

Open Rivers Navigator

Season 3, Episode 7

LaKisha Odom

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:00:11](#)):

Welcome back to season three of Open Rivers Navigator. I am your host Shefali Mehta. Through my work in agriculture and the environment, I've had the chance to travel the world, meeting so many incredible people. This podcast is my way of bringing their unique stories and passion to you. Throughout our episodes, we've addressed topics of equity, diversity, racism, identity, access, and numerous other critical issues that shape our society and that often prevent us from meeting our potential and truly addressing the issues that we need to. We thought it was even more important in this season focused on data technology to revisit the three-part series we did with Dr. Lakisha Odom in season one that was focused on diversity and barriers and agriculture. For this final episode of season three, we're happy to be joined by LaKisha to discuss diversity, equity, and life a year later. Thank you again for joining us. Well, I'm excited to be back with you, uh, after almost a year, LaKisha, how are you doing?

Lakisha Odom ([00:01:31](#)):

I'm shocked that it's been almost a year and I'm excited to be back as well. I think as most of our conversations go, we had a lot that we didn't get to cover that it's great that we get to revisit now.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:01:44](#)):

It has been great. Just the feedback that's rolled in the number of people who have listened who've really come back and said that, you know, your stories, what you were able to share with us just really impacted them. And I'm not surprised I've learned a ton from listening to your stories. And really there's a reason I love talking to you and having the ability to go, you know, just reflect on like, experiences, but these like lived in ongoing daily experiences that we continue to have. And, but it is interesting to look back at what's transpired over this last year.

Lakisha Odom ([00:02:13](#)):

Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. And I think that sharing personal stories is just always such a powerful way to really absorb information. Right? We can talk about things that are very abstract concepts, but in having a conversation with someone and sharing their lived experience, I learned so much because your experience as a woman of color, is different than mine, right? We talk about that, like the way in which we relate to race the way in which we are viewed, the way in which you respond, all of those things are predicated by so much of our background. So I learned so much from you and other women of color. So I think it's always just important to share all of our stories.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:02:50](#)):

Absolutely. So it's interesting. So I think in the last year, a lot has changed a lot in terms of the dialogue. And I we've been discussing how just in our community within agriculture, there's clearly different kind of awareness and dialogue happening. What are you seeing from your end as you kind of reflect back about this year?

Lakisha Odom ([00:03:12](#)):

I think I'm seeing like a couple of things that are very exciting and then some unusual side effects. So what I'm seeing is a lot more conversation, a lot more language around how to discuss race or institutionalized challenges or the fact that there are institutions and the unintentional well intentionally created, but being unintentionally supported in some cases, and just an awareness of colleagues about how deep these institutions run, right, how deep it is and how inculcated it is in the DNA of not just agriculture, but in all laws in the U.S. and abroad, right? All of these spaces where these challenges are so prevalent. So it been very exciting to see so much energy, excitement, and interest in wanting to know what to do. And when every positive that comes a couple of other sides of things, and some unexpected side effects I have noticed is I have a huge amount of fatigue around talking about these things.

Lakisha Odom ([00:04:18](#)):

And also I think some spaces where it's a weird, almost policing feels like how I should respond as a woman of color. When someone brings me some issue, they want me to, there's an expectation that I will be as outraged as they are outraged. But I think part of their outrages, they're realizing how prevalent racism is. And that's never been my, that's not a new revelation to me. So there's some spaces where, um, because of a multitude of reasons, I'm not going to necessarily hear an issue and respond with the same amount of, I don't know if it's anger or frustration or incredulity is likely what it is is can you believe this? Yes, I can believe it. You know? And so there's that lack of incredulity. And it's almost like when you don't care because you're not as upset as I am. And there's a, I've been caring for this since I was born.

Lakisha Odom ([00:05:15](#)):

There's a bit of exhaustion. There's a bit of fatigue, and I've heard report that a lot of us, of course, don't represent every black woman in the world, but I've had conversations with a lot of my friends that are in similar situations. And I think everyone's reporting back a lot of exhaustion, happiness, that folks are, um, acknowledging it, but exhaustion, because it feels like there's an added weight of responsibility as a woman of color, a black woman in your organization to feel something about all of the things that are happening. And the reality is you're getting more reports, more people are showing, it's more videos. It's more stories, which is awesome because it's bringing more of it to light, but then it's also more heartache. These stories have never, they're always heartbreaking. So it's more heartache as well.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:06:08](#)):

I know it's an incredibly important point that you raised that isn't really being covered. I think the, the focus overall, many people do recognize there's greater dialogue. Uh, those areas you highlighted around, there's a positive trend in being able to even discuss this, we have the language and the concepts in a way that we're developing to even have those discussions, which I think were lacking before. But the flip side is not an area that is often covered, but it is an area that I know you do see whether it's in discussions with colleagues or often it's even people who are coming to you as a mentor. Um, I've had discussions with kind of younger women going through various parts of their life, whether it's personal professional saying, how do I navigate this or this, this seems, this seems off, you know, and, and perhaps it's even hard to articulate what you're putting your finger on, which is there is this unintended consequence of fatigue because of the expectation that's coming, or the fact that it's almost like as, as people are processing the extent of racism, we're being asked to process with them. And I think I definitely, I would say I see this in the black and indigenous communities a lot more where you have had no choice, but to live it from day one. So to have to then also help others process is putting an undue burden on top of something that was already quite painful.

Lakisha Odom ([00:07:35](#)):

Yeah. I think that's very accurate. And I think figuring out how to navigate that is something that I know I've struggled with. I won't say categorically, everyone has, but I would say that that's something that is challenging because on the one hand, you're quite excited that people want to have these conversations, but these conversations still take an emotional toll. It's not that you're energized at the end of one of these conversations. Very often I've been in meetings where we're talking about some of the same words. I just have to turn my camera off. I just need to discuss it. But the fact that we're talking about some really challenging things that are happening, it's also just my heart is aching, you know, I'm weeping, physically, just turn my camera off and cry, because it's just, it's harder. But I think that's the nature, right before any real change can happen. It gets a little bit more challenging before it gets better, you know? And so we have to push through these uncomfortable feelings, get to affect the change on the other side, but it is not fun in the midst, right? That that's not the fun part, it's the very painful part, change requires some level of discomfort in order to get there..

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:08:55](#)):

Change is uncomfortable for all humans. So I like to think about the biology and the neurology is anytime we're changing, we're asking our brains to do a lot of work, right? We're like asking on a cellular level to shift. And even if it's a shift that's needed, even some shift that we have often have initiated, it is exhausting. And I definitely, I think in a lot of the work I do with organizations going through change, even when I know it, I will find myself in a place where I'm exhausted. And I realized trying to keep folks motivated through this is tough. And I do think that the other reality is we're human. We have this kind of pail can only hold so much water and we have to be really thoughtful. And I think a lot of what we're talking about in the backdrop of COVID and negotiating and still negotiating a lot of, um, a lot of these changes, I think we're, we're still in flux as we understand things.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:09:52](#)):

And on top of it, I think the additional piece that I saw, a lot of women, I think we've got a lot of stories about the, the plight of women or the role of women, how much they have carried globally in the face of COVID. So you just think of from a basic emotion, that pail is full and running over. And then you're talking about the, just the basics of change that are exhausting.

Lakisha Odom ([00:10:10](#)):

One podcast I listened to recently, and it struck me, like it hit me in the middle of my chest was that the reality is if you look at the number of people that have died from COVID, our country is in grief, it is in a period of mourning that we're not acknowledging, right. We're just expected to keep moving like this huge, never like unprecedented in our lifetime, right. Thing that has happened. And people, I don't know, one person who can say they don't have some, someone they know that has passed, if not more than one person.

Lakisha Odom ([00:10:46](#)):

And sometimes multiple people in their family, this is also this huge space of grief. So you have this overarching grief, you've got the normal rate, you got a racial reckoning and all the grief associated with that. You got all the anxiety about what's going to happen, our pails are super full right now and thinking about how to stay present. And as you said, keep up the energy to keep going, because to dismantle an institution, it's not a small thing, right? It's a huge effort and it will take a lot of energy and it will take

even more time. And this has been going on. It's not like people haven't been trying to dismantle these systems before now. That's really not true at all. It's just now there's enough attention from a wide range of folks that people are more interested in trying to dismantle some of these large institutions that marginalized groups and penalize groups for being different, but it's still long-term work. And how do you maintain your sense of self in the midst of all of these things?

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:11:54](#)):

I think that's the main, the heart of what motivated us to want to revisit this is really, what do we do to maintain our sense of self? Because I think at the same time in another arena, we hear the word self care so much. And I would, I do say that's a positive trend. The recognition, hopefully across the board, that if we're not healthy and whole at the individual level, really can't be there for others. We can't do much. Everything is really predicated on the ability for us to be healthy and really be there. And when that falls apart, the cascade is often quite quick. It's often apparent. It is what unfortunately fills the news headlines. And so we're really, really, I think you and I are really focusing on what is the idea of having that self-care and that focus on self so that we can continue to engage positively. We can engage in a healthy way. We can also do in a way that we don't lose ourselves.

Lakisha Odom ([00:12:52](#)):

Absolutely. And I would take it a step further because, I've been, and this is just something I've been thinking through on my own and I'd invite the listeners and you to weigh in. But I think there's self-care yes, but to me, the boundaries that we set to protect ourselves, that's love, right? Like that's how we love ourselves. That's how we protect ourselves. Right. There's care. Absolutely. And we need more of that women in general, people in general, especially in the season, you need to care more for yourself. But I think one of the practical things that have been, that's been healthy for me and this year is establishing stronger boundaries about when I will engage, how I will engage, what I will engage about and releasing myself of the guilt or the expectation that I give everything at all points in time to everyone who needs an emotional response from me, because, and I will say this, I feel it often, at least as a black woman and a black woman of size, let's be clear, there's this desire to be comforted by my presence, right?

Lakisha Odom ([00:14:00](#)):

There's this desire for me to gather you up into my arms and tell you it'll be okay. Now I am a comforting person, but sometimes my pail is so full I can't do that. And so when someone comes to me and says isn't this terrible about this new thing that happened in the world, there's no room in me to give anything. And I'm just like, I don't want to talk about it. And I think prior to a few years ago, I would have felt a lot of guilt around kind of not wanting to engage with that person isn't coming to you in a disrespectful manner. There's a lot of energy and interest in wanting to support, but it's okay sometimes, at least I'm learning to say, it's okay if I can't engage today or this week or on this topic at all, right. There's some spaces where there are videos that go around around black people being harmed, or I no longer can watch those videos. Don't send them to me. Right. Don't send them to me, if you do I will block you.

Lakisha Odom ([00:14:57](#)):

Not because I'm angry at you, but I have to protect my mental state. So I think like when we talk about things that have happened in the last year, a lot of it for me is being much stronger about boundaries as a way to protect myself and as you said Shefali, maintain that spark, that energy that I do have to fight

these systems where I have the leverage to do so, because the other thing I had to teach myself is I can't solve every problem. Right. I'm a person who developed scientific program in a nonprofit in agriculture. And there are things I can do in my private life. And there are spaces I can donate, but with the space where I can affect the most change is the spaces where I can affect the most change. And there's something that I'm not going to be able to do. Right? Like I admire and am so in awe of all of the protests organizers for example, but that isn't necessarily my skillset.

Lakisha Odom ([00:15:54](#)):

And so there's some spaces where you can also allow yourself to engage in the spaces where you can make change, right? Because if you're in spaces where you don't have the skillset, the influence, the ability to make change you're yourself just frustrating, and the other people can disagree. But for me, this is what I have. This is the guidance I have given other people who will talk to me about like, what can I do, right? The reality is you can't do everything, but that's the beauty of having so many people at the table. Everybody does a smaller piece, but that means more people are doing the work, right. And it's unrealistic to expect that one person or a group of people should shoulder all of the responsibility for dismantling a system that they didn't create. And they don't often benefit from. So I think like the two more practical things that I've worked on are thinking through like boundaries, which I've learned a lot about from Shefali, but boundaries as a form of self love, right? I never thought about boundaries like that before. I always thought about them as keeping people out, instead of like protecting my energy, my passion, my ability to engage and also acknowledging where I can affect things within my own sphere of influence. What's in my sphere of influence that I can effectively change. And that allows me to not feel like I'm not doing the work, but recognizing where my input on the work will be most beneficial. Does that make sense?

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:17:25](#)):

Absolutely. And it's interesting because I think boundaries are challenging for everyone. And there are many interesting studies around why as a species, again, we're a social species. It has really strong cultural connotation, societal connotation. So even how they manifest for each of us where they manifest, this is for everyone, regardless of gender, race, location, because a lot of these are what we're really saying is these are the, our tacit rules of engagement with one another. And I think that we, as a species do, we're always trying to figure out how do we work together as a whole, but we're also a species that is pretty independent. We are individual. We are different at the very individual level. And if we think through just like a basic look at our families, look at that we, most of us will step back and say, yes, the way that our parents or siblings or relatives wants to engage is often quite different from how we do.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:18:23](#)):

And we're almost like perpetually negotiating those. So I think of boundaries. You talked about the protection and, and I think this is the journey. So I think some people do see it as a wall or a block. And if you kind of go from that, it's the idea of protection and I've come to this place. That's recently a really their guidelines for engaging with me. There's not, it's really, um, it's like when we meet other people being able to just say, I really like hanging out with you, however, I don't hang out after 9:00 PM, or I really like hanging out with you and I prefer being outside. I mean, they're just different. If you think about it, it is, it is articulating those elements because it's really hard for us to read each other's minds, but it makes it so much easier for one another to know that

Lakisha Odom ([00:19:11](#)):

It came across my mind with your explaining that also this, this, this, this ability for us to be authentic with another person, right? Because I don't like hanging out past nine. If I tell you that upfront, I don't have to not tell you, go somewhere with you at 11 I'm in the corner grumpy and passing out. And then I kind of slowly, but surely don't want to hang out with you as much, but I never told you this simple thing. Right? And so it's jeopardizing our way to interact. And I think that thinking about like how to engage, especially as a black woman is important because I think that's another shift for me is I've become much more comfortable to say these are my boundaries and recognizing that there's unconscious, or sometimes there's conscious bias but we'll stick to the unconscious.

Lakisha Odom ([00:20:04](#)):

There's a lot of unconscious bias that comes with that. And I had so much fear around being the angry black woman, being difficult, being hard to talk to you because that's not my personality. If anyone ever meets me all I want to do is connect. Right? So there's an idea that no matter what I do, there's a barrier. I found myself relaxing a lot of boundaries to seem more accessible, but what I was doing was being less authentic, less and less authentic and disappearing. So another thing these boundaries do is allow you allow me to show up myself in a space like my full self and, and dealing with the reality that because of institutionalized racism and stereotypes and all these tropes that have been indoctrinated in a sense since I don't even know when. Right, right. As soon as people get here, there's going to be some people that are gonna be triggered by me, just showing up my whole self.

Lakisha Odom ([00:21:04](#)):

There are going to be some people that take my tone of voice if I don't smile as threatening. When in reality, it's just, I didn't smile today and I don't have to, right. And so that's another space where I think, um, guidance that I've given other people is you just got to show up as yourself, like I think Shefali and I joke about like when we first met, she was like, why you always sit in the middle of the room? I was like, I'm going to be noticed wherever I am, because there's a space where there's a tendency to want to like take up less space, not, you know, not be as fully yourself because you recognize that some people they'll be very uncomfortable. But I think that the beauty of this past year is acknowledging that discomfort more, which then makes it feel like less of my responsibility. Tho it was never my responsibility. But the reality is I felt like some of it was.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:21:59](#)):

And I think we all do because of again, how society we have messages, all of us do from the time that we're young and another way that helps setting boundaries or living them, especially when you're in a situation where we're really thinking about you are different from the culture. I think it's feeling that we're standing out. And again, this is something we've explored in different arenas where we have explicitly stood out. Is that when you experienced that response or a trigger from someone, because it actually happens often when we say this is the boundary, there is a natural desire to either feel bad. Like we take it very personally, um, to become defensive, to maybe to withdraw and almost start to change it. And I think there's actually another place there that that's the place to pause. And I'm a big fan of the pause and breathing and to really have space to reflect.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:22:57](#)):

So when that happens, I think one of the important things to remember is most of the time, this has nothing to do with you. It's not personal. So when someone is responding to, for example, I don't really want to go out after 9:00 PM. It could be, they take it personally because they suddenly feel like they're

being judged for the choices or they take it personally because they maybe feel rejected or they're not used to someone saying no to them. There's just such a wide range of responses. Quite frankly, that person themselves may not even consciously be able to tell you why they're uncomfortable, but yet we internalize it. And that's where the pause is so important to keep that from being absorbed and causing more pain.

Lakisha Odom ([00:23:37](#)):

That's very true. But I think like, to use your 9:00 PM example, I think that that's what I've started to do with some of my boundaries it's to just clarify. Right. So, cause I love it because it is my life. I am that example, I will say, like, when people say, oh, do you want to do this, this or engage in this way? Or do you want to be a part of this additional DEI working group or whatever. The example may be of the ways in which we're more taxed in this season. What I will often clarify is this is not a thing I have the bandwidth for. I like to support, but I'm very clear in the ways I can support. Right? And so that helps me to alleviate the idea that I don't want to be supportive of this, but just that I can't, I can't engage in this way.

Lakisha Odom ([00:24:24](#)):

Right. These are some ways I can help you, the requests that you have, I cannot. So I think, um, one of the other things that I've said to myself and I've had conversations with other people of color, specifically, women of color is also around like clarifying what you can provide, right? Because at the core part of the reason I know I feel guilty or frustrated is I often want to be supportive, but it's balancing being supportive and protecting your own energy. Right. And protecting your own kind of sanity in this day and age, like life never stops. It doesn't say, oh, you had a bad day, nothing else is going to happen to you for the rest of the month.

Lakisha Odom ([00:25:09](#)):

You know, COVID's going on so nothing else. We're not going to do anything else weird to you. That's not typically how life works. So the reality is we're all under multiple layers. And we all, I think I find that people that can clearly communicate their bandwidth, there, what they can do when they don't want to do. I'm finding that so refreshing, because now I understand how you don't want to hang out past nine, or you don't want to be on another DEI working group, but you will agree to review some proposals, something like that, because then you can still show up in a way that you can be helpful, but it's not in a way that's inauthentic to what you need. And I really appreciate the movement that I'm sensing around people just being more upfront about their boundaries, their time commitment, their time availability, and clarifying what they can do.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:26:06](#)):

So we talked about pausing and asking questions when someone comes to us, but there's another tactic that's incredibly important as well. And it's really important from an energy, preservation, sanity perspective. And it's actually not engaging.

Lakisha Odom ([00:26:21](#)):

I agree. I think that there's impetus sometimes to confront every injustice that you see everywhere that you see it, especially when you're in the moment. And I've had some really wonderful allies message me and say, oh my God, this person said this thing. It was so offensive. I should've been a better ally to you. I should have said something in the moment. And I say, this is a marathon, right? Like you can't give your

energy to every infraction. I will also ask myself like, yes, point it out. But the reality is, is pointing it out, got to change that person's point of view on this. If the answer's no, then what do you accomplish in that moment? If you feel compelled to do it, but don't feel like every injustice you have to like address, you can just go. That is, that is a healthy response, right? Disengage. You can always go back to the issue.

Lakisha Odom ([00:27:12](#)):

So just because you don't address it in the moment, we often feel like, then we can't address it. Yes, you can. You can, you can message somebody and say, Hey, I'm sitting on this for a couple of weeks. This did not sit well with me. And then perhaps send it again or some version of it in another meeting. So, you know, I want to just let you know, I would appreciate it if you don't use this language and you don't have to address it in that second and have all this amazing comeback ready and all the information, like we put pressure on ourselves, but I think you're right. You can not answer at all. If it still bothers you later, you can go back to it. You can have a conversation with them and recognize they may not be open to it, but it's just for you to kind of say what you need to say to be authentic. Right? If you feel like not bringing it up is okay, then don't, if you feel like I need to address it, then do. Just recognize they may not give you a response that's going to make you feel like, you know, they heard you because everyone's on a journey. But I think being okay with owning that I've said, the truth I needed to say is, is often enough, at least for me.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:28:22](#)):

And there is something is very interesting. It was a teacher that I work with who pointed out, especially when we talk about setting boundaries, are we where we talk about the, when you're in that position of fatigue and there's, I think there's things have been put on us that it's you owe no one an explanation. I think it goes to, because the explanation does involve energy. So if the correct path is I can't engage, I don't want to engage, then you don't have to. And I do think there's an interesting connection again, to this, uh, to expectations at workplaces. And there's definitely, and I think of some of the workplaces I've been in where there's some kind of almost, and I, there is probably it's the dopamine effect, right? They're looking at with email, but this bizarro thing about, I must respond to all my emails and texts within 24 hours must respond to everything.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:29:15](#)):

I think that there are many moments where you just can't or shouldn't. There are emails where I've received were honestly, there is no response. It is so far out there. And I think that when it comes to, I think a lot of people of color, I think definitely women, women of color that there's, they, you do not have to justify why you don't want to respond. Especially when it's in places like people questioning your boundaries, people questioning you, people asking to do more in a place where you talked about the pail being full, but just being able to, to not. And I think not engaging and stepping away to be able to preserve that sense of self is also in, it is an important tool that we don't think about in a workplace.

Lakisha Odom ([00:29:56](#)):

I think that's right. And I think, again, I recognize the space of privilege that we're speaking from and that we're in certain spaces in our career, the types of jobs that we have, what I have told, every person that I have ever mentored. And I believe this to be true because I've lived my life this way. You have power in every state, right? I may not have the power of my executive director when I'm an intern, but I do have some power, right? There's always a space where I have an amount of power that is mine, right? So if I'm an intern and I choose not to share certain aspects of my personal life, I get to do that. Right. And ideally,

you know, you worry that you will be jeopardized in your career path for not being honest. And that is a real concern, but the reality is, as a person, who's now a professional for over 20 years. If you're in a space where, where you setting a boundary is grounds for dismissal, you probably aren't in a good place and it's not going to get better.

Lakisha Odom ([00:30:59](#)):

It's just going to get worse. Right? And so I think there's some spaces where we're afraid to flex a boundary because we're worried about the ramifications and that is fair. But I think my, my, what I always tell people that come to me younger in their career is you always have power. You're never powerless. It feels that way sometimes. Systems are set up to make you feel that way sometimes. But the reality is that you are not right. And so you have to find a way to maneuver the power that you do have, is it in being clear about the way that you work? Is it being upfront about, you know, not being able to address phone calls after certain point in time, because the reality is they're likely not. If you're a woman, they're likely not doing that to your male counterpart, right? They're likely not doing some of these things to your white counterparts. And so figuring out ways to advocate for yourself and maintain a working relationship, it's a great skill, but never abandoned advocating for yourself.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:32:02](#)):

Absolutely. And there's something you had once said to me, that around the, making that space and being really true to yourself as cultural sensitivity is really important. And I think, again, going with there's this default culture, I've definitely experienced it in different places where, what is appropriate to share varies drastically. And there are many times I've been asked questions that I personally think are inappropriate, or I personally think are culturally inappropriate, or we've talked about physical touch and a lot of cultures and, and like my family. And there are things that I didn't grow up with. And there is an expectation that if you don't do it not okay, the flip side of that is if you go along with it and I've definitely had experiences where I did it because, because I thought I had no choice. I thought that was what I had to do. I thought that if I didn't, I wouldn't be able to maintain my job. I wouldn't be able to exist or do the bigger work that I was focused on. And I lost a piece of myself repeatedly to the point where you kind of look and go, where am I? And you shared some really interesting advice you've given folks and especially young women when they're in these positions that I thought was really helpful. And I wish I had done when I was younger.

Lakisha Odom ([00:33:14](#)):

Yeah. So one of the things that I always call it, and that's basically finding some things that you can share that you feel comfortable sharing, where they don't feel too intimate for you. So one of the things I would often do is like at one point we had a family, dog, Kayla and Kayla was funny and always up antics. And so I feel really comfortable sharing about Kayla because she's our funny little kids and we love talking about, but I may not want to talk about like intense family drama Or like if my parents going through medical issues or, or things like that. And culturally that's just as a black person from the south, don't share your personal information with folks that's just intrusive, right. To even ask them those questions. And so I recognize it's a culture difference. And a lot of folks don't think about it like that before me.

Lakisha Odom ([00:34:10](#)):

And I've had a number of young black scientists say when they join a lab, they're told that they're not friendly because they don't share personal stories, but they feel like that's so intrusive and it's the

antithesis of how they were raised. And so I'm like fine, it could be your crazy neighbor. It could be a hobby that you have something, because the reality is behind that is a desire to connect, um, on my, on my magnanimous ... That's what it is. I have other thoughts sometimes about what it could be, but a lot of times it's a desire to connect, but people don't recognize that in trying to force a connection, it feels violent. Um, and sometimes feel very violating to me when people just really want to ask a lot of penetrating questions when I'm really trying to say, Hey, I'm not saying I will never have closeness with you, but I have to build that relationship with you, right?

Lakisha Odom ([00:35:06](#)):

You can't walk in and demand it because that feels violent. And that's the thing people don't ever think about really is how for me, and I know it just feels very intrusive and violating to try to force it. And if I don't do it, I'm not a good team player, I'm not good at my job. I'm not friendly enough. I'm never going to make people like me. And so what you're saying is me showing up as I am, is not good enough. And that has to be a different way in order for you to accept me in order for me to excel. When in reality telling you about my mother's foot surgery does not make me any better or worse. It has nothing to do with my ability to do my job.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:35:52](#)):

It's interesting because there's a flip side of this and where I've received a lot of feedback where people say, well, you, you seem to not be interested in us why you're not asking questions. And there was a very important reason. I always, I often feel that it's very intrusive. I feel like I'm violating people. I, I often now actually will ask, well, is it okay to talk about your family? Or are you comfortable talking about your past experiences? And it wasn't until later in my career, later in my life that I understood the reason I did it as I was projecting the discomfort I felt I didn't want to do to others, but the oddness and especially in corporate America. And I'm thinking certain companies that I work with, and it definitely felt this while I was at McKinsey. And I think that's probably, it is indicative of consulting overall, is this like strange, false intimacy that's created where on one hand people share things that you quite frankly, I am shocked.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:36:48](#)):

They're sharing. That's great if they want to, but the expectation that you should share, and yet at the same time, they don't actually care. It's almost some kind of strange hazing or some, I think it's what awkward nerds do on it. I'm an awkward nerd. So I'm going to throw that out there. Is that what we do instead of maybe just coming out and saying, you know what I prefer talking about? I don't know, trees or a hobby. I don't want to talk about my family. I don't want to talk about my children. I want to talk about something else. And I really appreciated the cultures. And actually, interestingly enough, I found this with, with a lot of farmers and hunters where they were absolutely fantastic. I'd say, you know, let's talk about fishing or let's talk about why we enjoy going to Utah. And that was incredibly comforting in a way, because it felt that they were open to understanding that part of me that wasn't accepted and that there's, there's a loss there it's like cultural, diverse loss that I think a lot of these corporate cultures don't understand that they're actually doing to their people,

Lakisha Odom ([00:37:48](#)):

Because what you're doing is you're, you're setting up a scenario that says the way that you have walked in the room needs to be adjusted. We don't have to adjust for you, but you have to adjust for us. And to a certain extent, it's not that you never want to build a personal relationship with your colleague. To me, that happens naturally, right? That's how we met. Right? And then we became friends, but no one forced

it. And so very often what I struggle with is this idea of it being a mandate of me being a good team player or good at my job, or somehow being linked to my ability to perform the duties at hand. Right. And I do wonder, because I don't necessarily know that my white male counterparts have to be, I don't expect them to be, I don't need them to be.

Lakisha Odom ([00:38:41](#)):

And when they are not, they are not judged harshly for that. I don't necessarily hear that they're not team players seeing, I hear that they are, um, really intelligent, right? And so there for me, there is a little bit of like undertones that make me uncomfortable around why do I have to do this? Right? Why, why must I do this? And this is the only way that I can prove to you that I'm showing up for my job. Being there for my teammates, being responsive to their requests would make me a good teammate. Not you telling me, I'm telling you my about like my vacation plan and I understand people want to connect. But I think what it is, is connection that is forced is not connections, right? You want to connect? I understand that. Why can't we connect in a way that makes us both feel great?

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:39:36](#)):

Absolutely. And this goes back to the we're all individuals, we're all different. And part of the investment in a human best sign is to say, I'm going to take the time to figure out what it is. And the first to say, I, I felt that this was one of the most challenging areas of what's that balance of is this oversharing? And then as I shifted through roles, if I share, does that give space if people want to share, but I don't want people to feel they have to share. You know, this is kind of trying to read those, those, read those connections continually, and then realizing ultimately the best approach. And I think it's very recent is just being one, listen, listen, and pay attention. And just ask it's asking is really powerful. What, what would you like to do? What's comfortable for you and let's go from there.

Lakisha Odom ([00:40:23](#)):

Asking and also I think showing up as your authentic self, right? Just showing up and being honest about like, Hey, I'm a hugger, but if you don't want me to touch you OK and I, and I really have a friend that we live friends now, since we were over 20 something years, she is not a hugger. I am a hugger. I do not hug her. She's told me vaguely from the first day we met freshman year of college like don't touch and so I don't and it's not a big deal. It's like, okay, that is how you would like me to care for you moving on. Like, it wasn't a big deal. That's why I love now when I see parents not requiring children to hug or kiss. Cause I feel like if a little kid says, no, I never get offended because they're babies. And they get to say what they do, but also be like, I'm going to get offended by a three year old not wanting to hug me, but I'm always like, don't try to make them. Don't ever make them touch someone they don't want to. Don't ever make them engage with someone they don't want to, like, you don't have to do it.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:41:26](#)):

I think I am definitely someone who physical touch, especially in a work environment in shaking hands. I have never been a fan. I often am not given a choice. People will literally just grab me. So Europe and South America just get the kisses, let people just come up. And I, I don't even have a chance. I've been really appreciative. The few times people have asked, I would hope that my body language is strong enough to say that I'm a very friendly person. I do not like physical touch in the workplace. And COVID has given me that one thing of people are thankfully staying back from me. But I, I realized, I mean, this is, that's an example, personally, but each of us is going through it. I'm I know that I'm guilty. I'm probably doing things that make others uncomfortable. And I'm now more mindful of when am I creating

that, that situation and how do we make that space? And then on the other side is how can we speak up more? And if we're saying like I, and that's on me too, it's that feeling comfortable? Say, hi, I, I like meeting you. I'm not someone who's going to physically touch you. Just, that's not my M.O..

Lakisha Odom ([00:42:31](#)):

Yeah. I think that they're in it all is I think kind of to what we've been talking about, which is around just, self-acceptance being more authentic, being honest about who we are and what we can and can't do right. Emotionally, mentally. I think those are all fair things, right? Is this assumption that we, I think the whole part about diversity is just saying, none of us are a monolith. Whether you are a group of black people, brown people or white people, like everybody's different people know that version, people have different historical context in their family about what was acceptable. And I think it would just become this beautiful practice. We tried to start to meet the person at the individual level a figure out what works for them rather than like saying, okay, this is the way we all have to lay on everything.

Lakisha Odom ([00:43:19](#)):

And I think every time I see that happening, it gives me a lot of hope for how we can manage these larger insurmountable problems. Because until you master yourself, right, you're not going to be able to kind of master these other things. You're not going to show up your best self. So I think figuring out ways to master or to start to own and acknowledge and understand yourself, your needs, your boundaries, then smaller communities and larger community. I think that's how you make those systems that will change you. You definitely have to start with the system itself at the top, but it also has to be like bottom up. It has to be top down. Bottom up bottom up to me is the individual person becoming safer, becoming more aware, becoming more connected in the authentic way, becoming more honest about boundaries and things that harm and hurt and others being more receptive to hearing that those are the ways in which we can tackle these massive systems level approaches, but it can't just be all the systems that will change when we, as individuals don't change because we're all indoctrinated, right? So we don't change. And you do change the system. Guess what? We're going to bring all our little pieces of the system attached to the bottom of our shoe through the door. And so we have to kind of work on some of that. We want new systems, but also have to figure out new ways. That's what I think.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:44:47](#)):

And this is actually I think the heart of when we think about a diverse workplace, what we're really saying is we're bringing in different styles, different personalities, because you know, it makes us better in every sense of it. And I always come at it from a strategy solution, space and researcher is the best, most innovative research, the solutions that get us excited, that change things that come from being able to really nurture and bring together that diversity, the flip side of that means you also need to be able to interact. in that diversity, which means we each think differently, we're going to have different assumptions. We have different styles. And if we aren't able to communicate that to one another and we are going to be stuck kind of in this, in this loop where we're feeling this. And so one other thing, as you were describing, kind of the idea of communicating, there's still two elements there where I think there's an, there can be an imbalance where it really falls on again, the person who is different and often that.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:45:44](#)):

So we're saying maybe it's a woman of color in these environments, but it could be, you can say diverse. And in that broad sense of it is that the burden of explanation feels like it falls on that person. And I don't believe it does or should, because that is an energy in itself to have to feel that you're perpetually

explaining yourselves. Uh, it, it just, it's a drain. It is a, because it, at some point it starts to feel like you're trying to justify your existence really turns it. And so I think it's how to turn that around. And one thing I've found is again, that pause and breathing, but asking a question. So if someone is, taking that 9:00 PM example has that response, I'll pause and go, well, why are you responding this way? Or is there, is there something else that you want to share? So rather than me feeling that I'm on the hook to have to explain myself, I'm trying to seek out. So I think it's, we talk about curiosity and for ourselves to really understand that the curiosity for the other, but also taking some of that burden off of ourselves.

Lakisha Odom ([00:46:42](#)):

I've been telling myself for the last, I would say a year and a half to be curious enough, that theory, right. It's really easy to get into these spaces of like inherent frustration. Cause you're already just so you know, wound up about everything. Well, why are they questioning this and just say, no, no, um, I guess it's the positive, but it's part of me is going like, okay, what could be the thing? But even that sometimes feels exhausting. Right? What I would say is that, um, and Shefali can speak to this much more cause she's in the business of helping leaders be better in organizations. But I think there's some spaces where your institution can also kind of help that. Right? I've heard a number of different methods of people being able to kind of communicate their working style without explanation. I remember this example at a non-profit where they took this training, where basically they had these little color coded where it was like, I'm an extroverted and open to talk, I'm introverted and would prefer emails, or like a number of I'm open to talk now, or I'm really working, but it was like a color code.

Lakisha Odom ([00:47:49](#)):

Everybody knew the color code. And so if you went to somebody's office, they had a green sticky and it was like, okay, they're working on a project and they don't want to be disturbed. Right. And so you didn't have to explain anymore kind of what it was. Everybody kind of learned a common language. Another example of heard that I love is exactly what you mentioned, like creating a manual, like a short description of how you like to be communicated with. And I know some people would probably listen to this and go, that feels like a lot of work, but I don't think so to get the benefit of the diversity, right? Because I'm an introverted person I'll own it I'm aggressively introverted. And so they're just, some spaces were trying to get me to respond to you on the spot in that meeting, you're not getting my best idea.

Lakisha Odom ([00:48:32](#)):

You're getting whatever I'm thinking about in that moment. I'm a person that maybe needs to sit with things 24 hours, but I just need to sit with things or see things in advance in order to really feel like I'm giving my best answer. So I think if leaders would hear this and say, that feels like a lot of work, the question is, do you want your best out of your employees? And if so, we can't help how our brains are wired. And there's so much benefit to being introverted, extroverted, in between, being a person that loves crowds, being a person that likes to be alone, that person you hired has values. So learning how to work with them in a way that just brings out their best value. I can't imagine that that's the thing that people wouldn't want to do. And it's so helpful when people just tell me, I prefer in person meeting and I can say, I prefer emails.

Lakisha Odom ([00:49:20](#)):

I'll meet you in the middle, but there'll be some moments where I might really say, Hey, I'm overloaded on meetings today. Can we do it tomorrow? Because what I want as a colleague is to give you my best,

right? That's what I want. I want to show up and help solve the problem that you're scheduling a meeting with me for in the first place. So if I can't be in my best mindspace, then that's not helpful. And I think that will be another like practical thing that I appreciate that I've learned this year about how to deal with all of this change is to give yourself grace that someday you don't is not the best day to talk or deal with the thing if it's possible. Right? I understand sometimes with deadlines you can't avoid that, but sometimes you can take a beat and say, this is not the best day to have. I'm not my best self today.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:50:18](#)):

So there's two parts to that. I want to, I'd like to go into just one is up on the organization side. Absolutely. Right. There is a, there is so much that can be done. Uh, there organizations do this, uh, I will say that it is imperative that leaders do this and create the space and really what that requires. First of all, as leaders actually believing in what we're discussing and having the self-connection and awareness to do it because it really does start with the self and a leader. Being able to say, I recognize that the productivity of my people is going to it really going to optimize it. If they feel that they're in these places and I'm willing to try these areas, I'm willing to be open. And what we're also describing are, or being open to different ways of approaching the workplace that we, that we're not conventionally looked to, but have been shown, I think repeatedly to also not serve the organization.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:51:13](#)):

And I think the organizations I've enjoyed working with the teams that I've enjoyed working with, who really demonstrate this, do live this. And part of it is they recognize that you start from a place of being open and you start from a place of having that discussion. So whether it's a new project team spending the time to say, well, what are our say, what are our norms? What are these rules of engagement? How do we want to communicate? I do this with my team, every new person, every project, every client, you know, you've been through it. Like when, how do you want me to communicate? When do you, what's your preferred style part of it's simply because I want this to be as beneficial to you as possible. So on an organizational level, there's a ton of tools, but I really comes back to, I think there's a willingness and an appetite and an understanding by leaders that to do this well, it requires vulnerability.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:52:01](#)):

And that requires understanding that vulnerability is a strength. And I would say that's probably the biggest area that I've run into collectively in the last 20 years across sectors is that we live in a world where vulnerability is seen as a weakness and leaders are incentivized to suppress the very thing that could probably change it. So if they really can step into, this is the self, like really step into the self. So I really want to shift to the second piece, which is again, the self and really what do we do, because I think this is where it all starts. So for the organization to be there for the woman of color that we're talking about, like, how do you manage in the self it's individually. What are those things we can do? And I really do think that the biggest steps is it's our conversation we have with ourself.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:52:44](#)):

And you've already, you talked about, we brought up self-love, it's the idea of like really approaching ourselves with kindness. It's really hard to put kindness out there in the world if we don't have it to ourselves. And I think that is probably where I think through COVID through a lot of it, it really has, I think, highlighted that there's a collective frustration and sadness at the individual level that we're directing at ourselves. And that really doesn't serve us. Doesn't make us happy. That's not creating, but it, it definitely affects everyone around us. So I would say that the, before, even that organization can

start that the individual can, I think that's the first step is really having space to actively look to yourself and talk to yourself with kindness.

Lakisha Odom ([00:53:30](#)):

I think you're right, like kindness. And also just remembering that in a lot of ways, the system, the ways in which we measure our work and productivity are steeped in institutional racism. It's everything else, right? So there's some spaces where this idea around what is productive. Like I had this conversation with myself recently where I was beating myself up about not being resilient enough for a particular challenge. Right. And I kept saying like, why can't I do it this time? Every other time I can suffer through it. I can stick through it. I can get the job done. And then I stopped and said, why am I measuring my resilience? Right? Why is it that the measure of my resilience is how much pain I can take, not how much joy I can invite, not how much innovation I can seek out, not how many solutions, but really it was, normally, no matter what you throw at me, I could stick through the pain.

Lakisha Odom ([00:54:33](#)):

And I just thought, I don't want to do that anymore. But the reality is in a lot of ways, the ways that we've been indoctrinated to think about being productive in the workspaces is a lot of that energy, right? It's a lot of unhealthy and I think racist and sexist views around how you're supposed to work, what looks like productivity, always have to prove yourself. You're never enough. You're constantly seeking approval. And I think there's some spaces where you can go, as you said, with kindness, right? And being honest and authentic about your abilities and skills and, and being patient with yourself. And that some days you may not be able to do all of the things you do, that doesn't change that you are a productive member of your organization. So I think there's some spaces where even trying to dismantle that inner voice around what makes us a good employee, what makes us good at our jobs, right? Even some of that is tainted.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:55:39](#)):

Absolutely. And I want to clarify something very important and it has to do with the word productivity because I use it in a very different way than I think it would be defined by society or the connotation. And the reason is the actual thought of productivity, the way we really come to it. And I think back to like our Puritan roots and really in itself is problematic. And there was this book, I think it's from the nineties about white supremacy and what are some of the underlying beliefs that create some of these systemic issues. And there's a great summary that we'll link to in this podcast description, but one of those ideas is productivity. And we look at what it's done. It has created this realm of really reducing the human experience to just some very basic operational elements. And I think that we all have embedded that, that our worth and our value is connected to the ability to stay busy, not so it, it has really, I think over time evolved to just the quantity takes over quality.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:56:42](#)):

Right? There's no sense that quality actually matters. And what that effectively then does, is it leads to this internal dialogue we're talking about, which is, well, I'm not feeling great and I didn't do, you know, X amount of emails or I didn't do 10 new things for my kids or I, I wasn't, I didn't put in 20 hours today, whatever strange math happens because we've come to we've actually, again, species with amazing capability have gone to kind of the lowest common denominator where we're measuring our own self-worth in the most limited and, and really like not helpful of measures and that, you know, where does that come into this whole discussion of diversity and STEM and research, which is really what we're

focused on around here is that that's the antithesis of being able to live in a diverse, productive space. That's the antithesis of research and science and innovation, because if the measures productivity and the measures, these really basic elements, you lose everything else.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([00:57:40](#)):

And I think so, and again, starts with our ability to intercept it the way you described it to say, pause, why am I beating myself up for something that quite frankly, I never even put on myself, but I think the question I have for a lot of folks is do you know what matters to you? I think that's really a start. What's the value to you. And the more you spend on defining that value to you, the more you search extract yourself from the system and really create the space of that self-worth that stays with you kind of irrespective of where you are.

Lakisha Odom ([00:58:09](#)):

Yeah, I think that's absolutely right. And I think there's some spaces where there's a weird tendency, or at least I had this tendency when I started questioning, like, questions around what I think about productivity or work or being a good member of society, employee, et cetera. Right. Is a lot of it was this idea that if I'm not constantly busy, am I doing enough. And what thought through or been reading about is how important rest is to creativity. And so if in my role, it was part of what I do is think about where the next important research is or who is that next partner, what's that new innovative project. And so you find yourself needing to have that mental space out. Of course, it depends on the work that you do, the nature of the work that you do, how you can do this, right? So I'm not advocating that everyone will be able to operationalize this the same way.

Lakisha Odom ([00:59:12](#)):

But I do think that everyone could, as Shefali mentioned, like figure out what your values are, what your, what your, I hate to use the terms. There's no other way for me to describe what kind of, what your core values are as a person, what your brand is. Right. And I spent a lot of time thinking through that. For me, mine was like being accountable, being active, supporting connectivity. Those are my three things like anything I do. They come back to probably in some way, those three things. And so thinking about what is no longer in service of that, and I'm doing that and what can I offload realistically, because some things you can and some things you can't and how do you manage the expectations for the things that you can't and how do you replenish yourself? Right. I take no credit for this. This is a social media account. I follow called The Nap Ministry but rest is revolutionary. And thinking about the way specifically women, specifically women of color, specifically black women have not been allowed to rest, have the idea that we rest equals laziness equal not being up to par. And so we shy away from this vision, right? We feel like we have to work twice as hard, three times, four times, five times as hard. And I know you feel the same thing anywhere, but that is also I think, a tool of oppression, because if you constantly keep someone hustling for approval, they're exhausted. They're not being creative and they're a little bit more easily controlled, right?

Shefali Mehta (host) ([01:00:44](#)):

It definitely has connections to the colonial past, like European colonialism across the board, because there were many cultures. And this is where I feel very lucky that I was born into a spiritual belief and culture, where for whatever reason, we are able to connect back over several thousand years, which is rare just as a species, because it's hard to keep track of that long, but we can see in a lot of the, I think the lessons that have been handed down over those years through my ancestors were really around the

fact it's actually quite the opposite. Like our worth is not in our, busy-ness our ability to truly blossom and grow and become the potential as a species requires space and pause and thought. And only if you have that, can you then be in that best. So it actually advocates for, if you see just this act of busy-ness, it could actually, it actually signals problematic issues.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([01:01:42](#)):

Whether on the individual, are you, are you not able to face yourself? Are you in a situation where you're so overwhelmed that you can't to the systemic issue you're describing, which is it is how you keep people from thinking. And it's how you keep people from finding that authentic self, defining themselves at the individual level. And it's interesting because it's people are, might be listening and wondering, wow, what again, what does this have to do with diversity and, and STEM and in an organization, one of the, uh, for me, at least this has always been for me. It's an interesting indicator. I always look to see what are the leaders, especially those people who have strategic roles or research, how do they organize their calendars and their time? And if, and when you go and you see that they're in 10 hours of meetings, I immediately think, well, this person's thinking, how can you, we need space. We need time. We need that, that replenishment. So what you're saying to me is you've created no space for thinking, and you're perpetually in meetings and you're perpetually, you keep busy, you probably look busy. Maybe that feels good, but the pieces that are probably going to be the differentiator are missing. And those are actually like red flags. And I think that's where this really, then, then you can't do the kind of diverse integration we're talking about.

Lakisha Odom ([01:02:51](#)):

And I think that like, to take your point, I don't know if I felt good when I was busy, but I felt, and I'm working through that. I'm a recovering worthy holic, whatever that is. But I think that's what it is, is I felt like I was pooling my worth when I was busy. And I'm still, there's quite, I think there was a space where, you know, feeling like every second had to be filled, and this is what I also want to say is I recognize in some ways the spaces of privilege from which I am speaking, right? Because I'm thinking about my mother who was a LPN nurse, her whole career, there are certain spaces where you don't have the latitude to make some of these changes in your professional life, um, without doing a significant shift of job. Right? So I'm not saying everyone can say, I'm going to change my calendar and change that.

Lakisha Odom ([01:03:49](#)):

That is a space of privilege I'm speaking from. But I do feel as though there's always room to ask yourself what you value. So, you know, what is important to you and the create little pockets of rest, if that's all you can do is 30 minutes, 15 minutes of quiet, you know, just to send to yourself and make sure that you're actually feeling your feelings instead of just kind of going through the motions. And I think that's more now than ever. And I think like to me, this conversation ties back to our earlier conversation. When we were talking about how it feels to be a person of color in, uh, in, in a certain space, right? And it's thinking through like, practically, how do we take better care of ourselves? How do we become more honest with ourselves and others about what we need? How do we show up as for our full selves?

Lakisha Odom ([01:04:43](#)):

And that may just be my own personal challenge because I recognize that in an effort to not feed into a lot of stereotypes, I was very, I've been less authentic with myself. Right. And I own that. And I acknowledge that. And, and if there's anyone else that did that, I invite you to try to not do that as much, because showing up more, my full self is doing nothing but benefiting my organization, benefiting the

work that I can do, the impact that I can have, the change that I can affect. Right. And recognizing that shift, I'm not done yet by any means, but I've noticed some very positive changes since I've started thinking about a lot of these things around boundaries and productivity and rest and creativity.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([01:05:34](#)):

Oh, absolutely. And this is a beautiful place to actually wrap up this discussion because it really is about it's about the self. And you started this as you described the fatigue of the unintended consequences that came with a lot of this country and a lot of communities looking and understanding really the complete, like just the entrenched systemic racism. And we are just scratching the surface right. Of hundreds and hundreds of years, not only in America, but across the globe. Some of the most bizarre behaviors like policing when you're, you're, when I think this has happened where white people feel, people of color are not outraged enough or are not, you know, exhausted. And, and really it's the ability to step back, as you just said, and to exactly that, which is, I think all of us are working very hard to find those paths and, and be our authentic selves and define ourselves. But in doing that, our organizations are better as you said, others, but quite frankly, we're happier. Like I think that is the path to joy as a species, as on the human level, as we're on that process. And as we find it, we find those places that give us those, to give us that meaning.

Lakisha Odom ([01:06:46](#)):

And I like that, I feel like the title of this podcast should be joy in the midst of metamorphosis, because we're talking about is, like you said earlier, like this is work won't end until the systems are brought down and recreated this work won't end. So how do you protect yourself from being completely burnt out? And then unable to engage? How do we find joy in the midst of tumultuous, chaotic change? That's what it feels like we're actually talking about today because it's not, of course the racial component, but there's also a pandemic. There's also a complete shift in the way that most of us are working. And we weren't necessarily prepared for what that looks like. And it, at least I wasn't. Right. And, and it's so much discomfort in some ways, in a lot of ways, great discomfort, but still discomfort. So the idea of being able to tap into more peace, more centeredness, more joy, more of ourselves, I think for me at least, it became like almost an imperative that I figured out a way to do this or else. I was like, I don't know if I'm going to be able to weather all of this change. You know, the exact same way I came into it. This is forcing me to grow, which I appreciate, but it's uncomfortable

Shefali Mehta (host) ([01:08:15](#)):

Well once again, I want to thank you so much for taking time to speak with me. It's been entertaining, enlightening. I, I love talking with you. So I always appreciate these moments and you've once again, hit on so many important things that I hope that folks listening to resonate. We're looking forward to hearing back from folks with their own ideas and thoughts about how they respond to this. And I'm looking forward to what comes next. This world does not get boring. And, but it's also a lot of fun and a lot of joy. So thank you so much LaKisha for your time.

Lakisha Odom ([01:08:49](#)):

Thank you. And thank you for sharing the strategies for joy with me and some of the spaces where you've grown and hopefully your listeners will be able to share some of their either struggles or path to joy. And if they could pick up one thing from anything, when you said, I feel like it was a great time spent.

Shefali Mehta (host) ([01:09:12](#)):

Well, folks, it's a wrap. Thank you for joining us in our final episode of season three, where we were once again, honored to be joined by Lakisha to talk about this incredibly important topic and what we can all do to truly change the narrative, but really change the landscape and make this better for all of us and all of us who want to work in agriculture and food, and really make a difference. As always learn more about our discussion on open-rivers.com, where you can find links to resources related topics and other relevant episodes. We'd be so grateful if you rate, review, and share this podcast and whatever platform you're listening to us on. And I'd personally like to thank all of you for listening. This was a pet project of mine and something I've wanted to do for many years. And the feedback and response from so many of you has been incredible. It's been unexpected. And I thank you for supporting us through these three seasons. So we hope you enjoyed it. And I hope to bring you more episodes in the future. Thank you again.