

# 120. Finding the Light w/ Caroline Reddy

[00:00:00]

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hi everyone. Welcome to another episode of Writing Remix. I'm your host, Dan Inger, and today I'm here with a really special, amazing guest a. Multifaceted talent, Reiki Master librarian and published poet Caroline Reddy. Caroline, thank you so much. Hi.

**Caroline Reddy:** Thank you for having me here, Jen.

**Daniel Dissinger:** It's, it's a privilege.

It's a privilege to have you on. I mean, we share a, you know, um. We share a friend and David Lawton. Yes. Shout out David Lawton was on

**Caroline Reddy:** the podcast. Yeah. Shout out to David Lawton. Yes, he's awesome. I read at FIT last April for poetry month for, um, the immigration students. So that was really fun and interesting.

So yeah, he's a great guy.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Oh, I know. And I, and I, I remember meeting him through great weather when they, that was around and great weather was such a great thing and I know that they, you know, had to shut down, but. One of my favorite periods of time being in New York is being a poet and going to the Great Weather event.[00:01:00]

**Caroline Reddy:** Uh, yeah, that was fun.

**Daniel Dissinger:** And, and when they came here, performing for that with them at Beyond Baroque, so it's always been like a privilege to kind of get to know the writers through them.

**Caroline Reddy:** I, I feel like I read with, with that group at some point a few years ago. So it's been interesting how everything kind of circles back and, and inter um, interconnects.

And that's one of my messages, you know?

**Daniel Dissinger:** Oh, yeah.

**Caroline Reddy:** With my writing. Yeah.

**Daniel Dissinger:** That's my favorite thing about poetry. There is always an interesting interconnection at some point where you're like, yes. Oh, you know that poet? And then all of a sudden it's like, here we are. Right? Mm-hmm. Yeah. So looking forward to this conversation.

Why don't you tell the audience a little bit about yourself and then we'll, uh, jump right in.

**Caroline Reddy:** Okay. My name's Caroline Reddy. I was born in Shiraz, Iran in 1978. I came here when I was about eight years old, and with everything that's happening in Iran, um, unfortunately it's, it's been really difficult. So I don't really watch the news.

Um, my [00:02:00] whole thing from childhood, which I don't really remember, was very rough. It was very traumatic. Um, as an adult kind of looking back and saying to myself, how can we make, um. How do we make all of this suffering and how do we find the light within all of this? So that's been really my message of finding the peace in all of this, finding my voice and helping others find their voice.

So more on my background. I, I grew up mostly in Westchester, New York, not really feeling at home wherever I was, um, because I just felt like I was an outcast or an outlier, or. Now immigrants, a lot of immigrants probably feel like that, especially in the, within the Latin community, unfortunately. Um, so I, I always felt like I didn't really belong anywhere.

And it wasn't until I started writing and using that for healing that I felt some sort of peace. And when other people wanted to hear what I had to say and, [00:03:00] and I started teaching workshops, that's kind of when I, I felt more at home. Um, so that's, that's. A lot of the, A lot has happened, but I think that's the overall theme that I'm trying to go with.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hmm. I'm thinking like when you, especially with poetry and being a poet myself, that it's always given me that place that I can either. Make a home or feel at home, especially with other writers. How has poetry even more deeply, you talk a little bit about like, you know, finding the light, but how else has poetry created maybe that found home or that found family in, in that way?

**Caroline Reddy:** In some ways it has created communities. Um, I met so many amazing poets. That I've worked with. And I, you know, I, once I got this new job, I, I didn't really get to do a lot of readings, but they're back in my life somehow. So it's really interesting to always have that connection with [00:04:00] other poets. Um, even though, like, I, I felt like this year I had, I started a new relationship and new job and I was like, okay, I can't do open mics.

I can't, but then somehow all these poets still are there. It's not like I lost them or I lost. Another home. Everybody's still kind of there. And if I pick up the phone and I call one of them, then they're, they're more than willing to talk and say, Hey, what's up? I'm doing this reading, what are you up to?

So that's been kind of cool. Mm-hmm. Uh, to find. And I think any artist needs that. You know, I think theater people are really lucky 'cause they have that community. I think when you're a painter, a writer, it's a little bit harder, um, than those, the arts where you're. You are in a group, you are in a community.

I think for poets and writers, it can be difficult to find that, that space. 'cause it's a, it's a iso isolated art writing.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Yeah. I, it's funny. Like I teach, um, so at USCI teach writing, I teach like essay writing. Yes. So I teach the, the [00:05:00] class that everyone is forced to take. Right. But something that's fun to do is to show them how.

Writing doesn't have to be this solitary act that like

**Caroline Reddy:** mm-hmm.

**Daniel Dissinger:** We can create community around. Mm-hmm. Even all the disparate projects that we have and that we're developing and creating and that with shared narratives or sharing our narratives, we find that. That sort of intersectional relationship that we can have and, and mm-hmm.

That's one thing that as a poet, I've found is even stronger. A lot of the times when I'm performing or sharing work with people or I'm in workshops like mm-hmm. That there's such a, a desire to hear people's words, that it lets you in to kind of like. Their lives, their experiences, but they, like, you find these cross sections that are really like powerful.

I,

**Caroline Reddy:** I agree. One of the things I love doing is teaching. Um, I have two workshops. One, I taught the Creative Breath at the New Rochelle public library, and [00:06:00] I'm, I'm really lucky to work there because they, I had this idea and they said, yeah, go for it. So I'll be teaching that class every month, starting in March at Rochelle Public Library in New Rochelle, New York.

I'll also be teaching a class called the Immigrant's Voice at Poet's House, um, every Thursday from six to eight on Zoom on Thursday nights, and then April and May I'll be teaching the immigrant's voice again at Hudson Valley Writer Center. So I think what I learned when I went into teaching this class, um, I came up with a creative breath years ago, and I started it in my own apartment.

It evolved over the years off and on when I was teaching it. But what, what I really found out is people that are in that class, they really want a place to be heard. Um, they want a space to feel seen. They want a space to feel accepted. And those are all of the things that I really craved. So it's nice to see that this is not just me.

Other people want that, and it creates that community. [00:07:00] Um, and it's, it's an honor to teach these classes because you get to meet so many wonderful people that. Either feel like they're blocked or may feel like they haven't been heard, or might feel like their stuff isn't good enough. So then once they have a space for that, then everything drops and they, they're able to really tap into their intuition, into a creativity.

So that's one thing I, I agree with that. Teaching has, um, brought, and sometimes I actually like teaching more than the readings, to be honest. You know, I feel like that that's like, oh, okay. Um, readings are a little bit difficult for me 'cause I, I don't love reading out loud, but when I'm teaching it's a little bit easier.

I, I don't know why that is, but

**Daniel Dissinger:** mm-hmm. What is it about, like, because that's interesting when you're teaching, do you feel like you're act, you're engaging something different than when you're reading and that you feel more grounded in?

**Caroline Reddy:** I think [00:08:00] there's two parts to that. I, I, I used to teach, I was a teacher at different types of schools, but I felt like I failed at it 'cause I, I was never good at it.

I, I hated it and it wasn't, I wasn't teaching the subjects that I loved. So now that I'm teaching something I really like and people are, um, saying, yeah, I want you to teach this class that sounds good, and people are coming to it. I think that's where I felt like, oh wow. I, I do have this. this ability to teach.

So that was part of it was, um, maybe a little bit of an ego boost. Like, I could do this. I, I don't suck at teaching. I think the other part is again, that community experience because when you do go to readings, even though you connect and, and you find other people, you don't get to see like how people came up with those projects.

I think that's what it is when you're in a class, you. Or seeing like the development of people's projects and, and where they're, and hopefully one day it'll go somewhere. I had a student, um, I'll give a shout out to our SWA [00:09:00] who took my class and had her piece published at New Rochelle Public Library and then the newsletter published it.

So it was really nice to see that like, oh wow, this is kind of cool. Um, so I think that's what it is too, to see where people and the prompt for that class was to. Um, uh, take pictures of something you're grateful for and, and use that. As a prompt and we use that to kind of stream, write, stream of consciousness.

And then she went home and she wrote, wrote this poem and then it was published. So that was kind of cool.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Wow, that's a cool prompt. I like that. Like the multi media, kind of the usage of the, of a photograph to kind of spark a poetic space. Right? Like I like that. That's, that's really beautiful.

**Caroline Reddy:** A lot of the classes are like that.

I'll say, okay, like for the immigrant's voice, one of the cla one of the weeks is bring something that, um, is about your culture. It could be a recipe, a piece of clothing. Let's use that as a prompt. [00:10:00] So another class is like connecting to the ancestors, doing a meditation that does that. So a lot of the prompts, um, I was inspired by taking a lot of these types of workshops at different retreats.

Um. Different places like Omega and Kripalu where I went after I had a divorce, I went through a divorce. I went through a lot of workshops and they created these very. Wonderful spaces where you could be creative and you

could share your voice and vision, and no one was gonna laugh at you, no one was gonna make fun of you.

Nobody was gonna feel like, what is this?

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hmm.

**Caroline Reddy:** Uh, because as an artist sometimes I felt like when I was in certain places that, that if I talked about yoga or something, people would be like, what's that? What's, what's wrong with you? Kind of, it was a weird attitude that I, I sometimes, sometimes felt like people would say, and I am like, well.

Yoga's pretty accepted. I don't, I don't know what, what that was about. But then you go to these other places where the entire language is about creativity and intuition and yoga, you know, that's different. [00:11:00] So that was a big inspiration to create these workshops that incorporated healing and writing. So that's kind of where I'm coming from.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Well, I mean, and it's interesting that you say that because like you're a reiki master, so it's, these healing is so much part of, I guess, your, your life as well, like, and the idea of healing others or bringing people through a healing process and

**Caroline Reddy:** Yeah. Yeah. I think the, the, the biggest, um, thing for me that really helped me ground myself has been meditation.

Meditation helps you delve cre more into creativity and that helps you heal more. So I feel like they're all kind of layered and interconnected. So for me, I studied Reiki years ago at empty Hand. Zen Center was at Zen Center right here in, in near Rochelle. And then, um, years after, I remember after coming back from these workshops, I was sitting around my living room, said, oh, you know, I would love to teach that these kinds of workshops, but I don't know [00:12:00] where and how I would do that.

So the, the idea came 10 years ago and it just took a long time to kind of put together. But now, um, at New Rochelle Public Library, I have a lot of students coming in and I, you know, it's a, it's a popular program. Um, you know, and I hope that people also take it at, when I'm teaching the immigrants voice, I haven't taught that one yet, but it's very similar where it's what takes the idea of.

Working with a prompt, working with some sort of prompt to guide yourself and feel more at home, because I feel like, I can't say this for all immigrants, but I, from my personal journey, I, I never really quite felt at home for years.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Mm mm

**Caroline Reddy:** I kind of felt like I wasn't accepted and, and I, that people didn't really.

Understand me or like me or, or want to be around me. So that was something that was always a demon that I was dealing with.

**Daniel Dissinger:** It's such a, it's such a interesting workshop too, to think the, the idea of the immigrant's voice [00:13:00] too, and, and the idea of voice. Right. And I'm seeing like. This beautiful interconnection through so many of the things that you're talking about too, and, and also breath and voice, right?

So you have this

**Caroline Reddy:** mm-hmm.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Other one, like the, um, the, the creative breath and like the kind of role that breath plays in also in voice. Right. And it's

**Caroline Reddy:** mm-hmm.

**Daniel Dissinger:** If one isn't. Grounded in or, or kind of connected to breath in their own, in their own breath. Then it's like, then their own voice becomes almost ungrounded.

Exactly. And it's such a really beautiful relationship that you've created and thank you. In this kind of curriculum, to me, I see like a whole thing. I'm, I'm like, already, I'm like, we can go from here to here. Here.

**Caroline Reddy:** I think, yeah, I think that came together, you know, intuition and, and just. Working through ideas that, that I saw.

Like I would go to a workshop and it was all about bring magazines and create a collage and let's use that for. A painting or for something [00:14:00] that can help us through whatever you're going through. So those, I, I took so many workshops that that really helped me feel like the stuff that I believed in or

worked with wasn't as, as, you know, insane as, as I thought it was in, in quote, the real world where it's more practical and more, um, not as, you know, creative or, or intuitive.

**Daniel Dissinger:** So in terms with. With this idea of the, in this workshop that you're going to be doing at Poet's House and in the Hudson Valley, um, in Hudson Valley as well, the, the immigrant's voice, uh, I'm curious, like what is it about poetry? 'cause these are poetry workshops, right? Like mainly. Mm-hmm. So what is it about the, the space of poetry that you feel like has such a

Maybe a different power or a different like, kind of space to create than, [00:15:00] let's say, like prose or someone writing memoir or doing like a story in terms of the immigrant's voice. Is there something about poetry you feel like lends something different?

**Caroline Reddy:** I, I think for me it, it sort of, it happened that poetry sort of helped me find my voice.

Some continuing to stick with it. I am trying to, you know, my hand at fiction and other types because I was a fiction writer. And then, but I couldn't complete anything. And then poetry, I had written a few poems and I started sending them out. You know, one was rejected, like the first poem I sent out was rejected once or twice.

And then it was published and it was nominated for bester than that, a sacred dance. So I was like, okay, maybe this is the way. So I started, um. Writing more poetry. And I, I did a lot of, um, prompts. I have a wonderful life coach. I work with Shene er, so she would say, you know, meditate in the morning and see what comes up and use that as a prompt.

So, [00:16:00] um, poetry for me just really helped me get into the intuition, I think. And that's where I feel like artists have to really work with their intuition. So that's how it helped me. I don't think it's because. Prose isn't the way, or you know, playwriting isn't the way. I think for me personally, that was, uh, a journey that began with these prompts and finding ways to get my voice out there and it just became, um, my way.

But I also feel like there's a lot of, um, crossover, mean poetry and activism and like spoken word poetry. I've seen some amazing poets out there that are doing great work. Um. Using their poetry with everything that's happening, trying to really bring light to situations and, and the darkness that we're facing every day.

So I, I also feel it's, it's, it's very intuitive. You, you don't, you can't say a lot. You have to use your, a few words. So that really, [00:17:00] um, focuses what you're trying to work on. And also, I, I do think that there's a lot of poetry and activism that, that goes together as well.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Mm-hmm. Um, that you, you've been saying it's interesting, this idea of finding light has come up like several times and, and it makes me think about, I had this amazing teacher when I went to Naropa, uh, for my MFA, uh, Bhanu Kapil.

She, she's one of my favorite writers and just thinker and just wild, amazing person. She's just like one of, I'm so happy to have had her, uh, as a teacher. One of the things that she would do would, you would write feedback, would be write these really interesting, like, um, abstract ways to kind of go into our leave, enter and leave a poem.

And, and one of my poems, I'll never forget this. She's like, Daniel, I want you to think about what, how would you, what would it be like to try and float off the edge of this line? And, and like that?

**Caroline Reddy:** I think that's [00:18:00] the kind of, yeah, I think that's, you could be a little bit more playful, I guess. I, I don't know.

It's different. Um, with prose, it's, it's very much you have to have character, you have to have avoid, you have to have this, a structure. It's not that there's no structure in poetry, but I feel like it lends itself to, uh, a different whimsical style than, than p does to.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hmm. So how do you feel that, um, I guess maybe in your own writing, sorry, just everyone, I'm in my office right now.

It's by the most busy intersection in South Central Los Angeles by USC, but um. How do you feel in your own work as a poet that you search for or find light? Like how, and that is such a, such a bonded question, but like, how does that, how do you feel like you navigate that or create that? Possibly?

**Caroline Reddy:** That's, um, so, you know, I, I talked about my childhood, how it was very difficult and rough.

Um, I'm just gonna read a poem to sort of

**Daniel Dissinger:** Great. Yeah,

**Caroline Reddy:** [00:19:00] yeah. This is called the Basement of Tehran. So this is about, um, healing the inner child. I don't remember a lot of my childhood. It was during the war on Iran, but I do remember having to hide in a basement in Tehran. So this is called the basement of Tehran.

Holes still child to that fuzzy blanket until the siren stops and when bombs drop, we have the space beneath us that holds still as we take shelter. Underneath the loud alarm. When fear rains, stop Aziza. Smell fresh nibi as scent of your mother's hand. Pull closer to your malda. I tug at my papo. My childhood blanket has collected neuron memories that can be triggered any second by the latest bombs in Ukraine.

I am an REM trapped by nightmares that steal any sense of peace. [00:20:00] As I collapse under the eclipse, I can remember the pieces of another life, a pair of damp skis and the smell of Cardi Chai from Nahar lunch while remaining a child in hiding then and now a displaced refugee in a country that often shouts go back home.

I will process it step by step before the rumination spirals downward. Stop and assess sense, be touching. Moist earth smooth fingers. Reaching for the object before me. My water bottle with a wolf howling above Pine trees sprawling at its feet and mountain peaks rising towards its graceful neck. Just breathe the scene deep and rise upward.

From belly to throat to crown, I allow myself to sink into the tub. And inhale sense of lavender. I [00:21:00] Epsom salt, rinse off old aches and soothe my nerves. But the sound of sirens from the basement of Tehran has been replaced by the sensation of Tibetan singing bowls.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Wow. Wow. So I wrote a couple things down as you were reading, but then I just stopped because I was just.

I felt like, first of all, I want to say this, and I've said this on another episode, I think with Camille, uh, Camille Hernandez, the poet laureate of, uh, Anaheim. Every time a poet reads on the podcast and I come in as the host to try to attempt to say something, I'm literally left speechless because I'm like, whatever I'm gonna say now is going to sound so weird.

But, um. Your, your work is very sensory, like I am. I, I can, like the, the smells, the textures are so visceral, like, and mm-hmm. [00:22:00] It's interesting because living in LA I never thought that I would walk around and

smell things like jasmine and lavender and things like that, because they don't tell you that.

Right? Like, you, you never get that description. But hearing your work and being able to. Like, I felt like I'm like entering and exiting through every scent and the sounds and the, and the textures, and it just very beautiful. Thank you. But also very, like, it's a lyrical, there's a poet by the name of, uh, Mina Alexander, who, uh, passed away years ago.

But her work was very, like, there's a, there's a violence to it, but there's like, it's wrapped in this. Absolute beauty that like, I feel mm-hmm. Is yours. Like, you wrap that like in all these other things. And I, I, I could have listened to that for much longer. That was very, very good. Thank you. I like that blankets collecting, did you say?

Um,

**Caroline Reddy:** neuron memories.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Yeah. I like [00:23:00] that. That is, that. I like that image as well.

**Caroline Reddy:** Wow. Thank you. Yeah, the, the, I, I feel like what we were talking about, you know, why poetry? I think another reason is because every time I wrote PI would get so lost in the descriptions and people were like, oh my gosh, I read this and it felt like a picture.

And I think I am better off with describing sometimes I, I can't figure out the world building. I can't figure out. How I'm going to make things connect in prose. Um, but I'll get lost in a description of something for a few paragraphs and I know that that's not the point of prose as much. Sometimes, you know, you have to cut things out.

So I think that's also why at times poetry seemed, um, easier because you can like focus on one thing or, or two things or a few things and really like slow down, um, and pros. You have to have, you know, a beginning, middle, and end. So you can't always slow down with everything.

**Daniel Dissinger:** [00:24:00] That's a, that's an interesting thing that you said that too.

Like you can slow it down even though like, I felt like in that poem I was, I was being taken to so many different spaces. Mm-hmm. But it felt like, I don't know how to describe it. It's almost like a, I felt like it was like a gentle movement through so much. Mm-hmm. Right. And I'm being, and then there was that, that image of like, um.

In the bathtub like that, that was interesting because it like felt like a grounding moment for me.

**Caroline Reddy:** That's, yeah. I think that's what happened with me. I had all this trauma and I, I just never, it was very angsty. I wrote a lot of angsty stuff that was powerful, but I didn't wanna write about it, and it made, didn't make me feel good writing about it.

So I think. I was trying to find a way to write about stuff that has happened that's been horrible. But how do you, how do you come up through it? How do you find your voice? How do you find your grounding?

**Daniel Dissinger:** Mm-hmm.

**Caroline Reddy:** And a lot of things for me has been meditation, you know, a calm moment, boiling tea, [00:25:00] you know, sitting with your thoughts.

Um, a, a nice quiet bath. Um, reading, you know, works of like Han or something that can slow down and. Make you really feel like this moment is safe.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Mm-hmm.

**Caroline Reddy:** And I think a lot of, in therapy or, or I've had, you know, countless different, um, people help me throughout my lifetime and they'll say, okay, if you're having, you know, anxiety or something, think about what's right in front of you.

Think about like what you're touching, what you're smelling, what you're seeing. And that poem is kind of about that.

**Daniel Dissinger:** That's, that's amazing. Thank you. Yeah. I. So I've been, you know, and it's, hmm. It's interesting 'cause there's, as I said before too, like I've been on this other, I've been on this journey too of like, uh, self discovery in terms of like, uh, diagnoses that I've never thought I had.

Like borderline personality disorder has been something that I've been diagnosed with in the last couple [00:26:00] years. And it's interesting. It's the same thing, like, I'm always told, find ground yourself or don't look down. Look up, look at what you're, what's around you. Mm-hmm. And because you, for me, I have a tendency that I wanna like almost fold up.

Right? I wanna fold myself. Yeah. And it's like, it's very, very distressing. But it's interesting when you hear, when I was listening to your poem, I felt. Even in, so even in the, the fear of things that were happening or in the other moments, like bombs being dropped and stuff like that, there was like this other thing happening to try and like guide someone through it and, and.

In this other kind of protective way, or maybe it is what you said, like finding the light where like, you know, where is the light in the moment or, or following a light towards an exit from something that was right. [00:27:00]

**Caroline Reddy:** Yeah. I, I think that's the hard thing, whether it's borderline personality, I've been diagnosed with anxiety, depression, PTSD.

Mm-hmm. So I've had to really work through all these, you know, things in my life to have a stable job, you know, a relationship. You know, creative writing. If I didn't have these tools or people helping me, um, whether it's a dance class or my life coach or learning a new recipe, I don't think I would've been able to be kind of calm and grounded.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Yeah. Hmm. So in, so as a writer, um. What does, what does your writing practice look like? How does it, you know, do, is it something that's very disciplined or are you a writer that writes when, because I'm not disciplined writer at all, but like, are you a writer that, like when the moment, if there's a moment's like, oh, and then like I have to capture it.

How does it, how does it happen somewhere or

**Caroline Reddy:** It's, it's weird because for a long time I [00:28:00] wasn't writing anything. I was only writing pearls and then I stopped and then for two or three years. I wrote a lot of poetry and I, I got, um, my two books shake the Atmosphere for Climate An Empty Moment, which is the basement of Toronto in, and then on the precipice su summer.

This was, uh, published last year by Alien Buddha Press. This one was published a few years ago by, um, pur Springs Press. So I worked really hard on these two books, and then when all these new things happened in my life, I kind

of had to. Stop. And, and right now I'm not writing as much as I would like to, um, because I'm preparing for these classes.

Mm-hmm. And, uh, I'm, I just feel, you know, more settled in my new life. So I think when the process comes back, I'm gonna try different things. Like I'll do the prompts in the morning or I'll, another thing I do like to do is, um, I'll send a Zoom link out to some friends that are writers. Say, Hey, do you guys wanna get together and write for a couple of hours this weekend?

So that was, you know, a practice that I [00:29:00] would do where we would start with a few minutes of meditation. We would write for an hour and then share. So that's another process that, that I've been trying to do off and on. Um, so for me it really depends on, um. How my life is going. But I, at this point, I have not been writing as much as I would like to, to be honest.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hmm.

**Caroline Reddy:** But when I do write, it's either trying to get a few people to write with me. I, I write in the classes with the students, you know, I'll give them a prompt, but I'll also write. So that's another way, that's also why I like to teach. 'cause I, that gives me some time to write. And then a lot of it has been sitting in meditation and waiting for a prompt to drop in.

And then I'll, I'll take that and go with it.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hmm. That's a, that's interesting. I, I, that's interesting. Meditation. I, I try to meditate. I'm trying, I'm doing it in different ways,

**Caroline Reddy:** and then it's, it's hard.

**Daniel Dissinger:** It's

**Caroline Reddy:** hard. It's hard. It's

**Daniel Dissinger:** hard.

**Caroline Reddy:** It's hard. It's hard. I mean, there are, there are apps, um, [00:30:00] you could try with a group, see if that works.

If that doesn't work, there are apps you can use. You could just try five minutes in the morning. I try to do it, I didn't do it today, but usually I do three to five

minutes every morning and maybe like a few minutes at night, I'll try to read something that's, you know, quiet. Um, it's hard, it's not easy, but I, I did a lot of meditation with my Zen Center here, and then I would do weekend retreats where we would have to be in silence for an entire weekend from wow, like Friday afternoon into Sunday afternoon.

You'd basically be meditating even when you're eating. Um, it was quiet, and then Sunday afternoon, the, the quiet would break, and then you could talk again. So it was, yeah, it was a little,

**Daniel Dissinger:** if I told my family that in New York, they'd be like, this is not happening. You know, the, the, the, uh, stereotypical Italian American family, that's just loud.

**Caroline Reddy:** That's, that's, that's, that's my boyfriend's

**Daniel Dissinger:** joke. Oh, okay.[00:31:00]

**Caroline Reddy:** So I meant

**Daniel Dissinger:** they think they know what silence is. It's impossible.

**Caroline Reddy:** No, he's pretty, he's pretty mellow. But then sometimes I'm like, oh my God, he, um, I, I've meditated with him, you know, he has a meditation practice as well. Oh, that's good. Uh, so that, that, I think that helps me, that, that I, I feel like that's something that could help everybody, whether they're doing it alone with a group or their partner.

It's something to try to see what way works for you, you know? Um. I think, yeah, I would, I would say a lot of my healing and discovery and self journey started with meditation.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hmm. Yeah. I, I feel like the. I've been doing more guided meditations like through an app, like Inside Timer or something like that.

**Caroline Reddy:** Mm-hmm. Yes.

**Daniel Dissinger:** And um, we have this, my, my, uh, my wife and I, we have a, um, a infrared, uh, blanket, like one of those sauna blankets. Mm-hmm. And we both lay on it.

**Caroline Reddy:** Oh,

**Daniel Dissinger:** nice. So the heat like, makes, it calms both of us down. [00:32:00] 'cause we have very active ADHD minds. And so like for me it's like, it kind of calms me. So it's like, I'm like, okay, I'm sitting, I'm laying on this warm.

Thing and I can start to kind of like wind down where like,

**Caroline Reddy:** yeah, it's sitting

**Daniel Dissinger:** is really difficult for me.

**Caroline Reddy:** I think anything that makes you feel grounded is, you know, you could do walking meditation, you could do hiking quietly. You could do just laying in bed and like, you know, staring up at the ceiling.

Anything that kind of brings you to the moment is a meditative practice. Um. So it doesn't have to be just sitting quiet, but that, I think that opens a space for the other things to become more quiet, the other activities to feel more mindful. I also do a, a mindfulness for teens at the library I work with.

So, you know, I have a few teens that come in at, you know, Fridays like 4:00 PM There's a few of 'em. Sometimes they're really serious, sometimes they're goofy. But at the end I'll always ask them, how'd that feel? I tell 'em a little bit about meditation and then I say, okay, what if you get [00:33:00] teased? Or what if you have a bad day?

What happens? You know, they get, I get angry, I get upset. How do you think this will help you? And then once they do it for a minute or two, they're like, oh yeah, I really like that. And some of them actually go home and, and try it. So.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Wow, the New Rochelle Public Library sounds like an amazing place. It sounds like an amazing

**Caroline Reddy:** place.

I, I'm, I'm lucky. I, I really lucked out. Um, you know, I work with a nice team. Um, I have people that are very supportive in the programs that I wanted to work with, and it's been good, you know, I haven't always felt that supported in the past, whether it was in relationships or work, but here I, I felt, I feel that support.

So, um. Yeah. When I told my boss, yeah, I have these ideas. I'm like, yeah, let's try 'em. You know? So not every place gets to, to you. You get to try your, you know, creative creativity and being a librarian was very practical. It's very technical, and I'm not that kind person at all. So I came in thinking, oh my gosh, how am I gonna, you know, get [00:34:00] my, you know, stuff that I, I, I need to do.

That makes me feel alive a little bit more than a lot of the technical stuff. And I think once they saw that this was my strength, they were like, yeah, go for it. And it's been good.

**Daniel Dissinger:** How did you get into librarian, like being a librarian? I always, I'm always curious because it's such a interest, especially working on the university campus.

Like you're always like, how do you get in? Like how did they get into that? Like teaching to me is like very simple. They went to, they did this thing, now I'm teaching, but the library is such a. An interesting space in the public and on the university.

**Caroline Reddy:** Maybe by accident, but maybe not so, because I was a teacher and I didn't like it at all.

Like I said, I, I didn't enjoy it. Um, I was a school librarian. It, it just didn't, it wasn't for me either. And then, um, I, I've been in teaching and librarianship for years. Um, but the thing that made this place feel like more like, okay, this is kind of. [00:35:00] This works out or this this place works with me is because I, I felt like I could express myself.

I felt like my ideas, I don't know how, um, anyone can, anyone that's creative needs to have that outlet a little bit, even if, if their job is very technical. So for me, I always kind of felt like I'm not really a librarian. I'm not really, that's not who I really am. Like, that's not at my core. But here, I, I kind of feel like.

I'm able to kind of incorporate some of my creative ideas and sides into the technical side. So I think that's kind of what happened. I, I needed to find a place where I felt more like, okay, these two kind of worlds can, can live together. They can interconnect the technical part. Where it's not my strongest and the part of me that's more creative and literary.

You know, I think that's what happened. I had to, well, I don't know if it was teaching or whatever job it was, it had to be a place where I [00:36:00] felt like I

could have a voice and I felt like I could be heard or I felt like I could be creative. And, um, this kind of, it kind of all felt together.

**Daniel Dissinger:** That's awesome.

I really feel it really sounds like you're being nourished and thriving there and, yeah.

**Caroline Reddy:** Yeah, it's good. It's good.

**Daniel Dissinger:** That's really cool. I like that. Oh, wow. So let me ask you about the, the workshops again. Um

**Caroline Reddy:** mm-hmm.

**Daniel Dissinger:** So, apart to someone coming into your, the recent workshop, you're gonna do the immigrant's voice, what do you, what's the.

I mean, maybe it sound like what you want someone to walk away with, but what do you, what do you hope like a partici someone who participates in that workshop or enter that workshop, like, ha, like what do you hope that they, I guess, happens for them or that they do walk away with in the four?

**Caroline Reddy:** Sure. For, for those who are immigrants that, um, are not born here, I hope that they do feel like there is a space for them.

If they never felt like they were heard, like [00:37:00] that's how I felt. I hope that they can feel a connection to their past or ancestor, whatever home they've come from, whether it's like Thailand or Iran or you know, the Philippines, that they feel a place here that they, they can, they feel heard and seen and, um, accepted.

I also, um, feel like for those who are Americans, 'cause uh, the one in Hudson Valley, um, it's not just from immigrants, it's also if you're born here but you want. Your ancestry, your roots to like if you're Italian or if you're another, um, you know, if you're not from, um. I'm sorry, my throat. If you're not an immigrant, if you're, if you're from this country, that you can have a sense of connecting to your ancestors.

Like what did your grandparents go through? Or, or, you know, my boyfriend's, um, parents were immigrants, so how does that shape who you are and how did that, you know, help you become who you are today? So [00:38:00] those are

the. Those are the kinds of things that I'm hoping to, and then there might be people that had a really difficult childhood like I did that that might've felt like they never really felt accepted, heard, nourished, whatever it is that they needed, and then hope that they are able to find these tools to help them grab, become more grounded, become more calmer.

Because once you do that, then I think the world also benefits. I think things become calmer, life becomes better. Um. I'm not, I mean, I am angry at everything that's happening, but I'm not as angry as I think I would've been, or I'm able to channel it better. Um, so.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Yeah. I think like being able to channel, especially as writers, like in poets, like being able to channel one's anger or sadness or absolute frustration and any sort of thing that also might become like a physical tantrum into writing or, you know.

Mm-hmm. Something like that. It, [00:39:00] it provides so much, I guess, like. For me as a writer, hope, I guess as well. Mm-hmm. To get people to see what I'm doing, but also to see it in words sometimes, like we, I feel like as poets sometimes we, we have these emotions and we don't know how to like define them. And then when I see it in the poetry, I'm like, okay, that's, that's what I'm feeling.

It might not look like a normal quote unquote emotion, but in the poetry it looks. It looks understandable for me.

**Caroline Reddy:** Mm-hmm. And

**Daniel Dissinger:** I'm like, okay, now it's out of me too, and I don't have to like, keep it inside.

**Caroline Reddy:** Yeah. There's, um, that helps. I think what I felt was, was like I don't have a strong connection to my father, for example, um, my, I was born in Iran.

My, um, but my ancestors, my father from Ghana, so I'm gonna read, I was supposed to read this poem in the last podcast and I didn't get to, so this is called The Lost Tribe. So this is another way where [00:40:00] I feel poetry can help, or the idea of connecting to ancestors or, or your people that, like I've never met a lot of people, my family from Ghana.

So this was a way to kind of heal that wound in a way. The Lost Tribe, I never knew that the name OE AFA was one of royalty until a classmate whispered, you are of noble blood. I had been beaten and belittled by so many that I didn't believe in my own myth. For years, I slept wide awake until I felt stars of an Nancy and listened to the EMBA drum.

I danced in the astral realm and asked the Ashanti ancestors to create Kente cloth so I could be clad in a regal robe. I asked the elders to create a ritual ceremony as I clear the battlefields. I sword above prairies and sought safaris that could purify spears and swords. I learned the ancient A Kindra [00:41:00] symbols and sought wisdom that would be sewn into my cells as I reclaim my name, Nana Kuya and the Golden Stool.

So that's I think one way of also kind of dealing with things that you're not really. Aware of or connected to? I, I don't have a, you know, I never was close to my father. Uh, we're very strange for different reasons, and that was one way to feel that wound. So I, I wrote that, that, that poem about that.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Wow.

It you, the way you read it too. It's interesting to listen. That's why I love when the poet, when poets come and they, and they read their work. Because even if I can't see it, I almost in my head, as you're reading it, can see, can try to come up with the structure of like, the format of what it looks like.

'cause the first one that you read was very, was, was very contemplative and kind of paced very differently. This one was very, was. Much [00:42:00] more, I guess more narrative focused, but it was just, it was a different pacing that brought me through it in such a different way. Ah, I

**Caroline Reddy:** remember was beautiful. Remember the, the inspiration for that actually was I listened to the soundtrack of, um, black Panther a lot.

Okay. So it was, I was like, I, I drew, I draw a lot of inspiration, um, from sound, soundtracks, music, you know, if I'm writing about nature, I'll go listen to something that's about nature. If I. Write about. So that's one thing that I do. I, I sometimes will listen to whether it's just music that's meditative or like, when I was writing some sci-fi poems, I was just listening to the soundtrack of Arrival a lot because I'd had that very sci-fi, you know, tune.

And somehow that gets to my subconscious. And for this one, it was very much about like ancestors and, and how they play a role and how can we like. Our

past better or, or stronger, or even, even if there's [00:43:00] some like something off with it.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Mm.

**Caroline Reddy:** But that was that, that inspiration was from Black Panther. Yeah.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Mm. I like that. That whole image too in the poem of sewing into something like sewing something into yourself or, so that was,

**Caroline Reddy:** so, yeah. Sewing into the cells. Yeah. I don't remember how that came about. It was probably a prompt. What I, what I would do is like, I would do all these prompts every morning for 10, 15 minutes, and then I would do a meditation, and then something would drop by and maybe like sew it into cells or something would drop in, and then I would.

Sit and write without thinking too much about it. For like 10, whatever came out, I would write that and it would have like 10 or 20 of these before I would go back and start like fiddling with and seeing where, what connects to what, and then that would be a poem.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hmm. Excellent. Wow. So you really, uh, that's an interesting, like meditation is such a big part of your creative process.

That's

**Caroline Reddy:** mm-hmm.

**Daniel Dissinger:** That's [00:44:00] amazing. I like that. That's something I've always thought about as a writer, but yeah. Wow.

**Caroline Reddy:** Yeah, meditation is, um, is a big part and it, and I did write some, I don't see if I could find my haikus. Oh, here it is. So these are short haikus that came from those types of prompts. Um, they're just called four haikus, a drop of dew forms and an empty nest remains as the crane takes flight.

The singing bulls ring announcing Buddha Nature, a plum blossom blooms.  
Night Heron drinks pure water from a blue shell, sanctity unfolds. We sit in  
zazen enlightenment, shifts in space, cosmic cords vibrate.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Wow. You, you really think about you, you really work in a lot of different forms. Like, uh, I'm like, it's interesting, like I'm, I'm thinking of all these like forms that, like I'm hearing like the first poem [00:45:00] seemed very like.

Lyrical, almost like, and in my head I'm imagining like couplets or something. And then the second one much more close together. Like not that many stanza breaks possibly. And then the haiku, like you're, you work in so many different forms, and maybe that's because like how much meditation is a part of your creative process that like the poem really comes through you?

Very much so. And like almost like. We, the poem's almost like, I wanna be this, like, I wanna look like this. Yeah. That's, and this is what it's gonna be.

**Caroline Reddy:** I, I have one idea of what I'm gonna do, and then it changes to something else. You know, I feel like fiction is, is, and, and I'm trying to get back to fiction, you know, because I, I do miss writing that I did start out as a fiction writer.

I actually started out as a horror writer because I was obsessed with horror stories. And I think that was, um, I was just reading another. An interview with, um, I forget the woman's name. It's an African American, um, horror writer that I was reading the interview, [00:46:00] um, about a book she was writing. She said she had a lot of anxiety and horror was the way that she can, like, express herself by screaming on the page.

But, and I feel like maybe that was the reason I was so drawn into to horror writing. Um. As a kid. That's, that's what I wrote a lot, like fantasy and horror. Wow. And then as I, I got older, it was like very angsty stuff, you know, I hate the world. Not like that bad, but like, I hate the world, you know? It was decent poems, but it was just a lot of like anger.

And then as I got older, I was like, okay, this isn't really, this is not what I really wanna write about. What else can I write about? So that's what happened with. With the meditation and the prompts, kind of it, and I feel much better writing these types of poems than I do when I was writing the angry stuff.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Hmm. Excellent. Wow. I, so, so we're winding down and I, I want to like. You know, give you, you know, more, you know, more, more chance too to like plug all the workshops you're doing because you're doing [00:47:00] amazing work. Thank you. I, I just wanna acknowledge that too. Like, like, I, like, you know, when people come on, I, I wanna do as much as I

can to acknowledge the beautiful work that you're all you're doing and you are doing great work.

Thank you. These workshops sounds so amazing and, and just the way, you know. You read your work, our conversation. I mean, I feel like, I know I've known you forever. Like I feel like I'm like, oh, we can have this conversation forever. And it just shows that like as a, for people to be in a workshop, it's very vulnerable and I feel like the way you speak about the work and the way you come to it, it feels like anyone that's gonna be in your workshop.

Should feel safe to do that vulnerability. That's, and I, I appreciate, that's kind of what

**Caroline Reddy:** I really wanted. Yeah. Yeah. That's really what I wanted too. So the workshops are the creative breath at New Rochelle Public Library starting in March every month. [00:48:00] I think it's like the second, or the third Monday from six to seven 30.

Um, every Thursday in March I'll be teaching, um, the immigrant's voice at poet's house on Zoom from six to eight. In April and May, I'll be teaching the immigrants voice with Hudson Valley Writer Center, which is about immigrants. But also, if you're born here and you wanna pay homage to your ancestors, that's a class for you.

So those are the classes. And I, and in particular, I really wanted a space where I, I felt seen and heard and I, I got that chance with the workshops I took. So I kind of wanted to. Find a way to also make other people feel seen and hugged.

**Daniel Dissinger:** Well, I, I'm sure they're going to, I, I feel, um, feel so good that we got to meet and have this conversation and Yeah, everyone the, all the information to these workshops will have in the show notes and, and everything like that, so please check them out.

Go to them, express yourself, be there. And just thank you. Also, it's [00:49:00] just, you know, was amazing to meet you and I really appreciate it. Thank you. So thank you so much, Caroline.

**Caroline Reddy:** Thank you again, Daniel. Thank you so much.

**Daniel Dissinger:** You're welcome. And everyone please like and subscribe. Um, and also follow the Substack as new pieces are gonna come out on Substack as well.

And, um, and new things from the series, the inspired wor inspired belonging series. Uh, me and Stephanie, Renee Payne, and, uh, workshops that we're gonna be doing so you can see the announcements to those things as well on Substack. And, um, thank you so much again, and thank you everyone for listening, and we'll see you in our next episode.

**Caroline Reddy:** Thank you so much. Take care. Thank you again.