We Outside Podcast Transcript
S2 Episode 3: What Happens After the Epiphany? with guest, Salem Afangideh

Salem Afangideh: You're still not a runner, right? Like, if you're not putting in the work, you can't be a runner. And I think we have to fall in love with the process more than the outcome. To me, I think that is what I would say to someone who is in love with the transcendence

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Podcast Intro: Welcome to We Outside. Welcome to We Outside. Welcome to We Outside. Welcome to We Outside.

[Episode Intro] Ain B.: Welcome to We Outside, where we explore the unseen dimensions of leadership through conversations about spirit, nature, and what it means to be fully alive. I am your host, Ain. A vision can be true, and very often it can exceed our understanding of what it requires to carry it. Salem Afangede is the right person to explore that tension with because she has followed spirit across countries, careers, and many versions of herself.

She also knows what it means to receive an idea that feels deeply aligned, then discover that the body, relationships, or structure surrounding it need to change in order for it to flourish. Our conversation asks what happens after the epiphany of a vision, amongst many other things. There is shea butter, Lionel Messi, packaged transcendence, and a full 24-hour commitment to wallowing.

There's also a clear knowing. Spirit does not just hand us the vision and then disappear. The way we build, care for ourselves, and remain connected to source is all part of that calling. I hope you enjoy this conversation

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[00:01:55] **Salem Afangideh:** Hi everyone. My name is Salem Afangideh. I go with she/her pronouns. I am currently located in Montgomery, Alabama, and my weather today is fall. It's a nice, gorgeous fall day inside of me. It is cool, but also a little cloudy, but you know the sun is coming. The, the hints of summer are still with us, and so you know it's gonna be a sunny day, but for now it feels cool, light, and breezy, and that's how I feel on the inside

Ain B.: Hmm. And why are you feeling that way on the inside?

Salem Afangideh: I'm excited to be in conversation with you, Ain, and I am post a really nice celebration for my mom. So I think it's sort of I had this highlight, this peak emotional moment, uh, last week, which was my mom's 60th birthday and birthday party. And I'm kind of coming down from that. So it feels like I'm, I'm on the downswing from peak emotion, but also just in deep excitement and presence and gratitude for everything really.

Ain B.: Okay, so my name is Ain. I go by she/they. I'm located on ancestral Muscogee land, which is in Alabama, about 20 minutes, 15 minutes from Salem, so that's exciting, our first Alabama guest. And my internal weather is a spring day where it's sort of getting towards

summer, so it's a little warm, but there's still the cool breeze that's coming by, and the breeze is, like, kinda playful and a little bit strong, but not quite wind.

Ain B.: So I love the wind. I love wind in all its ways. And there's something about a day that's starting to get a little too warm with a cool breeze coming in that's like, "Oh, yes, perfection." And I'm feeling good. I feel that way internally because it's Juneteenth tomorrow. I'm going to Asheville next week to do some deep work and also to enjoy some sunsets over the Blue Mountains.

And then the week after that, I turn 46. And so this is a time in my life where I'm, like, realigning my integrity with myself and, like, you know, questioning things, cleaning things up, clearing things out in preparation for a new year, and it's always exciting for me to do that, to, like, take stock i- in both a way of gratitude and also a way of creating the space for what is to come

I would love to just ask you, what is present for you about spirit these days?

Salem Afangideh: Oh, wow. I think what feels most present right now is spirit as an affirming force, spirit as cheerleader, spirit as companion. So a little bit of context for those who may not know me is my family emigrated from Nigeria to the US when I was 13 and a half, a month before my 14th birthday. And since then, I have lived in Alabama, I've lived in Washington, DC, I've lived in San Francisco/Oakland, and I'm currently back in Alabama.

And in all of these phases, I remember when I first emigrated from Nigeria, I would, like, write letters and mail letters to my best friend in Nigeria because I was like, "You have to come to the US." Like, I can't have these experiences without sharing them with someone who I already deeply love, trust, and have spent years building a solid relationship with. 'Cause it, it just felt like if we didn't have the shared language of America, our friendship probably would not go into the future. And obviously, like, my best friend did not upend her whole life to, like, move to America for me. But that was such a craving for me as a young girl and even growing into womanhood, was like, I, I need someone who has full context, like, who isn't my parents or my brothers, 'cause they experience me in a different way.

Like, I need someone who experiences me in the fullest version of myself, you know, who doesn't really have any attachment to a version of myself. And that was something that I felt with my best friend at the time. She did not, she wasn't attached to a version of myself. She didn't hold on. So even as we were growing up, as I was changing, she was very present and curious.

And I think at some point I realized, "Oh, this is what spirit is for me." Like, spirit is that through line. Spirit is that presence that has been with me since I was a little girl, before I even had consciousness of a self, has been with me through all the ebbs and flows and the different seasons of my life, and also continues to be here and in all of the different places where I live, for all of the selves who I am yet to become.

Salem Afangideh: And spirit will be with me till the day I transition out of this form and into whatever form I, you know, I am next. And that feels really, really affirming for me in the present. And it also feel, allows me to be really grounded in the version of myself that is right now without being attached to the versions of myself that have been, because I know that there is a force that has sort of witnessed all of those selves and is present and is intimate with me, and can bring to mind at appropriate times the selves that I have outgrown that may need to be present with me in a moment, but also can help me call upon the selves that I'm yet to become to be in the present with me as needed

Ain B.: Yeah. You know, uh, this framing is so lovely because I think, and I'll speak for myself, you know, there have been different phases in my past selves where I'm like, "Oh, I really want a best friend." For years, I wanted a best friend because I went to seven different schools before high school, so my understanding of friendships were the nine months of a school year, essentially.

And so I never had, like, the quote-unquote, "stereotypical sitcom best friend from, oh, childhood." So that was a deep longing. Then I got a little older, and I'm like, "Oh, I, I just want a romantic partner," and that was just a big thing that took up, like, a l- significant portion of my early 30s. And what you're lifting up here is, I think, what I've more started to experience in the past 10 years, which is like, "Hey, wait a minute.

I'm not alone." You know, I actually do have this cheerleader but also witness, but also, you know, dear companion in spirit that has been with me this entire time and has taken on many roles in my life. Like, sometimes it's like, "Girl, get out of the bed, okay? We got stuff to do." Sometimes it's just being present with me of like, "You know what? We deserve better.

Salem Afangideh: Yeah

Ain B.: That's it. We just deserve better at this job, in this relationship, platonic or not." Like, quiet declaration that, mm, it's not good enough, right? Or any of the many other ways that it shows up. Right now, it shows up very frequently as gratitude of just like, "Oh, wow, there's so much that I've been asking for over all those different phases that I am now in a period of receiving and wanting to...

I mean, naturally feeling so much gratitude and finally being in a version of me that can express that." Like, I'm always telling my plants how beautiful they are, my house how much I love it, you know, and also that is really intentional about being grateful for the things that I've asked for. So I just love what you're naming here about spirit being this constant companion in a way that actually no one else really can be throughout our entire lives.

Like, from, from soup to nuts, you know?

Salem Afangideh: Yeah, man. And I, I love what you said about spirit taking on different roles at different times. That's so beautiful to me, the adaptability and the malleability of spirit to be

what we need. I don't think there's really any other relationship, I mean, unless you're just with someone who's a shape-shifter in a lot of different really cool ways. I think my mom comes close, where she really works at being adaptable towards my seasons and really intuiting when to be stern, when to be comforting, when to be, you know.

I- But also, she doesn't always have access to, like, the most interior parts of me. And so having a presence that's like, "Oh, what- whatever I need, you can be," for me, that feels so nourishing and so comforting, and building that reliability, building the capacity to hear, to understand, to, like, distinguish the knowings, to know when this is, this is my insecurity speaking, this is my fear speaking, this is spirit speaking, this, like, to know the different, I don't wanna say voices in your head, but to know what it is you are being met with and to know where it comes from and how it sounds and the tenure and the texture of the different knowings that we have, and even knowing what is yours, knowing what isn't yours, knowing what is being spoken into you, like all of those things, I think that is our work.

And when we do that work, then spirit can do their work. But if we don't develop the capacity to discern, to s- to see, to hear, to listen, it can all feel like one jumbled up soup of confusion

Ain B.: You know, first of all, shout out to your mom. I love to hear about a mom being adaptive to what is present for you in the moment, and them being responsive to being able to step into the different changing roles at any given time, right? It just really speaks to what you're also saying as this practice of discernment and listening.

I also want to shout out people who might be schizophrenic, because I think in our Western culture, you know, the listening to voices in our head is demonized and pathologized, whereas I'm like, "You don't know who those people are talking to, okay? They could be talking to the future. They could be talking to higher consciousness.

They could be, they could have figured out all the answers to all the things that we're trying to figure out right now, and you have just deemed them negative and to be pushed aside because they are inconvenient." Well, how many other things are inconvenient that you're trying to push aside on a societal context, and what type of freedom are those, uh, avenues of inquiry, discovery, and knowing actually offering us, right?

So just a little shout-out there, but I would love to hear, Salem, how do you cultivate that discernment of clarifying what is what, who is speaking, what is being heard? Yeah

Salem Afangideh: Two things that I do pretty much religiously is my meditation practice and my journaling practice. So if not every day, every other day, I make some time to sit and listen and just quiet, attempt to quiet myself. And what meditation does for me, especially breathwork, is that it allows me to It allows things to get quiet.

t allows things to, to slowly fade, to go from, like, really loud chatter to really, like, slow chatter. And in the slowness of it, I can sort of discern through years of practice, like, this is me. This is

coming from me, because I know myself. I know what my fears are. I know what my insecurities are. I know, I know what is mine.

I know my affirming voice versus, like, my mother's voice, right? Like, through years of hearing, I can say, "Yeah, this is exactly what my mom would say to me in this situation," because I'm in proximity to her. I know my father's voice, right? And I know sometimes when I take on my father's voice as a way to regulate myself, and I can be like, "This is, this is your dad's voice."

Like, you are taking this ...And so I, I think intimacy, right? Self-intimacy, self-inquiry, and that is also what journaling allows me to do. When I write, when I free flow journal, it, it allows me to get into the space where I'm just getting down everything that is there. And sometimes when I'm journaling, there'll be a line that I'm like, "Oh, this is, this is so profound," and it's an answer to a question that I didn't even know I had.

And so then I'm working backwards to say, "Oh, if, if this has come through, if this is something that has been channeled in, what is this thing coming to answer for me?" And it could be like a week, two week later when I'll have that experience. So I often experience things retroactively, and I see it as a way to sort of prepare me for what is to come. So I could almost intuit or sense when I'm going to get bad news, for instance, because I get something that sort of prepares me. Like, I get a knowing or I get a prompting to do something to fortify myself against it. I'll be journaling and, you know, some words of affirmation will come through. Also music, like I'll be

Sometimes I put my playlist on shuffle, and I'll hear the words of other people be exactly what I need to hear. And so, and sometimes it's nature, just being around the trees and really just listening and seeing what comes through, what c- what feels like a knowing in my soul, in my spirit, when I'm hiking, when I quiet the noise, the external noise.

And sometimes the external noise is where I get the wisdom, right? Like, so it's, it's just a, it's a deepening with myself and deepening with spirit and deepening with all that is around me, understanding that I think everything you want to hear from, everyone you want to hear from, is probably always in conversation with you.

And everything can be in conversation with you. And so if we're willing to be in conversation with ourselves and also be in conversation with the more-than-human world, there's a lot of opportunities to discern. And then through kind of parsing out what it is you're hearing, you're sensing, you're knowing, you're feeling, if you're more on the empath spectrum, you can feel very viscerally things.

You can feel people's feelings. You can feel the... Like, you can walk into a room and feel the energy of a space, and then sometimes that, and I think as a kid, that felt so overwhelming that I just sought to pay attention to that because it's sensorily very overwhelming to have the capacity to be so deeply in tune. But as you cultivate some sort of energy hygiene, as you cultivate spiritual practices, you really can learn how to be in your own energy, to be in your own

energetic signature. And I don't even know how to describe it beyond if you've experienced your own energy, you sort of know what your own energy feels like.

And when you feel like you had a lot of other people's energy that you're losing a sense of your own, that's when it's time to, like, come back, to do whatever practices you do to come back to your own energetic signature, which for me can look like just sitting in the dark, sitting quietly, taking a bath.

Like, whatever it takes to just quiet out other people's things, give them... Like, physically envision myself giving people's energies and reactions back to them and coming back to my own baseline. Knowing my baseline feels very important to me, and it's now it's something I do every day, just coming back, a, a practice of returning to my baseline.

And also allowing my baseline to expand, not feeling attached to a particular baseline, but, you know, allowing all the people who come in contact with me to, like, input into me in a way that I can either accept or reject

Ain B.: I love getting practical, right? Because I think so often we don't necessarily see pathways for these kinds of relationships, right? I remember growing up and really wishing that I could follow a path for a career, like wishing I wanted to be a doctor or a lawyer because there was like, okay, great, then you take the biology classes, then you take the MCAT, then you go to med school, then you do a post, right?

And so, like there was, it's just a, there's already a path there, and you just get to follow the path. Now, I'm not saying following the path is easy, but it's already outlined.But my spirit was never that spirit, and so I was always sort of figuring it out and piecing things together, and have gratefully landed in a place that is aligned with my spirit in this moment in New Seneca Village.

But I think often when we talk about spirit and our relationship to spirit, it is a little bit more confusing with pe- for people, or it doesn't feel as intuitive, in large part because we are conditioned to not be connected to our intuition, right? And to not be connected to ourselves as a source of much of anything really, you know.

Especially in American culture, you know, in addition to the external global branding, there's the internal branding that's like, "Hey, capitalism will fix it," right? And so there's something to buy or, you know, whether that be a product or even an experience sometimes. And there's not a like, "Hey, you actually have everything you need inside of you."

Now, it's going to potentially require you to get still, to develop a journaling practice, to hug a tree, to sit in the dark, any of the number of things that you've named and that I've also experienced for myself, but that it is possible to be in intimate, close, and honest relationship with oneself. And in fact, in my belief system, it's imperative that we do so

Salem Afangideh: Yes, absolutely. I think especially because, you know, most of American culture is deeply religious and especially, you know, in the South where we live. What I don't really have too many, too much to say about religiosity. I do, but I won't. Um, but I do ... I, I think though that one of the things, one of the disservices that religion does for us as people is that it outsources these moments of spiritual connection to others.

And so, the church, the mosque, the, you know, where, the temple, wherever you go to becomes the place where you feel the divine is most present. And when there's, when the music's cued up just right and the,the person who, you know, your pastor, your priest, whatever, comes in and he brings this divine revelation to you and you're just, it's, it's a transcendental experience.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm

Salem Afangideh: because, you know, you go to that regularly and there's really not a lot of spiritual formation encouraged alongside these moments of, "Just go to church, just go to mosque," people don't realize that they can have all of those things for themselves by themselves.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm

Salem Afangideh: it's actually imperative for you to have that even if you do choose to go to a church and a mosque and all of the, 'cause that is where you get discernments.

For instance, you can go, someone can preach a sermon and what they're saying actually d- like, is jarring against what you know to be a truth for yourself and the season of life you're called into. If you're not attentive to your own relationship with spirit, you're gonna be so porous that you're taking in everything that is put on you.

And in moments and in spaces where there's a lot of spiritual trust, there's also a lot of spiritual vulnerability. And if you're not fortified against what people are speaking into you, then that becomes your truth. That becomes your, your reality, right? If so, if people are speaking things that are not necessarily aligned with you but you're taking that in, you're now living in misalignment with your own path, with your own purpose, with your own spirit even.

But because we're experiencing transcendence, right, we, people tend to accept that without questioning what it is that they're actually experiencing and feeling and how that feels when they go back home. And, you know, in the Christian context I grew up in, when if you're not connected to that when you go back home or when you're in conversation, then we attribute that to the devil, right?

So it's like, yeah, y- I, I'm now distracted. I, I need to go back and get my, my fix. I need to go back and be connected. I need to go back next Sunday and be connected to spirit rather than, like, interrogating the discomfort that you may feel and maybe even seeing the ways that that

discomfort could be divine, could be a warning symbol to you to not go back to a space that could actually be hurting your own spiritual sense of, um, transcendence and abundance, right?

So that's, that's kind of my soapbox.

Ain B.: I detect no falsehoods. You know, I think it, that piece around the intermediary of it all I think about so often because we can tend to give our knowing away to others, as you're describing, and not grounding in that we know, right? And that if we don't know right now, if we seek to know, we will know, right?

Ain B.: And so, you know, I would love to talk a bit about that transcendent feeling, emotion, and how it can also be sort of a, prop might be too much of a word, a crutch. N- neither of those are the words, but, you know, just as we think about peak experience, we often want to move from peak experience to peak experience, and even within relationship to spirit that doesn't have intermediary, that is our direct relationship with spirit of wanting it to unfold in a certain way, and looking for only certain things to validate and affirm, as opposed to also using spirit as our opportunity to get more closely related to our own sovereignty

and our own internal agency, and the responsibility we have to ourselves and to the gift that you were talking about earlier, whatever contribution we're here to uniquely bring to the world, to be connected to that and to be in action around it. So I would love to hear some of your thoughts around, you know, yes, loving the miracles of it all, and then also, what else is for us to be practicing.

Salem Afangideh: Yeah. Mm. I think transcendence is kind of like endorphins when you're working out, right? When you're in the gym working out, just running, whatever it is you do to move your body, you have, you have to put in the work. You have to, you know, you're, you're gonna, you're gonna run, you're gonna run your first mile.

You'll probably be like, "Ugh, I hate this. I don't wanna do this." You push through, you get to your second mile, and you're like, "Okay, this is beginning to feel a little bit good. This is, this is nice." By the time you get to your third mile, you're like, okay, you're tired, but then, like, you feel this like, ha, I've done it.

Yeah, I can take on the world, right? Like, all of that.

I think sometimes we're looking for ... And, and certain people, like, and I, I think the modern church has figured out a way to package the transcendence without the work. And so you come in, and just by being present, other people have done the work. And people who work behind the scenes in church, as I did once, will tell you that there's a lot of work that goes into the performance of the Sunday morning that people come to experience.

There are a lot of people who are making sure that the transcendence you come to have is on the backs of their labor, right? They're, they're laboring. We're meeting, we're, we're doing a lot of hurdles, we're doing a lot of planning. It's just not visible work

Ain B.: Except for the pianist who hits those chords at the exact right moment, then does that pause, and then you're like, "Come on now."

Salem Afangideh: That's right, exactly. It, it's curated, right? It's curated. And I appreciate a beautiful curation, but I think we have to understand that every time we're packaged transcendence, we're missing out an opportunity to do the work to give us our own sense of transcendence. And it's not to say that we can't experience moments of transcendence and just enjoy them for what they are, but when we start craving the transcendence without the work that leads to the transcendent, then we're missing out on the, what actually builds skill, what actually builds capacity, what actually builds confidence, right?

[And so if you take this hit every time you want to feel endorphins, right, you, you take something and that gives you those endorphins, that gives you that sense of transcendence, you're still not a runner, right? Like, if you're not putting in the work, you can't be a runner. And I think we have to fall in love with the process more than the outcome. To me, I think that is what I would say to someone who is in love with the transcendence. It's like, this is available to you, but there are also processes that can get you there. It's also why I love yoga so much, because you do get that feeling at the end of yoga when you're lying in Shavasana. But you have to push through.

You have to go through the downward dog. You have to have those moments of self-doubt where you're like, "If I stay in downward dog one more second, I'm going to," like, "I can't do this," right? Like, you have to be in, like, warrior three and be wobbly. You have to be in a balance pose like tree pose and be, like, stumbling across.

You have to go through the highs and the low. And, and then when you get to Shavasana at the end, you're like, "Oh my God," like, "Wow, I did it." And-

Ain B.: I love this example 'cause especially me in downward dog, I'm like, "No, thanks."

Salem Afangideh: Yeah. I, the things that build the most confidence and capacity and skill don't always feel good though. But there is a good feeling at the end. And I think as we learn to slow down and really appreciate the process, whether that is in our physical movement practices, whatever we do to, you know, keep our bodies strong and agile, or in our spiritual disciplines, like we have to see that the transcendence is just one piece of it.

And it's actually, it's, it's a nice piece of it. But what you realize with people who come back to yoga, who come back to meditation, they don't come for those moments at the end. They actually come because after a while you notice that you're getting better at downward, "Oh, you can hold downward dog for like 30 seconds?

Wow." You could, you know, You could run an extra mile. You could, you could lift, like your PRs in the gym are getting better. You're getting stronger. That, that is the thing you come back for, you know? And, and it, we have to find those things that we're committed to being in process with long enough, and the outcome is just a moment.

But the process is what keeps us building the disciplines, the practices, the skills, and the confidence that propels us to the next level in our lives and in our

Ain B.: Yeah. I resonate with this so much and really appreciate the way that you're laying it out and connecting it to how we see and understand and recognize it on a physical level in our body-body, but then the invitation, it feels, is to get our way of being into loving process more. It's so funny because I've alway- I don't like cliches, and I have issue with things that many people say a lot 'cause I'm like, "Mm, I inherently distrust that."

So, like, "The journey is the destination," was one of those things I used to hear all the time and be like, "Don't say that to me. I don't wanna hear it." And- ... like, that is the dumbest thing I've ever heard. And as with many of the cliches that I hated, uh, as I got into my 40s, I'm like, "Oh, this is 100% right," you know?

And really recognize that part of my friction in particularly work areas in my life, but also in relationships, is the lack of process, right? It's just like, "Hey, we're about to do this thing. Let's just do it," as opposed to like, "Hey, do we wanna create some intentions around what we're doing? Do we want to get related about, like, how we want to do it?"

You know, and one of my beliefs now is like, how we do a thing is as important as what it is we're doing, right? Because the ways of being, the energy, the attitudes, the stance, the all of that that we bring into what it is we're doing is gonna impact the outcome, right? And so it's become a lot of a, a much richer space for me to be like, "Oh, actually, process is the starting point.

The journey is the whole thing." Um, and after many years of rejecting the entire premise. But it came out of deepening my spiritual practice of listening and discernment, of being like, "I'm gonna sit here with this ocean until I get the answers I need," and that is gonna be hours later or many weeks of return trips later that I am just coming to the shore with this same question and allowing the waves crashing constant into the shore to change me, to answer the question, but to also expand my perspective and understanding of not only what is possible b- but what is actually happening

Salem Afangideh: Ain, I think that is so beautiful because when you come from like a religious previously religious or even spiritual background, I think we look for easy answers, right? Like, we're looking for the next thing. And I think what nature does as a teacher is nature shows you the now thing. And so when you come to nature in the same way as you would, you know, open a Bible and be like, "Okay, God, show me something," and then you land on the verse that says, you know, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Don't lean on your own understanding." And you're like, "Oh my God," like, "This is an answer." I, I feel, or like, you know, you pick up a tarot card and be like... And I'm a tarot girlie. I love to read the tarot. I feel like there are a lot of answers there. And, but you can't over-rely on the tools because they're also, if they're quick tools, they're also being filtered through your own expectation. But what nature as a teacher does is it, it doesn't give you the answers to the questions you're often asking for. It changes you so that you s- realize, "Oh, I'm probably asking the wrong question." If I'm often asking questions like, "What do I need to do? What do I need to do?" Sometimes what nature reminds me is, like, look at all the things that are already being done, you know?

And, and so I leave with like, ah, I was so anxious about what I needed to do and what the next steps are, and, and now it's like, wow, like, I mean, we have oceans, you know? And so I live in this... I go with like, we have trees that are literally taking in our carbon dioxide and giving us oxygen. What do you mean? What did I have to do? Just breathe out, right? And there's already abundance.

Ain B.: Yes

Salem Afangideh: I feel like when I go to nature, it often tells me, "Eh, wrong question, wrong question, wrong question." It reframes my mind. It changes me. It directs me to the now. And it is in the now. It is in the present. It is in saying, as, when I stop focusing on like, what is next, what is next, what is next?

'Cause I think a lot of us get so caught up in that what's the next thing question. And it's like when you're in the now, the answers will naturally come. Someone in your present will say something that immediately is like, "Oh, wow," and this answer that you thought you needed to get in isolation, you realize that it was actually present in community.

I think that is remar- that, that is the thing that is so remarkable to me right now. I am meeting people and having conversations, and in a random conversation, there's an answer that, that comes, or there's an abundance that is presented. There's an opportunity that someone is looking for the right fit for that just happens to be me.

And if I was so focused on going out and making these opportunities happen, maybe I wouldn't have access to it. But in paying attention, happening in the present moment, it's like, oh, this is, this is just a natural fit. Like, someone out there is praying for exactly what I have to offer, and if I'm just present, we will somehow find each other.

And that part is the, I think the, the alignment, the coherence, the, like, when I'm doing my part, spirit does their part, and it's all in a way that doesn't allow me to over-rely on my ego because it's all in a way that is Yes, impacted by me. Yes, I have to bring myself to the table. I have to bring m- what I know to the table, but it's more than that.

You can see that there are other people who are also being prepared to be in that space with you. You can see that there are other opportunities that you wouldn't have access to when, without other people. And so it allows us to be interdependent. It allows us to be grateful. It allows us to recognize our place, but not to overinflate our role and our place in the, the work, the W- the capital W work that is happening all around us

Ain B.: Yeah, this is, um, so good what you're saying because, I mean, you know, I'm deeply in love with nature and think that it is the best thing we've got and such a blessing. And what you're also bringing in is the collective, and the word that keeps coming to me is the partnership that is activated when we are in deep alignment with our spirit, right?

So going to nature, being willing to be changed by it, going to our restorative practices, to our journaling, journaling, being willing to be opened up by what we discover there, that also allows us to come into greater alignment with the people, places, things on the material plane that are actually wanting to co-create with us, right?

And that by trusting ourselves and by building reciprocal relationship with these practices for spiritual path walking, for lack of a better framing, we are also signaling to the larger consciousness of like, "Oh, I'm ready for this opportunity. I'm ready for this person. I'm ready to be a contribution to the world in this way." What a astounding gift, while also being the result of actual and intentional work.

Salem Afangideh: Yes. And that is it. Like the work is massive, but I think it's also not grind.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Salem Afangideh: It is presence and attunement, which are not ... If you've ever tried to meditate, like meditation is not, you never come to the meditation mat like, "Wow, I got this." You know? It's, it's work to be present. It is work to attune. It is work to surrender.

It is work to trust. These things are not, they're not eas- They get easier with time. They get easier with trust. But each time you come, you have to come as you are and be willing to be transformed. Yesterday or two days ago, I was watching the Argentina ... Argentina was playing someone. A Algeria match. And I, for all those who don't know Messi, Leo Messi plays for Argentina, and he's one of the best players in World Cup history. And, you know, when he first started making shots, like the first few shots he made Actually, I think I'm confusing two games. I, yeah. But anyways, he scored all three goals for Argentina in this game, and it, the, the striking thing was it looked so easy. Every time he took the ball to the corner, every time he was passed the ball, some from like middle of the field, some from like right at the edge, you know, right on the corner of the, the keeper's eye- like eyesight, it all looked so easy.

And to someone who isn't like a soccer/football fan, they would think that he was just lucky. But you've kind of been a soccer fan and seen Messi's ups and downs and watched the trajectory of

him. He's now 40. He's been playing for the last 25 years. Uh, he has built so much skill that people perceive his skill to be an easy thing.

But if you ever played soccer, you know this is not, nothing he did was easy. None of the passes were easy. The, the coordination it takes to like know, anticipate where the ball is going to be and like get yourself there so you could kick the ball in at the per- like, in something that takes like 0.01 seconds to like get in, is amazing.

And I just, as I watched those goals, as I watched him particularly doing his thing, I just felt, "Wow," like I want to be in such deep rigor and practice that when people perceive and see the way that I move through the world and whatever I'm doing, they think of it as really easy, even though I know and the people who know me will realize that like this is all a result of commitment and dedication and, and presence and attunement and alignment, right?

And so I've been, I've been thinking of that since the World Cup is ... It's, there's a level of flow to the ways that we show up that are a testament to the work we've been doing before we show up, and that speaks for itself

Ain B.: It's a beautiful reminder of the practice, dedication, determination, and commitment it takes to be in flow. Because I find relationship with spirit so invigorating and such a wonderful thing, and because I'm in the relationship and have developed my practices and I'm not back where I was, where I was like, "What is happening and how, and what, and how, and who?"

You know, I forget 'cause I'm like, "Come on, people. Why? What? What?" You know, like, especially in this moment where so much is getting challenged in what I think are actually beautiful ways, 'cause, you know, a lot of people have been asleep for a really long time, and this is not quite a sleep through it moment, right?

And so I have hope that this moment, as terrible and disgusting as it is, is a precursor to a greater awakening for a larger number of people. I'm also always reminded of, like, if the spiritual path was easy, everyone would be doing it

Salem Afangideh: Yep. Mm-hmm. Everyone would be on it

Ain B.: So I just, I appreciate the relevancy of the World Cup example and the Messi example in this moment, and just, yeah, just a reminder of, like, stepping into the unknown yields such also unknown results, right?

Salem Afangideh: I think of it, you know, as, as someone who is an entrepreneur now as well, like, I think of it as, like, the choice to become self-employed and build something. It's so... Like, make- taking the first step is very brave, but it's also the least brave step you will ever take in the journey. like, but the journey from, like, when you're standing at that precipice of, like, "Maybe I can, like, leave the security of a nine-to-five and build something or figure out a way to make it on my own," it, it feels like the biggest decision you'll ever make.

Salem Afangideh: And it, it just feels so... Yeah, I, I, I don't know any other way to say it than brave. It feels so brave to say yes to that. And also, when my friends are at that point, it's, I, there's a piece of me that wants to say, like, "This feels so big," but this, in comparison to what the work is, but also in comparison to what the results are, like, it's, it's a really brave step.

And also every day from now moving forward is essentially you signing up yourself to partner with like, you will not... You may have plans, you may have goals, but the unpredictability of the market is now your problem. The unpredictability of your income is now your problem, right? Like you said at the beginning with your journey in trying to find a career, there is no clear path.

You can read all the books on entrepreneurship, but everyone's journey is so individual, it's so unique, it's so different, and it's, there is no one who is coming to save you from what the realities of these are. And that can either be really excruciating or it could also be really freeing to know that, "Okay, I get to co-create this path, and it's not going to look like anything that ever exists before, but it's going to be uniquely mine.

I get to create this company. I get to co-create this spiritual practice that is uniquely mine, and I can borrow from different traditions. I can borrow from... I can even be inspired by other people's relationships with the divine, with spirit," all of that. But this has to be mine, or it's not worth the risk of jumping from something more organized, more structured into something that is individual and uniquely mine. And it's hard. It's, it's, it's hard. But it's also so rewarding, and it's also different levels of different layers of hard once you've made the decision and once you're into the journey, that it's so difficult to explain from the outside

Ain B.: Yeah. Yeah. Can concur. And I feel like that's a whole other podcast, so we might have to come back and talk about that spiritual path because to your point, it's like, yes, you're making this brave decision today to step in- out of one world and into another, and then this whole world that you're now stepping into is gonna require you to be brave ongoingly as a lifelong stance, right?

Yeah. And, and to your point, what, what opportunity there is in there Salem, is there anything you want to say or share or lift up that we haven't thus far before we close out this part of the conversation?

Salem Afangideh: I think I, I wanna talk about the spirit and burnout thing, because that has been something that I've been thinking a lot about. The two times I experienced deep burnout, and one of them was really early in my career. So I started my career as a lawyer. I was also 20 years old when I became a licensed lawyer, and I knew that the capacity it took for me to go through law school and ye- and, like, graduate, take the bar, pass the bar, begin my career, was something supernatural.

Like, I, I knew that I could do it, but I also relied a lot on prayer, mindfulness. I got into yoga when I was in my third year of law school because I ... Then I started working with survivors of

human trafficking, and I was like, "Okay, I need to be trauma-informed. I need to understand how to regulate my own emotions so that I could show up for my clients."

But it very much felt like I was getting this access to supernatural support. And so I begun my career working with survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, and that was ... Again, I was, like, 20 when I graduated, 20 when I passed the bar, 21 when I began this career. And yeah. And also I, I think I, I did not realize, even with my tools, that I wasn't

This was so far above my pay grade, but there was so much opportunity, and I always wanted to be a human rights lawyer. I always wanted to step in and help the people that were the most, quote-unquote, "difficult to support." And there was a lot of opportunity in that area of work, and so I jumped right in.

And maybe about a year, year and a half into, like, really being a lawyer, I experienced my first phase of burnout. Like, my body was shutting down. My p- my thyroid was, like, I had some thyroid disorder thing. My, my periods were, like, non- non-existent. Like, my body was just in this chronic burnout, and it was screaming at me. It was, like, subtle at first, and then it just got really, really loud, and that was the first time that I e- really had to reckon with, like, oh, I feel called to this, but also my body cannot handle the pressures and the stresses of, and the realities of this work. And there was a grief in that. There was a betrayal.

There was a feeling of betrayal in that with spirit, where I felt like, "You called me to this. Why didn't you keep giving me what I needed to keep showing up for this? Why wasn't my body strong enough to handle the pressures of this?"

And in that I had to realize that, you know, spirit does not enable.

Ain B.: Wait, can you say that again?

Salem Afangideh: Yes, spirit does not enable. It does not enable your bad habits. It does not enable your bad behavior. It does not enable you abandoning yourself. And that is exactly what that had looked like for me. It was doing really good work, doing really, quote-unquote, "heroic work," but abandoning myself. Not sleeping, not really paying attention to my nutrition, not paying attention to, like, my hormones, my cycles, not going to the doctor regularly for my annual checkups, just completely immersing myself into the, this work that I felt called to do.

And so that work looked like, how do I, like, really come back to my body and realize that I am just as important as the people who I'm called to support? And to build a sustainable foundation for my work requires, yes, spiritual support, but also physical support. Like, I, as the vessel, have to be nourished.

I have to take care of myself. I have to not just take care of myself so I can good, do good work, but, like, take care of myself because I deserve care. So a complete different paradigm shift,

which led to me learning how to incorporate self-care and all of my physical practices, which is why, you know, when I talk about spirit, like, the physical is so important to me.

How am I showing up for myself as a person? What are the practices that sustain me? What are the practices that if I go for two, three days without doing, I'm like, "Okay, girl, you have a tendency to give yourself over to the work so much that you forget that you're in a physical body." And so I'm tracking my sleep every day. I'm, you know, making sure I'm drinking a lot of water. Like, the, there are very physical foundations to my self-care practice that allow me to not give, overgive myself to the work.

But the second experience of burnout really taught me a different lesson about spirit. So my second experience of burnout, when I felt called to lead, to transition from the human rights law firm that I worked at in the Bay Area into starting my own consulting firm, I felt like this was Definitely like a, a, a spirit-led idea.

Like, it was not something I was interested in doing, but I just had a lot of opportunities where I'd gotten to do some consulting practice on the side for some friends, and I felt like, "Oh, I'm really good at this. I'm really good at supporting organizations to get started, to get structured. I'm really good at, like, co-thinking, being a thought partner," and I'm also ready to, like, put the legal world behind me for now.

And so this felt very much like something I was called to do. And I was like, "Okay, thanks for the idea. I've got it from here." And it just became me, the first few years, like, being like, "Okay, what resources do I have? What communities do I have?" And I did well my first couple of years, but also I was working with people who I was not aligned with.

I didn't really pause to seek the strategies and the relationships from, to seek support around those things. I didn't pause. I didn't journal. I was just so poor, so open, that I didn't really recognize that you could have the right idea and the wrong team. You can have the right idea and the wrong clients.

You can have the right idea and the wrong infrastructure, because all of this needs to come as a co-created partnership with your work. And so when I had my second experience of burnout, it was not that the work was not aligned. It wasn't that I wasn't taking care of myself, but it was that I took a spirit-led idea and tried to run it with all of the things that already existed. And what I realized is that if you're trying to bring something to the world that doesn't exist, you also need to have a level of connection to resources that don't yet exist, to clients that are not even in your purview or pipeline yet. You need to consistently rely on the source of your vision and your idea for the support that you need to build this thing.

You can't rely on old infrastructure, old resources, old ways of being to build something that hasn't existed before, because that's not going to create a sustainable foundation. And so in learning that It sort of supported my new learning on spirit and work, which is, you know, yes, first of all, spirit does not enable bad behavior, and second of all, spirit is going to be a through

line, not just your...the, the, the bringer of the vision, right? Like, spirit has to be part of this work if it's going to be sustainable at all. And that sustainability piece of my work has become so important to me because it, again, it allows me to check my ego. It allows me to show up for my work and realize that I do need support.

I am in charge, but I am not orchestrating a lot of things behind the scenes because there's, there's spirit. There's a divine presence that is orchestrating, that is having conversations with people and bringing them my way, that is, like, doing a lot of things. And, and that allows me to stay focused on my part and not take on the things that are not meant for me to do, and also not, you know, not be a business owner who has...

Again, I wanna reemphasize the ego thing because I think as much we... You know, there's, there's, like, this colloquial saying in, like, Black spaces, "Give me the confidence of a mediocre white man," and I have to check that and be like, "I, I don't aspire for that, really. Truly, I don't aspire to have that." I want the confidence that comes from perfecting my craft, but I also want a level of humility that shows that this, everything that I'm building, everything that I'm a part of is co-created.

Like, it's not just me. It, I don't have... I have brilliant ideas, but it's not sourced from me, by me, for me, from me. Like, I'm not a genius. I am just part of a co-created ecosystem, right? That is what nature shows me, that you can be excellent and still be part of an ecosystem. It doesn't have to be this individualistic search for self-aggrandization to be worth it and to be something worth talking about and to be something worth being proud of.

So that, I wanted to bring that into the conversation, too

Ain B.: I really appreciate you sharing with us these two examples, right? And it reminds me of earlier in the conversation of How opening up to an experience allows you to be able to continue to deepen the experience. So there's what you learned about burnout the first time and corrected for, right, and created practices around, and then there's what this second opportunity for burnout is, is illuminating and highlighting.

And, you know, I also really love the piece of, and have experienced that myself, you know, with New Seneca Village being a spirit-given vision that I did push off for many years, almost a decade, but then when I finally said yes, I was like, "Okay, come on spirit, let's do this," right? And, and there's still learnings inside of that, but just to say that this opportunity to be co-creating something that has never been seen, I think is really a useful frame and reminder for anyone starting a new thing, beginning a new large project, and I would include, like, a baby is a large project.

You know what I mean? Like, building a house is a large project. Like, a, a- anything that we turn our attention to that takes some level of bravery and that will require some levels or many levels of uncertainty, that we don't have to do it alone, and that doesn't mean surrounding ourselves just with people on the material plane that can support us, but also how are we really

thinking and including and referencing and returning to the source of the original idea and vision and, and, and relying on spirit to also open the ways or to, you know, lead us to that conversation with that person who's gonna say that one thing that's gonna change everything.

Or any of the ways the spirit shows up to be like, A, you're on the right path, but also-- or B, nah, this ain't it. Look over here.You know? Pivot over here, you know? Um, there's something more available to you. And just what a gift it is to be in the practices that, whatever those practices are that you develop.

For me, it's deep listening and nature and journaling, for the most part, are my favorite activities. I do like a good solo dance party, too. That always helps. But to really be hearing what it actually is going to require, but also what is actually possible. There's a lot to be thankful for, even in the hard moments or, you know, I think I'm an entrepreneur in a different way in the nonprofit space, but still, that uncertainty is there and, you know, sometimes also are the 3:00 AM wake-ups, like, "Wait a minute," you know?

And so, again, giving honor to those hard moments, but also, like, what, what is the invitation there for my own personal development, but also for what might need to shift and change in the way that I'm doing the work

Salem Afangideh: Yeah. 'Cause it's, what you're building with New Seneca, again, has not been done before. So there's no through line. There's, like you can't go do research and say, "Hmm, how are the other people who are building, uh, rest residencies for, you know, specifically women and, like, people of other marginalized genders?

Like, how, how are they doing this?" Y- there's no different playbook. There's no book about that. You have to do this. But also what I'm sense- what I'm feeling and sensing is even you talking about your early search for a career path and that not being available to you, and you really having to create this career, it's almost like you've been prepared lifelong for this project, where you have to be with uncertainty to create the thing that has to be created.

But if you weren't, if you didn't know how to do that from previous experience, you would be way more destabilized in this

Ain B.: Yeah. Uh, that's 100%, and I have to give all that credit to spirit for pushing me, inviting me, but sometimes kicking me in the butt out of different places, spaces, beliefs, mindsets to, um, yeah, to get to a place where it's like, oh, there's so many of the things that I've prayed for my entire life that I have realized, not just in the work, which is such a honor and exquisite delight when people are reclaiming their relationship to themselves.

Like, that is just, get into my veins, directly into my veins, okay? But on a personal level, it's like, oh, I work from home. I'm my own boss. Like, these are things I've been wanting forever, right? And so, like, and, and there's the two sides of all of that. There's, oh, I'm the one ultimately responsible for all of it, back to the CEO conversation, right?

Certainly not making the millions, and certainly if it fails, I'm not gonna get a sweetheart deal as I walk away. But, you know, I do have all the responsibility and accountability and get to practice what you were naming and asking for from the very beginning of how do we do that with care? How do we be in leadership positions with the intention that we are creating something entirely new in not only the outcome of what we're creating, but in the process of what we're creating And that's a gift. I'm like, you know, uh, uh, what else am I doing with my time?

Salem Afangideh: Ah. It's so worth it. It's so worth it, and I think w- something I've been... Your, what you were just saying reminded me of a thought that I've been having lately, which is, you know how we have certain cliches about, you know, difficult moments revealing strong people or making, creating strong people, and I'm realizing when you talked about how spirit allowed you to experience certain things, and I'm thinking about how we don't often know our own strength.

Like, we, we didn't, you know, the Whitney Houston Hou- has a song that says, "I didn't know my own strength," and I love that song because oftentimes I think when I'm, whenever I'm faced with a challenge, it is, I now see it as affirming. It is now an affirming process for me. I'm like, "Oh, that means I already have everything I need inside of me to navigate this." Now, I don't know consciously that I do, so the process of solving the problem is figuring out how to bring what my subconscious and my spirit already know to the conscious, but it already exists. I wouldn't be faced with this challenge without the solution already existing in the ethers. And so this is for me to realize consciously what already exists unconsciously, and it has completely changed my relationship with problem-solving or a challenging experience in the world from, that are, like, directed at me.

One of the challenges I, I experienced recently, I applied for, like, a writing fellowship, and I spent so much time working on this writing fellowship application. I felt like I, I wrote the best thing I've ever written to send as a package for this writing fellowship application. It's with a writer I really respect, and I got the rejection letter last.

And part of why I wanted this writing fellowship was I want to develop my, a book, and I feel like I need a sustainable way for... I cannot both be an entrepreneur with uns- you know, unstable career reality and a writer with unstable career. Yeah, like, I need some level of stability, and this fellowship would be a container with very minimal time requirements so I could also be in the business of it all, uh, with running my firm. And so when I got rejected, like, my, my fear kicked in and it's like, "Oh, writing is never gonna be sustainable for me." Like, I'm never going to figure out a way to make this path ha- give me enough stability to be able to do it and, like, also do my, my other work, which I also really enjoy. And I allowed myself to wallow for a day because I do...

I, I also believe in wallowing as

Ain B.: Wallow. Get it out. Lounge. Stay in the bed. Eat the ice cream.

Salem Afangideh: Exactly. Exactly. I allowed myself to wallow and I was like, "We have 24 hours to wallow and be like, 'I am not a good writer. No one wants to read my work.'" There. And

I was just like, "Yeah, cool." I do it for my inner child, and after the 24 hours were done, I was like, "All right, pack this up. What do we know to be true? You want to write. This opportunity fell through. There will be other opportunities. And you, as, as an entrepreneur, if this is a challenge for you, you can solve this problem." The answer already exists. You just don't know it yet, but it's already out there.

So I can't wait to figure out what the answer to this puzzle is, but it's like I'm learning to see those inconveniences as puzzles, right? Like, a- and so it's like the, the puzzle piece already exists. It's finalized. I just need to figure out how the right puzzle piece fits into this piece that I have. Um, and I don't yet know how it's going to, but I'm It's completely shifted my relationship to moments that I would call, you know, advers- adversity or stressors.

I mean, in, in the grand scheme, these are small things. These are just questions that need ... These are logistical questions. Even though my inner child would like to catastrophize, I understand that this is, this is the fear, and it's important that we name the fear, but after that, when my adult self kicks in, then we get to say, "Okay, how do we solve this?"

You know, what are the, what are the creative ways, and what are the solutions that already exist that are just waiting for me to find them, you know? 'Cause if I have a problem, the solution's already out there

Ain B.: Beautiful. So I love this so much for all the reasons you name. I, I really do think the breakdowns lead to the breakthroughs, right? I know that's another cliche saying, but if you're looking for what is the opportunity and the lesson, it's there in everything. But also what I heard you say was, "For this application, I wrote the best thing that I think I've ever written."

And I'm like, okay, that's already something, right? Like, there's also the opportunity in the forcing function of an application that's like, oh, I actually did create the time. I actually did write something that I feel very proud of. And yes, it was a no from this perspective, but these are two other things that I know more possibility about who I am and how I can show up, and how I did and do show up.

That is also information to bring into what you're now like, "Okay, well, what's the opportunity that's coming towards me? How do I solve this logistical piece?" I'm like, there's, there's already the seeds that we know are in you, but there's already the seeds of what you even started and created for the application in the first place. I love this

Salem Afangideh: Yes. Thank you. Thank you. That's exactly right. It, it exists.

Ain B.: It's already happening.

Salem Afangideh: Exactly.

Ain B.: Yeah Salem, thank you so much for this conversation. I'm feeling really grateful for the way that we got to go in on a number of the topics that we like to go in on. And there's always so much more we could say, but I want to shift us to our sacred shout-out, because I would love to

hear what is a person, place, or thing, or belief, or affirmation, or whatever that is bringing you awe, inspiration, gratitude, or wonder these days?

Salem Afangideh: Yay. I love the sacred shout-out.

Ain B.: Me too.

[Sacred Shout-Out] **Salem Afangideh:** Okay, so there are two things. Number one is I mentioned early in the episode that I am coming down from my mom's 60th birthday. So last week was my mom's birthday. She turned 60 on Thursday, and on Saturday, my siblings and I threw her a 60th birthday party. And this happened because my mom was like, "I haven't been thrown a party since I was 17 years old." And my siblings and I were like, "What?" So, you know, we're all old enough to where we could do something that she didn't even have to be involved in, and it was lavish. I think I went all out. It was my best work yet. We had about, like, 75 to 80 of her closest friends, which that's a Gemini thing. I don't understand it as a Scorpio, but she had a lot of people who she really enjoys, really loved there to celebrate her, and it was beautiful.

And I'm just sitting with the profound implications of living a life where... And my mom is still, like, 60 is young to me. But the implications of living a life where, like, six, you know, five and a half decades in, like, you- you've collected so many people who just want to be there to celebrate you and have so many good things to say and will put their Saturday on hold to come just to tell you how great they think you are, you know? And, and that has given me so much joy for her. I feel so proud of her. I feel proud of the, the community she's built, especially being an immigrant. Like, you just, it's really difficult to be, it's difficult to be a child immigrant, but it's difficult to be an adult immigrant and pick up your life and move to a whole different country.

And in the last 17 years of us being here, she's built a really solid community of people who really enjoy her, and that, yeah, that made me so happy. So that is, that is a shout-out to my mom and her friends and her community here Thank you. And my second shout-out is I'm a part of the, a community called Lovers by Shan Boodram. And Shan Boodram is a sexuality educator, and she has just done a fabulous job of creating this online insider community of people who take love, relationships, and sex seriously, and talk about it with the weight that it deserves.

And that brings me so much joy. I was recently in a conversation 'cause we're, we're reading through a book called "The Mastery of Love" together with book club, and we were having such deep, profound conversations about our relationships to need and what, how it feels to need and be needed, and how it feels to build the sort of interior self that is resistant to people who could be abusive or people who could not, who don't have a strong sense of self.

How do we build a self that is resistant to that kind of external pressure, right? Even that people are coming to seek the light that you c- have cultivated inside of you. How do you create boundaries and navigate staying open but also being protected? And it, it just was such a fabulous conversation, and every time we have conversations in the group, every time I'm a part of the group, I see what people post, I just feel so grateful because I do take love and relationships very seriously, and it has often felt like people, a lot of people just see that as peripheral to their lives and, you know, maybe se- seasonal.

Like, there's certain seasons where it's like, "Okay, now that I'm done, now that I have the career thing, maybe I can turn to relationships," or, like, "Maybe I'm just a little lonely or bored." But for me, even as a little girl, like with my best friend, like it just was like, "Okay, I have a best friend." These are, you know, this is a responsibility.

I've always felt a level of responsibility for have- being a friend, even being a big sister. Like, I take my role as a big sister very seriously. I take my role as a cousin seriously, and the people in my close intimate life, I take that work very seriously, too. And having a space to be with other people, connect with other people who are a part of that community who take love seriously just brings me so much joy.

So I wanted to shout that out, too.

Ain B.: Beautiful. Thank you so much. And it ties into, actually you've been tying into my sacred shout-out this entire conversation. I'm feeling so grateful for intimacy. I have looked around, uh, in my life, and in stark contrast to even a few years ago, feel like I have such deep friendships that are so grounded in our complete acceptance of one another, knowing of one another, um, understanding, and, like, I can say anything that's up and present for me, and it's received with, like, "Yeah, me too," or, "Oh, I hear that," or, right, like, or, and, "Oh, well, here's a solution.

We could do this," or, "We could do that." And it's just, like, you know, as I think, 'cause I used to be one of those people that was very... I mean, I thought about love and relationships constantly, and then in the last 10 years I have made it a peripheral thing that I barely even think about, to be honest. And that shift feels pretty fine for me, but this intimacy piece is something that I didn't have as part of that love and relationship conversation that I have been cultivating over these past 10 years.

And, you know, I just think that it's just such a beautiful place to be known and seen and heard by people without, um, reservation and without putting themselves first in the conversation, but bringing their own experiences in as a mirror or as a reflection in support, and then being able to reciprocally return that level of listening and witnessing, intention and hearing, and questioning.

You know, it's really quite a delight and a practice that I feel deeply honored by and excited to continue to explore the depth of.

Salem Afangideh: Beautiful. Thank you for sharing. And I, I'm s- I love that. I'm so happy.

Ain B.: People are great, so yeah.

Salem Afangideh: And I, I think I love that even you sharing the, the waves of how you've been with love and relationships and having those seasons where it's like, okay, this is... I'm thinking about this a lot, and then maybe in response to the experiences you had being like, "Yeah, this, let me just focus on what I can control." And then, you know, that kind of rewarded. I, I bet that feels so gratifying to the you who felt like love and relationships could really be a generative space in our lives, you know? It's like you always knew that, and now it's, it's like it's happening. And I, yeah,

Ain B.: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much. Okay, so Salem, what is one practice, affirmation, or question that you want to invite our listeners into?

[Collective Practice Offering] **Salem Afangideh:** I had something else in mind that I was gonna say, but I think I'm, I'm going to leave with an affirmation because the world could use more affirmations. So my affirmation is, you're asking for a lot, but you're not asking for too much Yeah.

Ain B.: Thank you

Salem Afangideh: I think I'm gonna leave the people with that because it's been, it's a spirit one for me that has been feeling nourishing this last few weeks, so I'm gonna share that

Ain B.: That is so lovely. Thank you. Thank you. Salem, I'm so grateful to you for this conversation. I love connecting and talking with you, and so I'm glad that we got to do it in this way and share it with others. And I would love for you to share who you are with the folks and where they can find you

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[Guest Bio] **Salem Afangideh:** So I am Salem Afangideh. I am a lawyer, writer, consultant, and I do a lot of work at the intersection of the personal and the political. Right now, I currently work mostly with nonprofits and social impact businesses, helping them to start, scale, get funded, and build sustainable pipelines and processes. I also write.

I write on Substack. I- my Substack is called Coming of Age Is Not Soft Work, and it is all about growing up and growing up as a lifelong process, let me say that. And I frequent Instagram @Salem_Afangideh, A-F-A-N-G-I-D-E. You can also find out about my consulting firm at Afangidehglobal.com. And that's me

Ain B.: Yay. Thank you

[Closing Outro] **Ain B.:** You've been listening to We Outside. I'm creator and host Ayinde B. This show grows from questions at the heart of my work. What nourishes and sustains the people carrying change? How do spirit, nature, community, and restorative strategy deepen the ways we lead, live, vision, and create what comes next?

These questions also guide the offerings at my org, New Seneca Village, where we design restorative residencies and generative learning spaces for leaders and healers to step out of the urgency and to reconnect with the intangibles that expand their capacity to call in a collective future worth having.

Keep the conversation going with us on Instagram or LinkedIn. Tell us what sparked something for you, what questions you're carrying, and what you wanna hear more or less of. We Outside is edited by Podglomerate. Learn more at newsenecavillage.org/weoutside