

## Courtyard Conversations S4E3 Dr. Marcela Nava Transcript

Douglas

Welcome to Courtyard Conversations. I'm your host, Douglas Gutierrez, and with me today I have a very special guest. The one and only Dr. Marcela Nava. How are you doing today?

Marcela

I'm doing great. Thanks for having me.

Douglas

Thank you for being with us. Today's topic is twofold. We're going to be speaking on Women's History Month and Social Work Month. Okay. Let's get right into the program. What core values of social work do you think are most critical for students to carry into their future practice?

Marcela

Man, we kind of feel like we should just be walking around, right, with the values printed out with us, every day. I think it's it's a difficult time right now. And so I think one of the really important things to think about is really, you know, the first thing that comes to mind is when I say that is the dignity of every person.

Marcela

You know, okay. It's a time where as a profession, I mean, as a society, there's kind of an identity crisis, I think, happening at multiple levels in practice in academia, in politics and policy. And a lot of that is causing sometimes, you know, knee jerk reactions to carry out business as usual or to continue down paths or to, you know, really focus on continuing, you know, to be a voice for others.

Marcela

But I think what's being missed in a lot of those spaces and you know what? I would just really hold up as a core values is how many people, as much as we, you know, as a profession and as a practice, really want to take the lead and really feel compelled to take the lead. There are so many people who are voiceless and who have been silenced, in, in a lot of the environment that we find ourselves in, that oftentimes the louder that social work profession speaks, the more the the less capable we are of hearing the voices and really standing, next to the voices of people that are really struggling at this

Marcela

time. So I think thinking about the dignity of the individual, with dignity as just this really core value of understanding that sometimes individuals have very limited capacity to influence what's happening in them, around them. They have a limited capacity to change the policies and the politics and the environment, but to be able to exercise some level of basic control over

their life, to have some level of voice and some level of decision making, and what occurs to them is one of the most empowering things that can occur to somebody.

Marcela

So I think dignity of the individual and understanding how sometimes we just need to be quiet and really learn how to, support communities rather than feeling like, you know, compelled to take the lead.

Doughlas

When you mentioned dignity of the, of the individual, are you speaking on the individual of the receiver, the one the social work profession is wanting to benefit, or the sender, the ones in social work?

Marcela

The dignity of the individual, who like, you know, even even that idea of the sender of the receiver creates this idea that social workers are providing a service to individuals that are quite this kind of passive recipient of things, versus this idea of the social workers as collaborators that work with people who have autonomy, who have agency, who have a voice.

Marcela

And oftentimes, we again, because we're so, you know, and it's not that it's a, you know, negative thing, obviously, like our profession really causes us to step in and be a voice and take on leadership. But when our voices, when social work voices are heard before the voices of the individuals being affected or when they're heard, you know what?

Marcela

There's not a deliberate and conscious effort to partner with people and make sure that their voices are heard and and to use our voices to carry out their messages rather than carrying out what we think should happen to them. I think that's really where you see a violation of the dignity of the individual.

Doughlas

Okay, so in for someone who's not particularly within the social profession, the way I'm hearing that message is, communicate the problem or the issue, then provide a solution versus providing a solution first that sort of dictates the narrative of what this is what you need versus this is what I'm responding to.

Marcela

I would say even before is just listen, right. There's oftentimes, a sense of, of urgency that comes around in times like this of we need to act, we need to react. And, and one of the, the difficult things to, to sit with is the acute discomfort and frustration. And like I said, identity crisis. Right. Individuals that have, created a career out of trying to help others and help communities to then be in an environment where so much of that is being challenged on so many levels.

Marcela

But what I find is that sometimes it is that urgency to respond. That is where some of the greatest harms can occur unwittingly. Right? Because there's the urgency to respond is part of what some of the kind of greater happenings, you know, cause and so that urgency to respond, that urgency to react sometimes leads to people speaking and proposing solutions and taking leads versus just really pausing and sitting and listening, really listening to the communities being impacted.

Marcela

And also, honestly, you know, really sitting and trying to understand how we got to where we got to today. Right? There's, social work has. Yeah. Because of the social, you know, justice narrative. There's oftentimes, I think, the temptation to position social work as, you know, the, the good and versus the evil right. And to a lot of the issues that we study, we tend to position ourselves as the, again, the solution and the persons that are advancing social justice.

Marcela

And that tends to create this dichotomy where I find and this is kind of my, my thoughts and perspectives after doing this for several years, is that it creates sometimes a hesitation to really reflect on, well, what is this other side like, what is there? Are there things that we've done as a profession or in the spaces that we've moved in, that have contributed to some of this animosity?

Marcela

Are there things where we reacted and we behaved in a way that was polarizing? Have we, you know, pointed and accused fingers and reduce people down to their ideology much the same way that we accuse them of doing with us? So, I think there's a lot of necessity to think about the dignity of not just the people that, again, that we that we want to help, as a profession, but the dignity of the individuals that we disagree with, the individuals of the people that are, you know, may hold very opposing values.

Marcela

But they are still individuals. And to reduce them down to their ideology and to position them as the immoral, you know, side, you know, regardless of political you know, values is, violates their dignity as well and is also a missed learning opportunity to really understand how can we do better. Right. Because I think that leads to kind of a close mindedness of saying, no, we're the righteous, we're the good where the solid, where the social justice champions.

Marcela

Let's just keep fighting and moving forward. You know, like we're not perfect, we're not perfect, and we should stop and, you know, shut up sometimes and just be quiet and listen and and really reflect on, you know, how we can share. I'm not saying take all of the accountability. But share in some of the accountability of kind of this greater chaos that we find ourselves in as a society.

Douglas

Wow. I think that is a very mature and almost broader viewpoint of the entire context of the situation. I as I'm listening, I'm immediately thinking.

Douglas

And again, correct me if I'm wrong, the narrative of, well, there's this fire happening, let's just come in with a bucket of water with good intention, right? But sometimes intentional action, though, can be connected. There are two.

Douglas

Intensities and extremes of the spectrum in me throwing this bucket of water on the fire, wanting to put it out. I've then created more smoke and added to the destruction that the fire is currently making.

Marcela

Interesting analogy.

Douglas

Yeah, I also think about in this mature position of not necessarily siding with the quote unquote villain, but giving them that opportunity to to hear him out because maybe we are missing something. Maybe, maybe in our profession as social workers, we've kind of become, and I hope I'm using this word correctly, hubris in thinking that what we're doing 100% is right.

Marcela

Oh, absolutely.

Douglas

Yeah. It it also makes me think about, I heard this quote that if a, I think the correct term is the lumberjack. If a lumberjack has six hours to cut down a tree, he takes four to sharpen the ax. So instead of just immediately responding.

Douglas

Let's prepare. Let's gather our thoughts. Let's make sure that in our attempt to do something all we need is one one shot. We don't need 2 or 3 shots to take down the foe. We can do it in one. Is that more or less kind of what you're describing is come at it with everything as perfect. I don't mean maybe not use the word perfect, but as effective and optimal as it could be to then accomplish this task.

Douglas

Marcela

I'm sitting here thinking of the lumberjack. That sounds like something my dad would, would say like a story. Yeah. I mean, I think, I think definitely thinking along those lines, you know, the, the, you know, the what comes to mind right now is, you know, I was having a conversation, with a former student, you know, who's who's now in practice.

Marcela

And, we know she reaches out, occasionally and we'll kind of check in, you know, kind of do a mentorship meeting. Yeah. And she had reached out to me and just said, you know, I'm struggling, you know, with this is, you know, right after the election.

Douglas

Okay.

Marcela

But the last presidential election and she was really struggling and we had the most interesting conversation. And so she's telling me this story of going to a friend's wedding and sitting down and having a conversation with the friend's husband. And it turns out that the friend's husband had voted for Trump. And this was, again, you know, social work doesn't, you know, fall within political spaces.

Marcela

But of course, we know that everything's politicized in this environment. And so she so she's in this wedding, right? She's in this very public, you know, that she's been very, you know, intimate social space where where I feel like, you know, in most other, situations, she would have kind of found a way to, you know, get away from the individual or not have a conversation.

Marcela

But this was the person her friend had just married, right? So she ends up sitting down having this conversation with him. And so when she's talking with me, it was so interesting because her reaction wasn't, oh, I'm so angry. I can't believe what he did. It was this internal conflict that she had in herself, which was he's nice and he's reasonable, and he actually was able to have a conversation with me.

Marcela

And I'm struggling because I could kind of not saying I agreed with him, but I could kind of understand where it was. You can see where he's coming from. Right. And so she was having this internal struggle, and we had this great conversation. And I think kind of how we broke it ended up kind of breaking it down.

Marcela

Is that she again, she felt that, you know, part of a big part of her training had kind of compelled her to really have very strong feelings about, some of the values or some of the policies that this, you know, that this person she was talking with had. But then she also recognized him as a

human. She recognized him as a human who had had certain experiences that had led to certain beliefs and certain values.

Marcela

And so even though she, you know, may have, you know, disagree and continue to disagree with him in several ways, she saw him as a human, and so she could no longer really villainize him. Right. So she was now forced to engage with him as a human to with depth, with emotions, and not simply kind of write him off as, oh, a Trump supporter.

Marcela

Right. And so I think it was just such a good example of how it's, you know, again, as as tempting as it is to want to jump and react and continue, there are so many missed opportunities, you know, and in doing so, what we end up doing is essentially create, you know, reacting in the same way that we then villainize others.

Marcela

Right? If we are a profession that stands for values where we want to, you know, fight against racism and we want to fight against different forms of oppression, to then reduce an individual and villainize them, or reduce a group of individuals and villainize them based on a belief or a value or a political vote, is in many ways creating the same type of dynamics that we claim to stand against.

Marcela

And so, again, I think there's a lot of individuals that really hold on to their values as their sense of righteousness. And I think that what what's happening is that a lot of that's that's shaken up for people and that core of this, that direction of I knew what I was doing and I knew I was doing it, and now I don't know what I'm doing and I don't know why I'm doing it has really shaken up a lot of people.

Marcela

And so, you know, my kind of thing is, is not that that's a good thing or a bad thing, but that it's it's a learning opportunity, you know, if.

Doughlas

I like the framing.

Marcela

And it's learning opportunity. Yeah.

Doughlas

I like the framing. One of my follow up questions I wanted to ask was, is there a case where what you see is what you get? This is how this person is displaying themselves. This is their core beliefs. This is their ethos and logos and you can label it as something as evil.

Douglas

It's agreed upon that they're this way. It's known that this they're they're this way. This person is even outright and said that they're this way.

Douglas

What approach should you give somebody like that? Like I know you wanted to give them, you know, still the the, the room. You're human. I want to talk to you. But if they're just outright evil, a bad person, you're you're a bad apple. Why should you deserve my dignity to even speak to you as a human when you clearly don't see me as a human...?

Douglas

I guess I'm answering my own question now that I'm thinking about it. I'm into stoicism. Yeah, I read a lot of philosophy, and one of the quotes from the philosophers I don't know which one at the moment, but the quote is the greatest revenge is to not be like your enemy.

Speaker 3

Interesting. Yeah.

Douglas

So is this more of a...

Marcela

Oh, you're going into some deep philosophy.

Douglas

Yeah, yeah. Is is this more of, destroy hate with love kind of approach or how how are you; Help me understand what you wanting to say.

Marcela

I'm going to push back a little bit on just the dichotomy of love and hate and okay, good and evil. Because one of the things that social work that characterizes social work, especially, you know, social work in the West is the influence of Christianity. So if we think about Christianity and the influence of Christianity in the West versus different faiths and philosophy systems, in other parts of the world, a lot of social work kind of ends up adopting, you know, even though it's obviously not, it's a professional that's that's separate from, Christianity.

Marcela

You know, it's it's inevitable. A lot of the history of social work is really deeply embedded. A lot of, you know, social work practices done in faith based organizations. So this dichotomy of good and evil, of heaven and hell, is something that is much more typical of Christian religions and this idea of heaven on earth, and the idea that there is the possibility of creating and working towards a state of goodness is also kind of a Christian idea.

Marcela

And, and it's it's such a and it's an idea that's so embedded into our society. So Western society in Western culture that it's, I think, one that we it's so hegemonic that we kind of take it for granted. But if you think kind of alternately of the idea that there is no such thing as good and evil or actually certainly that there are good and evil is just embedded in all of us.

Marcela

We are all good and we are all evil, and it is impossible to separate that. And rather than thinking of this idea of a world where we can work towards a state of goodness and continual improvement, a lot of other faiths really look at life as a cycle. And so I think when you really look, you know, part of what really motivated me to get into public policy is because I was just my frustration with what I saw as really the lack of progress that a lot of social work interventions kind of were, were advancing.

Marcela

And so if you look at public policy and you look at, again, the evidence of how things happen, you don't see the state where, you know, people organize and they advance social justice and things improve. And there's eventually a state, you know, of, of where, you know, of equitable distribution of resources. You see a pendulum, you see a state where there's progress made in one space, and then there's push back and that, you know, you may take two steps back naturally.

Marcela

And now you see cycles, you see cycles, and you don't have like a clear good or bad, you know, parties, you know, even some of the most progressive policies that we hold up as things that benefit groups of people can have really negative long term impacts and other areas of, you know, economy and, and politics. So, so again, I there's no evidence that a lot of the ideas that we hold ourselves to of this kind of continue progress, that that's actually possible.

Marcela

The evidence that exists is that things happen in cycles and that there's kind of a pendulum effect. And there are, you know, negotiations that occur. And so this idea of good and evil and there being groups that are evil and there being groups that are good and righteous, is kind of a religious artifact that again, that, that I, that I think that we can have an opportunity to really reflect.

Marcela

Is that a way of, you know, continuing to advance a profession, or is there an opportunity to think about the profession as being part of this system and being flawed and having challenges and in some ways contributing to oppressive systems and, you know, being kind of a colonial artifact. And again, we're not good and we're not evil. We're both, how can we better comprehend that and just be grounded in that?

Douglas

I think I use good and evil synonymously with benefit and detriment. Meaning, I think I'm understanding what you're saying in terms of good and evil don't exist because there's sort of happening at the same time all at once. And what I mean by that is something that's benefiting you is detrimental to me.

Marcela

Not necessarily. Right. So that same, the same idea of good and evil is part of what creates, you know, you know, and I'm not saying that this is, you know, the, the be all kind of way, but it's, it's a perspective to really say, you know, so think of the way we often think about capitalism and talk about the role of capitalism and the way that impacts individuals.

Marcela

Right? Oftentimes that, you know, there's there's a lot of documented harm that has occurred in terms of distribution of wealth and in terms of, you know, limits to equitable distribution of resources and the ways that, you know, political and economic systems have created that. So oftentimes there's this resistance of, you know, this is evil, the evil capitalists, evil businesses, and the kind of righteous public sector and the righteous nonprofit sector.

Marcela

But the evidence shows that the public sector and the nonprofit sector functions honestly, really similarly as.

Douglas

Well yea, yea.

Marcela

Sector. Yeah, yeah. There's very yeah, you know, practically in terms of evidence of, you know, who donates more or who has better outcomes, the evidence really doesn't hold up that there is, stronger, you know, compelling value of of goodness and, you know, mission adherence in the public, in the nonprofit sector. So rather than thinking of things in this good and evil kind of dynamic, again, like, I think it's the opportunity here is to reflect, are there win win situations?

Marcela

You know, when you think about business opportunities, people that sit down to do business together, they don't have each other's best interests at heart. They have their own interests at heart.

Douglas

Primarily. x2

Marcela

Right.

Douglas

Like there's initially their self-interest.

Marcela  
Right?

Doughlas  
It's a plus.

Marcela  
If they figure out, I want to get richer, I want to do well, you want to do well, how can we do this together in a way that we both benefit? Right. That's kind of one of the core psychological tenets of capitalism. So one of the things that I've really been talking about, you know, in the classroom and in the community is how can we as social workers, as a profession, adopt some of that mentality as well?

Marcela  
And that doesn't mean that we have to go in and think of how can I, as an individual, benefit from this? But realistically, like we're making a living doing this, right? Like we want to get paid doing this. And if it is in our self-interest to ensure that we carry out our job to the best of our profession and adhere to our values of the best that we can, then why can't we sit down and look for win win situations with people, and rather than see them as the enemy, or see them as evil, or see them as oppressive, why can't we adopt again, a more nuanced understanding of all of us as

Marcela  
really complex systems and groups and individuals. And if we can find some mutually beneficial opportunities, we have a better chance of actually advancing some of the things we stand for, because, again, the issue becomes we can either make progress, which requires us to sit down with people that we, you know, and, and look at things in a different way, or we can stay grounded and self-righteous in our values while other people make progress.

Marcela  
And while groups struggle and where again, like it, it becomes very, performative, right? This the idea that our values and the way that we hold things. But it's if you're putting more effort into looking righteous and sounding righteous and reacting in righteous ways.

Doughlas  
Chances are you're not...

Marcela  
Than actually making progress. Are you, in fact an effective social worker, or are you an effective social value signaler and are therefore using your profession for that? So.

Doughlas

May I challenge you?

- Always!

Douglas

I agree that it would be optimal if we could both benefit. In this scenario, I know it may not be helpful to go to extremes, but for the sake of my example, I'm not interested in your benefit. I don't want to work with you.

Speaker 3

Cool I don't expect you to.

- Sell,

Douglas

Pitch me your. Your idea of this is how we can do this mutually when I'm not even. I don't even give you the ears to even want to work with you.

- Right?

Marcela

Not see that? That's the thing. I don't need to sell you an idea, I. My question to you is, what do you want?

Douglas

I want me to make all the money. I don't want you to make a dime. It's an extreme example. But I don't want you to make a dime. Like I could care less if your business or your endeavors,

Marcela

Or the community.

Douglas

Like I could care less.

Marcela

I don't need you to care. Now, if you're actively opposed to to to sit down with me, then I mean that the conversation doesn't initiate, right? But I think that's why that's why a lot of the times in having these conversations, the first step isn't how do we get to where we want to go, but is there something we can agree on?

Marcela

We have everybody has some point of agreement, right? So if we can sit down and figure out where's our agreement, we may not, you know, you may we may both agree that we don't like the way public dollars are being spent. Maybe I think that there should be more funding, maybe you think there should be less. Maybe. I believe that this group should have more access to health care.

Marcela

Maybe you believe they should have less or none at all. Right. But if we agree that this isn't working, and if we look for that point of agreement, then we're capable of listening to each other and having a conversation. And I think it's important again, to understand the solution may not be there, right? We may not be able to find a solution right away, but if we can just keep the windows of communication open, right.

Marcela

We continue that, humanize each other. How do you keep that? By finding some shared ground. Right. Agreeing on what can we agree on as a problem? Maybe we disagree on the solution, but if we can at least agree that this is a problem, we've now found some common ground, okay. And that conversation provides an opportunity where we can return to it when other circumstances align.

Marcela

And a lot of the times, the solution isn't going to come about until there's a window of opportunity or until there is an event that we can capitalize on, but at least it provides us with some common ground that we can return back to.

Douglas

That's a starting point. We agree that this is an issue.

Douglas

Another issue has raised that's that's caused me to place more value in it. So now the initial issue we both agreed on, I no longer have interest in it. Yeah. How do you bring me back there?

Marcela

I don't need to bring you back there. I think again, the idea sometimes is something some conversations you just have to let go. Okay, if it's not the opportunity or at the time okay, okay. It's not. Maybe we can circle back later. Right. But continue to try to force something to happen again. There's, there's I think that's again part of where that a lot of this happens is sometimes, you know, a lot of people will come to me and ask them, you know, I do a lot.

Marcela

I've done a lot of work trying to understand immigration policy and immigration spaces, and I've had a lot of people reach out to me over the years saying, hey, here's this situation, this really complex case of this individual. They're really great human. And it's, you know, they've done everything they can. Where are the resources to help them with this, this and this.

00:26:53:12 - 00:27:17:23

Marcela

And a lot of times my response is there are none, right? They're circumstantial. There is no legal or political or financial recourse that's going to allow this person to advance and in the way that

you want them to, the best thing that they can do right now is to stay safe, right, and minimize any further harm. So that idea of sometimes there is no path, there is no solution.

Marcela

And the time frame that you want with the person that you want, that's that's again, one of those other lessons that we kind of have to think about and really kind of acknowledging and accepting that a lot of the solutions that we look for are simply, you know, may not occur or they may occur in different ways, or they may come about, you know, at a very kind of minimal incrementalist.

Marcela

But this idea that we're perpetually going to be improving and looking for things to be better is not always realistic. Sometimes we just kind of have to see things for the way they are and figure out, you know, what role can we take there that still aligns with our values?

Douglas

Are you into stoicism by chance or ins in in retrospect, like philosophy?

Marcela

You know, I've done my share of like, you know, going down the rabbit hole of reading and, I wouldn't necessarily say I align with a specific philosophy. I would probably just call myself a pragmatist. You know, whatever's going to be the practical mindset for for the challenge at hand.

Douglas

Could you repeat that word pragmatist? Pragmatist? Never heard that before, and it's one who chooses, I guess, the best model for them.

Marcela

It's going to be whatever fits the solution. So, you know, maybe we can a philosophical framework might work for one approach. I may get into, you know, more of a Buddhist mindset, you know, for a different type of issue. I may lean into, you know, some very specific values for something else, but it's really more like what's what's up, what's going to fit to get me to where I need to be.

Marcela

Right. And so what framework, what philosophy, what lens, what perspective is going to fit to get there.

Douglas

Yeah. There's a there's another stoic quote that.

Douglas

In your path towards this goal, towards completing this task that the obstacles in your way become the very path and part of the path that you need to take. So if I want to get to here a point from point B, point A to point B, point A1.2 is in the way. But little did I know what I've learned and gathered through meeting and contact

Douglas

with this obstacle has now led me to appreciate differently or even come in a better position of reaching point B. So that's kind of I'm saying that's kind of what I was thinking. As you were saying, sometimes it's, you know, acceptance that there is no solution. But in me figuring that out now saves me more time or headache, more resource or manpower to then do something else with my time.

Douglas

Yeah.

Marcela

Yeah, there was, I was having a conversation with a student just last week, and we were talking a little bit about, you know, like some of their frustrations with social work. And this was in a class where, you know, we're talking a lot about policy. And again, there's there's a lot of kind of professional identity crisis, I think, happening right now around people, you know, like, how can I be learning about policy and how to improve and advocate when this is what's happening. Fair.

Marcela

You know, and what I, you know, caught myself saying was, you know, sometimes as in social workers, you know, if you really lean into against some of those kind of more eastern philosophies and even to some of kind of what we look at in terms of like mindfulness, there sometimes all we have is this moment and this interaction.

Marcela

So if you're a social worker that's in a space that's practicing and you find yourself being overwhelmed because the interventions that you've been trained in are not effective, or there's so many other barriers and obstacles you can think about, if you can maybe just pull it back and, you know, and I'm a strong believer that in all of the years that I've been doing that I've either practiced or taught or done research where I feel I've made the most impact on another individual's life is when I've just been present as a human, and been able to hear them and their experience and been able to validate them through my own.

Marcela

So if we just see ourselves as having the really cool opportunity, if nothing else, and not to say that we throw away all of the hard you know, research and development trenches and that what if we just see us as if nothing else, we have the opportunities to be around people going through all kinds of experiences, and if all we can do is just be present with them and respect their dignity and validate their experiences and just understand that being overwhelmed with

all of the future and the obstacles and the goal planning sometimes pulls us away from the only thing that we know for certain, which is this moment right now.

Marcela  
And this interaction.

Douglas  
Maybe this is me kind of projecting my own thinking, but I would argue that the present moment is all we have.

Marcela  
Absolutely.

Douglas  
The past. We can't change. The future will forever be uncertain. You can funnel it with, you know, certain parameters, but it's still unknown. It there's a lot of possibilities for it.

Douglas  
For the sake of time, I'm going to split because we are still on question one. I'm going to split these last two questions, one for social work and one for Women's History Month. I think you sort of answered this one already. Already. But I want to give you an opportunity to package it in the way you want to and deliver the message.

Douglas  
What skills do you believe social work students must develop now to effectively work across sectors and systems, and an increasingly complex policy landscape?

00:33:21:26 - 00:33:33:00

Marcela  
Skills. So we we talked about this a little bit, but the skills is to really be able to sit down.

Marcela  
To come in with a I'm going to call it a business lens, right. This mutually beneficial lens, I like it and really be able to sit down with individuals and think practically, all right, and be able to communicate and humanize and understand. I don't need you to share the same values as me. I don't need you to care about the same groups that I care about.

Marcela  
I don't need you to have the same interests. I just need to be able to find a way to communicate and find some shared ground. So the the ability to not need to be the righteous one, right to not need to be the good one. I like to sit down and understand. It's so complex and it's so nuanced.

Marcela

And if and if we want to be, we can either be righteous or we can be effective. Right? And it's a time to be effective like that. Right. So let's so, so sitting down and you know, that takes a big dose of humility. It takes a big dose of reflection. It takes a lot of introspection. It takes a lot of, asking for help and accepting help for, you know, your own challenges and allowing yourself to have that human perspective that you can use to approach others as humans.

Marcela

So, yeah, that ability to find mutually beneficial solutions, find some common ground and, and do so in a way that doesn't create this dichotomous good versus evil kind of approach.

Douglas

I love it. Well said. Coming around the corner.

Douglas

I love to keep this conversation going with you, but we have to keep the retention of our of audience members. For students watching during Women's History Month, what advice would you offer to those who want to lead boldly while staying grounded in their communities and their values?

Marcela

That's that. One more time.

Douglas

For students watching during Women's History Month. What advice would you offer to those who want to lead boldly, boldly, while staying grounded in their communities and values? But rather allow me to scratch that? I want to ask that this is more personal. Yeah. Looking at your career, what moments stand out as a as defining and finding your voice as a scholar, practitioner, and a leader?

Douglas

Oh.

Marcela

Finding my voice as a scholar, practitioner, and a leader.

Douglas

Hit you in the feels a little bit huh?

Marcela

It does. Yeah.

Speaker 3

Yeah.

Marcela

You know, I don't know if it's any one particular moment, but there are multiple small moments that repeatedly remind me why I do what I do, even with the frustrations of a given institution or the profession or it's happening. And those are the conversations that I have with people before class or after class or out in the community where it's not about, that theory that we talked about.

Marcela

Right. And it's not about, you know, an intervention that they practice in, but it's simply about something that they see in me that they connect with. So, so and so when. So there's moments that, again, I'm, I, I talk a lot about being, first generation American, first generation college student. And I've had multiple students come up to me and say, you're the first, you know, Latina.

Marcela

You're the first the professor that I've ever had. You're the first, you know, first gen professor I've ever had. So to have those moments where I know, oh, you see yourself reflected in me, right? Which is something I never had as like a model, I, I, I it's validated. Right. There's I can inhabit this space. This is a space for me.

Marcela

Right. Because growing up the way I did with, with, you know, immigrant parents are not U.S. citizens, don't speak English, are not very well integrated into society. The message that I still struggle with sometimes is I don't belong, right. You don't belong. This isn't for you. This isn't our place. And so to be able to validate that for people, I also talk pretty openly with students about my own struggles with mental health.

Marcela

My own struggles with my behavioral health. I talk about what my different paths to recovery have been, and I talk about how I integrate, you know, different, different things into that. So to have, you know, I've had students messaged me on teams late at night. I'm having, you know, this intense struggle and I don't know who to talk with.

Marcela

And I remember you mentioned, that you were in recovery and that this is something you can relate to. Could you talk with me about this, and to be able to be that voice for people and have them see that somebody with a PhD, you know, with the title professor, you know, with that works at university is just as human and just as flawed and has just as many struggles, but is still willing to continue to show up and be there.

Marcela

I think that's, again, the those are my favorite moments where I'm reminded that I'm not here to represent a profession or represent a university. I'm here to represent humanity. And if these are the pathways that allow me to do that, then that's awesome. I love that I but I'm here

to exist. And an existing to allow others to feel and see, you know, feel seen and feel validated through my existence.

Douglas

I love it. There's there's almost a humility aspect to it where you put this, you place this person so high, but yet you remember they are human and they relatively started in the same place you're in now. I like it. Well, Dr. Nava.

Marcela

Marcela.

Douglas

Marcela. Marcela, I like calling. I didn't grow up with a lot of Latinos who are doctors, so I think we talked about this before. I like knowing that I work with colleagues with PhDs. So I intentionally call people doctor. Okay. But if you prefer Marcela, I'll call you Marcela. Wonderful conversation. Thank you again for your time. Thank you for squeezing this courtyard conversations into your day.

Douglas

If you look beneath your couch, we have a little gift for you as a token of our appreciation.

Marcela

Okay?

Douglas

And again.

Marcela

Look right now?

Douglas

If you want to. It'd be nice to catch it on camera. Right on, right under. We get you some swag.

Douglas

Yeah, yeah. Nice little goodies in there. Oh I didn't get swag my last episode but and, but I work here, so.

Marcela

Oh you got me a coffee cup. I'm never sure.

Douglas

Yeah.

Speaker 3

Thank.

Douglas

Oh, yeah. Yeah. But again, thank you again for your time. Thank you for your expertise and sharing your knowledge and perspectives on these issues and these topics. I wish you well in your personal and professional development, and we can't wait to see all the cool things you're going to do in your future.

Marcela

Thank you so much for having me.