



MINDFUL IN MAY

Dr. Elise Bialylew, founder of Mindful in May (www.mindfulinmay.org) and The Mind Life Project (www.mindlifeproject.com) and author of The Happiness Plan, interviews Rhonda Magee.

Rhonda Magee

*Rhonda bio Rhonda V. Magee is a Professor of Law at the University of San Francisco and an internationally-recognized thought and practice leader focused on integrating mindfulness into higher education, law and social change work. A student of a variety of Buddhist and other wisdom teachers, including Norman Fischer, Joan Halifax and Jon Kabat Zinn, she trained as a mindfulness teacher through the Oasis Teacher Training Institute of the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness. A former President of the board of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, Professor Magee is a Fellow of the Mind and Life Institute, where she recently completed a two-year term on its steering council. She is a member of the board of advisors of the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness and the board of directors for the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute. She sees embodied mindfulness meditation and the allied disciplines of study and community engagement as keys to personal, interpersonal, and collective transformation in the face of the challenges and opportunities of our time. Her first book is, *The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities Through Mindfulness*.*

Elise: Rhonda, welcome to the program. It is such a delight to have you here. It was also really nice to do a five-minute practice with you for both of us to settle in between our busy schedules. So, thank you for that.

Rhonda Magee: Thank you. It's wonderful to be here with you, Elise.

Elise: I finished your book not that long ago, *The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming our Communities Through Mindfulness*.

Rhonda Magee: I have my little copy here with my pieces of tab. Everyone says it's a workbook.

Elise: I've got mine on Kindle, I must confess, because I just needed it immediately. It's got a lot of highlights in it and a lot of notes. That's what I'd really like to explore today. This idea of mindfulness and racial justice. How this practice of mindfulness, for many people, from the outside, it might look like something that's a little bit self-absorbed. That's some of the criticism that it gets. But, I think your book is a great testament to showing how it actually is a very generous act to the world.

Before we begin on some of the themes in the book, I wondered if you could share. In a lecture you gave, you started off by talking about the giants whose shoulders you stand on. I felt really moved by that. I wondered if you could share that, in a way, to paint the context of how you come to be doing the work you're doing.

Rhonda Magee: Well, thank you so very much. Well, I think that I am very aware of having inherited so much from so many who have really opened the door to this work that I've been privileged to be a part of; the work of exploring and sharing practices and ways of being with the challenges of our lives. That opened up healing opportunities for us, but also the chance for us to get to know each other from our positions of real and perceived difference: our different communities, our cultures, different nations, wherever we are. Especially in this time, where we can get together by technology in ways that we couldn't before.

I feel very, very grateful to have had the benefits of teachings from a variety of different places. I often think of my grandmother as the first teacher of mine. This was a woman who wasn't privileged with the fancy education that I was able, as a result of the Civil Rights Movements and the great efforts for social transformation that many of us know about in the United States in the 1960s, all the ways as a result of a combination of activism and sustained efforts to change law and policy. I also say a sustained effort to wake people up spiritually. As a result of these things, people like me, who hadn't had opportunities to go and get a university education, and learn from teachers around the globe, had opportunities. So, I took advantage of those things.

I think of my grandmother, sitting as she did, born in 1906 at a time when, in the United States – and really not only here, many places around the world – women didn't have a lot of opportunities for self-exploration, for education. When I came along in the late 1960s, she was an elder who got up every day before dawn and practised her own kind of centring, devotional meditations and prayers. In those ways, really, I think, embodied and modelled a way of grounding oneself in intentional and purposeful ways that could help support a difficult life. Again, her life was much more difficult than mine. At the time, she was cleaning houses for people. But, she had a way of understanding the role of a centring practice, a committed practice, a daily regimen for resource in herself, and from that place, being able to be a resource for others.

Elise: As I mentioned to you off-recording, I'm in Australia, you're in America. Racism is prevalent all around the world, but perhaps different hues and in different ways, so mindful of that and interested in that lens as we progress through the conversation. There was a really powerful quote at the beginning of your book. I'm probably going to mispronounce. Is it Ta-Nehisi Coates?

Rhonda Magee: That's close. Ta-Nehisi. I've heard him say sometimes what sounds like Ta-Nahisi. So, last name Coates.

Elise: The quote was, "Race is the child of racism, not the father." I wondered, just to begin with, if you could share how you understand this quote and perhaps a definition of race as we move into the conversation.

Rhonda Magee: The quote, "Race is the child of racism, not the father," really is meant to get us thinking about the relationship between systems of economic productivity and the accumulation of profits, whether they were colonialism, in the US we had enslavement, but first, before that, we had to clear the land of Indigenous people, which was a very painful, long, and frankly, bloody and violent process. These were political, economic systems that caused a lot of suffering. If you just look at the development of ideology of race, you see it co-existing with getting a lot of fuel at the same time that we were developing these systems of racial oppression. Again, there's a lot of history that one can look at. There are scholars who've looked at the development of whiteness, the history of whiteness. The different ways that we came to think about, again, these science-like notions of race and what was going on in cultures at the time. We were in the middle of these vast experiments, if you will, in economic productivity that required empire-building, and settling, colonialism and colonisations that, gain, caused a lot of suffering. For people to go through all of that and then somehow sustain a sense of self. We can look at what we do today. Social psychologists tell us very much. Our reasoning is often motivated by self-interest. One of the ways we survive all the cruelties of our history is to tell ourselves stories that make us feel like the heroes and others feel like the deserved victim.

Racism then, this process by which we're meeting people who look different, who have resources that we want, whether they be land, or gold, etcetera, and just to justify all the different things that we all know have been done historically – and still are being done, frankly – in service of profiteering and productivity. To justify those things historically, we've told ourselves some stories about the victims, the people who have been injured along the way.

Those stories then begin to reproduce the reality. Well, are these people who look different and who seem subjugated. They have been subjugated through these practices. Who seem to be living in a very different way. Maybe deprived in some ways of resources for thriving. It starts to look natural. Each generation, we get a new dose of, "Yes, there's something called race" because we look at the evidence of racism, and we find the idea of race as a nice justification for it, if you will. I'm using nice a little bit facetiously here.

That's what I think that means. It flips on the head because we tend to think, "No. People, independent of any political, economic interests, went out and have looked for a way of understanding humankind, came up with race, and then racism followed." The history provides at least as much evidence for the theory that I described before as it does its opposite.

Elise: For so many of the listeners, this is a global audience, but a lot are in Australia. I hazard to say there are a lot of white people listening to this conversation here. I'm thinking about the power of story to illuminate what you're talking about. I also am thinking about your story, and the timeframe that you've lived through, and what you've managed to overcome. You speak about this through the book. There are many different anecdotes. How do you see that you managed to come through this? Maybe first of all, if you could share a story that tells of what it was like for you to actually realise that "I'm different," or that "I am in a position where, in society, I'm not valued like others," or something like that.

Rhonda Magee: When I was about four, maybe, just a little girl, I followed my mother into a grocery store. A little store, where we can shop, with groceries and things like that. I had a cold or something. Probably a cold. I had a tissue in my pocket, like this tissue I have here, because I have allergies - even now. That's why I was like, "Was it cold? Allergy?" Something like that. I had this tissue, and I put the tissue in my pocket. Out of nowhere came this white man who grabbed my arm and yanked my hand out of my pocket as if he was going to definitely see some candy or something stolen. He sees this tissue. He just threw

my hand down. No apology. No, "I'm sorry." That was probably my first encounter with a white man, as opposed to one on television. It was an encounter that revealed so much about place and belonging. I was okay in that space in my place, buying this, but there was a presumption of criminality, like I might be some sort of a criminal. I'm a three or four-year-old girl, little girl, standing in the store with my mum nearby. That surveillance state was in this grocery store and this one place where white and black came together in my community. One of the few.

I think that definitely was one of the early, if you will, places of messaging the state of things. What a person like me might have to protect myself against people making all kinds of assumptions, starting with me as a baby, basically, being somebody not deserving of protection, or against who the state might be arrayed, or people and power might be arrayed to be protected from.

Elise: I do remember reading that.

Rhonda Magee: Okay. Good.

Elise: Thank you for sharing that. I read so many different stories. I think the stories are what convey so much of the politics in a way. I remember in the Black Lives Matter, and George Floyd, without going down that whole track – there's so much to talk about. But, I remember reading a story online of this guy – I don't know if he's famous or not – talking about how, "I never walk my dog without my little daughter because if I go out on my street, and I'm a black man, and I'm six-foot-tall I can't walk my dog. I'm at risk. I have to take my little girl so that that perception is now that I'm a father." I read that story. It really illuminates how horrible it is to live in that fear.

Rhonda Magee: Exactly. I think it's really important to have these moments where we tell these sorts of stories, where we can see that. The inquiry I always want to bring is, what's the prompt that allows white racialised, or folks who are racialised in a way that's protected from some of these negative assumptions, to feel what that is like too? In other words, it's one thing to have a story told where you can feel what

it's like to be the victim of that pervasive set of assumptions that somehow you are a threat. But, the question I have is, how do we bring white racialised, white-bodied folks into greater consciousness of what it is in the body, what it feels like, by converse, to be constantly, in some ways, shaped by this idea that you are the ones who belong, you are the ones who have something to lose by virtue of me or someone like that father being in their neighbourhood? Because I think if we can't see the two, the way they covary. This experience isn't discontent – in fact, I think of it as the reverse of – the negative of these things, covary. That explains my experience as a little girl. They're tied to some kind of experience that whites are being immersed in to build up a fragility, a sense of separateness, a sense of entitlement or privilege. Something.

As you know, part of my effort in the book is to create reflective inquiries to do that, which is difficult because if you're in the majority, it's almost like you're just swimming in the water. It's hard to say how you get to this place of feeling at home, and not threatened, and safe to walk in the streets at all times of night, or to explore without people thinking of you as a criminal. It's hard to isolate. But, that, I think, is really, really important because people of colour feeling threatened without white racialised or privileged folks somehow being taught to feel privilege. They co-exist. Does that make sense?

Elise: I'll going to park the question I was going to ask. Could we move into mindfulness and racial justice? Everyone's got a slightly different take on what mindfulness is, but can you share what you see mindfulness as, and in broad brushstrokes, how it can be relevant in this context?

Rhonda Magee: Just picking up off what we just were saying. To me, mindfulness, it's a number of things. On one hand, it's practice for paying attention in a particular way, by which I mean with a certain kind of friendly willingness to see what's there. Paying attention with this friendly willingness, openness. Non-judgement. As much as possible, in the moment. On purpose. We said, "All right. We want to see this, so we want to focus on an object of awareness." It could be, as often it is in mindfulness teachings, the breath itself, the breath and the body.

So, pausing. Feel what it feels like to breathe in. Not just feel it intellectually, but be present to the sensations of breathing in and breathing out. Practices that enable that kind of presence and awareness. That's certainly a foundational approximation of what I mean by mindfulness.

The practices that deliver us to a presence and awareness with reality. Including all the ways we're constantly reacting to reality. "I like this feeling of breathing; I don't. I'm uncomfortable with this; I'm not." Pleasant, unpleasantness through which we form a sense of ourselves. "I'm the person that can meditate easily or not." Whatever it is. It's the practices that wake us up to all of the different dimensions of our experience and our reactivity in response to a relationship with all that we might react to.

Then it's also, for me, the way of being with reality that comes up. If we do these kinds of practices regularly, we can become, I think, a bit more open to, "Here's a new moment. Here I am, grasping. Here I am, resisting. Here I am, wanting things to be a certain way and being at war. Let me let that go. Surrender a little bit." So, there's a way. We use the term equanimity: a way that can resolve, a way of being with this flow of sensation, energy, all of the 10,000 things by which form these ways we are in the world in these bodies, how we relate to each other. All that. Because I see mindfulness in that way, and the words I'm using are just fingers pointing towards something that's actually fundamentally, probably, hard to fully define. With that much, it's doing the best we can with the English that we have.

If we think about those things, how might we go back to that question I was raising before about what are the practices for becoming aware of race in our experience? Telling stories and then paying attention to the thoughts, emotions, sensations in the body that are coming up as we're listening to the stories, as we're telling the stories, as we're thinking about the audiences for the stories. Imagining the people who look like us or don't look like us and imagining what they might be thinking. All of these dynamic things are happening, again, behind the eyes. We don't know what's happening with you. But, it's going on. We're like

these dynamic interchange and flow of energy and information called the body, the spirit, the mind. Mindfulness is helping make us more aware of that.

My question, the question I was asking before, how is that whiteness is formed? How is that targeted stereotype other is formed in relationship to the stereotyped privileged, or superior, or included person? How do we become more aware in the present moment? Aware of the conditions that form a sense of belonging, on the one hand, or a sense of other on the other. The conditions by which I mean, what does my neighbourhood need to look like or feel like for certain people to feel like they belong and certain people to feel like they don't? How do I need to wear my hair? How do you need to wear yours? What clothes do we need to wear? What are all the different social inputs to the idea that these are the folks that belong and those are the folks who don't?

To me, mindfulness is about deepening our ability to pay attention. We practice focusing on objects of awareness, like the breath and the body. But, we could just as easily focus on, as we know, thoughts, sounds; just as easily focus on race as it comes and goes. The messaging about race as they come and go. "I think someone was quietly signalling something about my racial history that I need to pay attention to, or something about that racial other that I need to pay attention to." Somebody was quietly signalling with a joke or a look. You know what I'm talking about? Very interpersonal ways that we convey information about who belongs and who doesn't. We could bring mindfulness here. We could pay attention and notice. This is what my work is about.

Elise: You talk about micro-aggressions. In the book, you even give anecdotes of these micro-aggressions that have happened to you, even in odd ways that, maybe from the outside, a compliment, but a micro-aggression or something like that.

Rhonda Magee: Right. It's true. Yes. Micro-aggression is a term coined by this Harvard-trained psychologist, Charles Pierce, in the 1970s. He was one of the early black graduates of Harvard's medical school and professor there. He was seeing all these clients who were,

again, not unlike him: high-achieving people of colour in the United States, but who were coming with these feelings of despair, to sadness, to stress out of hearing people say different things over and over again. It's one thing when something like that happens once, but the cumulative effect is a big part of why the idea of micro-aggressions deserves, I think, our attention. Because, again, one-off comment or question that somebody might have intended not to be harmful, but that landed in a way that feels like, "What are they thinking about me?" Once? Okay. Happening all the time? Doctors are telling us that there are public health and personal health consequences to being immersed in a life, in a world where you hear, often, questions, "Where are you from?" "No, I mean, where are you really from?" As if, "Of course, you're not from here," which is a common. Right? And all of a sudden, they've got a lot of questions.

Elise: I welcome you to share other examples because it might actually be information for some of the listeners, ones that people might not realise are even microaggressions or something like that. Also, in connection to that, there's a large part in the book that's interpersonal. It's mostly about interpersonal: how we can bring this to the interpersonal in the context of racial injustice. A lot comes up about shame, which I thought was really useful. Shame and white privilege. You're right. Bring mindfulness right into the hard place of our reactions. When there is a microaggression, how do you manage that mindfully? I don't know if you have an example of that. How do you do that in a way that informs but doesn't shame?

Rhonda Magee: You see me smiling because I think we're in it. Part of what we're up against is dominant culture, which is constantly trying to form us as mistake-free. Part of what we're trying to do is create a context within which it's okay to be a learner, a life-long learner. It's okay to say, "That was an ouch point," or an, "Oops. I could tell that didn't land quite right. Let me try again." We're not formed for that. I can't speak for you, but I can say for me, as a person, frankly, in career, and in academia, and a 21-century culture where we're supposed to know, and be it, and be beyond it.

I'm naming that because I think part of the anxiety, frankly, that can come around this issue of microaggressions, and trying to navigate the world and minimise these harms, it's a wonderful aspiration and a set of intentions for us to develop, but then what can come with it is an anxiety around getting it wrong. "Well, what happens if I do those things? What in the world? Am I just going to be just up there, having it being revealed that I had an oops moment?" That has happened to me. I wrote about that in the book, being in one of my classes.

Elise: Yeah. That was good.

Rhonda Magee: Right?

Elise: Feel free to share it because I thought that would be good.

Rhonda Magee: I'm in the class, and I'm using the names of my students, as I will do. I called a student by one name. I think I wrote about it as Rosarita when her name was Maria or something along those lines. Where in other words, the name that I called, I was not calling the person by their name, but I was calling them by a name that signalled that I had the person in the category of Latina, maybe Mexican American. The name suggests that in my brain, I might not have the name right, but put her racial culture background.

Elise: It wasn't Jane. You didn't go from Jane.

Rhonda Magee: Exactly. It wasn't Mary, or Jane. It was some other, let's say, Spanish-sounding name, if you will. It was read that way. It was read that way by the student who, I could see, was feeling uncomfortable. On the one hand, people listen to that, and they're like, "Well, these people are being hypersensitive. You called their name. You tried. You corrected yourself. It's no big deal." Well, I understand that, but on the other hand, I also understand if you are in a minoritised situation as this student was. In other words, classrooms are majority white. You often have, as these students often do, the experience of being confused. "Well, we don't know which one of them it was, but it was either." I, as a black woman, know of this. I know when I'm on my campus sometimes with my other black female colleagues, Pamela will

come up to me and be like, "All the many times I've been called Rhonda. It's a little miffing because I've been on this campus a lot longer than Rhonda. Rhonda's been there 20 years, and they're still like, 'Can't remember Pamela from Rhonda.'" We have to laugh at it because it's kind of crazy, and funny, and it's human because we do it. It's also painful to be like, "Can I not be an individual that people know me for me?"

All of that is what we're invited to bring awareness. This is why compassion is such a big part of this for me. I haven't used that word explicitly very much in this conversation, but one of my readers, who was also reading using a Kindle, was like, "I feel like the author is using the word compassion a lot. Let me do a search." She came, and she said to me, "There are more than 700 times, which is more than twice a page." I'm like, "Yes." Compassion, by which I mean the desire and energetic will to not just understand a little more where another person's coming from. I was saying, on the one hand, it can seem like a minor thing. Shake it off. Don't be so sensitive. But, actually, if you step into their shoes, and you think, "They're in a minority situation. They're hearing this kind of thing all the time. They've been there years. It can be a little frustrating. It can be stressful."

That putting ourselves in the shoes of another person, building empathy, is a foundation for compassion, which is that will to alleviate the suffering, so the desire to. "Oops. Oh, my goodness. I didn't mean to refer to you by a name that's not your own. My apologies. Can we start again?" Or, "I want to make sure I pronounce your name right. Can you remind me again how it's pronounced? Let me listen. Forgive me as I make mistakes, and I'm trying to work on this." In other words, I think it's really about caring and letting the care that we have be made visible. But, it requires a little bit on all sides. It can require, on the one hand, creating more of a context in which it's okay to make mistakes, begin again, and laugh at ourselves, not take ourselves so seriously. But, that's true, I think, all around. I'm laughing a little bit at being called Pamela after all these years. It might be called Pamela,

Renee, or anyone. There are a thousand different things that people they remember. I'd rather be called by my name.

Also, mindfulness. This is what distinguishes a mindfulness-based approach to this from a psychological or multicultural education. Mindfulness is also an invitation to sort of soften the ego too. It's like, "Yes. I want to be known far and wide as Rhonda, the one and only." But, on the other hand, it's like you're just ...

Elise: It's spiritual grist for the mill as well.

Rhonda Magee: Exactly. Really, it's no big deal. "Call me Pamela, Rhonda. I'm glad to be on this campus with you, as opposed to being six feet under the ground." One day, sooner than I realise, we'll all be there. At the end of the day, let's give each other room to be alive together while we can. At the end of the day, the mindfulness invitation is like, "Yeah. We might make some mistakes, but let's quickly get back to the love part because we're not forever."

Elise: I think the message goes beyond even the racial theme. It's a huge theme. That's certainly something that I feel like the practice has given me just in every single interaction when I'm in my best self if I'm having conflict with a friend or a partner.

Rhonda Magee: Political conflict these days.

Elise: To realise that it's okay. "I'm not perfect. I stuff up. You're also not perfect. Can we just give each other a little bit of slack here?" I found one of the practices in your book where you do a guided meditation, which maybe we might even include or not, where you actually invite people to think about moments where they've experienced racism. Then you say, "Or, where you haven't," and what that means if you actually haven't experienced that. Can you explain your understanding of white privilege, what this term is?

Rhonda Magee: Well, I was alluding to it before when I was inviting this reflection on what is the experience of being at ease in the neighbourhood when you're walking your dog and not needing to think about bringing your child with you to protect you. Right there. That's

white privilege. Not having to talk to your child about how when the cops stop you, you really need to be very careful about showing your hands at all times, and, "Yes, sir," and all the different ways you have to extra protect, in a certain way, manage the situation from the threat of violence. That may be more present, actually, frankly, for all bodies in 2021. Many of our communities are more militarised. The policing. We're all a little more vulnerable to violence these days if we don't have really strong gun control, and we, in the US, of course, don't have strong enough, I think. We're all more vulnerable. There's that extra level that comes when people have been trained that, "People who look like you don't feel pain as much." Criminal threats, whether their five years old or 50, whatever it is with their criminal threats.

White privilege, it's pointing towards that complex of experience and embodied a way of being in the world that travels with being in a culture where your racial make-up is considered the norm, the presumptive, included citizen. You don't have to worry about your kind. That's an assumption associated with it. White privilege is, on the one hand, the internal psychological way of being around race and racism that can come with it. First of all, "It's a racial thing. I don't really have to think about that much. I don't have to study this. I don't have to take this on as a political issue. It's not my issue." It's part of being privileged.

Elise: Thank you. There's a lot in there. For the listeners who are hearing and thinking, "How do I learn more? Where did I begin? What books can I read?" I know it's endless. The listeners that are, perhaps, not of colour. White listeners who are hearing what you're saying and thinking, "This is interesting. I haven't thought about this much." Do you have thought leaders, or people who have written books, that you have come upon that you would highlight? I know there are many.

Rhonda Magee: Well, what I often encourage is for folks to look where you are. Wherever we are, there are some folks in our culture who are writing about these things. I really believe and I think part of our healing, part of what this time is calling for, is a greater connection between place, and history, and these issues that we're dealing with

right now. Looking out our own experience, our own historical legacy, how our people came to be where we are. Then looking at who wrote about the tensions at the intersection of those things. Who's writing about it now?

The people who are writing about it here in the United States, of course, and have for so many years, people like W. E. B. Du Bois, who's a towering figure of race and understanding about race in the American context. Toni Morrison, of course. She is a great literary figure, but her stories really inspire a lot of deep reflection on what are the different ways that our culture has held race and racism? What are the contributions to our film? I'm a big movie history person too.

Really, the question is, where are the places in my culture, wherever I am, where through images, through religious teachings, through immigration policies and stories that travel with them? We have where I am, where you are, where we even vibe these stories about who belongs. Who should be the dominant? Who should be subordinate? How do we naturalise those things? Who's been writing in ways to shift our thinking? Because the writers about this are everywhere.

I went to South Africa, not only in 2001 for the World Conference Against Racism in Durban there, but I guess again in 2019 for a conference on mindfulness in an African context. There, I learned a lot of things. Well, one of the things I was privileged to experience was a museum and a display right outside of the museum. The museum was on the cradle of civilisation, where the greatest number of human ancestral remains have been found in this one area outside of Johannesburg. It's a really mind-blowing place to go. To think of the early human ancestors who are the lineages of all of our people, from all these different ways. We look so different. All our diversity. Really, it looks like, again, we're all from one human lineage with roots in Africa but have migrated all over. That museum is beautiful for helping us understand some of the anthropological history of that.

Outside of that is this statuary display. Statues of people across hundreds of years of human history who have been trying to raise

awareness of bias, oppression, and also struggling for egalitarian policies and practices for justice around these ways that we do what we do. Standing in that garden of these statues, where you see people from Europe, from Australia, from America, from Africa, from all over. Historical figures on this long march to freedom. I think that's what it's called, the long march. I'm just saying to say the teachers are everywhere.

I'm a sociologist, former law professor. If you look again at sociological trends, you see that the temptation towards social dominant strategies, how we can divide, rank, and then dominate, that temptation runs across our cultures. We each have orientations in terms of our personalities. Do we justify domination, or do we lean toward egalitarianism? The cultures are feeding that in us, variously. When you're in a movement for civil rights, people are trying to feed the egalitarian impulses. If you're in a movement where fascism is on the rise, or racism is on the rise, they're trying to feed that in you that would be about dominance. It's really important for us to know that that's been going on forever, and it probably will.

The question is, how do we want to be? How do we want to choose, with awareness, with mindfulness, with compassion, with ethics, to make a stand to say, "Yeah. I could choose to enter the dominance, but is that what I want? I've seen that. My people have seen that. I want to choose in the time that I have to be different." There are teachers, wherever we are, who can help us see what we might see more clearly about how to choose to make the most of the opportunities we have, to give better than we got, and to heal these separations.

Elise: Thank you. I think that final message of, "What is your stand?" We might not be able to change everything, but while we're here, our voice and our life can make a difference. That takes courage to take a stand.

Rhonda Magee: Yes, it does. Ultimately, that is what we're talking about because you can read, and read, and read, but if you don't realise

that underneath the words is a call to stand, and to keep standing. We fall down, and we get back up.

Elise: Thank you so much. I think that's a great place to end. Thank you so much for your perspectives and for your wonderful, really, really important book, which I hope the readers – I have no doubt – will go and search out. *The Inner Work of Racial Justice* by Rhonda Magee. People can find you at your website. Rhondavmagee.com

Rhonda Magee: www.rhondavmagee.com.

Elise: Rhonda V Magee. Sorry.

Rhonda Magee: The middle initial is in there. The subtitle of the book, of course, is *Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities Through Mindfulness*. That healing ourselves part is important. It's available by audiobook on Audible if you're a person who would just like to have me reading those meditations.

Elise: I was doing both, and I really appreciated the audio-guided meditations. Thank you once again. Really appreciate the conversation. Look forward to following your work in whatever way it continues to manifest.

Rhonda Magee: Thank you so much. Really an honour and a joy to be with you.