

S01 - E14 - Rooted & Unwavering - Jan 27 - Hylke Faber & Valerie Bemo

Presenter 00:42

Welcome to this episode of Rodin, wavering We're broadcasting live from Phoenix Business Radio x. And this is where we help people and leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host Hoka. Farber, and I'm here today with Dr. Valerie BMO. I'm so happy you're here today. Valerie, how are you today?

Valerie Bemo 01:05

Thank you. I'm honored to be called to this podcast. I'm doing fantastic. And I'm going good. I'm looking for for compensation.

Hylke Faber 01:16

Wonderful, well, really happy that you're here. I just checked my files. That's how I know how long I know how long I know people. And it seems like we know each other since 2013. So that's 10 years. So it's almost like a celebration today in another way. I'm going to say a little bit more about Valerie. And before I do this, I'm also going to say a little bit more about this podcast series with an unwavering so rouda unwavering is a series where we every two weeks speak with a leader that we admire, for their sense of being rooted and connected to what's truly important to them, what their their their deep core priorities. And we do this conversation so that we can help each other and learn from these leaders about how we can do this in our own lives and our own leadership. How do we stay rooted and connected? And and learn all these from all these different stories about what that's like, and how we can show up our best. So Valerie comes to us. And I admire Valerie for many, many reasons. And if you just look at her resume, no, that just causes a pause, like wow, this, there's so much here. So I'm going to share a little bit about Valerie. And then also share a little bit about my personal experience with Valerie. And then we'll have the conversation about being rooted and unwavering as you're listening. I invite you to think Keep listening for what am I hearing here, that helps me to be more rooted and unwavering whatever happens in life. So Valerie is a distinguished leader, motivational speaker, coach and mentor and an internationally recognized expert in Global Health and Human editor humanitarian response. She was born in Cameroon and educated in Ivory Coast, France and Spain. She has a strong reputation as a cross cultural connected and thought leader. Her ideas are based in multicultural lived experiences. She's multilingual. And she brings throughout it all a deep sense of being present spirituality. So he has 20 years of experience in international development. She's worked with communities, organizations, governments, local, global, and she works on strengthening systems and empowering leaders to create lasting social change. Now, she's been doing this work for a while now, at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. And you work there primarily with the poor and



vulnerable communities across the globe, especially those impacted by natural disasters, disease outbreaks and conflicts. And she's worked in all the places that we hear about on the news, and some

of them we don't hear about on the news like the Haiti earthquake, the Ebola outbreak, the cyclone Idai, in the Mozambique thinking about helping refugees in Bangladesh, and also in Jordan, the Syrian refugees there and also recently or the last few years, co leading the foundation's response to the COVID pandemic in Africa. Now throughout it all he's committed in for passion for with passion for solutions. And he's very focused on shifting mindsets, and thinking about how you remove institutional and systemic barriers to empower individuals and groups to create locally grown solutions. She's also a coach, Team facilitator. She brings presents and those those little things because big things that help you sort of sit back in your seat for a moment and plunge into your heart and bring more of what you truly want to be to the fore. So I said I Noe Valley for about 10 years, I'm struck by her originality. It's very creative, very caring, very strong. There's always a sense of this deep strength, which I sense like an ancient strength that comes through her. And I'm so looking forward to a conversation with her. She has a medical degree from the University of Cote d'Ivoire, and an epidemiology diploma from the University of Paris, and a Master's of Public Health from the Madrid autonoma. University. And he's also a certified trainer and coach, amongst many other things. I also know you are a certified yoga instructor. Amongst many things, Valerie, so much to lean on, are talking about connectedness in this podcast? Can you say a bit more about get started? What have you been learning about connectedness in your life?

Valerie Bemo 06:04

Thank you, Anika, who has a person you were talking about in that is, it's amazing. For me connection is everything is the essence of human being. Starting by who we are, we are a web and all the different causes show us again, that connectedness come from the simple things that we look a lot in the, in the African African philosophy, we talk about Ubuntu that is about Ha, I am because you are, you are because we are. And I think for me, this is a summary of, for me the connectiveness it has connect with ourself, because without connecting with ourselves, and be aligned with ourselves, we cannot connect with others. And as we connect with others, we cannot connect with others without really acknowledging the environmental in where we, we are living connecting to everything around us to even the time, how do we connect with time? How do we connect with the elements, the different elements in nature, but with each other, but more important, you can only do that if you can connect with yourself, you get authentic, and you check on yourself first, you cannot only connect and be if you find yourself yourself. And if you're authentic. I think for me, that is really the hole of connectedness.

Hylke Faber 07:40

I love that you talked about a boon to I am because we are and then also making the direct connection to connecting to myself, and then my true self, and then the connection to eternity over time. And, and all debts that were part of so so say a bit more, Valerie, because that sounds so good. And, and I think many of us can relate to this. How do you connect to that? And how have you learned to connect to that in your life and leadership? Because you know, you've had a few decades of experience doing this life and so I'm curious about how you've been learning about that



Valerie Bemo 08:27

it's a journey and I'm still learning and I'm still going every day as we learn just if you look at when you're really tired or you're just everybody I don't know about you but for me going to the beach and start walking on the sand suddenly you feel Yeah, your shoulder relaxing everything's it's almost like magic but actually is now man is the elements each time you see a beauty wonder you that out make you feel like oh wow, there's something bigger than I am. And as you start listening to that you get more in tune with yourself and also thank you for a lot of guidance from people from you as a as a coach to start be to start be honest and looking at where I am what are my fears what's what, what who I am and it's usually have to have the courage to go back in who you are looking at the artist I say book curious and then start thinking wow, I did all that but a lot of things I could have done different but you acknowledge it and you're grateful for where you are and all the things that all the people things location that you go around and more important I feel like the more I go walk, and go around different culture, and different space, one things I learned is that all human being, we are all, one of the thing that we secretly all wants is to belong, is to be loved. This is actually even when we don't recognize it is part of it. And I've seen that high value talk about languages, ethnicity, places that have been around the walls, and I visited so many countries, almost 100, or 60, something of the countries. And still, that is the truth. And that is the one thing that you see, across the world. Even when I went to places where people are lost everything, refugees, where they lose people, they lost, all the valuable they are moved out, living in the tent, in the basic infrastructure with basic needs, even not met, the one things that unite people is to feel the sense of like, they seem, they are cognize, they are loved, and they belong. And that is the essence. And we as human being, we need to feel like we are nature, we are belonging to the earth, and we are part of it. Unless we are aligned, and in harmony, I don't think you will be able to be feeling that connection.

Hylke Faber 11:38

I'm very struck by your description of people that have lost, quote, unquote, everything, at least everything material. And then in the midst of that, and you're not talking from book knowledge, you're talking from actually having walked there and walking there. And I know how many times you are in those places. And whenever I talk to you, you're always coming back from somewhere, or you're going somewhere and somewhere as usually across the ocean somewhere in Africa or Asia. So when you think about those people that have lost everything? What do you learn from them?

Valerie Bemo 12:26

You know, the first thing that is always taught me is that people look at me and say, Wow, you're so good. You're giving so much. But actually what they don't understand is that actually, they are the one who gave me so much. Um, maybe help them and facilitate, I don't want to acknowledge that's, I'm working with a great organization who the generous organization and appointed resources, nevertheless, actually been my soul, they feel my soul. And one of the things that the first thing, you realize how grateful you have to be for everyday and life can switch in a in a dice like that, from everything to nothing. That acknowledging what you have is to first things and be happy with basic and



you start with a complain about not having a hot coffee or hot shower, or the water's not as good or it's not smelling as well as you want to. And you start really appreciating be able to read to have a shower. That's the first thing. But the more important is you go to some of these spaces. And one thing that's taught me is, they are usually more given than we are you go to somebody's tents, they are so happy, they will give you the few things they have. Because what what is important is that sense of love and sharing. And I'm always amazed with the generosity with not much. But also one of the things that is you know, a lot of the time you go and with your eyes of material eyes, you come on, you feel like a little bit like sad pity. And then the next time you you, you look at the person the next minute, you realize that they don't need your tears, they need your smile and you start looking at them as human being, you start looking at them like not with the cover, but who they are as a human being at the center with the heart, with the hope with the belief and then it's changed everything. And you realize that you are speaking with the human being with the heart and that make a difference and when they Since that, you start having a conversation, you start connecting, and you start B to human being, and the material disappeared. That is the beauty of sometime you, you almost like, wow, they don't even have to bother so much about so many things. They they are peace in the way. It's a bad way to say that, but they are. They're centered about it. And you appreciate now that you are who you are not because you have everything with what you have as material. But what you send that on and how your heart is, is what make who you are.

Hylke Faber 15:44

Yeah. So it's, it's getting out of the static, of our material existence. Where a mind make judgments about I need this, and I need that, that that that that the time unless that it's not going to work for me. And what you're saying is that these people, and of course, they're making generalizations, which is not fair. But some of the experiences you've had point to humans being able to live from a different place that we probably all longed for, in a way, that sense of being loved. belonging and, and love that comes from inside of us. Yeah, I really like how you're, how you're talking about that. And at the same time, these people there you are working in emergency relief, you know, they're they've just lost everything because of an earthquake or an an outbreak or some sort of something. So how do you help them them? Because in a way they already have it? How do you help them?

Valerie Bemo 16:59

Yeah, I think is is is a bit contract contradicting what I was saying earlier, like, they have everything, but they don't have everything, they, they still need a lot of materials done, but they have their heart, and as long as they are breathing, and that is what we have to work on nice. As long as you are breathing, your presence, they still hope. And under different in different code that I saw, people who still have hope, can see the future can believe that there's something coming out of it, we'll have a better chance to actually attack that something. And and the way we have them is different way from the basic needs water, food, shelter, making sure that they receive the the healthcare, the kids going to school or having a space where they can still be killed. Because sometimes we forget about that kids have to be killed. And then that is the basic, but more and more, there's a lot of discussion about you know, at the beginning, when I started this work, a lot of the work and with that is when our generous mind thing is like, oh my goodness, they have lost everything, we have to give them something, we have to then be



like, Oh, they should have clawed they should have this. And we tend to come with stuff and decide what they need and what they should have, what type of food is good for them, what type of water or clothes are the kids and education. And you have to remind yourself that before the crisis, they were living their life, and as parents, they they were taking care of their family and they love their kids, like every parents in the world and they want the best for their kids. And there's a lot of changing now in the way humanitarian is like instead of coming and distributes things to them, that is expensive is different and you just you can only distribute is number of stuff. But people are individual people have different needs different value different thing. Then there's more and more discussion about how do you give him instead of coming and giving stuff giving them cash on restricted and let them make a decision on what makes sense for them. How they can actually walk in the way that because a family may have is it kids who have diabetes or kids who need some or an elder, it will not be the same thing they will need as food or you may like maize or corn and I may like cassava that how do you give the choice because one thing is about dignity and Nobody wants to feel like I'm making some choices or what is good for my family, by give them access to resources, without making a decision and let them make a decision on their day to day life. It's just that change everything. Even a sense of dignity is like, I'm still alive, I can still make decision. Even if the phone come from somebody else, then I think there's a lot of evolution now, to help cognize the need for people to keep their dignity and to stand strong and unhei.

Hylke Faber 20:34

Yes, this dignity, dignity is such a powerful word. Even as you're saying it, I started to sit up more upright might in my own chair, and maybe as we're listening to you, that may also be happening for for all of us that are listening at the moment. I'm struck by you talking about dignity, and also your own background, growing up in Africa and then moving to the US. And now working for a Western based organization, the Gates Foundation. So can you tell a bit more about like, what have you been learning about dignity? And connecting with dignity? First of all, growing up in Africa, and then coming into the Western world?

Valerie Bemo 21:26

Yeah, how long do we have? I can't, I can spend the whole day talking about that. But I'll try to get some simple thing going up in Africa. There's something that my grandmother, my mom, my father always said is that it's not about how much you have is, you have to be happy with what you have. And you have to cherish what you have. And not looking at what you are not you don't have and focus on what you have. I think that is the first thing to that going up is was a reality. And I didn't grow up in a poor family, I have to recognize, I will say middle high income family educated parents, but that come from family that were long. Family mixed, and big families, then come into that mix of rural, urban educated non education, you ever mind you that it's not so much about always education, and I just cherish my grandmother, and by the name, her name is BMO, I carry that name. She was not educated, but it was the smartest woman I could see. And she knew how to manage people deal with the big family, be in that space. Without education, then I think a lot of time we made the mistake of kind of putting education as the smart because you have this deep lumps, because you have this education. And I think that's the first thing you learn the smartest, more agile, more connected people, and not necessarily PhD. I'm sorry for those who was big, this was not a I may have been a doctor but



it's not that will make who you are. That's the first thing you learn in Africa. And that sense of community sense of you cannot be happy or be centered. If everybody around you is not then you share whatever you have, you will be taking care of each other you then you live in a sense of community. It's a big thing that growing up in Africa you learn early age, and then you come to the Western was become like an individual. Initially shocking is like okay, what did I miss here? Sometimes you think is it me? And, and you have to learn that because of society. I've been so focused on the eye. And the individual. People feel that that is what it is, is my nuclear family is me and my small family. But we saw in crisis like COVID that we recognize that we all need community. Even if society make us be an individual one, we all need community and COVID the US shores that we stopped being a community and then it hit us really hard. Do we know our neighbor? Do we say hello? Do we actually talk to our colleague more I do. And I learned it from you actually is to do a check in when I'm in meet seem to ask people how you're doing today, before we go into the topic, and it's changed everything. And that's why you realize no matter how rich educated, we all coming back to, again, the basis, we need to belong, we need to be loved, we need to be seen, no matter where we are, and where we born, is actually a reality of the human being. And that's why we call human being not un doing on beam V chain. And I think that for me is still the basic and I wish the Western was the whichever wall will come back to this reality that community are essential. And, and we still need to stay find way to connect to each other is our it's almost like a survival in a way. For the human voice.

Hylke Faber 26:02

Yeah. So I'm struck by the paradox in this, and I, I struggle with a paradox off starting with your sharing with community is so important, like we are part of something and if my community is not in harmony, there's something for me to give, right. And at the same time, I remember you in the beginning of our podcast talking about connectedness starts with me. So say a bit more and maybe talk about what you learned from your grandmother BMO, about embracing that paradox of being myself. And maybe not getting lost in the need to belong, and to be loved. I love the prayer. For instance, if of Saint Francis like it's, it's in, giving that we receive and it is in, like pardoning that or pardon, it is a sense of like, so. So say bit more about this paradox of being in community. And being yourself because I can imagine, from the western perspective is like, yeah, no, I don't want that African, quote, unquote, community, because I like to be me. At the same time, from a Western perspective, that's probably this. While at least for me, it's like, ah, that expanded network of community, it seems so rich. So say a bit more about that,

Valerie Bemo 27:35

indeed, is looked like a paradox. But one doesn't disclose orders. For me, being a community require you to be authentic, require you to remove the mask. Because only when you are you, you can actually give what you have, because it's about sharing, it's about being you, it's about what you bring to the to the center. And if you are you, then you bring that when you if you are not you, you cannot bring that then it's actually forced you to find your space. And, and I think one thing that I remember is that I'm coming from big families, and I'm not the first one or the last one. And you know, you have to find a way to step up, and the stepping up is not by copying, if you're copying the others, then you don't exist, then you have to step up to find your space and to get your character. And I think it's the same image if you want to be because it's about like, what can you contribute? If you're exactly the same like



everybody then you can contribute. But if you bring your will value, then you have something to contribute to the society. And even the Western world when we said we want to be me me me. Guess what? We are in the world where if you're only you in the world, we need everybody. You can go we sold COVID You go to the supermarket, if people are not coming to work, guess what? If the farmer not farming is what will not have the food or become too expensive. If the restaurant cannot recruit the server, that usually we don't consider the cook, then the clothes and I think for me, this is really the reality of the the me but me part of the bigger and if the me part of bigger, cannot identify in the way without mask authentic, then you are cheating. And you can cheat for some time. You can have a mask and sometimes we believe that that mask is who we are, but in the long haul it will hit us back

Hylke Faber 30:00

beautiful, I love this whole theme of being embracing the community noticing that I am part of that. And I am nothing without it. Like, I need the food. And my community also needs something from me. Right? That is true. And then at the same time, but what the community needs is my real me. You know, what is my real me? I remember a master coach teaching me this question, What can your community not afford to lose? What gift of yours can your community afford to lose? And when I think about what you've just been saying, also about the refugees or people in the in, in those situations, that it's a lot about helping people to be restored to their dignity and to help to acknowledge their authenticity and their authentic choices. And that creates true harmony in in community. So go ahead, sorry.

Valerie Bemo 31:04

Yeah, no, I just wanted to add one thing, when you're talking about the people, you know, the most amazing things I saw in some of this community, you go and distribute food for because somebody may be eligible or no. And then that woman taking maybe a bag of rice, bringing it back. And then she's probably poor. And then she started distributing income to everybody else are you like, but this is your she said, yeah, what is the point for me to eat in if the other people are on doesn't eat? Because actually, it will not work, then she have a small thing. But the generosity with that small thing of sharing even that small thing, they say, each of us need to eat something, even if it's small, versus me eating a lot, and nobody else eating. And I seen it with the scar city they can have, they still managed to share.

Hylke Faber 32:04

Very humbling, realization that the poor are often more generous than the rich.

Valerie Bemo 32:12

Is it not? Is it not a paradox? This is the weird paradox. Talking about paradox.

Hylke Faber 32:19

That's interesting, as well, we're going to explore this more, we're going to take a break in a moment, we've been listening to Dr. Valerie Burma, which is who works at the Gates Foundation, a lot in emergency relief, and we talking about how do we stay our true self, and be in community. And we've been talking about the generosity of people who are really connected to their community, like the example that Valerie just mentioned about this person that had some rice, and then just started sharing



it with everybody because he said, Listen, if I don't, if the people around me are hungry, what point is there in me being full? So let's take a break now. And after the break, we'll explore this more this paradox of how do I stay myself. And we'll explore a little bit more also about what are the masks that I may be tempted to put on to be part of community. See you after the break.

Presenter 33:21

You are listening to rooted and unwavering presented by growth Leaders Network, the leadership team and culture development company. If you would like to learn more about working on connectedness for yourself, your team or organization, please contact growth leaders network on LinkedIn. And now back to the show.

Hylke Faber 33:46

Welcome back. We're doing a root and unwavering podcast. I felt almost weird about saying doing. I feel like we're more being a ruith and unwavering podcast, which is what you've been pointing us to Valerie Valerie BMO is a deputy director at the Gates Foundation, very much focused on emergency relief. And we really been exploring this paradox you could say about being yourself and being in community and the generosity that comes when we're firmly in, like found founded and connected to community because we cannot but be generous. So Valerie, let's focus on the mask better bit. So tell me a little bit about and tell us a little bit about the masks that you may have put on in your life. disconnecting from your true self and how you stepped out of those and what you learned stepping out of those. So maybe give us a few examples from your life. So masks

Valerie Bemo 34:55

they say a lot of mask. think the first thing is that as I said, I'm coming from a, we are six in my kids. And for long, I was the quiet one, the fifth one, always in the lowercase. And then I have my siblings, my sister's more vocal, more pleasant more thing. And then I was just couldn't speak as much. And then I have to be the pleaser of everybody I need to be, sometimes be the small and disappearing because I didn't want to show myself. And then the second one is to try to please and make everybody feel happy and pleasing and put that mask of like, I love everybody, everybody loves me and all that. And then I believe I realized that I was given given given, but that given was not actually an innocent given even if you are generous, but it was not. It was given for something in return. It was not like it was, it was given, I'm generous, and I'm still, but there's always a behind that must create an expectation, because I give because they, then they will love me more. Because I am pleased them, they should be loved me more than I'll belong. And then I'll be thing. And the more you do it, the less they look at you, the less you belong. And then you get first question. I remember for long, I was always the one like calling because I've been living with our families a little bit everywhere in the world, calling everybody expecting them to, to call me back and then complain, they don't call me back. Or it's always me. I say I love you. Nobody replied, If I don't call nobody call me. And that it was frustrating. And then I started realizing Hmm, it's okay. Why do you need them to? If you want to call them call them? But is it was it a an exchange of calling? Or is it because you just wanted to showcase. And I work on that a lot too. When you have a generous mine or vi a given person, it's a little bit of a contradiction from what I say you're given person, then you give, give, give give, you give in when things that you should not give



or you cannot give. And suddenly you realize that you were expecting love out of it, you're expecting them a thank you, you were expecting a Oh, I love you. And it's not coming and you're frustrated. And you're you feel like oh, they're ungrateful with you, you give all this thing you're always a call nobody call you on the day you have something nobody is there. And then you have to step back is like, what is going on? Why are you doing that? And then after a lot of work you like realize that you know what, actually I always give with there was a bag fear of expected to belong. But when you start be a bit more you to say you know, I love them. If I want to call I call because I want to hear them I want to do if I give it's not. If they say thank you it's a bonus. If they don't, it's okay because it filled my heart to give and just get into that simple change of no expectation. love unconditionally giving because you want to give not because you expect some even the Thank you. It's an expectation and just shifting that. It gets you light and at peace because it's like as if the 10 Q comes in. Oh, wow. Okay. They call me back. Oh, wow. But at least you you feel like you really gave it. Unconditional Love.

Hylke Faber 39:14

Yes, yes. Yes. Yes. So I hear you say this the sense of I'm in the heart. I'm giving. And I've done the work to let go of the expectation. The expectation of what's going to happen next. Right. And maybe you can say a bit more about what fear that expectation is born from like, why even have an expectation? Where's that come from?

Valerie Bemo 39:54

Maybe you have to tell me, I don't know. But I think is is that sense of Fear of abandonment. Because as a human being, like I said, we want to belong, we want to be part of a herd. And I didn't want to be feel connected. And we, we feel like, if we don't have that love, won't be alone will be abandoned will be sad and things and then we start really go up into like, I want to be part of this community I want to I don't want them to let me I want them to love me, I want them to see me and actually you your act? Because it's a mask, because it's not exactly the from the heart, you actually create the reverse.

Hylke Faber 40:50

Yes, that's what I relate to this is when I'm connecting from the head, it's transactional. It's like I give you this, and therefore I you give me this. So this tribal fantasy, basically, that's the unhealthy part of tribe, like the unhealthy part of tribe is, I give you this, so you give me that, which means that I'm always compromising myself, because I'm actually not daring to be myself. Right? That will be too dangerous to do that, because I might be abandoned. To be truly myself, I have to be willing for you to quote unquote, abandon me or have a different preference or not call me back. Right? So you saying, I'm going to make the call because that comes from the heart. And my inference is as you do that, you experience the joy and the fulfillment that comes from actually following your heart. And that by itself, is the reward.

Valerie Bemo 41:48

Well, foods,

Hylke Faber 41:49



yeah. In the Bhagavad Gita, they say, you know, it's, it's not the fruit of the work. The result of the work, that's the fruit, it's the work itself, that's the fruit and when I first read that, I thought that was absolutely nonsense. Like, I want the bonus to kudos to thank you, you're so wonderful. And what you're pointing to is no, actually, the truth of doing the work being the work, that unconditionality that creates the sense of fulfillment, because you're connected, you're in harmony. Yeah, yeah. So say more about how that works for you, in the communities that you're part of being connected to yourself unconditionally, unconditionally giving. And also not with all these expectations, what have you noticed in how your relationships may have evolved?

Valerie Bemo 42:51

It's funny, because even in the work environment, we then walk where people, there's a lot of expectation, and unless a lot of mask, and in some time, they even all said come in, in this space of global development, the overhead international development, and the level way I feel being a woman, black. African is not always coming in your advantage. And and you have initially you tried to belong, you want to put the mask of speaking the same way the language and, and the more you do that, the less you are, actually and the less you because, believe me or not, even if I try, I cannot change my color. Even if I tried, I cannot change the who I am, then instead of trying to be them is actually embracing who I am. I'm a woman, I'm a black and I'm African, and I'm not even a first language English. But by the time I start really looking at that, it change and you know, in the day to day work sometime I just by being You don't realize how many people come later, or the African or the black even like to say, you know, you inspire me like the way you stand the way you are, is make me feel like be more myself. I want to embrace it because I feel like sometime a shame or want to belong somewhere that I changed the way I am the way I dress the way i i been and actually by doing that, it's okay to be you who you are, and you're still at that level. And I think I see that every day. And I want to be An inspiration. Because one thing that I also recognize is that, especially in Africa, we come in from a colonial system. We here in America, we comment from a slavery system. And in the way, even if we the slavery's finish, we still have a lot of our narratives, mask and, and sense of inferiority in a way, even if we stand stand up. And we tend to be putting the mask, because the way we speak and the way you speak your way you stand your way you been trying so hard to merge the Western America a system that you stop being who you are. And I learned to really embrace who I am, and, and be part of who I am. And the more I do that, I start being part and I realized that I have something to share. I have something to offer, because I come with my authentic self with my cultural differences. And literally the last two years, a lot of people have been talking about diversity, about Dei, diversity, equality, inclusion, and all that I think people focus the diversity on the color I call it the Benetton color is like how many black or how many women? But for me, it's not so much about the harmony black a woman is about? Do they have space to express who they are? As they are? Do you create that environment and in a lot of places is not, then they still be a numerical numbers. But the inclusion is still a big long way, in most of the places, even when we're talking about diversity. So I went a little bit, I answer your question, but I open another topic.

Hylke Faber 47:16



I love it. I love it. And I'm also noticing as I'm listening to you a sense of compassion for those of us, including myself, who sometimes give in to being transactional community with others. No, it's it's so much of what humanity in its current state of evolution has been promoting. I give you this and then you give me that. It's so deeply ingrained. And what you're speaking to with moving from transactional community, which is not real community, it's what's community like? Lower maturation face, right? It's early maturation. And more mature community is authentic community where we can be ourselves. And I love what you said about being able to be and create space where people can truly be themselves. Not some diversity and inclusion metric, like I got so many black women or Asian, whatever. No, LGBTQ, whatever. No, that also has a place as a place, but that is not what we're talking about, you're talking about here. So fairly say more about your being a leader. Right. And when I read your resume that you sent to me, I saw the word spirituality in there. And to be honest, I was a little shocked. Because here I see a leader who has so much in the world, you know, who works with big governments, local organizations, lots of funding and things like that. In the middle of that resume. I saw the word spirituality. So can you say more about talking about being authentic and being yourself? How do you connect to that? And how do you bring that deeper self sense to everything that you do? Because I see you doing that? Yeah.

Valerie Bemo 49:39

Thank you for for that question. I believe in gods and I'm believing something bigger than all of us. It's not about religion. It's not about which part of the religion Yes, I'm Christian. I'm born Christian, and I'm still following it. But I made a lot of effort to Learn about other religion to learn have a lot of practice the Buddhists into Muslim, all that pieces and one things came to the same is like, the first thing is love, the first thing is like cognize is something beyond you, and bigger than you. And the more I embrace also nature, learn a little bit more, you know, I've been more and more connected to that love, one that one thing is that clear is that I can go you go to some of this amazing nature, and then you just see that this like, has to be something bigger, you have to be God's, that expression. And you see the connectedness with, even toys have everything. For us, everything worked together, seamless, even if he seems like a steak, is it nerds and is there and you're realize that it is. And when I talk about spirituality is you have to go with the space of love of being of compassion, but also empathy, to know that everybody, again, human being wants to belong to love. And when you get to that space, you start seeing everybody else around you, with the same desire to connect to something new god and opening that space, help you really be that authentic, and sin, I can be, like you said in the refugee camp with somebody who have lost everything, and see that woman sitting there smiling with her because of her heart of who she is not what she lost. And the same thing, I will sit with Bill Gates, with all the millions who have and is the same human being with the heart beating, smile or no smile. And when you start being in that space, is so beautiful, because and for me, you can only be that if your advice if you embrace the spirituality of human being on the heart of everybody, by nature, have the similar as long as you wave and your heart is beating, you are an if you are I am. And it's just a simple of that. And we employ the same we we have to share what resources we are interconnected. And the world become even a small, small space with the connectivity and again COVID shows that how small it is, even if it's a big world, we are so interconnected.



Hylke Faber 53:14

It's becoming quiet. As I'm listening, Valerie just becoming quiet. I'm struck by this phrase, you know, it's the person in the refugee camp who's breathing and smiling or not smiling. Who is who is that? Who's part of that bigger hole and Bill Gates as well. And everybody else as well. And that's all the same. We're all breathing. We can know that. And so when when we are connected to something bigger than our what I would say ego mind, separate sense of self. We start to see everything, like the harmony of the trees, where everything is connected with each other. And we cannot but have care for it and be generous and it's all sort of start to be this this dance you could say that's what I'm hearing what you're saying. So question I love to ask towards the end of our conversations and amazingly already close to the end, Valerie. What would you say to somebody who's not feeling connected today? To themselves to people around them? Maybe not be not only today, but maybe for a while maybe for months for years? Who does not sense that? And maybe because they're listening otherwise it probably wouldn't be listening, have some kind of yearning for that. Would you say?

Valerie Bemo 54:54

It says yes. We are all in that journey and Every day is an everyday reality. And you have to look at it as not the destination. But the path, or the holds or the, the way. Because you have to be committed on the day to day to find that, when I wake up, I do a prayer. And I connect with myself and to God and then ask that I've been who I am. And I have challenged during the day. And it's up to me to like, what, why is it happening? And to do a check in? We'll be having some high and low we will have in some days where we feel like oh, who was that person? This Who is this speaking. And you have to look at it and love yourself, have a little bit of compassion. You just said and not beat yourself, but love yourself and say, maybe I can do better tomorrow. And I've been different. But that simple journey of going inside yourself. And check in with yourself. Talking about check in check in with yourself, checking where you are, and towards God and just looking at God sometime to help you. And we God will come other people around in your journey. You will have some coach you have some some people and it's not always the person you think it should be. It's not always Yeah. Yeah, boss. Yeah, the Hector the witches person or something, it can come with the unexpected space. Like I said, when I go to the refugees, actually, they give me some time more than what I give to them. They were sent me they would me to the sense of life, then look around you. There's always a message for you. In the supermarket, do you say hi to the person who is in front of you who serve you give them a name. Next time you do that, you'll see you'll see a Margaret seven. She may be these just say hi Margaret, how are you doing today, as she said, Are you see the difference? The smile you may have made her day. And the same thing. It may come from anywhere. And just be open to to embrace it. And to be it may be difficult sometime. But I guarantee you at the end, the more you sent and the more you're happy, the sense of peace of lights that you have in the day to day it cannot replace anything else, that material will bind to me.

Hylke Faber 57:55

Thank you. Last question. So you work in emergency relief. So my sense is day, every day on your screen? Or when you're actually with people? You see lots of things that could be construed as hard. How do you relate to that from the space you just described? If you do



Valerie Bemo 58:25

one thinks that you you see there's a lot of destruction, there's a lot of emergency every day, for sure. Is to first feeling like I have a space where I can do something I can help I can be in that's the first thing. The second thing is that is to be able to see beyond the number to see a face it people and to contribute the best way you are. And that for me make a difference when I'm I have resources, of course coming from the foundation and even personnel is that question? How can happy have a service with the resources look a lot, but it's nothing compared to the needs, then how do I best use the stewardship of this resources that entrusted me to do? What is the best support? How can I support and how can I support the people because there's a lot of intermediary what is the best path to get to that people without having all the from the tube going away because at the end in a lot of our system is almost nothing gets in there that hardwire be stewardship of the resources that have been entrusted and that I have the privilege of managing now. And that and when you get Add to that speed, you're like, oh, I can do something I can be in there I can space and then do the toots, what I like about traveling, after a few months of just sitting in your computer become numbers. And then you go to the field and see see one person, and you hear their story. And it makes so much sense you like, okay, it's not just 100,000 person or 50 people is that face, you can put a face it had a person bitten in that. And that satisfaction is just changing. Make your forget about the sadness, and making you feel so grateful that you can actually be in part of the space to do something.

Hylke Faber 1:00:52

Thank you, Valerie. Thank you very, and we're getting to the end of our conversation, I want to say a big, big thanks to you. What I'm taking away also from this last bit of our conversation, is to live from this generous heart and open to what's around us not get lost in the mind of the numbers. The I can't do anything extending. And then the rewards like meeting Margaret in the supermarket, or the conversations with the people that you're meeting in the places where there's been real hardship, and just meeting them, and really listening to them. I sense the presence you bring to them. And then the transformative power, the miracle that happens in that. So we've been listening to Valerie BMO today, Dr. Valerie BMRC, she works at the Gates Foundation, and emergency relief. A big takeaway I had today was about how important community is and how from Valerie story, it's always whether it's in the supermarket, or whether it's with somebody you serve, or whether it's in our family or whatever it is. And that's important, to stay authentic, to be connected to our light and to also realize that we are not what we think we are we actually connected to something much bigger. And that is a journey for each of us to explore every day. So now there anything else you want to say by way of closing?

Valerie Bemo 1:02:26

Thank you, Erica for the opportunity. But so everybody to remember, we all have something to offer. And we have to be open to receive as well, when it comes our way.

Hylke Faber 1:02:38

Thank you, thank you, we always have something to offer, and also be open to receive it as well. That's a beautiful place to end our conversation today. You've been listening to root and unwavering we're



going to have and we continue to have community conversations on LinkedIn through growth Leaders Network, you can check those out. If you'd like to learn more also, you can subscribe to this podcast, for example, on Spotify and other places. And we will be here again with Garth bass Nagar, who is the author of a book called unfair. I love that title on February 10. He's also the founder of cocreation partners, and he will speak with us again on February 9. So that's it for today. You've been listening to rooted and unwavering where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host SoCal Faber. See you next time.

Spealer 1:03:41

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