

**Ep #85: (Part 1) Equality, Empowerment,
and Impossible Dreams
with Dr. Tererai Trent**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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Tererai: So in our lives we have to reach a point where we ask ourselves, do I want to be a victim or do I want to pass on a better baton to the next generation? And tipping into what we are meant to be, it's important, and I think we have talked about we are the carriers of the dreams that our ancestors have always wanted us to be, never to be oppressed and never to be silenced. And so we have that wisdom within us, so when we decide I'm not going to pass on, it could be the baton of self-judgment.

You know how sometimes how we self-judge ourselves; we doubt who we are and we entertain those ugly thoughts that will demean us? We have to say, "No, I have wisdom within me." And the wisdom that was passed on down from generations before you, but to tap into that wisdom we have to recognize the hungers that we carry. What do we hunger for in this life? And for me I hungered for meaning in my life. I wanted to change this narrative, never to be the girl who married young, who had babies, we had no education, but to redefine my story in my narrative.

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That was a clip from my conversation with Dr. Tererai Trent. Dr. Trent is one of the most internationally acclaimed voices for women's empowerment and quality education.

Hailed by Oprah Winfrey as her all-time favorite guest, Dr. Trent is an inspiring and dynamic scholar, educator, humanitarian, motivational speaker, author and the founder of Tererai Trent international. She has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show, Super Soul Sessions, CNN, the Voice of Africa, CNBC, and has spoken at the United Nations, TEDx, the

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Women in the World summit and the Emerging Women summit, among others.

She received her PhD in Interdisciplinary Evaluation from Western Michigan University and holds Master's Degrees in Public Health and Plant Pathology. She is also the author of the award winning *The Awakened Woman: A Guide for Remembering and Igniting Your Sacred Dreams*.

I had the great honor and privilege of meeting Dr. Trent several years ago in Iowa when she was a keynote speaker for the National Resilience Institute, for which at the time for a few years I had been serving as the Creative Director and the MC for their annual summit.

She was the keynote speaker that year and it was an event hearing her speak that rearranged me and changed my life. And I am so grateful that she was enthusiastic and agreed to this interview here today. Because I know hearing her story, hearing the wisdom, the healing and the truth that she conveys through her inimitable storytelling ability will also awaken something in you that will forever leave you rearranged.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Hello, everyone, welcome to those of you that are new and welcome back to my listeners who have been with me for a while. For all of you though, this is a first time occasion on one level because this is the first podcast I'm recording in our new house. So we are moved in, we are still transitioning

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things over from the old farmhouse into our new home. But we are here, sleeping here, eating here, loving it and it really kind of is uncanny that this is the podcast that I'm recording here, this podcast about believing in your impossible dreams and achieving them.

This home is one manifestation of a big dream of mine. And it was one I know I shared with Tererai when I met her years ago when we didn't have blueprints, I think, yes, we did have the land here. But just one of many dreams that have come to fruition or are unfolding. And so it was really wonderful to connect again with Tererai for this podcast. When we recorded this is weeks ago, it was before the murder of George Floyd, it was before the crisis of racism came to a head again, and protests and demonstrations had broken out.

You'll hear Tererai talk about this being an uncertain time and you'll hear her share what she does to center herself and find her courage and vision again in uncertain times. And neither of us knew we were talking about the uncertain times of the pandemic when we recorded this. And not knowing what was soon just coming around the corner.

So I think too, really fortuitous and a blessing that she and I were able to have this conversation, because although I was not able to ask her a direct question about her perspective, experience, thoughts about racism in America and around the world. She does speak powerfully and eloquently to systems of oppression and to breaking cycles of oppression. And so I think the meta theme is very relevant, and again, somewhat very uncanny, given that we didn't know the turn of events that was about to happen when we had this conversation.

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And like I said in the intro when I met Tererai, I felt I was rearranged and for the better. And I think now again we're in a time I can feel myself be rearranged and I know many of you my dear listeners, are feeling the same way. And the world is the same and I know we are wanting to do our best to rearrange ourselves for the better, for the better of the world, so that it is a better world and better systems, a better life for everyone.

And again, Tererai speaks so eloquently to this from a place of both drawing on ancient wisdom traditions that were handed down to her through her natural linear line. She grew up in Zimbabwe. I'll share her formal intro in just a moment. And then also through her current modern life moving from Zimbabwe and receiving her higher education, her undergraduate, her master's degree and her PhD in the United States. And then going on to be an internationally acclaimed speaker and humanitarian, an advocate and champion of women's rights, children's rights, so these very global issues.

And she also speaks so wisely and profoundly to transformation on the individual level. And I know she also knows that that is where the most profound transformation on the global level begins and is going to happen. It was her own story, this awakening, and this remembering and reigniting of her sacred dream, how changing and transforming her life has allowed her to change the world and so many other lives in such powerful, deep meaningful ways.

So a little personal back story before I share Dr. Trent's formal biography with you. I met Tererai, I believe it was 2015. As I mentioned, I was serving for a few years as the Creative Director for a non-profit called the National Resilience Institute, which has since also developed an international branch called Worldmaker International.

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So NRI was founded by another very dear and important mentor and friend of mine, Mollie Marti – Dr. Mollie Marti. And I was on a conference call for NRI one day with Mollie and a few others from the NRI team. And they said, “Hey, great news, we have found the best MC for our annual summit.” And I said, “That’s great, who is it?” And then there was a pause on the line and it was, I could tell, like a funny pause on the line.

I’m like, “Oh, it’s me, it’s me.” And Mollie said, “Well, will you?” And I was honored and flattered and then also a little bit daunted by it. MC is not something I was accustomed to doing. And she said, “No, I think you’ll be fantastic and you’ll do a great job. And also you are going to love the speakers we have lined up.” And she said, “Particularly the keynote speaker, Dr Tererai Trent.” She said, “You are going to be blown away, I cannot wait for you to meet.”

And it was one of those times when I really wanted to say no, because, basically because I was afraid of the public speaking and being unprepared for that. But then something in me too when she had said, “You are going to be blown away,” and the way she talked about Dr. Trent, to me it had the feeling of it, something I call like a god ask, or like an invitation from the universe. Where even though a lot of me was saying no, the most important part of me said yes, and so I did.

And I was so nervous right up to the morning of it, I didn’t sleep much the night before. I felt like I wanted to vomit that morning. I thought, well, if I do then I have a pretty legitimate excuse for saying I can’t do it. Maybe they can find someone else last minute. But of course I didn’t want to back out either. So I went ahead and did it and then that day it went really well actually once I got there, and gotten into the groove of things. And it also, I

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think maybe all of those nerves and all of that energy was a part of me that was anticipating a really important moment in my life.

Mollie, as a mentor had already been so important and monumental for me. And then when she introduced me to Dr. Trent it was another one of those times in your life where you can look back and see how things have changed and how you have changed since that time. And I introduced her and then I sat in the audience.

And by the way, the way I introduced her was I introduced her and then there is a film reel of like Oprah introducing her. So nothing like introducing someone who has been introduced by Oprah to make you feel like, hey, I have got something to learn here, no pressure. But anyway, then I went back and sat in my seat, and was mesmerized, was captivated. I literally could feel the energy of what she was saying, I could feel it in my bones. I was literally physically moved. I just felt like my cells rearranged themselves, again, it's just that cellular level.

And it was a very profound experience. And then to cap it off, Mollie had invited us both to stay on at her home that weekend. And we had this epic long, these long talks into the night, Dr. Trent, Dr. Marti, Tererai, Mollie, myself. And it was just really a very extraordinary special weekend. And I'll share a little bit more about that at the end. But needless to say, both of these women have had such an incredible impact on my life. And you'll hear Tererai speak about the women that have had an impact on her life in this podcast.

And you'll see too that she is just someone who she carries that forward, that's a baton she's passing forward is this, this act of reaching back and pulling other women up. It takes a lot of energy for her to do this and yet at

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the same time it's just so ingrained in her, helping others come alive, reigniting their own sacred dreams. And when we met that weekend I felt that we met on that ground too, that are just this innate desire to awaken the potential in women. And knowing that that is a force to be reckoned with, and that will rearrange the world and transform the world.

And when we met it was actually just months after we met that she was approached by Simon & Schuster and offered a book deal to write a non-fiction book, which then became *The Awakened Woman: A Guide for Remembering and Igniting Your Sacred Dreams*.

And then I had the honor to – she invited me to share my story of remembering and igniting my own sacred dreams and my journey of transformation. After having become a lawyer and then recreating and transforming my life as an artist and then as a coach, mentor, teacher of creativity and also really fundamentally about awakening the creative potential and the dream seeds within other women.

So, *The Awakened Woman* is described as being her accessible, intimate and evocative guide that teaches nine essential lessons to encourage all women to reexamine their dreams and uncover the power hidden within them, power that can recreate our world for the better. So you can see already how on the same vibe we were about that awakening the power hidden within women to recreate our world for the better. The book went on to be the winner of the 2017 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work in the instructional category.

Essence magazine herald *The Awakened Woman* as empowering women to access a fearlessness that will enable community progress.

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That was written in 2017 and is never more relevant than today. Oprah also praised the book, she wrote a foreword and Oprah rarely writes forewords, I will tell you more of that story in next week's podcast, so be sure to come back to get the second part.

And in the meantime if you haven't read this book yet, I highly, highly recommend it. I'm going to dive right into the interview with Tererai as if you have read it because you can hear her cover the book again in any other podcast. And I really wanted to use this conversation to share different nuances and to go a little bit more deeply into some of the stories that are in the book. And also just to allow you to experience her energy and the wisdom and healing that is conveyed through her storytelling.

So before we do get to the conversation, here is Dr. Tererai Trent's story. Tererai grew up in a cattle herding family in rural Zimbabwe where she dreamed of getting an education but was married at a young age and had three children by the time she was 18. Undeterred by traditional women's roles and cultural norms, Tererai determinedly taught herself to read and write from her brothers' schoolbooks.

As a young mother without a high school diploma, Tererai met a woman who would profoundly impact her life, Jo Luck, President and CEO of Heifer International. She told Tererai, "If you believe in your dreams they are achievable." Which Tererai said and translated into her language as Tinogona. With Jo Luck's inspiration and Tererai's mother's encouragement, Tererai wrote down her dreams of going to America for higher education, sealed them in a tin can and buried them under a rock, ultimately redesigning the blueprint of her life.

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Dr. Trent could not have imagined that her steadfast determination, hard work and belief in her dreams would eventually earn her multiple degrees and a prominent global platform with world leaders and international audiences where she advocates for quality education for all.

A two time guest on the Oprah Winfrey Show, Oprah donated 1.5 million to rebuild Tererai's childhood elementary school in Zimbabwe, and in recognition of her tenacity and never give up attitude. Today, Dr. Trent is a senior consultant with more than 18 years of international experience in program and policy evaluation. And has worked on five continents for major humanitarian organizations.

With a desire to give back to her community and the firm belief that education is a pathway out of poverty, Dr. Trent founded Tinogona Foundation, now known as the Tererai Trent International, TTI. Whose mission is to provide universal access to quality education to children, regardless of their gender or socioeconomic backgrounds, and also to empower rural communities. Through strategic partnerships with Oprah Winfrey and Save The Children, 11 schools are being built in Zimbabwe and education has been improved for over 5,000 children so far.

Leading the global charge and the fight for quality education for all children and women's rights, Dr. Trent is invited to speak all over the world, to share her remarkable story and the valuable lessons she has learned along the way. And now today she joins us for *The Art School Podcast*, I hope you enjoy.

I am thrilled to welcome to *The Art School Podcast*, a dear friend, a woman that has changed my life and I know to this moment continues to change

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the lives of tens of thousands of people, millions yet, I still predict. So please welcome Art School audience, Tererai Trent – Dr. Tererai Trent.

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Tererai: Thank you. Thank you. I think we've changed each other's lives, you also have changed mine, Leah, thank you for having me.

Leah: Well, I know the first time I met you, encountered you in person, and I heard you speak; you're a keynote speaker for the National Resilience Institute annual summit. And I felt in my bones like my cells rearrange. And so much has been different in my life from that moment forward, hearing you use your voice and the power in your voice and message. And since that time you have also written a book and you continue to speak all around the world. And so I'm really honored to have you speak to our audience today.

And I will have given a formal introduction to you before this podcast started, before we started recording today. And I'm also going to link to your book, which I have already mentioned many times throughout the life of this podcast. And I encourage everybody to read that, and I was telling you before we got on that you're someone to me that seems to have lived seven lives within your years that you've lived. And when I read your book for the first time, with each story I felt like could have been a book within itself.

So what I want to offer the listeners today is a chance to hear you go deeper into some of those stories. And one we just talked about just before we started recording was I wanted you to talk about those years between when you buried your dreams, your dreams of going to the United States

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and getting an undergraduate degree, a master's degree, a PhD. And then the fourth dream of returning to Zimbabwe to open a school. And then it took eight years for you to get – is it the high school equivalency degree, is it?

Tererai: Yeah, it took me eight years. When I met the woman who inspired me and women were inspiring one another. So she asked me in my small village, we had gained our independence, so we were kind of new and there was this promotion of women's empowerment. And she had asked me, "What are your dreams?" And I had never put words to my dreams because I was a silenced woman. I was a woman who lived in an abusive relationship and never thought that I had any value in society as a woman.

So when she asked me, "What are your dreams?" I couldn't put words, I was silent, other women that were in that circle started talking about their dreams, but mostly the dreams to educate their own children. And she looked at me, and she was an American woman, and I remember we had been colonized for a long time. So we never get to see white people hanging with Black people. And so the way she came and joined our group and just sat there. And then she looked into my eyes and said, "You've never said anything, please, what are your dreams?"

And I told her, "I want to go to America. And I want to have an undergraduate degree, a master's and a PhD." And I remember there was silence and I could feel the other women saying, "How can you say that? You have four children living in an abusive relationship. Let alone you don't even have a high school education. How can you even think of going to America?" I could feel it and there was silence.

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And what surprised me was this stranger, and her name is Jo Luck, I later learned her name is Jo Luck, and when she came to my village she was a Program Officer. And today she – when I came to the US then I realized she was the CEO and President of Heifer International. And so she looked back at me and said, “If you believe in those dreams they are achievable.” And she used the word ‘Tinogona’. And in my mind I’m thinking, this woman must be crazy to even think that I, Tererai can go to America, I can have an undergraduate, I can have all these things.

And I went to my mother and I told my mother that I met a woman who made me believe in my dreams for an education. So my mother said, “Tererai, if you believe these dreams and you achieve these dreams after you’ve worked hard, not only are you defining who you are as a woman. But you are also defining every life that comes out of your womb in generations to come.”

And I knew my mother was handing me an inheritance. Because you see, I come from this long line of women who had been silenced, married very young before they could define their own dreams. And so my mother knew I needed in many ways to achieve these dreams because it would be a way to break that vicious cycle of poverty.

And I always talk about my great grandmother when she was born, she was born into this race, the poverty race and she’s running into this really holding the baton. And she runs with that baton, the baton of illiteracy, the baton of early marriage, the baton of abuse, the baton of a colonial system that oppressed her and she hands that baton to my grandmother. My grandmother grabs that baton and in this relay that she never defined. She ran, she has the baton of illiteracy, the baton of early marriage, abuse to my mother.

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My mother would turn and grab that baton and hand that baton to me. And so my mother said, “You write down those dreams and bury them the same way we bury the umbilical cord.”

When a child is born the elders of the village, the wisdom whisperers, the grandmothers, the librarians of our memories, the ones who reminded us that we have awoken dreams that our ancestors have always wanted. Would surround the baby and snip off the umbilical cord and bury that umbilical cord deep down in the ground. With the belief that this child when they grow, wherever they go, whatever happens in their life, the umbilical cord will always remind them of the importance of the place of their birth.

So my mother said, “You write down your dreams and bury them. No matter the abuse in your life, no matter the beatings from your husband. Your dreams will always remind you of the importance.” So I had my four dreams and my mother said, “I see your dreams, they only speak to your personal goals in life. But I want you to remember this, your dreams in this life will have greater meaning when they are tied to the betterment of your community.”

So I would end up writing my number five dream that when I am done with my education in America, I want to come back and improve the lives of women and girls in my community. And it would take me eight years to achieve my equivalent of a high school education. I didn't have any, which is here they call it GED. Eight years of failing and eight years of never giving up because we were still under the British system of education, where I would not fit into a classroom because I was already a mother.

So I had to do correspondence where I would write all my paperwork for my classes and send these exams to a place called Cambridge. And I had no

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idea where Cambridge is, and I didn't have money, so I needed about five subjects in total for me to achieve my GED, which is math, English, science, geography and a local language. And I could not register for all five because I was just poor. My mother was a subsistence farmer, she would grow vegetables and she would sell to allow me to register for two classes at a time.

So I would do two classes and I would send these papers to this place called Cambridge and wait, because I lived in the rural areas, poor, no running water, no electricity, nothing. So the post office was some distance away and I would go to take my exams, they would always come after every six months or so. The results would always come in a brown envelope. And I would open that brown envelope and I realized I have a U, ungraded, F failure. And I go to my mother and I say, "Mother, I have failed." My mother said, "Don't you worry we will sell more vegetables."

And she would sell more vegetables and I would retake the exam and wait and the paper comes back, that brown envelope, I open it, I have a U ungraded. And I would cry, "Mother, I have failed again." And my mother said, "No, you try again. We will sell more mangoes." And she would sell and I would go back and study hard and write again, and come eight years I have achieved A's and B's in all my subjects.

In many ways it speaks to the power of having a mentor who believes in us. And I think as women we need champions who can say, "Stand on my shoulder." And that's why my mother did. And reminding myself that I was in this race to pass on this baton and I don't want to pass this ugly baton, the baton of illiteracy, the baton of abuse, early marriage to my own daughters. So I knew I had a moral obligation, a second responsibility to

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make sure that that baton was going to be redefined, shifted, so I can pass on a different baton to my daughters.

And that's the reason why I never gave up, because I knew what was at stake, never ever to pass on the ugly baton, the baton that silences women.

Leah: So not only vegetables sustained you but also your mother, and also this deep conviction that this is your life but also the lives that change forever after. And I know it's not only been your daughters' lives. So before I ask you my next question, can you tell everyone how old you were when Jo Luck came and you're sitting in that circle?

Tererai: I was around 20 years, and I, by then I was expecting my fifth child. By the time I was 18 years of age I was already a mother of four, and one of the babies died as an infant because I failed to produce enough milk. I was a child myself. I was just following the same pathway that generations of women before me had followed.

But when I talk about this baton of illiteracy, being passed from my great grandmother to my grandmother, to my mother and to me. It's a vicious cycle that comes along with this baton. But my grandmother would always say, "But in this race, in this passing on of this ugly baton there's also the passing on of wisdom." So in our lives we have to reach a point where we ask ourselves, do I want to be a victim? Or do I want to pass on a baton to the next generation? And tipping into what we are meant to be, it's important.

And I think we have talked about we are the carriers of the dreams that our ancestors have always wanted us to be, never to be oppressed and never

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to be silenced. And so we have that wisdom within us so when we decide, I'm not going to pass on, it could be the baton of self-judgment. You know how sometimes we self-judge ourselves, we doubt who we are and we entertain those ugly thoughts that will demean us? We have to say, "No, I have wisdom within me." And the wisdom that was passed on down from generations before you.

But to tap into that wisdom we have to recognize the hungers that we carry, what do we hunger for in this life? And for me I hungered for meaning in my life. I wanted to change this narrative, never to be the girl who married young, who had babies, who had no education. But to redefine my story and my narrative and there are two kinds of hungers in our life.

There is the little hunger, and the little hunger is all about taking that – literally taking that baton, that ugly baton and keep on running with that baton. And sometimes just getting yourself to this blame shifts that you are the wrong one. But when you think of the great hunger, the greatest of all hungers, is hunger for meaning in our life.

Leah: So one thing that was so striking to me about the story within your book, the story within stories about those eight years was that you didn't put the baton down. And I think a lot of people, like you say, they have a calling and knowing. And some people will even say it feels old and ancient. And then they do doubt themselves and question themselves and ask, maybe I'm just imagining this, maybe this is illusions of grandeur. Who do I think I am?

And so they have a moment where they believe they're carrying a baton, they believe that their life was meant for meaning. And then a few years, maybe a few months goes by, or maybe that brown envelope, whatever it is

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for them, comes back with the U or the F and they think, I've failed. Therefore that means this baton is not mine, this is not my race to run.

But for eight years, your mother sustained you, the mangoes and the vegetables sustained you, this ability to tap into an ancestral knowing and this deep will and power within you that you would not pass this on in your lifetime. What was that like to be inside your mind, did you feel doubt at that time or was your knowing that this was what – part of what your life is meant to be, just so strong that the doubt couldn't stop it?

Tererai: I had moments of doubt obviously. But I was so fortunate to be surrounded by my mother, my grandmother and the ancient women in my community. My grandmother, my mother would say to me, "Tererai, go to this place where you buried your dreams and sit and visualize yourself as though you've already achieved your dreams."

So I grew up in a community that believed in rituals. So I would have my daily rituals, so every day I would go to this place and visualized myself getting into an airplane, going to America. And remember I had never seen an airplane. The only thing that looked like an airplane were war helicopters, because I grew up during the war. So there would be these helicopters flying into the community. And I would visualize myself getting into this helicopter and it would take me to America. Visualized myself even getting inside, finding a seat where I would sit.

And I had no idea what seat it was but I would just think I would find, somehow it has to be a chair stuck somewhere. Then I would visualize myself flying to this place called America, arriving and seeing these tall buildings. And I'm holding my books and I'm walking towards some

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classrooms and I'm in front of some teachers. And visualized myself attending my own graduation, I have achieved my undergraduate.

So all these dreams that I had written and buried deep down under the ground, remember they would bury, implant, in my language is the same. I would see, visualize those dreams being achieved, and I'm already living that life. And I remember the day that I got this white envelope from Oklahoma State University saying, I had been granted an undergraduate, to study my undergraduate in agriculture. And the day that I went to the airport and getting onto that airplane, there was this feeling, this déjà vu, like I've been here before.

This knowing that I've been here before, even though it took me many, many years to see that, but the feeling that I had lived with that dream as though it had already been achieved, oh gosh, that now it tears me up because, gee, yeah. And here I am, I remember getting to Oklahoma State University and realizing this is the dream, I graduated my undergraduate, it wasn't easy. I was always the oldest student in any class that I took but I never cared because all I wanted was to fulfill that life that I knew I was supposed to have.

Leah: Yeah. You, and not only were you an undergraduate student, you brought your children with you.

Tererai: Yeah, so three months down the road, you know, I was very fortunate that when Zimbabwe gained its independence, because we had been somehow colonized by these Rhodesians which were part of the British system. There was a lot of compassion and sympathy for Zimbabwe. So that time many non-governmental organizations or non-profits were really looking for women. And there were not that many women

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who had university degrees. And so I was fortunate, I started working in piece jobs here and there and saving my money to come to the US.

And so the Embassy – the US Embassy was so open for women to come to the US for their education. So I saved enough but it wasn't enough for all the airfares for the kids. And my community ended up selling mangoes and tomatoes and coming together. I think I was short about \$640 which I write in my book, and we got that money. So I came to the US first to secure a place to live and to make sure that I'm well received at the university. And then the kids came, it was, gosh, I was this student with no scholarship, with nothing, except the monies that I had saved.

And the way I saved my money, I was always afraid my husband would take my money and so I would hide my money and I would hide it in a bag of corn because my husband never cooked, he never came into the kitchen. But then at night I would have these dreams that he had found my money, and he had taken my money. So I ended up giving other people my money to keep it for me. And so the day that I received that letter that I was now going to America, I gathered all my money and came with my money.

And so when my kids arrived it meant that we needed a bigger place and the money wasn't enough. So I ended up living in a trailer house in Oklahoma. It was horrible, we had no electricity, we had pretty much nothing. It was almost like living in the rural areas. But then you see the yearning from your kids, they wanted bicycles. They wanted to watch TV because their friends would be watching those kinds of things.

And there was a time when my kids were brushing their teeth and I realized their gums were bleeding. And I knew they were missing fruits and vegetables, I couldn't afford fruits and vegetables. Somehow fruits and

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vegetables are expensive in America. In Africa we grow our own vegetables. So I grew up on vegetables, I grew up on fruits, you can go in the forest, you can find fruits, in America, no. Fruits, a little bit you have to pay a price to get those fruits.

So I went to the university and I said, “My kids they need fruits and vegetables.” So the university Vice President of Students – International Students, his name is Ron Beer, he said, “I hope you don’t mind leftover fruits and vegetables, some of these stores at the end of the day they throw away the fruits that are going bad.” And I said, “No, I don’t mind.”

We went to this store, the store guy says – the manager says, “No, we can’t do that in America. If we give you these shriveled fruits and vegetables that are already going bad and if you feed your kids or yourself, if anything happens you will end up suing us.” And I said, “Well, I have no money to sue anyone, please.”

And I’m crying, and the guy was very emotional and he said, “Okay, I’m going to give you the fruits and vegetables but I’m not going to hand them over to you, I’m going to put them in a cardboard box and place that cardboard box outside near the trashcan. Make sure by 4 o’clock you come and pick your cardboard box.” And unfortunately 90 to 99% I was late to that cardboard box because I had to take 18 hours of coursework and I was working three jobs and taking care of the kids. It was always a hassle in my life.

And so I would arrive there and find the cardboard box, it had already been placed in the trashcan and I would just retrieve some of the fruits and vegetables. And when it spilled into the trashcan I would gather everything, wash and feed my children. And ask myself, who am I to complain that my

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children are eating fruits from a garbage can when I know there are thousands, if not millions of kids in sub-Saharan Africa who live on the streets who are eating from dirty trashcans? At least in the American trashcan someone is washing it.

And who am I even to complain that I live in a trailer house with no electricity and it's dilapidated? When it rains I find myself in a corner with my children waiting for rains to go. Who am I when I know they have thousands of homeless women in America and in many western countries who are on the streets? At least my life is much better. Those thoughts grounded me, I knew I was better off, I had a better life and I could see at the end of the dark tunnel there was a light that I could see.

So that helped me in many ways to come home to myself, to realize that my life was much better than the life that I was seeing on the streets of Oklahoma.

Leah: That spirit in you, that is so strong. Do you feel that that is something that's been with you your whole life? Did you learn that from your mother, from your grandmother? You talk about the other women in your village, or do you just feel, have you always been that way, had that strong, strong spirit?

Tererai: I think what shapes us in our life is the stories that pass down from generations from before us. So we would sit around an open fire when I was young and listen to these stories, heroic stories of women getting by in a patriarchal society, in a colonial system. But women, were stories were also healing in many ways, were stories were also building the resilience in me because they were passing on stories from their ancestors and saying.

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“Our ancestors have always wanted a better life for ourselves, a better life for our children and our grandchildren.”

So in many ways that shaped me, even up to this very day when someone says, “It’s just impossible.” I always want to find ways to make it possible. And I’m not saying that I don’t reach a point where I want to give up, I reach those points. I reach those points, but somehow it kicks on me to say, what baton do I want for us? That grounds me, so I always find my own mantra, and mine is Tinogona which is it is achievable, we can do this.

Leah: And the way you talk about stories and the stories that shaped you and your life, and the stories that you continue to tell and the words you use, it makes me think there’s like a story could be just words on a page. But then there is another kind of story where there is an energy passed through it. And there is words that could, again, just be symbols and shapes and reading can be an intellectual exercise, hearing a story could just be something like sound waves.

And yet there is something I feel like a transference of spirit and of wisdom, wisdom in that old sense of wisdom being this life force and an intelligence and universe that’s passed through. And we get to use our words, and our knowing of each other through story, like there is a mythic, mythological, but I don’t mean in a sense of fairytale. I mean that it guides, a wisdom that guides us through these kinds of stories. That was part of your lineage, it seems like the storytelling that conveyed wisdom and truth and strength.

And I find it so, like it’s fascinating, surreal, it doesn’t even quite touch it to say then that you then wrote a book. That is this kind of storytelling, this kind of ancient mythic epic storytelling, where you’re not just retelling amazing tales, and they are. But there is some transference of energy and

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wisdom that has this all chemical ability to it. And it has this ability to transform the listener and the reader. And I know that was my very same experience hearing you speak that first – hearing your storytelling. But there was something else that you conveyed through the story.

Tererai: Because when we tell stories we are not only telling stories, we are also passing healing [inaudible]. And is the ancient wisdom and I always say women, we are the wisdom whisperers because we have gained that healing from the ancestors. And so when I share a story I'm also wanting the listener to see themselves in that story. To see the nuggets of who they are in that story and to find their own healing in that story. And remember, the stories that I listened to, they were stories of sore women, how the wounds, historical traumas from my ancestors.

But those wounds, the stories as they were being told about those wounds, they were also a healing that was being passed, never to be defined by these wounds. But they exist, it's part of our DNA, but also with the wisdom in how we tell our stories and how we make others feel the joy from that story. And to always remember that even though there were traumatic events in that story, but there was also wisdom that was being passed in that story. So stories provides a healing to us, and it's important to go back to storytelling to our folks and to our friends.

Leah: And something too that is so stunning to me is you talk about how these are stories that were passed on, of sore wounds and included stories of trauma and oppression. But not in the slightest is it a story of victimization, it's a hero's saga, and it's like an intergenerational one even where with each generation passing this down, that hero's strength is gathering and gathering.

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Tererai: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because if we don't tell our stories we become silenced. But in that narration of the story you are always asking yourself, is this the narration of who I want to be? Or in the telling of the stories, there is the good and the bad. There is the victimhood and the one who says, "No, I am part of the solution." But it's how then you tell the story in a way that brings healing. I'm not saying you avoid the bad parts, you tell the bad parts. But the bad parts, the end of the story how is that story going to heal the listener?

Otherwise I can be comfortable with a story that I was married young, I was exchanged for a cow as part of the marriage and that's the reason why I am here and my kids can't get an education, because of that. Do I want to remain in that story? It's comfortable, it brings pity, it brings sympathy. But I don't need sympathy, because my ancestors never wanted me to dwell in that story. I am part of the dream that I need to re-shift and redefine so I can pass on a different baton to the next generation, so that's the story that I want to tell, the story of hope and the story of forgiveness.

Leah: What a profound example to have not allowed anyone else to define your story or the end. Because you didn't have somebody ahead of you who had done what you wanted to do. That was a dream that was unlike anything, had you?

Tererai: No. But I knew in my bones, I knew I needed to change that narrative. I had listened to that narrative but also as I said, the sore wounding of my ancestors came with wisdom. And my mother said, "You are the one to break this vicious cycle and never to pass on this baton." And I knew I had that sacred responsibility. So in my everyday when I am confronted with it's impossible, I'm always asking myself, then will I allow

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this situation to silence me? Right now we are under tremendous uncertainty with the pandemic, it is silencing a lot of people.

And I get silenced sometimes, but I wake-up every day and go to my ritual and say, “Tererai, come home to yourself, never let fear, anxiety silence you.” Because if you allow that then you are passing on the baton of silencing to your children.

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Hello everyone again. Are you rearranged? Isn't Tererai just remarkable, life changing, truly? So this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to work with me, to coach with me, to take everything that Dr. Trent has just shared with us and think about how you want to apply it and integrate it in your life. So that you're not just consuming this as information, but you're taking it deep within and allowing yourself to be rearranged, to be changed, and to be transformed.

That's the way we transform our lives, and that's the way we transform the world. So you heard about Tererai taking her dreams, writing them down and planting them. I have done this. I did this the weekend I met her and I went to my parents' home in Northern Iowa, our family farm. We didn't yet have – now that I think of it we didn't have yet have access to this farm we have in Michigan.

And so I wrote down my dreams that weekend with Mollie Marti and Tererai Trent. And then I drove north a few hours in Iowa to bury my dreams in a tin can beneath a tree where my siblings and I used to play a lot when we were growing up. And it's good soil there in Northern Iowa, good for growing a lot of things, dreams included. So a lot of those dreams that I

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wrote down and shared with Tererai that weekend too, parts of those dreams I share in my story that is shared in her book. And some of those dreams I am living out right now as I talk to each and every one of you.

And so I would ask you, it's been quite the year, 2020, again, I'm recording this June 2020, and it's also important that you pause and connect within and reconnect with those dreams. Like you heard Tererai say that she would go out to visit the dreams. And she had a ritual of visualizing them again and again, and when we weren't recording she shared too that in some ways it was easier to visualize in Zimbabwe, because there wasn't so much competing noise.

And so that's what I want to offer all of you this week, take time out to reconnect with your dreams. And then also consider is there, like Tererai's dream, that that dream you can add that connects to the greater good of all. Tap into that as well, tapping into that I think allows us to tap into a more universal creativity and does facilitate this process of awakening these. Not only the sleeping dreams, but also these sleeping creative powers that we have to transform our lives and transform the world.

If you want I am holding this summer, I've been offering free group coaching as well as the summer workshop series for the Art School and the Mastermind, because I want to create these spaces, these extraordinary creative ecosystems where you can tap into your sacred dreams. And also the power, the creative power you have to transform your life in the world. And it's important that you carve out time to do this, this doesn't just happen on the fly. So do that for yourself this week, you can connect with us in the Art School or you can do this on your own.

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But do take that time to remember your dreams, to ask yourself how you are going to reignite them and how you're going to tap into that awesome creative power within all of us to transform and be transformed.

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you have enjoyed this podcast, if these episodes have been useful for you, if they have helped you start to facilitate your own transformation. The best thing you can do to pay it forward is to share and is to subscribe and go to iTunes and leave a review. I am so grateful for each and every review you leave. I know that takes time out of your day and that matters immensely to me. So thank you for taking the time out of your day to listen, to tune into the podcast. And thank you so much for letting me know that you are.

And for those of you that have taken the time to leave a review I truly appreciate it. And when you're ready to take this work deeper there are two ways to do that. There is the Art School Fall and there is the Art School Mastermind. So the Art School Fall is open and we are enrolling, because when you enroll in either the Art School or the Mastermind you are automatically included at no extra cost in the summer workshop series.

So the best thing to do to learn more about these is to go to my website, www.leahcb.com. You'll see the respective pages for the Art School and for the Mastermind, you can go there to learn more.

Also if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us at support@leahcb.com, we'll answer all of your questions and take excellent care of you. And if you want to stay informed of updates about free classes, and I'm offering a lot of these, please sign up for my mailing list at www.leahcb.com, that's l.e.a.h.c.b.com. We would love to have you in this extraordinary community of powerhouse creators.

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And if you want to expand your capacity to tap into your creative potential, to inspire, to create at a higher level, to move your income and your life to the next level, to transform your own life in the world. There is no community and no coaching out there like this, so we would love to have you join us.

To close today I'd like to leave you with the words that awakened and reignited sacred dreams of Tererai's, sacred dreams that then allowed her to go on and transform not only her life, the lives of her children, the lives within her community, within her country, but also lives around the world. And those are the words Jo Luck spoke to her when she looked her in the eye and said, "Girl, tell me, what are your dreams?" And she repeated, "If you believe in your dreams they are achievable." Or as Tererai would say, "Tinogona."

So one more thing before we leave today, I have a dream, I don't think it's that impossible, to share with all of you, and I would love your help. This might be like the six degrees of separation exercise, this could be crazy fun to see how this works. But they're not so impossible because I can totally see it as being the next natural step for Dr. Trent's incredible powerful book, *The Awakened Woman*. Is I would love to have Reece Witherspoon read this and feature it in her book club.

So if any, all of you listening would ping Reece about this book, even though it was published four years ago, I think now is it's time. And again, I'm going to plant that dream in the hearts and minds of all of you creative powerhouses who know how to make things happen out there. And I know something extraordinary is going to come of this. So, thank you in advance for all of your magic, all your creativity and your help.

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Have a beautiful week, everyone, Tinogona, and I will talk to you next time.