherwise it just gets taken as another thing to just make money from and just to propel yourself into a position of leadership which clearly you are not doing this for that because this work is really hard and you've been in it for a really long time and there are several points in which you could have given up and gone into something which would have been much easier for you as a white person.

Dr. DiAngelo: Even today there's moment when I'm like I'm just not doing this anymore. I can't. But somebody recently asked me like if, you know, what you wish you knew or something and I thought I wish all those years has was taken all that abuse from white people and it doesn't compare to need out, but we can be awful to other white people who breaks with white solidarity that's why white people don't break with white solidarity, right? I wish somebody just said hang in there, you're gonna be able to lay this out and what I hope my work does one piece of it is make it harder for white people to run this devastating nonsense with no accountability. Because now we have language.

Layla: Thank you for saying that. Yeah. Thank you for saying that because the language piece is so important both for people of color and for white people. So, to have a book called *White Fragility* on the New York Times Best Seller list for me really matters that we are naming it. It's something that we named. I know that when I was going through connecting with the publisher for my book and that there was a particular publisher who was like would you consider changing the name of your book essentially to make it less scary and less confrontational, although they did not use that language they use more business kind of language that was essentially the message. And for me it's so important to have the language to be able to name it because if you can't name it it's that thing that you were talking about right at the beginning with your mother not being able to speak the cancer and not allowing any of you to speak it, it's this Bogeyman that we can't talk about that we pretend doesn't exist and yet that continues to have this violent impact every single day. So, having the language, being able to say that's actually white fragility what you're doing right now, not in a name calling way or just say you know, let's identify, this is what that means and here's actually an article, a book that talks about and explains to you what it is and how it shows up.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah. Even reading the New York Times like what the list is you have to like what's that? Every time I get that and someone says, you know, what do you do and then



I wrote a book. What's it called? I mean those moments I have to say *White Fragility* and then it pushes me also.

Layla: It pushes me with my book when people say what do you write about? Uh, *White Supremacy*.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah.

Layla: Yeah. Because pushing against, you are absolutely right, dominant culture and keeping things comfortable and safe for white people but yeah thank you so much for that conversation because it's just I think it's something that I think white is so important for me to have this conversations. This is now the second season of Good Ancestor podcast. In the first season, I had two white people and everyone else is people of color. It's the same with the second season and it's because so much of my audience is white. Not all of them but a large proportion are coming into this work because of me and white supremacy. And so I think it's valuable to have conversations with people who are in this work whether they are educators or people just in it and grappling with it and having vocal conversations about it. I think it's so important to sit with the awkwardness and that there is no clear cut answers this is how it's gonna be because so many people are looking for that. So many people are looking for just tell me what to do. Just tell me how it's supposed to be. Robin supposed to give the standard answer for all white people. I, Layla, I'm supposed to give the standard answer for all black people especially all black women and it just doesn't work that way and this continues to be I know for me a journey of understanding more and more of the layers of it and the nuance of it and the complexities of it and learning to be with that without trying to fix it and make it all into straight lines, but just trying as best as possible to navigate it with integrity.

Dr. DiAngelo: Yeah, I mean we are back to the master's tools, you and I are inside white supremacy trying to challenge it.

Layla: Absolutely.

Dr. DiAngelo: So, it's messy and it's that both end of challenging it and reproducing it, but I just know to not challenge it and I often end my sessions by saying to the white people, you know, part of being white is that you could just leave today and say, oh, that was an interesting session. That was an interesting podcast and do nothing different and honestly most of you aren't going to do anything different. Just continue being nice which by the way is the title of my next book, *Niceness is Not Anti-Racism*.

Layla: Yes. Brilliant.

Dr. DiAngelo: White is that you have that choice but here's what I want you to do for me if you're gonna make that choice. I want you to go home and I want you to look yourself in the mirror, look yourself right in the eyes and I want you to say I choose to collude with white supremacy. And then carry on but let's do it with

honesty. That's how I see it to not take up this work is to collude. There's just no neutral place and then we also add it's the most transformative liberating work you could ever do. It's not awful. It's painful at times for sure. But on every level nothing is gonna push a white person like getting engage in this work. What's the point of being alive, in my point of view, if I am not growing and stretching and contributing?

Layla: That is such a good place to end what has been an incredible conversation. I wanna ask you my final question, Robin. First of all I wanna thank you for this conversation and for writing *White Fragility*, for supporting the *Me and White Supremacy* work and for bringin your full self to this conversation. Our final question is what does it mean to you to be a good ancestor?

Dr. DiAngelo: That at the end of my life, one, at each night when I go to bed I can ask myself where you in your integrity today? Did you align your actual behavior with what you profess to value? And at the end of my life, did your life in some way contribute to a more just world? Somebody recently from the right called me a social justice warrior and I thought man, you should come up with a better term. There's nothing about that term that bothers me, if my tombstone should say, here lies the social justice warrior, I will be in good keeping in my integrity.

Layla: I love that. Thank you so much, Robin.

Dr. DiAngelo: You're welcome.