

125. Inspired Belonging: Being Unashamed During Mental Health Awareness Month w/ Angela Franklin

[00:00:00]

Daniel Dissinger: Welcome to another Inspire Belonging episode in our continued series here on Writing Remix

i'm here with my co-host for Inspire Belonging, Stephanie Renee Payne. Uh, Stephanie, welcome, thank you, and always a good, it's good to see you.

Stephanie Renee Payne: Good to see you, too, Dan, and good to be with you and the lovely Angela Franklin. We're very excited to have you. And Dan, if you can introduce her, 'cause I'm ready to just hear- I know

what she has to say. I really am. I know.

Daniel Dissinger: I think we're both really energized, and I think- Mm-hmm ... everyone listening and watching can tell as like, as like everything I've just said, and we both said is like, it's like, "Okay, whoops. I said that. Oh, I'm just gonna keep going." Just barreling through. 'Cause even before we hit record, and even- Mm-hmm

before what you're hearing, we were already having an amazing conversation. Mm-hmm. And so, um, we are so happy to have our guest on today to talk to us [00:01:00] on this episode. LA-based poet, essayist, visual artist, and documentarian, Angela Franklin. Angela, thank you so much for joining us on Inspire Belonging.

Angela Franklin: It is a real treat and a pleasure to be here.

I'm, uh, you all, first of all, Dan, you Dan, and Stephanie made me feel so comfortable. And, you know, as, um, a mature, seasoned citizen, you know, you've seen so much, and there's so many directions that your art could take, uh, could take. But then I've learned to start laser-focusing on things that really are,

are compelling and that I'm sort of, I have to admit, obsess about, that really just dig into me.

So, and most of those things tend to impact me personally. And so [00:02:00] my writing encompasses a number of things that bother me, so I write about... I write, my poems and essays explore race, mental illness, death, domestic violence, and social justice. Mm-hmm. W- with those, uh, subjects, things sometimes just come and land in my lap.

And I was waylaid by my brother's passing, uh, two years ago. He, he was, uh, he, he suffered from mental illness, and he had bipolar and schizophrenia. And notice I didn't say he was bipolar or he was schizophrenic, and there's a reason why. Because a person is not their disease. We don't go around s- well, it, it is in our lexicon of course, "Oh, she's diabetic," or, "She's hypertensive," or whatever the disease is.

You [00:03:00] know, suddenly you, you find yourself, now you're, you're an organ instead of a person, a whole person. So with, uh, the ma- brain malfunctions, it's, it's always people, they'll shy back or avoid you because the brain and its misfirings or its malfunctions, it makes people nervous because they don't know quite what to do with that.

And so imagine the person experiencing that. They don't either. They don't like being outliers. They don't like being shunned or ignored or whatever. And so we as a society have, we have to change things on how we address them, how we treat them, and make them a part of society. Hmm. And that's very, very difficult because the whole issue of dealing with me- mental illness, it [00:04:00] has so many layers to it, and it's not a one-size-fit-all response.

And there's so, so many changes that have to be made, and we have plenty of people who are experiencing, uh, these various, uh, types of, of mental health issues that are functioning well in society. Hmm. And so there's that, and then you have others that, who need to be on medication, but shun medication for the various reasons of the side effects can be brutal.

And so they make adjustments when administering medication to, to address what that, what that illness is, and they don't always get it right. Because with the case of my brother, he got to a point where he just was like, "I'm done. I'm not [00:05:00] taking that." But then conversely, the pendulum swung to the severe left in that he's finding himself using- Uh, illegal drugs, street drugs, which caused him to be what's known as dual, or have a dual diagnosis, which means he has the mental illness, but he also has drug addiction.

So the, a lot of times the drug addiction, uh, the drugs that they take are to mitigate some of the, uh, of the, uh, effects or impacts of the mental illness. So it's just- Mm ... a vicious, cruel cycle, um, that, uh, we watched him go through, and we could not, we could not get him off the street. Mm-hmm. In his mind, and this is what you see with people on the streets, and I'm certainly not giving a blanket statement to encompass [00:06:00] everyone, 'cause it's not like that.

But what I am saying is that for some, the freedom of not having to answer to anyone, living the way they want to live, regardless to how that living is impacting society, that's what they're, that's what they want to do. And it makes no sense to us. Like for example, with my brother Mark, um, I, the last time I saw Mark alive, I tried, you know, to get him, my sister and I tried to just...

I wanted to put him up in a motel. Mm-hmm. But, and that was, that in and of itself was risky, because then the psychosis would take over and he might have dismantled the whole place by the time morning came. But rather than him being on the street in the condition that he was, I felt that we needed to do something, but he flat out [00:07:00] refused, said, "I'm not going into a motel.

I'm not going to one of those places." "Well, why Mark? Why won't you go into one of the..." "Huh, they have bedbugs. I, I'm not going where they have bedbugs," you know? I said, "Bedbugs? Dude, you're sleeping on the streets. There's rats and roaches." H- you know, and this, th- these would be... I mean, I can look back on it and find the humor in it, but it was so, so heartbreaking because he refused, you know?

He had this vision of bedbugs and I'm thinking, "Lord, have mercy, bedbugs?" And then, you know, you've got a bigger problem. What about the elements? But do you know, my brother lasted on the streets for 10 years, and I still cannot... So I, I still cannot wrap my mind on how he was able to do that. And there'd be many a nights where it was biting cold here in Los Angeles, and [00:08:00] people who aren't from here don't realize how cold LA could get, you know?

And so he- He, he, he somehow managed to survive the, the rains. And I remember the year 20, uh, 2024 when he was found unresponsive on the street, it had been just severe cold. And he actually, the cause of his death was due in part to hypothermia.

Stephanie Renee Payne: My

Angela Frankiln: goodness. Here

Stephanie Renee Payne: in LA, hypothermia. You know, one thing that I, um, that I really felt strongly in your work is the way, and, and as you just spoke, the way you humanize your brother, the way you bring him into the world, um, outside of his conditions, the way you explained that the illnesses that he had were not him.

Um, and you do that so beautifully in your [00:09:00] poetry.

Angela Franklin: Thank you. Um, yeah, 'cause... And I was, um, and I have joined, I've been a part of this, uh, grief, grief group for about three, it'll be six months by the time I'm finished with it. Mm. But I've been in there a good two months so far, and I didn't realize how many, you know, all the emotions that I was feeling because I just, because I just stuffed them down and just pushed forward.

Mm-hmm. And this is what we tend to do in our community- Mm-hmm ... is we just stuff and push forward, stuff and push forward, and we don't deal with our feelings. And that will catch up with you. Mm. And so I realized, I was like, "You know what? I'm in this perpetual depression, and I've gotta do something about it."

And, you know, in talking with my siblings, they all had their various types of ways that they [00:10:00] were coping, and I was like, "Well, I, I need some additional help." Mm. And then here I am in a, in a room full of strangers with their own grief and, and who, and, and the person that they lost or the persons that they lost, because in some cases there was compounded grief where they were, was a succession of losses.

And, and they were dealing with that. And here we are in there, different, uh, races. And grief is something that's universal, and it unites us because, um, we're all going to experience it at some point in time. But what me- the reason I mention that is because I- just last night, so on every other Wednesdays, um, and it's called Our House.

Uh, it's grief, Grief Recovery, I think is the name of it. Mm. But I mention it because I was sharing last night that I don't, I, it's [00:11:00] very difficult for me to think- Past Mark, when he was okay, he was thriving, he was doing things in his life, I can't seem to remember, recall those moments. I only think about the time from his, his, uh, homelessness to up the, up until the time of his death, and I'm desperately trying to recover that.

And that's all I seem to be able to write about, are those moments, right? And that bothers me, but I think what it is, and I kinda figured this out myself after last night's sharing, is I think I have to... Like you, you know how when you take a, a towel and you wring it, you wring it and twist it to get all the-

Yeah the, the liquid out, right? I think that's where I am now with that. So I think- Mm-hmm ... I'm twisting myself, um, uh, in my soul or in my memories to wring out everything that I want to say about [00:12:00] my brother's passing and how he passed. And, you know, it just really seems senseless. But there's also the aspect of trying to help a person who doesn't feel they need help.

Stephanie Renee Payne: Mm. You know? That's such a beautiful way to, to talk about the poetry that you've written about your brother, to let, to wring it out, to let the grief of it come into the work until it feels like it's enough. Um, but the other thing that I think it, it does, at least it does for me, it brings that space into the, the human consciousness.

Um, so there's something really brave about wringing it out and sharing that, and letting other people see that that, those pieces of grief exist. And so your poetry does a service to humanity- Mm ... because we grieve. As you said, it's universal.

Daniel Dissinger: Yeah. And I was thinking too, because [00:13:00] we, um, everything you're saying too with the grief group, being a poet, um, also the idea of even living in a city like LA or any city.

Like, and being an individual, any individual trying to find place in a place or their place somewhere. I was thinking of the question, of this question that Stephanie and I have been considering in terms of inspire belonging and the idea of belonging, and I would like to kinda ask, even after all this amazing stuff you, you've put out there, um, what does belonging then mean to you in terms of...

I mean, you, you have this grief group. You're a poet, you're a writer, you have, you know, you're looking at the world in this way. So this, this idea of like belonging and, and how, what does belonging then mean to you in this way[00:14:00]

Angela Franklyn: That is a good question. Belonging. And you could approach that on several different levels. Belonging in your immediate community, belonging in the greater, um, outside of your community, um, and belonging

even to your, your gender, belonging as it relates to your ethnicity, belonging as it relates to your job.

I mean, there's so many levels of belonging. So for me, belonging is we could be different, but we are also, we- our, our humanity makes us united, whether we want to recognize that or not, you know? And I learned over the course of the years that we in this country, we are not a melting pot. [00:15:00] The more appropriate in my humble estimate- estimation is we are more like a mosaic- Mm-hmm

with all these different unique pieces fitting together to make a whole something. Because to disregard that I'm a Black woman melting in this big pot of humanity, and you, Dan, a white male, you know, what is wrong with me seeing you as you are? When people tell me, "Oh, I don't see color," I'm thinking, "Well, what do you see?

Clearness?" Yeah. Because, no, I'm thinking it's okay to see me as a Black woman because that's what and who I am, you know? Mm-hmm. And why disregard that? That's crazy. And say, "Okay, we're different. Let's celebrate our differences and come [00:16:00] together for the humanity sake of it. Let's belong together,"

Stephanie Renee Payne: right? I like the bigness- Because-

of humanity. That- that's- It is ... really lovely. Yeah. And I've always had trouble with this melting pot thing because you diffuse who you are, and I really appreciate the mosaic piece of it because I think we're a tapestry of all different colors and, and abilities and, and- Yep ... and you said something before in the, in the group that we were from all different kinds of backgrounds, but we connected through grief.

We connect through our human experiences.

Angela Frankiln: Mm-hmm Absolutely. Absolutely. And that, you know, that's what binds us, you know. Mm-hmm. And just because, you know, you, you live this way and I live this way, you know, I worship this way or you worship that way, that does not diminish who we are as human beings. You [00:17:00] know, it's different.

It may not be what you do, but if I choose to do it, you know, don't judge me. You know, try to understand it. And I think that is what's getting lost in society

today, is people don't even wanna take the time to understand each other. Mm-hmm. You know? You, you see, you know, just the way people drive in traffic.

Yes, I know you wanna get someplace, but you know, just 'cause you left late is not my problem. You know, so, you know, so I'm gonna take my time, and I'm not gonna run over somebody else because of your craziness, you know. So I mean, there's that. But, um, I think that, yeah, I think we just need to just slow down.

Mm. Mm-hmm. You know, w- w- we have more gadgets, more information, more technology than [00:18:00] ever before, but we don't have time. Mm-hmm. How is that? Yeah. How, what... A- if, if anything, that whole not having time and constantly being on, you know, s- steroids, so to speak, trying to get places and- Mm ... maneuver this and maneuver that, what, what, how about just, well, I don't have to do that today, you know?

And I've decided for myself and my own mental calmness, it's Sundays, you know. In, in my faith, Sundays is, is, is the Lord's Day, so we just rest and take stock of where we are. You know, maybe you think about it, something kind I could do for someone in the week or, you know- Mm-hmm ... how about just resting my body, you know?

Mm-hmm. How about not getting online? So I don't typically, uh, get online if I can help it. [00:19:00] Mm-hmm. Because I just, I just wanna be, you know, rested from all this craziness going on in society. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And I think that one day of rest makes a big difference. Mm-hmm. It really does, because then, you know, I've rested my mind and I can do other things and, you know, and it's all good.

Stephanie Renee Payne: Mm-hmm. How does that speak to your creativity when you're, when you're rested and you're... Because you are so steeped in these beautiful contemplative practices, like, "I'm gonna rest. I'm gonna turn this off." How does that, um, speak to, to how you create?

Angela Franklin: That's a really good question, because the way I create is I'll have a nagging thought about something- Mm-hmm

that bothers me. And sometimes the created piece is instantaneous. It just comes. Like, I wrote this poem, [00:20:00] and it's, it's really, it's, it's brutal because of what the woman went through was brutal. And she had schizophrenia and bipolar, and she was in jail, and she was giving birth. Mm. And she was literally chained to the bed.

Mm-hmm. And no one came to help her. Mm. And when I heard that story, every cell in my body was on red alert, and I was trembling with rage- Mm ... because of what had happened to another human being. Mm-hmm. And the poem just sort of wrote itself. Mm-hmm. So I think there's a part of me that does it when it's, when I'm rested, and also when I'm [00:21:00] hyper-stimulated as well.

Yeah. I remember I was at a, uh, at an event, and, uh, a- a- actually, I'll tell you, I was at the museum, and it was a nice day, and I'm minding my own business, and this man comes... And this is a thing that happens quite a bit. I think I'm a keeper of stories, 'cause people single me out and start telling me stuff.

I'm like, "Why are they telling me this?" But this I kid you not. I kid you not. So this man comes up to me, and it was the day that, uh, I don't know if you all know who Amadou- Mm-hmm. Oh, absolutely. Amadou Diallo is. I was living- Yes ...

Stephanie Renee Payne: in New York during that time. Yeah. Okay. So was I. So, so you- Diallo. Yeah ... you will relate

Angela Frankiln: to this story.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So he comes up to me, and he gets in my face. He's a, he's a, a, a, a Black man. And now, mind you, my friend is Black. He doesn't talk, he doesn't ask her. He comes directly to me, and he gets kind of in my face, like, in a [00:22:00] beseeching kind of way, not a menacing way, but he asked me a question, "What does the white woman think?"

Mm-hmm. I'm like, "What?" And he asked me again, "What does the white woman think?" And I'm thinking, "Well, how would I..." Uh, you know, my mind is tumbling around. I'm thinking, "Well, how would I know that?" You know? What he was getting to was, how does she raise sons who grow up to become killer cops? But I had to listen to him- Mm-hmm

to, for him to get to that point. And then I went home that night and I wrote a poem, What Does the White Woman Think? Mm. So in terms of my creativity, it's, it's, it's stimulated when I'm resting, when I'm, I'm relaxed. And then some of the, you [00:23:00] know, crazy news could go out of my head. And other times it's like my senses are on high alert.

Mm-hmm. And, um, and I write from that.

Stephanie Renee Payne: Yeah. I write

Angela Frankiln: from, you know, sitting in my backyard sometimes. And I remember one morning, it was so peaceful, and all of a sudden I hear this sound. Mm. And I'm like, "What the heck is that?" I'm thinking, "Is something gonna jump out the bushes on me?" You know what it was? It, I, I looked around, I didn't see anything, and then I looked up, and there on the high wire was a squirrel eating its breakfast.

Mm-hmm. And because it was so quiet and still that morning, the sound was just reverberating between the garages, the buildings, you know. I could hear it. I was like, "Well, I'll be dog." So that inspired a poem. Mm-hmm. And so, you know, it could be a sign [00:24:00] on the ground that'll inspire a poem, or it could be one on the wall.

Just something real simple, you know. Mm-hmm. Something crazy, or a half of, um, an ad for a movie or something. Mm-hmm. And, and I'll just take off on that. And- That's how my

Stephanie Renee Payne: mind

Angela Frankiln: works,

Stephanie Renee Payne: you know ... well, I, I, I just appreciate the way your mind works, and I really, uh, sort of heard you when you said you're a keeper of stories.

Uh, the keeper of your brother's story, and bringing not just all that your brother was, but your sense of, of, of, of, um, healing, uh, for your brother, and that sense of rage and what you said bothers you, um, and your social justice lens, um, that trembling. You, I remember Amadou Diallo very well. It was shocking, just so shocking to hear something like that.

And, but- And senseless ... and senseless. But your, [00:25:00] your response, and I think that's what, um, you had said in your website you like to shine a light on dark places, but you do it so beautifully, uh, in your response. You respond. You don't hold it. You said you hold things, but my sensibility is that there's a beautiful response on the page.

Angela Frankiln: Mm-hmm

Stephanie Renee Payne: Oh, thank you.

Angela Frankiln: Yeah. Thank you so much. That, that, that website, oh my gosh, it so needs updating. You know what? I- But I saw you. I saw you in

Stephanie Renee Payne: that I'm so embarrassed. I'm so embarrassed. But you know s- you know something, Angela? I saw a soul there. I saw you there, and I could feel, um, your sensibility.

And, you know, like you said about our gadgets, there are certain things that we have to do, but I felt the humanity of a person there, and a person who is a storyteller, the keeper of stories. A person who, um, will let things, you know, [00:26:00] come out through the spoken word or, or, or, or visual aspects or whatever.

And, and a person who wants us to, to come together, and we can't do that unless we see each other. And that shining a light, you, you make sure these things are seen. You make sure your brother is seen- Mm-hmm ... even through the prism- Always ... of- Yeah ... the mental illness that, that he carried. Yeah.

Daniel Dissinger: And, and it's because also in terms of mental illness, it's like these are things that are invisible to everyone else- Mm

a lot of the times, and, uh, most, 100% of the time, and people try, and especially the people who are, um, experiencing those things, um, want to keep it hidden because of the stigma of what it brings, right? Whether it's the stigma of whatever mental health is- illness it is, or the stigma that comes with, like, people being, uh, [00:27:00] saying, "Oh, get over it," or, "It's not that bad," or, you know, trying to help you in a way, like silver lining it, right?

Th- this is, these types of things don't help. I mean, someone, uh, as someone who does, you know, suffer from something that was, you know, just learned about in my life, like with, like borderline, uh, personality disorder, it's not something that is, has a quick answer, you know? These are, this is something that has been- Mm

in, uh, inhibiting my life for many, many years that I had no idea about, and it's not an easy navigation. And I think in terms of the project, in terms of the things that, you know, the, that book, the 88, it's 88 Unashamed.

Angela Frankiln: Mm-hmm. Unashamed. And that unashamed

Daniel Dissinger: part, like, uh, Black mental health stories, we have to take that part of the shame part of anything in our lives, and I feel as, you know,

when you speak [00:28:00] about it, and I've seen you read poetry and I've, you know, spoken to you, that there's, like, these moments that, like, i- of deep love even in the darkness of the work that it is.

And I think, you know, Stephanie and I have spoken so much for, about bell hooks because bell hooks is- Her work is steeped in that core of love, right? Love, yeah. And like the, when the shame part of getting rid of the shame of loving oneself and to experience love, and wanting to live a life that is like surrounded by that.

Mm-hmm. And I feel like that comes out in, in your work and this project that's coming out as well, that is very admirable and, and important for people to see.

Angela Frankiln: Oh, thank you. Thank you so much. I, I think that, um, what, I guess what those who read my work, what they're, what they're [00:29:00] experiencing is a lifetime of, of just observation, participation- Mm-hmm

and, um, just being human, you know- Mm-hmm ... and seeing that. And I, I remember I always be grateful for my father in growing up, and, uh, my mom too, is they taught us as children that you never make fun of someone's affliction. So whether they, they had, um, they were disabled in some kinda way, um, that you could find yourself in that situation.

Mm-hmm. And it, it's interesting because I, going back to the whole mental health issue, I remember years ago when I was in college, I, I did a, a story on the homeless situation in LA, and I was at this community college [00:30:00] trying to put the, put back the pieces of my life after a divorce and now being a single parent, so I decided to go back to school and get an education.

And I remember, um, an assignment where I actually chose to write about homelessness. Mm. And it, the reason I chose that was because I would see the people around the college, you know, foraging for food in the trash cans and whatnot, and it just made me so sad. And then I just started, 'cause I was a journalism major at the time, I started, I just started talking to people and asking them questions and how did they end up like this.

And, and the stories I got were just, uh, amazing and heartbreaking. And, uh, at that time, I think there were 20,000 people. Mm. This was in the '70s. [00:31:00] And now look at the numbers. They're over, I think, 70. thousand people. Mm-hmm. Um, you'd have to verify that. But I think, if I remember correctly, that that's about what they estimate to be living like that.

And so and I knew that part of it was because of mental h- mental health, uh, issues. And, uh, Dan, I just wanna say I appreciate your s- sharing that information about your own journey. It, you know, because you certainly didn't have to. But I think the more we share and say, "Hey, you know what? I ex- I, I experience depression," or, "I experience anxiety," you know.

Mm-hmm. Or, "I experience this or that." And then it makes it more, um,

Stephanie Renee Payne: acceptable. Yeah. Mm-hmm. It becomes another color [00:32:00] in the beautiful mosaic of all- Of humanity ... that we are as human beings. Mm-hmm. Exactly. I- and I think it, it takes away the idea that I need to hide this thing. And, you know, Dan, in some of the work that we've done together, is open to share that information, and it always, without question, um, opens up a space for others to be able to share- Yeah

what they're going through as well. And, um, I just really commend you for bringing in the fullness of humanity, um, because I think in a lot of ways we don't think about other people as being human. I know my, my sister and I did not grow up, my sisters and I, one, one passed away- Mm ... uh, with our father. And, you know, we knew he had some, uh, alcoholism and other things going on, and we were scouring the streets looking for him, you know, "Could that be our dad?

Could that be our dad?" We heard that someone had seen [00:33:00] him on Skid Row. We're both Angelinos, so we know what Skid Row is. Um, but it shouldn't just be those who are having those experiences. We all should humanize the experiences of all of us so we can see each other and we don't have to hide, and it doesn't have to be remarkable to state that we do have something that we're contending with in the mental illness space.

Angela Franklin: Mm-hmm. Absolutely. Because, uh, in, um, whether it's, uh- Alcoholism, and all those are s- are symptoms of something else. Absolutely. You know, and trauma, it, it, when a person has experienced trauma, that could waylay you- Mm-hmm ... in a, in, you know, you take women who've been, uh, sexually violated- Mm-hmm ... and the type of trauma that they carry, and, and some of it is a lifetime.

Mm-hmm. And men too, but they're not allowed as much to speak [00:34:00] about their particular trauma. Just last week, you know, this is, uh, Mental Health Awareness Month. Mm-hmm. So May is, uh, July is, and October, these three months are, uh, so just keep that in mind. And, um, it'd be great if you all have other people talking about this.

Mm-hmm. But just last week I was at a, a poetry workshop, and one man stood up and shared what had happened to him, uh, how he was violated at six years old, and then another shared... And, and what's interesting is I said, "Yes, these types of stories need to be told, particularly from African American men-" Yeah.

Mm-hmm ... because they don't talk about this stuff. And, and, and, and you know, what better place than us poets to welcome this and embrace this, you know? Mm-hmm. And I'll be [00:35:00] doggone, after he shared that, and then another lady got up and shared about her brother who had, uh, uh, schizophrenia and bipolar, how he was in and out of the jail system, and that's another component.

We didn't even touch that. But she could barely get through her poem because she was crying. And I said, "Tell," I said, "Tell that story. You have to tell that story because people need to hear it." Uh, everyone cannot stand and articulate something like this, so it takes, we poets, we writers, have been gifted.

Mm. We owe this. Mm-hmm. And after her, her reading, another man comes up, had not been in there when that m- previous man stood up and shared his story in a poem. He did the same thing, and he says, [00:36:00] "This is my first time sharing this publicly." Mm. And we were just blown away- Mm ... because something had opened up spiritually for this story to come through.

What we as writers do, we're committing spiritual acts, 'cause writing is spiritual. It's coming out of the subconscious. Yes, it is. And we have- And I, I think,

Stephanie Renee Payne: yeah. And yeah. I was just gonna say, you spoke to that when you said- Something in me just needed to write this. It is a spiritual act, and, and It, it, it

Angela Frankiln: definitely is, and so I, I just, I finally have embraced that this is, this is my calling.

Mm-hmm. It's always been my calling, but I busied myself doing a whole bunch of other things, because writing requires you to go deep- It does ... if you are going to do it right. Mm-hmm. And this [00:37:00] is why my poems, I've been told, this is what other people say about it, such power is because I'm going for the jugular.

If I can't make you feel, I've failed as a writer. Mm. Because we need to feel. Now, there are the poets who write about the flowers, the trees, the beauty, and all this. I feel that there's a lot of that. I write about stuff that bothers me. Mm-hmm. Mm. And I feel like if I could help somebody else to see what's bothering them, maybe they won't kick the dog that night, because somebody expressed something that, "Hey, I felt that way, too.

I just didn't know how to articulate it," right? And so this thing with my brother, I remember reading at Rorschach, and, um, this, uh, person had come up to me and said, "Oh, my gosh. You [00:38:00] just read my sister's life." Now, mind you, I was reading about my brother, but she related, identified with it, because it was about mental health suffering.

Hmm. Wow. So- I, I think...

Stephanie Renee Payne: Go ahead, please.

Angela Frankiln: Oh, no. Uh, so I was gonna say, so this book, this book, 88 Unashamed: Black Mental Health Stories is, has, is, is a seminal work, because it has all kinds of stories in it, from the perspective of the person who's experiencing this, also to those who have observed it, and also from a, uh, a ministry, a pastoral perspective.

So you have... Now, I don't, we don't have all the elements of it, but may I say that what is important is how you have the, [00:39:00] the aspects of it in one book where you could, there's something in there for everyone, you know? And how the work is, uh, broken down and, um, you could- See yourself or know of somebody.

'Cause, you know, in, in our community par- uh, in particular, Stephanie, you know- Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm ... that we didn't talk about that because what's our- No ... what, what was our, uh, our, uh, mantra? What goes on in this house, what?

Stephanie Renee Payne: Stays in this house. Everybody's

Angela Frankiln: bus- Stays in the house. Yes. What goes on in this house is, is, it stays in this house.

And what's the other one? Everybody's business... Yeah, this

Stephanie Renee Payne: one You know that one? Yeah.

Angela Frankiln: Everybody's business is nobody's. No-

Stephanie Renee Payne: is nobody's business. That's right. So these are- That's right ... things

Angela Frankiln: that, that are true for our community- Yeah ... and folks of color. Especially

Stephanie Renee Payne: for the, for the Black community because- Absolutely

we, there's a sense of invisibility that we- Yep ... I'm thinking of Ralph Ellison, that, [00:40:00] that we have to deal with on the regular. Yep. So to bring those things into visibility could be dangerous. Tell us w- more about the book, when it's coming out, where we can get it. We're really excited about it. So the book, I was trying

Angela Frankiln: to find, um, let's see.

Oh, so the book comes out this month. Um- Nice. Okay ... yeah, it comes out, it's supposed to be public, but you know how things go publishing. I'll say that and then people say, "Hey, I couldn't get the book." But so, you know, it's supposed to be out this month, right? At the end of the month at the latest, or, you know, at the earliest.

But, um, I, I, I think I gave, um, Dan the QR code- Yeah Okay.

Daniel Dissinger: Yeah I'll be posting that in the- We can share that ... share it around for pre-order and everything. Yeah. 'Cause we want

Stephanie Renee Payne: people to, to- Yeah, that

Angela Frankiln: they could, even because- ... have this resource ... they may have a- It's really wonderful ... they, yeah, 'cause they may have a Black friend [00:41:00] or- Mm-hmm

you know, a Black relative, they themselves. Mm-hmm. And it's, like I said, it's there's the whole universal aspect to it too. Absolutely. So the, the sections of the book are, uh, family dynamics, faith and mental health- Mm ... and mind and body wisdom, living in Black skin- Mm-hmm ... abuse and resilience, we are a quilt, voice for the voiceless.

That's the section that has my work in there. Um, and let's see. Uh, internal struggle for life, you know, people that are struggling to stay alive. You know, that you're struggling to, uh, not, uh, do something to themselves. Mm-hmm. You know, so there's that. So, um, I think, uh- You know, that there's so much that a person could learn from this- Mm-hmm

and be exposed to. I, I, you know, I'm, I'm very appreciative of this, uh, forum in which to, you know, share [00:42:00] that because it's, it's needed, it's necessary. And just the whole thing is to, uh, destigmatize, um, uh, mental health issues. You know, c- because it's steeped in, in shame- Mm-hmm ... uh, silence, and what's the...

shame, silence, and s- one more S. Shame, silence... Uh, oh, um, and, uh, secrecy. Secrecy. You don't tell- Yeah ... you don't tell. Yeah. You know, um, and I, I have to say that I have interacted with-- I started counting the people who I knew had issues, um, and I used up all my fingers. Mm. And I said, "How is it that..." That's why I, I know that I've been called to write this.

As I'm writing, uh, also the work that I contributed to 88, uh, Unashamed: Mental Health Stories, I c- made [00:43:00] a contribution to that, but I've also been writing my own stories about Mark, my brother. Mm-hmm. And, um, and I st- I started thinking about all the people that I had interacted with, you know, uh, um, uh, a former partner, you know, and, and his, uh, uh, uh, struggles and, and how sometimes stress can trigger or lead you right into a mental health crisis, into psychosis.

Mm-hmm. And nobody talks about that enough, the impact- Mm ... or that stress has on it, too. So there's that. But- Mm ... I mean, there, I can talk, I can talk y'all's ears off

Daniel Dissinger: now. No, I mean, I think we- There's

Angela Frankiln: so much I can share with you, but you know what? How much time you have?

Daniel Dissinger: Oh- Yeah ... well, I would love to... I mean, you've been talking about your work.

If you'd like to share a poem or two with the audience- We don't have time ... or with us, I would- I can share a

Angela Frankiln: couple with you. I can share- Would love to hear

Daniel Dissinger: it. I mean- Okay ... and in terms [00:44:00] of talking, I mean, I... This, the reason, uh, I've been podcasting for six years, and to me, um, as a college professor and someone who loves to learn and stuff, it has become m- my personal classroom.

Classroom. Like, I, I- Absolutely ... I cannot get more, like the people that I've been able to meet from all over the world and all works of, walks of life and all different industries and places has been, um, a gift. And even when it's difficult, you know, with even what we're discussing and you're sh- and what we're sharing and talking about with you as well, Angela, how you're, you know, giving so much to us and to the audience.

Mm-hmm. It, it is, um, to, you know, just want to acknowledge that because it's a lot and but it also is inviting. And I think, I hope will- It, it really

Stephanie Renee Payne: is. Yeah. Yeah. And I-

Daniel Dissinger: That's what I hope the audience understands, like- I, I'm sure ... this is an invitation. Yeah. Right? Yeah. It

Stephanie Renee Payne: really is an invitation. And then I wanted to say something about the [00:45:00] bravery, especially as a Black woman speaking from that space.

When we look at the intimacies of who we are, the intimate becomes a universal. We speak to everybody. Yes.

Angela Frankiln: Every time. And so I

Stephanie Renee Payne: thank you for that.

Angela Frankiln: Mm-hmm. Every time, Stephanie. Every time. The, the, the, the quiet secrecy, it, it's- Mm-hmm ... it's somebody else is experiencing

Stephanie Renee Payne: the same thing.

Angela Frankiln: Absolutely.

Stephanie Renee Payne: And so I- Maybe in a different way and in different skin, but the intimate becomes a universal.

Oh, absolutely. Every time.

Angela Frankiln: So if you write about the da- And you know what? Going to that place of shame. Mm-hmm. When you go there, that is where the best work comes from. So when people start telling you, "Oh, you don't wanna t- you don't wanna say that. You don't wanna tell that." Oh, yes, I do wanna tell it because somebody else is experiencing it too.

Maybe not exactly like this- Mm-hmm ... but this, this thing has, is happening and has happened to other [00:46:00] people. So on that note, what I will read, uh, for you is this work. It's called, and this, and, and as soon as I start trying to make it smaller where then the thing jumps around and goes crazy. Now, what happened here?

Oh, okay, here we go. Y'all, this thing here, you know, Grandmama here, that's

I'm just keeping it real. Okay, so I'll read this piece. It's called Schizophrenic Smoke Detector Blues. "Bipolar battered my brother's brain senseless. He ditched his room and pitched a tent on skid row. After voices advised him, 'Kill the government's eyes,' I saw psychosis slither thick inside his dark temples.

He ditched his safe room, pitched a tent on skid row. After the smoke detector screamed at the fridge, [00:47:00] psychosis snaked thick trails in Mark's brain cells. His bedroom curtains watched, shook in fear. After the smoke detector spoke to the fridge, itching voices cried, 'Destroy the ceiling spies.' His bedroom shook-" His bedroom curtains shook in fear after he smashed his pink pills.

Itching voices cried, "Destroy hidden ceiling spies that hitched a ride inside his Target shopping cart." After he crushed his pink pills, my baby brother believed in Nestor, a phantom friend. 10 years, I still see psychosis slithering, dark in Mark's temples after his phantom friend Nestor gave useless solutions to a bipolar brain battered senseless that said, "Go, make a bed of concrete."

And he listened. [00:48:00] And so that was a pantoum. Beautiful. Thank you for reading that. And, um, I, yeah, uh, it, it all started with the smoke detector and I- in his room, he had a nice room, and everything was in it, and he systematically started disassembling everything. Took the smoke detector 'cause it was spying on him.

It, it, it was just, of course, it made no sense, but he broke and disassembled everything in his room, and then piled it with a bunch of just useless stuff. Mm. And, um, useless to me, but perhaps not to him. And it, it just, I was just

exasperated and tried to keep him sheltered, paid the rent on the place until one day he just decided he'd had enough and just walked away from it.

Mm. So, yeah. So that's that. And if [00:49:00] you have any questions about that piece or you wanna hear another one, um, I have an, I have more, I have several, but, um-

Daniel Dissinger: Why don't you share one more? We'd love to hear one more, and absolutely.

Angela Frankiln: Okay. Okay. So yeah, this one's a little hard. It's, uh, called 200 Episodes of Schizophrenia on Meth.

The black hooded apparition scythed my brother away. Our family's feeble attempts failed to ransom him home. I still awake mornings where Mark is smiling, coping- Eating Captain Crunch. On those good days, I do not nightmare. He does not hallucinate, does not renounce his Blackness as cursed, does not believe he was born Asian, does not believe he can speak Tagalog, [00:50:00] does not pen pal Filipinas for marriage, does not embrace nonsensical cures for sustained brain backfirings, does not smell or speak of death before he tasted it, does not staccato speak or stutter high-pitched chicken-like clucks, does not laugh maniacally or throttle his throat raw screaming at social workers, does not mix meth to fix loneliness.

On those good days, my brother is not plucked unresponsive off of Skid Row Street, does not die alone, grungy, unidentified, in an indigent hospital bed.

Daniel Dissinger: Wow. Thank you. I-

Stephanie Renee Payne: Dan and I both are, are really emotional. That was such a beautiful rendering. Wow. Such a, a raw and lovely way to, to really show what your brother experienced.

Thank you for reading that. Mm. [00:51:00]

Daniel Dissinger: This is the moment in the podcast, like any time I have a poet on or we have a poet on and they read their work, I literally unmute myself and have no idea what to say, and I'm always I'm always, uh, so, um, taken back by also what the, what writers come on and share, so. But that was...

I- the line that just stood out to me, I had to write it down, was, uh, "I do not nightmare." Like, you- Do not nightmare. Yeah ... taking that word and making it actionable was, hit me so hard. That was

Stephanie Renee Payne: beautiful. And seeing you in the process. We see your brother, but we see you, too. Mm. So we really thank you for that.

Angela Franklin: Yeah, that, um, you know, about, I don't know how many years it was before he actually died, but I remember this so well. I'd had a dream one night [00:52:00] that my stepfather had, um, come and, uh, I could hear his voice and just as clear as, clear as day, he said, "Daughter," he said, "They found Mark. They found Mark dead."

And I just bolted straight up out of my sleep. And at that point, I, and you know, my heart's just pounding, and I wrote a poem- Mm ... about that, you know? And how, you know, I- one line in it is, "Never trust, never trust-" Never trust the dead to deliver a message about the dead or that he hadn't died. You know, it was, that was not, you know, it hadn't happened, didn't believe it was gonna happen, and we always thought that Mark would come out of that.

Mm. That he would come out of the, you know. But, [00:53:00] um, that he would just wake up one day and be tired. 'Cause I know people who have, you know, they just left the streets and settled in to, uh, everyday life. Mm-hmm. You know, like people who are, quote, "normal." And, uh, but that was not to be for him. And he, there was so many things I didn't tell you about Mark, that he was an amazing, amazing artist.

He was highly gifted and creative, which seems to be something that people with those illnesses share in common. And, uh, he was, he was all of that. And, uh, just, uh, very charming, just beautiful person, you know. Um, and I miss him. Mm. Mm.

Stephanie Renee Payne: And you've also given him to all of us today. Yeah. And we're really grateful. In a beautiful way. Yeah. In a holistic [00:54:00] way.

Daniel Dissinger: Yeah, absolutely. So thank you. Thank you. I'm, uh... Okay. We're... Angela, thank you so much. Thank you so much. I am, don't even know what to say other than thank you. Appreci- And we appreciate you so much.

Mm-hmm. And, and I'm hoping- Too ... everyone listening and watching this ki- uh, get w- just, uh, deeply listen and, you know, leave, you know, love and, and a- and a f- f- and appreci- I, I can't even speak, but, like, just, like, leaving

that love for us as well, like, and for you in, in this episode is just, th- this is, this is the type of episode that I do this for, and that I know me and Stephanie do this specific Inspire Belonging series for.

That these are the types of things that bring us together. Um, but would you [00:55:00] tell everyone mo- a little bit about where they can find you, uh- Mm-hmm ... in the, more if anything else, other books or anything else that you would like for them to know about, um, any other projects so that they can, um, shower you- Yeah

with their love and their appreciation for what you do as well.

Angela Frankiln: Oh my gosh. Okay, so, um- I have a confession. I'm so, I'm so ba- no, you know what, you all? I'm just, I'm so bad with social media, and you know, so I have an editor telling me, "Well, you know what? You have to, you have to do it, and you know, because so people can know you're out there," and all that.

So okay, so I do have, uh, an IG account. Um, I don't post on it much because you all, I'm so busy trying to write. Of course. And I'm, but I promise to get better, so I have an Instagram account. I think it's, [00:56:00] uh, @angelamurielfranklin, I think. Um, and then I have, um, a, um, Facebook, um, and then I have, um, a website, which I'm about to, uh, revamp that.

So- Mm-hmm ... yeah, so I'm gonna be, I'm gonna be out there, you know. I, I have to because, you know, it's, it's my lot in life. So if whatever I could do to, um, help someone to better understand their relative while they're still here- Mm ... you know, th- th- what kind of love and support. And I also wanna put in a plug for NAMI.

Um, that's the national- Yes. Yeah ... yeah, okay. So you know,

Stephanie Renee Payne: yeah.

Angela Frankiln: NAMI. Yeah. NAMI. Yeah. Yeah. So that's, that's a, a wonderful resource. Um, we thought, we thought we could help our brother by ourselves, but [00:57:00] we could not. Mm. So if that's one regret I have is that I didn't really, you know, pursue them to, to see, well, what ca- what can we do?

But also, I have to remind myself there's not much you can do when someone refuses, and they're their own mind, you know. You, you just can't. But I'm so

grateful for this opportunity, and so, um, grateful for you, Stephanie, Dan, and Dan who just pursued me. Dan

Stephanie Renee Payne: can

Angela Frankiln: be persistent. Determined to get this interview.

I mean, I d- He can be persistent. I love his persistence, and he's so gentle and, you know- Gentle Dan, yeah ... just, but I think this was the right time to do it, you know- Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm ... for the book that's coming [00:58:00] out, and, uh- And, and so people can look in there and see and, and find their own story in there, or be encouraged to write their own story, because there's no one catch-all story.

This thing is all over everywhere. Mm-hmm. People are seeing mental health issues crop up in children. Mm-hmm. You know, they need help. Mm-hmm. They need help and they need understanding and embracing, you know? That's right. And so, yeah, that's, um, that's... It's, it's necessary. Mm.

Stephanie Renee Payne: Well, we're, we're not going to let you go easily.

We want you to come back, especially after the book's been published and the other independent works that you're, you're engaged with.

Angela Frankiln: Mm-hmm. We

Stephanie Renee Payne: wanna celebrate the work that you're doing, so we hope to see you here again soon. You bet.

Angela Frankiln: Yeah, uh- Well, I will... You know, if you'll have me, I, you know, 'cause I mean, I could...

Look, I can keep talking and talking about this because it's so important. No, I think- So necessary ...

Daniel Dissinger: we would love to have [00:59:00] you back, and I think- Mm-hmm ... we, you know, it would, it, there are so many other things to dive into and open up and, you know, so... And I know the audience would love to have y- you know, have another episode where you're here, and so definitely.

And, um, so everyone, thank you for listening. And also, you'll see, you know, Stephanie and I are running a workshop on May 30th. It's a virtual workshop, uh- I'm signed up ... Inspired Belonging.

Angela Frankiln: Yay. Yep, Angela's signed up.

Daniel Dissinger: It's, uh, in, uh... Claim Your Story, and it's gonna be a g- it's a guided contemplative generative workshop.

Um, we will bring you through certain, um, exercises in order to get to those spaces and to those stories that need to be told and that you've been always wanting to tell. And so, and Stephanie, other, you know, if you wanna say [01:00:00] a little bit about it as well.

Stephanie Renee Payne: Yeah, uh, we're excited for this offering because as you said, Angela, in this era of everyone being lonely in, in the, the AI space, the social media space, we wanna come together and celebrate our humanity.

And again, I want to share that beautiful mosaic. That's going to be my new way of thinking about who we are here. We are a mosaic of different colors and textures and- Mm ... just a beautiful tapestry. So we, we're inviting everyone to come out- Yeah ... to celebrate all of the different ways that we are human together.

And- Yeah. Awesome Absolutely ... we thank you so much. Well, I'm drumming up support also

Angela Frankiln: too. Yeah. I'm, I'm, uh, also going to be, um, twisting arms to come in there. No, because- Well, now that you're

Stephanie Renee Payne: going to be here, we're, uh, we're, we're so happy to have your voice

Angela Frankiln: there as well. Yeah. [01:01:00] Well, y'all just don't know how many people are, "Angela, can you look at this?

Can you do this?" And, you know- ... and, and I'm giving away the store, but I'm saying, "You know what? You want something new. You want a new direction. Now, Dan and Stephanie, y'all have to deliver now. Y'all are gonna have to bring it." So- Oh, we will ... y'all have me bringing these people on here, and then you guys are shake it and fake it.

Yeah.

Daniel Dissinger: So... Oh, no, we will. Yeah,

Angela Frankiln: but se- so seriously, yeah, I, I, yeah. Mm-hmm.

Daniel Dissinger: We will. And we want the room filled. It's a, you know, it's a Zoom.

You know, we're doing this virtually, so everyone can come. And it's May 30th. It'll start at 10:00 AM, uh, Pacific Time, to 12:00. And, um, it's, you know, no, no, um, no pressure on sharing. Also what you wrote, like, this is a workshop that is your workshop, and- Mm-hmm ... we t- we're gonna talk about the experiential aspects of, like, you know, what was it like to face- Mm

a, a prompt that asks you to go to a pl- go somewhere that you might not have been before inside yourself or to a place in your [01:02:00] history or mythology and everything. And so it is a safe workshop to explore things that you might not have ever explored before. So, you know, 'cause I know in workshops for me, I know sometimes, like, you're just writing things, and sometimes they're like, "All right, now let's go around and hear what everyone wrote."

It's like, I don't necessarily wanna do that right now, not prepared. So there is no pressure, and it is, um, going to be a very supportive space, so.

Angela Frankiln: Oh. Yeah. You know, I, I, I just thought about something. So if there's an issue with the QR code, you know- Mm-hmm ... for 88, uh, the series- Right ... um, you also, um, w- the editor, Romaine Washington- It is, uh, dot Ro-RomaineWashington.com.

She, if you, if you go on her website, she also has a way that you could order the book too. Oh, that's wonderful. Yeah, and she's just- Okay ... an amazing editor. So yeah, I just wanna put in a [01:03:00] plug for, uh, people to- We could put

Stephanie Renee Payne: all of this in the podcast notes, so when people see it- They'll be there ... yeah. Oh, awesome.

Thank you so much. They'll have all of this. Yeah. The book, the QR code, uh, Romaine Washington's, um- Yes Yeah Thank you so much ... um, website, so we can celebrate this with you. That's what we do.

Daniel Dissinger: We'll put it there. It's right there right now as you're watching this or listening to this.

And so get that book, pre-order that book, and, um, we'll see everyone hopefully in the, in the workshop. And also, there'll be a link to the Inspire Belonging substack that's also started. Stephanie's been writing some beautiful pieces on there as well. And follow that. Subscribe. Subscribe to Writing Remix.

And, um, we'll see you all in the next episode, everyone, and thank you so much.

Stephanie Renee Payne: Thank you. Thank you, guys. You were wonderful. Thank you, Angela. You were beautiful. I mean, we were in tears when you read