

(Intro)

I'm Layla Saad, and my life is driven by one burning question: How can I become a good ancestor? How can I create a legacy of healing and liberation for those who are here in this lifetime and those who will come after I'm gone? In my pursuit to answer this question, I'm interviewing change-makers and culture-shapers who are also exploring that question themselves in the way that they live and lead their life. It's my intention that these conversations will help you find your own answers to that question too. Welcome to Good Ancestor Podcast.

Today's guest is award-winning British science journalist and broadcaster, Angela Saini. Angela is the author of three books, including *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong*, which has been translated into 13 languages, and her latest book, *Superior: The Return of Race Science*, which was named a Book of the Year by the *Financial Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph*, and the *Sunday Times*. She's currently working on her fourth book on the history of patriarchy to be published in early 2023. Angela presents science programs on the BBC and her writing has appeared in *New Scientist*, *Sunday Times*, *National Geographic*, and *Wired*. This is the third time I've had the pleasure to be in conversation with Angela, and the first where I got to interview her rather than the other way around. She's the first person with a science background that I've interviewed on the podcast and her work gives a really important layer to our understanding of the intersections of science, race, and politics.

Hello, everybody, and welcome to another episode of Good Ancestor Podcast. I'm your host, Layla Saad, and today I'm here with the author of one of the most incredible books of 2019,

Superior: The Return of Race Science by Angela Saini. Angela, welcome to Good Ancestor Podcast.

Angela: Oh, thank you for having me. It's such a pleasure to be in conversation with you again.

Layla: I'm so excited because we've now talked twice already.

Angela: Although at those times I was interviewing you, so —

Layla: Yes.

Angela: — it's slightly different this time.

Layla: And the whole time, I was like, "She's so fascinating. I wanna turn the tables around and interview her." Our first conversation was really special. You know, we got to be in conversation for the British Library and we had the incredible Nikki Giovanni with us and that was an incredible event. And then the second time was for the *Me and White Supremacy* journal. And so, you've really helped, you know, share my work. Now, I want everyone to know about your work.

Angela: Oh, that's so sweet.

Layla: *Superior* is actually not your first book. I believe it's your third book, is that right?

Angela: Yeah, it is. Yeah.

Layla: Third book. I really want to get my hands on your second book, *Inferior*.

Angela: I will send you a copy.

Layla: Oh, my gosh. You sent me this copy that I'm holding as well. You're incredibly generous. Thank you so much. *Inferior* is about how science has gotten women wrong, is that right? How science has gotten women wrong?

Angela: Yeah, that's absolutely right. Yeah.

Layla: So, I'm excited to read that, especially after reading *Superior*, which is such a fascinating read and we're going to be talking a lot about this particular book today. But before we get started into the conversation, I'm going to ask you the question that I ask every single guest, which is: Who are some of the ancestors, living or transitioned, familial or societal, who have influenced you on your journey? And I know that you have a dedication at the beginning of your book which speaks to that. Do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

Angela: Yeah —

Layla: Yeah?

Angela: Well, it was a kind of tongue-in-cheek dedication that I have at the start of *Superior* which essentially says, "It's for my mom and dad, the only ancestors I need to know." I mean, it's not like that. It's not because, you know, I don't care about my grandparents or my extended family, many of whom I have a very close connection with, but because it was really a slight jab at those ancestry testing companies who claim to be able to tell you everything about yourself by analyzing your DNA, which is, you know, the very least plausible way of understanding who you are. I think who we are is made up of our experiences, the tangible cultural connections we have with real people in the real world right now, not some imaginary people who may or may not have lived at some distance from us, you know, thousands and thousands of years ago. As much as we may feel

attached to history and that history means something to us culturally, the way it lives on in us today I think is through culture and experience and the way we're treated by society and that's really the point I was trying to make. I'm a child of immigrants. So, when I grew up in London, my parents were my only tangible connection to the cultural history of my family and it was through them that I understood what it meant to be who I am. So, for me, they are the most important ancestors in my life.

Layla: I think it's such a perfect segue into this conversation, because you talk a lot about the ancestry companies and I want to have that conversation, sort of the nuance of why people seek that information out and why that's a piece of the jigsaw puzzle that many people have been denied and are looking for but at the same time why it can be harmful, I think, in some ways, like I haven't had my ancestry tested because I don't know what people are doing with that information but also that, as you said, it doesn't tell the story of who we are right now. So, I want to talk about that for sure. But I think before we get started, so you're the first sort of science-backgrounded person that I've had on this podcast and so I think it would be great to sort of talk about like your journey and your journey into being a science journalist and why that was important to you and the books that you've sort of been guided to write. Tell us a little bit about that.

Angela: You know, it's funny, I was watching, I actually binge watched in one evening the whole Netflix series, *The Queen's Gambit*. I don't know —

Layla: Okay, I'm in the middle of watching it.

Angela: Well, it's about a chess prodigy and I'm in no ways a prodigy at all but one thing that she said resonated with me

which was that the world of chess, you know, it's very circumscribed, it's one board and she could dominate that entire space. You know, it made sense to her. It has set rules. You follow those rules and you can dominate and understand that space. And, for me, when I was growing up, I think, even though I loved reading, and I loved fantasy especially and science fiction and I loved to write, for me, science was a world of facts and figures, a world that I could understand and was objective, was full of truths, that it didn't matter what other people thought about what I wrote about science, the scientific facts in front of me, they were immutable and I think when I was growing up, that was really important to me, especially growing up as I did in southeast London, in a world in which racism was part of the lives of everyday people, then as now, but particularly then because where I went to school was in the same town as one of the biggest nationalist parties headquarters, the BNP. So, I was reminded of my race every single day of my life. Racism was part of the backdrop to my childhood. And in science, I felt that here was a space in which it didn't matter what other people said because I could master it, I could control it, and that's part of the reason I ended up studying engineering at university and it was only actually after I left university and started especially reading the humanities and the social sciences and seeing, as a journalist, how science is done in the real world that I started to realize that, actually, it wasn't as objective and truthful always as I imagined it to be, that people's subjectivity and personal opinions, their politics, is deeply embedded inside these systems of knowledge, so much so that the entire science of human difference is prejudiced by it. You know, the idea of race and I imagine there are people out there who think that race is some kind of biological quantity, is something tangible, it really isn't, but the reason that we imagine that it is and the reason it has so much power over us is because for hundreds of years, scientists created these racial categories and treated them as though

they were immutable and real and objective. So, I've spent most of my career kind of dismantling that, trying to understand where these mistakes happened, why they happened, and, in some ways, fulfilling that promise that I made to myself as a child that I wanted what I was reading, what I was studying and understanding about the world to be truthful and objective. That's where I want it to be. And it isn't right now, but I hope that by understanding the bias in it, we can correct it.

Layla: I really saw that sort of search for truth as I was reading the book. It was fascinating hearing you interview people whose views you either may slightly not agree with or very much don't agree with, and yet wanting to present the whole picture for us, which I really appreciate. So, for those who haven't read *Superior*, you know, they hear me raving about it but they have no idea what it's about. Can you give us a little summary about what this book is about and why you were inspired to write it? Why was this in particular something that you really wanted to explore and to present to us?

Angela: Well, it's a topic obviously I've been thinking about for many decades. It's one of the reasons I went into journalism and started writing in the first place. So, like I said, when I was at university, I studied engineering. I got involved in student politics, as so many of us do. So, I became one of the chairs of the anti-racism committee on the Student Union and that's when I started writing for the student press. So, the first things I wrote about were race, which, where I went to uni— so I went to Oxford and at that time —

Layla: How was that? How was that writing about race in Oxford University?

Angela: Well, you know, there are very few ethnic minority students there at the time, and even fewer I think minority staff. I mean, academics, ethnic minority academics you could probably count on one hand. It was something that was so important to me because of the world I'd grown up in and yet something that so many people around me were so oblivious to. And so I was trying to make sense of it, trying to make sense of what was going on in the world, and what race really meant. So, I've been turning these things over in my head ever since. And *Superior* really was an attempt to make sense of it all, to try and get clear, in my head, get some clarity about what race really is. What does it actually mean? Now, there are a lot of books out there. In fact, there have been many books written over many decades, particularly by geneticists looking at the genetics of race. It's very easy to dismantle genetically because there really is hardly any —

Layla: There's nothing there to see, right.

Angela: There's nothing there, yeah. As you yourself have written in your work, you know, there's — race really is a social construct. So you can't really just look at it through a scientific lens because to do that, it tells us what we already know. We already know that it doesn't make any sense in those terms. So, what I wanted to do was try to understand then, if it doesn't make any scientific sense, if it is pseudoscientific to divide people up into races, then why do we do it? Why did we start doing it in the first place? And why do scientists still behave in this way now as though race is meaningful. And I think when you incorporate the history and the social science and the humanities and kind of bring that all together, that's when I think you start to see race for what it really is. And where I landed, after looking at it in this kind of rigorous way, was that it's really about power. What else is it really? It's just about power. It's a manifestation of power. Whenever we group

people, that's a manifestation of power. And if you understand it that way, you can start to understand why it still survives in certain corners of science, why mainstream scientists even now resort to race even when they know they shouldn't.

Layla: You know, I've been working on the young readers' edition of *Me and White Supremacy* and I felt like it was very important to give kids and young people sort of history 101 about where all of these ideas come from before we dive into actually looking at the different facets that are in the book, right? The white privilege and the fragility and tone policing and all of that, to actually help them to understand that this isn't just from some people being mean or unkind, but it actually has a historic — a very long history that we're often very not aware of but that shaped the way the world looks and the ways different people treat each other. And so, when I was reading that history and sort of doing my own research, it was very helpful for me to also understand where that came from. And you start in your book, well, I don't know if you start but early on in your book, you talk about where these ideas about dividing people into sort of different colors, right? And assigning traits to them, characteristics, that really started with the European Enlightenment period. Prior to that, we've always noticed human difference but we haven't necessarily assigned meaning to it in the way that it shows up, not to say that there haven't been cultures in the past that haven't treated other people differently, right? And said, "Those people are different to us and we're othering them because we want to have power over them," but I think the way it spread from the European Enlightenment was really looking at the entire world. It wasn't just one culture to one culture, it was looking at the entire world and saying, "The most beautiful people, the smartest people are white and the worst people, the laziest, the ugliest, the stupidest are people who are brown and black," and those ideas. So, as I was sort of doing this research for my book, I

really had to like think about like at what point did it go from, “We are just encountering these people for the first time so we don’t know what they’re like,” right? European travelers left Europe, traveled to different parts of the world, saw people that they had never seen before and were trying to make sense of it. At what point did it go from, “They’re different to me and I’m trying to understand it,” to, “I’m going to classify myself as superior to them”?

Angela: Well, the classification in itself is a political project, because there are no natural distinctions between any members of the human species that allow us to be categorized in a distinctive way. So, there are no black genes, for instance, there are no white genes. You see, there are many gene variants associated with skin color, but you see them all over the world. So, you see, for example, the gene variants associated with lighter skin in Sub-Saharan Africa. So, there are no kind of telltale genetic signatures or even physical signatures that tell you exactly where someone is from or a gene that everybody in one group has in common and nobody else has it in the world. There are no such things. So, given that we cannot be easily divided into sub-breeds of some race as some online call us or subspecies as some people online talk about. The act of dividing in the first place we have to accept is political in itself. It is not a scientific act. It can’t be because there are no scientific distinctions. So, number one, I think we have to start with why did they do this? Why did they even bother starting to categorize people in the first place? And I think that must have been informed by the politics of the time. So, if we go back to the birth of modern Western science, the Enlightenment, this was a moment in history in which Europe was doing particularly well, not purely because of its own ingenuity but largely because of slavery and colonialism and the effects of that, the power that it gave them. And it’s very easy and you see this right throughout history in many different

time periods and in different places. Whenever you have a group that is dominant over another group, for whatever reason, and usually economic or political, but whenever you see that, they very often, not always, but very often start to frame that dominance as natural —

Layla: Yes.

Angela: — that, you know, for example, the kings and the queens, the aristocracy have some quality that the peasants don't have, or that we in this country have some qualities that make us better than people in that country or that village or that tribe or whatever. The racial categories that we use now are just another version of that. What they were saying was, okay, it may have the veneer of scientific respectability because they're using kind of biological markers rather than things like economic status or social status or anything else. They're using phenotypic or superficial features that we have. But they're essentially doing the same thing, which is, okay, we in Europe happen to be economically dominant at the moment. We happen to have white skin generally. And people in these other countries that we are dominating or slaughtering or whatever we're doing to them have darker skin and they are not economically dominant. So, that must mean that there's something natural about us that makes us better. And it really is as simplistic and as arbitrary as that. There really is nothing else to it. So, having created the categories, which in itself was a political project, the reason that meaning was given to those categories was also because of the politics. The strange thing for me is that scientists ran with it —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — having created these ideas in the first place. And, you know, skin color is about as random a way of dividing

people as you can get, because if you think about how hugely variable skin color is, even within countries, even within Europe, within India, where I'm from, you know, you get every shade of skin color. It's such a strange place to be drawing lines around people. But, anyway, having done that, that became the system of racial classification which we still use to this day. So, for hundreds of years, we have stuck with that. In the 19th century, you've got physicians and prominent scientists looking at the possibility that black people didn't feel pain in the same way as white people, that their bones were denser. You know, these kind of bizarre scientific lines of inquiry based on this initial random presumption that there was some kind of way to divide people up by skin color.

Layla: And, you know, you talked a little about this earlier, but I think throughout the book, as I was reading your book, I was really struck by how often scientists would try to test something to see if it was scientific and it was obvious when I read the passage that, no, that that's the case because of social conditions, right? If there's differences that are being noticed, it's because of racism or it's some sort of institutional oppression, but still they return to, "There must be a scientific reason. Let's look within the genes and see what it is about those people that makes them not able." In the same way, I'm sure — in *Inferior* that there are — I think that you quoted Charles Darwin, right? Who had the statement about women being inferior and because he didn't see women being in the positions that were men were in, right? And not succeeding in the way that men were succeeding, that it was something about women that made them inferior and not something about the way that society was set up that prevented women from even being able to get into those positions. And so I found it fascinating as I was reading your book how scientists again and again were looking for an answer in genes which is found in the way that society is set up. What do you think drives that

sort of attachment to wanting to find some difference, even after reason after reason shows it's not in the genes?

Angela: Well, it's, in a way, it's a get out of jail free card, because it's saying that inequality, as we observe it out there in the world, is not the product of social and historical factors, it's just the product of biology. It's just the way things are, you know? It's how things will always shake out. It was interesting for me last year seeing the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic data, because around March or April, you might remember we were seeing very high rates of COVID death and infection among black Americans and non-white Britons. So, in London, in particular, where the virus hit quite early in Europe, there were very high rates of death among Asian doctors —

Layla: Yes.

Angela: — and people immediately, and I don't mean everyday people, I mean prominent physicians at top universities, medical researchers at top universities immediately started asking maybe there's something genetic here. Maybe there's something deep down that is causing Asian doctors and black Chicagoans to die at higher rates than everybody else, which was such a historical way of looking at the data because we have always had racial disparities in health. In fact, in the US, black Americans have lower life expectancies than white Americans. Black Americans die of almost everything at greater rates than white Americans, including infant mortality. Now, why would we not expect, in the event of a pandemic, those kind of disparities to play out in racialized societies like the US and the UK? Of course they would. And yet here were scientists almost behaving as though they were oblivious to all that information that they'd had for the last 50, 60 years of the data that they had and just looking blankly at what they were seeing and assuming there was some kind of genetic bias to how this

virus behaved, which, of course, we know there couldn't be, not only because global data shows us that there isn't some kind of huge skew. If anything, there's a skew towards North America and Europe and that presumably has a lot more to do with the response to the virus than anything else. But the fact that scientists were so quick to jump to those kind of conclusions I think should have shown to us how racialized we are as a society, even within academia.

Layla: Yeah.

Angela: Even within the sciences, which is supposed to be so objective.

Layla: There isn't the impartiality there that people within that field believe that there is, right? That it doesn't operate in a vacuum.

Angela: No, and neither can we expect it to because these are just human beings living in society affected by these ideas, affected by the politics that they're in, just like the rest of us. And science, in particular, I think one of the weird things about science is it's particularly slow to move as society moves. So even after the George Floyd murder last year, there was an article published online by two French researchers complaining about ethnic minority scientists and Black and STEM which is a big movement to try and root out racism from the sciences, complaining that they were politicizing science, forgetting that the politics has always been there —

Layla: Right.

Angela: It's been there right from the beginning.

Layla: Right.

Angela: If anything, what we're doing when we challenge the racism within science is challenging the politics that was there and that needs to be challenged in order to make science fairer and more reliable and more accurate for the future.

Layla: Yeah. I mean, one of the ways that we are all aware of, right? That science has been linked to the politics is the things that took place within Nazi Germany and the ways in which Nazi scientists "experimented," I'm putting in air quotes, on Jewish people in horrific ways in the pursuit of science, as they would have put it, but really, I mean, to satisfy some sort of deep, dark thing that was going on within them, but it was all in this in a way to again prove the inferiority of these people.

Angela: Well, the eugenics movement and race science go hand in hand here. So race science, like I said, now, we think of it as pseudoscientific. For about a couple of hundred years, it was just the science of human difference. That was just the way that people thought about human difference, the way that scientists did their investigations. It was even common in the early 20th century for scientists to believe that we weren't one human species, that we were somehow different species, that we had evolved separately, that we had not just superficial differences between us but some kind of deep psychological or intellectual differences. So, in the early days of eugenics, and I have to say where I live in London is the birthplace of the eugenics movement, so in the very early days, at universities here in London, the Jewish community in London became a big target because they were immigrants that were living in East London. The poor were already a target of early eugenics programs because there was this belief that poor people were genetically deficient in some way and that explained intergenerational poverty. But because Jewish people were kind of foreigners and also poor living in East London, they

became the target of this. So you see this early eugenicists kind of framing whatever differences they see between this poor community and everybody else as being somehow endemic to them, natural to them, innate to them in some way. And it heavily informed the eugenics movement more globally, not just in Nazi Germany but also in the US. I mean, when the US took up eugenics, they took it up with such fervor that Hitler admired what they were doing in America. You know, what he saw happening in America in terms of laws to restrict immigration from certain countries. So one of the earliest anti-immigration laws in the US was against Asian Americans. So, a huge effort was being made in America to limit who could be a citizen, who could be allowed into the country based on these racialized principles that also informed the eugenics movement there and also went on then to inform the Nazi eugenics movement.

Layla: And, you know, when we think about the eugenics movement, we think of something that was this awful history that obviously took the lives of many people, took parts of their body without their consent and did things with them, but that was the sort of horrific part of history that we now shove under the rug and it doesn't — it never went any further than that. But what your book, in a horrifying way, helps to show us are the ways in which it evolved and became something else. We don't hear the word "eugenics" used sort of in vogue now as a science that people practice, but it became something else. What did it become and how does it still show up even today in 2021?

Angela: Well, I think we have to remember where it started. It didn't start with race. It started, like I said, with class. It was about the poor and the rich, and this idea that people were wealthy or doing well in life because they had qualities that

other people didn't have. So, it was a neglect of the fact that, of course, when you have wealth, you pass on that wealth —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — so you're always going to do better —

Layla: I wonder why they're so wealthy —

Angela: I wonder why they're so wealthy. So, one of the earliest eugenicists, one of the first eugenicists, Francis Galton, who was Charles Darwin's cousin, he coined this phrase, "hereditary genius." So, in his family, he saw that there were a number of very illustrious people, like himself and Charles Darwin —

Layla: His cousin, right.

Angela: His own cousin, and he thought, you know, maybe we have some traits, some kind of innate traits that other people don't have and that's what makes our family so great and if we could nurture these traits in the families that have them by encouraging them to have more children and discourage those people with the bad traits not to have so many children, then what — you know, this is how he phrased it, what galaxy of geniuses and brilliant people might we create.

Layla: Right.

Angela: So that was a kind of kernel of this idea that there were innate qualities, innate traits that we pass on through generations and, actually, that is really also the kernel in modern day scientific racism. When you see intellectual racists, many of them are eugenicists still so you see, and this has become a big news story, particularly in the last couple of years, because we have seen people, like for example Jeffrey

Epstein was one. We have seen people here in the UK expressing these views that there's no point in investing in eradicating poverty because these people will always be poor. Or there is no point in having equal opportunities programs because there are certain inbuilt qualities to certain groups of people that we will never be able to shift. And this is a big argument on the right. You see this in many different countries around the world, including in the UK. This notion that people, fundamentally deep down, groups of people are just who they are and they will be that way forever because of these genetic qualities. Now, we know that that's not how heredity works, number one.

Layla: Right.

Angela: So, let's just say, I mean, this is a silly thought experiment really because we shouldn't be talking about people in these terms anyway, but let's just say you have two brilliantly intelligent people. If they were to have a child, that child is likely to be cleverer than average but actually less clever than their parents. So you don't create a super genius. What you do is create just a child who is closer to the average and that's because of regression to the mean, which actually Francis Galton himself came up with. So, he should have realized this at the time that you can't breed people to perfection, it's just impossible to do that, because humans don't behave that way. In fact, you're more likely to get brilliant, so-called brilliant people, emerging from the average. So this is why, you know, ordinary parents usually are the ones who give birth to extraordinary prodigies and amazing children because that's where most people are so that kind of spark of these unusual qualities usually emerge from the, you know, the average group of people. But it is this kind of myth that groups of people have certain qualities that we should be encouraging

that lay at the heart of eugenics, and I think it does live on in some ways, even now, in damaging ways.

Layla: Right, absolutely. I mean, and we're in this time in our history where, I mean, obviously, these are ideas and dynamics that have existed for a really long time but over the last few years, we've really seen a ramp-up globally in white nationalism and this idea of superiority and inferiority of so-called races. You would think that the science would help us to show us how ridiculous these ideas are but even those scientists who may not be, you know, outright racist, don't have a racist agenda, are really trying to do the right thing, even they struggle to see outside of the idea of race. And you talk about in your book how people shifted from using the word "race" to using the word "populations," but that word still looks pretty much like dividing people up into different races.

Angela: It's almost like being gas-lit, actually, sometimes. When you're talking to scientists about this and especially when I'm talking to population geneticists, they will assiduously avoid the use of the word "race," you know? They will do anything not to use that word and any other word they can think of, anything else that feels euphemistically more palatable to them, like ethnicity or population, but you have to ask yourself, especially when the populations they're talking about really do correspond almost identically to racism, old-fashioned ideas of race, what do you really mean here?

Layla: Right.

Angela: And that is a tricky thing. I mean, there's a wonderful academic who I quote in *Superior*, Lisa Gannett, who called it statistical racism, that you may not be talking about discrete races like 19th century people did, but you still seem to be

talking in ways that sounds suspiciously like 19th century race theory.

Layla: Yeah. And it was interesting as well reading about — I cannot remember the name of the scientists who talked about whose book on human biodiversity became coopted into a sort of alt right almost movement, right? Tell us about that and how sometimes even well-meaning scientists who are not even trying to talk about, you know, eugenics or race science or anything like that, even those terms can become something else?

Angela: So the person who coined that phrase, human biodiversity, is Jonathan Marks, who's a wonderful scholar in the US and, in fact, I would very much recommend a book that he wrote after that called *Is Science Racist*. It's a very little, short book.

Layla: Oh, wow.

Angela: It was —

Layla: That is an after effect of his work being coopted, is that —

Angela: Possibly. Yeah, possibly. But he's been thinking about this field for a very long time and what happened was human biodiversity, which seems like a very innocuous, if anything, right-on kind of phrase, you know? Biodiversity is a word that we use in left wing circles all the time or when we're talking about conservation or climate change, we talk about stuff like diversity and so it feels like a positive thing. What happened was that the right, the far right and white supremacists, ethnic nationalists, took hold of this phrase and started using it as a euphemism for race. So they would refer to human biodiversity

really as a way of — and they have a lot of code words like this, I should add, so —

Layla: And I think this is important to note as well and then this is really the point that I wanted to make, right? It's — the language changes and we think that — I'll let you continue the story. We think they're talking about one thing; they're talking about something else entirely different.

Angela: Yeah. And they do that deliberately because that's the way they mask what they actually mean and the way that they pull people into their debates and conversations without them fully realizing it. And this is essentially what happened to John Marks was that he was using human biodiversity in a completely different way to the way that they were using it. He was talking about cultural diversity and, you know, the kind of panoply of human difference that we see in the world that is cultural and linguistic and all of this. And they meant that we are different species, we are different breeds. There is some kind of biodiversity that needs to be preserved. I mean, this is another tenet of the white supremacist movement, that we need to look after our white population, we need to preserve our ethnic distinction. That is why immigration is dangerous. That's why racial mixing is dangerous, why intermarriages is dangerous. So they kind of coopted this phrase, as they have coopted many others. Another one that they use is race realism, for instance. So, rather than calling themselves scientific racists, which just goes to show how being called a racist is unpalatable —

Layla: Even to racists.

Angela: Even they are uncomfortable with that word. They will call themselves race realist.

Layla: Which means what?

Angela: Which essentially implies that we think that race is real. That it is biologically —

Layla: Okay. Okay. Which sounds like it's being neutral. We're just saying that race is a real thing.

Angela: Yeah. So they're very clever in the way that they manipulate language. And I think maybe the reason that they've managed to get away with it for so long is because, for a while, and certainly, you know, in the 90s perhaps and early 2000s, we could live in this illusion that there kind of — there were no more white supremacists in academia, there were no big racists, scientific racists out there, that this was a problem that existed on the streets. It was about thugs and skinheads and it wasn't about people in power who held these ideas. Obviously, we can't maintain that fiction any longer. And this is what these people were doing. For decades, they have been nurturing these ideas and publishing in journals. A lot of these prominent figures are dead now but their work lives on. In fact, John Philippe Rushton, who was a very prominent scientific racist of his generation who died relatively recently, only in the last year were two of his papers about race and IQ retracted —

Layla: Wow.

Angela: — from one of the journals that he wrote for. So we have to understand what a long lifespan these things have and how long and carefully these people have been nurturing these ideas. The fact that they use these euphemisms is no accident. They do it deliberately in order to enter mainstream discourse and make themselves look like something which they're not. What they are, of course, is just old-fashioned, 19th century scientific racist. Well, they're trying to pretend that they are

some kind of intellectual contrarians, that they have something to tell us that has been hidden from us —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — all this time.

Layla: And that if we just throw more money behind it, we just keep doing the research, we'll eventually find this difference within the genes. We'll eventually find the answer to the difference in biology that proves a certain group of people is more developed in some way than another group of people. What I found really frustrating actually, you talked about being published in journals. I found that really frustrating because why are these people being given a platform to even share these ideas? And you shared about one of the journals that is funded by, I guess someone of wealth, who is invested in this idea of finding difference, but that journal still exists today, the *Mankind Quarterly*, which publishes all kinds of journals which aren't — it seems aren't really based in strong science but very much have an agenda to prove this difference. How do you feel about that journal still being in circulation?

Angela: Well, I'll just give your listeners a quick little potted history of *Mankind Quarterly*.

Layla: Please do.

Angela: So this was a journal that was founded after the Second World War by people, including one very important Nazi race scientist, someone who carried out experiments on the body parts of Holocaust victims, including children. So, it's founded by this group of people from all over the world, there were British people in there, there were Americans in there, in order to propagate the kind of scientific racism that wasn't

acceptable anymore. So, eugenics and race science that journals just wouldn't publish because — not just because it was morally wrong, which is a good enough reason in itself, but largely because it was just scientific nonsense. You know, it really didn't make any sense given what we knew about human difference by the 1950s.

Layla: Right.

Angela: So, the *Mankind Quarterly* was published independently. It was funded independently by a very wealthy segregationist from the US, Wickliffe Draper, and I can recommend the excellent book, *The Funding of Scientific Racism* by William H. Tucker, which kind of forensically looks at the history of this individual and the *Mankind Quarterly*. So what Wickliffe Draper did was he handed out — he would not only fund the magazine but also the people who wrote for it. And he did that for decades. It's only relatively recently actually that the fund that he set up, the pioneer fund has —

Layla: Ran out of money, it seems. Yeah.

Angela: Ran out of money or it handed all the last of its money out and we don't know exactly what's happened there. But I was looking into the finances when I was researching *Superior* and, as far as I could tell, it's connected to some kind of offshore funds but as far as we can tell, it's been emptied of all funds now. That's not to say that other funding won't come in.

Layla: Right.

Angela: It may well — it may already have. But it was enough money to keep the *Mankind Quarterly* in publication even to the present day. So you can still read it, you can go online, and I interviewed the person who was then the editor of *Mankind*

Quarterly when I was writing *Superior*, and, you know, as can be expected, his idea, you know, he's no prominent academic. He's like a medical lecturer working on a cruise ship in the Caribbean. You know, he's not some brilliant academic, but he and his cabal of people who, again, exist all over the world, keep these ideas alive through publications like the *Mankind Quarterly* and a slew of other publications that they have. And it's very difficult, I think, for the layperson to know that these are dodgy, because when you go online, they try their very hardest to make them look as scientific and academically legit as possible and unless you understand the lineage and actually what's going on here, it's very easy to be sucked in and to think that this is real science.

Layla: Right. This is real. This is actually factual. It's been found to be true, right.

Angela: Yeah.

Layla: Which is, when we think about, again, that white nationalism that's on the rise right now, I mean, people are hungry for those ideas. People want to hear that this is true, that they are superior and you have a publication like that that is spouting those ideas. I mean, that's a self-funded, sort of self-run publication, but also there are people within that sphere in those circles who are also being given platforms in respected science journals as well. And, you know, people being able to say things that are not exactly scientifically true. I think you quote like one of the journals, *Nature*, I think it's called, *Nature Journal*, and there's been people who've been published and then those articles have had to be retracted.

Angela: Oh, this is Elsevier Journals. So there's a number of prominent journal groups in the world. Elsevier is one of them. Most journals get published by *Nature*, as you say, Elsevier,

Taylor & Francis, and, within those groups, there are journals that have on their editorial boards and have among their authors people who are also editors or contributors to the *Mankind Quarterly*.

Layla: Right. And so that's where it gets really sticky and really messy because those are the spaces where we don't want to hear that, right? They have their own platform, they've created it, they can say what they want, but they shouldn't have a platform there. I remember just I was reading your book and then just Googling so many different things because I was like, "That can't be true, that can't be right."

Angela: It does sound bizarre, and I think especially when you have, as I did for so many years of my life, had this image of science as a really rigorous thorough place where you just couldn't possibly get dodgy stuff passing through the peer review process and getting published in a prominent journal. Well, that just isn't the case for certain journals. So I'm not saying that we should be casting aspersions on the very big, important journals who really do a lot of effort to make sure that we get the best quality research published but there are certain journals, so for example the *Intelligence* which is a journal published by Elsevier, in 2018, I found that two of the members of the editorial board of *Intelligence* were also editors of the *Mankind Quarterly* and there are standards that you have to meet in order to sit on an editorial board according to Elsevier —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — and when I approached the company about it, they said, "Well, it's not really our problem. You should take it up with the editor-in-chief of the journal," So I did that and what the editor-in-chief told me shockingly was that having them on

the editorial board reflected his commitment to academic freedom —

Layla: Wow.

Angela: — and this is a refrain we hear so much more these days, academic freedom, as a kind of defense for having people with unsubstantiated pseudoscientific views allowed to persist within academic circles.

Layla: So it's like having academic freedom, being able to show that we make space for academic freedom, is more important than being responsible with who we allow to have power and to have a platform with the harmful ideas that they could be sharing, that that freedom, it comes above everything else.

Angela: Yeah. And you hear that a lot actually in the scientific racist circles, people saying, you know, the facts don't care about your feelings —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — and things like this, but really, that's a mask for the fact that they don't have any facts. What they're doing is giving us their feelings. The fact that so many of these papers have to be retracted. If you go to the website, Retraction Watch, which is this wonderful initiative to monitor when papers get retracted, so many of them are racist papers. Just the beginning of 2020, a paper was retracted from the journal *Psychological Sciences*, I think, because there were so many complaints that it was politically motivated, that it was clearly racist, and then the authors themselves put their hands up and said, "Yeah, actually, our data is not very reliable and very dodgy so you probably should retract it." And you have to ask yourself, if the authors themselves immediately recognize this, why did the

journal not notice? How did the peer reviewers not notice this? And I find it very hard, given how many examples of this that we have, to be generous these days and put it down to oversight or laziness. I actually think there are people within these journal groups who want this stuff published.

Layla: Right.

Angela: Who don't care if it's sloppy, who don't care if it doesn't make any sense or the data is bad or whatever. They want these political ideas to be out there and given this veneer of respectability.

Layla: Wow. Let's switch gears a little bit because we started off this conversation talking about ancestors and ancestry companies that can analyze your DNA and find out where in the world you're from or how much percentage of what place you are. I know this is something that really took off over the last few years because I know where my family are from. You know, I have asked. I remember when my grandmother was still alive. I remember she told me, "Oh, my grandmother was Iranian," and I was like, "That's odd." You know, we're not Iranian, right? And when I — as I've been writing the young readers' edition, I called both of my parents and asked them, you know, which other countries do you know that we have heritage from, and they sort of listed some for me and they said, "We think this and we think that but we're not exactly sure," and as I was getting those sort of countries and places down, I really thought, well, how important is it actually? Because it doesn't directly influence what I know about me now and so how important is it for me to know, you know, how much are we Iranian or from Yemen or from these other places? But I know that there are people who don't have as much knowledge about their ancestry, those who are the descendants of enslaved Africans who don't know where in Africa their family

are actually from, are hungry for that information and I think that I completely understand and I know, if I were in that place, I would be looking for that too. And yet, those tests don't actually give us the accurate answers that we think that they are giving us, is what I understand from your book. So, can you talk to us a little bit about those companies, those tests, and what we need to be aware of?

Angela: I completely understand what you mean when you say that if you know your family history, if you can go back a number of generations and be able to say, "I have cultural roots in this place and I can go there and I can feel connected to this place," that's a wonderful thing to have and it's so important I think, for us as humans, to feel that. I think it's an important part of how we build our sense of self identity. And I also am fortunate in having that history. I can very easily trace my family back. I know exactly where they've lived for generations. In fact, my father's family still live in the village where they've lived for generations and, you know, there's a long history there. If you don't have that, then I think it is easy to feel as though there's a part of you missing, especially when we — and perhaps we've always felt this way but we as humans place such importance on ancestry. You know, we really care about who you are, where you're from. This is why we invest so much still in the idea of aristocracy, you know, this idea of lineage. It means something to us.

Layla: Yes.

Angela: The problem is these ancestry tests, as much as they may give the illusion of giving you something back that you've lost, all they can really do is tell you what you genetically have loosely in common with living people today. So they're not finding some genetic signature in the past that connects you to the past. They're finding genetic signatures in the present that

connects you to the present. So, for example, if let's just say everybody on the planet were to have a DNA test, then my DNA will be compared to everybody on the planet, you would find my family all over the world. You know, in America, right across Europe —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — in India, everywhere, so you wouldn't be able to pin me down to one geographical place. And that's also one of the issues when it comes to African-American ancestry tests is that they are comparing that person's DNA to people who are living who could have moved all over the place. You know, there are many people, for instance, in the 19th century, because of — after emancipation, there was this huge drive among many white Americans, including leaders, American leaders, to have people repatriated to Africa.

Layla: Right.

Angela: Is that possible? So they didn't belong in America?

Layla: Right. Because it was the idea I think that we can't have free black people living with us in our society, right? That's such an affront.

Angela: Yeah, because how can we cope with that?

Layla: Right.

Angela: Absolutely. So many people move to Liberia. So there were people that moved to Africa, they moved to Liberia, which was a state set up for these repatriated —

Layla: Specifically for that.

Angela: So, if you're an African-American and you were to have a DNA test done, it is possible you may find ancestry in Liberia. That doesn't mean your ancestors came from there. It means that somebody in your past connected to you in some way, related to you in some way, moved to Liberia. That doesn't mean the original ancestors who came over through the transatlantic slave trade came from that place in the first instance. And that is how it gets messy. You know, that's why it's problematic. And especially when you have so many generations over so many generations intermixing, then your ancestry starts to mean less and less because, for example, in your case, you have heritage in all these different places. You can't pin yourself down to one region or one culture anymore because you have all these different things and then you have to ask yourself, I think, "What is my culture really? Who am I really?"

Layla: Yes.

Angela: And who all you really is is who you are right now, you know? Not just as an individual but the people who brought you up with their cultures —

Layla: Yes.

Angela: — with their ideas and whatever they gave to you, their languages and everything, and, you know, there is an Indian-ness to me which isn't genetic. The Indian-ness in me comes from the fact that my parents spoke Indian Punjabi when I was growing up, they took me to India, I've lived in India, I have a relationship with the country and it's very possible that my son may not have all the connections that I have. He may choose to have it and he may not. But he should feel completely comfortable in feeling as British as any other British person, as

any other white British person, if he chooses to. And I think that is something perhaps that we lose when we focus so much on ancestry, is that we lose the cultural connections that we have in the present as well and what identity means in the present. If we are really to feel ourselves to belong to a place, then why should we have to feel the demand of proving that in some way, of substantiating that through some kind of ethnic or genetic test? We shouldn't have to. That's not what identity or citizenship should mean. So, I think it's a fraught area and I understand it. And, in fact, I understand it in lots of people. So, for instance, I went to Dublin a couple of years ago and I was taken to the immigration museum there which was founded by a very wealthy American, I think who founded Coca-Cola, but I may have got this completely wrong. But, anyway, a very wealthy American, and it is a museum for Americans really. So, most of the visitors to that museum are Americans who want to understand their Irish history, to find their Irish ancestor, wherever they are. And I can understand that. Like I said before, we want to know what our roots are. But really, if you find some Irish ancestry after 10 generations or whatever, or however many generations, even three generations —

Layla: Yeah.

Angela: — what does that really change about who you are as a person fundamentally? It doesn't make you any different as a person. And if you imagine that it does, the only way it can do that is by you resorting to stereotypes about what it means to be Irish, because every Irish person is completely different.

Layla: Right, right.

Angela: — their own way of doing things and their own life and experiences and everything else. There is no stereotypical Irish person.

Layla: This is really, really interesting and sort of multilayered conversation, right? Because it's about defining or learning to define who we are and I think a part of it is understanding our history and where we come from culturally while also understanding that, scientifically, there is no such thing as race. So, both things are true at the same time, right? Like I see myself as somebody who is East African, Middle Eastern, but I'm also British and I live in the Middle East. There's all these different parts to who I am. And there's certain values that I hold that I think very strongly align with sort of my East African heritage and there's other values that come from my British birth and upbringing and all of those make up who we are, but I — yeah, just want to reiterate, right? When you come from a people who have been so oppressed and had so much taken away, where not even your name is the name of your people and, not only that, that what you've been told about who you are for centuries is that you are inferior, you are lesser than, you are nothing, I can understand that wanting to find proof, evidence, something tangible, that proves I exist, I'm here, I matter, I have a history, I have a people, I come from a people, to restore a sense of dignity. So, I think that that is a really important piece and these other things that we're talking about are also important as well too. There's a certain point at which — that when you go beyond, there's less connection, right? So I know my East African history, because, like you, I'm a child of immigrants. I was raised by parents who held those values strongly, raised as speaking both languages, all of that. I didn't necessarily have that connection to my more expanded family and I know when I'm in those spaces, I feel very British, you know? With my extended family, I'm like —

Angela: Yeah.

Layla: — there's something missing. I don't feel connected in the way that I want to feel connected but you're a part of me too. So it's complex and it's multilayered. But to add on top of this as well is the understanding that human history — human beings have always been migrating, always. So even when we talk about coming from a certain area or belonging to a people that lived in a certain area, people have always been moving to different parts of the world. And, you know, when I read in your book about the revelations about Cheddar Man in the United Kingdom where they found out that this great English ancestor whose remains had been found and people had assumed was white, it was actually discovered that, no, he was more likely dark-skinned with blue eyes, which is unusual in and of itself. We don't see many people like that anyway, but for people who so strongly felt like the UK has always been white, you know, from the very beginning, to be able to see that, no, we've always been migrating and moving around and what humanity looked like and where those people who looked like the way they look today lived in different places is just kind of — it's mind boggling. But I think that's so important as well.

Angela: Yeah, absolutely. I think sometimes we imagine that cultural diffusion, multiculturalism, the migration that we see now is a new thing. It is such a firm, eternal part of human history. It's one of the most defining parts of who we are. We've always been moving around, always, back and forth. So, even after the migrations out of Africa, there were people moving back into Africa, there were people moving within Africa —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — there were people moving all over the world, sometimes moving back again. And that's one of the reasons that we're such — if we're going to talk about genetics, one of

the reasons that we're such a genetically homogeneous species now. You know, we have more genetically in common with each other than any other primate. So, chimpanzees show more genetic diversity than humans do.

Layla: Wow.

Angela: Underneath, we are so alike. It is culture and language and dress and everything else that makes us feel as though the differences are bigger than they are but really, what you may have been told at primary school, I certainly was told that we were all the same underneath. Well, actually, that's pretty much biologically true. We are pretty much the same underneath. And, like I said, part of the reason for that is that we've always been mixing with each other. You know, there are no pure races or pure cultures or pure ethnicities that then became kind of mixed up later on. And the Cheddar Man is a perfect example of that. You know, this is one of the earliest skeletons that have been discovered in the United Kingdom, within Britain, and when he was discovered, at the time, this is going back nearly a hundred years ago, when his bones were first found, there were attempts to recreate what he may have looked like and you can't tell a lot from the skeleton, especially before the ages of DNA analysis and so people gave him white skin and kind of trailing brown hair and his trademark mustache. We didn't know, but that's what they assumed. And it's only relatively recently, so within the last 10 years, that geneticists have realized that many of those early hunter gatherers, so some of the first human beings, first homo sapiens to live in Europe, Western Europe, all had, as far as we can tell, fairly dark skin and blue eyes. So, that's a combination you don't see these days, but, again, we forget that 10,000 years ago, people didn't look the way they do now.

Layla: Right.

Angela: People look completely different everywhere, all over the world. So, by modern standards, and, again, we can't assume that people from 10,000 years ago thought about race the way that we did, they certainly didn't, but by modern standards then, he would be categorized as black. And this, I remember when the Cheddar Man discovery was announced on television so there was a documentary about it, it was a huge affront. There was this huge public debate, because all these white Britons then were wondering, wait a second, we thought that whiteness was part of Britishness, that this is an ethnic feature that we have. And to learn that, actually, the first Europeans didn't have white skin as they imagined was kind of a shock to their sense of self, in a way, for some people. The geneticists knew that they couldn't have cared less —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — to them, it didn't mean anything because they knew that we've always been changing and people look differently 10,000 years ago. But, again, what it does is puncture this notion of racial purity. In the past, there were pure races and now we don't have pure races anymore. Well, actually, they were never pure races. There never have been.

Layla: So, for people who are listening to this and hearing, okay, so, biologically, there's no such thing as race. If you look under the skin, you wouldn't be able to tell who's black, who's white, you know, all of that. So, should we just live as if race isn't a real thing?

Angela: Problem with that is, I mean, if you look at how our lives are constructed, how much of the way that we live as modern humans is because we live in houses, we wear clothes, we have democracies, we have, you know, nation states, we

use money. None of this is biological. All of this is socially constructed. But we can't just do away with it. We can't just snap our fingers and say, "We're not gonna live like this anymore, we're gonna live completely differently." This is part of how we have come to think about ourselves for the last few hundred years. Race is embedded in our sense of self. It is how we categorize ourselves, in the same way that we do by gender. You know, the gender binary is so firmly rooted in the way that we think about human difference in a similar way to race. It's very difficult for people to think outside that. You know, it's such an affront to your worldview, to most people's worldview, to suddenly have that taken out of the equation when you've been thinking about it practically since the day you were born —

Layla: Right.

Angela: — which people have demanded that you do, you know, the society expects you to. This isn't something you can switch off. This is something that defines how we treat each other. How we live. It viscerally affects our bodies. It affects your life expectancy.

Layla: Yes.

Angela: It has such a profound impact on how we live. So we can't imagine it away. What we can do is challenge it and, through political action, through activism, ask that society think about human difference in a way that isn't in these racialized terms, it doesn't do the damage that it does, and somehow move away from that. But we will still have culture at the end of it. And culture matters. It's important to us. If there's anything that kind of sets human beings apart from other primates, it is culture. It's the fact that we can live in so many different kinds of ways. And, in fact, I went to a lecture I

remember before the lockdown, so a few months before the lockdown, and this great lecture in the US by a researcher who's been looking at brain size in different primates —

Layla: Yes.

Angela: — and for a long time, people have thought that humans have particularly large brains relative to our bodies and that is a bit true, but it's not the full story. So there are many primates who have particularly large brains. What we have, though, is a very plastic brain —

Layla: Yes.

Angela: — compared to other primates so while most primates, their brains stop kind of reshaping or developing quite young, our brains are always, always moving. And, in that sense, maybe that explains why we are able to live in so many different kinds of ways, that you see such variety, cultural variety and linguistic variety among humans is that the permutations in which we can live is just so vast. And, for me, that's a particularly exciting thing because what it tells us or what it reminds us is that if we want to live in a fairer society, we can. There is nothing kind of biological about the way that we, in my particular culture or in your particular cultural and someone else's, have chosen to live. There is nothing natural about it. We have constructed it over millennia. We can live in different ways if we want to.

Layla: So we can acknowledge and we must acknowledge that the social construct exists and is very real —

Angela: Yes.

Layla: — and has implications, while at the same time appreciating and honoring and being proud of our culture, the culture that we've inherited, the culture that we immerse ourselves in, and that we can find a sense — because, you know, as human beings, we're always looking for that sense of belonging and who am I and what does it mean to be me and I think that cultural piece that you're talking about is a huge factor of that. And —

Angela: Yeah.

Layla: — yeah, we don't need to dispense with that when we're saying that racism exists because race isn't culture.

Angela: Yeah, but also I think we should also embrace the fact that we can be part of cultural change. That cultures aren't kind of preserved in aspic. They are always changing. If I want, for example, the idea of being British to be different than it is now, which I do, I want it to be more inclusive, I want it to be a more pluralistic way of thinking about Britishness, as I do of all kind of national identities, then we can do that. We are capable of doing that. And I think that is also empowering —

Layla: Yeah.

Angela: — in a way. You know, things don't have to stay the way they are forever.

Layla: No. And that's — Yeah, coming back to that plastic, we have plastic brains, right? We're constantly evolving. We've been migrating for generations. Everything about us is not static.

Angela: Yeah.

Layla: And yet, race science tries to make it that it is so but it's not.

Angela: Yeah.

Layla: You know, I see us as living ancestors that are influencing future descendants, the people who come after we are gone. As science journalists, someone is steeped in the science, what do you want future descendants, future people to understand about race and science and how we can create a society in which racism no longer exists?

Angela: Oh, my god. It feels like an impossible thing to imagine, isn't it? But, I mean, what I would like and this is what I've been calling for over the last year in many of the university talks I've given and the school talks is I would love to see history and the humanities embedded in the way that we teach science. So, I would like to see us understand from a very young age that we can be critical about the information and the knowledge that's given to us so we can change it. We can make it better and more truthful, because, at the moment, it is skewed, there's no doubt about it. The ideas that we have about human difference do not reflect reality, and I would like the science of human difference to reflect reality and then be used as a tool that actually improves our collective understanding of who we are. And I think for that, we need to be generalists in a way. We need science, we need history, we need the humanities, we need to kind of incorporate all these ways of thinking when we ask that question that you posed, "Who am I?" You know, all these things fit into that puzzle but if you don't have accurate information, then how can you draw an accurate picture of yourself and a good answer to that question? And I guess that's what I'm always trying to do through my work. I haven't reached an answer yet, but I hope, eventually, by the time I die, I will have a good answer to that question of who I am.

Layla: Yeah. I think it's part of being human to be constantly exploring that question. And I think that you're doing such an amazing job with the work that you're putting together in helping non-scientists like me, laypeople like me, understand this really influential field and how it does impact us. I'm not reading science journals, right? I'm not in those places, but you've helped to take something which is complex, not easy for the lay reader to read, and put it in a context, within history, within social sciences, that helps make it clear to us what is actually going on, what is important, what are the different contexts and layers that we need to understand and help us towards a path towards change. So, I just want to really acknowledge you and thank you for your incredible work. It's important. I will read any book that you publish in the future. I don't know if you have any more books left in you after the, you know, the work that you've been putting in.

Angela: The book I'm writing at the moment, I started it last year but it won't be finished for a couple of years, is on patriarchy. So, when that last book came out, *Inferior*, one of the questions — there was a chapter on male domination in there and it's widely accepted now that humans haven't always been male dominated. So, the question I kept getting from readers was, "Well, then when did it start? How did it start? Why?"

Layla: Yes.

Angela: And that's the question I'm trying to answer now. It's really difficult.

Layla: I can't wait, and I'm sure that it's going to be something that is looking at, as this book did, looking at it from a global perspective as well, because patriarchy has developed differently all over the world, just differently all over the world.

So I can't wait to read that book. So I'm gonna ask you our very last question now, Angela, what does it mean to you to be a good ancestor?

Angela: For me, it's about leaving the world a better place than you came into it, especially over the last year. You know, I've spent a lot of time now with my husband and my son much more than I expected to because of lockdown, and what it's taught me is that they're the most important people in my life, my friends and my family, and I want them to feel that I helped them understand the world in a different way, that I was empathic and sharing my life with them, sharing positivity with them, and I think especially in the age that we're in now of divisiveness and kind of polarization, it's quite an old-fashioned idea of universal humanity, that we're all the same underneath, that we're all in this together, I think is probably the most important lesson we can have and if the last year hasn't taught us that, then —

Layla: Gosh, yeah.

Angela: — I really don't know what can.

Layla: Yeah. Well, thank you so much. I definitely count you as one of my living good ancestors, just because how —

Angela: Likewise —

Layla: — really expand my understanding. I did an event yesterday for celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and I shared your book. I said I've been reading this book and it's really helped me to understand and we need to read widely different kinds of authors who can help us to really understand what we're experiencing and why and I think you've just added such important works that help us to really understand

ourselves and help us to create change. So, thank you so, so much for everything that you do and for being on this podcast with us.

Angela: Oh, likewise, Layla. Absolutely. I feel exactly the same about you. Thank you.

(Outro)

This is Layla Saad and you've been listening to Good Ancestor Podcast. I hope this episode has helped you find deeper answers on what being a good ancestor means to you. We'd love to have you join the Good Ancestor Podcast family over on Patreon where subscribers get early access to new episodes, Patreon-only content and discussions, and special bonuses. Join us now at Patreon.com/GoodAncestorPodcast. Thank you for listening and thank you for being a Good Ancestor.