

Introducing Inspired Belonging

Dan Dissinger: [00:00:00] Welcome to another episode of writing remix. I'm your host Dan Dissinger and today is actually the beginning of a whole new series of episodes. I'm not going to be on the podcast as you see in the title this episode called inspired belonging and.

What, um, we're going to do in this episode, me and my colleague and friend, Stephanie Renee Payne, um, are going to talk about. Inspire belonging, the impetus of inspired belonging, and also its connection to, you know, writing and aspects of identity and kind of how it came to be and what we're going to do even just further than just the podcast.

So this is really just an introduction into. Inspired belonging and bringing you into kind of the space of that. And, um, so I'm going to just throw it over to my, uh, well, my co host actually to, to inspire belonging. Actually, it's been so long since I had a co host shout out to Katie McNey for being a co host on so many of these amazing episodes out there doing amazing stuff.[00:01:00]

Um, and, uh, so yeah, welcome to also my co host Stephanie Renee Payne. Stephanie, um, welcome on this journey. And, uh, yeah.

Stephanie Renée Payne: I'm so happy to be here, um, I'm Stephanie Renee Payne, and Dan and I have collaborated in many ways, and we, we almost, uh, intuitively put this wonderful, inspired belonging together. We often found ourselves presenting for our writing department together, and we noticed that, um, We had such a wonderful reception when we talked about what's underneath the writing.

How writing really brings forth a sense of, of, of knowing ourselves better. A sense of connecting to ourselves, a sense of building community, a sense of truth. Um, and we've just been developing this over time. We've moved inside and outside of [00:02:00] academia, and we want To share this in this moment in time.

Dan Dissinger: Yeah. I mean, I think a lot of what you said to just now, I mean, we're just going to dive right into the idea. I mean, the two words there and what we're doing inspired and belonging. I mean, I mean, serendipitously, I've been talking about the idea of belonging even today, right now, as we're, you know, before we recorded this in one of my classes, uh, talking about Eli Clare's book, um, exile and pride, and a lot of it is about.

What does it mean to belong and the idea of like how writing creates and can create that. energetic experience between people who feel like they don't belong in the same space or how to belong in a space or to create a space of belonging.

Stephanie Renée Payne: Yeah.

Dan Dissinger: Writing really is so energetic in that way. I

Stephanie Renée Payne: think what you said about to create a space of belonging, um, and that really does happen in the writing space, but it also [00:03:00] happens in an open space.

And I know you and I are united in this way, but I have. In the past many years been using the L word in my classroom and that is love and I think A total acceptance that I can say to my students, and I can really say it from a heart space, that I love you, and I want you to do well, and I want you to know me, and I want you to know each other, and I want you to build community together, and understand the depths of who you are.

and understand the depths of what is possible in your life. And I think a foundation of love and acceptance is really important. And to move beyond what is What is acceptable? Um, I was just, Dan and I both have a love of bell hooks. We, we, um, presented at the bell hooks symposium. It was lovely. Um, and I think Dan had said to me at [00:04:00] one point in our long day, I feel so loved here.

Do you remember that? I

Dan Dissinger: do. No, I do remember that it was the academic conferences are so They're weird spaces to navigate, you know, they, they are, I feel like for everyone in terms of any intersectional identities, you come to the academic space with academia is just this other beast that is looking at everyone.

And I think the idea of what we're even doing in terms of the idea of belonging, when I was at the bell hook symposium, I, I felt. One, a sense of belonging and two, just loved and accepted it was, it was one of the very few times I think in an academic setting of that. And I think it was because like the idea of like the inspired.

the, the inspiration of what the work was, which was not to speak at people, but with people. And when we presented, [00:05:00] they were, people were so, um, I don't know, connected to, to what we were saying, because we weren't

doing anything other than. Providing a time for them to write and to find that space. We

Stephanie Renée Payne: were just holding space And I think what I experienced in that lovely symposium was there wasn't there wasn't a way to do things.

Um, there was discovery all around and I think about, uh, bell hooks, uh, definition of love and all about love that it's not presented as a noun. It's presented as a verb that it's actionable. And that it holds a responsibility that we look at each other as full human beings. Sometimes I think, uh, we can define in certain spaces what it means to be an American, might not look like all of us.

And, [00:06:00] bell hooks. transcends that in her idea of love, uh, that we all are human beings capable of, of everything, no matter what kind of bodies we're in, no matter what kind of, uh, brains we have, no matter, uh, our gender, our gender expression. And I think we are a stronger people and something that I've been really interested in lately, we care not just for one another, but we care for our planet better.

Mm. When we understand our sense of, of, um, that everything is sentient in this world, that we all feel that we all, you know, have a soul, so to speak.

Dan Dissinger: I mean, When I'm thinking about this kind of space, we're opening up now on the podcast and how what we're creating for this and what we've been doing in terms of workshop leaders and bringing inspired [00:07:00] belonging to people and the experiences we've had, um, especially the one when we went to UCLA, uh, PAMLA and the, the one participant like really had an emotional experience and was, There's Felt safe enough to also have that experience and to Openly openly express that with everyone.

I was thinking about this and how we do that work and This part of the podcast and being like inspired belonging and like what we're gonna bring to it I do believe is rooted in what you just said with bell hooks and that is that it's a it's an action right like it is It is a choice, like choosing to be.

loved, but also to love choosing to make space of spaces of belonging to actively do that and not just speak on it where like, that is something that I feel like we in this space that we're going to be continually [00:08:00] doing, uh, episodes of inspire belonging is something that I'm looking forward to. Like it's not just the podcast, it's, it's much more cause we are.

Also be practitioners and that's the thing I take with bell hooks is like that you move from theory to practice and it's like this is like podcast to practice like Practitioner part

Stephanie Renée Payne: and a continued practice for us. That's right do this because we feel Better. We do this because we want to really tap the depths of our soul and our humanity.

And I also think, one thing that I have really been thinking about and why we do this, is we want to invite everyone to be able to push past sort of the individual boundaries that we hold. It's a lonely space. Yeah. And building community with one another and learning from one another and loving one another.

Um, we really want to expand in that space and do it through writing. I [00:09:00] think that's the, the, the next piece that we want to talk about. Yeah. And, um, as writers, both you and I, I'm always discovering when I write, I'm discovering who I am. I'm discovering where I have fears. I'm discovering where, you know, I may not want to look at myself and I was thinking about Ernest Hemingway who said I know who I am after I have written.

And so writing is a is a really special part of what we do. We give people the opportunity to sort of tap that subconscious space where all kinds of things are hidden to help us see who we are more fully.

Dan Dissinger: Yeah, and I think like in writing I like a lot of times would I've been in writing workshops or have done work that in this vein of terms of like identity exploration or works with like, you know, DEI and it's like we work we do something and then there's like the sharing part and the sharing part can be very [00:10:00] traumatic because like we've been Kind of socialized to like share the trauma that we've just wrote down We're like our approach has been and I think the reason why even people are then willing to have The experiences that and share those experiences that we never asked for people to share.

It's the shared like What was the engagement like, where did you, my, where have you possibly felt the resistance to this question? Because we're not going to answer all the questions, like we're building walls. I do it all the time. It's something I've been working on for a while now and trying to think about like why I'm resistant to certain feedback or resistance to certain, um, relationships or resistant to relationship with myself as like deep as I can get that relationship.

And I don't think that. I need to share that if I'm in a writing space with people as much as go. This is what I want to do like I'm going to share the engagement part and then maybe I get to the to what I did put down and I [00:11:00] think that has been such a different approach. I'm we've seen some really great results with that and writing does that like writing is just so important.

It's it's something that everyone can do and I think that's something I always want to emphasize. Everyone can do it, right? And there's because we've made to feel writing could be So difficult and the boundaries between good and bad writing is like so vast Yeah,

Stephanie Renée Payne: but it's really not about that. It's really about discovery and As I as I know you tell your students to that This is just a process of discovering and writing has the capability to help us discover all kinds of things And I think doing it In a way that builds community is really lovely.

And as you said, it's for you. It's a private space. We're just holding, um, a space for that. Um, but if you want to share whatever parts of it, you can share whatever parts of it. But even sitting, um, with a [00:12:00] group and silently writing together, you're building community and you're building a space of sharing.

And you're building a space of, of, uh, engaging in the depths of who you are with another person by your side, which has really been a special, um, very special space that you and I have been able to facilitate and learn from.

Dan Dissinger: Yeah, and I feel like that's The idea of the belonging and the inspired and the inspired belonging is such an action like it's it's it's practice and I think We do work like this because we want to practice the building of community and how do we do that and there are many different ways, but this is one and I feel like You know moving into even just talking to other writers and stuff that we're gonna do it other people and stuff that like we We want to know that like [00:13:00] we want people to see that it's not something that has to be so formalized It's already in you and I think like we want to be there with the journey and like mediate the spaces.

Stephanie Renée Payne: I think the first time I, I, I taught a writing class for senior citizens and I thought I have nothing to teach them. They have such rich lives that they have lived and they have so many ways of expression in those lives. And I think that what I learned in that space is that while my Permission meant nothing, but just saying you have permission to tell your stories was all that was needed in that space.

And I think when we do the work that we do, we're just offering a permission that really isn't ours to give. And I think we've all had times in our lives when we've been given permission to be ourselves. And I was always this very sensitive, contemplative little girl. And I remember at 10 or 11 or something like that, [00:14:00] um, reading the road less traveled, uh, um, uh, Peck's book.

I'm forgetting. The author's full name, which I feel embarrassed about. But anyway, it, it offered me the permission to go on a different road. I knew I was an oddball. But, but that helped me to just stand in my humanity and be who I am. And I think, The space that we try to create, um, we just want to do the same thing.

Dan Dissinger: So like if we're saying to the audience that's listening and like going inspire belonging as a space, like, or what it is that the decor. Or like in its, at its core, what we see as the values of, like, what, how could we, you know, define that? Like, or is it something that can be defined? I

Stephanie Renée Payne: think it's different for each group that we, we work with.

Because you and I have worked both in the corporate space, the student space, [00:15:00] and the academic space. And sometimes it's just what I had said before about permission to really, uh, to tap the depths of who you are, permission to build community in your workplace, um, permission to expand your pedagogy if you're, um, if you're an educator, uh, to look deeper than, um, than the discipline itself, what's underneath that discipline.

I think, um, To build community, to, to, uh, Someone had said, and I'm not remembering again, that we in our social media spaces have less community than we've ever had in our history. And just to come back to one another, it's sort of like what Ram Dass said, we're all walking ourselves back home. And I think this space to me is we're all walking [00:16:00] ourselves back to each other.

Because we've lost that in some ways and we need each other.

Dan Dissinger: I feel Like we're all walking together. I love that or even like towards each other, right? Like When I think of the work we've done With inspired belonging in this space that we've created in the work that we've created in the workshops and stuff that it is almost Like like being in a space and letting people Who feel far away sometimes, even if we're in the same

room, that they, they gradually move closer and then it's in the writing, like they move closer in the writing.

And as they do that, we actually start to kind of see each other and it's, it's lifelong work. And I think that's exciting. It's sometimes I think sometimes I think when I was, uh, early on in my academic life, like. The idea of [00:17:00] lifelong work was very scary. I was like, oh man, I have to work on this all the time and but now I think as i'm learning more about myself and You know things that will i'll be you know Talk about on this on these on the podcast as well.

Is that like that i'm okay with like letting people know? About certain things about me because there's a community that I also want to have walk with me and Either support me or I can support them and I think that's that's the humanity of it all that I see in what we do So

Stephanie Renée Payne: absolutely and I just want to say one last thing about building community and walking I think it's also learning to walk with ourselves fully to fully accept all the aspects of who we are and when we do that we're better at Opening ourselves up to others.

Yeah.

Dan Dissinger: So, uh, you know, so everyone, like this is just the intro episode. I mean, as you can see already, Stephanie and I can go on, could go on [00:18:00] forever. And I think the, though, that's the. Something I've also learned just in the podcasting life, as you can see, you go through, you can look at all the episodes of Writing Remix and see how, like, the vast idea of what's been talked about, and especially the episodes Stephanie has been on, um, you know, which we, you know, we can highlight as well.

I think, This is going to be a great journey. It's going to be a whole other part of the, of the podcast. So don't even think this is right. It is on the writing remix, but this is different inspired. Belonging is going to be talking about many different types of things that writing remix is like doing less of writing me makes is definitely much more pedagogical and the academic.

And I, though, I love that there was something like that. We were doing that. I was like, it needs its own space. It needs, it needs. We're in these breathing room and this is going to be it. And so we're going to be releasing. I like to

Stephanie Renée Payne: think of this as sort of the contemplative space that that I feel needs to [00:19:00] accompany.

Dan Dissinger: Oh, hugely. Yeah. So everyone, thank you so much for. Uh, for listening. Thank you so much for enjoying this, please, you know, start sending questions to in the comments or, uh, in the email like right now we'll be writing remix email and you'll see the, you'll see the email in the show notes, um, contact with questions about this idea or, Questions about the work that we're doing because we're always doing that.

There'll be a link as well to The workshop that we are providing as well. So you can also contact us We're always available to to do workshops and we can get that going as well So, please like, you know, subscribe to writing remix to get inspired belonging episodes and it's also on substack So you can also get that there might be some like special stuff on substack that be releasing as well So definitely like, you know join that and we look forward to Talking to anyone and everyone, if you've heard this and you're like, Oh, I want to come on or [00:20:00] contact

Stephanie Renée Payne: us.

Dan Dissinger: Absolutely. So everyone have a great day, be inspired. And I don't know, write some words down. It's always good to write some words.