

Ep #213: An Introduction to The Glittering Darkness



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

Ep #213: An Introduction to The Glittering Darkness

“The darkness is what enables the North Star to shine so brightly,” Dr. Kathy Berg. As we move into December and further into the darkest time of year in this hemisphere, I wanted to create a sort of capsule collection for these Art School episodes.

I wanted to create something that might act like a small guiding star, in ways, as you move through any kind of darkness, whether it’s seasonal or metaphorical; that darkness that tends to proceed entering into the process of death and rebirth, and therefore transformation.

And what I want to always offer you above all is that possibility of transformation, is that knowing – and this is some of the best wisdom I have ever received, down through thousands of years from poets, mystics, sages, and also from modern-day sage mentors.

And that is that, no matter what your life looks like right now, it can change. And not in spite of the struggle, darkness, loss, or feelings that you’re hopelessly and utterly lost, or just wandering aimlessly, pointlessly in a wilderness. But your life can change through these things, because of these things.

Your life can change through entering this season of transformation with the approach that it is sacred, meaningful, and it is not shameful or pointless. And so, in this episode and in the next few episodes, this capsule collection, I’m calling *The Glittering Darkness*, so that you might experience the truth of what my dear friend and Art School alum Dr. Kathy Berg has said, “The darkness is what enables the North Star to shine so brightly.”

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.

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Hello, everyone, and welcome to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. It is officially December here as I record this for you. And feeling all things December, as they are in Michigan, we have our tree up. It looked taller in the wild. But I think at the point – it was so cold that day and there was a lot of snow on the ground and I hadn't yet acquired replacement winter boots, and so my toes had gone from really cold to numb, to not feeling them at all, and then back to so painful that I thought, "Yeah that one, that one looks tall enough."

And it's beautiful, actually, and it's up. But it's not decorated yet. So, maybe this weekend, I'll be able to recruit some of the elves in my house to help me decorate.

And those elves have been busy, busy, busy with basketball and school and looking forward to Christmas, because we do celebrate Christmas in our house. And looking forward to things like going to the Nutcracker with my daughter Blaise.

And I wanted to mention too, my own experience with darkness and with depression, including in lesser forms like seasonal affective disorder. And I'll say it again in this episode, but don't go it alone and reach out sooner rather than later. And throw everything at it. Be proactive. Find all ways to, yes, embrace the beauty in the season, and then also be real about how it affects you.

And when I say season too, there are seasons of darkness in our life, and they can happen simultaneously with seasons of great joy. And I'll talk about that in an upcoming episode in this capsule collection of *The Glittering Darkness*.

And to know that that is all part of the human experience, yes, and that also while there is wisdom to be gained there and wisdom in the body and wisdom in the difficulties and in the struggle, you also deserve to feel joy and you also deserve to feel loved and connected.

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So, please, give yourself all of the support and help and always reach out sooner and give yourself more. Air on that side. You matter so much and, as I said in the intro, no matter where you are right now, how it feels, what it looks like, it really can change.

And the hardest thing about being in the thick of a darkness and despair is when there is no light and you don't feel a shred of it in your heart. And so, tucking this away, this echo of light, I hope you don't need it, but in case you do.

And if it's ever less of a need but just more of – I hate to say darkness-lite, but you know what I mean, tuck this away. No matter what it looks like now, it can change.

I have seen that over and over and over again in my own life and in the lives of so many, many, many of my clients. Truly, changes where they cannot believe it, where they had great dreams and hopes for themselves, sometimes even tucked down deep, and even what they are able to change amazes them. And that's available for you too.

And talking about all of this, about the darkness, about the making of meaning from it, about the times where it feels completely meaningless and pointless but somehow telling our stories to one another creates the stars. A star is born. We become one another's North Star through our collective, shared experience.

And so, along that line, be sure to listen to the very end of the episode today. I hope you always do. But in case not, I have a tremendously magnificent, inspiring, profoundly moving story to share with you. And then also, as luck would have it, on a superficial but also fun note, fun shopping advice, some pro shopping tips for your Holiday season, a way to score major gifts that will be incredibly meaningful and also light up the life of anyone who you're in the business of delighting this season. So, stay tuned all the way to the end for that.

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And now, without further ado, let's jump into the episode, The Glittering Darkness, the intro episode.

As we move into December and further into the darkest time of year in this hemisphere, I want to have a conversation about darkness. And it's not just me inviting you to a conversation about darkness. Life is always issuing those invitations.

And truly, those invitations are invitations to initiations. The rest of nature seems to be able to not decline that invitation. The rest of nature flows and surrenders with natural processes, including death and rebirth.

But humans, we have the opportunity, we have the privilege, we have the choice. And without more conversations that normalize the process of moving through a transformative period in our lives, a transformation that is often ushered in by difficult trial-like circumstances, then we end up having a culture that's deprived of the wisdom, the gifts, the contemplation, the genius, and the evolution that can come from the alchemical metamorphous process that happens naturally.

So, I wanted to create a tiny little capsule collection of *The Art School Podcast* episodes for this time of year because I know many people struggle with the darkness, both in terms of seasonal affective disorder, something even heavier, but also the metaphorical darkness, particularly as you move into a journey of self-actualization. Which is what all great creative journeys and dreams invite us to.

And this is a missing element because we fear the darkness, I think, because we have never really deeply been taught as a culture how to trust ourselves and how to return to our instincts.

So much of my work is about this regeniusing process, which is a return to your natural innate nature as a genius. And that is fundamentally about trust.

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But we have a culture that has shamed us out of our own internal knowing and it's also shamed so much of the process that's associated with darkness and struggle and being lost in the wilderness and trial.

So often, in our culture, it's looked down upon as a weakness or as a sign that you've done something wrong. Or failure is looked at as final, as it's just somehow an indication that you're not cut out for the dreams that you know are really meant for you, for the life you've always wanted to live.

So, I'm naming this little capsule collection The Glittering Darkness because truly it's in this dark place – as my dear friend and Art School alum Kathy Berg said, “Where the North Star is able to shine so brightly, it's in these places of darkness where our gifts come alive.”

So, what I want you to hear too, a preface to this conversation is that yes, we are going to talk about darkness. And also, no hero on a hero's journey goes it alone.

So, by all means, get all of the support you need. This podcast episode, these episodes are just one facet of support and meaning that are available to you, and I also hope that they nudge you if you're on the edge, to reach out and really throw everything at any sort of difficulty or trial you're experiencing.

Don't deny yourself the best of support. Get a psychiatrist. Get a therapist. Get a coach. Get friends. Get allies. Have people check in on you.

I want to be clear that by having this conversation, in no way are we fetishizing darkness or heaviness or agony or torment. Instead, we are ennobling one another, reminding one another of the capacity that we have, the strength, the ability that lies within us to navigate darkness, that it can enable us to be in touch with gifts that have been lying dormant within us.

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And also that having this orientation that this is meaningful and not just meaningless can make a world of difference. So, you can have that orientation, that your struggle, your feeling of despair even or powerlessness, that can be meaningful and you do not have to sit in it forever or alone.

So, definitely, all great wisdom traditions teach that guides appear or are summoned or are asked for, all great myths have a Goddess or a God that comes in and leaves the stranded hero just exactly what they need, just a little bit of grace to get them on the next way.

And so, what we can take away from that are to ask and receive the help that's available for us, all forms of help, human, divine, pharmaceutical, nature-oriented, and creative.

And because it is so important, what I really want to emphasize and repeat is something I shared in the intro, that no matter what your life looks like right now, it can change. Not in spite of the struggle or the darkness or loss or a feeling that you are hopelessly and utterly lost, like you're just wandering aimlessly in a wilderness for decades.

But your life can change through these things, because of these things, by engaging in a meaningful way with these things. Through entering this season of transformation with the approach that it is sacred, it is meaningful, and that it is not shameful and that it is absolutely not pointless.

Here's the tricky part. Oftentimes, when we are in the thick of it, when we are lost in the wilderness though, it's the nature of the alchemical process, we cannot see the meaning always at those times.

We are truly feeling the depth, the rock-bottomness of being lost because that's what's necessary, again, to illuminate what needs to be illuminated in our lives. So, I hope messages like this are ones that you can carry with

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you if you're in the midst of a place like that, that something in you will recognize this light and will continue to move forward with it. As Blaise Pascal said, "You must always keep something beautiful in mind." I read that first in Viktor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*. And he talked about how that was key in not just surviving concentration camps during the Holocaust, but in maintaining his humanity.

So, in this little capsule series of episodes, *The Glittering Darkness*, what I want to do is just help frame a new orientation, or perhaps edify and maybe enhance and existing one.

In this first in the series, what I want to do is create a general context and framework, kind of create our energy field, set the table for the conversation, and also this could be the keystone, the crowning jewel of this episode, make clear that there is a choice point and how important this choice point is.

And I think it's first important though that we have a conversation that changes our orientation, or invites us to consider different orientations to darkness. And then, in the next two episodes, I'm going to be sharing some brief, but I hope potent communication that I have shared with clients.

Because sometimes, I think it's those fly-on-the-wall moments, those most personal, that are most universal. So, let's dive in.

I would not be having this conversation or creating these episodes if I did not think it was fundamentally essential. While I do not believe in creative blocks, like writer's block as it's conventionally talked about, what I do notice and what I have observed in my life and in thousands of hours of coaching is that we can block an invitation to initiation.

We can block our own evolution. We can block our own greatest becoming. And that block usually occurs around resisting something, something difficult, some sort of darkness, by resisting surrendering.

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That block usually comes from refusal to fail, a denial of vulnerability or loss. Life is trying to show us the way and there is a lesson for us to be learned there. But we are refusing it, refusing to go into the difficulty, to really look at the struggle, to go into the heart of darkness because, deep down, we understand that there is a death that has to happen there, a death of the way that we used to think about ourselves, a death of the way we used to approach life.

And we just do not have good wisdom traditions or rituals in place in society as a whole to help us navigate the fear that comes with this. And then also, on top of that, then we are always inundated, conditioned to believe that to go there really is to die. It is to die in terms of what it means to be successful or accepted in this society. And that is true. But then, what's lost is so much greater.

We resist things falling apart. But just like the caterpillar falls apart, dissolves in order to become the butterfly, so must our lives sometimes fall apart in order to be rearranged and made into something new.

This death and rebirth process can happen continually in life and I think is the natural order of life if you are continually learning. And it's not easy, but also could be navigated with so much more compassion and wisdom and what we could gain from it could yield so much for our individual lives, so much healing, so much genius that would also contribute to the collective society.

But instead of rituals and practices and conversations around this – and I do not want to just disparage society. I want to get back to talking about having this conversation about what we can do differently.

But instead, we have pathologies. We think there's something wrong with us if we're not always on the upward track, on this constant linear movement towards bigger and better and brighter.

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We make ourselves and others and inexperience that could ripen and mature and wizen and deepen us, that could forge our character, that could transform and evolve and metamorphosize us, we make it superficial, instead, that process of darkness by making it into a problem, a flaw, a disease even, an illness, or just in general an aberration from quote unquote normal, and therefore we deem it bad.

So, what do we need to do instead? We need to make it important to have and normalize conversations and new rituals and practices around darkness.

Is this time of year, in the calendar year but also in our lives, it is about endings, finality, and death. But it's not only about that. And it is about the Holidays and festivities and feasting and cheer and miracles of light and, you know, Gods become men as babies found in lowly settings like mangers.

It is about those things. And it's also about more. Within those things, if we slow down and dive beneath the surface of those things, if we contemplate those things, what's waiting for us is also the theme, an invitation to transformation, initiation, and particularly the kind of transformation that can only happen in times of darkness, that can only happen in any process, passageway of death and rebirth.

So, in order to overcome the conditioning around avoiding darkness and shadow and surrender and death, in order to move beyond worshipping false gods of control and certainty, we need to then reclaim our very nature.

Because to deny our nature denies our creative nature, and that's to deny our genius. And creativity is natural. But if you deny any aspect of nature, like death and rebirth, like surrender, like moving with rhythm and seasons, then you also deny and stifle creativity.

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I want to pause right here and share with you why I'm so compelled to have these conversations and to create these specific episodes. Because I receive so many questions and I have listened to so many people speak of their heartache and grief over opportunities lost, over failures, over years, decades lost.

I have listened to heart and gut-wrenching stories of deep regret. And probably clearly, it has an effect on me as it would on any empathic, caring human being listening to someone else's story of regret, of grief, of loss.

But I tell you what breaks my heart most of all, and it's something that I can do something about, and it's something you all can do something about, is to harvest the wisdom from those years.

Because no matter how true the feeling of despair and being in the wilderness and being lost is, it is not your final story. And I believe that pain continues to follow you around. Maybe, sometimes, when we're such endurance athletes, in a negative way, about it, just thinking we need to suck it up. But instead, what's also available for us is to go into it and reap the wisdom from that experience and to see that within those times that you are now regretting, that you think were pointless, were just a wash, just a complete loss, that your gift is in there.

Remember, in the darkness, the North Star shines. So, if your darkness is currently regretting something, if your darkness is currently feeling everything you've worked for is failing, look for, feel for the North Star. It is there.

And remember, things can change, and that this pain is following you around for a reason. It is a call from the gift. It is a call from your soul, that there is something there for you that's wanting to rise up and wanting you to turn towards it.

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But what's keeping you from turning towards it? Usually, these fears that we have, these fears that that's the ultimate taboo to go into exploring your regret, to acknowledging failure, to surrendering.

The ultimate taboo is to let things fall apart. The ultimate taboo is to give up. And give up not in the sense of giving up your dream or giving up your life. Never. But giving up your sense of control, that it has to happen your way or look the way you thought it should look.

And I am speaking from my stubborn-self experience where my greatest heartaches were really those places where I thought, "I cannot fail. I cannot fail. I cannot fail." Until I repeatedly failed and failed and failed and you feel the rock-bottomness of things.

And as people often say, it's in that space then where you also experience grace and illumination. And then, here is again that crown jewel, that keystone of the episode that I mentioned. It's in that place then were perhaps life has brought you to a situation where you're like, "I have no choice. I have no choice but to go into this." Then, in that moment, to make a new choice, in that moment, you could choose to turn back to your old ways of doing things.

You could turn back to society's way of doing things, one where you were not yourself but kind of okay holding it together on the outside or maybe had a lot of success. You could go back to an old habit of dependency on something external.

You could go back to an old habit of distracting yourself from what you really want to do and the way you really want to live your life. You could go back to old habits of believing the lie that the life you truly want, the happiness, the love, the dream, the creativity, the self that you really want to become, you could go back to an old habit of denying that.

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Or, there in the darkness, as the poet said, the eye begins to see, and you could make a new choice. You could choose to heal. You could choose to surrender to that which wants to happen through you and for you. You could choose to surrender to the death and rebirth process. The death being who you were trying to be before that wasn't really you, or maybe the death being not believing those deep truths within are really possible, that death could be the death of your nonbelief.

The death could be the death of not trusting yourself. And when you hear this, you might be thinking, "Oh my gosh, who wouldn't want that stuff to die? Who wouldn't want doubt and distraction from the purpose of your life, the passion of your life? Who wouldn't want lack of belief to die? Who wouldn't want things that limit our expansion to die?"

But do you know what I hear over and over again as the hardest thing for people to move into and embrace? You know what they say, "I am so afraid to trust myself. I am so afraid to trust my own knowing. I'd rather go back to codependent ways on, if I just follow what other people tell me is a good life, then I'll have a good life," right?

Because we've been so conditioned out of our own wisdom. We've been so conditioned to shame our own knowing. We've been so conditioned to not trust ourselves and instead place our trust and our hopes and our dreams in the hands of things outside of us.

"Oh, if I follow that person's advice and that person's path, then all will be good. Money, if I make enough money, if I place my hope and my dreams in the hands of money, then if I have enough, then I'll be good. If I do X, Y, or Z, which I think will make me feel worthy, then I'll be safe and then I can trust myself."

But none of that, at this point of choice, the invitation to initiation, which doesn't have to happen at rock bottom, but oftentimes, for those of us that

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are particularly stubborn and afraid, that's what it takes to loosen our grip and decide we're going to give trusting ourselves a chance.

And trusting ourselves not when we have evidence for that. But trusting ourselves no matter what. An unconditional trust. A trust that does not require evidence. An unconditional trust, a trust that does not require that you are always or frankly ever successful.

That is what unconditional trust is. That's what unconditional love is. That is what love is. And that is the north star that begins to shine when it's utterly dark.

And that gift, the gift of your own trust, the gift of your own love and the grace that is ushered in when we are open and willing and surrender to trust that which flows through us, that is transformative. That's the miracle that's available in the darkest moments of our life.

And here is the paradox and the reality of life too. This is not a formula. This does not mean that it all works out. And yet, still I was thinking, as I was exchanging messages over the last several weeks with some dear friends about hard things, sad things, just difficult, life and death sometimes things, and you can't see what good there is in it and you can feel despairing and just heartbroken and lost.

And at the same time, I realized, there was also something in that reaching out to one another. That too was a miracle of light. That too was something that shown through glittering an aspect, a thread of the cosmic fabric, the texture of life, a note that wouldn't be available, of not all of us understanding what it really meant to be in the dark place, a recognition of the preciousness of one another, our lives, ourselves.

This brings me to the part of the 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. What I want to illuminate in this episode's coach with me are the choices,

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the choices that are available to us. Even when we're talking about surrender, within the surrender, there's this beautiful paradox.

There is a choice of how we will move through the death and rebirth, how we will be reborn. It's our choice to be present with ourselves and with the gifts. And we also have a choice to turn away and to go back to old ways.

For some of us, that looks like continuing to blame things on outside circumstances. It looks like what Joe Dispenza calls the habit of being yourself, and then which he talks about, the alternative to that in breaking the habit of being yourself.

So, for you, think about any experiences you have with darkness. Think about what choices you have regarding how you encounter it. And with compassion, bring your awareness to the ways where you're resisting change, where perhaps you've tried to create a change or a transformation in your life, but then you just go back.

And again, without judgment, examine, explore why. Why haven't you moved out of that level of experience? And then, consider, contemplate, what choice would you make if you trusted yourself completely? What choice would you make if you trusted yourself 1000%?

Here's another paradox. My advice for accessing your own wisdom here would be to spend some time by yourself, all by yourself, in order to give yourself a place to listen to that voice of trust within you, give yourself time and space to be all by yourself, no matter where or when you have to carve that out, to ask yourself who you would be and what you would do if you 1000% trusted yourself.

If you want more on how to do this, I talk about it – I taught a recent workshop called Creating Your Own Miraculous Practice, and we'll be sending that out in our newsletter, the replay, in coming weeks.

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So, there's no need to sign up for it separately. Just as long as you are on my email list, the Art School Newsletter, which you can sign up for in the show notes or find by going to www.leahcb.com. You'll receive that class, that workshop at no cost.

But I mention it here because I can already hear the pushback to finding time and the reasons why you can't or you won't find time to listen to your own voice or why you can't trust yourself. And I really dive deep into that and into anticipating those responses and offering some different orientations.

So, finally, if there's been anything, any change, any transformation, any dream you've been trying to create and it just seems all is lost or you've been wandering in the wilderness, there is something there for you. There is something there for you.

It's these times where ironically anything that's keeping us from our deepest truth and from our alignment, it's in these darkest times that those things are illuminated and that we can see them clearly. And again, we have a choice.

We can turn back to them, or with guides, with support, with allies, with friends, we can say yes, yes to all of the things the darkness is trying to illuminate for us, yes to seeing our North Star, and by saying yes to this, to the darkness, to the things it's trying to illuminate for us, to our North Star, then we are also saying yes to finally aligning with and committing ourselves to that dream and to being that person we've always wanted to be.

That is the miracle, the transformation, the alchemical magic of saying yes to your creative soul and then to all of the ways that that – I don't want to say sanctifies your life, but again, illuminates how sacred your life has always been and is.

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Thank you so much for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. The Art School, for me, this work is all about nurturing your nature, nurturing your innate genius and allowing you to become the person, the creative being that you're meant to be.

And I say the artist that you are meant to be, although I know people from all walks of life, particularly people with a holy curiosity and a passion for life are drawn to this work. And there are a range of opportunities to engage with the work.

So, in its essence, what is the Art School about? What's the Art School approach about? The philosophy is that it's by cultivating an extraordinary way of being in mind, body, and spirit that your extraordinary life and dreams become inevitable.

It's a process informed by neuroscience, poetic and artistic thought, and ways of being, ancient wisdom, somatic intelligence, modern psychology, your own innate creative genius processes, intuition, and some other rad stuff that feels like straight-up magic.

The Art School and the Art School Mastermind are designed to evoke and radically nurture the creative genius within, fostering the deepest most profound transformations, the ones that help you become the artist, the person you've always known you could be, living the extraordinary life you've always dreamed of.

So, recently, I've been doing a lot of bonus workshops and calls and generally coaching, and then also answering questions about the Art School and Mastermind. And so, I thought today, I would answer one of the most frequently asked questions.

And that is, "I'm so drawn to the work, but I don't consider myself an artist. I have a small business. I'm a doctor. I'm a lawyer. I'm a stay-at-home mom.

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I'm a student. I'm an educator. I'm not sure what I'm doing with my life. Can I still join?"

Yes, and then that leads me to the second question. I'll talk more about the first. What's the difference between the Art School and the Art School Mastermind? One core difference is that in the Art School Mastermind, there is a requirement of a core creative project, as defined by you.

And it's also something I can work with you to define. There is also a lot of one-on-one support from me in the mastermind. But back to the question of who is the Art School for, truly for creative humans. Which applies to all humans.

And I could quote studies and reports or statements from internationally respected bodies, like World Economic Forums about how creativity since 2016 has now moved from being lower on the list of most desirable, necessary skills, to number one.

So, there is that. And also, it will change your life. Answering the call, listening to your voice, whatever is drawing you to creativity, even if you can't make sense of it yet, even if it makes sense to no one else, if you know that something is calling you and it makes you more alive even contemplating it, while it also scares you, honor that.

That is a North Star in the wilderness. And trust that. And I cannot tell you the number of times I've had it happen now that I've been doing this long enough, where someone comes and says, "I'm so drawn to working with you," and then they disqualify themselves, or it's the disclaimer, "But I'm not an artist, or I'm not a real artist, or I'm not a creative at all, not since kindergarten." I hear that one so much.

And then, given some time and letting the work happen and the sanctuary and the container that is the Art School, and lo and behold, look, they're painting. They have a podcast. They've written a book. They're performing

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plays, sometimes that they wrote themselves, sometimes they quit their jobs and start entirely different careers.

And so, you'd be surprised. And then, there are also other people who stay in their conventional or traditional paths but just find that there are so many possibilities, that they didn't realize how they were eclipsing the opportunities in their life for joy, for meaning, also for adventure.

They could be still in the same role, like a doctor who's still in the same role, but also now is working 50% less without a significant pay cut and has a much better quality of life and has also returned to taking up hobbies that they just enjoyed so long ago but haven't had time for.

I can't tell you exactly what will unfold for you. Only that you will be astonished and astounded in the most delightful and rewarding of ways. Relationships transform, families transform, familial patterns are healed. Generational wealth patterns are changed.

People say, "I'm a completely different person and more myself than ever." So, I like to say, come as you are and you'll leave as yourself. So, come however you are. Don't disqualify yourself. Reach out. Ask us any questions. We're available, support@leahcb.com.

And make sure you're signed up for my newsletter, the Art School Newsletter, because I'm always doing pop-up workshops, sometimes even free one-on-one coaching if I have openings and I just feel like coaching. So, make sure you're on that because that's always the way to stay current. Sometimes there is a delay with the podcast.

And also, find me on Instagram, [@leahbc1](https://www.instagram.com/leahbc1). I always appreciate connecting with you there and I'm so grateful when you spread the word about the podcast by subscribing, by sharing on social media. And if you tag me, then we can connect.

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So, thank you for listening and please join us for one of our upcoming calls and explore the transformation that can happen for you in the Art School.

To close today, I want to honor and approach this theme of The Glittering Darkness with the reverence it deserves and without sugarcoating anything. And also, to being remiss and sharing with you the treasure that lies there and the miracles, the transformations that can happen because of it.

And so, what better way to illuminate that but through a true story. So, today, I wanted to share with you a little bit about the story of Saint Bakhita's. So, I have the honor of learning about Saint Bakhita's from my dear inspirational amazing friend Wendy Angst. And Wendy is a professor at Notre Dame. And she has been leading a project, leading Notre Dame students in collaboration with Saint Bakhita's.

Saint Bakhita's is a vocational training center, a girls' only boarding school in Uganda. Founded in 2007, Saint Bakhita's was created to provide educational opportunities for young women that had been abducted and held captive by the LRA, returning home, often with children, after years and years which included missing years of education.

Saint Bakhita's was named in honor of Saint Josephine Bakhita, the Patron Saint of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. In partnership with Notre Dame and in collaboration with the Archdioceses of Gulu, Saint Bakhita's relaunched in November 2021 with the creation of the Innovation Scholars Program, to reimagine a new way to deliver vocational education.

This first cohort of 78 innovation scholars were given an opportunity to learn a vocational skill, tailoring, hairdressing, agriculture, or catering, while also receiving foundational training in agroforestry, computers, financial management, and entrepreneurship.

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Students at Saint Bakhita's work closely with students at Notre Dame to collaborate on entrepreneurial innovations and together work closely with the community to ensure innovations have a broad, positive impact on the economic prosperity of the region.

So, I will tell you, I knew of these abductions but was tragically underinformed. Until, thanks to Wendy and then also Victoria Nyanjura – I'm probably not saying her last name correctly – she came as a visitor, as a guest of Notre Dame, and on behalf of Saint Bakhita's and a guest of Wendy's, and I had the opportunity to hear her speak about her personal experience being abducted as a child and having children in abduction and then escaping.

So, I wanted to share a little bit from a wonderful article written in the Mendoza College of Business Newsletter, that's Notre Dame's college of business, by Carol Elliot. And she does a beautiful job of sharing more of this story of Saint Bakhita's.

"The school, located in an impoverished northern region of Uganda, opened in 2007 to help women rebuild their lives in the wake of tragic abductions by the violent Lord's Resistance Army, the LRA. As many as 30,000 children were victims of the LRA with abductions beginning in the late 1980s and continuing for over a decade. The school reopened on November 7, 2022, and is poised to graduate its first class of 78 Innovation Scholars sponsored by Notre Dame.

So, as part of its vocational offerings, St. Bakhita's trains students in the finer skills of sewing and tailoring as an eventual career path. And therefore, in the handmade clothes, bags and backpacks, Professor Angst and her students saw an opportunity to raise funds and awareness for the school."

So, these socially conscious products, which there are wrap skirts, swirling and bright purple, orange, yellow, red, and green patterns, cleverly hand-

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sewn backpacks shaped like elephants, zipper pouches, and a kaleidoscope of brilliant colors, these are now available at the Notre Dame Hammes Bookstore and also online. There's an online shop which we will include in the show notes.

I have purchased several skirts. Not all for me. For myself and for gifts. So, anyone listening who's on my gift list, pretend you didn't hear that. And also, the adorable elephant backpacks.

So, for those of you out there listening – and I know there are people like this in this audience, who want to shop consciously with a mission and love this beautiful win-win during this season too of miracles and festivities, to have your gift also go farther and benefit others, I wanted to share this story with you and also the opportunity to do some amazing and very meaningful Christmas Holiday shopping.

So, an amazing note, the Saint Bakhita's logo on the displaying clothing tags shows a mountain and a cross, which have a particular meaning. When the children were abducted during the LRA conflict, the cross on the mountain was lit up so that they could find their way home.

And I've been meaning to share this story for weeks, just looking for the right time. And I thought in this collection, The Glittering Darkness, what better way to help meaning come out of darkness than to be able to contribute even in small ways to this incredible collaboration and endeavor. And also, how creative? Just evidence of the power of creativity to heal and to transform.

Finally, I would highly recommend that you watch – it's like a short film. I hesitate to say commercial because it's really more like this beautiful, tiny, short documentary film about the collaboration with Saint Bakhita's. And it's Notre Dame's What Would You Fight For? And It features Saint Bakhita's, their students, Professor Angst and her students.

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And it's so moving. And again, one of the ways I know best to transform darkness and make meaning is through storytelling. And I know you'll experience the power of that through this short little docufilm commercial, and we'll have the link to that as well as the link to go shopping at Saint Bakhita's in the show notes as well.

I hope you all are inspired and empowered to move into your own beautiful Glittering Darkness, never alone, never alone, and also always knowing that no matter what life looks like now, it can change. It is within you, and there is also that North Star lighting the way.

Have a beautiful week, my friends, and I look forward to talking with you next time.