

Candice Schutter: Welcome to another episode of The Deeper Pulse.

In the words of Timothy Snyder.

"Do not obey in advance. Most of the power of authoritarianism is freely given. In times like these, individuals think ahead about what a more repressive government will want and then offer themselves without being asked. A citizen who adapts in this way is teaching power what it can do."

Candice Schutter: Before I get into the bulk of today's episode, I wanna share with you a clip from my iPhone video archives. This is Janaya Future Khan on Saturday, June 14th at the first No Kings protest in Los Angeles.

Janaya Future Khan: Every generation. Every single generation has a choice to make about what our mark is gonna be. About how we will be remembered. And I want you to know that when you are asked 3 days from now, 10 days from now, 10 years from now, 25, what you were doing when the fascists came, remember this moment.

I want you to take a moment and close your eyes and feel what is in this moment right here with you right now. This is love. So I want you to say, repeat after me:

I got your back.

Crowd: I got your back.

Janaya Future Khan: I got your back.

Crowd: I got your back.

Janaya Future Khan: I got your back.

Crowd: I got your back.

Janaya Future Khan: I got your back.

Crowd: I got your back.

Janaya Future Khan: Yeah.

I'm gonna tell you this. I understand you've gotten different directions. Sometimes it's Black people to the front. Sometimes it's Mexican people to the front. Sometimes it's trans people to the front. I'm gonna tell you this right now. It's everybody to the motherfucking front.

I don't need anybody to walk behind me. I need you at my shoulder.

I'm gonna tell you this. It's not just about what you stand for, it's about who you sit with. For those of you that know the loneliness that echoes deep inside, this is what community feels like. Don't ever let it go.

People got into activism because they thought that it said something about them. I'm gonna tell you something about activism, okay?

Activism doesn't build character. It reveals it.

Take this moment today and go home to your families. Get online. Get back on the streets, whatever. But remember this. Remind the people that it is not yet too late to be the person you always thought that you could be.

Crowd: Come on.

Janaya Future Khan: Nobody is born remarkable. We become remarkable when we fight for freedom and justice and liberation today. Today and every day after this, you have become remarkable.

Thank you.

Candice Schutter: Again, that's Janaya Future Khan, a longtime activist with the Black Lives Matter movement.

I captured this speech live when I was attending the first No Kings protest in downtown Los Angeles back in June. And I am kicking off today's episode with a few excerpts from a Patreon release I dropped a few days after getting back from that trip. There is a second No Kings protest being planned nationwide on October 18th and I know that even among those who find the current administration's actions horrifying and detestable, that there are some who feel trepidation around what it means to show up and protest.

So I wanted to give you a taste of what it *felt* like in downtown Los Angeles last summer when Trump first sent military presence to an American city.

So here's a bit more from that June 20th release over on Patreon.

And In the LA area, there were a dozen different protests. And so the very reasonable level-headed part of my mind was saying, well, just go anywhere but Downtown LA.

But I really had this sense that it was similar to what had happened in Portland back in 2020 when all the BLM protests were breaking out. And Portland was being covered in the media a certain way, that the city was burning basically. The News coverage was misrepresenting the

situation, to say the least. And so I just had this need to know and understand what was really happening. So I decided to go to the Downtown L.A. protest.

And I am a partnered, but unmarried woman, without any children, of a certain age and of a certain level of privilege that I felt like this is not a time for me to be precious about my body and my safety. If *this* body with *this* privilege isn't able to put herself on the front line, who is? Right?

So I attended on my own but I felt the exact opposite of alone. I felt so held and connected and in community. I felt safe among my people. I felt safe because there were so many of us. And the crowd grew and grew and grew. And it was 80 to 90% people of color and so truly what America claimed itself to be before the current regime really stepped into power. There's what America really has always been, which is white supremacist patriarchy. But there's the promise of America, right? The dream. The, diversity. And it was just a really beautiful assembly of humans.

And so I walked up to the steps of the Capitol building and the crowd is like amassed in front. And then on the actual steps, the first set of steps, there are people standing, looking out towards the crowd with their signs. And then right behind them, at the actual doors of the Capitol building, there are National Guard and LAPD all lined up with their guns and their, all the stuff.

And the stark contrast between the military and the people, it was a little bone chilling. But it was also, you know, the military, the vibe that I got from the service people who were standing there, was very peaceful. Like there wasn't tension. There wasn't, like they were guarding the doors 'cause any minute the riot was gonna begin. Like there was *none* of that energy.

And so I climbed kind of halfway up the edge of the steps so I could look out at the crowd and take in all the signs and take photos. And that's when all of the chanting and singing began.

So you hear the drums that are being played. There was a brown skinned man, playing the drum that you hear and strapped to his back in like a baby bjorn was a child who looked to be about two years old. And she's got these two adorable little ponytails poking out of the top of her head.

And she is behind her dad, her legs dangling and kicking in the air. And she's got a little tiny American flag in each hand. And she's just swinging 'em to the beat, dancing her head around. I mean, it was like this, this is what we're here for. This is what we're here for. That child, every child. Every family.

It was just amazing, the vibe of community and love. And we were all there because we care about the safety of people who are being disappeared and immigrant communities and LGBTQ+ folks and Black folks and all the everybody, and women, and you know, the list goes on and on and on in terms of who's being harmed by this regime.

We were all there because of love. And it was palpable. It was palpable.

So that was just four short months ago, and my, oh my, has the Trump regime ramped up their efforts. But it's not too late for us to shout out that the emperor has no fucking clothes. We must be vocal and insistent. And I hope that if you are able, you will join the October 18th No Kings protest. Event organizers are expecting it to be the largest protest in American history with well over 2500 protests planned.

Go to NoKings.org to find a protest near you. And let's send a message outside of the echo chambers of social media that We The People, is much more than a political slogan. That it's a commitment to one another and to the embodiment of what democracy is supposed to stand for, which is all of us.

So this particular call to action is timely, but it's actually the perfect lead in to today's topic. Because when it comes to something like defeating fascism, leadership alone can't save us. And this is the thing that social justice organizers really understand more than those who call themselves leaders. As Janaya said, "I don't need anybody to walk behind me. I need you at my shoulder."

Before the election that brought Trump and his sadistic cronies back into the White House, I released an episode entitled *Hope Is A Verb*, highlighting the critical distinction between hope and magical thinking.

The Westernized world of wellness is all about peace, love, and light, as a personal practice, as something experienced on the inside. And I've talked an awful lot on the podcast about my years of new age naval gazing, and how in wellness spaces, it was very often implied, or in some cases it was stated outright, that equanimity is what matters most. Our ability to self-regulate and maintain a sense of peacefulness within. And I was taught that my ability to bring myself into that space of calm, centered, groundedness was really the key to peace and justice for all.

Mindfulness, equanimity as a practice can be very soothing to the soul, for sure. And a very helpful way to stay sane in the face of all that we cannot control, which is a hell of a lot. But it can also be a way to spiritually bypass and escape the realities of the day-to-day world. The choice to self-center can be self-regulation, but it can also be a comforting and privileged distraction.

So I guess what I wanna say, as I move into talking a little bit about this thing we call followership, is that even when we're not actively saluting our supreme leader, we may be silently complicit. Because it's overwhelming by design and when fascism isn't directly knocking on our front door, it's easier to turn away, to not look, to share a post on social media and feel like we've done our part. But feeling good isn't the same thing as doing good.

And here I'm telling on myself, because I have been retreating into a contemptuous sort of silence, stewing, feeling disdain for all the things that I see happening on the news. Resisting with my mind and clicks on social media while my body continues to, through inaction, go along for the ride.

I'm hearing a lot of understandable outrage toward those who are actively bending the knee, capitulating to authoritarian loyalty checks, "obeying in advance," as Timothy Snyder describes it. Most of us are gobsmacked by people and institutions that seem to be adapting instinctively to Trump's fascist demands, walking in step without conscience or question. That's a thing, and it runs adjacent to the cult norms we've been exploring on the pod for the past couple of years now. It's a topic that I've covered ad nauseum.

But here I wanna get a little more nuanced. If we only define followership as loyalist allegiance, well then, what is it that we call what so many of us are doing? That gray area that exists between marching in step with leaders and *actively* resisting.

Next week, I'm gonna start sharing some conversations, taking a critical look at leadership. But I wanted to start off with this episode, because it's very easy to look at leaders as the problem when in reality, leaders have no leverage without their followers.

What if submission doesn't always look like passive acquiescence or doting compliance? Some days I am willfully ignorant, refusing to notice the grave brutality and injustice because I tell myself, well, there's nothing that *I* can do about *that*. And in an immediate sense, I'm probably right. But justice is incremental and it is often delayed by the heavy anchor of this country's sorrid history. And it requires each of us to kick against a very stubborn current in order to break free. Justice isn't something that we necessarily get to see in our own lifetimes. But that doesn't mean we stop reaching for it.

The Trump regime is landing blows on doorsteps and bodies. It is inhumane and unjust, but it also reveals their desperation. The show of force is meant to silence us, and they will only succeed if we let them.

Many of us feel in our bodies, *this isn't right. We have to do something.* We just need permission. And we can find permission as we put our bodies on the line. In this way, there are no leaders and followers. There is we the people, showing up.

Candice Schutter: So if you've been tuning into the podcast for a while, you know that I like to take long walks in the morning. It's one of the things that I started doing during the pandemic to kind of keep my mental health in check. And I've learned that it does an awful lot to start my day off on the right foot, pun intended.

And when I walk, I occasionally see neighbors in the area. I kind of walk through my neighborhood and then it connects to a system of paths that run through the desert up against Mingus Mountain. It's really beautiful. And as I'm walking through the neighborhood, I often walk by the same sort of people who are out walking their dogs and whatnot. And there's this particular human who walks his dog, which appears to be some sort of Labradoodle. And the dog is always walking very peacefully by his side. He seems to be a pretty mellow temperament dog. I don't get like a high energy vibe from this dog at all. The dog walks next to him on a leash very obediently. And whenever I'm walking, generally I'm on the opposite side of the street. So there's, you know, 20, 30 feet between he and I. And as he's

walking, anytime somebody walks on the same street, even if it is at that distance, he will stop, and then he will command his dog to sit.

And this dog sits in the most regal, like a show dog sort of. The dog sits very obediently. And the man just stands there. And again, I'm nowhere near them. But he waits until I pass and then gives a command and then the dog is able to, is permitted to stand up and walk next to him again, just as obediently as before.

And the first time he did it, I didn't think much of it. But as it's happened, you know, half a dozen times, I see him just every now and then. And I was just really struck the other morning when I saw them, like, isn't it fascinating that he feels this is necessary?

Now I am all for people training their pets to be respectful of other humans. But I get the feeling that this man is sort of performing for all of us, like look how well trained my dog is. And I can't help but just wonder at the psychology of the part of him and the part of us humans that really sort of gets off on the control. Like this dog will do exactly what I say when I tell it to do so. And it feels a bit like he's got his own little soldier. His own little soldier that walks next to him that does exactly what he tells him to do.

And I mean, I have no idea what the relationship's like, maybe it's super playful and loving as well. I'm not trying to make it one dimensional. But I'm just fascinated by the way in which the man leads and the way in which the dog is trained to follow.

I really think it is an illustration of something that happens in our culture all the time. And that we have just come to accept and sort of shrug our shoulders at and maybe even applaud, like, good for you. Wow, look how well trained your dog is, right?

So I just wanted to just kind of drop that there, just to kind of set the tone for where I'm gonna go later in this episode where I wanna talk about followership.

One avenue in leadership studies that is emerged wherein they actually do conferences and whatnot on followership and "good followership" and how can we make followers more responsible in the role that they play so that leadership can function more effectively .

And I saw an episode of a podcast recently, and it had the best title. It said *MAHA Is a Bad Answer to A Good Question*. And I agree with that. I think teaching people to be better followers is a bad answer to a good question. Re-imagining followership, I don't think is the right answer, for me, from my perspective.

I wanna talk about sort of the psychology of followership. And this is just the very beginning of what will be a much longer analysis. But I just, I feel like I've spent some time recently laying the foundation for this fall series where we're gonna be looking at leadership and how to do it differently. And I'm in school, so things are moving very slowly, but it's, it's happening. It's coming down the pike. But I keep focusing on leadership and like we need to look at doing leadership different and this and that.

And it's just really occurred to me lately, how much what we think of as a problem of leadership is actually a crisis of followership.

Because if we look at somebody like Donald Trump. Donald Trump is not a smart man. He's clever in sort of a diabolical sense in terms of getting attention as narcissists can be. But there's nothing really special about him. In fact, he's very incompetent, and he doesn't deserve to be a leader.

And yet, he is leading the largest political cult in the world right now.

How does that happen?

We can point at him and label all his faults and say what a terrible person he is. And now he's surrounded by people who can sort of pluck the strings of the system and make them work in their benefit. But yet, overall there's a lot of incompetency. And he purposefully hires people who are incompetent. So there's no competition in that regard.

So how is it that someone like that becomes so powerful? Is it because of his leadership style? He's using the authoritarian playbook. It can be effective. Populism, all of that.

But it's not just about a MAGA follower who is in an echo chamber where the information they're receiving really limits their perspective. And they get so steeped in that, that cognitive dissonance, when they are confronted with anything that is evidential outside of that. It's really a struggle. I have a lot of empathy for people who are in that place, even as I'm very outraged and angry at them at the same time.

But I'm not just talking about extreme examples like that.

Not just in terms of obedience, but even in the ways in which we resist. We sort of accept it as self-evident that the hierarchies that function and govern our lives are natural and necessary.

The hierarchy shapes the leader's behavior and what happens is as they are continually celebrated and propped up, I'm doing this thing with my hands where I have this little tiny squatty little pyramid. But as the bottom fills in and it starts to swell and grow in the middle, that the tippy top gets higher and higher and higher where the air is really thin. And it starts to get high on its own supply. The propaganda of being propped up, of people being devotional under them, of being fawned at, of being celebrated. How can that not go to your head? How can you not start to believe in it?

And so we get so angry at the leaders. We're like, they're such narcissists. They're so self-centered. They're so this. The structure itself is built in such a way where we prop them up, we push them up, we worship them. I mean, look at how much news coverage the fact that Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce have announced their engagement is getting. I've seen women on video clips who are like bawling their eyes out.

The projection, the transference onto people who we perceive as leaders or celebrities is so intense that it takes almost a superhuman capacity to avoid internalizing that on some level. It is really no wonder that leaders give into self-aggrandizement.

So it's easy to point at people who are shitty leaders or too full of themselves and get pissed off at them, when in fact the followership and the way it functions is creating said monsters. And I think it's important to just highlight that and to earmark it and to say, how is it that followership is part of the problem?

Like a headline that just recently comes to mind is Michael Franti. Which I was never like super into Michael Franti's music, but a lot of people in the new age wellness world certainly were. And I even have some friends who knew him personally. And it just recently came out, I guess, that there's numerous sexual abuse allegations against him. And people are like shocked and horrified. They admired him and pedestaled him.

Is it any wonder? I say this, not to excuse his behavior in any way, shape, or form. But just to say it's an explanation why this is such a pattern. It's not just about the way people lead, it's about the ways in which we follow.

The mechanisms of followership are set up in such a way that we systematically reinforce the dyad. And by the dyad, I mean the leader-follower dyad. That's a continual framework we're using. To such a degree that when people even critique leadership as I'm like in these leadership study circles, people can't even do it without falling into it. They'll say things like, the follower needs to learn to lead themselves. Which is the dyad just showing up in a different way, leader-follower dyad within our own minds. It's like the, the call's coming from inside the building, the cult leader lives inside.

That's not a solution to the problem of that dyad, right?

So, the first thing is just to acknowledge the way in which it's reflexive. We frame our social critiques in terms of that dyad. Am I the leader or am I the follower here? And the way that it functions as it relates to the importance of today's topic and followership is that if we're looking at our social systems in the United States and we say like, there's such a problem here. Tsk, tsk, tsk, those leaders in Washington. It lets us off the hook as followers. We're like, I'm just a follower, so I'm just this passive person who has no power and no say in the matter. When, in fact, that's part of the colonization of the leader-follower dyad that says, if you're not a leader, then you don't have power.

And yes, there is truth to that in terms of the way the systems are built. I'm not denying that. But those systems were created by people. And so in order to undo them, we have to challenge the assumptions at the root of them. And one of the assumptions is that as a follower, I do not have any say, power, or control here. And we have to start challenging that within our own psyches. As a constituent of this country, I don't have any say control or power here. Bullshit.

Now it is frustrating right now 'cause a lot of the levers that we can pull in terms of calling people isn't really going anywhere. In terms of marching in the streets. It feels like a lot is not working. And that is true. And, we can't just engage in fights only when we know we're

gonna win. If we have learned anything from civil rights activists over the years, we know that to be true. The impossible battle is the one *most* worth fighting in, *most* worth engaging in.

And I have less power as a follower. But the only way we can teach systems that followers have more power than leaders is banding together and showing the fuck up. It doesn't mean like we have to do it in a specific way. We can go back to the episode 87 with Susan McCulley and I talking out just a few examples of things that we can do, and barely scratching the surface.

Point being, yes, you're gonna feel helpless. And we may be in it for a long haul in terms of the actions that we take are not going to have linear ramifications and consequences that feel satisfying to us. Things are going to get much worse before we recover from this. I'm pretty sure of that.

But collapsing in absolute despair or withdrawing into endless naval gazing is also a conditioned response that can stem from the ideology of followership, the ideology of how much power we have and how much power we don't.

One of my favorite quotes from Judith Butler and the book, *Gender Trouble* is, "to operate within the matrix of power is not the same as to replicate uncritically relations of domination."

What's being said is that the system has to be changed from within. But when we are within it, we must critically challenge the dominionism that is at the heart of how it was created.

This is what leadership studies is inching toward when they do retreats and things that focus on followership. Because what they normally teach people in these followership trainings is they teach followers to be more "courageous." I'm putting that in quotes, 'cause the word courageous follower is sort of a soundbite in leadership studies.

So you're teaching followers to express themselves more overtly, to challenge leaders, to hold them to account. And I think in conjunction tries to train leaders to accept accountability more so, blah, blah, blah.

But there's a lot of bandaid solutions that can happen there, because power can be flexed in a lot of different ways. And the truth of the matter is that in the system, it's objectively valid that the follower has less power than leader. The follower has less influence, less say. It is more risky for them to speak up.

So on one hand, is this a realistic solution to the problem of leadership, to expect followers to risk their social position and their livelihood in order to hold leaders accountable?

And also, why is the onus on the followers? If leaders have created an environment in which followers do not feel comfortable expressing discontent and dissent, then that's something to look at. Maybe it's not the leader specifically, but it's the way the organizational hierarchy is set up that's made it such. Those are the things that should be critiqued, in my opinion, not the

behavior of the followers yet again, who have already been colonized, who are always on the lookout for how they should become better workers and more a part of the team.

And there's just so much emphasis on fixing the follower. And I think that policing the follower's behavior is not a solution to the problem. Especially when it's operating under the assumption that the leaders are gonna acquiesce and that they're not gonna find ways to manipulate around it.

And I mean, this is the wellness industry. This is the dark side of emotional intelligence. We place all kinds of lip service on creating environments where people have autonomy and they can express themselves and they should.

I remember being in workplaces and continually being coached, you need to express yourself more. You need to stand in your power. You need to challenge us. You need to tell us what you really think.

And yeah, there was something in that for me. But there was a reason why I didn't feel safe doing so. There was a reason why my body told me to tread lightly, to proceed with hypervigilant caution. And it wasn't always in the leaders' demeanor, sometimes it was just the way the system was set up. And I knew when there was room for my opinion and when there wasn't.

I worked with a mentor who was very good at telling me to say what I needed to say. But when she didn't like what I had to say, there was masterful manipulation and I would be gaslit around my perspectives.

And so, I guess my point is, is that we can tell followers to show up differently. But leaders, when they are incentivized to do so, which the systems themselves incentivize them to do so, they're going to manipulate the situation toward the end, which is them above and us below. That's just how the hierarchy functions.

So there's the leadership that needs to be critiqued. But also, followership and the way in which we try to teach followers to correct for patterns that really are ignoring the fact that followership itself is a problem. That the power dynamics, the hierarchies, and especially the way in which the hierarchies ignore intersectionalities. And these catch-all descriptions of how followers should behave differently do not work in a world where implicit bias is real, where unconscious bias is operating all the time.

Right now, I'm taking a class on leading diverse teams. And the thing that a lot of people don't get when they're like, well, I just wanna hire the best person for the job. It shouldn't matter, diversity or inclusion or whatever. Like, I want the best person for the job.

But what is being overlooked over and over and over again, there's lots of layers to it, but aside from the systemic differences, the fact that certain people have hurdles they have to clear that others don't. So an individual who has relative privilege is going to quote, unquote, rise to the top a lot faster than someone who has intersectional challenges in terms of their identities.

But even these people who are really committed to meritocracy will argue, well, you know, sorry, not sorry. That's a thing that happens and that sucks. But also I want the person who's best suited for the job.

Well, what the research actually shows is that meritocracy is a myth in the sense that the way in which we evaluate merit is shaped by our unconscious bias. And again and again, study after study shows that if people are aware of the identities of the people who are applying for a position, for example, that the white male will get the job significantly more often just because he's a white male. But that the people who granted that job will argue, they based their decision on merit. They will twist themselves into a pretzel to make a case for the fact that it was absolutely a merit-based decision.

When you give them the same applications blind, when there are no identities shown, when all of that is hidden, equity emerges. The women, persons of color, women of color, like rise up in terms of, it's more in a place of parity with the white men. But only when those identities are hidden. Same job qualifications, same experience, but the standards are not the same.

So when we say we're basing something on meritocracy, it's a lie, because we cannot outrun our unconscious and implicit biases. They are very real. We have to correct for them.

And so why am I saying all of this?

Because when it comes to followership, we are continually holding people, based on their intersectionalities and the ways in which they do or do not conform to the prototype we have in mind, we're holding them to different standards. And we're holding ourselves to different standards. Those standards have become internalized. And we think, we don't have a place, we don't have a say, we don't have. Because experience has taught us that our opinion doesn't matter as much. We internalize that. And we feel like we're not at liberty to show up because we don't fit the authority prototype as we've been taught to understand it. All of that to say, we're gonna be examining followership as well as leadership. Deconstructing both of them and saying like, what are alternatives to all this?

And some of you have written to me to say like, okay, I, I get what you're saying, Candice, the way we do leadership isn't working. So what are we gonna do instead?

And I just wanna say to all of you, I am here for that question. And I don't think there are easy answers to it. I really don't. I'm gonna give you kind of a little checklist of just things to be thinking about in terms of how you might approach leadership differently or followership differently. But this is in our DNA. This is like an epigenetic code that has been passed down for a very long time. And based on our, again, intersectionalities and identities, the ways that we've embodied it and the way that we show up within that system and reenact it, is very different and unique to each of us. So there's no easy formula. We can't just turn our conditioning off like that. It's going to be inch by inch.

And in the episodes that are coming up, that's what we'll be talking about is like what inch by inch really looks like. And I'll be talking with people who are doing that work in real time.

But for those of you who are like, if not this, then what? Give me something, Candice, please. I'll just highlight a few takeaways that feel like most apparent from the work we've done thus far.

First, we can see leadership as something that is shared. Leadership as a verb and an event that is experienced in a fluid way where sometimes one person is leading and sometimes it's another. That it's just part of the process of collaboration. And that we can trade the role of leadership more fluidly.

And I'm just gonna give you like a super basic example.

Right now I'm in a course and there are six people in my team. And we're all capable of embodying and expressing leadership as a verb, right?

So we've been working together on a project. And it's been incredibly refreshing, because we have group Zooms, and we have a Discord channel, and we have a Google Docs folder. And we have this list of assignments, and within each assignment there's specific things that we have to do every week. And what has happened naturally, it's been, like I say, a really refreshing experience of shared leadership and what it can look like, is that we just all organically take turns grabbing something. Like, you know, Michelle will grab a document from the Canvas portal at ASU, and she'll post it in Google Docs. And she'll say, hey, I just went ahead and filled out this first question. Let me know what you guys think, gimme your feedback. And then someone else will pop in and answer the third question. And then someone else will do this and do that. And oh wait, we need to create this visual for our team. So, I do a lot of stuff like that for my podcast. I said, hey, would you all like me to contribute in this way, or does somebody else wanna do it? And people were like, no, no, please go for it. And so I created a draft, and I shared it. And people offered feedback and we tweaked it. And we do that on every little bit. And it is kind of amazing, like we did a week's worth of work in three days, because we all stepped up and chose when to lead and when to follow. And we got shit done fast. And we're just cranking things out.

And it's incredibly efficient to have people who are willing to, you know, you could say, step into the identity of leader, but we're not really using that language, who are willing to treat leadership as an event and just say, these are the things that I see that need to be done. I'm gonna take the initiative. I'm gonna step forward. And I'm gonna do it in a way that's really respectful and makes room for collaborative input. And it's working really well.

I realize this is like, a small example. But I think these dynamics can emerge if we empower one another and we celebrate one another. I mean, we thank each other. We acknowledge one another's work.

And we also, you know, for me, I haven't really worked in teams for a long time. And I was a little nervous going into it. And I realized, that's not the way that I would've answered that question, but the way that Rob did it, I can respect that. And I don't need it to be my way. It can be his way. It can be his language. Do I feel like I resonate with it? Where can I offer a tweak that might make sure that I feel more represented in this communication?

But it's, it's a surrendering of control. Because a lot around the leadership identity for me was around the need to reclaim the autonomy that I never really had. Like I was controlled as a child, and so I became the controller. I thought that that was how leadership functioned. And I'm now realizing that it has nothing to do with control. It's not about control. It's about contribution, shared contribution, and not vying for control.

And I'm having experience of what that can feel like. And I'm less invested in the end product. I'm enjoying the process so much more. And I think we can do more of that.

But the reason I connected to this conversation around followership is we can't do that unless we're all willing to step up into being the person who is doing the event of leadership, taking a risk, putting it out there and saying, hey, this is how I would do it, and I'm just gonna go ahead and take up space here. I'm gonna go ahead and show you the way that I wanna approach this. And trust that there's room for me here, that I won't be controlled and manipulated for basically expressing my opinion. And that there's worth in what I have to offer.

And then experiencing other people reflect back like, hey, yeah, I totally see that. I appreciate you stepping in here.

And it's, I'll tell you this much, *so much easier* this term working in a group. I mean, I have some individual work as well for the course. But I'm just like so giddy and tickled by how efficiently, how quickly we can get work done when we work together. And um, yeah.

So fluid roles when power is shared and leadership is an event is key.

Also, I think we can flag groupthink in our mind. So when we're in an experience with a group and we notice that groupthink is a sensation, like we can feel when it happens. We can feel when it kicks in and everyone's just like, we're just gonna sort of fall into the same vibe and not create any room for dissent. Not overtly, we're not saying don't dissent, but we're just being so agreeable that anyone who feels a sense of, this is a little off for me or feels a little dissonance, there's no room for them. Because they're in a room full of like this resonant, people who are nodding along and smiling energy, right?

So a piece of it is flagging that. Like when you're in a group and you feel that happening, can you actually take it as a signal to dialogue and ask really direct questions.

To say something like, okay, so I'm really feeling like we're all on the same page here. Everyone's in agreement. But I bet that something about this isn't complete. There's something that maybe we could look at that hasn't been named yet. So who wants to play devil's advocate here? Who wants to offer something that maybe we should think about that we haven't yet? Let's just pick somebody, you know. And just make it almost like gamify it. Who's gonna be the devil's advocate? Who's gonna challenge us and break the spell of groupthink so that we can get back into critical analysis around this and we can make it even better than before?

So I think we can kind of build that into our dialogues, so that it becomes more reflexive over time, that when the groupthink happens, we apply this devil's advocate.

There may be even somebody in the room who tends toward that, and that's the, the moment when you call on them. You say, you know, Sue, you're able to see things in ways that I don't, so what do you see here that I'm missing? Tell me.

And then when Sue offers her opinion, and you can say, okay, does anyone have another perspective around that? You can sort of reinforce critical thinking by celebrating it and saying like, this is a normalized part of our dialogues.

So I think that's another thing we can do to recondition our groups for leadership to be a shared experience.

And in this way, critical thinking and skepticism become a general rule in the space. They're not some like, record scratch thing on the side that destroys efficiency. 'Cause like, oh God, like we were humming along beautifully, and then, you know, Candice had to come in and say the thing that screwed it all up. No, we actually want those moments. We welcome them so that we can dialogue around how to make things better.

So critical thinking is celebrated. Skepticism is celebrated. Not as an opportunity to spin on like what's wrong, but to say, let's underscore what doesn't feel good about this, what doesn't seem quite right. And let's use that as an opportunity to create an even better solution than the one we had before.

Also, and this is key. When we talk about DEI, it's diversity, equity, and inclusion, right? The equity piece gets misunderstood a lot. That like, if we just have one diverse face in the room that we've somehow achieved DEI. When in fact, first of all, we know that it takes like a critical mass of diversity within any group environment to sort of shift it towards where we get the benefits of diversity.

And I just wanna say that the benefits of diversity, if you're somebody who needs those sort of capitalistic assurances, that it's like worthwhile and that it matters. Like it increases innovation, productivity, growth, all the things. It's such a no-brainer for somebody who's motivated by like, what makes an organization more successful, profitable, all the things. Like DEI, it works like a charm because the more diverse perspectives you bring in, the better it is, frankly.

However, a lot of times, DEI is treated as performative. And you know, you have sort of like one woman in the room and a person of color and you're like, we've done it. We've diversified. But we haven't met the critical mass where marginalized voices feel like there's a representation in the room where they feel safe to speak up. And we also haven't created a space of equity.

And so when we are looking at re-imagining leadership and followership, understanding that equity means that we are going to have to make an extra effort to correct for the inequity that

is systematically built into the systems and the ways in which we relate. So we are going to have to find ways to platform and prioritize marginalized perspectives.

Equity is balancing based on the social realities that exist. So creating equity does take effort. It does mean earning trust of folks who've been marginalized. It doesn't mean shining a spotlight and like feeling good about yourself because you asked, you know, the one woman of color in the group to speak and now you feel like you can give yourself a pat on the back. It's so much more than that. It's actually creating a culture where she's safe, not the one in a hundred in the room. Where there are opportunities for her to not only express herself, but to rise into positions of influence where you are willing to follow her. And yes, the leadership, the event of leadership is to shut the fuck up and listen, like frankly.

Also, and I think this is pretty key. If we wanna do leadership and followership differently, our moral compass is something that we have to all feel like we have a responsibility toward. That the ethics of the group and the organization is something we all have our spidey sense around, and that there's room for any one of us to name and speak to it. That it's not just about leadership's to do the right thing.

I mean, how many of us have been in organizations where we're off to the side, you know, whispering with our coworkers about how fucked up the unethical thing that the organization is doing, but we have no power to change it or we feel like we have no say in it. That actually we can create organizational systems and relationships that are collaborative where everyone has a say and a stake in the ethical arc.

In the opening meeting with my group for the course, we had to come up with guidelines around, like how we were gonna operate our group. And there were some things dropped in that sounded really great. Like, we're not gonna say things that are offensive, for example. And I felt like, we need to be more explicit and clear around the fact that we're all gonna have a different sense. So I, I basically presenced in the meeting, like I'm looking at this point that someone wrote, which I agree with, we wanna be conscientious about not using language that is derogatory or offensive. But I just wanna name the fact that that's a very relative thing. And that rather than just assuming that we all know what that means, let's make the agreement that we will make room for the fact that we are going to all have different experiences around what is derogatory and offensive. And that we will have a space of open dialogue around that. And if someone feels like something doesn't land right or they wish that different language would be used in a situation, that we'll name it and make room for that and have a dialogue around it. Rather than just this like straight up rule, like nothing harmful and derogatory. There's no way we're going to come into that all on the same page. Because again, intersectional identities, lived experience, cultures that we've grown up, religious beliefs, all the things. Like we are going to step on each other's toes. How are we gonna navigate when we do. Not if, but when we do that?

Making it feel like a safe space doesn't mean we establish rules everybody has to abide by. Making it a safe space means that it's safe to name when it doesn't feel safe. And to have a safe and constructive dialogue when that emerges. Because it will. It will.

We're messy, messy humans with very different preferences. And um, yeah, we can just be more explicit around those types of things. Does it take a little bit more emotional labor?

Potentially, from the get go. But it'll be worth it down the road because the tensions won't fester and build and mount inside.

And then of course, this is pretty key when it comes to reframing our ideas around leadership and followership. That when there's an outcome that is a win, that outcomes are not due to the leader. That is a reflexive way in which followers outsource their joys, their wins, and their celebrations. And the leaders get celebrated, whether it's through the standing ovation and applause. Or the leaders get the bonus because their followers stepped up and delivered for them. The leaders are the ones who experience the rewards and the accolades and the severance packages and the, the private yachts and the jets and all the things. And the followers are the ones doing the grunt work, and they should be so honored and grateful to have the job that they have.

Outcomes are shared, be they wins or losses. Everyone's equally invested. And as I said in Episode 93, collective liberation benefits everyone equally. And that's kind of what I'm pointing at. That it's built in such a way that when we win, we all win. When we lose, we all grieve together, dust ourselves off and learn from our experiences. Reflect on it, share equally on the responsibility, the reflection. And then together we move forward in a different way.

The influence and the responsibility both are shared.

But it can also happen, just like high school, where a group of people has all the influence and the power. We can also tell ourselves the story. I've certainly been guilty of. I'm expressing the tenets of collaborative shared leadership within a little bubble, but we're still positioning ourselves over the other people below.

So we're practicing what it means to be collaborative, but we're still reenacting those power-over models. We're just doing it like with other people. So we can feel a little bit better about our powerflex, because, well, you know, I'm not doing it alone. Like I am technically collaborating with somebody. But we're still sort of reifying the structure.

Um, that's not what I'm talking about here. We are creating an environment where, not in every case is every voice going to be able to be incorporated.

'Cause I've also been in like communal codependent communities where it's like we're trying to make room for every voice and it's just like this endless process, because everyone's trying to be represented. And then it does become a crisis of no leadership because nobody's really leading.

It's not because there's not a person on top that that doesn't work. That's not why it fails. It fails because we don't understand what leadership actually means. It's like a diffusion of followership. Everybody's sort of stuck in the colonizing space of *follower* and is making room for each other and nobody's actually embodying the energy of what it means to lead and direct. And it doesn't have to be one person that does that. But what ends up happening is that, when there's this diffusion into followership and it becomes sort of like inertia and stagnation 'cause there's so much listening and not enough leading, that it can feel like the only way out of that is to like appoint one particular leader.

But really there's another way outta that, which is for each individual to learn how to lead and to take turns. And that leadership does need to happen, but it doesn't have to land on the shoulders of just one person.

So I'm just laying the groundwork for where we're gonna continue to go. And just in the meantime, keep an eye out for those red flags and see what you can do to correct for it in real time. You don't have to reinvent a system to enact new behaviors.

Keep an eye out for groupthink. When blind faith is showing up. When there's a homogeneity in the group and more diversity would be of value, which is pretty much always.

Try to center the marginalized perspectives in the room.

Whenever it feels like the mission is becoming more important than the people involved, take a pause, reevaluate, make sure that that's in service to what you really mean for it to be in service to, and that it's not in service to something else.

And again, I can't underscore this enough, stay within your scope of practice.

I have been critiquing leadership for three years, and it is not within my scope of practice to tell you that I know how to fix this. I don't know how to fix this. And I know it frustrates people who want me to tell them how to make this different. But I don't have those answers. And the only way that I'm gonna get those answers is through collaborative dialogue with people who are asking the same questions. And that's what we're gonna continue to do. That's what we're gonna do next.

And I hope you'll be patient, because I think we all really want a savior right now. And it does feel really good when someone steps forward and expresses themselves with so much confidence that you think, well, they must know what the hell they're doing. I mean, look at how sure they seem about that which they're selling.

And um, I'm not a fan of like really deductive reasoning and making things super simple, but if I had to say sort of a takeaway right now where I'm at, is that leadership in general as a framework, as an identity, could benefit tremendously from *humility*. I think that would help a lot.

And on the flip side, followership could really use a permission slip for greater *audacity*.

The thing that feels like it breaks the mold. Not just courageously standing up to the leader, being the one who is brave enough to challenge. I did that dance a lot. No, I'm talking about the audacity to buck the system entirely. To just say, I'm calling this game for what it is, as something that is rigged.

That's one of the things that a friend recently said to me that really landed and resonated.

She said, "I don't feel like I have to play by the rules of a game that is rigged."

I think it's sage advice for times like these.

Candice Schutter: Thanks for tuning in. If you would like to support this work and gain access to over a hundred hours of bonus content, head over to patreon.com/thedeeperpulse. A seven day free trial is available.

I'll be back with some special guests very soon.

Bye for now.