**The Stories We Tell: Shifting Hearts and Minds Through Narrative Change**

**[00:01 – 05:03]**

**[Music]**

**Noelle:** What up?

**Miranda:** Welcome to the Unpacked Project.

**Noelle:** We’re your hosts. I’m Noelle.

**Miranda:** And I’m Miranda.

**Noelle:** We’re here to explore all things social justice. It's through casual conversations, interviews and storytelling that we hope to inspire others to take action towards a more compassionate and equitable world.

**Miranda:** Because honestly, it kind of sucks here sometimes.

**Noelle:** For real, we can do better, people.

**Miranda:** Alright let's start unpacking.

**[Music]**

**Noelle:** Hi everyone, Noelle and Miranda here. We wanted to seek some time before today's episode, to share some really exciting information about a fundraiser that we're running. Every quarter, we try to partner with a community service organization or a non-profit organization, to raise funds or collect products for people that are in need. We run the book drive, almost about a year ago at this point, we also collected money to donate to the Trevor project during pride. So, this month, during the month of October, in honor of domestic violence awareness month, we're partnering with the house of Esther, which is a local non-profit organization down in Bradenton, Florida, that focuses their work on women's services and women empowerment. And we will be collecting funds and products, where we will donate these to Hope Family Services, which is a domestic violence shelter, down in Bradenton, Florida.

**Miranda:** Yes. So, our ask folks. head on over to the link in our bio on Instagram, at the\_unpackedproject, you'll find our amazon wish-list link to everything that we're asking for; so gently use purses or new purses, large enough to house, any items for feminine products or toiletries, things like that, for a woman who again is in-house. You can also check out our website theunpackproject.com. We have a donation page, so if you just prefer to donate financially, that would be a benefit as well. So, please provide support, and all of these will be donated on Christmas Eve. So, we thank you in advance for any help that you can give. We really appreciate you supporting the causes near and dear to our hearts. Thank you.

**Noelle:** Thank you. Enjoy today's episode.

**Miranda:** Well, hey Noelle, how you doing?

**Noelle:** I’m good. How are you? Good to see you.

**Miranda:** I know I know, it's been a while. I feel like we released some of our episodes, just the two of us, but really excited to get back into some of our interviews with some of our experts. It’s been a long day, you know, 7 o'clock our time, but really just excited to get into things. So, you ready for this?

**Noelle:** I'm ready. Yes, I’m really excited. Our guest today actually, I remember doing the screening and take a couple of months ago. And we've been, like you said, we've been doing our own episodes on messaging and narratives. We had an episode, a few weeks ago, with Over Zero, where we talked about misinformation and disinformation. And so, just really excited to have Rinku Sen here today, Executive Director of Narrative Initiative. She is a writer and social justice strategist. Rinku is formerly the executive director of race forward, and was also publisher of their award-winning news site ‘Color lines’. She was also the architect of the shattered families’ report, which identified the number of kids in foster care whose parents have been deported. her books stir it up and the accidental American theorize a model of community organizing that integrates a political analysis of race, gender, class, poverty, sexuality and other systems. As a consultant, Rinku has worked on narrative and political strategy with numerous organizations and foundations, including policy link, the ACLU and the Nathan Cummings foundation. She serves on numerous boards, including the Women's March, where she's co-president, and the foundation for national progress, publisher of Mother Jones magazine. Rinku, thank you so much for joining us today. Can you tell us more about yourself and just how you got into all the work that you're doing?

**Rinku:** Yeah, it's so great to see you both, and I’m so excited to be having this conversation with you. I started organizing when I was 17-years-old, in college. It was my sophomore year. I did not grow up in a particularly political family; I’m not a red diaper baby or a union baby or anything like that. I was just an Indian immigrant kid, growing up in largely white factory towns and suburbs, and trying to fit in until I got to college. And what happened was, my sophomore year, at the very beginning of the school year, there was an incident of racial violence on campus. And the Black student organization started a campaign for various changes, recruited the other student organizations of Color, the Asians and Latino students largely at that point. And I went to hang out with two of my friends one night, Val and Yuko; they're still my friends today, 35 years later it must be.

**[05:04 – 10:08]**

**Rinku:** And they were going to go to a rally the next day - a rally for racial justice - on campus. And they asked me if I was planning to go. And I wasn't planning to go because mostly growing up, having very few resources to understand race or immigration through, I really had just tried to keep my nose to the grindstone and be an American. And the best ways I knew how; much of that had to do with like, wanting to eat hot dogs for dinner and talk like Marsha Brady. So, when I got to college, it was really the most multi-racial community I had been in, up until that point. And I got recruited. Before that, no one had ever tried to recruit me to do anything about racial injustice or inequity in the country. And at first I did say no, but my friends did a little bit of an intervention on me. They said; “Rinku, you're not a girl anymore; you're a woman now,” which isn't really a line you think of, in connection to politics, but it works there. And you're not a minority; you're a person of Color. And this was the first time I’d ever heard the words ‘person of Color’ and thought there might be another thing to be, that wasn't a diminishing word. Minority, I feel like, just puts you into this little box and you're supposed to stay in it. So, I went to that rally and my life just completely changed because I think that was where I figured out that there were so many ways of being an American; of being American of investing in the country, investing in the community, working with the people around you, to make it as inclusive and fair and compassionate a community as you could be. So I went to that rally, and the great thing about organizing is there are always a million things to do. So, no matter who's coming in you, there's some assignment you can give them. and people started asking me to recruit folks for meetings, and give a speech here and there, and come be part of a planning another action. And I ended up doing, our kind of peak action in that campaign was a sit-in of the John Hay library. And I sat in and prepared to get arrested, which didn't happen but it was my first time, you know, being ready for that. And we won some really important things, including a new third-world center on campus. It had been in the basement of the Afro-American studies department. And after that campaign, we got this big Victorian building, which is now the center for students of Color at brown, where I went to school. And the end of that year, I was involved in a women's campaign against sexual violence on campus, which came together really fast, right after spring break and going into our reading period. And we want a bunch of things there too, including a dusk-to-dawn shuttle service, which still operates at brown. And this was all in 1984-85, so it's been a long time since then and it's been great to see other generations of students, other classes of students benefit from those things that we fought for and won. And once I’d had those experiences of getting together with other people, identifying our problems, figuring out what would be good solutions, and winning, challenging the institution and winning, I was pretty much sold. And I became an organizer after college, rather than a professor. The other route I could have gone was literary criticism and teaching English and literature and writing; that would have been good life too, but this one has been pretty satisfying.

**Miranda:** Yeah, I know, definitely. That’s in such a different trajectory it could have been. So interesting to hear. And I love hearing that story because I think there's so much in that you, our friends challenging us to do better, rising to the occasion, you know, this experience. we recently did a live and we were talking about diversifying your feed on social media, diversifying your friend groups because the awareness that just differences bring to the table, things that you really just wouldn't have known, and really relatable to the story that you shared. So, I’m happy to hear that. So, under your leadership, there have been organizations, such as race forward, that have engaged in some really powerful campaigns, such as ‘drop the I word’. Can you discuss a little bit more of that work, and then the successes of running that campaign or these campaigns?

**[10:09 – 15:03]**

**Rinku:** Yeah, happy to do that. When I worked at race forward, at that time it was actually called ‘the applied research center’. We changed our name toward the end of my tenure, I think in 2013 we changed our name. And our general approach was to try to build a bigger constituency for racial justice, by doing a lot of media work and centering our media work on our storytelling. But we did other things as well; we ran trainings on how to strategize for racial equity in an institution or in a community, we worked on lots of different issues over time. But because I’m an immigrant, I have always felt very attached to other immigrants, no matter how they got here, you know, getting here by various means. And I had spent 6 years reporting on immigrant workers from windows on the world, at the top of tower 2 and the world trade center. And that experience of following those workers around, in the aftermath of September 11th, and watching them organize other restaurant workers, other workers in their industry. I just really got a feeling for the immigration debate and the issues that we were trying to make decisions on, as a country. And one of the things that was really clear to me and to us, as an organization, was that the anti-immigrant riots, the conservative movements, insistence on using illegal and attaching it to, usually, frankly, brown-skinned male immigrants, you know, that was the image that would always come up when someone said ‘illegal immigrant’ for example. It did so much harm, not just to how immigrants are perceived, but also to how anyone who might be an immigrant, would be perceived. Like, lots of U.S citizens with brown skin, being seen as undocumented immigrants. So both, in how we saw ourselves and how other people saw us and treated us, the word did tremendous damage to us. and conservatives pushed it because when they did their polling and focus grouping, they found in around 2000, the year 2000, that Americans actually weren't very concerned about immigration. George W. Bush, before September 11th happened, that year he actually gave instruction to his domestic policy team, to look for a way to create a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. We don't think of George Bush as a pro-immigrant person but he was, partly because he was from Texas and there are a lot of immigrants, many undocumented in Texas, and many mixed status families. I think, this idea that immigrants who have papers and immigrants who don't, are very completely different people, that is just completely false; they're living in the same households, they are the parents, grandparents and children of US citizens, often. So, Frank Luntz, the republican pollster and communications strategist, wrote a memo that we found that said; “Listen, conservatives. Americans don't care that much about immigration, but they care about terrorism and they care about law and order. So, if you want to get people on your side to restrict immigration, you have to talk about law and order. That's the thing that's going to work.” And so, conservative activists would insist that journalists, for example, use the ‘I’ word in writing about immigration issues. So, we were mad. We were mad that this word was getting thrown at us in these really discriminatory ways, with no scrutiny. And we thought, in particular, journalists needed to do a lot better. It’s their responsibility to represent us accurately and fairly, and in the context in which our stories belong. And so, we decided to do a campaign to replace the word with other words, and we had lots of options for other words.

**[15:04 – 20:08]**

**Rinku:** And we targeted the associated press because the associated press's style guide sets the lexicon, you know, the vocabulary for thousands of other outlets in this country, but also all over the world. And we knew that if the AP changed it in their style guide, that many many other people would just roll along and do the same. So, we made journalism the arena of struggle. We targeted the associated press, which was the leader in journalism. And we recruited immigrants and the people who love them, to tell stories about who we actually were. We had been cast as these law breakers but who we actually were, was a full range of human beings who deserved our human dignity, and we use those stories to reframe the debate, from being entirely about law and order to being about human dignity. And I just want to mention some of our wonderful partners, because we couldn't have done it without them. There was a youth organization in Charlotte, North Carolina, that pressed and pressed and pressed on their local paper, so that by the time the AP made the change, the local paper was ready to do it too. Jose Antonio Vargas came out as undocumented, after having been on the staff of the Washington post for years and having been part of a Pulitzer prize-winning reporting team. And the national Hispanic media coalition ran a survey, a poll in 2012, around the time of the 2012 election, that showed that 40% of Americans, 40% of the people they polled, thought that all Latinos in the country were undocumented; that in fact there were no authorized Latino immigrants in the U.S at the time. And when we finally met with the associated press, the managing editor and the editor of the style guide, we took with us a human rights attorney, who talked about the many different legal statuses that people without papers have; they could have overstayed a visa, they could have an asylum claim pending, they could be refugees. Just a huge variety of precise statuses that are the legal statuses. So the idea that the ‘I’ word is the correct legal word, it was just false, crap. And the attorney we took with us to that meeting, really helped us establish that. So, it took us almost 3 years, 2 and a half, almost 3 years. There were a lot of people who decided not to play because they were very focused on the policy debate and didn't think that changing this piece of journalistic practice (1) could be done and, (2) would make a big difference if it was done. And we just thought we could do it. So, we tried and it turned out to be the right moment, where there was a big enough constituency and the harm of the word could be really established through research and storytelling. And I’m relieved that we got that done.

**Miranda:** No, I mean that's an amazing story, like the allies that you had. and really again, you know, obviously we're interviewing you because you're speaking to so many things that we've recently talked about, but there's so much power in the language that we use. And for folks that think that something as small as the word ‘immigrant’ is my new, it is extremely powerful, right? It tells these messages, we assign that to visuals; what do immigrants look like? What do they do? It’s all these things that we're receiving. And not only the messages that we're receiving about someone but the messages that we're receiving about ourselves, and it's just so damaging. So, I really appreciate hearing stories like that. Sorry, what were you going to say now?

**Noelle:** Yeah, no, I mean, along the same lines, like just thinking of that one word of illegal, right? I remember, in the episode that we did, I think was the last one that you and I did, Miranda, or maybe the one before where we said, you know, someone could just be trying to portray in an article that someone said something, and there's 8 different words you can use to say that they said, they gloated. And then that portrays a completely different message than just saying what the facts were, what the issues are. and I think one of the consistencies that we see coming up when we're recording these episodes about messaging and about narratives or how misaligned, you know, how we receive these messages and then how we internalize them, can be even with our value system.

**[20:09 – 25:01]**

**Noelle:** And it's like you're saying; “well, conservatives didn't even think it was that important of an issue.” Like, no, I never thought of Bush as a pro-immigrant, you know, someone who has pro-immigration policies, but then you have these special interest groups. even when we were talking to Ian about LGBTQ issues and all the trans bans that are happening right now, and when you look at the polls, it's not even an issue politically; not that it's not important but it's not something where they're looking for all this legislation to come out. But you have these special interest groups that are pushing it, and then all these messages that create all these narratives against these groups of people that are super harmful. So, it's just so interesting to me that we see that theme running through all of this work. And yes, how just one word can completely shift how something is framed, and then how it's received by people. So, it's just really interesting. And something we've also got-

**Miranda:** Well, and then we’ve confirmation bias, right? So, would you say 40% Rinku, that just made the assumption? So, here you have 40% of folks thinking that most Latinx folks are immigrants, and that's just not the case. And then, you have this play on these words that they utilize, and it feeds right into what people believe. So, it's so damaging and it's so concerning, and I wish and I hope, through this work and in part this podcast, this episode, the folks really understand how much power is in the language that we use.

**Rinku:** Also, how much power we have to change it. I think, I’ve been organizing for a long time, around all sorts of policy and policy issues and institutional practice. And when we get to the things that form our culture, that create norms or create perceptions of each other and ourselves, we sometimes get a little shy about asserting our power, or it feels like, well, culture is this amorphous thing that it's about, like religion and values and social networks and entertainment and pop culture. And we can't really influence those things because we don't run Hollywood or we don't run the AP or, you know, we're not journalists but we have cultural power as well as political and economic power. And at narrative initiative, a lot of what we do, is help people tap into that, locate their cultural power, their narrative power, and then start using it to make changes that would make a difference in their lives. I'll just tell you one quick story about how we decided to take the campaign, if it's okay, if I have time?

**Noelle:** Yeah, sure.

**Rinku:** When I was on book tour with the accidental American, I was in Powell’s books in Portland, Oregon. And in Powell’s, you do your book readings on the second or third floor, the art books are behind us or in front of us. And so, we did our talk and answered questions and everything. And I kept seeing this young man, like circling us; never sitting down and joining but kind of walking back and forth. And after the event broke up, he came up to me and he said; “hey, can I talk to you? I heard you were talking about immigration, and I’m really in a bind. I graduated from high school last year and I can't go to college, I can't get a job because,” and he whispered it, “because I’m illegal.” He whispered in my ear, and he asked me what he should do. he said; “Do you think I should go to immigration and turn myself in and beg for mercy, like beg to have them let me stay.” and I had to tell them; “No, don't do that because they will actually probably deport you.” and the best I could do for him then, is say, you know, refer him to some immigrant rights organizations and say, you know, organize with them. And when DACA passed, I think that young man would have been one of the recipients, one of the beneficiaries of DACA. I didn't keep up with him but people like him needed to be able to not be whispering their status, so that they could fight with other people.

**Miranda:** And I know, in your work, a lot of the work that you do, theorizes this model in community organizing that integrates the political analysis with all of these different pieces of who people are, right?

**[25:02 – 30:15]**

**Miranda:** Race, gender, class, poverty, sexuality, all these other systems. And we've talked a lot, in previous episodes, about the necessity to use that intersectional lens when doing this work, and even just kind of understanding a lot of the social issues that are happening around us. And your theory sounds very similar to that. So, why do you think that this is so important and so imperative that when we use this kind of lens to understand narrative and political strategy?

**Rinku:** It's important to be able to look at any problem through a bunch of different identity lenses because you want to solve that problem for everybody; you don't want to leave a chunk of people out of the solution that you fight for and win, (1) because that would be morally wrong and, (2) because if you want to hold on to those victories, the more people who have benefited from them, the more people will fight to keep them if they come under attack, which they almost inevitably will. One of my favorite examples of this comes from the Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN) in the auths. They organize working and poor families, white Native American and Latinx largely. And their members were encountering this problem where they were eligible for SCHIP (State Child Health Insurance Program), but they'd go and apply and they'd always get rejected, even though they were eligible. So, ICAN ran a matched trio-testing project. They came up with trios of families; one white, one native, one Latin. And trios that had similar circumstances, send them into apply. They sent in 27 families; 26 were rejected, even though all of them were eligible. And when they looked at why they got rejected, they found that the SCHIP office hours were a problem; it was like when working people work, so they couldn't go, if they got rejected, they didn't have the time to go and fix it. The application form was very long and confusing, and it was easy to make a mistake. So, everybody had those two problems. But in addition, the Latinx families had an extra problem, which is that when they went to apply, they'd be asked all these intrusive questions about their immigration status; how many of these kids are the ‘I’ word? Who’s the father of these kids? How’d you get across the border? Questions that the federal government says, are not to be asked in relation to SCHIP kids eligible by income and by papers, then you just got to sign them up. So, if they had not taken a racial lens to that problem, in addition to the class lens and the gender lens because it's all mothers going through this, then they would have solved the problem for the white families and solved it for the Native American families, but they would not have solved it for the Latinx families. So, you have to be able to look at something through all of those eyes, to know whether you're solving the problem completely. The other thing that's important to know about inter-sectionality, as a practice, is that it's an analysis; it's not an identity in itself. I wrote a piece called ‘how to do inter-sectionality’ a few years ago, after taking a buzz feed quiz, you know, those buzz feed quizzes. And it was going to tell me, how intersectional my identity was? How intersectional person am I? And that's just a false premise because there's nothing more intersectional about my identity than a white straight disabled man, for example, or a white straight able-bodied man; those are still intersections in that man's. There are different kinds of experiences he might have, based on the different identities he has and how those identities are treated in the society. So, if we want to solve problems for everybody, we have to be able to look through all the lenses. And just because you look through a new lens, it doesn't wipe out your old lens; adding a race lens doesn't mean you no longer have a gender lens; adding a disability lens doesn't mean you've dropped your class lens. You’re looking for the spot in the Venn diagram, where the most people benefit from the solutions that you're crafting and fighting for.

**[30:16 – 35:30]**

**Miranda:** Ilove that. It’s going to be a quote. And so, on the topic of intersection, right? In our second season, Noelle and I discussed the intersection of race and religion, in particular, you know, white nationalism and Christianity. So, the inter-sectionality of race and gender really is another area that piqued our interest, especially when it comes to white women and their involvement in the 2016 and 2020 elections. So, exit polls claim that in 2016, Trump won a majority of white women's votes at 52%, in comparison to Clinton at 43%. But then in research, using public voting records, once it became available months later, we saw that that wasn't actually the case. So, what we saw was that even though white women were considerably more pro-Trump than non-white women, white women among themselves were just divided at 47% for Trump and 45% for Clinton. So, that 52% stat created a really powerful narrative, right? So, I wonder, you know, what's been the impact of this, politically, and within society in general?

**Rinku:** I think, the 40’s the correct figure; the 47% figure is not nearly as well known as the 50, as the wrong figure. So, people pay most attention to elections when elections happen, not 4 months after the election. And it's only your kind of hardcore strategists who track, when the data gets cleaned up from exit polls, and see the corrections. So, there was a little bit of a similar correction in the 2020 figure; the first figure for white women was around 55% and it came down a little bit, once the full data was in. I think that in elections, 5% is a lot. 5 points is big. and having the perception that white women voted over 50% for Trump, really drove a lot of people away from wanting to organize white women in the progressive ‘we’ into the progressive body politic. And I think that we might have felt differently if we knew that it was 45 and 47, rather than 47 and 52 because 45 and 47 means you're competing, you are competing for those votes. The 2020 figures are worse. and I think, what that reflects actually is not so much that democrats abandoned organizing white women or decided not to; they definitely didn't, and there was a lot of that organizing going on, but the GOP also fought hard in the 2020 election. The electorate grew for everybody, so there was just a lot more voting in 2020 than we're generally used to, an experience. And I think the important lesson here, really is that no group of people has uniform politics; nobody does, and even black people don't, Indian immigrants certainly don't, Filipinos don't, Latinx folks don't. There’s a range of politics in all of our communities, and good strategy means that you study all those segments of people who think in different ways. And in white women, religion and geography matter a lot; maybe they matter a lot for everybody but they certainly matter a lot, in terms of where white women are situated, who they relate to, who they socialize with, who they have interaction with and exposure to. and I think that for me, partly because I am a person who came into movement without intending to because I was recruited; if my friends hadn't recruited me, I might have never come in this direction. And so, I am reluctant to seed anyone to the right wing. And I do figure that if we're not organizing somebody, the right is organizing them. and I’m not ready to give up on anyone because as much progressive momentum as we have that I’ve been part of building for the last 30 years, clearly it's not enough because Donald Trump got elected in this country and then did 4 years of horrible damage; and that damage, I think that damage also fed the change in the white women's numbers going up, in terms of Trump voters because the dis-info game grew tremendously.

**[35:31 – 40:05]**

**Rinku:** It gained so much power in that 4 years; the platforms grew, the numbers of narrators grew, the diversity of narrators grew and the lies just piled on top of each other, so that it became really hard to kind of dig our way out of them. And that changing context is also a big factor in the 2020 election. So, as a feminist, I think there's a lot that I have in common with white women, particularly poor and working class white women, and I’m not ready to let the right have them. I think we have to compete for them and I think we can.

**Noelle:** Yeah, I love that. And I think, a lot of it is, you know, like you said earlier, kind of realizing what power we have to do the work and make change. and we've talked in previous episodes about, a lot of us just kind of being passive consumers of all this information and not really actively making sure that we're trying to figure out all this information, and what's misinformation and disinformation, when are people playing on our emotions, and kind of understanding ourselves and what we bring to the table, through our experiences and through our own biases, and how that interacts with all the information that we're receiving. So, I think, a lot of these episodes, we've been trying to place an emphasis on that, are people kind of realizing the power that they can have in making the change and just becoming more aware of what we're consuming on a daily basis, which is shaping our mindset about a lot. You had a recent blog post, ‘systems language for narrative change’. And you share that “people and their stories about the world shape the systems we build and use. Distancing people from systems also distances people from their power. We accept dominant narratives in the stories they tell, and challenges they present seem insurmountable.” That was a quote from your recent blog post. Can you elaborate on that for us? Because I think it's just such a great summary of a lot of what we've talked about and what some of our previous episodes have focused on, and just what are the alternatives for everyone?

**Rinku:** Yeah. So, as an organizer, I’ve always been about systemic change; we want to change things in systems because we can't go person by person. If we have to go person by person, it's going to take too long and there's going to be too much suffering and death before we get to mass change. So, the world runs on systems; it runs on government systems, on corporate systems, on education systems, on family systems, on social systems. So, as an organizer, I was always about helping people understand the system and where in the system you could change something. But there are a couple of things that I’m self-critical about now, that I typically would have said a lot, maybe 10 years ago. I used to talk about how systems churn along in producing racism, even if the individuals inside the system don't intend to. So, let's say you're a social worker that Idaho, example that I gave, let's say you're one of those social workers and you don't ask the Latinx families about their immigration history and you try to treat everybody respectfully. I’ve spoken to nurses who had to create their own, I had to teach themselves how to ask patients about their pain level in 10 different languages because the system in hospitals, this was in a transplant unit where pain may actually limit the oxygen a person is taking in and then their body might reject the transplanted organ. So, super important question, ‘are you in pain? Do you have pain?’ she just taught herself that in 10 different languages because there wasn't any bigger way to help every patient manage their pain. So, we want medical training and nurses training to be different; that would be the change in the system.

**[40:06 – 44:49]**

**Rinku:** But what I realized is, when I say something like that system churns along producing these outcomes, even if you, person inside the system, don't intend them to, that is profoundly disempowering; that means, then how do I also argue that we can change that system, if it's going to churn along, no matter what any of the individuals do in it, including the people who are trying to get their public benefits or get their kid through school or get their parent out of the hospital or get a better job. Then that's a contradiction that wasn't helping us see our power and be able to take action. But the fix is actually pretty simple. the fix is that whenever you're telling stories about systems or describing how they're working and what needs to change, you got to put people in there; start with the people, don't start with the regulation or the law, don't start even with the harm; start with the person, start with the mother who's trying to get her kid health insurance, so that her kid can be healthy, and who is willing to do what she needs to do, to shift the system so she can get her kid on SCHIP. if she needs to organize with other people, she'll do that; if she needs to be part of a grassroots research project, she'll do that; if she needs to go recruit some other folks to join, then she'll do that; if she needs to testify in front of a body of policymakers, she'll do that. So, we need to tell a lot more stories about people changing their systems because they can be changed, otherwise we're just going to raise a lot of awareness but depress everybody out of the ability to take any kind of action. So, we don't want people hiding under their covers because the world just sucks so bad and nothing can ever change. we have the evidence that human beings can change systems, sometimes in very foundational, fundamental, dramatic ways that, we have that evidence through human history and also in our contemporary lives, and we need to use them more.

**Miranda:** Yeah. I think it's always about the people, and that's a common theme through all of our episodes. I think, back to season one, when we interviewed Dr. Ashley Williams in regards to like policy change within early education. And we start with the people that are receiving the most harm, the people that are doing the work, you know, who are the people that are at the table, right? People are creating these systems and it's so important to remember that. So, thank you for sharing that. I do have to say, this brings us to the end of our episode though, and it kind of breaks my heart because I think this has been such an enlightening episode, so I really want to just thank you for joining us today. Thank you for your dedication to this work. I mean, it clearly shows from the moment that we met, from the work that you've put out there, your dedication to what you do, you do it wholly, humbly. And I think we just need more, we have a lot of people that are like that but we need more people like that, doing this work. So, thank you. Thank you so much and we can't wait to see what else you do with the narrative initiative. As always, listeners, we want to make sure that you check out our YouTube. Please like, subscribe. You can always find us on Instagram and Facebook as well. Check out our content, and we also have information that we share between episodes as well. And our next episode drops in 2 weeks, so we're now airing every other Wednesday, just for our own sanity. But we'll be speaking with Dr. Graham Norton, the CEO of ‘listen first project’ and he's really going to help us explore how we can use connection and listening to bridge divides.

**Noelle:** Thank you for coming on today, Rinku.

**Rinku:** Thank you so much for having me. Bye.

**[Music]**

**Noelle:** Show the Unpacked Project some love and be sure to like, subscribe and review our podcast. You can also check us out on Instagram at the\_unpackedproject.

**Miranda:** And if you enjoyed today's episode, visit our website at theunpackedproject.com where you can make a donation that supports the research production and operating costs of this work.

**Noelle:** Shout out to all of our listeners who unpacked with us today.

**Miranda:** See you next week. Peace.