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Candice Schutter: Welcome back to The Deeper Pulse and the continuation of the 'cult'ure series.

We are going to be moving this conversation here on the main feed away from wellness culture in the coming weeks. Zooming way out to focus on some culture war topics that have been weighing on my heart and mind.

But before we go there. There's one subject that's long been screaming for some air time. Because some things need to be named out loud. And because when it comes to the bigger picture, sometimes the only way to mitigate harm is to take on risk so that others don't have to.

So in this week's episode, my pod wing wonder woman, Tracy Stamper, and I will be speaking more candidly than ever. In a peek behind the scenes and hopefully one of the [00:01:00] last times we'll be focusing on the Org here on the main feed.

So let's get right to it.

The stories and opinions shared here are based on personal experience and are not intended to malign any individual, group, or organization.

Hey, y'all. It is so good to be back and right out of the gate, I want to level with you. I spent way too much time grappling with whether or not to share this episode here on the main feed.

The conversation you're about to hear was recorded for Patreon the first week of February, on a day when Tracy and I were feeling... well, a bit over it. And so we prepared ourselves not at all, pressed the record button, and spent two hours speaking to things we'd long avoided sharing publicly. [00:02:00] It was cathartic. It felt honest and real. In some ways long overdue and also right on time.

Listening back while editing, I realized that she and I were miles away from the stilted recordings that we'd made back in 2022 when this series first began. That said, I did very little editing. I cleaned it up a bit and sent the entire conversation out to patrons of the pod in one fell swoop, two hours pretty much uncut. And within a few days time, it became one of the most downloaded bonus episodes to date.

The response to our share was understandably, a bit mixed. Because we were speaking to some triggersome topics and breaking free from our good girl conditioning. But mostly, we heard from folks who expressed their relief, that we were finally speaking out about the shady annex of org loyalists who take it upon themselves to police those who question and or choose to walk away from the practice.

And if by now, you're not really sure what the [00:03:00] Org is, you're probably new to the pod, so welcome. The Org is an alias for the wellness brand that Tracy and I were both once affiliated with. And in early on 'cult'ure series episodes, we shared about how we met in an

Org training and about our subsequent personal and professional experiences with the company. That's episodes 33 to 37 if you want to circle back.

But also FYI, it ain't just us. Over the past four decades, the Org has trained, I'm going to guess tens of thousands of people worldwide. And to be clear, it's brought a whole hell of a lot of good into many people's lives. And also, and sadly, there's been significant collateral damage along the way.

But all of this has been covered before. I'm bringing it up again, only because this episode speaks to the way in which, not only at the Org, but in all the many places where folks stand to lose privilege or position, reports of harm are often waved away, [00:04:00] shushed and silenced by those who misplace their disgust and disdain on those who choose to speak up.

But I'm kinda sorta getting ahead of myself. So let me just say this. The truth of the matter is that, honestly, I don't really want to talk about the Org anymore. We've shared our stories. I've done my duty to raise awareness, and now there's a wealth of evergreen data for folks who are questioning to circle back to.

Who knew there would be so many stories. We sure the hell didn't.

Anyway, I, *we* really, would love to give it a rest. And it feels very much like it's time to move on and wrap main feed coverage of this bitch of a topic.

And we will. But not until we tell you why coverage of the Org here on the podcast has gone on as long as it has.

First a little context from one of our favorite cult experts, Dr. Janja Lalich. [00:05:00] Some of you who've been listening for a while now might remember that back in September of 2022, I interviewed Dr. Lalich on the podcast. That's episode 38, if you missed it.

I just want to briefly reference Janja's work today and how, based on her own personal experiences exiting a political cult and decades of research, she developed what is known as the *bounded choice* framework. Bounded choice offers a nuanced psycho-social explanation of indoctrination, as a complex process through which even the most intelligent and discerning of people can fall under the spell of charismatic influence.

The model not only explains how the cult persona develops slowly over time, it also in many ways describes how and why high-demand allegiance is actually reinforced, and in some cases enforced, not just by leaders, but by diehard loyalists within the group. I'll drop a link to a recent one-hour talk where Janja walks us [00:06:00] through the entire framework. So you can find that in the show notes.

But what I want to highlight here and now for our purposes today, is a moment midway through her presentation when she refers to the primary goal of high-demand indoctrination, which is, as she describes it, to create "deployable agents."

Flying monkey is another more popular term in cult recovery spaces. Borrowed from the storyline of the Wizard of Oz, it describes the way that hardcore loyalists reinforce ideology and allegiance to the group by policing behavior, expression, and dissenting opinions. This behavior is ultimately in service to silencing those who challenge leadership or a dysfunctional status quo.

And you see when it comes to the world of new age wellness, flying monkey behavior can be hard to suss out. Especially because it very often comes from folks that we otherwise love and respect, who show up armed with [00:07:00] *concern*, but nevertheless proceed to gaslight us with indoctrinating ideas and sugar-coated redirections that they wholeheartedly believe in.

All good intentions aside, flying monkey behavior is control masquerading as kindness.

And honestly, I can't even count how many times we've heard from folks who've shared with us about receiving a private message or phone call from someone high up and influential in the Org, pressuring them to explain themselves or to undo a certain action. Examples include, asking the wrong question on a group comment feed, speaking critically about business practices, raising questions around issues of social justice, even just clicking the like button on a post that makes reference to this podcast.

Since the beginning of this series, flying monkey behaviors have sort of ramped up. Until now, we've pretty much avoided speaking to this topic. And ignoring the issue, well, it [00:08:00] hasn't helped one bit. Maybe our silence around it all is part of the problem.

During this conversation, you'll hear the two of us having some personal ahas, one of mine being how my lifelong obsession with being liked has gotten in the way of standing for justice. And now that I'm finally pulling my head out of the goddamn sand, I'm finally learning that sometimes mitigating harm *requires* that we take sides, rock the boat, offend the offenders, and maybe even take a proverbial punch or two.

I mean, it's funny, I listen to podcasts. I hear people speaking in ways that sound fearless to me in comparison to the highly filtered verbosity that I've long tuned into in wellness spaces. I realize how exhausting it is to be so cautious at all times.

Graduation from silence or even polite disdain, it doesn't mean we turn hysterical and start setting fire to buildings. Despite the [00:09:00] narrative that we've been fed, when we stand up and just say what we think and feel without filter and a bunch of emotional labor protecting everyone's feelings, this is not a crime. And it doesn't make us the real problem. See episode 59 for more on that.

Dichotomous thinking is at the core of high-demand influence. Either you're in or you're out. Loyal or an outsider. An ally or an enemy. And fixation on extremes of this sort, they're just another smokescreen distraction.

Tracy and I are more honest than ever in this episode. But even so, we're not here to shame those who are doing the harm. Nor are we interested in pedestalizing ourselves by

comparison. You'll hear both Tracy and I openly admit how we ourselves have engaged in flying monkey behaviors, some of which we're still untangling ourselves from, especially when we take a look at capital C cult conditioning.

The struggle is real for all of us and pointing fingers isn't really the [00:10:00] point. What we're interested in is where does this flying monkey behavior come from? And what is it in service to, *really*?

To quote Mahatma Gandhi, "Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly."

Cult recovery is much more than an inside job. Certainly we have some healing to do. But navel gazing will only get us so far. If we really want to shift the culture, we have to be willing to break with the script and speak up when shit feels shady.

But having said all of that, the real irony is that outside of the wellness world, where high vibe politeness reigns supreme, nothing that Tracy and I share here is really all that subversive. It was just two women having an honest conversation. And allowing our outrage to push us outside of the bounds of how we'd long been conditioned to conduct ourselves.

On that note, quick story.

One [00:11:00] day, many years back, I was in an impromptu social situation, and against my better judgment, I indulged in some wickedly strong weed. So strong, in fact, that it sent me soaring while mid conversation with a stranger.

I will never forget the moment when it hit me. I was in the middle of sharing a story, and suddenly, I was hovering outside of my body, alarmed by the fact that I was... well, I was talking. Talking, talking, talking, saying oh so many words, speaking entirely unfiltered about god only knows what. But I couldn't seem to stop myself, my lips just kept moving. And a voice inside of my head started screaming at me. *What are you doing? What are you even saying?*

The hypervigilant critic was totally up in arms, freaking the eff out. Who pray tell do you think you are saying all of the things, without my preliminary approval?

It was wild, [00:12:00] y'all. And honestly, until that moment, I didn't fully grok the degree to which I chronically filter my expression, on guard that I might say the wrong thing.

Now for those of you who are into psychedelics, there will potentially be an episode on this topic in the near future, and I want to say that I have no interest in romanticizing this moment. Some of you might argue that it was even medicinal. And maybe it was.

But also, you should know that the next couple of hours were, in fact, a living hell for me, even after I fled the pressure of the social engagement. Because THC and I have a complicated relationship and because of trauma I'm still working to heal, I really, *really* hate being out of control.

But again, that's a topic for another time.

The point is, that I had internalized the idea that it's not safe for me to be me, thinking, feeling, and speaking without reading the room and incessant crowd control caretaking.

And you might hear all of this and think, [00:13:00] well, Candice, get yourself a good therapist. Yep. I've been doing that. And also, what if my need to be diplomatic and digestible, considerate and polite, what if this is also socially rewarded behavior that keeps a problematic status quo humming along, unencumbered.

I'm just saying.

Please be advised. This conversation may be triggering for folks who are still affiliated with the Org or any other sort of high-demand relationship or group where thought, behavior, and speech is monitored or policed.

Today's episode is dedicated to anyone who has been questioned, attacked, or sugarcoat shamed for walking away from a community or a relationship that no longer serves them.

[00:14:00] Welcome back to another episode of *Deconstructing Dogma* and The Deeper Pulse on Patreon. We are happy to have you here with us.

And I actually had something totally different planned for this week. But Tracy and I have been texting a lot in the last few days. And it just feels like, I'll speak for myself. I feel like this is a topic that we have been thinking about covering for a very long time, since the beginning.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: But for reasons that we'll go into in a moment, some of them valid, some of them frankly, a function of indoctrination, have kept us from addressing something that is a continual theme. And it is basically on this notion of taking the high road. That's what we're here to talk about today.

So Tracy, how do you feel coming into this conversation?

Tracy Stamper: Well, the amount of energy and [00:15:00] attention that you and I have put into this topic and navigating behind the scenes and caretaking. It is enough, enough.

Candice Schutter: Right. Yeah.

And, and when we say enough, we're not expecting this issue to go away. But I think enough of... well, you know what's so fascinating about this? Is that I feel like we have been taking the high road, quote unquote, around this topic. And suddenly I'm having this aha.

Like there's something to it. And I just wanna say like, if you look up online, taking the high road is an idiom for: "to take a more honorable or ethical course of action." Okay.

It also, what I'm realizing, and maybe this has been obvious to some of you out there all along, and I apologize if you're like, what's your hesitation? I'm realizing my own indoctrination around this confusion that taking the high road is actually in some [00:16:00] ways being complacent. And taking the high road in 'being nice' basically. Which is, you know, a function of white supremacy. And we we're gonna touch upon that in a bit here.

But this, this need to be seen as a moral person rather than actually being somebody who's aligned with their moral values and acting and speaking in that way, even if some people don't like it. Those are two very different things, and I have been confusing them for far too long. And I'm just like, enough with the silence basically.

With, with, oh, like the, ethical thing to do, the thing that's in *integrity*. And that's a word that I get really fired up with around the way it was used at the Org. Because often, like you were told, you were in your integrity if you were in compliance with what the teachings taught you.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And integrity is an inside job. It's, it's not dictated by people out there. So I still have been under the influence of that. Because it didn't come from the [00:17:00] Org really, it came from our culture. It came from the patriarchy and yada, yada, yada. So I'm really, um, activated today. But I think in a, in a constructive way, in a deconstructive and constructive way.

Um, and I just wanna say and own from the get go that this is messy. And that I know for sure that my biases and my blind spots are operating every step of the way here. And that they have been throughout the series. And that I have been unwilling to really step into certain conversations, because I knew they would be present and I didn't want you to see them.

And I need to get over that. Because that's the perfectionist bullshit that we call 'the high road' that isn't actually ethical or moral. It's just supremacist and perfectionist and totally protecting spaces of privilege.

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

Candice Schutter: So guilty as charged [00:18:00] and hoping to do better and deconstruct some of that in this conversation. So,

Tracy Stamper: I am right there with you.

Candice Schutter: yeah.

So we wanna talk about the notion of the high road, as I said. And the way that the high road is defined and the way that it's enforced. That's what we wanna talk about.

So first of all, contextually, why are we talking about this now? We could have talked about it from the beginning. And it's, it's been peppered in here and there, I think in the content. Right. But lately it seems like there's just a ramping up around this rhetoric.

Flying Monkeys that come sweeping in to defend the brand and shame really in a, in a sugar, I call it sugarcoated shame.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: Because it's not generally really mean-spirited sounding. But it's this dressed up in love and light, [00:19:00] sort of gaslighting shame, that is really no different than the oldest adage that's been thrown at women, which is you should just be grateful. How could you possibly critique this thing that has given you so much? You know, we all know the drill.

Um, and that's sort of enforcing the high road. Like get back up on the high road. Like what are you doing down there?

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And Tracy and I are, are apparently like the, the lowest of the low. Down below high road.

Tracy Stamper: How low can you go?

Candice Schutter: How low can you go? Right. We're limboing over here. Way under the high road, and inviting people to join us.

And I'm quite proud of that. Because I feel like there's a lot of performance going on up there. And there's a lot of supremacy going on up there. And there's a lot of exclusion and gaslighting and all the things.

But, policing now has become more of a thing on the more public posts. Because people who have left [00:20:00] the Org are now speaking up.

And I, it's like, it's funny, I was just gonna say how *brave* that people are speaking up. And I've just really been thinking like, how weird is it that it's brave to just say what you think is true? How fucking weird is that? If that isn't evidence of cultural indoctrination, I don't know what could be. Like why is that brave?

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

And when we're speaking about a specific group, and it being brave to say something that goes against the grain, that my friend is saying something about the group.

Candice Schutter: Exactly.

Tracy Stamper: That's, that in and of itself should be a wake up call.

Candice Schutter: That's right. Exactly. So those of you being brave and posting. It is brave from the standpoint of cult dynamics. You're going against the grain. You're posting. And then people are sweeping in with their high road finger wagging.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: To shame you for doing it. That's happening [00:21:00] more.

Tracy Stamper: And I would love to add that I've noticed something really interesting happening. The moment that someone claims to take the high road, that does imply that those who are not in agreement, are not going along with that party line, are taking the low road. I mean by saying what I am doing is the high road, it is pointing a finger and saying, you are taking the low road.

It, it's very clear.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm, that's right.

And that's why I sort of love this definition around like the high road is about taking a more honorable or ethical course of action. Because then we can really apply it as an acid test. Like, okay, is it really dishonorable or unethical what we're doing?

I don't feel that that's true.

Tracy Stamper: No.

Candice Schutter: And for someone who maybe that feels true, there's a really, um, [00:22:00] sort of a painful reckoning in terms of values that needs to happen. Like what, what are your values? What values do you hold if it is unethical to represent voices of people who have been oppressed or feel as though they're survivors or to center a narrative that isn't centered around people at the top of the pyramid.

That's unethical? That's immoral? That's dishonorable?

Well then, what are your ethics?

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: What do you honor?

I just think it's a really interesting angle to look at it from basically.

And, and high, even the word high. I mean, so much of our language is just infused with the patriarchy and with white supremacy and like, why is high better? And this may seem so, like for some of you out there, you might feel cognitive dissonance when I say that. Because it used to be the case for me. I'd be like, well, obviously high is better. That's just the definition of high.

No, it's not. [00:23:00] We have accepted that it's the definition of high. But it's actually not. I mean, objectively speaking, high is not better than low. And levity is not better than depth.

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And that's our conditioning. You know, this is what I've been unraveling for the last few years. And I even listen back to my language, weeks, months, years ago, and I'm like, oh, there it is. Oh, there it is. Oh, there it is. Oh, there it is. It's like, it's, it's eeking in all of these biases, I still have every single one of them. Just like I'm still racist in the sense that I've been conditioned by my culture. And I have to continually grapple with that and do my work around that. And it's my responsibility. And I have to own it.

And I just, I'm just gonna bring it in now, is the work of Regina Jackson and sikh-ruh Rao who wrote this book, *White Women: Everything You Already Know About Your Own Racism And How To Do Better*. And it's this [00:24:00] fantastic book that really challenges white women to really look at our biases and the way in which, well, I don't wanna speak for them, read the book. Okay. I'm not gonna try to summarize it, because I'm still learning.

But I just wanna say that something that's really jumping out to me that feels super relevant to this conversation is that, one of the things that is emphasized is that as white women, what do we value more than anything in terms of our own identity? And it's being nice. Being on the high road and proving that we're there, and that we live there. And because we are so attached to not being wrong, not being racist, not being an asshole, being a nice person, we actually end up being uglier. Because we're denying the shadow side of us and the things that we need to look at.

And that's just how it happens. And I see this happening. And I'm bringing it in 'cause I see this happening so much when it comes to this topic. When comes to these people who are preaching about the high road. But then they're saying these things that are spiritually bypassing and gaslighting or that are [00:25:00] sugarcoated shaming.

And I just feel like in some ways it's more damaging. And I've heard BIPOC folks say this. It's, it's more hurtful in a way because it's pretending to be something else.

Tracy Stamper: Yes. The facade of friendship or trust is there. And I can only know what it feels like as a white woman to be in a space with someone I trust and to realize that those actions coming from the other person are not trustworthy.

So for me, that's gonna hurt. I'm gonna have my own response to it. And I will never know what that feels like when race enters the picture.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: I will not know what it might feel like to feel silenced or shamed by a white individual as a Black person. I just can't know that.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

And I think the thing that, that I really wanna highlight here. Because it's almost like a whole other [00:26:00] conversation, and not one that we should be leading necessarily. I mean, I think we should talk to each other as white women about these issues for sure, and we can do that. But it's a whole other conversation to really go down that rabbit hole.

And I think, you know, check out this book. And also, Saira and Regina have been featured on an Apple TV documentary called *Deconstructing Karen*. Highly recommend watching it. I highly recommend watching it. So it's on Apple TV. So check that out.

The thing I wanna bring in that feels so important here is this performance of, I am so afraid of being seen as mean that I'm going to dress up my truth in so much nicety that I'm actually meaner.

Like the truth isn't mean. And this is another thing that I feel like is a, an indoctrinating principle in new age wellness spaces. That like, there's just certain things you, you don't say [00:27:00] because it's it's negative.

But what if it's true?

And why is what's true mean? Just because we don't like the way that it lands, 'cause it might sting a little.

Tracy Stamper: Because it's so low vibe.

Candice Schutter: Because it's low vibe. And what is that saying? It's saying you're threatening the high vibe hierarchy, you're threatening the fact that we have pedestalized

Tracy Stamper: Yep.

Candice Schutter: this other way of being and engaging with the world.

And then you think about, and there's complexity to this though. 'Cause the high road as it's defined as a more honorable, ethical course of action is a real thing. And like what comes to mind also is the quote from Michelle Obama when she said, "when they go low, we go high." right?

And in my, you know, you may have a different opinion about this. But for me, I really resonate with how that was intended in terms of we don't wanna engage in like, mud slinging and vitriol. I can get behind that.

And, and Tracy and I, I feel like, have been [00:28:00] really conscientious of not doing that. And sometimes we do it behind the scenes to each other in text messages. Not to each other, but about situations.

Tracy Stamper: With each other.

Candice Schutter: With each other. Thank you.

Tracy Stamper: Because sometimes blowing off steam is just, in this work, you gotta do it.

Candice Schutter: Of course.

And you gotta do it in life. I mean, shit, if you don't have people that you can just be ugly with, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I used to exist in that reality, and it's very lonely.

It's very lonely.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm. And is it being ugly?

Candice Schutter: I was just thinking the same thing. I was like, ugly. Interesting. And, and why is ugly a bad thing? Again, you're seeing the, the culture's influence on our language and how we read it. Because why is beauty better than ugly?

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: Things to just flag and notice.

And what makes it ugly? [00:29:00] Like is it, is it objectively ugly? Or did we decide it's ugly based on some standard that is cult agreed upon? Which feels like what's being applied here when folks are saying, you know, you're not taking the high road by doing X, Y, and Z. It's like, well, because the dogma says that we don't do X, Y, and Z.

And we're here to deconstruct that and to say, well, what if the dogma isn't the guidebook and the rules we have to live our entire life by? What if there are other options? And what if the dogma's based on something that's pretty screwy and exclusionist and um, harmful?

And I don't have dogma to replace it with. That's thing here. Like we're deconstructing dogma. It's not reinventing dogma. That's not the name of the series. We're taking it all apart so that we can reconstruct something together individually and collectively. But we have to pull it apart first.

And that's where I feel [00:30:00] my conditioning really show up, 'cause I wanna, I wanna fix it, make it neat and tidy and deliver it to you pretty. Because I'm a woman in this culture and I want you to like me. And I'm just gonna say it. I want you to like me.

Candice Schutter: And I'm letting go of that more and more by the day and just really getting honest. And that's what I want this space to be, right, is for us to just be able to be honest. And I know Tracy's spoken about it really, you've spoken about it really openly. Like, you're deconstructing the good girl persona in a big way.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

It is so deeply ingrained in me that I'm noticing how often my reactions, responses, impulses come straight from it.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm. Yeah.

And this is where we have to really get out of our binary head spaces.

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

Candice Schutter: If we're not good, that doesn't mean we're being bad. If we're [00:31:00] not nice, it doesn't mean we're being mean. This default is why we are doing this episode, where this high road thing comes from. Well, you're not being nice, and so therefore it's a sin what you're doing.

There are many ways to be in the world. And mean and nice, that binary is not real.

Tracy Stamper: It's very interesting that you brought up the black and white. I have that written down on my notes for today is just noticing how much more spaciousness there is outside of high-demand cultic indoctrination, where it seems to me that black and white thinking becomes further dredged in. It so hinges on that binary. You're either practicing the practices you are meant to, or you're not. You are speaking impeccably, or you are not.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: [00:32:00] Um, I notice one of the most healing things that I've noticed for myself in the recovery process is how much more breathing room there is in the gray spaces.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, absolutely. Well said.

And it's like that thing where I'm, I'm continually trying to highlight, there's the inside job and there's the systemic change. And there's the inside job and there's the systemic change. And they both have to be happening. And so when we talk about this, shifting into more of a gray perspective.

And I wanna just name that in a lot of spiritual wellness circles, there's a lot of talk about the gray. And like living in the gray and stuff. But we're not talking about it in this sort of disembodied way. We're talking about boots on the ground, being able to have a full-spectrum human experience and look at things that we might label as unpleasant or painful.

Like [00:33:00] that's, I feel like, Tracy, what you're talking about when I hear you saying landing in the gray and having more options in terms of emotions that you can choose from and ways of responding. And, and that's what we're talking about here.

One of the ways we know we're dealing with cultic conditioning and, and when we're talking about capital-c cultic conditioning. Let's just talk about patriarchy for a second, let's just pull a immediate example from the culture. What's really alive right now. like what's going on with Taylor Swift. I'm scrolling through the news and whatnot, and this article pops up about. Did Taylor Swift snub Celine Dion?

This article was actually pretty well written. But basically Taylor, all eyes are on her right now 'cause of she's just in a media shit show, if you don't know Google it. But she was at the Grammy's. And she is standing up for all the artists and applauding and like considering how many cameras are on her seems to be in herself, enjoying the experience. And she goes up on stage, she has this moment where she [00:34:00] wins her 13th Grammy. It's like a big deal. Or no, actually I think it was her 14th. And she won album of the year for the fourth time. And she's the only person ever to do that.

So she's in complete shock. And she's looking at her producer, and she's celebrating. And she doesn't, I guess, make eye contact with Celine Dion when she goes up to the podium and accepts the award. And there's this online shit show of people being like, she snubbed Celine Dion and how rude. And, and that binary of she needs to be nice and she needs to be perfectly on point at every moment. She's either the hero in this story or she's the villain in this story. And she can't be anywhere in between. Heaven forbid she be, get to be human.

It's like this, why am I talking about Taylor Swift? This isn't about Taylor Swift. What you're seeing there is the same microscope we're all put under. And it's just an example of like, the opposite of what you're talking about, Tracy, where it's black and white.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: [00:35:00] Either we love her or we hate her. And the world tends to default to hating women. And especially demonizing those who are experiencing other intersectionalities; color, gender bending, all the things. That binary kicks in. And that's capital-c cult conditioning. That's what I've just really, when I started learning about cult dynamics, started to really see. Oh my God, like I'm not just recovering from wellness spaces. I'm recovering from holy shit. And this runs so deep. these biases are embedded, I'm sure, into this work. I'm gonna look back at it in five years and be like, holy crap. Look at all this cult conditioning that was still operating in the way that we're showing up, in our language.

And this episode is really us just landing and like, oh my God, and here it is with this whole nice girl thing. Protecting people from what's really happening behind the scenes.

So should we get into a little bit of what's happened?

Tracy Stamper: Yeah, [00:36:00] absolutely.

As you were sharing that story, I was thinking of what has happened to me in the past as a very specific example of this. And I have shared this before, about the pushback that I got after I wrote a Facebook post about having left the Org. And it was very *nice*.

Candice Schutter: It was very nice. It's Tracy. She defaults to nice. Because she actually is like in the genuine definition of the word nice. There's legit nice going on here.

And I'm sure a little bit of the performance. I would imagine.

Tracy Stamper: Both sides of that coin.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Tracy Stamper: And because I was so invested and involved in the Org. And it was such a passion of mine. And I was such a proselytizer, I did have to explain all of a [00:37:00] sudden why I'm not talking about it anymore. I'm not teaching it anymore. I'm not training in it anymore. That's a really strange, sudden shift for me. So I did feel a need simply to explain, hey, I'm not doing that anymore.

Um, I received a very, very lengthy Facebook message from a former colleague who, you know, I'd been in trainings with, I know personally, and I felt raked over the fucking coals by the way she spoke to me.

What I wasn't able to articulate at the time was that I was coming out of a scenario with the Org in which I personally saw Marissa's cruelty. And I felt it come my way. And it was startling and [00:38:00] shocking and painful as fuck. And that was the experience that I wrote about, very nicely. And received this very long DM from a woman who basically, it felt like she was reinforcing the abusive dynamic that I had been needing to escape from.

I had shared that my last conversation with Marissa felt emotionally abusive. And it felt emotionally abusive because it just fucking was. I mean, it was.

How many of the Flying Monkeys who have pushed back were there and heard that call? Zero. How many of the folks who pushed back on me, which there weren't all that many, but to have someone come and kick you when you're down, it's memorable.

Candice Schutter: mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: How many of those folks had any idea what actually happened on the phone? At least [00:39:00] from my perspective. I don't know. They may have heard from Marissa what happened. I have no idea. From my perspective, what I experienced and what I

heard and what I felt and what I was told. They have no fucking clue what that private conversation entailed. No clue.

So it was very baffling for me to feel like I was being attacked by, in my case, it was two women, both who had been former trainer colleagues.

Candice Schutter: Both who we've heard many stories about.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah. And this, right here, the reason I go back several years in time is because we've got the same two to three. I would say two are very vocal. There's another third, Flying Monkeys in the Org who are taking their high road and flying and shitting [00:40:00] on the rest of us down here trying to fucking ground, heal, come to terms with, understand.

And it is, God, I just.

I just can't imagine that these women wish to further abuse folks who have felt abused.

Candice Schutter: No.

Tracy Stamper: It's so interpersonally violent. I can't even put words to it, and I'm fucking pissed.

I mean, the number of folks. And, and I can think right now of at least three individuals who have spoken to me, one-on-one in confidence about one of these, as we call them Flying Monkeys. And it just keeps fucking coming.

Candice Schutter: Well, and that's the thing that I texted to Tracy yesterday. I was, okay, we've been taking the high road around this, without realizing. Like [00:41:00] following the book, this line that we've been fed around what the high road is, instead of asking ourselves what's the actual high road here?

We've been just taking the default high road. And what has it done? It's in many ways enabled the dynamic, because our silence enables. That's what it does when we don't say, this is what's happening.

And, you know, and just to say, first two things. One, Flying Monkeys, if you're not familiar with where that phrase comes from, it's the Wizard of Oz. And what is it? The wicked witch of the West. I think the good witch was from the east. I don't know. I should know this. I'm from Kansas.

Tracy Stamper: I know she wicked.

Candice Schutter: She was wicked with, the wicked witch would have her Flying Monkeys fly in and do her bidding. I think it's where it came

Tracy Stamper: The wicked witch of the high road, I think.

Candice Schutter: The wicked witch of the high road. That's it. Yep, sorry. My bad.

There's the yellow brick road. And then there's the high road. So they, they would come, they would basically do her bidding, and that's kind of [00:42:00] where it comes from.

Now this is obviously an analogy or whatever. We're not calling people names so much as just saying, this is a dynamic that happens. And usually people who are playing the role of Flying Monkey are doing it for what they believe is right and true. And so, I really don't think that any of these particular individuals in any way understand that what they're doing is problematic. I think they really are, you know, under the spell of the dogma and of the, the Queen. And really do believe that they're protecting her and the brand and their own livelihood and that they're doing the right thing.

And I just know it's hurting people. It hurt you when it happened to you. And I've also heard from people who've been hurt by this behavior, wherein and they are being gaslit

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: for making the choice, a simple choice to step [00:43:00] away.

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

Candice Schutter: I just thought of another person. And they just told me recently about it. And how a Flying Monkey swept in when she decided no longer to continue on with her belts. And that she was shamed and given a hard time.

She wasn't speaking out, saying anything negative, starting a podcast, you know, doing all this stuff. She just, she just chose to step away. And in most of these stories, that's all that's happened. And then the people who have been vocal, of course, you know, the Flying Monkeys don't like that either.

Um, but just to say that this isn't about slinging names. It's just that we don't wanna necessarily name these people 'cause we don't want the narrative to center on them. We want the dynamic to be the thing that we're focusing on. But we do wanna call it out and say, this shit has got... it probably won't stop, but we need to all be talking about it so that when it happens we can normalize that conversation. And be like, ah, just happened over here. Oh, this [00:44:00] is going on, too. Like, so that we actually know. It's still gonna sting and it's gonna hurt. But maybe we won't personalize it so much if we understand that we're not alone in experiencing it.

Tracy Stamper: Absolutely. And something I've noticed that I find so interesting is how over in ATO, After the Org, our private Facebook group, how much sensitivity and compassion shows up when we refer to Flying Monkeys.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Tracy Stamper: Because I am imagining every single one of us, or the vast majority of us, certainly in ATO, knows what it feels like to be indoctrinated in these same ways. We were there.

Did I ever, was I ever a Flying Monkey? I actually. Yeah. I mean, seriously. I cannot think of an example specifically.

Candice Schutter: You wouldn't [00:45:00] have seen it as that behavior. That's the thing we

Tracy Stamper: Exactly.

Candice Schutter: wanna point out.

Tracy Stamper: Exactly. And I've been on both sides of this coin.

I remember being the one who was disappointed, upset, confused, angry at a direction that the Org had taken. It didn't make any sense to me. And the fallout that it caused for me professionally was gonna be intense, having to respond to other people. And I was angry about that. And I remember calling a mentor and just, it's like a volcano outta my mouth. I was just fit to be tied. And my mentor kind of brought me back down by reminding me that all of this was just human behavior.

And while that is true, the behavior itself was not okay. It wasn't okay then. And it's not okay now. [00:46:00] And the way that my mentor was able to shift an experience that I had seen, uh, and talk me into it being okay with me.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm. Yes.

Tracy Stamper: brought me back into the fold when I was wanting to run the fuck away.

Now that, I can't even tell you how many times I've done it. Because that was basically part of what I perceived as my job. Keeping people in. Bringing people in.

So did I do some Flying Monkey swoops with that? Oh, I have no doubt I fucking did.

I'm sure I did. Ugh.

Candice Schutter: mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: The beautiful thing that I'm seeing is when we're over an ATO, because we're in a group of folks who know what it's like to feel indoctrinated ourselves. Most of us,

if not all. I see compassion for the [00:47:00] individuals who keep showing up with Flying Monkey behaviors. See a lot of compassion for them.

And at the same time, when it comes to just out in the wild, wild west of the Org, I don't necessarily always see that same compassion towards people who speak out.

Candice Schutter: Oh, right. Well, yeah, because that's why I feel like it's so important to name psychologically how defense mechanisms work.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Because when you're disowning and projecting, it's harder to have compassion.

So if it's like *your* behavior's the problem, and the finger is pointing to such a degree. And you know, we do finger pointing here too, so I'm not, I'm not on any sort of high horse. See the theme here. I'm not interested all those high places. I understand that I do this, too. So when I am naming this, I'm owning when it shows up for me, too.

[00:48:00] But like when we're in this space of projection, like in this defense mechanism, like, not mine yours, not mine, yours. Then compassion is much harder to find.

And so, I think that folks in the ATO, as a general rule, I just am witnessing a lot of people doing that thing I was talking about a moment ago, which is like the introspection. How did I get here? How did this happen? And what do I need to learn here? And how can I do different so that I don't repeat this pattern?

And also, what's going on over there? What is that? What's *actually* happening? When this behavior is going on, what is actually going on here? What's not mine? What is *not* mine here?

And if you're doing both of those things, I think, you know, it's possible to hold someone accountable and express compassion simultaneously. And I see, you're right, I see a lot of folks practicing that. We're practicing that together. How do we walk that middle ground.

And also fall off. Because fuck the perfectionism, right? Like we're gonna swing over into [00:49:00] finger wagging. And then we're gonna be like, oh my gosh, I'm totally triggered. And you know, and it's like, it's all part of it.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: But that idea that we can actually get to a place where we're in perfect compassion and seeing with purity, that's what gets us into trouble.

And I feel like that's what we see in the wild, wild west, like you're saying, a lot of people on their high horses or on their Flying Monkeys or whatever they're doing. Pegasus, I don't know what's going on.

There's a lot happening on the high road.

Tracy Stamper: A lot of creatures up there.

Candice Schutter: There's a lot happening. And the shit falling down. I love that. I love that so much.

But I wanna speak to the call, in terms of the individual that you called, that was your mentor.

Okay, so we've got like the Flying Monkeys who are running around like policing people's posts and writing DMs in people's boxes.

Tracy Stamper: And pooping on heads.

Candice Schutter: Pooping, yes, we've got the Flying Monkeys who are pooping on heads.

And then we've got [00:50:00] these sort of angelic creatures who are on Pegasus in their white robes, who are really, and again, all of these archetypes I can embody if you pay me enough. Back in the day, I was all about them.

I didn't get paid. What am I talking about?

Tracy Stamper: Seriously, you did it for free.

Candice Schutter: Right. If, if I was rewarded with enough privilege and a big enough spotlight.

Anywho. So the Pegasus, the folks on the Pegasus.

It makes me think. This is totally a side note, but it just popped in, so I'm gonna share it. A foster kiddo that I advocate for and hang out with, they were sharing with me that they have this new favorite animated series. And it's called, Hazbin Hotel. It's definitely not technically age appropriate. They're about to turn 16, but they're an old soul. So I'm letting it slide.

Um, anyway, it's this animated series that I haven't even watched the whole thing, but they love to tell me the whole plot line of all the shows. And one of the things that was so intriguing to me. They're showing me [00:51:00] pictures on their phone of there's like angels and then there's like hell and the devils. And the angels do these sweeping down exterminations. They're like, basically the high road.

The narrative is flipped. Because you've got this beautiful, like this gorgeous angelic creature who fits the white woman's stereotype of how one should look, who is doing all this harm. But she's an angel.

And I was just like, huh, how interesting. And then these, these hell-born children are striving to like create this middle ground. It's, it's a really fascinating premise. And again, I haven't watched it, so don't quote me on whether it's great or not.

But I just thought this was so interesting. And I, I was really intrigued by this character of this like, woman in these white robes. And this is something I alluded to really briefly in the intro to episode 77 with Nikki G. If you miss that one, it's so good. Check it out. She's amazing. I say it's so good 'cause it's, it's about her. She's amazing. [00:52:00]

Um, but the intro, I use this term *soft power coercion* that I've sort of been using in my own mind for a while now to help me to understand this thing that I've experienced a lot. Which is very similar to what you're describing that this mentor of yours did. That I have done myself in the past, that you just owned having done yourself as well, where you use this sort of gauzy, sugarcoated, nice, sweet, love and light language to deliver something that's actually kind of ugly.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And is coercive. It's coercive in this really subtle way.

And, and again, this is something that has been talked about throughout the podcast here and there through example. But I just wanted to give it a label. Because to me it's so insidious in wellness spaces. And I have been so confused by it when it's happened to [00:53:00] me. And I feel like, this feels really icky.

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

Candice Schutter: I feel like I've been influenced, manipulated or coerced. But it was delivered in such a nice way, that I don't feel like I can push back. There's nothing for me to grab onto and say, this was abusive, or this was wrong. Or this.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And, and again, we're talking about this mentor of yours who I've actually heard about having these similar kinds of conversations with other people. This is a person who means well.

Tracy Stamper: Abso-fuckin'lutely.

Candice Schutter: Just like all of us white women who mean well; us, pointing, we're pointing at ourselves here. We mean well, but we do lots of damage.

Tracy Stamper: And does it matter what we mean when we're harming someone? No.

That's one thing, whenever I'm watching a television show, and there's an interpersonal conflict and one person [00:54:00] says, well, I never meant to hurt you. And I'm thinking, God, I would hope not. Shouldn't that just be the given that.

Candice Schutter: Right.

I mean, I, I get why we, I get why we feel we need to say it for ourselves.

Tracy Stamper: I do too. I do too.

Candice Schutter: Because it's like that check-in. Because I mean, sometimes we do mean to be hurtful. I mean, let's if, we're being honest with ourselves.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: So I think it's an important check-in to have with ourselves. But to use it as a defense or a justification is where... and again, I have done this plenty.

Tracy Stamper: Same.

Candice Schutter: And having been on the other side of it. And like, how sad is it that so often, it, it is sad to me that like I consider myself an empathic person who cares about other people. And I'm really waking up in recent years to how much unpacking all this has really made me understand, there's a lot of hurt and harm that I've done and been unable to see until I actually saw how it was done to me.

Tracy Stamper: Absolutely.[00:55:00]

Candice Schutter: And it's like, ugh. Like, I don't know. I, I wish that I didn't have to see it through my own eyes to really believe it. But in some cases, that's just true about us humans, you know? It's like, fuck, it's, it's, it's, it's bitter medicine. But it's medicine.

So not gonna spin out on that. Just own it.

Tracy Stamper: There it is again.

Candice Schutter: There is again. Exactly. There it's again. Mm-Hmm.

Another example of this is when Marissa sent text messages to many of us on Thanksgiving.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Oozing with love and light.

It's vastly confusing. Because it seems like a really good faith, I have the holiday spirit thing to do. But it's actually aggressive and harmful to push those buttons, especially on a holiday.

But you can't, it's, it's like these behaviors that you can't [00:56:00] critique without seeming like an asshole. And that's

squadcaster-2jcg_1_02-06-2024_103228: Yes.

Candice Schutter: them so clever.

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

Candice Schutter: It's just such a mind fuck, 'cause you're like, well, how do I critique this when if I tell the story, it sounds like this person was just being nice the whole time.

Tracy Stamper: But not really if you really parse out the words in some of the messages. Because you and I have been privy to a few of those messages that were sent privately by individuals who shared them with us privately.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Tracy Stamper: and

Candice Schutter: And we have the one that I received as well.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

And looking at the surface, there's a lot of love and light and higher road. And why do I feel so slimed on after I read it though? And then once I come down from that shock, I can go back to those same messages, and I can see the subtext.

Candice Schutter: [00:57:00] Yes, yes.

Tracy Stamper: Is alarming.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

It's the ultimate defense though. And this is why, you know, as somebody who's engaged in this behavior in the past. You know, I can be a wordsmith. And so I have most definitely written some manipulative shit to some people and like put them in their place, but also not really, 'cause I'm not. I've totally done it.

It's the ultimate defense. Because when the person comes to you and they're like, this didn't feel good, or you were saying blah, blah, blah, 'cause they read the subtext. You can be like, I

Tracy Stamper: Look at the love and light in line one and two.

Candice Schutter: I did not. I did not, I did not say that. You can say, I did not say that. Just like a person who lies by omission can say, I didn't lie.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: It's the ultimate defense. It's built in and that's why it's a manipulation.

And when I wrote those things that I talked about writing that were manipulative, [00:58:00] did I think I was being manipulative? No. I mean, on a couple of occasions, yeah. But most of the time, no. I was just using the tools at my disposal that I had been trained in that I used to gaslight myself on a daily basis.

I was just spinning it off on somebody else.

Tracy Stamper: And right there that, for me, that's where the compassion comes in, is that I know that anyone who's going to opt to engage in Flying Monkey behavior is gaslit. You don't do that unless you are,

Candice Schutter: Mm. Yeah.

Tracy Stamper: Unless you have been gaslit and indoctrinated. You just don't do that.

Candice Schutter: That's true.

Tracy Stamper: So there's a recognition that someone is just spinning off something that they're already seeped in. They're gaslit and they're trying to gaslight me. They're gaslit, [00:59:00] they wanna gaslight Candice. It makes sense. And I've been on both sides of

Track 1: yeah,

Candice Schutter: Yeah, same.

transition

Candice Schutter: So at any rate, the monkeys dressed up as angels who are basically reinforcing the moral high ground as the place where their privilege resides. My privilege resides here, so therefore I'm going to position it as something better that needs to be enforced. And what they're actually doing is reinforcing compliance and control.

And they're not free either.

Tracy Stamper: No. Oh no.

Candice Schutter: They're just as caged, if not more so. And when I say more so, I don't mean in terms of like the impact on them. They have more privilege, so maybe their lives are grander. But in terms of the cult conditioning.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: The cage, [01:00:00] the bars are thicker.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah, that makes sense.

Candice Schutter: And it just breaks my heart. I mean, I, actually had to end a friendship because of this. I can't engage without this form of control and manipulation. This person does not want to control or manipulate me, but they're so under the influence of the dogma that they've imbibed, that they're trying to control and manipulate me.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: I can't be around it.

And it's heartbreaking. It was like, really painful.

Tracy Stamper: It's heartbreaking.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: From personal experience, I know it is heartbreaking.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

And I'm so much happier not being in that relationship. You know? And that might sound *mean* to say, but it's just true.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah. Because there's more [01:01:00] room for truth.

And when there's more room for truth, there's more room for you.

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Tracy Stamper: Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And these things get so tricky though, telling the truth when the truth hurts.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: This is where the limitation of language is so pertinent. Because there's no way that we're gonna be able to describe any of this without backing ourselves into a corner. Because that's just the nature of language. So if I say, we need to be able to tell the truth, even when the truth hurts. Then the person who is the Flying Monkey could very easily come back at me and say, I'm just telling you the truth as I see it. And if it hurts you, it's not abuse. Right?

So what is that distinction? And I really feel like it's about what is it in service to?

Tracy Stamper: [01:02:00] Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And then also, sometimes truths are going to conflict and that's okay. And then it's about boundary. And, you know, knowing where to draw lines and, and who to be in relationship with and who not. And I don't, like this friend that I decided to end the friendship, which ended really in a very, um, loving way because I stepped out when I did.

Because I was like, this isn't a space that I feel safe in and comfortable and like I can be myself. And if I stay here, then I'm going to either be trying to convince her to think or believe something different or vice versa. And what's the fucking point of that? In this instance, it made no sense to do that.

Not to say there's, again, never always. There may be a situation where you want to engage in that. But it was not a tug of war I wanted, a game I wanted to play. So I stepped away.

[01:03:00]

But then when we're dealing with systemic things where it's like, well, I'm just gonna go step away and stick my head in the sand. Again. Nope.

There's no easy, like. There's no dogma that's going to answer these questions for us. It's so nuanced.

Tracy Stamper: It's so nuanced. And it's just not as black and white as everything seemed to be when I was in that Org head space where things really did feel black or white. Either they are for us or they are against us.

Candice Schutter: Which leads me to the two specific examples of Flying Monkey behavior that happened to come from the same individual. One more recent and one from about a year ago.

What you just said really connected me to the most recent one, which is a blog post. That I guess it was written a few years ago, and it was just recently reposted, which seemed to be a commentary on the folks who are leaving the Org currently [01:04:00] and are choosing to actually, clutches pearls, name their experience out loud.

Who have done so in just beautifully articulate ways. Um, again, no mud slinging. Nothing that I would describe as dishonorable or unethical that seeing. Just basically naming their experiences.

And then this post, which is kind of about the high road and is sort of, it, it feels very much like a veiled critique talking about not burning bridges.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: I've just really been thinking about this whole idea of not burning bridges. And we've had this dialogue going on on ATO about this. And, and it seems to be the consensus is like, why is that such a bad thing to burn a bridge, first of all, if it's one you never wanna cross again?

And also, how is that not cult conditioning to say, I wanna make sure that I can belong to this group again if I choose to, and the [01:05:00] only way for me to make sure that I can belong to this group again if I choose to is if I keep my fucking mouth shut.

What is that?

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And the really, the implication being that it is dishonorable to say I left because, for example, this organization had a lot of lip service around social justice, but they're not actually walking the talk.

That's somehow ugly and dishonorable and mean, and that burns a bridge?

How is that such a terrible thing?

Tracy Stamper: Right. Let's take this example. Content warning here for domestic abuse.

Can you imagine ever saying to someone who has escaped and survived domestic abuse, can you imagine chastising them or shaming them for having burned the bridge over to their [01:06:00] abuser?

Candice Schutter: mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: No.

Candice Schutter: It happens though.

Tracy Stamper: Oh, all the time.

Candice Schutter: In that, in that clever way of, well, you know, he's really had a hard life. He really means well. And the other day he brought you flowers.

Tracy Stamper: I've never seen him act like that.

Candice Schutter: Exactly. I'm glad you named that because we might not be saying don't burn the bridge, but we are gaslighting the survivor.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm

Candice Schutter: Into forgiveness.

We've been talking about forgiveness for years and years and years and years. It's time to tip the scales in the other direction. And say, no, let's talk about accountability. Enough with the compassion. It can still be there. But that's not the central narrative that we're focusing on. Because we want to disband the system.

It makes me think of in the *Deconstructing Karen* documentary on Apple TV. I don't even think I described what they do, so, um. So Regina Jackson and Saira Rao have these dinners where they invite, they call it Race2Dinner, and they invite a group of white women. [01:07:00] Saira is Indian-American, and Regina is Black-American. And they invite these women to these dinners to talk about race. And all these things go down. So watch the doc.

But one of the rules is, 'cause these are all white women at the table, aside from the facilitators. The rule is if you wanna cry, you need to leave the room. There's a room over there with tissues and you can have your moment. But you need to leave the room.

That's kind of what it reminds me of, of like, but what about her feelings?

Tracy Stamper: Uhhuh.

Candice Schutter: And it's like, well, what about all the feelings of all the people who are being gaslit by this post?

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And, and this is where I wanna own this long silence that we have had here of not naming this. Because in March of last year, this individual released a song in response to the podcast.

Did she tell me it was in response to the podcast? No, but it's pretty clear that it was in response to the podcast based on the [01:08:00] title. And it was a very well produced.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: Something that had been worked on clearly for months. I think there was a post about it that, that a lot time had been spent on this particular piece of art. And, And it's like, I have compassion for the indoctrination that this person has experienced and why they're choosing to do this. And I somehow let that keep me from talking about it.

But what about everybody who listened to that song? 'Cause that song was super gaslighty. And it was actually kind of a cool moment for me, because it didn't get under my skin a lot, and I realized how much work I had done. But I have been in this. And I had been in it for a solid year before I heard the song.

I actually went back this morning.

Tracy Stamper: Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And looked at it. Because I haven't looked at it in almost a year. And I didn't play the music, I just put on the captions and I was reading the lyrics just defining the experience of [01:09:00] the listener who's being talked about. Now, maybe not every listener, but like me, I'm clearly being talked about. I mean, let's be real. Tracy's being talked about. Any one of us who's identifying with the content of the podcast is being talked about.

And it's just so fascinating to me, because this is a cardinal sin at the Org to define someone else's experience. And it is the absolute number one technique of gaslighting. Let me tell you what your experience is. You don't know. I'll tell you.

And we didn't talk about it for a couple rea. I mean, one of the main reasons I stand behind, we didn't wanna center what was going on in reaction within the Organization. We wanted to really focus on cult recovery, and we still wanna do that. But part of what's happening in recovery is that people are being gaslit by parties who are still inside. So to not really speak to that until now, you know, I [01:10:00] think is a little belated. I mean, we've talked about a little bit, but to not really call it out. And to just not say, this song is a Flying Monkey anthem.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Reinforcing all of the cultural conditioning that we should be ashamed of ourselves and zip it and stay silent.

Candice Schutter: And why?

I wrote down here, Flying Monkeys are loyalists who double down and will continue expressing their disdain toward anyone who even subtly challenges the dysfunctional status quo.

Why? Because it earns them more privilege.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: That was another reason why I didn't wanna call attention to this person and shine a spotlight on them, because within the Organization itself, they will get applause.

Now I wanna say, to be super clear that there were people who were in the Organization at the time who actually spoke out and said, hey, I do not [01:11:00] support.

Tracy Stamper: That's not cool.

Candice Schutter: There were plenty of people who said that. So I'm not saying everyone at all. No, no, no, no, no, no. I think there was people who thought it was distasteful and ugly. And it wasn't the high road. And it also was just wrong.

But then there are also people who in the comments were celebrating, thank you for making this thing. You said it all. You said everything I wanted to say. And of course, the very first comment was from who?

Tracy Stamper: Ms. Marissa.

Candice Schutter: Of course.

And like, think about all of the physical and emotional labor that went into producing that.

Tracy Stamper: And financial. mean, all of it. It's intense. That was, yeah.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

And I do have compassion for this person. I'm not saying I don't. And also have a lot of anger toward this person. Because this behavior has not stopped, and it's continued.

Tracy Stamper: And it's not okay. It is defending [01:12:00] emotional abuse with further emotional abuse. That's what it is.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: Knowing that we were coming into this topic, I spent some time thinking about Flying Monkeys, having been one myself, having been shat upon from their higher monkey road while I'm down here on the earth. And I asked myself, what would I say to... if I, if I suddenly had a Flying Monkey audience, what would I say?

And what immediately occurred to me is stop giving us so much material, please. Um, do you realize, Flying Monkeys, that you are prolonging this entire series? [01:13:00]

Do you remember, Candice, a few months ago said, okay, 'cult'ure series is wrapping up, moving on. And then these things land that just need to be addressed, because they are so egregious. And they are so much what Candice, and Candice and I, have been saying for two years now.

And it just seems so ironic to me that it seems like the Flying Monkeys are out there chirping a chorus of just shut the fuck up, people. Shut the fuck up. You all stop squeezing your sour

grapes. And it's because of the pushback that is very, very harmful to individuals that we keep coming on here and being like, okay, here we go again.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Tracy Stamper: Right?

Candice Schutter: Well, and, and adjacent [01:14:00] to that and really the source of that, 'um, they're just like the tributaries running off of the main river. Right. And so, this is something that, that has been just so up for me in the last year, especially, of the irony of the fact that Marissa would love for us to stop, I'm sure.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And ultimately, the only thing that needed to happen from the very beginning was an acknowledgement of the harm and accountability. I mean, corporations do this all the fucking time, like performative accountability. Where it's like, oh well, we're just gonna hire somebody to come in and write the perfect letter to say like, we acknowledge the harm that we caused, la la la la la.

Marissa couldn't even do that.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: The bare minimum.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Would have shifted, Like [01:15:00] even if we didn't stop talking about it, it would've shifted the narrative a little bit. People would've been like, well, she's acknowledged it. And so dah, dah, dah, dah, dah.

So it's the similar thing, like of what you're saying of Marissa's the reason why we're still talking about this is because she has never actually owned any of her actions and the harm that's been caused. And created a, a true and genuine pathway to repair.

Tracy Stamper: And true and genuine, I think, is paramount there. Because there has been, in some circumstances, some lip service paid. And, in the examples that I've seen, the way it comes across is, I'm sorry that you felt hurt.

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Tracy Stamper: I'm sorry that *you*.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm. It's the non-apology apology.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: That we actually talked about doing an episode on. But if you Google it, there's a lot of people who have probably done a better job talking about this topic, of how [01:16:00] people apologize, but not really. There's a lot there. And it, so it's a lot of that. A lot of non-apology apologies.

And also the, which has become kind of a default in the larger culture around folks who are being called to account for their blind spots and biases and privileges and the way that those have been abused, is this default to like, oh, well you're just trying to cancel me.

And cancel culture is a real deal problem and issue. There's, of course, a conversation to be had there. Because there are extreme examples that are just as culty. They're just like the other end of the spectrum, that are just as culty as the cults they're calling out, right? So the cult of cancel culture is something that I could do an episode on very easily and have tons to say.

But there's also this massive gray area.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: Where folks are pointing to that. [01:17:00] And I'm just gonna name it. Marissa just did this recently on her blog where she wrote a post about social justice, which is like what? Um, but in it she, in my opinion, and I don't know, maybe she has a personal relationship with this particular woman, but in my opinion, she tokenizes a Black woman's work to make her point around how we should be calling people in instead of calling people out. And sort of hijacking that narrative, which is very genuine and serves a very constructive purpose, for her own purposes.

And to again deflect. And to say like, why are you calling me out? That's not how we should do this. Love, light, peace. Love light, peace. Love, light, peace. Right?

Every time she does that, she's making her own bed. And anyone who's like, oh, the podcast is taking the Org down. It's like, no, Marissa's taking the Org down.

Tracy Stamper: Ding, ding, ding.

If there was [01:18:00] nothing behind the podcast, Candice, you and I could not have an effect. The reason that the podcast has become problematic is because so many people see truth reflected, see their own experiences reflected.

Candice Schutter: Exactly.

And because there's no accountability around said experiences. Nobody here is saying, nor has anyone said from the very beginning, and go back to 32 if you wanna listen to it. Nobody is saying that the humanity and the issues and the problems and the harms, that we should be

able to create some organization that is a utopia where those things don't exist. Nobody's saying that.

We're saying that when we harm and when we know better, we do better. And we own it, that we fucked up. And we do what we can to make repairs and to do differently. That's all that anybody's been saying.

And all these people who are recently exiting the Org, I wanna speak to [01:19:00] you and say, I understand and have so much respect for the ways that you have hustled to try to get that to happen since this podcast came to light.

I also wanna say, and this might sound like asshole, but it's truth. I knew that you wouldn't be successful. And that breaks my heart. But I've been in those rooms.

And I still had hope. I had like a glimmer of hope. Like, well, maybe something's changed and maybe, that was still even there for me. And I just wanna say that I just really admire those of you who, who really tried. And thought, well, hey, maybe, and I get this, hey, maybe in this culture where this has changed a little bit more, and maybe people are talking about this, maybe this will be the wake up call. Because in some instances it is. it could have happened. My pessimism aside, it could have happened.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And it didn't. And now you're leaving and you're grieving and it's really painful. And um, we feel you. [01:20:00] And I'm sorry that Flying Monkeys are what you're getting on the other side of it all, because it's not what you deserve.

And if you're not in the After the Org community, it is still going strong. We have not paused it. And it's alive and well. And we welcome you. Write to Tracy or I. The After the Org group.

I wanna acknowledge the After the Org group is still active. It is a *hidden* group. So if you go to search for it, you're not gonna find it. And the reason for that is to protect everyone in it. Because as I understand it, even if we keep it private, once we make it unhidden, then people will be able to see who's in the group, who aren't in the group. And the way that this Flying Monkey thing works, we want people to be able to come in without the whole world knowing that they've come in. That's nobody's business. So that's why it's hidden. And that's why you have to message us directly to get admitted. And it's not because we're trying to make it so exclusive. It's 'cause we're, [01:21:00] we wanna keep it as safe as we can. So.

Tracy Stamper: And it's not like we're talking about secretive things over there. I would imagine after how many hours of recordings with the two of us.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Tracy Stamper: We're not really trying to do anything on the sly. Just over their healing.

And Candice, what you said, I, I really wanna underscore. You said leaving and grieving. There are so many folks who are leaving and grieving. And my guess, I don't know this, but my guess is that anyone who is acting in Flying Monkey ways, has no clue what that grieving is like.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Tracy Stamper: No fucking clue what that grieving is like. And I would just like to say on behalf of the folks who are first coming out, don't kick them when [01:22:00] they are down please. Don't fucking kick folks who are hurting.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Or bait them.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: bait them with all that they're gonna regret. And how, oh, look what you're gonna miss. And taunt with with the loss. Because there's the shaming and then there's the, well guess you're not part of this family anymore. Oof. Because of who you've chosen to be and who you've chosen to align yourself with, which first and foremost is yourself and your sense of dignity.

Tracy Stamper: I used the term before and it just felt so apropos. I was raked over the coals by a Flying Monkey who accused me of harming their business by my speaking out.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm. It's so common.

Tracy Stamper: And here I am thinking, God, what a [01:23:00] luxury and a privilege right now for you to be able to be concerned about your business.

Mine is gone. As my community. As is my emotional health.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: As was my physical health. I was literally in pain, with dignity stripped away from me like you were talking about. What a weird time to feel I needed to be reminded of someone else's business.

Like, it just, it was just clueless to me.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, it's something I've heard repeatedly.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And the message being, fine if you wanna walk away. Fine, if you're hurt or whatever, or you're not in it anymore because you don't have the personal power to be in it.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: now you just are sour grapes about it.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And so, sucks to be [01:24:00] you.

Fine if you wanna walk away, but don't talk about it. Don't bad mouth the brand, because you're gonna hurt all the people.

And this, if you listen back to 33, I think it was 33, where I talked about all the reasons that we chose not to name the Org. Which I still struggle with when it comes to this high road thing, because there a part of me that's like, is this high road conditioning?

But anyway, I'm not gonna go down that rabbit hole right now.

So you'll remember that I spoke about reasons that we weren't naming the Org, and I said that one of the reasons was because I had a lot of friends and colleagues who were practicing teachers and trainers and whatnot. And I didn't wanna hurt their bottom line.

Tracy Stamper: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And I, again, just like with the Flying Monkey, who I was like, oh, I feel compassion. They're indoctrinated and they wrote this song or this blog post, and I don't wanna pick on them because they're indoctrinated. Just like the white woman in the room at the dinner table crying when everyone else needs to benefit from the larger [01:25:00] conversation that isn't centered around that white woman's tears.

Your business is the white woman's tears.

Tracy Stamper: Thank you. Yes.

Candice Schutter: You are going to lose privilege if we start telling the truth. Period. Bottom line. You're not gonna have as much privilege. And that's just the price we all have to pay.

But in the end, we're all gonna be rewarded, because we're all gonna be free. It's a long ways away. But that's the fucking point. But you have to give up something in order for this to change.

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And yes, it's going to hurt some more than others because they are higher up, and they have more privilege.

Just like if we take down an MLM. The people who are at the top of the pyramid, sorry y'all, your comfort is not more important than the whole. Your business is not more important than the whole. And this is something that it's taken me a while to wake up, how [01:26:00] often I am protecting the people at the top.

But I didn't really fully understand the way in which I was still protecting and insulating because I felt compassion towards them, which is very true. Just like I feel compassion towards Marissa from time to time. But she's not more important than all the people she's hurting. And everybody under her are not more important than everyone under. That's the problem with the hierarchy is that somebody always suffers.

Tracy Stamper: Right there.

Candice Schutter: Because of the prioritizing of certain people's comfort over others.

Tracy Stamper: Marissa's not getting hurt by someone's choosing not to tell a story is not more important than all of the literally hundreds who have already been hurt. You said, your business is not more important than the whole. It's just not.

Your business cannot be more important than my health. It cannot be. [01:27:00] Your business cannot be more important to me than my health. And if for my health, the route is to tell the truth, I'm sticking with my health. I am not sacrificing my health for your business.

Candice Schutter: Exactly. What are you

Tracy Stamper: makes no fucking sense.

Candice Schutter: asking me to do here?

Right, exactly.

Tracy Stamper: People. People. That makes no fucking sense.

Candice Schutter: But the whole, I mean, this is where the cult dynamics get so complex though. Because there's people who would say, 'cause this is the thing with words and why it gets turned into a dogma. Because I immediately see the way this narrative can be spun.

Because somebody could come in and say, well, you're speaking about the whole, Candice. You're saying we're doing this thing that benefits the whole. Well, the whole of the Org is doing great work. So a few sour grapes, a few hurt [01:28:00] people. Why are you taking down the whole in service to these individual? Aren't you doing the same thing?

And again, that's why none of this is, that's why it's called the deeper pulse. You can't look at the surface narrative and solve these problems. You have to look underneath, like what's driving each of those narratives.

And where is my, going back to what the high road is supposed to be, taking a more honorable or ethical course of action, what is the most ethical thing? And then you could take a philosophy course on like, what does ethics mean and how does that work? And does the ethics of an individual matter as much as the group? It's so complicated.

None of this is simple. So we're not here to replace one simple narrative with another.

Tracy Stamper: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: I just wanna name that when the whole that we're defending is in service to a hierarchy and a power imbalance structure, I'm not interested. [01:29:00] I'm not interested. Because I know that it doesn't trickle down. I know that's not how it works. It's not how it works.

I wish it worked that way. But humans with power who hoard it at the top. I mean, look at the billionaires in the world. It just doesn't work that way. Now in some cases, some billionaires are doing some great philanthropic work. But as a general rule, it doesn't work that way.

So I'm interested in the whole, not a utopia, because I don't believe it'll exist. But a space where we can show up honestly and directly and stop being *nice* all the time. And we can just say what's real and also keep our hearts open.

And I don't, I'm not gonna pretend that that's easy. I struggle with it every day, especially in this fucking world right now. But we can practice together. And like we can own our [01:30:00] "ugly" parts and also shine light together. We can do both.

I like to think we can at least.

Tracy Stamper: And we need to do both. There are too many folks out there who are hurting too much.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: That's got to tip the scales of silence. It just has to.

Right.

How much is too much? Well, a long time ago, if you ask me.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Tracy Stamper: And when we're talking about how folks are treated when they first get out or when they speak out about having left a group, the irony is that oftentimes it is the way folks who are still involved with the group respond that reveals that there's something really fucked up with the group dynamics in the first place.

Candice Schutter: A hundred percent. Yeah.

Tracy Stamper: And something I've seen time and time again [01:31:00] in comments by individuals who have acted the Flying Monkey is, oh, well I haven't listened to any podcasts. Or, oh, I listened to the first one and a half episodes.

And the irony is that almost all the time what follows, oh, well, I haven't listened, are a whole bunch of examples

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Tracy Stamper: of what you have already talked about.

It's like the, they're proving the point.

Candice Schutter: I just wanted to, to highlight in the *Deconstructing Karen* documentary, there's a voiceover that pulls from a quote from Martin Luther King Jr. And he says it so well, kind of what we're pointing at here.

Dr. Martin Luther King who wrote in his famous letter from Birmingham Jail, railed against the white moderate insisting:

"I have [01:32:00] almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's greatest stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the white citizens counselor or the Ku Klux Klan, but the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice, who prefers a negative peace, which is the absence of tension to a positive peace, which is the presence of justice, who constantly says, I agree with you in the goal that you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action."

This, I feel like just explained so well the problem with this high road argument. Like, well, yeah, I don't want people to be abused either, but the way that you're doing things, the way that you're talking about it, the way that you're... yeah, but, yeah but, yeah but.

I think we've gotta be really wary of this. And, and I know that, this is just something that I have [01:33:00] been very guilty of, of exactly what he's describing here. And how this progressive woke wing of things. I am not anti-woke culture. I feel like there's a lot of juicy goodness there. And the way that we use it as a cloak. The cloak of woke, that we hide behind with all this lip service around the high road and standing on our moral ground, when

in fact we're just hiding from doing the hard work of looking at ourselves and calling out the bullshit and losing our privilege, unearned privilege, by the way.

Tracy Stamper: Yes.

I grew up in a very conservative family. And the rule was always, don't talk politics.

Candice Schutter: uh, yeah.

Tracy Stamper: And as I have been paying attention, as I came into my own, I learned my politics are very different [01:34:00] than almost everyone else's in my family.

And so I've been indoctrinated with don't talk politics, which is very confusing to me when I go into the same circles, you know, family functions with the folks who tell me not to talk politics. And they're all talking politics. Kind of. Because they're not saying specifically politicians' names. They're not talking about Republicans or Democrats. But they're fighting the culture wars.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Tracy Stamper: So they are talking politics. It's a constant. It's just a constant. It's the way my family bonds, it's, It's a constant.

And I remember at one point thinking, well, if they're all talking politics through talking culture wars, why could I not? So I started responding. I started sharing my own. [01:35:00]

Smack down so fast. You're not allowed to talk politics. And finally it occurred to me.

Candice Schutter: If you disagree.

Tracy Stamper: If you disagree.

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Tracy Stamper: You are not allowed to talk politics if your politics point at the status quo.

Candice Schutter: Or cast me in a light that I don't wanna stand in.

Tracy Stamper: Exactly, exactly.

And it's all about, if you ask me, preserving privilege.

Candice Schutter: Yes. And, and the optics of who I think that I am. The story that I have invented about the person that I am. And if you say something that challenges my moral high ground, then we don't, we don't talk politics.

Or in some instances, you know, I think about this one a lot. Especially living where I live, in terms of the political landscape here. It's really an odd mix. Um, but that thing of like not talking [01:36:00] politics. I think is really interesting. Because I think that is a, um, another way that we hide.

We don't wanna have any conflict whatsoever. We can't possibly stand in the tension, like Dr. King says, "the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice."

Right? In order to create positive change and justice, we have to often dismantle and disorder; those are my words, not his.

And then "who prefers a negative piece, which is the absence of tension to a positive piece, which is the presence of justice."

That. I don't want the tension. And as soon as the tension's there, then we're gonna make a rule, which is really what high road is. The tension has emerged, so we need to make a rule that that is outlawed.

We don't talk politics. We don't criticize Org leadership. We don't [01:37:00] exit loudly. We don't hold the door open for the next person. We don't shout the room and say, hey, anybody else in there feel the way I do? No, no, no, no. That door shuts right away, and it locks.

This podcast violated that. The people on the inside got to hear from the people on the outside.

Well, first of all, the people on the outside got to hear from each other. That was huge.

Tracy Stamper: Huge.

Candice Schutter: And then the people on the inside suddenly were hearing from the people on the outside. And that is like, when it comes to systemic culty dysfunction, sirens, alert, alert. Cue the Flying Monkeys.

Tracy Stamper: Exactly.

Candice Schutter: Off they go.

Tracy Stamper: Exactly.

And it's always the folks in a position of privilege who are gonna be invested in maintaining that status quo and silencing us. It's

Candice Schutter: Right. Mm-Hmm.

And I also wanna be compassionate towards the process of [01:38:00] coming to terms with all of this and how it is a slow burn thing. I mean, I have been critical of myself throughout

this process for not, you know, presencing certain topics. Because I wasn't ready to do it. And it wasn't that I, I mean, there was definitely avoidance going on. And I was slowly doing my learning behind the scenes, inching my way to being ready to have those conversations.

And I didn't want to be another person who was like... and I did do a little bit of this in the beginning until it was actually pointed out to me by a individual who was doing a lot of work, who was a little ahead of me on the path, is much younger... Of sort of performing, this is what I'm doing in my anti-racism journey instead of centering the conversation of anti-racism. Like centering the narrative of, this is what I'm doing to become blah, blah, blah.

And it's like this thing that I, I still catch myself doing that we, we do, 'cause we're like performing. I'm a woke white woman. Look at me. Right? It's like, instead of I'm just gonna do what I'm [01:39:00] doing behind the scenes. And from the outside the optics might be that I'm not doing anything. And I need to be able to be okay with that while I'm in the process of learning and unlearning. And then I'll show up to the conversation, not when I feel ready, 'cause I'm never gonna feel ready. But when I feel like I have done enough work that I can be present to this conversation and stay regulated and own my shit as best I can and be, be actually open and ready to learn. That that is a process and a journey that we each have to go through. And I just wanna express compassion around that because can only be where we are in these things.

I just feel it's important to have compassion around the fact that this is a process, deconstructing all of the things that are playing into these smaller cult dynamics. There's this larger work we have to do. And it takes time.

And it means standing in a space of tension. If we just keep retreating to our insular world, world with a small-w, the larger world with a big W is gonna continue to be abandoned and [01:40:00] stuck. We've gotta do our work and step out into those arenas.

Both and. Inner work. Systemic change.

Tracy Stamper: Both and.

Candice Schutter: Thank you so much for tuning in. If you feel personally moved by this content, and you have an impulse to share, we encourage you to do so. However, we also respectfully request that you do not flip the flying monkey script and use this content to shame anyone who might be still waking up to these dynamics.

And if you'd like to send us a personal message, visit thedeeperpulse.com/share.

I'll be back soon with another story in the 'cult'ure series lineup.

Bye for now.

