

Layla:

Often described as a force to be reckoned with, Nova Reid is an inspirational speaker, writer and diversity and anti-racism campaigner. Nova approaches her work from a unique position, uses her professional background in counseling skills, mental wellbeing and understanding of human behavior to encourage meaning change from the inside out. She has worked with over 200 progressive organizations and clients including Change.org, Lufthansa and Bloody Good Period. Has also recently launched an online anti-racism course. In 2019, Nova was shortlisted for an Inclusive Companies Award and nominated for National Diversity Award. Nova is a passionate advocate for quality and helping people be the change they want to see in the world. She regularly appears on BBC News, Sky News and BBC Radio as an expert on race and diversity matters. In 2018, Nova was invited to attend the royal wedding of the duke and duchess of Sussex to provide expert media commentary. Nova is a popular keynote speaker, the regular mentor at the Southbank Centre's Women of the World Festival. In March 2019, Nova was invited to lead a panel at the UK's first She Summit. In the same month, she was honored to be named one of the top 100 black British women by the Black Magic Network as part of international women's day 2019. Later that year, Nova was invited by TEDxFrankfurt to give a talk on microaggressions. Nova is a regular writer for publications including Refinery29 UK and Restless Magazine and is also the founder of multi-award winning wedding platform and London show New Bride, the leading inclusive platform dedicated to diversity in the mainstream wedding industry. Nova

is a passionate advocate for equality and helping people be the change they want to see in the world.

Hello everybody and welcome back to Good Ancestor podcast. I'm your host, Layla Saad and I'm here with this beautiful queen today. Queen Nova Reid, welcome to Good Ancestor podcast.

Nova: Oh, thank you so much for having me Layla. What a pleasure.

Layla: I'm so excited to be here with you. I'm very grateful that we got the chance to meet just very briefly in person a few months ago. Caught each other at the rooftop of the Southbank Center.

Nova: Yeah. And it was a beautiful sunny day and it was such synchronicity because I thought I just wanted to see you, but I thought it's just gonna be impossible and there you are.

Layla: Yeah. It was amazing. So we were there for context, for everyone who is listening, we were at the Women of the Word Festival at the Southbank Center in London, I was in the UK for my UK book tour and Nova—I knew we were gonna be there at the same time, you were in the audience for my talk, right?

Nova: Yes. Yes.

Layla: Along with, yeah, and I could hear like the hell yeses from the choir, the audience. It just made me feel so joyful in that conversation and then I was

hanging out with my sister's-in-law and caught you on the rooftop and that was amazing.

Nova: Yeah. It was wonderful. It was the best talk of my day. In fact after that, so I went to come earlier that day and didn't organize myself, so I arrived in time for your talk and I was going to do other things afterwards but after our nourishing conversation on the rooftop, I was like, yeah, that's it, cup full, I'm done.

Layla: I'm good, yeah, it's awesome. It was so awesome. And it's so, you know, wild to think about it that that was just a few months ago and now the idea of, you know, being anywhere near each other is just, yeah, I'm looking forward to the days when we can be out in the sun in London and out of the streets and seeing each other, yeah.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: All right, my love, let's get started with Good Ancestor podcast, our very first question for everybody, who are some of the ancestors living or transitioned, familial or societal who influenced you on your journey?

Nova: My goodness, you know, I'm still discovering this part of me, I traced my ancestry by a DNA test in December and I got my results in January.

Layla: Wow.

Nova: And there are so many components and parts of myself so I'm only just discovering and I went on a

spiritual healing retreat in February, so yeah, this is a big question for me there's parts of myself that need integrating, there so many aspects of who I am that I'm still exploring and I'm still honoring.

Layla: Yeah. You know, in doing my research for our conversation I think I was watching your TEDx speak which was—it's TEDxTalk which was amazing and you talked about growing up in Hartfordshire and being one of the only, right? And I so resonated with that because I grew up in Carmarthen, Wales and was one of—was the only going to Roman Catholic school so the only Muslim, the only Muslim being sent to those schools and one of the only black kids and this idea of who am I? Everyone else's know who they are, I'm not really sure how did I get here and why am I different? Is that something that you feel since your childhood, you really grappled with finding your place and where are you now with that sense of self definition?

Nova: Yeah, so I grappled with just at the younger—when I was younger it is more about fitting in that sense of belonging and when I came to accept my identities, a black woman as I would say the black girl that was really painful for me, it's very hard because I had received program and they told me I was less than because I was black. And so accepting that was really painful for me though I've gone through therapy that was a lot of trauma and so there's been a peace about accepting who I am as a little black girl and a black woman and then there's been this pace of when I started to explore anti-racism and what that means and I'm starting to

learn about colonial past and where I really came from then it's like that journey had to go all over again who I thought I was that's not the whole story or am I even that. I remember when I shared my—so my dad has always been somebody who has read the books, has been very much into anti-racism, he wouldn't call it that but that's what he was into and I remember as a young teenager saying to him, oh come on dad, it's not about race. That was a long time. I would say all of this stuff that I'm going eye-rolling now and then I got to an age and I was a teenager, I don't know how old I was but it was more when I was starting to be independent and I was noting these rejections, I was noticing this disproportionate treatment and I was noticing the racism in a way that I can protect it before by my parents. And as a while that was right all along. So when I went on this journey to trace my ancestry and I shared the results with my parents and my mom and dad were in the room, dad was like, "yeah, that makes sense" and my mom, and I love my mom but she's not into this stuff at all. She's just like this is the way it is. This is the way white people are. Let's just get over with it and live a peaceful life. So when I told her that I was 56% Nigerian, she said it was a load of rubbish and she said where's the Jamaican? And I said mommy you've missed the whole point. We were never there to begin with. We moved from there.

Layla: Right. Right. Right. And so how do you think—so thank you for sharing this really personal story. How do you think she was processing that?

Nova: I just think it was just, I think it was too much for her. It just wasn't dropping cognitively. It's not just her. She doesn't have the understanding and I think that's something that's really important that just because you are black or brown doesn't necessarily mean that you are anti-racist or you understand, you know, the normative of what this means. She just couldn't understand it and there was also—I vaguely remember that there was this anti-African, anti-Caribbean rhetoric that went on between the black communities as well. That was coming up as well.

Layla: Yeah. There's a way in which I definitely saw it in the UK when I still live there and I've seen it when I've traveled around the US as well and I think it exist also within, you know, European countries that were colonizing parts of Africa where and other countries where it's like, but now you're here so just be British. But now you are here so just be American. You don't need to go digging into that stuff and the extent to which you start saying actually yes I'm British and I'm also these other things. You are—there's almost like you're betraying...

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Right? Like there's a sense of betrayal and now you're being treated as if you are othering yourself in saying that you don't really belong here.

Nova: Yeah. I mean it's so late I don't remember growing up because I speak a certain way I would be told that I was a coconut and that I wasn't black enough

and then there was all my struggles of my identity anyway so this not feeling like I belonged anywhere it's like I can't be—when I'm British I'm told I'm not British. When I claimed my Jamaican heritage, I'm told I'm not Jamaican enough. And then fast forward further down the line to exploring ancestry it's like argh let's go back, let's just go back to basics because I'm more than one thing, but we often don't celebrate that. We try to put our self in these boxes.

Layla: Right. And I'm so struck by the fact that for white people it's, well, I'm white and that's the end of conversation and there you know, we talk a lot in this work, right? About the exchange that had to be made for people of where they were really from to exchange it for whiteness so that they could claim that white privilege and there's a—I have seen and I'm sure you have as well as we talk to white people in our work about, you know, instead of culturally appropriating from our cultures, why not explore what is present in your own and there's sort of that I don't know what's present in my own. I don't know what's there. And so I find it really ironic that there is that on the one hand but then for us, there's this projection of if you go and start exploring your own culture and claiming your own culture and dressing in your own culture that you are now also saying that you are now one of us.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: Yeah. Yeah. It is so multilayered. In your own journey then and especially like I'm sure you have a lot of black women and women of color who look to

you, who come in your DMs and asks for advice, right?

Nova: Yeah. Yeah.

Layla: For them as they are reclaiming their own identity, what are some nuggets of wisdom that you have for them?

Nova: I think I said it earlier is that we are more than one thing and that is a beautiful—that's a gift, that's a positive and we can be all of these parts of ourselves. We don't need to hide different elements of ourselves because we think that they are unworthy, less than or whatever. It's claiming all of them and embracing all of them and discovering all these new parts of yourself that you didn't realize existed in whatever way that feels right and releasing any shame around not knowing. At least shaming around rejecting.

Layla: Shame is a big one.

Nova: Oh, huge for so many.

Layla: Shame is a big one. I think for me, I, you know, in coming you were saying about how you used to say the same things that now make you roll your eyes, right?

Nova: And my dad just sits there quietly going mm-hmm.

Layla: You know, and we have to like forgive that part of ourselves that didn't know.



Nova: Yeah, of course.

Layla: Yeah. Yeah. So what I found really interesting about your story is your entry into kind of anti-racism work what I would say is a very unlikely, you know, because when I was first getting to know you and your work, I was like, oh, she's okay, she's anti-racism and she hate it but she's also—she runs this wedding consultancy business like, oh, that must be two separate things that she just has two different interest in, but in digging deeper into your work finding out actually it was the wedding world that brought you into anti-racism work, tell us about that.

Nova: I think it was bubbling beneath the surface before because I started my professional journey as a professional actress and singer and danced for a little bit, and I lost confidence and ended up re-training and had an injury as well and I was working in mental health and they just love the way that I was with people and say they'll re-train me to work in mental health disability advocacy so the foundation really started then with sort of advocating for the underdog. In that time, I got engaged to be married so I thought the process of starting my journey working in mental health you have to do a lot of inner work and so that inner work was brewing all over the stuff about my race and surface that I thought I dealt with. I was happy. I thought I was happy with who I was and comfortable in my skin. So, in therapy, this stuff is coming out it's like mmm I didn't know why this is—I thought I dealt with this. Then I got engaged so because this stuff was on the surface, I got engaged with all these magazines and there were

just no black people anywhere. And I was like what is this? And I'm like why have you not moved on at the time Disney characters in, you know, this lack of representation something that's so universal celebrating love and so I was at the point where I was much more confident in who I was and I was like I'm not tolerating this anymore so we just started blogging and ranting about it. And that's what was the catalyst to me starting in that space to drive forth more representation and to challenge publicist who were saying that they would never put black women on the front cover of their magazine because black women won't sell and white women won't buy magazine with a black woman on the cover.

Layla: Right.

Nova: I've been saying this on TV.

Layla: So you would be emailing them to ask how come.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Right.

Nova: So, I wrote letters at first and got rubbed off and then I thought let me just create my own platform which is called New Bride and then that sort of evolved into a website, a directory, a wedding show and so as I grow more successful in that space and also I wasn't going away, suddenly this publishers were contacting me and asking me about what they can do to improve our best within publication or business.

Layla: And was that most likely because they've been called out or...

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Yeah? Because there's nothing that I see that, you know, motivates the status quo, dominant culture to change unless very tough pressure has been applied.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Sadly. It doesn't often come from within, you know, it's something you have to change here, yeah.

Nova: The wedding industry is hugely institutionally racist. I'm not gonna make any like most industries haven't engaged and I think it was an article I wrote for how things imposed that got their attention because I named them and at that point I said in their 60-year history that never had a black woman or woman of color in the front cover of their magazine, there's the evidence.

Layla: Wow. It's really striking me because, you know, on this podcast I get to speak to some of the most incredible people in the world and each one of them works in a different field and exactly what you've said I've heard from people in the wellness space, people in you know, in the fashion space like all of those things again that this space is institutionally has always been extremely white, white supremacy is the foundation upon which this industry is built and we are in the year 2020 and you know, still the

representation has been this much. And so it's—I mean for the listeners people of all races oftentimes it's like, oh, there's gonna be an area of life in which white supremacy is not present. The wedding industry, there's no white supremacy there, right? That has nothing to do, that has nothing to do with racist, right? And then you dig up like you said just laying the facts out and saying there has never been a black person, a woman of color on the cover and what really strikes me about that when I was doing the research about your work and watching a video that you did I can't remember where it was you are being interviewed but it reminded me about what I've said about what I noticed when I watched movies and so when I watched—I loved going to the cinemas. I love movies. But I always watch it with two eyes like I'm watching for the story and the enjoyment of just surrendering to the moment but I'm also watching for hmm how is racism showing up here. How is white supremacy showing up here and something that I noticed is that in movies where there is a love interest, love interest are usually white. They are not white for going for diversity thing here it has to be an interracial couple. Oftentimes the person who is a person of color very light skinned and that's the way to make it acceptable in “to everybody” to dominant culture. You cannot see, you will not see a love interest that both partners being black people unless it's considered a black movie.

Nova: Mm-hmm. Yup.

Layla: That means it's now been—it's usually been made by black people, it's an old black cast. That's the

only time that you see that. So this idea so I'm looking at like you said with the wedding magazines, you're seeing brides and grooms who are or brides and brides and grooms and grooms who are all white.

Nova: Yes. Yes.

Layla: And that's expected to apply to everybody. So, Nova were supposed to be able to find yourself within whiteness but if you are on the cover, a white woman cannot find herself in your blackness.

Nova: Mmm, yeah.

Layla: Yeah.

Nova: That was the thing. It was like if you're black or brown use your imagination.

Layla: Oh.

Nova: We—for the most part we have to and I remember when I started to speak coupleness to friends and family and other peers. I say look there's no maga—I've counted three magazines that have 300 pages and there's not even a brown skin, there's not even a light skinned person there.

Layla: Right. Right.

Nova: Not even anything. And so the immediate response was well isn't there a black magazine? And my response to that was this is a way. Why do I need to segregate?

Lyla                    And really that saying that's really saying then is this magazine then only for white people?

Nova:                Yeah, of course.

Layla:                Right.

Nova:                Reinforcing and challenging.

Layla:                Right.

Nova:                If I want to go and access things about my culture then I know about my culture, it's in my family, you know, I can ask the traditions and inspiration from my family, they are my source. But if I want every day universal tips on hair, makeup, wedding dresses, what things like on my skin type then I'm gonna go those magazines and they just—if they just didn't exist for us.

Layla:                Yeah. And what really strikes me is so many—I mean for you it was like and like you said you are at the point in your life in which those questions were coming up for you anyway so you were noticing it but for the most part we are flicking through we don't even notice.

Nova:                Yeah. Yeah.

Layla:                And especially if you have white privilege, you don't know this.

Nova:                Yeah.

Layla: Yeah. And so I'm sure many people are thinking what's the big deal?

Nova: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. They were.

Layla: Yeah, I'm sure. And so you know, jump from there you starting New Bride which is this beautiful business, tell us about it and tell us about the wedding show that you did last year.

Nova: So, it started just as a blog when blogging was in. And...

Lyla We don't do that anymore.

Nova: I know. We're lazy. We just want social media quick fixes. And I really—everything about New Bride was different. My logo was red. Everything in the wedding industry was pastel and pink and I have this big bold red and gold logo and it was primarily started as me documenting my planning and then when I saw that my story was resonating with others and then brands started to contact me and asked me if they could sponsor and I have no idea what's happening. I don't know what they sees inside. I thought let me get married and if I still have the same energy behind it post wedding, let me see what I can do to monetize it and turn it into a professional space. And so that process started in 2014 and then I went full time in the business in 2016. And that was when I wanted more from it where I was seeing the value in person experiences and always because I did regular—because what happened in that space was my blog was very small in terms of numbers compared to my white

peers who had—some of them had 200 plus thousands, some half a million, some even over a million and I had I think at that time on average about 16,000 followers. So, much smaller. And so when advertisers who weren't really engaged in this work but wanted to take a box, wanted to get in touch and they asked me for my fee and I would tell them and they're like but your blog is so much smaller and so they sold in numbers is the value. But I said mine is smaller but they are engaged. I know where they shop. I know where they read. I know what they like and they are loyal. They will give word as recommendations because they are not being served anywhere else. Speak to them about the value as niche is interesting. And so in doing this annual surveys, what was coming up was the wedding shows are really, really inadequate but they didn't meet needs that people were receiving racism but you know, automatic assumptions about whether they could or couldn't afford a service, being ignored, oh my god, so much stuff and so I feel there's a niche here I'm going to be mad and do wedding show. The trouble with the industry...

Layla: Have you done anything like that before?

Nova: I produced theater shows before.

Layla: Okay.

Nova: To me, it was easier than that. It was easier than producing theater show.

Layla: In your mind?



Nova: Yeah, in my mind.

Layla: In reality?

Nova: In reality, to be fair, producing it wasn't hard, what made it hard was that I have no funding, no finances, I have no one working for me. I can only afford freelancers occasionally, so I had to do absolutely everything and there was no marketing budget and I lost many too stoning weight and I was like I am not doing that again. Without funding, without finance behind it and people actually valuing it, I'm not putting myself through that again. So that was the learning in that. I could do it but to the expense of my health.

Layla: Yeah. And did you see after that interest in funding?

Nova: So, I had great press attention. It was covered by the BBC. It was covered by Refinery29. I had a—I would never forget this, this made all of that with difficulty in doing that on your own all worth it and I had lots of people volunteered which is incredible. I had a black woman come up to me afterwards, I've done a catwalk show and I tend to show into—a turned the catwalk into a bit of theater experiment. So, there was a love story and it was lots of different body shapes as well but that was the other thing that round me up it was just size 8 women. We had lots of different body types on the catwalk as well. We had people in the disabled community who came to the show and people who work in the LGBTQ community, so I was trying to be as inclusive as possible to send the message and black woman came up to me afterwards because I

intentionally chose 3 black models, I had 5 in total. I intentionally had a biased towards black women because we saw for not saying, she came out to me afterwards, she said, thank you so much for doing this and then she started crying and then I started crying and I said can you tell me why you're crying? What's going on for you? And I knew it. The words didn't need to be spoken but she said I never knew what it would feel like to be intentionally included before. I'd still make me cry now. So afterwards I agonized.

Layla: I'm still on what she said. I never knew what it would feel like to be intentionally included.

Nova: Included. Yeah.

Layla: Wow.

Nova: It still moves me.

Layla: And even what—do you know why it moves me? It moves me because we have so adjusted ourselves to not being included which the inclusion should just be a right. Like it should just be a given. It's we are not asking for the world. It should just be a given. But we have so adjusted ourselves to I'm not gonna be included so I'm not expecting to be included that when it happens it feels like everything.

Nova: It feels like and also my branding like I work with them the graphic designers and I said I want a black woman on—the front of the show is a black woman and so the colleague of mine said don't you

think that might put people off? I said no. why do you think it would put people off?

Layla: I find that language so interesting. I find those words so, so interesting not just because they've said it. Because so many people say it all the time in all kinds of way.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: And I'm off social media at the minute but I'm gonna switch lanes really quick. I'm off social media at the minute but I hopped on today because I wanted to check out your Instagram page because I wanted to see about some of the things that you've been posting recently just so I can see, you know, what's been coming up for you. And you posted about the Fred Perry campaign-

Nova: Yes.

Layla: -in the UK. So for those who don't know who Fred Perry is or—Fred Perry is a very British brand and it's a very...

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: Yeah. And there's a culture around it so this is irrelevant right now, tell us what happened with Fred Perry.

Nova: Oh, boy.

Layla: For those who don't know, it's a clothing brand.

Nova: Yeah, clothing brand. I think they do women as well, but I think they are renowned for a place for men.

Layla: They are renowned for the men.

Nova: Yeah. It's not my style so I'm not, you know, not hugely into them. But there was a recent campaign they do with four models and they used I believe two dark skinned black men and then two men of colors to front their campaign and it kicked off on Twitter right after it kicked off from Twitter with a white guy saying "I take it you no longer want me as a customer then." And then a thread of comments, this is diversity, bullshit and we need to boycott the brand and they don't want us as white clients and they are taking all our whim." It's just completely escalated. So of all of the years and the millions of images of white men modeling, they are losing their shit over four men of color in the face of their brand.

Layla: Yeah. And that's exactly what that person said to you, wanna pit people off if a black person is front. Right.

Nova: I mean everybody knows the ethos of my brand New Bride and what it stands from the industry, those types of people wouldn't be coming to my show and also I have no interest in serving people who want to willingly sit in their racism. My show is gonna wind you up and that was the fear again we've been used to that being the norm and again magazine with say to people that worked in the industry that if you want your shoot to be featured in

our magazine, it's more likely to be featured if you use a white model.

Layla: So, this is the other part about this that really strikes me is these—I guarantee these are the same people who will say I am not racist.

Nova: Of course.

Layla: Right?

Nova: Yes.

Layla: These are the same people who will say my so and so is black, my so and so is black, I'm not racist. But what they are saying when they say you're more guaranteed to get featured if it's a white model, what you're saying is a black woman is not attractive.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: If that isn't racism, what is it exactly?

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: I really wanna understand.

Nova: I'm quite happy to name the publisher actually because they are a well-known publisher, Condé Nast and they had a wedding title at that time but title hasn't survived. They are no longer in existence and it's because I am—it's because they did not move with the times. People are wanting more and they were getting less and they were acquired by

the same digital brand I think that owns Tinder I can't remember the name of them. And they put out statement and they said we will be—so had a US title, it had Brides US and Brides UK and they put out statement and said we've now taken over and we will be continuing to acquire Brides US and we will be doing what we can to make it more current. We will not be moving anything before the Brides UK. That to me says it all.

Layla: Wow. So one of the reasons why I wanted to particularly speak with you is you're based in the UK and the British have a very particular flavor of racism. And I'm British and I speak to this but I think because I don't live in the UK, people think, oh you don't know, right? You don't really know. And so I was a British woman who lives in Britain and speaks to British people, why don't you tell us about this particular flavor of UK racism and how it shows up because it's different to how it shows up in the US and the conversation is held differently to the US but what I would say is racism is racism. Just because you've talked about it differently, it doesn't mean that it's not the same violence.

Nova: Yes. It has the same impact and the outcome is the same but what I would say is that the racism we experience here is under the surface. It's in the separate-

Layla: Very sneaky.

Nova: -fabric of the DNA of its country, it sneaks up when you least expect it and then when you try and speak on it, address it, you gaslit, you're minimize, you're

shutdown, there's some kind of retribution and you speaking up on racism ends up being more problematic, offensive, whatever than the actual racism itself. And I think a huge component is that because we gloss over our history is not taught in schools. We don't understand about where we come from and what we did in order to be where we are, where we've got some of our wealth. We don't understand. And so there's lots of rhetorics like, oh, this happened a long time ago, let's just move on, you know, some of the rhetorics and therefore nothing really changes and there was huge fragility, we are extremely, extremely unsophisticated at talking about racism in the UK.

Layla: Yeah. I find that because in the United States, the history of racism is on that land itself, you know, the land theft, the genociding and then the kidnapping and slaving and bringing them there it happened on that land whereas Britain's history was outward. They went out and did it.

Nova: Everywhere.

Layla: Right. So, there's this almost like forgetting because it's not present in the land, but there are people living there like who look like you, right? Who are the evidence of the fact that this did happen.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Yeah.

Nova: I mean there's one star I love sharing because I just see people's jaw drop was that we were still paying

off recreations from slavery in 2015. So, British taxpayers were still paying off recreations from slavery in 2015 so that recreations were made two people who enslaved people. Slaving families were given this recreations. That did not come to us and we were paying that until 2015.

Layla: Wow. So when you said recreations I thought I didn't know black people in the UK got recreation. That's not what you're talking about. No, no, no. You're talking about for the fact that slavery ended, slave owning families were paid a recreations to make up for the fact that they could no longer own slaves.

Nova: Yeah, to make up for the fact that they would no longer getting an access to free labor.

Layla: Wow.

Nova: Debt was so large. The debt was so large that we British taxpayers only just finished paying it in 2015.

Layla: Wow. That's—I mean my jaw dropped.

Nova: It's my favorite.

Layla: Yeah. Wow. And the other thing about British culture which is its just very inherently British is we don't—it's rude to like make a fuss of anything.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: So if you're angry, you know, sometimes you know, I live in Qatar and we had people of all cultures



here and I remember when I would work in a job-job, in a corporate job, people of all cultures are there and oftentimes it was white British man who are in those managerial positions and everyone else is all other kinds of cultures and I could tell when they were not okay from the way that they spoke and their tone but it doesn't translate the same to other cultures so you could kind of have to like there's what British people say and then there's what they mean. Right?

Nova: Yeah. Yeah. Wait, I'm not good at being honest and I don't mean that people are going out of their way to lie but they are certainly not telling the truth. They are not speaking about how they really feel.

Layla: Really feel. Right. Right. So it gets coded in other ways in communicating which I'm not saying is inherently wrong, I'm just noting it as just a British quirk but when we were talking about racism which you need to have direct conversations about what's actually happening, this is where this way of communicating becomes an even bigger source of harm because that's where the gaslighting happens.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Yeah. Yeah.

Nova: Completely. Completely.

Layla: Yeah. And you were part of, you know, this journey that you've been on in working in the wedding

industry is you got to be a part of Harry and Meghan's wedding.

Nova: Oh, yes. I have a lot to thank that couple for.

Layla: Yes, you do. You were interviewed a lot as part of that wedding. What was that like?

Nova: You know what Layla, this—I remember a colleague and I'm gonna name her, she's actually a former client as well, her name is Denise and she said to me before Harry and Meghan were engaged, she said, they're gonna get engaged, you have your blog post ready.

Layla: Oh, she knew.

Nova: And I was like, oh, really? Because I wasn't a royal—I didn't—I don't follow a celebrity. It's just not me and I'm like, oh, all right. So it was in my mind and then when they got engaged, I wrote a blog post that night and I think I published it in the morning after and it was all about what it might mean to have a woman of color in the British monarchy. No other platform in the wedding industry was talking about that. They were all talking about what dress she might wear, all of the frivolous stuff and I was talking about the historical significant having a woman...

Layla: I remember my mom was like, wow, the queen is gonna let a person of color be in her royal family, you know, my mom was like times are changing because it is so unprecedented.

Nova: Yeah. It made the most sense to me and it was that blog post I did because I think they got engaged in November and that blog post I did got picked up by Sky News in the following January and they were just—it's not uncommon that they'll reach out to wedding or me as a media platform to ask me opinions or just shares stuff or—and they said can we have a chat. And I remember I was having a really bad day, finances were hell and I'm thinking about jacking it all in for money and turning all of these New Bride stuff I had had enough and I was just—and my colleague did fix things for myself and I was in the car garage and I said I'm just outside, let me call you back when I'm back in the office and then we spoke on the phone for over an hour and they said we would never spoke to someone more passionate, I've learned more from you in an hour than I have learned in my lifetime. I really love you to be part of the documentary. So, that was the start and then of course I did that then they wanted me on air every time to speak on it and then BBC News saw it and then Germany saw it, New Zealand, Australia, oh my gosh, it was-

Layla: Incredible.

Nova: -amazing, overwhelming and also I had to just trust that I knew that I deserve to be there and I knew my stuff because it just at one point I had 15 interviews in 1 week and I was—yeah, if I really sat into the magnitude of that and that I would be speaking to, I would have got overwhelmed, so yeah.

Layla: Nova, how was—so you know, seeing how their wedding and marriage has been picked apart in

some of the British press, as somebody who was being put forward as this is a voice on these issues, what are some of the things that you've had to come up against because I cannot imagine being—and this is the author of *Me and White Supremacy*, right, but I cannot imagine putting myself in that level of unsafety.

Nova: Yeah. So when Sky first asked me to do the short documentary on race, I remember I didn't say yes right away, I remember I was talking through it with my husband, I said if I do this, my profile is gonna be raised and I'm gonna receive racism and I don't know if I'm still enough.

Layla: Yeah. I had the same conversation with my husband like this will be coming.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: Yes.

Nova: Because we can't have one without the other.

Layla: No.

Nova: And so he has sort of talked to me through it and he's like what would you say to someone else, can you address it the same thing, it's like what do I need to protect myself, to look after myself, to prepare myself and to make it as safe as possible because he's like if you're doing work that is going to evoke a lot of emotion in people, it's just not possible to have one without the other.

Layla: You're also a dark skinned black woman and that I mean that's an important—that's important too to note.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: I mean, yeah, how you would be treated if you're a white woman, if you're a lighter skinned woman of color, if you're a lighter skinned black woman versus you being a dark skinned black woman, anti-blackness especially against dark skinned black woman-

Nova: Right. Yeah.

Layla: -is disgusting.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: Yeah.

Nova: Yeah. This is some cool people I mean I don't—I just have to put my barriers upright, self-care, ramped up with my safety, what do I need to do to filter this stuff out, so I had somebody I could—at that time I was able to hire somebody who is filtering messages so I didn't see them and I just...

Layla: We don't read the comments.

Nova: Yeah. I was like never. Don't read the comments and at some point I remember some people coming back to me saying all the comments about and I was like I don't need to hear that.

Layla: I don't need to ever see them.

Nova: Tell them I don't need to hear it. So, I never left comments or things like that and if I've been on radio show I won't go on Twitter for at least a week or a few days afterwards just waiting to calm down again. I guess what made me decide was that I'm feeling cold to say something that's bigger than me and that's bigger than this. I will do I can to protect myself but that cause is bigger.

Layla: Yeah. And that's for me I mean this idea of being a good ancestor was what became my something bigger.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: Because when I began the work as well, it was just like, wow, you know, this is a lot and I actually didn't realize the people who could be so violent and could say the kinds of things that they say umm.

Nova: I mean you experience I mean I remember when you did your Me and White Supremacy when it was challenge on Instagram it was a friend of mine who knew I was doing anti-racism work, at least the beginning stages of it, she's like, oh my god, have you heard of Layla she's doing this challenge. Oh no, I knew about you before because you've written the Spiritual White Woman thing, that's where I first heard of you and so I was following you and then I saw this challenge and I was reading the comments and I was like, oh my gosh. I was really worried about you.

Layla: Yeah. And that's the thing we see each other and we are like are you okay?

Nova: Yeah. I didn't know how she's even, oh my god, because I'm terrified.

Layla: It's that same thing like you said like there has to be something bigger because not by choice would we do this work. There are so many other things we could be doing that are safer that would, you know, we would be able to sleep more peacefully at night, you know, wouldn't break our heart every single day, you know, what I mean. Wouldn't have to put us in positions where we have to be gaslit and then explaining ourselves and all kinds of ways and having people project who they think we are or what we think, you know, I'm sure you've heard this but I've definitely heard people say, oh, I just thought you hated all white people and it's like what did you read in what I said where that was...

Nova: Yeah. You're racist against white people. I've been called middle aged before I'm not sure how to feel about that. Bitter, black woman.

Layla: Yeah. Yeah. And...

Nova: And disgusting, I've been called.

Layla: And it's like in the beginning for me that was really hard because I was still in the—we are always in the state of becoming as Michelle Obama would say, but I was very much gaining my sense of self from other people's ideas of me.

Nova: 100% agree.

Layla: Right? And so up until doing anti-racism work, everything I've heard was wonderful about me. So I was like I'm wonderful, I'm fine, you know, everything is great and now I'm being called a racist bitch and now I'm being told that I'm XYZ and I'm bitter and it really starts to mess with who you think you are and you have to actually stop and think who am I? How do I define myself because I can't move forward in this work until I know who I am.

Nova: Yes. Oh gosh, that really resonates. Yeah.

Layla: I saw a video that you did recently where you talked about boundaries and I thought this is on your Facebook page and it was after I think it was after the news of Ahmaud Arbery coming out and you did a video on your page I think that's what it was.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: You talked about boundaries and I felt this is somebody who had a really like myself learn that, yes, I will show up for this conversation but I will show up in my way not in the way that you expect me to or desire me to.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Yeah.

Nova: And I remember this lesson on your book tour when you were talking about I come from a therapeutic background anyway so I've always been into



therapy. I've had therapy, clinical supervision, all of that stuff, but what I had to notice was that when I started doing anti-racism work, I wasn't in therapy. And so I got to a point where this was just eating right me and I would be the work I was doing, the energy behind it was convincing people, getting really mad and fed up that why can't they see this, why won't they wake up. it's making me eww. It's making me eww. So, I do a lot of work anyway and I think I started on this journey since last year just really going in and also the more I was teaching anti-racism work, the more I was like umm I've got some internalized racism.

Layla: Yup. It springs up and punches you in the face.

Nova: Oh, surprise. So it's like—and also there was such shame around it to have gone back into therapy, going on this healing retreat, working with my therapist now has supported me in defining how to do this work safely and from a place of power and not my pain because it was coming from my pain.

Layla: That's right. That's right. It was coming from that that wound of all of the remembrance of everything and it's a very dangerous place to put ourselves in because it eats us up from the inside out and then it doesn't serve the work.

Nova: It doesn't serve the work and you know, what they—I mean it was a process that I have or had I should say tumors in my wound and they were causing huge, huge problems with periods very, very painful, very heavy bleeding to the point where if I was—in fact my TEDxTalk I was on my period I

was working with a designer and said I'm gonna need to wear black because there was just flooding, you'd get up, you'd be leak it was just horrendous, horrendous, horrendous symptoms and I put off surgery for ages because the first surgeon that I saw suggested a hysterectomy and all of these things that they are not looking into is causing such common issues within black women. So this is not uncommon and they record fibroids with these tumors. And so I decided to have the surgery which was last year. So I had already started that, you know, from a year before I started with nutrition, I was starting to work on inside out and the scan showed that I had about 12 or 14.

Layla: Wow.

Nova: When it came to having the surgery and the surgeon coming to see me afterwards, he said Nova we've removed 37 tumors.

Layla: Wow. Wow, Nova.

Nova: My husband visibly gasp and he said that's almost one for every year and it was at that point I was like no more am I internalizing this stuff. I am not working in unhealthy ways. I will put my boundaries. That means some relationships end or people don't like me for it, I'm okay with that. I will not allow this stuff to go into my body and to show up in my body as trauma in that way again because that's what it was.

Layla: That is so powerful. I mean I've heard you talk about how racism causes trauma that we are living

with that trauma and seeing how visibly, you know, part of it was these it's coming out in this fibroids, in these tumors, right? And that's the thing that many people who have white privilege do not understand about how it's impacting. Just because you are not seeing the N word being used or you're not seeing somebody visibly cut or visibly beat up from a racist attack, doesn't mean that those microaggressions as you talk about in your TEDxTalk which I really encourage people to go and watch, isn't having that kind of deep psychic physical mental effect.

Nova: Yeah. And that's, you know, by all means with people who I'm curious going to read up about transgeneration of tumor and how things are passed on from generation to generation especially in women. Like I said I described her as a spiritual healer called [Inaudible] [51:14] and she died early and she had this tumor in the same space, in the womb and I'm like ahh, but the research that I was talking about in my TEDxTalk around trauma I was talking about momental mental health and there was a study done by neuroscientist and it showed people exposed to regular—that study was for black people I need to preface that, black people who are exposed to regular racial stress, they were looking at the brain pattern and it was showing the same brain pattern in black people as soldiers who would serve in war as war veterans and it was showing up as PTSD. So that is just one study.

Layla: And define for the people who are still not getting the racial stress, what does that racial stress look like?

Nova: It's every day discrimination. It's every day othering. It's every day messages that somehow you don't belong. Where are you from? Where are you really from? Oh it wasn't racism. Oh, stop playing the race card. What a normal black people get over slavery. It's paying an equity. It's disproportionate healthcare outcomes. It's black women being 5 times more likely to die in childbirth in the UK and nobody really interrogating why. The disproportionate treatment or the disproportionate outcomes that we see from COVID-19 in black, that's the stuff. It's not because we are inferior human beings.

Layla: What I was going to say I think white people I know, white supremacy's narrative around that is there is something inferior in black bodies that would 'cause that to happen.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Right? And this idea that fundamentally black people and other people of other races were not white are different to white people. White people are the norm of what it means to be a whole human being and everyone else is another kind of setting that is inferior in some way. And that's a really insidious way to deflect from the harm that whiteness does.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: Yeah.

Nova: It's a racist and it's a negative stereotype of course just like across all races there's gonna be people of different social economic backgrounds and that's gonna impact your access to healthcare. Of course it will for anybody but the spin on COVID-19 was that it's because we got a vitamin D deficiency. In fact with a K and we all live in crump house and we will know, you know, because there were many who have passed from it who are consultants who earned a lot of money who are not living in crumps most generational houses. Some rhetoric would go with black maternal health. Serena Williams is multilingual, highly affluent and she nearly passed away in childbirth because she wasn't listened to when she said she was in pain or when something was wrong.

Layla: Right. Right. Yeah.

Nova: And if we stripped back to studies that I think it was 2016 study that revealed white medical students do believe that black people can withstand more pain, that's gonna impact how you treat people overall.

Layla: Of course. Of course. And it's you know, when I'm having conversations online about racism I think and also when I do like events so I've recently did Good Ancestor podcast live where we had a live audience virtually or when I've done like master classes and there's a Q&A portion, a comment that I will get over and over again is I'm a British woman or I'm a British person or I live in the UK and it's different here. It's not that here. So how do you suggest like what are the things I need to be looking at here because it's different to what you're saying

about the rest of the world and these things like I just can't like underscore this enough. I just can't because it's this exceptionalism that happens where it's like that is the rest of the world specifically the US. It's not us. It's not here.

Nova: We are not that bad. And then it turns into this weird competition about well who is...

Layla: Who is more racist?

Nova: I have that only last week someone asked me well if—the cover was around Harry and Meghan again and they were like, well, if Britain is so bad then why do you think she's going to America which is even worse and I'm like based on whose standards?

Layla: Right.

Nova: She thinks racism in America is worst because I'll tell you something I have these conversation with my husband, he was less patient than me and he says to me I would rather deal with an overt racist any day than dealing with these insidious stuff.

Layla: Any day because they are just gonna be like, bye.

Nova: You can deal with it. You can manage it.

Layla: Right. Right. So there has been in the UK, you know, Post-Brexit and the current PM and all of the changes that are happening there, definite rise in the incidents of racism and acts of racism, that's scary. I have—I don't live in the UK but my family do, my brothers, my nephew and my niece and

when I think about it, I'm like we are in 2020 and that's coming back up again. It's always there like we are saying, but it's coming up in this way that people feel more involved to do these things, how are you navigating that?

Nova: Again it's just I'm seriously looking after my wellbeing. I'm making sure that I practice joy and that there was laughter in my life and that there was lightness because I can't do this work without that reality like I need that boundaries, having to make decisions about relationships I want to invest in.

Layla: Can we talk about that?

Nova: We can.

Layla: Let's talk about that because when you are a black woman who talks about anti-racism in very direct ways, you know, that causes the people in our life to not know what to do and especially when it's relationships of people who are white or who have white privilege, there's often an assumption that yeah but I don't have to, you know, that I'm not racist. I've been your friend all of this time. You know, that I'm not racist. I definitely had to navigate that and I talked about one of the like main friendships in my book that this is person is no longer in my life. My bestfriend who was a white woman no longer in my life because when I started talking about racism, she disappeared herself from my life. Wasn't showing up for the work. Wasn't showing a period actually, full stop in any way and it's very painful. I remember feeling very confused, just very confused because I know you. You are a

good person. I know that you've walked me through some really hard things. You've been there for me when this happened, when that happened, why are you not here now? How's that been showing up for you?

Nova: Exactly the same. It could be the same story Layla. I mean there's one friendship I mean I'm working through it in therapy at the moment because it feels that grief. I'm actually grieving our relationship because I have come to a place where I have to accept that our relationship may not survive this and I have to be okay with that. I'm not paying forward, she's a bridesmaid at my wedding. She's been in my life for decades.

Layla: So that means that—because you started New Brides around that same time, she is—this isn't new to her this conversation, right?

Nova: I mean it's definitely—and it's gone up a level because before I would sort of fluff around, I would talk about—to be fair my work was more holistic when I first started doing consultancy and it was diversity consultancy that I did which always includes other identities and I noticed that the one everybody got uncomfortable with and really wanted to close over was race and I was like nope that's the one we are leaning into. So, around the wedding time it was more diversity than anti-racism. Of course I would talk about race but it was more diversity.

Layla: I also think that we've changed how we talk about race now like if I think about just 2 or 3 years ago



when I think the conversation was more diversity than race.

Nova: Yeah. I remember I would struggle to say white people.

Layla: Right.

Nova: I would say Caucasian or people who are not black or everything else but white. So I look back in a bit, oh my goodness, like, yes, and also I'm much more I am living—I am who I am now. I'm still a journey. I'm still growing but I was assimilating back then and switching it up and want to make them comfortable because now I'm holding a form of boundary and so some won't like it and it's painful and yeah I had being ignored, being gaslit, I told her this particular friend I messaged maybe three weeks ago it was around the time of horrendous murder and I was just sharing that I was really hurting and it would be really lovely to have heard from you, to this day I have not had a response and that was the closure I needed. There's nothing more I can do. We have had conversations. We come back and forth before anti-racism and how I, you know, I think I need to go to be myself in this relationship and the behavior hasn't changed. The outcome hasn't changed.

Layla: And that's the—because we are talking to on our platforms, right, hundreds, thousands of people every single day but we are human beings. We are human beings who have individual relationships with individual people and I can say everything to all the people but you are my person. You are

supposed to be my person and this is, you know, that's the real when you that's when you start seeing the real cost of white supremacy.

Nova: Oh gosh and it was so painful because again she was a bridesmaid at my wedding. She's a gorgeous human being. She was there for me with surgery and all these times she was there for me but there was a whole other times when she wasn't. There was a whole other times when she caused me harm, you know, the memories of her husband having a joke about salvation people and calling them the P word and then her laughing and there were times when she was having a Islamophobic rants and I had to call her in on that and that's wow she can present in this way in front of me, what is she saying behind my back and then the mind just goes wild.

Layla: Right. Right.

Nova: About filling in the gap and it's not healthy.

Layla: So as you are on this journey of healing that and coming into, yeah, wherever you are on that journey, is it working this out in therapy and by yourself, what are some of the I guess lessons you are learning or decisions you are making or yeah just how are you not just reacting to what's happening because that's just coming again from our pain but actually that why is a part of yourself, that part that's really true. What is that part saying?

Nova: It's responding and it's recognizing that, you know, we are all products of our own environment and to

me the essence of anti-racism work is about collective healing and we all have a lot of shame that is just floating around and making us behave in certain ways and until we have the courage to uncover what that is and why it is showing up, we will continue causing harm to one another unintentionally or otherwise. So, I really do feel that I'm able and it's interesting because I'm able to hold compassion for other people more easily than I can myself. But to me that's the component. It's compassion for myself and others and also accepting that not everyone is gonna get this and that's you know, having to find—having to be at peace with that not everyone will get it. If it was that easy then, you know, things would have changed during the civil rights movement.

Layla: Yeah. I know that there are black and brown people listening to this conversation right now and maybe in exactly the same place that we are talking about right now or just having come through the other side, what do we want them to know about how to—because like you said there's a lot of grief, it's very triggering and traumatizing but we don't wanna live from that place, right? So much of the conversation of anti-racism and racism is we start to define ourselves from this place of pain and this place of exactly what white supremacy says we are which is joyless, you know, which is not free, which is you know, never being seen until whiteness validates us, right? And so that's not what we want. This world that we wanna build is a world in which all of us, people of all races have a dignity to live in their full humanity. So, we have to live that now.

Nova: Yes.

Layla: What do you wanna say to those folks?

Nova: So I posted a 5-day program at the end of April just for black and brown women and it was all about learning to be allies for ourselves so learning to address microaggressions when they happen in the moment looking at how—figuring out what our triggers are around that and building this all of these stuff so bringing some of my mental health backgrounds into supporting them. One of the things I said and it was a lesson I can't reinforce in and you could just see the penny drops, I truly believe that one of the biggest way we can honor our ancestors is to allow ourselves to heal. If we sit in our pain and our grief and we function from our pain and our grief, we are not allowing ourselves to heal. We are denying our life to shine. We are denying our freedom and that's what they would have wanted. They would have wanted us to be free. So, I'm not saying don't advocate and don't, you know, don't speak your mind.

Layla: Don't feel angry or don't lose that, right. That's not we are saying.

Nova: That's not what I'm saying. We angry, but don't let that anger turn itself inwards. Express the anger. I had a lot of therapeutic shaking and dancing and expressing ahhh you know, we are doing vocal releases to get it out of my body and then I moved on with my day. So I can be in deep grief and moved to joy more quickly than I used to be able to and that helps me and there are some days that are

really heavy and I have to just surrender that other days living in our joy allowing ourselves to heal is the way we honor our ancestors.

Layla: I want that so much. And I really wanna pick on something that you just said there which I realized was a lesson for me which is that I actually don't need to express my anger to white people.

Nova: Nice.

Layla: So I can go workout my anger because working out my anger is me than doing what I'd like honoring, what I feel letting it work through me and moving on. But when I'm—I found that when I was expressing my anger to white people, what was underneath that was I need to convince you that you've hurt me so that you will see me so then I'll feel more whole.

Nova: Oh, yes. Yeah. We don't need that.

Layla: No.

Nova: We don't need that to feel whole.

Layla: No. So my—the way that when something happens and someone has done something that has violated a boundary because that's when we get angry if a boundary has been violated and some way I just reinforce the boundary and then I go do me. I don't need to get into that—I don't need to get into an altercation with you. I said what I said and I'll keep it moving. I'll go workout my anger somewhere else but I found that in those early days of doing anti-

racism work, I kept returning to those people waiting for them to get it.

Nova: Yes. Yeah.

Layla: And so it was always a waiting and it's like watching a TV series that has a cliff hanger at the end and you never get the resolution, right?

Nova: You know, there's a beautiful element of this retreat that I went on to which is all about writing a letter to people or person or situation that represents harm that has caused you trauma and seeking resolution on that and there's so much—there's a book by Eve Ensler called *The Apology* as well, but it's all about the power and just writing that like you don't need to get an apology from somebody, you don't need it, but that process really helps.

Layla: Right because I don't need them to see my—I don't need them to affirm my humanity.

Nova: No.

Layla: I affirm my humanity. I'm talking about when something needs to be addressed, sometimes something needs to be addressed, right? And it needs to be something that needs to be fixed or someone needs to take accountability so on and so forth. That's one thing, I'm talking about I need to show you how angry I am so that you can see, so that you can affirm that I'm a human being.

Nova: No.

Layla: No. Right. That girl—I got so free after that.

Nova: That expression allowing our self to not by our time and oppressed, it's for us because we've been taught for so many years to suppress, be observant and bite our tongue, it's for us, that expression is for us.

Layla: But I find myself catching myself sometimes because, you know, sometimes you're just like I'm just—can I be petty right now like, yeah, but petty wants to come out and sometimes, you know, you do it and then you—but most of the time I'm like it's not even worth it like my—this is what you're saying I made the decision that my peace and my joy come first. So, this is gonna take me outside of that. It may feel good in the moment to have that clap back or whatever that thing is, but now it's still in me because you don't react the way I wanted you to react and get the thing at the end of it and that's the way that we can be participating in white supremacist dynamics without even realizing it.

Nova: Yeah. And also again giving away your power.

Layla: Mm-hmm. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. Oh my gosh, I love the conversation so, so much. Okay, final question before our final question because you've talked about giving away our power. As you've been you know, on this journey over these last few years and really I think am I correct in saying your voice every day you feel like getting freer and more true?

Nova: Yeah. It's definitely freer as much more liberating and it's my truth. So, I'm owning my vulnerability. It's my truth so no one can take that away from me, it's no debating. It's my truth.

Layla: Yes. So what are the—I guess because the power is there you don't have to go out and get it, it's there but there are things that get in the way of it.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: What are some of the things that for you got in the way that you had freed yourself from or are in the practice of freeing yourself from that, make it easier for you to come from that place?

Nova: Yeah. I got in my way. The Nova that doesn't feel good enough, the Nova that was afraid of her power or stepping into or starting to step into it, the Nova that didn't really know who she was or where she belongs, so for me being—people often say even for people who are white or have white privilege and they want to be allies, I'm like how can I be of their ally, do you in a work? How can you, you know, be your foolish self as a black woman or woman of color deal in a work, allow yourself to heal and when you discover things, just hold them with compassion like we are doing the best that we can and we have to behave in a way in order to survive, we've been told to assimilate especially after coming from British and have had assimilation role model too. We did what we thought was right and that's okay but now it sounds clique but wonderful Maya Angelou now we know better we can do better. So for me just having compassion



because sometimes I go back into that I'm not good enough, I'm an impostor and I just hope...

Layla: That's the big monster, right?

Nova: The big one. It was oh, here we go again.

Layla: And I would say that, you know, for so many of us especially those of us who are black and brown, that is a big one and what I have seen is like I said I get to interview amazing people on this podcast each of them doing work that is so unique and there are also nearly all of them are pioneers in doing what they are doing. Not to say that they haven't been other people that have come before them that have laid the ground work and able them to be able to do that work, but to do so using you as an example because I am talking to you, you know, being in the British wedding industry, having the conversations that you're having, no one was doing that before, not in the way that you are doing it, not at the level that you are doing it at and impostor syndrome can pop up because you are doing something that's new and you are conditioned into white supremacy just like all of us are.

Nova: Yes. Yeah.

Layla: And impostor syndrome can come up and I'm always struck by the fact that we can have done this and have done that all of these achievements that we racked up and people are going oh my god and we don't take a moment to stop and think wow, wow, you know, and I say that not to say you have

to have those achievements to have that moment to celebrate yourself but making it through the day.

Nova: Yeah, is an achievement.

Layla: Is an achievement when you've got racial microaggressions every single day. Again noticing for example the level of peace, I'm feeling being offline at the moment.

Nova: Yeah.

Layla: You know, what I mean?

Nova: It's hard. I took four days offline and came back on today to more drama and bullshit, so yeah, some yeah, there was a lot of power.

Layla: Just getting through the day and I think just really noting and celebrating and giving gratitude to the fact that there's a poem I think it's by is it Lucille Clifton or Sonia Sanchez, I cannot remember but at the end it's like I think it's just—I think it's Lucille Clifton and she says won't you celebrate with me that I live this life and every day something has tried to destroy me and I'm still here.

Nova: Oh, yeah.

Layla: Yeah. Butchered her words but that's what she, you know, that's the poem.

Nova: The essence.

Layla: Right. Right. And that living from that sense of pleasure and that joy isn't all of itself like amazing.

Nova: Yeah. Because we can often feel guilty for leaving room place of joy when our brothers and sisters are struggling or dying or whatever it might be. So, there's this conflict but we can be both, the two can coexist and I think it's vital.

Layla: Yeah. Yeah. Okay, Nova...

Nova: Oh, boy.

Layla: I adore you. I love you.

Nova: Oh, likewise.

Layla: So, I was really interested in how you answered the opening question about, you know, the ancestors that have influenced you on your journey and you're still very much in that journey of getting to those answers for yourself but as somebody who I see as a living ancestor right now, what does it mean to you to be a good ancestor?

Nova: Oh, it—to me it's going back to what I just said. Being a good ancestor is living in your truth, not being afraid of your power, not being afraid to go back to that inner wisdom and it is all of that stuff. It is allowing ourselves to heal because that is the best way that we fight this system by healing and living in our joy and yeah, I can't express it enough. It's nourishing. I wish I got here earlier, but you know, without beating myself up.

Layla: You are here now.

Nova: I'm here at the time that I was ready to—because you know, it can be quite painful but I'm here at the time that I've been ready to do this and I think the healing is collective healing is where change happens. Because if we are operating from a place where we are living in our joy, we are living from a place where we are speaking truth, it has a ripple effect on how you show up in the world, the relationships you have, how you inspire others, how you motivate others and I think that's being a good ancestor because that then leads to legacy.

Layla: That's it. That's it. I just want to thank you and honor you for the healing work that you continue to do within yourself first and the space that you hold for the rest of us too. As a black woman, it means so much to me seeing you shine and seeing you show up in your work the way that you do and I feel so, all over the world, doing this work but there is this collective sisterhood of amazing black women who are doing this work and I feel very honored to be a part of that sisterhood.

Nova: Oh, Layla thank you so much. I absolutely adore you and I can't thank you enough for what you have endured and what you are doing now because, yeah, we are all part of that story.

Layla: Yeah. Yes we are. Yes we are. Thank you.

Nova: My pleasure.

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