

HOW TO ESCAPE THE TRAP OF OLD THINKING – DR. BARBARA J. LOVE INTERVIEW

Barbara ([00:00](#)):

Hello, Barbara.

Barbara ([00:01](#)):

Hello, Jean, delighted to be with you today.

Jean ([00:05](#)):

It is a delight. I am so excited. Okay. So it is my pleasure to introduce to you Dr. Barbara J. Love, who is a consultant, coach, author, lecturer, climate change activist, an organizational transformation specialist, as well as a personal transformation specialist. Barbara is Professor Emerita from the University of Massachusetts College of Education and Social Justice Education. So Dr. Love works from a unique set of assumptions about the nature of human beings and the process of personal organization and social change. She's worked with a lot of different kinds of organizations throughout the US, Europe, Caribbean, Africa. Her research focuses on transformation. She's authored and coauthored, a variety of publications, including developing a liberatory consciousness and understanding racism and internalized racism. I invited her here because her liberatory consciousness model rocked my world when I first saw it. And as a matter of fact, we've featured it on one of our blog posts, blog number 10. So I wanted especially for you to know about her model and to introduce you to Dr. Barbara Love. Okay. So hi Barbara.

Jean ([01:47](#)):

So thank you again for interview agreeing with this interview. And I want to start by learning about you, how you came to be, how did you grow up? How did you get interested in concerned about social justice? And what's the Genesis of who you are.

Barbara ([02:09](#)):

Thank you for that question. I don't get asked that question a lot. I grew up in Arkansas. I am a southerner, born and bred. I grew up in a community that was founded by my great grandfather Miles Leech. I attended a school that was built by my great grandfather, Miles Leech.

Jean ([02:36](#)):

Wow.

Barbara (02:37):

Yes. My great grandfather left a plantation in Tennessee where people were held in bondage and he left the plantation money box under his arm. He did that and landed in Arkansas after the civil war, he bought land and built a community, built a school, and it was his idea that Black people had to do their work. Black people had to build a school. He thought Black people had to educate themselves and so on. So that's my background. That's the stock from whence I have come. And when people ask, how can you believe, how do you do this work? How do you keep faith? And my question becomes, how can I not? How could I not?

Jean (03:34):

We're got to go back to the money box, the money box.

Barbara (03:40):

Well, I don't know how he got the money box, we didn't get that story. The story that I have made up is that he was undoubtedly a trusted part of the plantation operation in order to have access to the money box. We know that he was educated. We know that he was a literate person, which is not the usual situation for a person held in bondage on the plantation. So we assumed that he must've had some access to have been educated in the way that he was and to have access to the money box so that he could leave with it when he departed from the plantation.

Jean (04:18):

That is such a story.

Barbara (04:20):

Yes. I have that money box on my shelf in a private place. Yes. And I have the original deeds where he bought the land. And let me tell you what else I have.

Barbara (04:33):

I have a stack of poll tax receipts that I want to put out and send to everybody that I know who's worried about whether or not they should vote. My great grandfather paid the poll tax where people in the community, and he would load them up in his wagon and take them to vote. He was insistent that we should be part of figuring out how to organize the world around us. So, yeah, that's my background. I will show you, I have poll tax receipts from him, from my grandfather, my grandmother, my mother, my father, they all paid those poll taxes so that they could go and vote. So I'm saying if

they paid and went through what they went through to vote, how could anyone not vote in 2020? So I know that's not the subject of our conversation today.

Jean [\(05:31\)](#):

Oh yes, it really is. Yes. Okay. That's an amazing, amazing story. So let's fast forward. So you're a child, you're being raised with the stories of your grandparents. You're being raised with a self-liberation consciousness. Then what happened?

Barbara [\(05:56\)](#):

Then what happened? That was my maternal grandfather. The story from my paternal grandfather was of him marching with Marcus Garvey. They used to march. Again, they, they ran a co-op so that they would buy their own food. They would in this small community, I had my mother's family community and my father's family community and the Love community. That's my name. That's my father's family community. They ran their little community to themselves. They had their own commissary, they had their own co-op. And the stories that they told. They were Garveyites and they believed in self-determination and they believed in, they own their own land. They raised their crops. They sold that crops as a collective, as opposed to an independent people trying to do their work. And so there is that background.

Jean [\(07:01\)](#):

Those who don't know who Marcus Garvey is, would you say just a little bit about him?

Barbara [\(07:07\)](#):

Yes. Marcus Garvey was a Black man. His origins were Jamaican in the early part of the last century who preached self-determination for Black people. He thought that Black people should own their own land. They should raise their own food. They should have their own businesses and organizations. That they should trade with each other. They should have their own skilled professionals and so on. And Black people needed to support other Black people in order for Black people to develop an economic base from which to have a social and political basis of independence in the US and there were many groups around the country, in the U S who patterned themselves on the principles of Marcus Garvey. And he was eventually deported from the US and returned to Jamaica.

Jean [\(08:08\)](#):

Wow. He was bit too radical for the powers that be at the time.

Barbara [\(08:14\)](#):

Too radical for the time. So they got rid of him.

Jean ([08:20](#)):

So on both sides of the family, you got self-help, self-liberation, and I hate to be so trite to say it, a can do spirit. How would you put that?

Barbara ([08:34](#)):

Yeah, that's a perfect description. A can do spirit. And not only a can do spirit, but a must do spirit. That it is our responsibility to do that. We don't have the luxury to not engage in attempting to change the system around us. We don't have the luxury to not build community, to not build institutions that support Black people, that we don't have the luxury to not build institutions that will support our own liberation.

Jean ([09:04](#)):

Okay. So with this background, I'm assuming you went to a segregated high school?

Barbara ([09:09](#)):

Segregated high school and a segregated college.

Jean ([09:14](#)):

Where did you go to college?

Barbara ([09:15](#)):

I went to Arkansas, AM&N. It was Agricultural Mechanical and Normal, and nowadays it has been integrated into the university system and they call it the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. But when people ask me where I went to school, I still say Arkansas AM&N because those are my roots. Why? You know, I had a chance to think about the textbooks that I had when I was in elementary school and our school, like many other segregated schools at the time, got the textbooks that were left over from the White school. So when I left Arkansas going to Missouri to teach school, and I just have to tell you that story as well. So I majored in history, but I took the teaching blocks so that I could become a teacher. The last semester of my senior year, I applied for a teaching position in Missouri, Kansas City, Missouri. I went for an interview. During my interview, the person who was interviewing me wanted to know, you know, and so that was 1965. So, you know, the state of the country, the state of the world, what was going on, questions about desegregation, all of that was happening in 1965. So there for my interview, the interviewer wanted to know: do you think you can teach White children?

Barbara ([10:50](#)):

So I had a question in return. Do you think White children can learn?

Jean ([10:57](#)):

And did you, did you really ask that?

Barbara ([11:02](#)):

What else was I to say? He was surprised and startled. And he said, well, yes, of course they can learn. And I said, well, if they can learn, I can teach them. So I taught social studies for four years in Kansas City. And then I worked for a year as part of a community organization. And that was a very interesting experience because part of what I did was to organize community dialogues, opportunities for people to come together and talk about issues of race and class and the intersections of those and how they impacted on our daily lives.

Barbara ([11:37](#)):

Yeah, it was, it was a very powerful experience for me and for the community. I met people.

Jean ([11:46](#)):

What year? When was it?

Barbara ([11:48](#)):

1968, 69.

Jean ([11:51](#)):

In the very early, early years of the dialogue, as a means for racial reconciliation. Wow. And where was this? Kansas?

Barbara ([12:03](#)):

Kansas City, Missouri. It was in Missouri. So focusing on race, we talked about class as well, but the focus was on race. I tell you, one of the people I met, I decided, okay, if we're going to have dialogue about race and racism, let's get real. So I tracked down the local head of the KKK to come join one of these dialogue groups. Well, we ended up developing such a great relationship because it's like he had to question all of the attitudes and beliefs and viewpoints that had informed his participation in the plan. And I had to question my perspective of Klansmen as monsters. He turned out to be a human being. He turned out to be a human being with whom I could have conversation and dialogue. And you know, I don't claim that our work changed the course of his life, but by the time we finished, he was on a very different life path. He

was doing his plan. He was doing very different work and I left Kansas City to come to Massachusetts.

Jean ([13:27](#)):

Okay. But wait, I want to comment on something here, because this modest statement is I don't claim our work changed him. We all have inputs and various inputs come in and there is no doubt that your work had input into whatever the stream of consciousness was that led him to redirect himself.

Barbara ([13:50](#)):

Yes. And you use the word consciousness, coming to consciousness. And that was a powerful lesson for me about coming to consciousness. And it was a powerful lesson for me about people can only think the thoughts they have access to.

Jean ([14:09](#)):

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Barbara ([14:13](#)):

They don't have access to different points of view. If they don't have access to different information. If they don't have access to the questions, then they keep on thinking what they've always thought. What has been poured into their heads, what has been installed on their minds.

Jean ([14:27](#)):

Yes. So lead lead us now to liberatory consciousness.

Barbara ([14:32](#)):

And so there I was at the University of Massachusetts, but let me tell you another story about the University of Massachusetts. Because I had been teaching social studies, my admissions letters said you are admitted to the social studies education program and named a person who would be my advisor. So I traveled to Massachusetts Amherst. I went to the School of Education. I found the office of the person who was named as my advisor. I moved my letter in my hand, and I walked into their office to introduce myself and say, you know, my name is Barbara Love. I have been assigned to you as an advisee. I held out my hand, they cowered behind your desk. They did not shake my hand. And they said, you don't want to see me. So I stood there for a little while and they finally said, "You want those people upstairs."

Barbara ([15:34](#)):

So I turned on my heels and I walked upstairs to find out who are these people upstairs? And when I got to the top of the stairs, I could see people in the hallway. I could hear voices. I could hear laughter. And I said, Oh, these are the people upstairs. I had found the Center for Urban Education and the cluster of Black people in the School of Education. They were all right there. And I said, okay, that's why he sent me here. So I asked them, who's in charge here? And they told me, and I said, where is he? They said, he's in that office. So I went in and I introduced myself and I've been at the university for the next 40 years. Wow. So I was in the center for Urban of Education after a semester there--

Jean ([16:28](#)):

I just have to say that the small indignities that we then turned to triumph, those stories are just amazing. There's an indignity. And then we change it into triumph. That's what you did, again and again. You're telling me is a dignity hits, you change it into triumph. Again. And again, and again, that's the trajectory you're describing for me.

Barbara ([16:56](#)):

Yeah. I, well, thank you for naming it that way. I always say it's following my grandfather's light.

Jean ([17:04](#)):

Well then your grandfather's life is leading you to triumph. However you get there that's what you have done consistently as you're describing it. Okay. So keep going.

Barbara ([17:16](#)):

Yeah. okay.

Jean ([17:19](#)):

Okay. Consciousness,

Barbara ([17:21](#)):

Liberatory consciousness. So we all, and I love that you're saying that you taught Frere with your students and my work in Urban Education, then teacher education. And then eventually we developed this social justice education program. That's where I, along with the group of five other faculty, we developed what was then the very first graduate degree program in social justice education in the country, actually.

Jean ([17:59](#)):

That's cool.

Barbara ([18:00](#)):

Yeah, it was and it was the opportunity. I said for once my mortgage paying work, coincides with my life mission. I don't have to do a job and then do my life mission work on the side. My work around creating a world that works well for everyone, creating a world characterized by equity, fairness, and justice. I consider that my life's mission work. And I'm so glad I don't have to do one job that has nothing to do with that. And then do this work as an addition. So my worlds all came together in this way.

Jean ([18:39](#)):

You're singing my song.

Barbara ([18:43](#)):

Yeah. So you're asking about teaching Frere but I have to tell you a number of people were important to developing this notion of liberatory consciousness.

Jean ([19:04](#)):

Before you go there, say something about Paulo Freire for those who don't know about it,

Barbara ([19:10](#)):

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator who eventually ended up leaving this country because it was no longer safe for him to be there because he framed education, the goal of education was liberation. The goal of education was the development of a critical consciousness that would enable people to rise above the ways that they were embedded in oppressive systems that kept them thinking and kept them living lives of limitation. And he thought that education ought to open one's thinking, education ought to open one's horizon, education ought to equip one with the skills to be able to analyze the world in which you found yourself and equip you with the capacity to figure out how to change that world. That we become more fully human by engaging in the act of transforming the world. Yes, the world is as we find it and the world in which we find ourselves is characterized by oppression, it's characterized by relationships of domination and subordination.

Barbara ([20:17](#)):

And we can accept that as the way that it is. We can accept that as inevitable, or we can engage in a process of transformation. And while he does not say that we are less human if we do not engage in transformation, but he does say that we become more fully human. We become more fully who humans are meant to be as we engage in the process of transforming the world and that we cannot transform the world without

transforming ourselves, without transforming our own consciousness. Because the process of living, the process of being socialized into the societies in which we live, has ensured that our consciousness has encompassed all of the attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and consequent behavior patterns that are necessary to function effectively in an oppressive society. And so we each engage in reproducing oppression because that is what we have learned to do. And so his goal was to help us be able to think outside the oppressive consciousness that has been installed on us and be able to think in ways that can lead us toward liberation.

Jean ([21:42](#)):

Okay. Hang on. What is the oppression that he's talking about? Be really specific about that.

Barbara ([21:50](#)):

Freire was talking, in his case, about the oppression in Brazil, it was about economics. It was about class consciousness. It was about the oppression of those who have over those who have not. Those who have wealth, land, resource and those who have not. And Brazil, like many other countries throughout the world, but in particular, in many South American countries, there is a very small landed aristocracy and a very large class of peasants, class of people who have no land, who have no resource and who are therefore consequently dependent on the land and aristocracy for their wellbeing. And when you are dependent in that way and have no perspective outside that dependency, then you simply go along with that system and engage in the reproduction of that system. And Freire was developing a process of education, a set of protocols that helped people question that reality question that way of being in the world. So that they could engage in critically transforming that world. And for that, he was subjected to criticism, censure, and eventually ended up leaving the country.

Jean ([23:27](#)):

Okay. So take what he said about oppression in Brazil and apply it now in terms of how you develop liberatory consciousness.

Barbara ([23:37](#)):

As I read and tried to understand his notions of critical consciousness, it's themed clear to me that it was not just about a class analysis. It was ultimately about any relationship of domination and subordination. I decided that it was not just about class, but was about any relationship of domination and subordination. My work had dealt with intersectionalities with a primary focus on race. Because it did seem to me that the primary arena of oppression that affected me and my people was about race and racism. So my initial thinking was applying his concepts of critical consciousness to an

understanding of race and racism, and especially to an understanding of internalized racism. But I came to understand that it was not just about race and racism, that analysis applied to gender, that analysis applied to religion, that analysis applied to ability, that analysis applied to language system, to nationalism, to any other relationship of domination and subordination.

Jean (25:10):

I want you to talk first, you've used the term internalized oppression two or three times, and we haven't defined it. So explain what that is.

Barbara (25:18):

Yes. Internalized oppression. And I will say why that understanding of internalized depression was so revolutionary to me. Internalized oppression is that process whereby those who are targeted for oppression, those who are subordinates in a relationship of domination and subordination, those people who are on the receiving end of oppression will internalize the ideas that have been put out to justify the oppression. They will internalize the rationale for the oppression and come to accept that oppression as justified, come to accept it as rational, come to accept it as inevitable, come to accept it as appropriate. He said, if we don't know our history, and if we don't try to figure out how to live outside that history that has been imposed on us, we will always be going through the back door. And he said, we will always be going through the back door and if there is no back door, we will make one.

Barbara (26:34):

Carnegie Woodson. He said, you know even if the system changed so that there was no racism, we would recreate it if we didn't do something about what had been done to our minds. And around that time, I remember watching the movie, gosh, I don't think of the name of the movie, but it was about Mahatma Ghandi and the change in India. And one of the things that, one of the scenes that I found really interesting was that the story is that the British and India had rules about how Indians could relate to the British. And of course, all those rules were organized around White supremacy. And so Indians were considered subservient to the British. And one of those rules had to do with the sidewalk who could use the sidewalk. So if an Indian is walking on the sidewalk and a British person, an English person is coming down that sidewalk, then the Indian had to get off the sidewalk to let the British person go by. So that's the scenario. Now, after the change in India and those rules were abolished so that it was no longer legally required for Indians to get off the sidewalk, if a British or English person appeared, guess what happened?

Jean (28:09):

It just makes me cringe. It makes me, gives me the shutters. Go ahead.

Barbara ([28:17](#)):

That helped me understand this notion of internalized oppression, because the rules exists in our head as much as they exist on paper. Once we have internalized the oppression. So if a British person came down the sidewalk, the Indian person automatically stepped to the side to let them pass. And I thought, you know, that's pretty much like, you know, being in the South, that's pretty much like Black people and White people in the South of the US. That's pretty much like it. In my mind laid out all the examples in Dumas, my mother's doctor had a clinic and there was one door that had a sign over it that my mother entered. And there was another door that led to a different waiting room that had a sign over there. Guess what those signs said? One said Black and one said White.

Jean ([29:22](#)):

Did the sign say Colored or Black?

Barbara ([29:25](#)):

I think they said, Colored, you are right. They said Colored.

Jean ([29:29](#)):

I wanted to get the history right. Okay.

Barbara ([29:32](#)):

It said Colored. White and Colored. And you know, eventually they took those signs down. They took down the sign that said White. And they took down the sign that said Black. And in the, I don't know, eighties or something like that, nineties, I was home in Arkansas. I took my mother to the clinic to see her doctor. The signs are gone, but I'll bet you can describe those waiting rooms. And I don't have to tell you. So I said to my mother, why are we going in this door? Because even though the sign was gone, you know, the imprint, how the imprint stays on the wood, the imprint is still up there. We went in that room and my mother insisted on sitting there. So I said, no, let's go in the other waiting room. I tried to get the people in the Colored waiting room to go into the other waiting room.

Barbara ([30:38](#)):

They wouldn't do it. They wouldn't do it. And I got a picture of what internalized oppression looks like, because once it is impressed in your mind, unless something changes your mind, it doesn't matter about the signs on the door, right? Just in your mind. It doesn't really matter about the laws on the books. Your change has to happen

here. And so this is me now thinking about our work really does have to focus on changing our consciousness.

Barbara ([31:15](#)):

The other thing that happened that helped me think about this liberatory consciousness was, so we're doing this work, we're doing teacher training and trying to train teachers how to have awareness of race and racism as they're teaching in schools. We're doing all this work in different kinds of organizations. But there are always Black people who are not ready and will not participate in a different way of doing things.

Barbara ([31:52](#)):

My prototypical example now is about what was happening in South Africa, because many people then concluded. I had a colleague who would say, you know in order for us to actually make change, in order for the revolution to take effect, some Black people are just going to have to be shocked. And I would say, you know, you can't say that, you can't say that, but deep in South Africa, that's exactly what they were doing. They were necklacing people, you know, if somebody, if a Black person was suspected of tattling to the police, or if they were suspected of informing, they would be necklaced. Necklacing was when they put the tire around you, pour gasoline on you, and set it on fire. That's what necklacing was. And that was practiced widely during the struggle in South Africa, Black people who were informers, who reported, who were undercover agents. If they were found out, they would be necklaced.

Barbara ([33:03](#)):

And it's like, Oh my God, I came to understand that this practice cannot lead to liberation. You cannot use oppressive measures to create a liberatory society. You can't use the same means that the oppressor used to try to create a different world. That just doesn't work. Because what you end up doing is recreating the world occupied by the oppressor but with a different oppressor in charge. And what is that, what good is that? Why, why would I want a Black oppressor as opposed to a White oppressor? Why would I want an oppressor, period? So once again, it's like, okay. So if you can't shoot them, and if you can't necklace them, what can you do? And the answer for me, you know, different people will have come to their own answers. The answer for me was you have to work on changing consciousness. And so liberatory consciousness, what constitutes a world characterized by liberation? Can you imagine that? Can you envision that? And then that gives you a basis toward which to work, that gives you a basis around which to organize your actions.

Jean ([34:25](#)):

Barbara, describe that world. People ask that question all the time, envision other than what we have, what would that be?

Barbara ([34:36](#)):

And I'll say these three things about it. The first statement I say is to encourage everyone to develop their own vision of a world, characterized by liberation and recognize that that's no static thing. You're not going to sit down tonight and come up with a vision of a world characterized by liberation that's going to be satisfactory next week, or next month. That vision has to continually evolve. Because as you learn more, you do more. And as you do more, your understanding broadens and so your vision changes. So your vision has to continually evolve. And I encourage everyone to keep working at the vision. And don't be discouraged by where you are right now, because we each are where we are, and we can not be blamed for being where we are, we cannot be criticized and judged for being where we are. We can only be acknowledged for being where we are with the opening and the possibility that we will grow, that we will learn and grow.

Jean ([35:49](#)):

A lot of people would say, shouldn't we blame and judge other people for where they are?

Barbara ([35:56](#)):

And people choose that option. And we have not seen good results.

Jean ([36:10](#)):

You and I were meant to find each other.

Barbara ([36:10](#)):

That's all I can say. I cannot say you must do this, or you must do that. I can only say what are the results?

Jean ([36:17](#)):

Okay. Look at the results.

Barbara ([36:19](#)):

And let that be your guide.

Barbara ([36:23](#)):

I will tell a story. I was doing a workshop once. This was a workshop about classism. And I asked the participants to envision a world without classism. And I said just imagine what the world, what your world would look like if there were no classism. And be as bold, as bodacious, be as daring as you can, do not let reality be the criteria that helps you decide what this world looks like. Don't even let the sky be the limit. Don't let money be the limit. Just be as bold as you can in creating a vision of a world without classism. And people got into the exercise, they were really excited about doing it. And nobody had ever asked them to do this before. And one woman who was so excited about it, it is a White woman. This is in an organization. I don't remember if it was a Fortune 500, but it was, you know, a business organization. She was so excited about sharing her vision of a world with no classism. And she said in this world, people in their trailer houses can put that trailer houses right next door to the mansions, no rules that say you can't put your trailer next door to a mansion.

Jean ([37:58](#)):

You said let's make the sky a little bit bigger.

Barbara ([38:01](#)):

I don't know if you watch movies a lot or not, but you saw Black Panther, right? Of course you did. Of course you did. I forgot the name of the movie that came out after Black Panther. I forgot the name of it. I went to see it because they told me that the Black Panther was going to be in it. Yeah. Avengers. That's what it was. Okay. So I was so upset when I left that movie. I promised I'd never go again. You have to understand. I watched Black Panther five times. I paid five times to go see Black Panther. And then the Avengers came and I said, I'll never go. Because you know, there were these stones, the infinity stones and Thanos, whoever's watching this. You have to have already seen the movie so I'm just spoiling it for you if you haven't. Thanos ended up getting all five or seven or however many infinity stones there were so with these stones, you can change time. You can change reality. You can change resources, you can change everything. And so when Thanos got all of the stones, what he did, because he said, I have to do something about the world. There are too many people, and there are not enough resources for all the people in the world. There are only enough resources in the world for this many people. So what he did because now he had all power. What he did was to get rid of the excess people. He got rid of half of the people. And I said, what a colossal failure of imagination, because if you have all the stones and you can do anything you want to do, why not just make more resources?

Barbara ([40:01](#)):

If you can change space, you can change time, you can change reality, then why not change reality so that there are more resources? Why get rid of the people? So critical consciousness for me remains such a huge issue because it is about what can you hold in your consciousness? Can you envision a world that works well for everyone? So this is my point. Number two, it's a vision of a world that works well for everyone. A world that is characterized by equity and fairness and justice. John Rawls wrote a book where he talked about fairness. Imagine a world where and I'm, you know, this is a deeply theoretical, philosophical discussion to which I am not going to do justice at all. But here's what I took from it. That if you came into this world, into any point in this world, you would be satisfied, right?

Jean ([41:15](#)):

That's a good way of paraphrasing it.

Barbara ([41:17](#)):

Yeah. You, you would be completely happy to come into any point, any place in that world. So if you can imagine a world where whatever point you landed in, because birth is like that, it lands you where it lands you. If you would be completely satisfied wherever you landed in that world. Okay. Now we've got a world, at least for me, a world that works well for everyone, a world that's and I say, equity, not equality. People get confused about equality. And we are not talking about equality. We're talking about equity. We're talking about people having access to the resources that they need in order to live well. We have enough resources for every human to live a decent life, we have enough resources for every human on this planet to be able to live well, but we don't have the will. We don't have the consciousness to gain control of those resources to make the decisions that would allow that to happen. Right now we could have healthcare for everyone in this country, but we don't have the political will to support that kind of resource allocation. What we actually have is people in charge who want to get rid of the Affordable Care Act and the health care that is available for people who need healthcare desperately during this particular moment in history.

Jean ([42:45](#)):

Okay? So the world that works for everyone and what's number three?

Barbara ([42:50](#)):

And number three is to develop the sense of empowerment, responsibility, accountability, allyship, empowerment, to organize yourself, to make that happen. And it doesn't always mean that you have to do it, but it does mean that you have to be in

collaboration with other people to help make it happen. There's no point in dreaming about a world that works well for everyone if you don't have some understanding, and if you don't have some commitment to doing it. And this notion of allyship goes in any number of directions. And let me say this, you had raised a question about whether allyship, accountability came before or after action.

Jean (43:43):

I'm going to pull it up.

Barbara (43:44):

All right. Okay. Let's go to slide number going next, next, next, next, there. Back up back one accountability/allyship.

Jean (44:03):

Well, wait before you do that, just talk to us very briefly through these things.

Barbara (44:08):

Let's talk us through each one slide, next slide awareness. And next slide. The four points of this model are awareness, analysis, action, and accountability/allyship. And though they are presented in this sequence. This is not actually meant to be a stage model where, you know, one must follow after the other, because on any range of issues, we will be at different points. We will be at different points of awareness on a range of issues, but on a given issue, we will start with some awareness. We will do some analysis. We will decide on a course of action to take. And that course of action will expand our awareness and constantly cycling through these modes. I'm going to call them modes as opposed to stages. Our awareness is constantly growing as a result of what we're doing. Our analysis broadens as a result of what we're doing. Our actions become more specific, more pointed, more effective as our awareness and our analysis grows. And so awareness is what is the state of the world around me? What is the state of the organization around me? What is the state of the community around me and how well does what I see match the vision that I have of a liberatory organization, of a liberatory community, of a liberatory relationship? This applies to relationships, this applies at the micro level and it applies at the macro level. How well does what I see match my vision of a world characterized by liberation, of a nation characterized by liberation?

Jean (46:16):

Right. So compare what is to what could be.

Barbara ([46:19](#)):

What is to what could be. And not just what could be, but specifically, because remember, Thanos thought about what could be, but your specific vision of what should be, what should be.

Barbara ([46:34](#)):

And I'm using the term "should" very specifically here, because this is from the point of view of liberation. There are people, I'll just use the US, our country right now who have a vision of a world of limitation, but there are people pushing for the expansion of relationships of domination and subordination. There are people who still think that generals who were in rebellion in the U S therefore traitors to the U S should be the models for our armed forces. Our bases should be named after those people. That's not a liberatory view.

Jean ([47:16](#)):

Right. Okay. Okay.

Barbara ([47:19](#)):

Okay. So that analysis is precisely looking at what we have. So we've noticed what we have. The analysis is matching what we have to this vision of what we think should exist. This vision of a liberatory relationship, organization, community, nation. And then action is about deciding what needs to happen to decrease the distance between what I see and what should occur between what a liberatory relationship would look like and what this relationship looks like at the moment, what needs to happen to narrow the distance? This organization has these characteristics at the moment, a liberatory organization has Y characteristics at the moment, what needs to happen to move, lessen the X characteristics and increase the Y characteristics, because that is what will move this organization to like being a liberatory organization. So deciding on what actions need to happen to do that.

Barbara ([48:35](#)):

And then I was getting to this accountability/allyship because there is accountability to the vision. There is accountability to the community. You know, I always think of accountability to my great grandfather and you know, what he experienced, what he played out for us and how well does what I do match the path that he laid out, the trajectory that he pointed us in. So accountability can be thought of in any variety of ways. What is my accountability to you, as a fellow Black woman, in a society characterized, as we understand this society currently characterized, and we are seeking a liberatory society, we are seeking a society that works well for Black women.

We are seeking a society that works well for everyone. But just in this case, I'm talking to you as a Black woman. And what is my accountability to you? Okay.

Jean (49:51):

Do you want to show anything else? Any of these, or is that it?

Barbara (49:53):

Yeah, that's, that's it. But let me say something about allyship, because often when people talk about allies, they are speaking as members of one group doing things on behalf of people in another group. And I am presenting a different version of allyship. I think of allyship as people, allies are those who act on behalf of their own vision of the world. People who object to racism, people who object to classism, because racism or classism is contrary to their vision. So I do not want people working to eliminate racism on my behalf. I want White people, for instance, working to eliminate racism on their behalf, because they are offended by racism because racism is contradictory to the world they want.

Jean (51:02):

I'm aligning to the world I want, on the behalf of the world I want.

Barbara (51:07):

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. And the only final thing is that, so we keep cycling through that and we go through it. And as one of my students said, you know, my goodness, Barbara, can't we have a moment where we can just relax and not have to think about this? And the answer is no, no. If there was a moment when oppression would stop and you didn't have to think about it, then yes. But until that moment, then you do have to think about it all the time. Movies you watch, the books you read, your children at school, you have to think about it all the time.

Jean (51:53):

One of my brother-in-laws gave us this saying, what you don't work on, works alose.

Barbara (52:00):

I love it. I love it. What you don't work on, works alose and we know about things loose in the world. Yes, yes, yes.

Jean (52:13):

Okay. So this is wonderful, wonderful. How you develop the model, just brief. What are you doing now? How are you using the model?

Barbara ([52:23](#)):

I use it in all the work that I do, I must say, because I think of it both as a model to apply in our analysis of organizations, of relationships, and in our living. So I encourage people to think about it all the time in making your individual and personal decisions as well as in making your organizational decisions, et cetera. So for instance, well I love where we met, where we are applying it to coaching. I use it in developing management and supervisory training programs. The work that lots of people are doing now on understanding bias and microaggressions, the model applies perfectly there because very often in the work on bias and microaggressions, people want to know, okay, so what's the specific behavior and what do I do about that specific behavior? Which I can name, you know, a hundred different behaviors. And then for the hundred that I name, there's another hundred that I cannot name. And so if you're depending on me to name the hundred behaviors that are offensive, then you'll never notice the hundred that I didn't name as part of this training. So the point is for you to develop the capacity to do the analysis yourself, to be able to notice what is it that you need to understand so that you can notice when a particular behavior is potentially a microaggression or macroaggression for that matter. And then how do you understand it? What constitutes the offense and what do I need to do about it and how do I make amends and how do I change the situation so that this doesn't happen again. So when people were trying to do their own empowerment training and I use this in understanding triggering, and what are the things in your own life story that supports you to move forward in an empowered way, or it gets in the way of your being able to engage in the world, your relationships, your organizations in an empowered way? So I basically use this model in just about everything that I do.

Jean ([54:38](#)):

Wonderful. And as you know, we applied it, Carol Marmell wrote a blog, a guest blog post, and applied it. And it's for those listening, it's in blog Number 10, if you want to see how we applied it there.

Barbara ([54:54](#)):

Excellent. Excellent.

Jean ([54:56](#)):

Okay. So this has been highly informative. It's been a delight to have this occasion to talk with you and hear more about your work and how you developed it all. And I really, truly thank you for giving your time, your courage and your being to the world. Thank you.