

Susan McCulley: [00:00:00] You know, the political actions can indirectly lead to help. And that's a long game and it's an important game to be playing. But it's, it can't be the only thing.

Candice Schutter: Right. Yeah.

Susan McCulley: There can be this, well, I went to a protest and that's what I'm doing. And I say yes, and what did you do to make the community stronger? What did you do to build a relationship that wasn't there before? Or offer support to somebody who may be struggling?

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

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Thank you for tuning in for another episode of the Deeper Pulse. You know, back in November, which was the last drop here on the main feed before a long break, I shared with you about hope. And how at the time I was keeping optimism [00:01:00] alive by taking action.

And I said to you, that whatever the outcome that I was likely going to fall to my knees, feeling either a sense of relief or devastation. And unfortunately, it was the latter that came to pass. And even as I anticipated it was a strong possibility that we would end up right where we are, it took me a minute.

I am prone to anxiety, to self-doubt, to second guessing myself. So I've been feeling all of that as I step back into the spotlight. And I'm sharing this, because it's easier to have my strong feelings in private with the people that I love and care about, and to not show up publicly in this world where sometimes the meaning we're after gets lost due to sound bites and a lack of nuance in public discourse. So it's a scary time to be speaking out loud.

Some days I wake up feeling anxiety and fear. [00:02:00] Because, well, fascism and the Nazi oligarchy that's taking over in Washington, and the fact that people are, quite literally, being disappeared for speaking their minds. This whole Trump presidency has woken us up to the reality that many different demographics have been living throughout this nation's history.

And there's so much happening, it feels impossible to respond to everything in real time, and so I'm not going to roll through the headlines here. We are in the thick of it, and who even knows what fresh hell might emerge by the time I release this recording. So finding ways to respond to this tumultuous time, close to home and within our communities is key right now.

As I'm exploring critical theory around organizational leadership, I'm realizing how much collective inertia is connected to our ideas about leadership and about the grandiosity that's [00:03:00] often attached to it. As if impact isn't as meaningful or as important if it's not on a large, massive scale.

We forget the power that we have, the things that we can do that don't require any sort of authority telling us when and where to move. We have our values within us. We have the

compass of our heart to guide us toward what feels right and what feels wrong, each of us doing our part. Not looking for a savior, but stepping forward one by one by one. That's the power of community.

The other day I was listening to an interview with Luvvie Ajayi Jones, and she offered up some simple yet sage advice. She said, "Don't worry about changing the world, that's too big. Ask yourself, what can I do to change the room that I'm in?"

And as I spoke about in episode 86, it can be very uncomfortable, quite literally [00:04:00] painful, to separate from group norms, to be the one who speaks up.

Your courage will catch up to you. That has certainly been my experience when it comes to challenging the bullies of the world and standing up for what's right.

But I'm saying a lot of words, and I'm not really answering the question that's forefront in most of our minds, which is, what can we do in response to this madness? That's what today's conversation is about.

How do we, particularly those of us who have been raised on this bootstrap ideology, this individualistic culture, how do we learn to come together in community and collectivism? This is the question of our time folks. And right now we've gotta learn how and we've gotta learn fast.

On Saturday, April 5th, there is a nationwide protest planned, and I hope that wherever you are, you will participate. Because us showing up in large numbers, it sends a [00:05:00] strong message. Protesting. Making phone calls. Showing up to local town halls. All of that matters. If you're doing it, keep it up.

But what else can we do?

What does it look like to start local? To create activist movements within our own communities that are grounded in measurable impact?

I'm gonna be real with y'all. Like I anticipated a dictatorship, a fascist regime. But I had no idea it would move this quickly. And some days, I really do question whether or not we're gonna be able to save our democracy.

But here's the thing, we need to take action anyway. Not just because we don't wanna give up. But because we need each other, now more than ever. And there are things we can do locally within our own communities to create support networks, to fill in the [00:06:00] gaps that are being created by greed, bigotry, and injustice.

If our only game plan is to look to our leaders to save us, I hate to say it y'all, but I think we're a little bit screwed. I think we have to do different than we've ever done before and truly come together. We may not be able to save this country from Trump and his oligarch bros, but we can save each other. Or at the very least, we can have an impact in whatever room we're in, at the park where we walk our dog, at the supermarket, in our community

centers, and through strategic support of local organizations who already know how to meet the needs of our community.

So today's conversation is with Susan McCulley. Susan first joined The Deeper Pulse back at the beginning of the 'cult'ure series. She's a former Org teacher and Tracy Stamper and I [00:07:00] interviewed her in a bonus conversation over on Patreon. Susan joined me once again in January of 2024, when we spoke about body image and diet culture. And she's back again today because, after the election when Susan picked herself up off the floor and dusted herself off, she decided to do something.

You'll hear her speak about what motivated her to create a community activist movement. What started out as a small group of concerned citizens in Charlottesville, Virginia, has since swelled to over 400 individuals, who are not only aligned in their values, but in their actions.

Today's episode is to offer an example of what it can look like when a community comes together to fight the fallout of fascism within their own neighborhoods.

Be sure to listen all the way through, because Susan's gonna share with us four questions that can help get us unstuck.

[00:08:00] Here is my conversation with the founder of Keep Going Together, Susan McCulley.

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Candice Schutter: Oh. Hello my friend. We are here again. Wow. We just bounce from topic to topic, don't we?

Susan McCulley: I was thinking about that. Yeah, 'cause a friend of mine, today, she approached me after class and, um, and she's so upset about what's happening.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: She is married to somebody who at the very best is ambivalent, if not leaning Trumpy. And so she feels very alone.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And, um, she said, I, I wanna ask you something. She said, I think that maybe that this whole Trump thing, I think maybe it's a cult.

And I said, oh, yes, honey. And she said, she said, I don't know, I just had this idea. And I said, listen, I'm gonna set you up with a podcast. [00:09:00] There's about 800 episodes.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: All about this.

Candice Schutter: Right. And there's so many people talking about it now. Like Janja Lalich is putting a lot of stuff out. And all the people, are giving people language for it.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Well that was the one I sent her. I said, you can look at the,

Candice Schutter: Good.

Susan McCulley: Look at this whole list because there'll be things that will appeal to you.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: But I was like, are. uh, we've been talking about this for years now.

Candice Schutter: We sure have. And I really feel like, I dunno if you feel this way, and I don't know if this is me sort of reading too much meaning into chaos. But I keep saying to people, the 'cult'ure series was like my bootcamp.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And now, it's time to go to battle.

This deconstruction that we did in this sort of microcosmic way of these smaller communities, and one that we shared, where we kind of looked at what was good and what wasn't and the complexities of it and developed all this language around it. And then started to talk to other people and see the parallels, and really do the work of actually naming it out loud.

Because, I mean, [00:10:00] that's part of what we're here to talk about, right? Is like what is it to actually step into activism and using our voices and like really doing the thing. And I don't know, quite honestly, Susan, that I would be able to do this if I was the me.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Back in 2022, who first started dropping those episodes. I would be knees shaking, freaking the fuck out.

Susan McCulley: So much. And yeah, I think that that for me, part of what happened after doing all of that deconstruction is that, after I got out of the depression of the results of the election, I was like, okay, I know what we're dealing with here.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: I, I know what this is.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: I know how they're manipulating us or trying to. I know the way they're using language. I know the way they're using, you know, love bombing.

Oh, I wish you could have heard the telephone [00:11:00] town hall of one of our congressman who is just a boot-licking Trumper.

Candice Schutter: Mm.

Susan McCulley: He was just like, I just love you all. And I just, and I was like, oh yeah, go ahead and try that.

Candice Schutter: Uhhuh, right, right.

Susan McCulley: I know what you're doing. You little weasel.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Susan McCulley: Will not work on me.

Candice Schutter: No.

Susan McCulley: So, but I think that. Yeah, I totally agree. And that there's less, I think that is a shock or a surprise.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And more of like, yep, that's what's gonna happen next.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Now it's the words and the, you know, things like DEI and waste, fraud and abuse. It's just, it's thought terminating cliches.

Candice Schutter: A hundred percent.

Susan McCulley: So interesting. And dog whistles, which is similar. It's a similar thing.

Candice Schutter: It is. Right.

And then, and I think, I wanna say there's an aspect of it that's about having empathy towards the people who are, sort of, buying into that narrative and are indoctrinated into to that ideology, there's a sense of empathy that [00:12:00] emerges for me.

But not just empathy. Because the places we're gonna go today is like talking about making empathy actionable, which means really pushing back against those folks and being okay with that. So that's there.

But I don't get derailed by the confusion as much as I think other people do, right. Where they're like, I don't get? How did they? Why are people fi-? Like people are really, understandably, it's taking up a lot of psychic space. Trying to understand what is even happening, I think just paralyzes so many people. And so just having an understanding, that foundational understanding of being like, okay, I'm not gonna go beat my head up against that wall over there. Because I know exactly what's gonna happen. And I know why it's gonna happen. And I know how those dog whistles work and I understand all of that.

And so where can I be of service and have an impact? And not be afraid of stepping on those toes. Which is something that, again, within the process of everything we did. We talked about good girl conditioning. We talked about [00:13:00] our, our white saviorship and our fragility and all those things, like all the things that we talked about. It's like now, okay, walk the fucking talk. What are you doing to create a new experience and a new reality in terms of how we respond to these things, *especially* as white women. Especially in terms of stepping forward in that way. And that's something that you and I know have talked quite a bit about, on and off the record.

So I'm just thrilled to have you here today. And I'm glad that we already have a shared language around a lot of this. And I invited you here, because I love speaking with you, and I always benefit a lot from our dialogues. And also, because you have really stepped forward in your community and taken, like you said, after the election, you really dusted yourself off, got up, and really started moving in a really tangible way. And you've created something in your community, that a lot of people are co-creating with you, that I think can be a great [00:14:00] model for many of us around the country. Especially those of us who are like, what do I do? I wanna do something. I keep hearing these buzzwords, do something, take action, create community,

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: All these things, and you're doing those things and making them really tangible. So I'm just thrilled to have you here for this conversation.

Susan McCulley: It's always a delight to speak with you, my friend.

Candice Schutter: Yay.

Susan McCulley: And this is just something that is really keeping me afloat, and allowing me to direct a lot of energy in a way that feels in alignment with my values.

And, and it's, yeah. I, I keep coming back to, at the end of the game, whatever that is, at the end of my life, at the end of whatever, can I look back and say, I did the best I could and did I do it in a way that I feel good about? Right?

And so, so when [00:15:00] I look back on my own experience in the Org, for example, there are so many examples of times when stuff was going sideways, and I just sat there and let it go sideways.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And I think that part of what I'm so grateful for your whole 'cult'ure series is that it gave me a chance to examine that and have compassion for myself.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: And when presented with another situation where things are going sideways, I am not gonna let it just slide sideways.

Candice Schutter: Yes. Yes, so much yes to that.

Let's start by telling folks about this group that you created. Tell us about what inspired that and what it is.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. So literally the election brought me to my knees. And, I really felt like everything [00:16:00] was over and that everything I cared about was going down. And I turned off all of my news. I stopped reading pretty much everything. As I started to emerge, when I started wearing color again, I mean, I literally was, I feel like I was in mourning. I was, uh, yeah. It was, it was a terrible couple of weeks and I am grateful for all the people who stuck with me while I was being miserable.

As I started to come out, I started to listen to, read, seasoned activists, almost all women, many people of color, Black women. And I started noticing themes. And sometimes I was reading stuff that was current, but not always. Sometimes I was just reading about, what you do when everything starts falling apart. And I started to notice that the themes that came [00:17:00] up over and over again were build community, get hyperlocal, and focus on the people who you can help in your neighborhood.

And so I, you know, I started thinking about like, what does that look like? As you say, you hear these words and you're sort of, okay, yeah.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: Kind of know what that is. Yeah. All right.

But I woke up one morning in that sort of space between sleep and, and being awake. And I had this idea of creating a group that would work together to support our local nonprofits who were holding up the most marginalized people, institutions, and environments in our area.

And the first idea I had was to call it [00:18:00] *through it together*, based on the idea that the only way out is through.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: But then I knew that it would get changed to, uh, an acronym. And so I didn't wanna be the, the TIT group.

Candice Schutter: Which, you know,

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: is, could be fitting given the probably, majority demographic. Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. But, um. So, so then I, then I remembered this quote, which is often attributed to Winston Churchill, although he didn't actually say this. *When you're going through hell, keep going.* So I called the group Keep Going Together. I called up my buddy who's a graphic designer and I said, hey, make us a logo. He was like, okay. And like, next day I had a logo.

And I put it up on Facebook as a private group and invited some people, just to see if what I was saying, it made sense to me, but I wanted to see if it made [00:19:00] sense to anybody else. And you know, a bunch of people joined me and we started talking and we started setting up, kind of parameters about the way we wanted to be together. That we wanted to focus on action. We wanted to focus on what can we do in our community? Because can't change whatever the heck they're gonna do. And what we can do is build relationships with the people who are doing the work already beautifully and whose funding is in jeopardy. And what can we do for them? How can we build relationships with each other to support each other, because we are all suffering and we're all in some kind of grief right now.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: Then building relationships with the nonprofits, and the people who are on the front lines doing the work, as I say, whose resources are disappearing. And [00:20:00] then, by extension, anybody and anything that is benefiting from that work. So that this, this network of support, it expands out.

So at about lunchtime. I, I think there were 50 of us.

Candice Schutter: Nice.

Susan McCulley: And we've just been growing since then. And it's been a fascinating evolution. I think when we first started, we were almost defiantly nonpolitical, like political action was not where we were putting our attention. This was November, December. And after the inauguration, however, we have definitely increased our attention on things like calling our congress critters and telling them what we think and doing that really regularly, like a practice. We have, um, certainly participated in some protests and rallies and that kind of thing.

And at the same [00:21:00] time, we're always looking at who is suffering in our community, and what can we do directly to help with that?

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: What can we contribute in terms of, can we raise money, can we volunteer, can we, whatever it is that's, that's needed.

So for example, somebody posts something early on, it was in January, I think, about some terrible ICE raid in Chicago. We're in Charlottesville, Virginia. And my response was, okay, there's nothing we can do about that. But I know the lawyer who's working for immigrant families here.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Susan McCulley: And so I called her, and said, I know you have no time. I said, just dump it out on me. Tell me your top needs. Tell me what, if you had a band of people, what could you do? What would you need done?

And she told me, you know, I need [00:22:00] drivers. I need office help. I need funds for bond. I need somebody to help with paperwork. And she just told me all of these things.

I put it out to the group. And I don't know, who speaks Spanish? Does anybody speak Spanish? You know?

And it's amazing. People are, are like, yeah, I used to do this work with, you know, with different populations. Or I used to be a lawyer and I could do paralegal work.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: You know, I'm retired now, but I could do that. I don't know anything about anything, but I could drive people to wherever they need to go.

And it is so powerful to be able to go to an organization and say, tell me what your top needs are. Tell me what would make things easier for you and reduce the suffering for your clients or for the work you're doing. And I can put it out there and the people who are drawn to it, [00:23:00] step up. And it's a really powerful way of making a difference that we simply can't make across the country.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

My first master's degree was in Social Impact. It's really about building nonprofits and socially minded businesses. And there was so much focus on, because in this individualistic society that we live on, how to do this yourself.

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Right? How to create your plan, how to duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh.

And I got out of the program and I learned quite a lot. But I was also like, this feels like more of the same thing. Me at the top of some sort of pyramid starting a whole thing. There are people who, well before this crisis hit our country, who have been doing this work, some of them their whole lives.

And I love, what I love so much about your [00:24:00] approach, Susan, and the all of you together are doing, is really your giving them a boost, like helping them to do the work they've always been doing with even more support. And you're not trying to reinvent the wheel or anything like that.

And I think again, that's sort of another sideways presentation of white saviorship. Like, we need our name to be on it, it needs to be *our* organization.

Susan McCulley: Oh yeah.

Candice Schutter: And it's like, no, no, no, no, no. What needs to happen is that people need help, and there's people already doing it. And I love that you're taking this, all this energy and this the sense of helplessness that people feel.

Because, and I know for a fact, that a lot of people listening to this episode are like, I want to do something. Really, really, I want to. And I have no idea what and how and where to start.

And I love that you're like, well, there are plenty of people who know exactly what needs to be done. And they don't have enough resources or enough people or enough funding to do the things that need to be done. How about we ask? How about we partner up with them and support them and become.

Susan McCulley: [00:25:00] That's right.

Candice Schutter: You know, the wind beneath their wings, so to speak. Because there's so many of us. And it sounds like it's really making a difference in your community.

Because, you know, I'm a part of the group. And I do a lot more observing because it's, most of the activism is local. But I'm learning so much just seeing the posts that people are posting about. And it's like a wildfire that's built. I joined immediately and it was like, you know, spark, a post here or there.

And, and now, I can't even keep up.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Because you created these parameters around it. And you and I spoke, we had a preliminary chat before this when you were talking about like, you didn't want it to be a place where people just come to bitch.

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Like, that's fine. We, we all need to do that.

But also, that's not what this space is. This space is about action. And so when I read through the posts, there's always something informative around what could be done, what is being done, what the next step to take is. And I think this is the thing people are most hungry for.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. I think you're mentioning a number of things that are really important.

One is, I think that no matter who you [00:26:00] are, you're gonna go through times where you're feeling helpless, hopeless, despair. And it is so easy to get stuck in the vortex of the just unbelievable, unending, relentless shitshow that is being shot at us every day. And there is such a seductive quality to just like, keep on consuming, consuming what's going on and feeling like, like almost like a butterfly pinned.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: By everything that's happening. And the enormity of it is what feels so impossible to break out of.

So my recommendation for folks. I mean, yeah, if you wanna go and like hang out and vent and bitch and talk about it, I totally get it. And there are people I do that with. But I'll tell you, to be honest, [00:27:00] it doesn't really f, it doesn't feel good. It doesn't make me feel better. I sometimes lash out about this or that.

Candice Schutter: Sure.

Susan McCulley: Um, you know, the Department of Education at the moment is making me put my head down and just knock it against the desk.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: But, what I've noticed is the people who are doing this over consumption, of taking it in and sort of regurgitating how terrible it is, kind of get stuck there.

And when I said that, that working with Keep Going Together is keeping me afloat, what I mean by that I get information. And I say, okay, what can I do in *that* realm *my* community? And then I take some action.

Maybe it's making a phone call. Maybe it is volunteering for the new queer center that's opening in [00:28:00] our neighborhood. Maybe it's reaching out to another nonprofit that I haven't talked to yet, and just to hear their story and to find out what their situation is. Whenever I do that, I start to feel like, okay, I feel like this sense of being buoyed.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And then yeah, inevitably, there's some crappy news. And I'm just dumbfounded by how bad it is. But what I keep doing is just keep doing something. And that's what the group does.

You know, we've got folks who are sending information about local actions that are happening. There are a lot of protests and that kind of things that people can participate in. We've got some artists who are like, all through Black History Month, every single day somebody was posting something about a monumental black artist. This is Women's History Month, and so it's like women artists. And [00:29:00] it's just like, so inspiring and helpful.

Other people are really focused on things like, make sure that we're taking care of ourselves, and what can we do to keep ourselves going internally. Or working the relationships that we may have with people who have voted differently than we. I mean, all kinds of really interesting ways of actually taking action to counteract the deadening anchoring energy of what is going on in the world.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: So we're in late March 2025, and right now there are a lot of protests going on. And I am all for standing up and saying, no. Calling the Congress people and saying, you know what, no, this is not good.

And I find that it's important that we are also doing things that are directly positive. [00:30:00] By this I mean, fundraisers and volunteering and donating and doing things that are actually directly leading to help.

Now, you know, the political actions can indirectly lead to help. And that's a long game, and it's an important game to be playing. But it's, it can't be the only thing.

So that is part of my focus too. And I find this, particularly for white folks, that there can be this, well, I went to a protest and that's what I'm doing. And I say yes, and what did you do to make the community stronger? What did you do to build a relationship that wasn't there before? Or offer support to somebody who may be struggling?

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: Um, a really great, kind of shopping mall at the edge of our town. There's a proposed Tesla dealership going in there. And so been a lot of protests there. And the challenge [00:31:00] is that there are a lot of beautiful, little small businesses, local businesses, that are in that mall and potentially could be harmed by our actions.

And so, one of the things I say is if you're gonna go to a protest, buy a cup of coffee in the local store. Tell the person in the little boutique that you support them and buy something there, like shop there. Because we don't want them to suffer. And we want to build their trust that the other people in their community are not just like striding over them to make some kind of political point.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: And, this is a really important thing.

And so wherever you are listening from, whether you have a community of people around you already, or if you just feel stuck and not sure what to do. I say look for a small action that you can take. [00:32:00] And it be what I think of as a 'no' action, like calling and saying, this is not cool and that person should be resigning right now and don't vote for this terrible SAVE act or whatever it is.

And do something, even a small thing, that's positive. And that could be super small. Taking someone's cart from the parking lot at the grocery store so they don't have to walk it back. And really genuinely asking the cashier how they're doing.

Not just saying no to what we don't want, but also saying yes to what we do. Like what do we want? The kind of culture we do wanna be living in.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, yeah.

It's interesting, the thing that's rising up right now is like the protesting piece. It does take a certain amount of courage to stand up in a group. And it takes a whole other kind of courage to stand up on your own.

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And we need to be doing both of those things. [00:33:00] And I think that's kind of a good benchmark. Like, okay, I'm taking, I took my group action. What's my individual action?

And we're gonna talk here in just a moment about these four questions we can ask ourselves, 'cause you know, we said in the beginning when we're sort of listening and learning from activists, there's all this stuff coming at us. And we're like, where do I start? I hear what you're saying. I get it. But I also feel paralyzed still, 'cause there's so much.

Especially because, even as folks are listening and they're like, that's amazing, all the things that Susan and her community are doing. I, you know, work 50 hours a week and I have kids. I can't do all those things, right?

So knowing where to start and where your lane is, is a really important thing. And I just wanna say to everybody, hang tight, stay with us. Because we're gonna talk about that.

Susan McCulley: Absolutely. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And I also wanna underscore, before we go there, this piece around consuming. And it's like a vacuum that pulls us in and, and by design, social media specifically, is designed to do that to our brains and to our bodies. So [00:34:00] again, we're kicking against a really strong current there.

And balancing that with action, you know, I just wanna say, when I've spoken about hope, I keep coming back to this word hope and what it actually means. How hope is a verb, and the definition of it that my mentor, the positive psychologist, C.R. Snyder came up with. So there's the goals. And there's the pathways. And there's the agency. And the thing about social media or about the newsfeed, or about "muzzle velocity" and "flooding the zone" and why it works, why totalitarians do this. It actually attacks hope directly, because it's saying, we're doing so much that your goal, you can't even fucking see it.

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Everything is so clouded, you can't even see your goal on the horizon. And every pathway that you think is available to you, we're shutting that down and we're shutting that down and the Department of Education and USAID. And and they're literally trying to dismantle our sense of hope.

And that's why we have to be really conscientious about not, [00:35:00] mm, imbibing so much of it. When that hunger comes, take a little piece and to somehow learn to walk away. Like every addict has to do with everything that we become addicted to. It's a, it's an addiction. And we need each other and other things to distract ourselves from that.

But agency.

The reason why it feels so good when you do the one thing, even though you can't see the horizon, 'cause it's so cloudy and the pathways seem to be just closing one by one, by one by one. You do a thing that reminds you, wait, hope is still possible, because I still have agency.

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: I still have agency. I still can do something that has an impact, even if it's just on my neighbor or the person across the street or the person that is impacted by that nonprofit organization. And that is soul fire, my friends. That is the stuff that turns everything back on. And that, that feeds this sort of opposite dragon, if you will. Like there's the dragon that brings us to our knees, and then there's the [00:36:00] one that's like, I am not giving up.

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: I'm finding something really similar. The more actions I take, and I do wanna talk about these questions soon because it feels like it's starting to move in that direction around, what is in my lane.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And I'm stepping out of my lane too, here and there. But I, I really think it's important we speak to this piece, because some people, I think, also don't do anything, because they're like, I, that's just not me, that thing.

Susan McCulley: Right.

Candice Schutter: And so, we step out of our comfort zone somewhat to do things and then we also figure out what it is that enlivens us.

I was just talking, just as an example, which will maybe lead us into these questions a little bit. I was talking to a friend recently, and she was sharing about a friend of hers who's a queer man. And the friend I was speaking to was saying like, she's been doing all this activism work and she was sharing with her queer male friend that she's doing all of this. And he was just like, I'm just too sensitive. I just can't, like, that's great that you're doing that, but I [00:37:00] just, I'm not doing anything.

And then like, in the next breath, proceeds to tell her. He's an amazing artist. He's like, by the way, I designed my outfit for the Civil War. She sent me a picture of it. It's like this incredible gown with like, all these metals and stuff on it. And it's rainbow. And it's incredible.

Susan McCulley: Oh my God.

Candice Schutter: That's his activism.

Susan McCulley: He's doing it. He's doing it.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: He's absolutely doing it.

Candice Schutter: He's like, I'm not doing anything. No, you are just by doing what you do in response to this. I don't know. I just thought it was a great example of what we were talking about the other day.

Susan McCulley: It's a beautiful example. And I do think we should go into the questions. Before we do, I just wanted to say, that it is building a muscle. That it is important to take ourselves outside of our comfort zone enough to stretch ourselves.

So what does that look like? I mean, it's very, very personal. All of this is very individual. And what is a stretch for me is like easy peasy to you. And [00:38:00] that's part of the beauty having companions along this trail.

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Susan McCulley: I'm gonna do this thing, because it's a little bit of a stretch for me. And you're gonna do something else that's a stretch for you.

You know, finding your lane a hundred percent, which may not look like what you think activism looks like. It may be very different, and we'll get to that in just a second.

The other thing I wanna say is, especially if you don't feel like you have a community, start with just two friends.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Start with a little triad of the three of you. And talk each other about how you're feeling. And then let's go to these questions 'cause I think it's really helpful, especially if you're feeling overwhelmed.

So these are questions that I started asking myself regularly and folks [00:39:00] in Keep Going Together, especially when they first join us. But also asking members to revisit these questions.

The first question is:

What is good, beautiful, and working in the world and in your life?

Because when we are in the fire hose of terrible, it is really easy to only see the mess and to only see the darkness. And when our vision is narrowed to only the terrible, we have no energy, no capacity to do anything. And that, as you said, is by design.

Candice Schutter: Yep.

Susan McCulley: So by opening the aperture. It's not to say that we're, you know, we've talked about toxic positivity and spiritual bypassing. [00:40:00] That is not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is being able to hold it both.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: To hold what's happening, to hold what is being torn down and being destroyed and being recklessly, cruelly dismantled, and the fact that the stars were so bright this morning.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: And here in Virginia right now, the cherry trees are blooming and the daffodils are just breathtaking.

Both of those things are happening. And,

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: The more that we can see the full spectrum of life as it is right now, the more we can see clearly what it is, what we wanna say no to, and what we wanna work for, what we want to preserve, to save.

Candice Schutter: Yes, yes.

Susan McCulley: To stand with.

So the first question is, what is good, beautiful, and working in your life and in the world?

The second question is:

Who are you [00:41:00] willing to stand with, work for, maybe stand in front of, as we were talking about before?

I mentioned that part of my struggle right after the election was that it felt like everything I cared about was going down. And that is true. And what I have done is to identify one, two, three issues that really matter to me, for whatever reason. I mean, it's, and I don't even, I'm not even gonna say what they are. Because it's so easy to be well, like, what about this? I'm like, yeah.

Candice Schutter: Exactly.

Susan McCulley: And for whatever reason, these are the ones that have floated to the top for me right now. Now that could change, right. But now, I'm focusing on just these couple of issues. Now, as part of this group, what I'm also focusing on is getting people to engage in their own brand of [00:42:00] activism. So that's, sort of, like a, an umbrella

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: that is over all of this.

But for me personally, I have, you know, just a couple of things where I'm really putting my attention.

And what's helpful about this is that, first of all, it's focusing your energy. It's not spreading yourself so thin. Because we can't, we can't all do everything. And it's much more impactful for people to really dig deep into the things that really matter to them. Build relationships, for

example, with nonprofits or whoever is doing the work or with whoever is, is in the way of harm. And that doesn't happen if you're just dabbling in everything.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, that's true.

Susan McCulley: That being said, one my issues is not particularly immigrant populations. But if there is an action for them, I will step up for that.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: But that's not where I'm putting my, my attention.

And this takes some [00:43:00] time, I find, depending on the person. It could be doing some reading or researching into the history and the, the current situation of a particular issue. It could be your own personal relationships that you are particularly touched by an issue. For many people, it's not easy to identify right away.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, I just wanted to say, 'cause I worked as a coach and I listened to people for a living for 15 years. Part of my job was to listen for the things that people were passionate about, right?

Where's the fire for you? Like, when I talked about them flooding the zone and all the pathways that they're closing, the one that makes you go, what the f?

Susan McCulley: Yes.

Candice Schutter: That makes you, that turns your nervous system on.

Sometimes what turns your nervous system on is not the thing to focus on if it turns you on in a way that's too triggering. So I don't, I wanna be clear about that.

But then there's the things that you just feel a certain fire around for whatever reason. Pay attention to that. Pay attention to the things that you tend to [00:44:00] fixate on.

Susan McCulley: Yes.

Candice Schutter: In terms of issues, I think can help people to identify that as well. So I just wanted to throw that out there because.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. That absolutely happen to me, traveling with my husband in a beautiful place. And I read one story, and I thought I was going to meltdown. I did meltdown. I was enraged.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And I realized, after I spent a whole day like being a pain in the butt and doing all of my regulation tools, just like, oh, you know. Um, once I came down from like, oh, there's some information.

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Susan McCulley: This is what I need to put my attention on. This is where I need to, to turn, this is a pain in myself, a suffering in myself that I need to turn toward to find the people who, who need help there.

Candice Schutter: Well, and the reason why that that is so helpful in the long term is because when you're doing this kind of work, there's a lot of dead ends, there's a lot of [00:45:00] detours that have to be taken. There's a lot of frustrations. I learned this working in the foster system, right? You think you're gonna have an impact here. But, nope. Roadblock, roadblock, roadblock.

But you know, I think of the word outrage. When we feel a sense of outrage around something, that anger, frustration, whatever is the thing that's gonna keep you going when you hit the roadblock. Whereas if you didn't feel as passionate about it, you would give up sooner. And that's also why it's important to pick those issues, because you're gonna hit something that's gonna tell you no. And that fire of frustration can be mutated into something constructive that'll help, you know, crawl over that wall or help build a ladder or whatever. Um, so yeah, I think, getting the rage out in a constructive way.

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Around the things that we're most outraged by.

But, you know, at first they do take us to our knees sometimes, like you said.

Susan McCulley: Very often.

Candice Schutter: And you just have to have that experience first.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. But yeah. This second question, which is, who are you willing to stand with? Who are you [00:46:00] willing to speak up for, protect, work for? What is it that fires you up, that lights you up?

That's a really important part of the process.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: And not something either that is written in stone, nor is it necessarily something that you will figure out overnight.

Even if you've like, had a cause for years.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Things are different now.

Candice Schutter: They are.

Susan McCulley: And things are more in jeopardy, perhaps, than they've ever been in a lot of cases. And so, I really invite people to be curious.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Um, and I love your suggestion to notice what maybe brings you to your knees and find if that is a place where you, there's a foothold for you. Yeah.

The third question, I think it might be my favorite question.

Candice Schutter: I was gonna say, I think it's my favorite.

Susan McCulley: It's, is *what is your superpower?* [00:47:00]

What is it that you do with joy and ease and energy? The thing that your friends say, oh my gosh, you are so amazing when you do this thing. And you say it's, can't everybody do this? And the answer is no, everybody cannot do that. And that is where you can make an incredible difference.

So my favorite example of this is my 85-year-old father lives in a retirement community in southern Maryland. And they have a little list serve that goes to all the residents. And right after the election, he said things are terrible. And make a really, really good loaf of bread. [00:48:00] So if you make a donation to any cause, for any kind of social action, uh, social justice, ACLU, whoever you want to make a donation to, just tell me that you did that, and I'll make you a loaf of bread.

Candice Schutter: I love that.

Susan McCulley: Now.

Candice Schutter: I love that.

Susan McCulley: I, yeah.

One of the things I love about it is that one person made a donation for \$1,050 or something. And she, she said, she said, this is the most expensive piece of bread I've ever had.

But I think my point with this is, it would've been so easy for him to say, I'm an old dude.

Candice Schutter: Yep.

Susan McCulley: in a small community. I don't have any social justice activist experience. I don't know what I could do.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: But instead, he looked at his skill, at something that he does, he loves to do and, and that brings such joy to the [00:49:00] people around him. He's always a welcome dinner guest, let me tell you what. Um, and, and he, he made that into a social justice action.

Candice Schutter: It's beautiful.

Susan McCulley: And this is, is possible for everyone, everyone.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Um, there are so many examples. There's a, a woman I follow, her name is Shannon Downey, um, she's also known as the Badass Cross Stitch. Um, she does embroidery work.

Okay. Like what? It seems like, completely benign.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: But no. She makes, first of all, she makes totally hilarious patterns. I'm, just invite you to go and look. And they're, they're wonderful.

Candice Schutter: We'll link to it. We'll link to it in the show notes.

Susan McCulley: But, um, but she also kind of invites people into activism through craft. And it's sometimes called craftivism.

Craft has been one of the [00:50:00] underpinnings of social movements forever.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And there are so many examples. But one of the ones I, of course, is like the AIDS quilt, made at a time when people were turning away and not acknowledging the humanity behind this scourge of a disease. They literally laid these people's lives out on the, the Washington Mall.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And made people see the lives that had been taken in a way that changed history. It changed, yeah, public opinion.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: And so, my point here is just, no matter what it is that you do well and with joy and with energy, that is something that can lend itself to offer help and assistance in ways that you may not expect.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: So, so [00:51:00] whatever your superpower is, whether it's accounting or crochet or bread baking, whatever it is, get curious and creative about how can I help with that?

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: Because I think that one of the things that I find is that people say, I wanna do this right. I wanna do the right thing. And there are plenty of people who will tell you the right thing to do is phone banking. Or the right thing to do is knocking on doors or working for a campaign or something. And for you, that may be a superpower. If so, blessings on your head and go and do them.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: But for a lot of people, those things are a struggle. And they don't feel good. If that is the case for you, I don't recommend doing those things.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: I recommend finding something that you can do with [00:52:00] energy and joy.

Candice Schutter: Well, and this connects, this question really also connects to, I guess it was an indirect action item you gave all of us in the beginning when you were talking about what Keep Going Together does.

Like reaching out to the lawyer and you're like, gimme a list. You're writing down all the things. You need this, you need the driver, you need this, da, da, da.

Also a way to approach this, instead of just thinking like, what am I good at and what can I do related to activism? Reach out and get the, the list from your community and then look at that list and say, okay, what is something that I do that sort of fits the bill here?

As I thought of another example sort of related to crafts while you were talking. My mom and I both have been CASA advocates, court appointed special advocates in the foster system.

And my mom. So I decided I was gonna do this volunteer thing a few years ago, and I told her about it. And she was just retiring and she basically, long story short, got trained and became a [00:53:00] volunteer faster than me. She just thought it was a great idea and she called me and she's like, hey, I'm already doing it.

And I was like, wait, what? Um, so she got really into it.

Exactly.

And it's in her wheelhouse, because she just has the right temperament for that kind of work. It takes a certain temperament. You have to be really grounded and stay really regulated and have sort of a nurturing, altruistic approach to life, and that's my mom. So anyway, she, she started doing that. And then now she actually works part-time at the CASA office.

Um, but at a certain point, she looked at the needs of the foster system. And she's really good at quilting and sewing. She's been an incredible seamstress my whole life. So she asked around, and she discovered that a lot of times when a kid is pulled out of the home, the child has to pack really quickly. And so, she thought about it and she was like, oh, I'll make some quilted with love custom made duffle bags that they can take with them when they go pick up these children. And these kids have this [00:54:00] handmade thing, that is the first thing they're given, that they can put their stuff in. 'Cause not all these kids have suitcases. I mean, these are children who are like neglected. It's just like this really mundane item, but it makes a massive difference.

Susan McCulley: Sure.

Candice Schutter: in these kids' lives.

So I offer that as an example to just say, sky's the limit in terms of how you can apply this stuff. But to say like, she asked what is needed here? And then she looked at what are my skills? And then figured out a way to merge the two.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And do something that she loves to just sit around and make things. It works for her. It fits, I just think it fits the bill of question number three. What's your superpower and putting it to work for, for all of this?

Susan McCulley: It's a perfect example.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. And looking for, looking for that overlap.

Yeah. I mean, I'm a movement teacher. Again, not something that one would think of as being much of an activist thing. But give me, give me a playlist. I can give you a playlist. Yes, I can.

And [00:55:00] this is another point that I wanted to bring in here. That part of what happens when we do things that align with our gifts is that we stay in our bodies.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: So one of the things that can happen, and again, this is intentional, when we're flooded with information that fills us full of fear or despair, is that we go up into our heads and we start to spin. I literally can feel when I've had too much news.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. Same.

Susan McCulley: I literally feel either dizzy, spinning in my head, or I feel like I've eaten like a bunch of crap.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: You know, like in my stomach. I feel like unwell. Really good opportunity to use some of those self-care tools and to go outside and breathe.

But the same thing can happen if you're forcing yourself to do something that is [00:56:00] outside your, um, I don't wanna say outside of your comfort, because I think it is okay to nudge that a little.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: But if you're really

Candice Schutter: Nature.

Susan McCulley: making yourself. Out of your nature, yeah, I like that.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. If you are really contorting yourself to do something, because you think it's the right thing to do, you are actually not gonna do much good.

So this idea of staying in ourselves, getting into our bodies is so important. And that's what you do when you do your superpower.

And, Howard Thurman, who was a theologian in the 20th century and he said:

"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do that. Because the world needs people who have come alive."

And an alive person is by its very nature in its body.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: So this is what's so important about this third [00:57:00] question, about identifying your superpower.

And I also would argue that the more you spend time in your superpower, the more that expands and that you can start doing things that you maybe didn't realize that you could do before.

Candice Schutter: Right. It sort of bleeds into other arenas. Then you're like, oh, wow, I'm doing that. I'm actually doing the thing that I didn't think I could do. Exactly.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And so, then the last question that I ask, I often ask this at the end of a gathering or if somebody is feeling really stuck, overwhelmed, uncertain about what to do. The last question is just:

What is the one next step you could take?

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And whenever anything feels overwhelming, I just wrote about this in my blog last week, is just to make that step so small.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: That you can [00:58:00] do it.

If it feels like too much, it is too much. So make it small enough so that you can keep going, right? And as soon as you start to feel yourself freeze up, ask, well, what's the one, what's one thing?

Like, you and I are gonna hang up, Candice. And today, I gotta call my Congress. I haven't done my congress calls today, so I'm gonna do that. It's the one thing that I'm gonna do today.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: So what these questions I think are helpful for is sort of cutting away a lot of the noise and getting down to the essence of both the truth of the situation, in terms of the good and the bad, what matters to you and what you can do. What is in your skillset to do.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And then taking a step into it.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm. [00:59:00]

That's, I'm just laughing 'cause this is just occurring to me as I'm speaking. You just said a moment ago, you're doing the thing that's your superpower and then suddenly you look around and you're like, oh my gosh, I'm doing this other thing that I didn't even plan to do, 'cause I was just doing the thing. That's my superpower. I feel like that's what this group has been for you.

Susan McCulley: Oh, absolutely.

Candice Schutter: I feel like you stepping forward and using the skills that you've developed over the years. And your ability to practice mindfulness as, as not as like a woo concept, but as in like in a real grounded way of approaching the world. And knowing your body and your ability to describe what it, what is the difference between being in your body and when the news pulls you out. All that stuff. Like all this language that you've developed, you're applying it in this new way. And now you're doing a whole new thing. That maybe if I had said, hey, Susan, go start an activist group. You'd have been like, are you crazy? I'm a movement teacher.

But, but actually, I love what you just said, 'cause I think it's [01:00:00] so important. And I am, I'm gonna spend some time reflecting on it, 'cause I think it's happening for me too. Where it's like, if you move into your lane and you just take up the whole fucking lane, just take up the lane, for once. Take up the lane, spread eagle and just fly. Suddenly you're gonna be in places you never thought you would be. And you'll realize, actually my "superpower" and this "lane" that I've imagined for myself is much bigger than I ever imagined.

And I would add to, you know, there's the checklist of all the skills you developed. But just who you are, your beautiful heart, your intelligence, the way that they dance together. That also is your superpower, that is the thing that's as evident as your nose, right? When you were saying like, what's the thing that you just are, and people marvel at. And you're like, wait, what? I did what? I didn't know that was a thing. This is just me, me-ing. Like Susan Susan-ing is [01:01:00] also part of what you're demonstrating here for us.

Thank you for all the tangible pieces, but also thank you for the integrity you're bringing to it and the heart that you're bringing to it and what you're modeling there, because that's what we need. We need, we need people who've come alive. And a big part of coming alive is being in our integrity, I think. I really do, I really think it is about being honest about who we are and showing the fuck up.

Susan McCulley: Right, yes.

And I think, you know, part of what I wanna make super clear to everybody who's listening is that, you know, for me, being with groups of people and speaking to, to people. I love to do that. And if you are an introvert who the idea of standing up in some kind of situation is totally out of your nature, it doesn't mean that there isn't a role for you.

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Susan McCulley: We need everybody [01:02:00] in their integrity, everybody in their lane, as you say. Um, you know, we've got folks in the group who are working on the website and taking photographs. And we've got a whole team of like, surveillance guys who,

Candice Schutter: I love that so much.

Susan McCulley: Oh my gosh. These, these like.

Candice Schutter: Well speak to that a little bit 'cause people might misunderstand what we're saying there.

Susan McCulley: Oh, I mean, I mean, so for example, we did a fundraiser on Saturday for this new queer center that's opening up, particularly for youth, for trans and queer youth. And I'll tell you, when I set it up, the folks who we were doing it with, they're so without qualms about being out in the world. But I was concerned that some, that somebody would hear about it and wanna come and make a ruckus. Or heaven forbid, have some kind of violence.

And there are some guys in our group, [01:03:00] and one of the things that they do in their spare time is they go to protests and rallies and events and they watch and they look to see what's happening. They look for, for kerfuffles. And they are committed to deescalation and keeping the spaces safe for everybody.

And I'm telling you, I was leading this group and just knowing that they were out there was an enormous gift.

Candice Schutter: It's huge.

Susan McCulley: And, right. They have totally different skill sets than me. I, I, I couldn't even begin, I don't even know what to do.

I mean, I would be no good at that.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: But together, we created a safer environment. And it's, it's amazing.

So no matter who you are or what you see as your gifts. And if you don't know. If you're like, I don't do any, I don't have a superpower, that's bullshit.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Ask your friends. Your friends know what it is what they know, know what it [01:04:00] is. They will tell you.

Candice Schutter: Yep.

There was an exercise I used to do with people when I was a coach. And I would send them these three questions to send to their people. And it was all about diagnosing what these things are. And I never once had a client come back and be like, uh,

Susan McCulley: I've got nothing.

Candice Schutter: There wasn't really anything there.

They were always like, wait, what? And then there was this theme between all the people from different spheres. It is absolutely a thing. So yes, encouraging people to follow through on that and ask their people.

And, you just gave me an idea, because the reason I got so excited when you first told me about the surveillance guys, was because in our area, in this town that I live in, there's a drag show that was planned for last weekend. That, I won't go into the ins and outs of the whole debacle. But this drag show has been planned for months, and there's this group of protesters who were planning to show up. So they moved to the venue and tried to keep it a secret. The protesters found out where it was, and then began to harass the business that was gonna host [01:05:00] it, to the point where the next business said, we're not gonna host it anymore. It sounds scary, what they wanna do.

Th, these are very real threats that exist. And I just wanna say, in my community, there's a group of people who planned to show up and do this very thing. And I remember saying to Chris, literally, this was like three or four days before you told me about these men. I said to Chris, I'm like, where are the fucking men in our community? And it doesn't have to be men. I shouldn't say that, shouldn't be gendered. But we are the people who have the skillset to hold those boundaries, to deescalate, to keep an eye out, to be the surveillance team. Where are those people? Why are they not showing up, so that we all feel comfortable?

Not even specifically me. I actually was ready. I was like, I'll fucking go. I don't care. Because I was just, this is one of my fire issues.

Susan McCulley: Yeah, me too.

Candice Schutter: And so, I was like, I'll be there. I don't.

My concern is the people that might get hurt who are there to perform and the people I'm standing in front of.

Susan McCulley: Sure.

Candice Schutter: And then you told me, in my community, oh, we have those people showing up. And it gave me so much hope. And it [01:06:00] also made me think. And the reason I'm bringing it up now is, it's one thing to say, what's my superpower? To look at the list and compare our superpowers and then line it up. It's a whole other thing to look at the list and go find the people who have that superpower.

Like for me to actually actively seek out, reach out to people that I know who maybe were in law enforcement or something at some point, and to say, hey, would you be willing? Because a lot of times people, again, they wanna help. They just don't know.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Like, oh, of course I'll absolutely be there, right? So think about what other people's superpowers are.

Susan McCulley: And where your needs are.

Candice Schutter: And where your needs are, and actually actively try to seek those people out. You're giving me ideas locally of what we could do. This event has since been rescheduled to April, so that gives us time.

Susan McCulley: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: plan and create that team, you know, create that team that fills that need.

Susan McCulley: And I think that what I appreciate and the big statement that you're making is invite people in to do what they do [01:07:00] well.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: And in that particular situation, what I really appreciate about the team that we are, that is part of Keep Going Together, is they committed to everyone's safety.

Candice Schutter: Yes. Yes, that's right. A hundred percent.

Susan McCulley: And that is, to me, essential. That I would just say as one of the, the things that I over and over to our group, is if you choose to go to a potentially contentious event, whether it's a protest or a drag show or whatever it is, that you commit to staying calm and peaceful. And this is for lots of reasons.

I mean, escalation can happen super fast. And in this environment, this political environment, any kind of violence, whether it's [01:08:00] verbal physical, of course, or even vandalism or anything other than calm and peaceful, nonviolent, is fodder for the administration to clamp down and declare martial law and to start stripping rights.

So it's so important for people who are protesting to be doing it in such a way that they are doing it from a place of, of non-violence. And that we're holding each other accountable. Because as we talked about, we can all get fired up about something, and if somebody comes in is taunting or whatever, some of us might, um, uh, not.

Candice Schutter: Some of us.

Susan McCulley: I'm not pointing any fingers here.

Candice Schutter: Some of us.

Susan McCulley: But you know, if, if you had a friend with you who said, hey, Candice, let's take a breath.

Candice Schutter: Maybe don't. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Yeah. Well, and, and I think though, it's also just to speak to this, this is like a whole other rabbit hole that could be a whole other conversation. So I just wanna [01:09:00] like, put a bookmark in it. But just to say, that there's also I've been listening to folks who deconstruct sort of anti-fascism and what works and what doesn't. And the blurry line between nonviolence, peaceful protest and then when it becomes violent and there's like a huge continuum there.

And the thing that I just wanna speak to is that, when I say that I would stand between those people. I think what happens a lot of times is, especially those of us who've been in like the wellness world or whatever, that peaceful and nonviolent can mean passive.

Susan McCulley: Oh.

Candice Schutter: It's really important that we understand that when I say I'm gonna stand between those people, and if somebody comes up and I'm not gonna get, I'm, I'm, I mean people who know me. I'm not a brawler. I'm just not. I mean, I can talk a big game, but I'm just not.

But I'm to the point now where keeping the peace does not mean staying silent.

Susan McCulley: That's right.

Candice Schutter: It means staying calm and regulated.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: [01:10:00] And saying the thing that needs to be said and drawing the boundary. And even if I do it with my shaky voice or whatever, however it comes to pass.

Not antagonizing.

Susan McCulley: Yes.

Candice Schutter: But defending.

Susan McCulley: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And that's, I think, something we're all gonna have to learn how to do together. And we're gonna cross those lines. And that's why it's good to have people on hand who actually are skilled in deescalation and know how that works and what that looks like.

Susan McCulley: Yep.

Candice Schutter: To help teach us. So that we can say, okay, I'm not gonna, just.

Because it just makes me think of the town hall. I can't remember her name. The woman who was removed.

Susan McCulley: In Idaho.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And like, nobody really did or said anything. And it's like, that's not peaceful non-violence, that's passivity.

Susan McCulley: That's right.

Candice Schutter: So I just wanted to name that as people listen to this. And know that, you know, I know that you and I both see the nuance there. And just wanna name it out loud to everyone and say, that's a whole other conversation.

Susan McCulley: Dang. Yeah. Yeah, it totally is. [01:11:00] And um, but it is important. I just wanted to say that, because it is such volatile times.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: So much, you know, disagreement and, feeling like this, this hatred and this writing people off. And I just really reiterate keeping yourself regulated and calm.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And clear.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: And inviting everybody around you to do the same.

Candice Schutter: Yes. And as you say, not tripping the wire, that gives them an excuse to.

Susan McCulley: Oh, see, that's the thing.

Candice Schutter: Bring down the hammer, right? It's like, that's a fine line to walk. It's a fine line to walk and, and we're gonna have to figure that out together.

And we can't take responsibility for when they do it. But the point is, is just being conscientious of the fact that that's the game plan.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: So don't give them an excuse.

Susan McCulley: Exactly.

Candice Schutter: to go there. Yeah.

This is, I just thank you so much for being generous in the midst of all the other actions you're taking, to share this with me and with all the listeners on the [01:12:00] podcast.

Because it is so encouraging to have a clearer sense around, again, those soundbites of like build community in your area, local activism. It's like, oh, this is one model of how it can look and there are infinite numbers of models, but this is one model of how it can look.

And depending on who the people in your community are and what all your superpowers are, it's probably gonna look a little different.

Susan McCulley: Sure, of course.

Candice Schutter: But here's a great place to start. And the specific things and the examples that you gave for what y'all are doing, and those four questions, I feel so much more equipped.

And I hope you're proud of, of what you're doing. And I know it takes a lot of energy. And I know that you're working, burning the candle at both ends a lot of the time, and I hope you take time to pat yourself on the back. And just

Susan McCulley: Hmm.

Candice Schutter: what you said in the very beginning, like, if I'm going to be living through these times, I wanna look back and feel like I did everything that I could and like I did the best that I could. And I hope that you take time along the way [01:13:00] to celebrate that and to tell yourself that you're actually doing what you set out to do right now. You don't have to wait till then.

Susan McCulley: Yes, thank you. I am.

And I really invite anybody who's interested in doing any of this work, you can check out our website, which is keepgoingtogether.org. You can get a little bit of a taste of, sort of, who we are and what we do. And you're welcome, no matter where you are in the country, in the world.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Susan McCulley: To join our Facebook group and or our email list. And you can be connected to me. I'm happy to talk about whatever your particular situation is and help you get something started. Or, I, I love talking about this, 'cause honestly, it's, it's keeping me hopeful, in that verb way, you know. In that, like actionable way.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: [01:14:00] So thank you for the kindness.

And also, if you're hurting and it doesn't feel good, this will help.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: This will help.

Somebody came to me and she said, oh, I've done all this. I did this in the sixties. I did all this. I don't wanna do it now.

And I'm saying to her and to, to all of you, it's not for us. It's for you.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Susan McCulley: This will help *you*.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And, um, and it will help a lot of other people along the way.

So.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. Thank you. It's a perfect place to end.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: I really loved this conversation and not just because it was fun to have, but because it was *useful*.

First thought, best thought, rapid fire, [01:15:00] ask yourself the four questions and start taking action in your small way.

Remember, activism doesn't have to look like anything in particular. It's you and your values actualized. And honest to God, it's enough. Because if all of us take tiny actions within our wheelhouse of influence, we can have a huge impact.

Again, we may or may not be able to impact what's happening in Washington, but we can have a significant impact on what's happening in our communities. And let's start there.

I'm gonna leave you with a quote that Susan sent me shortly after the first time we spoke in preparation for this conversation. It's by Ursula Wolf Rocca.

"It can be overwhelming to witness, experience, and take in all the injustices of the moment. The good news is, is that they're all connected. So if your little corner of work involves pulling at one of the threads, you're helping to unravel the whole damn [01:16:00] cloth."

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