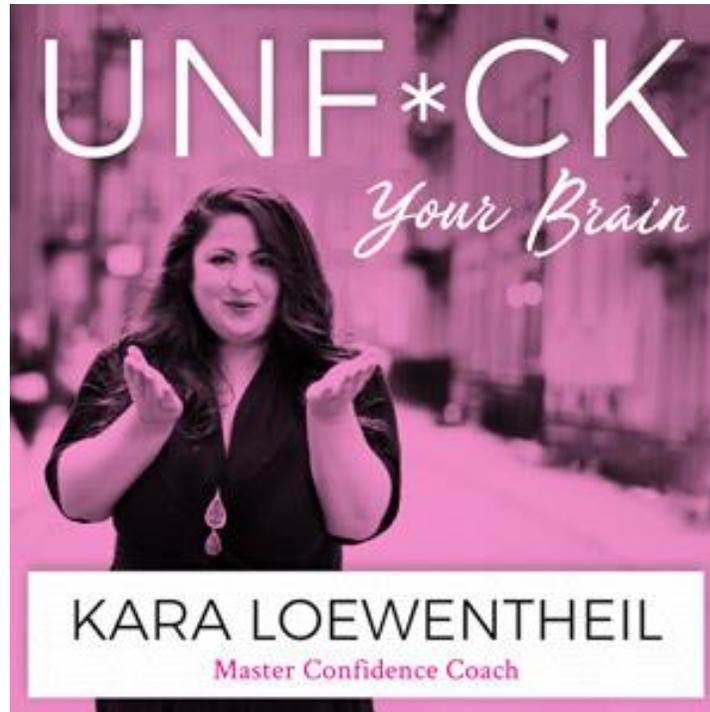


**UFYB 205: Not Identifying As a Feminist:
A Conversation with Advanced Certification in
Feminist Coaching Graduates Amy Logan,
Brig Johnson, Linda Street, and Maggie Reyes**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

[UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

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Welcome to *Unf*ck Your Brain*, the only podcast that teaches you how to use psychology, feminism, and coaching, to rewire your brain and get what you want in life. And now here's your host, Harvard Law School grad, feminist rockstar, and master coach, Kara Loewentheil.

Hello my chickens. I am so excited about this episode. This is one of the kinds of conversations that I think need to be happening more in the feminist movement as a whole, which is obviously a huge whole.

But I do think as with any kind of social justice movement, there can be this tendency to be kind of insular, to assume that if somebody doesn't agree with you or identify as a feminist by now then whatever, they're being obtuse or abstinent or they just don't get it or whatever it is.

And I think especially going from a very socially justice critical theory academic policy activism world to the life coaching world, I really noticed a big difference obviously in how people think about social justice movements in general, how people think about feminism in particular, how much or how little people identify with social movements as part of their worldview.

And so I was so excited to have this conversation with some of my students who came into the Advanced Feminist Certification that I teach not necessarily identifying as feminists. They were attracted to the certification because they were coaches, they knew my work, they knew my coaching, something in it had spoken to them, but they didn't identify as feminists necessarily for a variety of different reasons.

And so today, we're going to talk about that and I think this episode is going to be helpful if you aren't sure about whether you want to be a feminist,

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identify with that, to understand why some of my students have now transitioned in the way that they think about their relationship to the movement.

And if you already strongly identify as a feminist, to hear and understand what maybe some of your blind spots about why other people don't relate to the movement the same way that you do. So it's a great conversation and we are going to be launching the Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching soon again.

We only do it once a year and it is an application only process. You apply, and then we review your application, we keep it to a pretty small group so that everybody really gets the kind of attention and specific coaching feedback they need.

It's one of my favorite things I do. So if you are at all interested, you will want to get on the interest list because we open it up to the interest list before we open it to the general public. And last year was only the first time we did it and it sold out just from that interest list. It filled up.

So if you want to be on that list that you get the email letting you know when applications are open, you get that head start on everybody else, and it's rolling, so that head start can be very helpful because we are reading and applying as applications come in. And once it's full, it's full.

So you can go to unfuckyourbrain.com/acfc. Just the letters, like an acronym. Or you can text your email to +13479971784, that's +13479971784. And then when you are prompted for the codeword, you just text back ACFC. Alright, let's get started with this conversation.

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Kara: Hello my chickens. I always say that I'm super excited about whatever interview I'm about to do, so just number one, I am always super excited. But this is a topic that I love that I think is so interesting. So for a lot of you who listen to the podcast maybe identified as a feminist when you found me, that's how you found the podcast. I know some of you didn't because I get Instagram messages sometimes that are like, "I'm a 17-year-old living in rural Nebraska and my family are all conservative and I thought feminists were man-hating and whatever, out to destroy civilization until I found your podcast and now I understand."

But I'm sure there are people in a range of different positions about this listening to the podcast. And so one of the things I wanted to talk about with some of my coaches from my advanced certification is their relationship to feminism and how they identify or didn't identify before they came to the podcast, and to sort of bring up all of the reasons that people may or may not identify as feminists, which can have to do with your personal upbringing, your politics, your background and identity, the ways that feminism has been historically been in the US a kind of white privilege women's movement until recently and some would say still is.

And so we're just going to talk about it from all different perspectives. I'm not going to recap the perspectives. I'll let everybody tell their own. So I'm going to ask everybody to introduce themselves and then we're just going to get into it and talk about what we historically have thought the word feminist meant, how the experience of the program may have changed or not changed people's perspectives, and what the evolution of our relationships to the word has been.

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So let me call on people to introduce themselves just to keep it orderly here. Brig, you want to go first? You're an old favorite on the podcast, but just for anybody listening to this for the first time, who you are, who you coach, and then we'll dig into the actual details later.

Brig: Okay, great. Brig Johnson. I am a master certified life coach. I coach mindset mostly for high-achieving Black women, helping them make the shift in their mindset and unclutter all the stuff that's getting in their way.

Kara: Love it. What about you Maggie?

Maggie: Hello everyone, my name is Maggie Reyes. I am a marriage life coach. I help Type A women have better marriages. And everything that I do is feminism without the label feminism attached to it, so I'm excited to be here.

Kara: You're like, oh, that's what this is called? Linda, what about you?

Linda: So I'm Linda Street. I am a life coach for female physicians who are working on their salary negotiations to help them get more money and get out of their own way on their journey to more money, and I'm thrilled to be here as well.

Kara: Linda and I just did another podcast yesterday so this is just like, now our new daily routine. Alright, so everybody who listens to the podcast has heard - I don't think came out of the womb knowing the word feminist, but it was pretty close. I was an angry feminist in my high school days, writing newspaper editorials about it and has been always pretty core to my political and social identity.

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But that's obviously not the case for everyone. So what I'd love to hear is maybe in the order that we did the introductions, just kind of riff and explain to us what relationship if any you've had to the word and at least how you thought about it before you came in to ACFC.

Brig: I had very little relationship to the word feminism. I was a Black woman living a Black experience, and just saw feminism as - I never even considered it as white privilege. I just considered it as - I just never gave much thought to it. It just didn't take up space in my mind.

I would look at - I knew Gloria Steinem, that was the extent of it. And then I never even knew that there was a subcategory that I totally dig. Black feminism, and feminism and intersectionality. I didn't know that until I got into your group.

Kara: That's so interesting. So you weren't like, I'm opposed to this. You were just like, there are a lot of things in the world I don't think about and feminism is one of them.

Brig: Right. If you had to ask me, was I a feminist, of course. I was trained, I had my own - I was a single mother, I had my own house, everything. So it was like, yeah, of course. But it was never something that I just identified as.

Kara: That's interesting. So if somebody had said to you, hey, do you think you're a feminist before ACFC, would you have said yes or would you have been like, I don't know?

Brig: It wouldn't have been a hell yes. Now it's like...

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Kara: Would have been like yes, I guess.

Brig: Yes. Now it's a hell yes. For sure. But what I saw of feminism, I didn't totally identify with. So it would have been like yeah, I would have had to explain it.

Kara: You're like, well, I'm not the opposite. I'm not a meninist, so I guess yes. That makes sense. Just wasn't speaking to you, didn't seem like it was speaking to your concerns.

Brig: It didn't speak to me at all.

Kara: What about you Maggie?

Maggie: So my relationship to the word, I actually gave this a lot of thought before we met today. And I talked to my husband, he took a women's studies class in college, which I did not. And he's like, you are absolutely a feminist, you always have been, I don't know what you're talking about. He was so clear.

Like, oh, how interesting, we all have blindspots, don't we? So my mom was a feminist and she was just angry all the time. And I didn't understand as I was growing up. I was like, that thing you're angry about all the time does not seem like a thing that I would - are there memberships? Is there - these are the things, right?

Kara: Right, the angry club.

Maggie: The angry club. And then if I think about my career, I used to work in HR and I was that person like, why aren't there any women in this

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position, that position, the other position? Let's go hire some women, and what do I need to do in order to make that happen? I was doing all the things that a feminist would do, but I was like, I'm not a member of the club so I don't know, I can't identify myself as something - I don't have a membership card.

Kara: That's interesting. But you felt like your mother had a membership card. She was like...

Maggie: I felt like she had very strong opinions about a lot of things, and most of them were negative and circular. I didn't see her moving forward in whatever angry thing it was, and even as a child, I've been that person who's solution-focused, okay, so what are we going to do about this? Where do we go from here?

Part of my thought process around do I identify as a feminist is if you asked me to describe myself, I'd be like, well, I'm Cuban, I'm a life coach, I'm a small business owner, I'm a wife. I would say 50 adjectives before it would cross my mind to also say and also feminist.

Kara: So interesting. I love that you were just running around being like, doing all the feminist things and then being like, no, it's just normal. What about you Linda?

Linda: I think I came from a very different angle and it's been fun listening to Brig and Maggie's stories on this. So I'm the first girl after three boys and my dad was a drill sergeant. So I grew up in a very male...

Kara: Like a literal drill sergeant?

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Linda: Literally, for a little while. Yes.

Kara: Just clarifying for everybody.

Linda: Literally. So I grew up in a very male predominant kind of environment and my mom was a stay-at-home home, so goes right along with that story. But she always told me like, you can have your own money, you can do this.

So I felt like for me, it was very much something that I felt like I had to prove the whole time. I was always proving something. I remember my grandfather at 16 telling me I couldn't go to medical school because I was a girl, why didn't I apply to nursing school? And he got the first invitation to my medical school graduation by the way.

Kara: You're like, I'm graduating at you, this is graduating.

Linda: Yes. So it's funny that Maggie mentions the anger because that was a lot of my experience I think for the first part of my life with feminism is this very angry, I'm going to go ahead and really show the world that I'm woman, hear me roar. And so it was very much this girl power, Spice Girls, I'm going to show you type of a feminism energy.

And so for me, what was so interesting prior to coming into the training is I was in that headspace of girl power, I'm woman, yay. I mean, I'm an obstetrician, and then I had two sons, which made things really kind of challenging for my brain. Broke my brain a little. But I was totally unaware of this whole concept of white feminism. And as soon as you started bringing it up in your copy, I was like, oh shit. I was like, huh...

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Kara: I think I'm the club and I didn't even mean to be.

Linda: Right. And I don't want to - I was like, I don't want to be in a not including club. I was like, I don't know if I want to be in that club. And it was just kind of an unawareness. It wasn't even trying to be exclusionary but just lack of awareness of the other facets of the whole complex topic. And so that actually made me a little intimidated because I was like, Kara's going to eat me for lunch.

Kara: I love how many people tell me they're terrified of me who then work with me. We did a focus group for The Clutch yesterday and part of what we asked is why don't you apply for life coaching, and these people have been in The Clutch for a year and they're like, "Oh, I'm terrified of you." But you're here, like what is happening? I'm not that scary, everybody listening. I've never eaten a person.

Linda: She's not scary. I'm still here. Not lunch.

Kara: There you are. That's right.

Linda: Right. And so I think that was the angle that gave me pause and made me a little nervous about the training. Just because I was like, with every piece of growth, I feel like right before you embark on a lot of growth, there's this like, what if I've been doing this wrong the whole time? And so there was a lot of that for me, so it was coming from a little bit of a different place, which was interesting.

Kara: I feel like we should also define maybe for people - people write whole books about these things, but white feminism being a feminism mostly created for and to the advantage of white women that is dealing with

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mostly not just white women, but socioeconomically middle to upper class white women.

So for instance, we talked about this in the podcast yesterday a little bit where we talked about work-life balance. Well, work-life balance is something that white women with a professional job and childcare worry about, versus a single Black mom who's working three jobs. Not so much worried about the life-work balance. Worried about the like, can I pay rent and I have to take two buses to get to my job situation.

So when we talk about white feminism, we mean kind of traditional mainstream dominant culture discussion around feminism, which for a long time was very focused on white women's issues. And we won't go into - maybe it'll come up in the rest of the podcast but there's a long history of white women allying themselves with white supremacy to advance white feminism.

So arguing that white women need to be given the vote because if we give Black people the vote, then we have to have more white people having the vote to balance things out. That was an argument some of the suffragettes used. So it's completely obviously understandable why some people not identified with white feminism.

Amy had to join us a few minutes late, but do you want to - all we've done is introduced ourselves and talk about kind of where we were with feminism before the program. So if you want to do both those at once, you'll be all caught up.

Amy: Okay, sure, yeah, thanks for having me. I'm Amy Logan. I'm an ex-Mormon life coach, podcast called Ex-Mormonology. And my thoughts are

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very scattered, I apologize for being late. I wrote the right time wrong down. But I was so afraid to use the term feminist. And I couldn't put my finger on it. I didn't know why I thought that way.

So that's why I knew that your course was what I needed. Because I didn't even know there were the difference between white feminism and all the other things that we've learned in your class. To me, I just didn't even know it, so I felt a little bit like, deer in the headlights coming to what I was going to be learning from you, and just loving it.

I had such a fear - I remember being a little girl in the 70s walking with my mom. She was pushing a stroller, I don't know exactly the year but we were going to vote. She was going to vote. And I feel like it was an ERA, an amendment go to, and I remember going and I remember in our church that that was very frowned upon. You're not supposed to vote for the equal equality...

Kara: Equal rights amendment.

Amy: I'm flustered with my words. Yeah, and I remember thinking - it always stuck out to me because I was too young to know what was going on, and this was when people still voted in garages. That's what we did in our neighborhood. And I just remember that sticking out. So I just have that soundtrack in the back of my head that feminism is just a bad word.

And so it felt so uncomfortable to be like, okay, I'm going to open this door, I'm going to see what's behind this feminist door because clearly, with my lived experience, I'm about being authentic and being the authority of your life and being this voice to help people overcome their own insecurities and

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things that hold them back. And being a woman, this seemed like the right path to be on.

Kara: I'm curious if you think, what, if any, part of your sort of leaving the church and grappling with that and deciding to leave had to do with things that retrospectively you would identify as feminist issues. Did it even have to do with how the church treats women or the church's beliefs on women? Or was that really irrelevant?

Amy: It's a mixed bag of things. And coming out of Mormonism, it was hard to see exactly. I started going down the historical - learning about the history of Mormonism, and that's what kind of flared me up like wait, I didn't know about this, I've been an active believer for my whole life and now I'm learning all these things about Mormon history that didn't resonate with me.

And then as I was peeling back those layers, I could start to see the patriarchal setup of Mormonism, which you would think being in it and looking at the hierarchy of Mormonism you could see it's all men. But my brain couldn't see that because it just was what it was.

Kara: Right. You're just like, of course they're in charge. That's the norm. Bunch of white men.

Amy: And yes, they were all white. So that was my lived experience. So until I could start peeling back the layers and get to this one, I'm like, oh okay, I couldn't separate it for a while.

Kara: So I'm curious to hear any of you who want to speak to kind of how going through the Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching kind of changed your relationship to the word or the concept. That's a very broad

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question but just I think - again, like I said, some of our listeners are died in the wool, and maybe like Linda were already feminists but may not even know what pieces they're missing.

And then some people probably are like I don't like that word, I like your podcast, but why do you have to talk about the feminism so much? So I think whatever experience you want to share would be useful.

Brig: I think when we got the box, I was kind of like everybody else. I'm going to join this, I didn't even know exactly what I was going to get out of it. I had no clue how many books I had. And so when we opened up the box and the first book was *Ain't I a Woman* by Bell Hooks, I was sold after that.

Like Maggie, I call myself a pay-as-you-go school kind of person. So I just took the bare minimums and community college, and so I never took a - I was in nursing and then biology and everything, so I never took any of the women's studies. So I had no exposure. I think for me, there was almost a little bit of shame too of how come you don't know this?

But it was just where I was and I was okay with like, okay, well, I'm learning at 56 now. All of this. And so I started on a travel trove of just like, I ordered Brittney Cooper's books, I ordered Koritha Mitchell's books, I'm like, reading it all now.

Kara: I love that so much. I guess I have two follow up questions. One is if you were sort of like, I don't know what this thing is I'm signing up for, and it was called the feminist training and you were like I don't know about feminism, what made you sign up for it?

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Brig: I think it was literally listening to your podcast over the years and understanding the patriarchy and like okay, but I think it was once I got in that I really understood. Because still, it's like the patriarchy, I still literally saw white men, I never made the distinction or the connection of oh, it's in the Black community too.

I think that's what blew my mind is when it was like, oh, there's Black male patriarchy too. And that's when I was like, oh my, okay. But again, I didn't get that until - I just knew it was something to explore.

Kara: I think seeing all those different layers of it like okay, so there's white supremacy, but then there's also misogynoir and how is it playing out in different communities. So what do you think - I'll save that to the end. That's another question I want to hear everybody, what they think feminism means. Anybody else? Maggie, you want to share with us what happened when your husband already knew you were a feminist but then you decided maybe you were a feminist?

Maggie: Yes. So when George Floyd happened, I had an awakening. Because up to that point, I feel so identified with Brig too. I grew up the daughter of a single mom and my whole first chapter of my life was really surviving. I didn't have time to have these philosophical debates about things. I was having bologna sandwiches for lunch. It was a different time.

And I read this document from Dismantling Racism that was the characteristics of white supremacy culture. And it was everything I coach on every day. And I was like, oh wait a minute, everything makes sense now. It all came into focus. So right after that, you announced that you were doing this and then I read the page where you said it was taking a butterknife to a gunfight.

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Kara: Just so people know what we're talking about, it's that if you try to coach a woman without understanding patriarchy and white supremacy and all the different structures of intersection, it's like bringing a butterknife to a sword fight.

Maggie: Yes, thank you, yes. And I read that and I said, this is for me. I don't care what it's called.

Kara: You're like, sword fights? I'm in.

Maggie: I'm there. I'm already having them. I need better tools. So that was really the impetus to sign up in the first place. And then as we went through the material and as we went through all these different aspects of all the ways that this ocean that we swim in affects where we get stuck in our lives as coaches, we help people get unstuck in whatever specialty we have.

I was like, yes. So now I address the ocean we swim in. Obviously with much more depth of knowledge, but also much more of my own sort of reflections upon let's look at how this came to be. We still have things, thought work and model out and see, but let's consider the ocean we're in as we do that thought work.

Kara: Yeah, I'm curious to hear from the rest of you and get to that how it's impacted the work you're doing. I think that's a big piece of this too. So what about you Linda?

Linda: I love that Maggie brought up that part of the copy because that was what was really hook, line, and sinker for me as well. Because I was like, how many times am I not serving well enough, both in my day job and my

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coaching job because I don't have this knowledge? Why am I accepting that a butterknife is enough? I'm not that gal. I want to go 300% in.

Kara: She's an OB surgeon. You do C sections, right? So you definitely need not a butterknife.

Linda: I do mostly radiology type stuff.

Kara: We did this podcast yesterday where she used a surgery example, which is where I was coming from.

Linda: Sometimes. I do mostly sick babies and sick moms. But that's why this is relevant because I mean, if anybody's paid any attention to the maternal mortality statistics lately, they're dismal in our country and there's a wide racial discrepancy. And I live in Georgia, so there's probably 50% of my patients are Black and 50% are white. So this is very relevant to my everyday life.

And I was like, if I can do better for these mamas because I have a better understanding of some of these contexts, and can show up in a better way for them, how is that not freaking amazing? Maybe I can be a better doctor because I'm a better coach, which is just a whole 'nother level of mind-blowing.

And then in my coaching life, I'm coaching women on salary negotiations. So all these diverse layers of intersectionality come into that full force. If you want to bring out bias and all those things, talk about money. And talk about money in hierarchal...

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Kara: I always have trouble with that word. Hierarchy-influenced structures we can call them.

Linda: Hierarchy-based structures. Let's talk about that so that I can speak English. Southern is my new first language. So being able to bring all those extra facets to what I do in both of my roles just was so attractive to me because as soon as I saw that that was a gap, it was like, I can't unopen that door. I need to walk through this door and really make sure that I'm getting everything I can out of it.

Kara: So good. What about you Amy?

Amy: Yeah, I love this because this is kind of what we were referring to earlier about my experience growing up Mormon. I researched my way out of Mormonism basically. And so any other door that makes me feel uncomfortable I knew I would need to step into. And so being a feminist was a bad word, I'm like, okay, the only way I can figure out if that's true for me is if I study.

Education is the key to everything, and so that's why this course was so appealing to me because I thought okay, I'm just going to learn. I'm going to see. I'll make my own opinion based on the information that I'm studying because then I can pull from all these resources, which you had amazing resources and content for us that blew me mind, to once again, realize how much I didn't know as a woman in this country, a white woman, not seeing the intersectionality of it all.

It's life-changing for me. Everything I do now is so different, and being that I do coach women, mostly women, I do coach some men too who are

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coming out of Mormonism, I knew that I couldn't be the only person who's confused by this feminist conversation.

Kara: Definitely not the only person. Would you call yourself a feminist now?

Amy: Yeah. Absolutely. For sure.

Kara: So I'm curious, and Maggie talked about this a little bit, but also if she wants to say more, any of you want to talk about how you think - it's almost like this identify shift, right? You're like, okay, now I am a feminist. And as a coach, we know identity shifts filter out into the way that you do anything else. You think of yourself as this kind of person and then that creates feelings and actions and results in your life.

So I'd just be curious to hear what you see has changed, either in your personal life, your way of thinking about yourself, and your coaching, just whatever it is, the shift from either I'm not a feminist to I am a feminist, or from this is what feminism means, oh no, it means all these other way bigger things I hadn't considered, and I need to bring an intersectional approach to my work. How that's changed you personally or in your coaching work. Whoever wants to jump in.

Maggie: I'll go first because I have lots of thoughts.

Kara: Do it, tell us all your thoughts.

Maggie: So first, I became aware of my unconscious heteronormativity at a higher level. I had some inkling, but now I'm really clear. Especially I'm a

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marriage coach, so I'm talking about marriage all the time. And just bringing it to my own awareness and calling myself out on it.

And even when I'm sometimes giving examples on my podcast, and I'll catch myself doing something and I'll just say it live and course correct there. The principles of feminist coaching, our first module in the class, I really had the sensation that if you taught us nothing else and that's all we did for the whole time together, that would have been investing in the class.

Because just seeing my coaching and my life through that lens of those feminist principles just opened up something that was never there before. It just expanded me in a whole new way. The idea of being non-hierarchal, so my family was Catholic when I was growing up, welcome to hierarchy.

Kara: Yeah, that and Mormonism have some things in common. Here's a bunch of white dudes, even though Jesus was Middle Eastern. Details.

Maggie: Right. So that idea of not being hierarchal, I started - it's almost as if I was walking around in the dark and then you turned on the light and I was like, oh, I'm being hierarchal, even how I lead this session, or even how I lead this group, or even how I encourage communication or the container that I'm creating.

And it made me revisit previous decisions that I had made when I wasn't conscious that I was an unconscious hierarchal mindset that is what these patriarchal mindsets are. We don't even realize that we're in that ocean. That was massively, massively powerful for me.

Kara: Can you give us a concrete example to give us an idea?

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Maggie: Totally. So one of the examples that you gave which really spoke to my heart was when you did one of your very first groups, you were the only one who coached in that group, you had it on lockdown as to what the rules were and all of that. And I had created something similar in my unknowingness.

And I was running a small group at the time and as soon as I learned what you were talking about, let it be messy, let us all help each other grow, let that be part of it, I just embraced all of that. And one of the things I teach in marriage is do-overs. There's never a bad time for a course correction, you can do it in the middle of a fight, it doesn't matter.

It's one of the principles I teach all the time. So I gathered the group on our next call and I said we're doing a do-over. This is what I did when I wasn't present and wasn't aware of this unconscious hierarchy that I was perpetuating, here's what we're going to do now and here's how it's going to flow. And we just had a great conversation about it.

And what was beautiful about that is one of my clients was like, "Oh, you're modeling what a do-over looks like." Yes. And we're changing the way we're moving forward from now on too.

Kara: How has that been, to let them coach each other?

Maggie: My perception of it is it's been fabulous. They have great things to say, so we're going to assume that we all agree that it's been fabulous. It opened a new portal for vulnerability, for help, for support. Especially when people are struggling in marriages, very often they talk to no one else about it.

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And so having someone you can trust and talk about the struggle is equally as important as whatever I have to say. Or sometimes more so. So then when I started my next group, we just started that way. This is how we do things here. And I think it's just a better way to live.

Kara: Yeah, it's so good. I was talking about this in this focus group I did because I was sort of talking about the fact that it is messy. So it's like if I kept everything on lockdown, then I could make sure that no one ever said anything - I could just sort of control it all more, and there's more risk to letting everybody just coach each other, but there's also so much more reward.

And I think especially as coaches, both we're taught the hierarchy but then also there's this natural human tendency to look outside of ourselves for answers and we hire someone to help us. And sometimes we want to make them the authority so we can rebel against them. There's all kinds of complicated psychological dynamics that go on.

And then there's also this thing I think that often we are like, well, okay, my coach could figure it out because they're our coach, or they're special or they're whatever. But when you have your peers communicating with you and teaching you, it makes it much harder to be like, I'm a special snowflake who can never change my thoughts, or Kara's a special snowflake, and that's why she can do it. So good. Anybody else want to get in on this what's changed for you?

Amy: I'll speak to this. What's changed for me, which I think was so important is the terminology I used to be more inclusive. Previous to this course, I thought I needed to keep it just for my white woman experience. And just tweaking my language to be more inclusive of so many different

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people in this world, it's making connections that I didn't think would happen just from changing my inclusivity. And that might seem small, but it's been huge for me. And I just love the connection that's happening because of it.

Kara: I think one of the things that goes wrong is when people are thinking about trying to be more inclusive, trying to have a more equity-centered business or conversations, they think they have to be PhD expert level to say or do anything. And the truth is especially in the coaching industry, the bar is so fucking low. Can you just mention that whatever anti-Semitism or fat phobia or racism exists? Can you try using a gender neutral pronoun?

You actually - just a little bit makes people feel seen and makes them feel like you might be a safe person to talk to. It has to be genuine, obviously, but it's like you don't have to be an expert-level Jedi about all of this. Yeah, I've been saying this for 20 years and I still don't know as much as lots of people. But just any gesture towards that. But people want to wait until they're like, okay, well, I have three PhDs in critical race theory, feminist theory, and intersection, and now I'm ready to speak on it.

Amy: Yeah. That's my point. I don't have to be an expert in everyone's lived experience, but to see that we're all experiencing things a little bit differently and to be inclusive of that just feels so much...

Kara: Right. And you can't be an expert in everyone's lived experience. But there's a huge difference. All you actually have to do - it's so funny, it's always the opposite in coaching. You just have to acknowledge out loud that you are not an expert in other people's lived experience for them to be like, okay, maybe I can talk to her.

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She at least understands that she is not an expert on my experience, so maybe we can have a conversation. As opposed to when we try to hold ourselves out like we're - Simone Seol and I are doing this limited series podcast. It'll be out by the time this is out.

So in the podcast series we did, sometimes podcasts feel time-bending. You're like, when I'm talking, when it's coming out, what will have already happened. That podcast series will be out. It's called Outside the White Box because it's all about this idea that coaching does not take place in a white box where everybody just enters the box and then everything they've ever experienced as a person in the world where they're treated differently for various reasons doesn't exist.

And you don't have to be an expert in all of it. You just have to be willing to say, "I know I don't know, here are some tools I have. Here's the ways I've used them, some of these you may find analogous or helpful, I don't know what your lived experience is, let's have a conversation about it." What about you Brig, or Linda?

Brig: I think for me, it was mostly - it explained my duality as a high-achieving Black woman in this strong, I do this, do this, do this, but why do I people please? Why does what they say matter so much? Why I went into fight or flight, why I had such strong reactions to other people's opinions of me. I saw all my attachments.

It made me go, oh, of course that's why I do that. So it totally made me normal and made me understand and accept all of me. As a Black woman, I understand why I'm more protective and deal with security, why security is such a big thing for me when I understood the history and how everything is language and how I'm outside of the sphere in the constant work.

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So I'm aware of it, but the way it was explained in the course was like, oh, I get it. It put all the pieces together, as Maggie was saying. I understood, and so for me as a coach now, it just helps me make a safe place for all my clients.

They're high-achieving, they're PhD, but I feel like an imposter. They work at the White House. They work at the White House. I'm like, you work at the White House, but I have this problem, I'm insecure about this, when I get this email, I have this reaction.

And so for me, it was like I just get to show them, you've been conditioned this way, and this is why your body reacts to it. And this is how we get to understand and create safety. So it's just another level of nothing's wrong with you. Totally nothing wrong with you.

Kara: Yeah, I think that is to me one of the most important pieces. It's funny because in coaching sometimes we say you don't need to know the why, and that's true to some extent. I don't think you have to trace everything back to whatever childhood thing.

But when there's a whole system - this is just talking about one instance of sexism versus a whole system. When there is a whole system, you can't really understand what's going on with you if you don't understand that. Because you're in that place where you're like, okay, well, my coach explained flight versus fright to me, so I understand the evolutionary biology, but it still keeps happening and it's in these specific situations, or with these specific people.

Until you can pull back and be like, oh, well I've been socialized to think that I'm not good enough for these particular reasons and I have to show

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up this particular way as a woman, as a Black woman, as a Cuban woman, as a fat woman, whatever, now I can start to see why is this thing - it's sort of like I feel like sometimes it's initial coaching tools will take care of the low hanging fruit. And then it's like, the stuff that is really deeply in there. Some of it might be family, and then some of it is this social stuff that we're not looking at otherwise.

Brig: Right. Because for my clients, it's like especially, it's our thoughts about us. If we look at our thoughts about us as oh, I'm a badass, but then it's like, oh, but what I think other people think of me, that is more important and why. And just explaining all of that.

Even in relationships 70% of Black women are single. 70%. That's systemic racism. That's a system. That's not a me problem. That's a we problem. And when you explain it that way, it's like, all of it is like, oh, something's wrong with me. No, it's a whole system.

So it is a C but it is a T, and it is a C too, right? So it's like, it takes everything from a DEFCON10 to a DEFCON4. Now we can work on it. Now we can change the thoughts.

Kara: Yeah. And I think one of the things I really realized when I was working through all this for myself when I first found coaching and I was like, okay, this part is so helpful but what about all this other stuff? Are we not talking about it? Why are we not talking about any of this part?

It's like, sometimes the way coaching is taught is sort of the way to empower people is to make them believe that no circumstance matters. And I'm like, people don't need to be treated like they're three years old.

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You can say to someone, “Yeah, systemically, circumstance-wise for instance, if you’re a Black woman who wants a Black partner and wants to marry a Black man, many of them are in prison because we live in a system of racial apartheid. There are literally less people available. Now, how do we want to think about that circumstance? What are we going to do?”

I did a lot of this work on dating in a fat body. I do not need to pretend to myself that there is no fat phobia in the world, that there’s no discrimination against fat people in the dating pool. I’m never going to believe that. We have statistics. But I don’t need to believe that to feel empowered. What I need to believe is okay, a lot of shit in the world is not the way I would want, and now how do I want to show up? How do I want to be resilient?

That’s what’s so powerful because then I’m like, fuck it, bring it world, what else do you have that’s fucked up that I’m going to try to help fix? I don’t need to believe that there are no circumstances or boundaries that - it’s like gravity exists. If I jump out the window, I’m going to fall. I don’t have to believe that that’s not true in order to feel empowered. And in fact, knowing that it’s true keeps me from jumping out the window, which is actually empowering and keeps me alive.

Brig: Totally, yeah.

Kara: So good. What about you Linda?

Linda: And I think coming, listening to all of their answers, this comes up for the gals that I’m helping in a few ways. I think one way it’s really helped me is to not see it as there’s simply a gender gap in medicine. Because it’s more than just a gender gap.

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There's a gender gap, and then there are all these other marginalized identities that I may not understand on a personal level. But if I can make it a safe space for the women who do, to talk about how that is impacting their pay and what they're able to negotiate for, or how they're perceived when they ask for more, I mean, one of the most common things that I hear as a barrier is I don't want to be seen as greedy.

And that tends to come up and then there are all these other levels of like, I don't want to be seen as greedy because I'm so lucky that they're sponsoring my visa to practice medicine in this country. Immigrant women in medicine have a whole 'nother set of hurdles to go over in their job negotiations.

And then you add in all the other identities, and just giving them the space to acknowledge that that's coming up for them in their negotiation. And I don't have to understand exactly how it's coming up to be able to help them because they do understand how it's coming up, if they're able to look at it and bring that awareness to the fact that, "Huh, I never thought about that, but maybe that is coming up for me."

Kara: Yeah, it's like the next level of your client is always in the best position to solve their own problem, right? We don't tell people what to do because you know your life better than I do. You know your own brain. I just have to help you see clearly.

You're not going to know an immigrant woman's experience better than she is. Your job is just to help her see her own experience clearly. And then she's going to be able to figure out what to do.

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Linda: Right. And it's always something that I had shied away from before because I was like, what do I know about that? I was born in Detroit. I don't know anything about an immigrant experience. But I can hold the space to let her know that that could be a part of this and that that's okay, and it's something that she can work through with these same tools and I don't have to understand it to help her because it's not about me doing the helping. It's about me providing the tools and she's helping herself.

Kara: That's such a good example also of what we were just talking about, which is like, yeah, there will be people on the other side of the negotiating table sometimes who have thoughts about you that are explicitly or implicitly shaped by their biases. We don't have to pretend that's not true in order to empower people in negotiations.

We got to acknowledge that that might be true. Now what are we going to do? How are we going to deal with this? How are we going to be strategic? When are we going to fight it out? When are we going to try to go somewhere else? I feel like that's such a perfect example of - because this comes up a lot is sort of like, okay, I believe in myself, but other people are going to have racist, or sexist, or homophobic, or bigoted thoughts.

Yeah, they are. So let's not pretend that that's not happening. Let's figure out how you're going to show up knowing that sometimes you're right that's what's going on, sometimes you're wrong that's what's going on, it doesn't even matter. How are you going to show up knowing we don't have an x-ray machine for what's going on with whoever we're dealing with?

Linda: Right. And helping to choose an outcome that you do have control over, right? My win in the negotiation is that I can show up the way I want to, and then I can decide based on the specifics and the parameters if this

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is a yes for me or not. It is not a unilateral conversation. It's not a hierarchy-based conversation. I have an MD but I can't speak English.

Kara: It's okay. This is the podcast we did on "cancel culture" where we came up with - we're an online accountability discourse process, and then we had to say that every time.

Linda: Right. I actually just listened to that one this week, so that's super fun. But yeah, you can still have the authority, even if they don't give you what you want. You still ultimately get to choose is that right for you or not, do you want to pursue another thing or not. And none of that is outside of you.

So you can win whether or not they give you what you've asked for. Because at the end of the day, if you really get kind of in that headspace of I showed up the way I wanted to show up, that's a major win. And it doesn't matter how they respond as to whether or not it's a win.

Obviously, it's wonderful if they give you all the money and make it even better because of all that backpay that you're deserved. But that's not ultimately the result that you're chasing. The result you're chasing is that you showed up and you left that shit on the table.

Kara: Yeah. It's so insidious because I think one of the critiques you often would hear would be like, let's say one of the critiques of that would be, well, certain women don't have other options, or can't do other things, whatever. But part of the whole insidiousness of any oppressive system is it gets in your head and makes you think that you don't have any options.

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I mean, that's the whole thing. People conflate both acknowledging that oppressive systems and discrimination exists, but they think that if you do that, that means you also have to believe and agree that people don't have any options, which is not empowering at all. But often that comes up.

It's like those things are put together and I think those have to be so separate. Because the belief that you can't change your life, that you don't have any options, that the oppressive structure dictates everything that's possible for you and about your life and that there's nothing you can do about it, that's actually the oppressive system in your head. That's who taught you to think that way.

And so when we agree with that, we're actually doing the oppressor's work for them or for it. We have internalized the system and we're believing what it tells us, which is what keeps us putting up with whatever bare minimum we can get.

Linda: Right. And from accessing opportunities that might be available.

Kara: And accessing the creativity of our brain. When you tell yourself there's no other option, your brain's like, great, time for a snack, I'm done, let's watch Netflix. When you believe there's options, your brain's like, boom, five different things we could try, here's what we do, let's go. So good.

Alright, I know we're coming up on an hour because this was such a good conversation. Is there anything else people want to add? Any final or closing words? Anything you feel like you didn't get to say about your relationship to feminism or how it's impacting your work or your personal life? Anything.

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Amy: What I want to add is what the course helped me do is zoom out and see, because I would see similar things coming up for my clients all the time. A lot of us probably do. And this course let me see the bigger picture because I was so mono-focused on this one area and I'm like, oh, this is the reason my clients are having a hard time overcoming this, or can't see it from this point of view.

Because this course covered so many areas that it just kind of opened my eyes, made me see the connections and why especially women are coming with the same issues again and again, because of how we've been socialized, how we've been raised, how we've made connections, not even seeing the hierarchy. I'll just use that word.

Kara: Yeah, I do think that came up a lot, especially in the work module. Everybody was like, oh, this is why my clients are like this. That's how I came to this sort of was as I started doing my own self-coaching and watching my clients, and just watching my friends' brains, when you learn about this, whenever anybody talks to you, you're like, circumstance, thought, feeling, in your own brain, sorting it all out.

And just being like, what the fuck is going on? Why are all of these women who are professors and chiefs of staff at philanthropy foundations and doctors, how do we all think we're imposters? Something is not right here. This is not just personal family history, this is not just biology. There is something else going on here.

Obviously, I knew about feminism but it's like, that's I think how it got integrated into coaching for me was the same thing of being like, I'm having the same conversation with a lot of people. Sign in and not talk about this in coaching school. Something else is going on here. What is this?

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Amy: Yeah, this helps see the big picture. It's like putting the big topical map down. You can start making the connections where without this, I felt like there was too much in it and this just really helped give me a better map to see what's going on.

Kara: I love that.

Brig: For me, it just helped me help my clients become creators, become architects. Because they understood why they were stuck and now we just went dismantling those thoughts, and then creating new ones.

Kara: Yeah, there's something so empowering for whatever reason to be able to be like, oh, this is where this thought comes from. It's not mine. I think what happens is if you have a thought that's like, whatever, I'm stupid, I'm not good enough, all of our favorite thoughts, it's like you just keep thinking, "Well, maybe I have it because it's true."

You're sort of engaged constantly in this low level debate with yourself, even if you know it's not helpful, where you're like, yeah, but I have the thought for a reason, I don't think I'm a dinosaur, so if I think I'm stupid maybe it's because I am.

And understanding where it comes from I feel like is so freeing. It allows you to really be like, oh, this shit isn't even mine, I didn't come up with this, I didn't create this, I did not consent to this being put in my brain and I am going to get the fuck out of here.

Brig: It's so empowering for my clients when they get it. It's like oh, I get it, it makes sense. Cut the cords, let's go.

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Kara: Yeah, cut the cord, exactly. You're like, I didn't grow this, this is an interloper. So good. Anybody else have anything they want to say?

Maggie: For our final project, we all did different things and for my final project I did this thing called the internalized patriarchy relationship inventory. And I want to say two things about it. Letting it be messy, who am I to have been qualified to create such a thing? I just wanted to do it so I did it, right?

It's the idea that is it better to look at it messily and let it be completely imperfect and even be missing some huge chunk of thing, but start having the conversation? Or do we wait for it to be perfect? And that's one thing that I'm taking away from the class for forever. That is like, this is valuable, this is important, let's have a messy conversation about it and let that be okay.

Kara: Think about all the messes that white dudes have made throughout history. They're happy to make a mess.

Maggie: Yes. And when I announced it to my group, I said this is what we're going to work on next week, it's in progress, I'm doing this for my class, they cheered. I know, that was this moment where I was like, this is why I do this work, this is what it's all about. It was such a moment where I thought, they don't care if it's messy.

Kara: Look at the course itself. We went through and I was like, okay guys, what am I missing? And you all were like, here's all the things you're missing. And I was like, great, yeah, I'm sure I am, tell me more, and then we're going to revise and then we'll have the same thing happen all over again. It does not have to be perfect to be helpful.

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Maggie: And to be so valuable and so life-changing for people. And so you model that so well for us, and I feel so equipped to then keep modeling that for myself, living it for myself and modeling it for my clients.

Kara: It's the opposite of perfectionism. It's like you just go in and you're like, yeah, this is probably a mess but I think it's still helpful, and then let's see if we can make it any better. And it's such a socialization thing also that it's supposed to be perfect and beyond reproach, and then especially if you're a woman of color, or especially if you're a disabled woman or whatever, the more marginalized identities you have, the more it's supposed to be perfect and beyond reproach because you're going to be judged so harshly, so you can't put anything out there that's not perfect. And fuck that noise.

People are going to judge you no matter what. Do you want to put your unfinished messy work in the world and do something? It's like being - when I think about my version of it, it's like, as a fat woman, I'm never going to be able to present myself in a way that makes a thin supremacist person agree with me that it's okay to be me.

This is never going to happen. So I can't spend all my time being like, let me just get this perfect so that then they'll all agree with me. They're not going to agree with me. You can't be a perfect enough woman to make a misogynist agree with you, you can't be a perfect enough person of color to make a white racist agree with you. You have to put it out there messy and let the people who want to be in conversation with you be there with you.

Alright, thank you guys so much for coming on and talking about this. I know it's such a helpful conversation. It's just so fun - this is a slow way to bring people to the feminism cause, converting you one by one through a

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high-end coaching program, but you know, I just got to meet my quota for this year and now I got four more.

No, such a privilege to be your teacher and your coach and thank you for coming on and sharing all this with everybody. I just want to group hug everyone and we can't on Zoom. We're all hugging each other on Zoom. Thank you.

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