

**Ep #86: (Part 2) Equality, Empowerment,
and Impossible Dreams
with Dr. Tererai Trent**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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Tererai: This idea of I can do it by my own, I think we come in this society, in the western society, where we have learned a lot from the Native Americans. Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within the web. Whatever we do to the web we do it to ourselves. All things are bound together, all things are connected together. Our very survival is connected to the survival of others, that's what makes humanity.

In the African context they say ubuntu, "I am because we are, since we are, therefore I am." When we greet one another, even with strangers, sawubona which means I see you. And the stranger would say, ngikhona, which means I am here to be seen with my vulnerabilities, with my soul wounding, with my joy, that's the power of our ubuntu, the power of the web we can build, is build out of love.

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That was a clip from my conversation with Dr. Tererai Trent. Today is the second part in a two part episode, so be sure to listen to last week's episode to get the full introduction and to not miss a single moment of what Dr. Trent has to share.

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, and welcome again to *The Art School Podcast*. If you missed last week's conversation, the first part of this two part series with

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Dr. Tererai Trent, be sure to go back and listen to that. You'll hear her full bio, you'll hear the introduction. I share a little bit of the story about how we met. And as well as the coach with me at the end, so be sure to listen to that one and then come on back for this one.

Before I jump into introducing today's episode, I want to say that we talk a lot in this episode about the power of the collective. And truly working with Mollie Marti, working with Tererai, shifted so much for me in how I thought about creativity and resilience. It was really, you know, there are many things along the way, but Tererai and Molly have been very influential for me in thinking about how our thriving is really a social experience, our creativity can be a social experience.

And I think it's been amazing and so much fun to see in the Art School as we have introduced these Virtual Artists' dates. So many artists identify, not all, but some as introverts. And to see people seeing how, saying how incredible it is to be in their own space but creating together and creating in community, I have a lot of people that will say too, you know, they'll come having wanted private coaching.

And for this year anyway, I have shifted all of my coaching into really making sure that my Art School students and my mastermind clients have extraordinary, extraordinary results. Because I also see this collective power that takes place is dynamic that happens in this community, and the group coaching dynamic and also in the organic creativity of the community, that's just unparalleled.

So I'm very much a believer in private coaching and at the same time I want to empower the potential, and the creativity, and the success of as many people as I can who are desiring this work. So when people say, "I'm not really a group person, I really invite them to try it out.

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And that's why I'm offering – one of the reasons I have been offering so many group classes, free group classes and offerings is to give people who think that they're not a group person. They might think they're a lone wolf, to give them an opportunity to experience community in this way. Because many times I've heard people say at the beginning, "I'm not really a community or a group person." Only to then experience it and then say, "Oh, I didn't know community and group could be like that, this has really just redefined for me what community and group can be."

And what it can be is transformational, transforming your income, the depth and the impact of your creativity, your sense of wellbeing, your interpersonal relationships on all levels, not just within the Art School community, your health. Really every aspect of your life can be touched by a community like this.

So we are currently offering the summer workshop series. And when you enroll in the Art School, the fall Art School, and when you are a qualified enrollee for the mastermind that automatically includes the summer workshop series. So you have the ability to create momentum, to make progress this summer and to experience this truly transformational community. And again, I can't wait for you to hear Tererai speak to the power of the collective. And also our sacred obligation to one another and our sacred place within this collective.

So just to refresh, a brief bio, the full bio is available in part one of this two part series. But for now let me share with you this. 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

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speaker, author and the founder of Tererai Trent international. She has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show, twice, Super Soul Sessions, CNN, Voice of Africa, CNBC, and has spoken at the United Nations as the keynote speaker, TEDx, the Women in the World summit and the Emerging Women's 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.

Her award winning book, *The Awakened Woman: A Guide for Remembering and Igniting Your Sacred Dreams* is 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.

Tererai points out that there is a massive untapped global resource in women who have, for one reason or another, set aside their wisdom, their skills and their dreams in order to take care of the personal business of their lives. Not only is this a type of invisible suffering experienced by countless women, this rich resource is a secret weapon for improving our world. Women have the capacity to inspire, to create and to transform.

Nicholas Kristof, the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and number one nationally bestselling author of *Half The Sky*, which featured Tererai's story, which was the book that then got the attention of Oprah and was the impetus for Oprah inviting Tererai to her show the first time. Nicholas Kristof has this to say about *The Awakened Woman*, "Any time anyone tells you that a dream is impossible, any time you're discouraged by impossible challenges, just mutter this mantra: Tererai Trent."

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Oprah Winfrey also endorsed *The Awakened Woman* writing, “If you’ve ever had a dream, a longing, a desire, but thought to yourself, “No way, I could never. I don’t have the time, money, resources, skills, courage” this book is for you. If you’ve ever looked at the world and felt an aching for one of its many hurts or injustices, this book is for you. If you know the power of sisterhood or need to know its power, this book is for you.”

So I mentioned in last week’s introduction to this conversation that Tererai and I recorded this pre the race crisis in this country coming to a head. We recorded it in early May, I believe. And it is just a serendipity, synchronicity that so many of the conversations that we have, the themes that she touches upon. The wisdom that she shares speaks so relevantly and powerfully to the crisis in which, and the conversations, and the opportunity for radical change, and actually find ourselves right now.

And just as Oprah wrote years ago, 2017, in her praise for the book, “If you have ever looked at the world and felt an aching for one of its many hurts or injustices, this book is for you.”

I also shared last week that I would tell you a little bit more this week about how Oprah came to write the foreword for this. Because, Tererai had been on the Oprah Winfrey Show, twice, and had been named Oprah’s all time favorite guest. And so had thought she would ask Oprah to write this foreword, but she was told, “Don’t ask her, Oprah doesn’t write forewords.” And so Tererai once again wrote down that Oprah would read the book, would love it and write the foreword. And I believe she had asked and initially was just told again, “No, Oprah does not write forewords.”

And then day, one night she received a call in the middle of the night because she was in Zimbabwe, and it was Oprah and Oprah said, “I just finished your book, I loved it. It’s amazing. I’m going to write the foreword.”

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So the foreword written by Oprah is powerful, it's an incredible preface to a truly powerful book. And I highly recommend that you pick this up. And again, this conversation goes more deeply into certain stories and certain themes that Tererai shares within that book.

And I do think as I shared my conversation with Tererai, to me she is someone who has lived at least seven lifetimes within this lifetime. And when I read her book there were so many places where I wished I could pull out that section and have her write a whole book just about a particular section or chapter. And she also so generously shares her platform with other women who believe in the capacity of tapping into our sacred dreams and our creative potential as a way of transforming our lives in the world.

And that was also how it came to be that she invited me to share my story in this book as well. So it was such a delight to connect with her and have this conversation. And I am so honored that she took the time, and grateful, and delighted to share the second part of this conversation with you. Enjoy.

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Tererai: 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

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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 allowing 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.

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 soul 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 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. So I have to rise to the occasion, I know it's very difficult, but I encourage women to go back to their daily rituals and find meditations that work for them. To silence those fears and to make sure that you are working where you are and give voice to your pain, give voice to that pain, and finding healing through meditation.

Leah: So you have spoken to and worked with women all over the world, including in western cultures. And what batons are people, are women

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even in modern democratic societies still carrying? Because a woman listening, I know anyone listening will be in awe of your story. And then what if there's a woman who thinks, well, I don't have a baton like Tererai, like I am very privileged? I have no reason to be silenced, what would you say to someone that is maybe discounting their dream or their knowing because it's a different kind of baton and it's a different kind of race?

Tererai: Well, the baton of abuse is universal. The baton of women being silenced from their own dreams, where they shelve their dreams because they want to take care of either their husband's profession, or they want to make sure that the kids; they have a better education at the expense of their own dreams. And I'm not saying we should not give for our children's education, but sometimes women, especially everywhere, and even here in this society, women are always giving, and giving, and giving, and shelving those dreams.

And here they come, they are now 70 years old and they say, "I wish if I had done that when I was young." And also there is also the baton of privilege itself, where we take everything for granted. It can be a bad baton; it all depends on how you want to address your privilege. Is your privilege silencing someone? Is your privilege hiding you from the reality of what it should be? So I think when it comes to batons, there are so many batons that I have come across.

In my book I write about a woman that I met at one of my speaking and she said, "When you talked in that address about that baton, you nailed it for me. My grandmother, when she was in high school, she couldn't finish high school and had these babies. And one of the babies was a mother and they ended up getting incarcerated and the mother also had babies." And so it's a cycle that you see in our society as well.

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Leah: And you were saying too about the – it isn't - the education of our children being important, and yet it doesn't need to come at the expense of women's – their dreams as well. And I'm glad you brought up ritual, because I wanted to ask you now, what rituals are sustaining you? And also because I think particularly during this time in the pandemic, I'm talking to a lot of women whose space is smaller than what they're normally used to do, the demands for, if they have children for homeschooling and are working from home is different.

So what rituals do you currently rely on and which ones in particular would you suggest during this time to help women ground in their dreams and in their knowing?

Tererai: So I've been waking up before sunrise. And I encourage women to do that, if they can, wake-up before sunrise. And do what I call fierce writing, and sometimes I call it soulful writing where you ask yourself how in these moments of this pandemic, how is the pandemic silencing me? Where does the pain, and fear, and anxiety, reside within me? You just write, you don't edit anything, you just write and write.

And maybe after 20 minutes of writing you let it simmer within you, and you really begin to think, what yearning is now coming out of this writing? What is it that I want to change? Or do I want to remain defined by this anxiety, in this fear, in pain? And I find writing to be liberating, and sometimes when I find I'm being hurt, I also think of forgiving myself.

And so I have a ritual where I would write about how I am hurting myself. And what things I need to forgive myself. And what steps I also need to take to make sure that as I am hurting myself by the messages that are silencing me, there's also my kids that are being silenced. And there's also

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my community and my friends that are being silenced. So I have to forgive myself and forgive others in the process.

Leah: That process of forgiveness and that grace, I think that seems to go hand-in-hand with being able to have beautiful, audacious, bold dreams. I was thinking again back to what would sustain you through eight years. And when I talk to people who feel like their obstacles are daunting, or they are doubting themselves and they want to quit.

And I hear you talk about having a ritual of forgiveness and that to me seems to speak to what would allow somebody to continue on as you forgive yourself the failure. You forgive yourself the shortcoming, and that allows you to still stay connected to that dream.

Tererai: Yeah, because forgiveness is the foundation upon which to build strong and bold dreams. So you cannot only think of forgiving others, you have to forgive yourself; you have to confront some things about yourself. And once you do that you are able to love what's in the world. My mother would always say, "We are born to love and to forgive, and leave this world a better place than we found it." So I think forgiveness plays a bigger role in our lives, it also plays a bigger role in our fear and in our anxiety.

Leah: And I want to talk again about your mother for a moment, and also your grandmother and the women in your village, because it ties into something else in your book. And you can sure cite this more beautifully than I can. But it's about how you can go far alone, but together you can go farther. That to me is such a beautiful aspect of your wisdom. And it's one, I think we have been slower and more reticent to adopt.

But I think people are being more and more open to that now that, I don't need to have this rugged individualistic, pull myself up by my own

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bootstraps. Yes, I can be resilient, resourceful, and also there is great power in being in community.

Tererai: And women, it's our collective feminine energy that's going to heal this world. When we come together as women or as individuals we come together, we can do much more. And my mother would always say, "Together we do more than when you do it on your own, we stand on each other's shoulders."

And my mother talked to me about the power of the invisible ladder, that, you know, a ladder that you use for building, and it has rungs. That here on earth we are all climbing this ladder. And there are those who are at the bottom of the rung, and those who are at the top of the rung. And those who are at the top of the rung, they have a sacred responsibility to pull up others who are at the bottom so that we can all thrive together.

This idea of I can do it by my own, I think we come in this society, in the western society where we have learned a lot from the Native Americans. Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within the web. Whatever we do to the web we do it to ourselves. All things are bound together, all things are connected together. Our very survival is connected to the survival of others, that's what makes humanity.

In the African context they say ubuntu, "I am because we are, since we are, therefore I am." When we greet one another, even with strangers, sawubona, which means I see you. And the stranger would say, ngikhona which means I am here to be seen with my vulnerabilities, with my soul wounding, with my joy, that's the power of our ubuntu, the power of the web we can build, is build out of love.

Leah: I remember the first time I heard you talk about sawubona.

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Tererai: Sawubona.

Leah: Sawubona, and I, ever since then have not been able to forget that, whenever I see then this, as you said, the collective feminine energy in practice. And maybe you can speak to some of your experience with this. What do you account for that? When I see women come together in this way, where they are allowing themselves to be seen are fully vulnerable, soul wound, but also courage and brilliance, and beauty, and seeing others in this way.

It's more than a simple math; it's more than one plus one plus one equals three. It's like one plus one plus one, when these are women are together equals 3,000.

Tererai: And do you know, you asked about what batons that are being passed here, and talking about the collective of women. In the western world we have seen the Me Too movement. Women who have been silenced, abused, sexually abused at workplaces. But now women have said, "If I remain silent." Because many women that are in the movies, they have been silenced, and some of them, their mothers were in the movies were also silenced. So it was just being passed down, thinking it's okay for men to treat women that way.

But collectively the Me Too movement has brought women in a way that we are saying, "Women need to be believed." So that we don't continue to silent women when they say, "I've been sexually abused; I carry these wounds with me."

And I think when we show our vulnerability, and our pain, and our joy, and our collectiveness then we bring the narrative to a different platform where women are saying, "We are all sisters in this game. And we need to cheer

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one another, to be there for each other, because we are brilliant when we are together, we are much more brilliant.” We are much more resilient when we are together than fighting the game alone.

Leah: Yes, that seeing of one another too, it seems to awaken aspects in the other, to be seen and to also be in the presence of another seems to draw forth something. But on your own it might forever sleep, and it's for you to, like you're – for you the other could have been your ancestors, your grandmother, your mother, it was also your children, your daughters, your granddaughters that helped evoke and awaken the giant within you.

Tererai: Exactly, exactly. We stand on each other's shoulders, we do, we do. For me, in many ways I say I might have my talents and my gifts, but it took others to make me realize these are the talents that I have, it really does. It really does.

We need one another in this world, and that's love, that's compassion. It's not about, you know, I have to wait up until my cup is overflowing, I hear that all the time. And I'm asking, “When is that cup going to overflow?” But I'm not also saying you should work from an empty glass, you need to work from a glass where you are fulfilled. But still carry the compassion with you.

Leah: I think that is another one of those batons, to think that we have to, that we can't have a full cup. But then also to think that I just see that that baton too of thinking we need to do it on our own, how really that depletes women in so many ways, and also either I have to do it on my own or I must be perfect. I must somehow be more than I am ever capable of being before I can carry this baton.

Tererai: And it makes us competitive against each other. And I always think that another woman's success should not be my competition, it should be

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the platform for my inspiration, for me to see what other opportunities that are out there. And for me, to get together with this woman and say, “How can we make this bigger?” Otherwise we remain in silos where each person is doing their own thing, because we need to compete or I need to be the shining star.

I think we need not to pass that baton to our daughters but to say, “Yes, you are as an individual, talented and gifted. And how are you passing those talents and gift to uplift humanity?”

Leah: Yes. Yes. I think that collective – it’s a creative collaboration and conversation with one another where we can amplify what’s ours to give.

Tererai: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And do you know, when my mother said, “Your dreams will have greater meaning when they are connected to the betterment of others.” She was talking to that collective energy. I have been very fortunate that Oprah Winfrey ended up donating 1.5 million for me to go back and rebuild a school, initially it was one school. And today we have 12 schools where we have more than 59,000 kids that have passed through the school, the schooling system.

And many of the girls in my community had never gone to university, their parents never went to university, and now we are boasting of kids that are going to university, breaking that cycle. Making sure that – my mother knew that when I redefined my baton and passed on a baton of education, or a baton of awakening. I have also that moral obligation, or we all have that moral obligation to extend that baton to the community.

Leah: That’s a legacy, I feel like then too is now part of your DNA, and it’s passed on to your daughters and granddaughters. And I think too anyone

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that hears you speak, it changes that resonance to know that when you come from that inner connected place.

I think it's one thing to hear, "Yes, we should do something for the greater good." And again it's another one of those things where you do the kind of storytelling where you feel the energetic truth and resonance of that, that we are truly connected. And that there is a power in tapping into, as your mother said, that greater community collective good.

Tererai: Yeah. Yeah. And I think we can do a lot more if we believe in ourselves, and when we uplift ourselves from, these are my problems that I have. Yes, we face those problems, but also think about how best you can use your talents and your gifts to help yourself as long as you help others.

Leah: So I want to be sure to ask you before I let you go today. You are a powerful creator, and you have, again, like you said, lived so many lifetimes within this lifetime. And all of those dreams you buried have come to fruition and are continuing to spill over and affect other people's lives. And you didn't even write down, be on the Oprah Winfrey show, not one time, but two times, not to mention be her all time favorite guest, and that also happened.

And you've written and published two books, and I have given away so many copies of both of those books, one is a beautiful children's book that I always gift to friends and families and classrooms, and we have our own copies, and then the other of course, *The Awakened Woman*. And so now, what are your dreams now, Tererai?

Tererai: You know, I get that question every time, and I have always said, I'm done with digging the dirty ground and planting my dreams in the dirty ground, I'm done with that. Now I will bury my dreams in your hearts, in

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your listeners' hearts, in every woman and every man out there. I'm burying my dreams and the dreams of our collective, the dreams of making sure that we are there for each other, each one to find their own great hunger.

Leah: Beautiful. Beautiful. What a perfect place to end. Thank you for that. And now from a woman who began with her mother planting and growing vegetables and it was a sustenance. And now you give another kind of sustenance as well, a soul sustenance, the kind that can truly feed the hearts and minds of the world. So, thank you so very much for your work and for being here today.

Tererai: Well, thank you. Thank you for having me. Thank you. You are the women who sustained my soul.

Leah: Thank you.

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So now that you have had the opportunity to bask in the energy, and the wisdom, and the power that is Tererai Trent, this brings me to the part of podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in and really work with me, coach with me. Take what you've heard here, really take it in and don't just consume it, but allow yourself to be transformed by it. Allow it to awaken something within you so that you can transform your life and transform the world.

So I want to bring your attention back to when Tererai talks about the importance of our narrative. And how even in those parts of our narrative, not even, but including those parts that are the difficult parts, that are the traumatic parts, that are the parts that sometimes you would like to avoid. That is important that we include those, that there is wisdom and healing

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available to us in all of the story. And that the way that we can guide ourselves away from being victimized by the story is to ask, “Is this the narration of who I want to be?”

And not to avoid the bad parts, but to tell the story in a way that brings healing. So my prompt for you today is what is your great hunger? What narrative in your bones, what circumstance in life in your bones, do you know you need to change? What cycle do you need to change? What baton do you not want to pass on? What legacy do you want to create instead?

And finally, what are going to be the rituals that keep you tied to this great hunger, the initial ritual of recognition, of listening to what in your bones you know to be true that needs to be changed? And then, what daily rituals, so that you can over and over again, ignite and enliven and bring to life, that change?

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you have enjoyed this podcast, if these episodes have helped you change in meaningful ways, the best thing you can do to pay it forward is to share, is to subscribe, is to go to iTunes and leave a review. I am so grateful to all of you for being out there and being a part of this listening community. Even if I have not met you yet, I someday hope to, it means a lot to me to think that someone on the other end is listening to this as they cook dinner, as they take a walk and is taking this and making this a part of their lives.

So, thank you for listening, and thank you also to those of you that take those extra minutes out of your day and leave a review, that means the world to me.

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When you're ready to take this work deeper there are two ways to do that this year. There is the Art School Fall and the Mastermind. And when you enroll either in the Art School Fall or when you are a qualified enrollee in the Mastermind that automatically includes at no extra cost, the summer workshop series. So you have additional months of masterclasses, support, community workshop space via the Virtual Artists' dates.

And there's additional time to generate momentum and generate positive creative energy to transform your life and to tap into that collective transformation that you want to be a part of out in the world.

The best way to learn more about these opportunities, the Art School, the Art School Mastermind, is to go to my website, www.leahcb.com. And there you'll see the respective tabs for both the Art School and the Mastermind. Also while you're there if you want to make sure to not miss a free group call, or any of the other options that I offer to my community, be sure to sign up for my newsletter, so, that's www.leahcb.com.

Also feel free to reach out to us at any time with questions on the Art School, on the Mastermind, about the podcast. We are here for you and happy to help. You can email us at support@leahcb.com, and we'll be happy to hear from you and take excellent care of you.

In closing today I want to just share a little serendipity I noticed in my notes. I looked down and I saw from episode one how, I was taking notes myself as I re-listened to the episodes. And I wrote down when Tererai had said, "In our lives we reach a point where we need to tap into what we are meant to be."

And then right next to it, like laying over the top of it was another of my note cards where I had written, she talked about how, "We are brilliant, yes,

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alone, but we are much more brilliant together. And we need to ask ourselves how can we get together and make this dream, make this potential we have, bigger and better together.” And then I had an arrow from that drawn up to, we can do more when we believe in ourselves. We can do more when we believe in ourselves for ourselves and for the collective.

So I wanted to leave those three things, they occurred at different spots in the conversation. But I wanted to leave you with those three thoughts as something to contemplate for yourself in your own life, regarding the transformation you want to see in your own life and out in the world as you go about your week.

Thank you again everyone for being here. Have a beautiful week and I will talk to you next time.