



## MARLA TEYOLIA

### Transcript: “Your Ancestors Are Calling For You”

**Sarah Greenman:**

I'm Sarah Greenman, and this is Collaborative Alchemy. My guest today is Marla Teyolia, a founder and CEO of Culture Shift Agency, a consulting and coaching firm, whose mission is to advance the holistic leadership development of women of color and their allies. Today, we're talking about spiritual mentorship, reclaiming our power and why liberation is an inside job.

**Marla Teyolia:**

There was a part of me that thought that the medicine that needed to be shared was outside of myself, that the medicine was like, it was indigenous teachings, it was practices, but it felt like it still was coming from something external. What came through was, no, your story is the medicine.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Marla is a highly-sought-after workplace strategist and transformational leadership coach, who mentors high-achieving executives that are hoping to lead from their most deeply-held values. You all, she is pure magic. She specializes in working with individuals who want to develop presence, build inclusive teams and overcome limiting conversational patterns and gracefully navigate difficult conversations. Yes, please, welcome to the show.

Marla Teyolia, I'm so excited to be hosting you here.

**Marla Teyolia:**

First off, thank you so much for having me. Truly an honor to share space with you. We haven't seen each other in so long, so this feels good.

**Sarah Greenman:**

For those of us who don't know you, can you tell us a little bit about your story?

**Marla Teyolia:**

Gosh, where do I start? Okay, Marla Teyolia, I am a mother to almost 15-year-old twins. I am a partner, wife to my beloved, for maybe like... God, I can't even count now, like 26 years, 27 years, I think, is what we are this year.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh my gosh.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, it kind of crazy. I am a daughter to my mother who actually lives with us, so we have a multi-generational household. I am a mother to a four-legged fur baby who's at my feet. I am a business owner, a founder and CEO of a company called Culture Shift Agency. I'm a space holder for transformation and healing. I am a student of life and yoga and meditation and bridging ancient healing modalities with new technologies.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And I feel like, I like to think of myself as someone who's like a grower of food and of people. And then I recently was taking an herbalism class and we were talking about our relationship to plants, and I realized that I hadn't really, really grown in like 10 years, like I used to grow all of our food and I've since then have moved around the country and been in different rentals and properties, where it's like I can do something small. And then in Atlanta, we were there for a few years and I had a garden there, but then we moved. So I feel that's part of my story and it's part of my reclaiming, but I feel as someone who's very much connected to land and to water and to seasons.

**Sarah Greenman:**

You speak about what you're connected to, which I love. Tell me what belonging means to you and feels like to you.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Belonging feels grounded. It feels earthy. It feels embodied and belonging to self and spirit first. I think belonging also feels like being seen for the fullness of who I am, being valued and honored for that. And it feels free and it feels familiar and it feels reflected, it feels easy.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Feels easy.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I feel like so much of the work that you do to hold space for others seems to be like you're paving a pathway to belonging or sort of leading them in the direction of their own self-leadership.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, I appreciate that because when you asked the question, that was the first image that came up, was around belonging to self and supporting people to belong to themselves first. And I think we get so pulled with our multiple roles and identities and who we are in the world and how we navigate our lives that we don't feel like we belong to ourselves. Like we belong to our jobs, we belong to our little people, if we have them. We belong to all these roles and responsibilities and not really to ourselves, so many images came up when you asked the question.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah, I'm always interested in origin stories. And I think about your work as a culture shifter and a change agent and a space holder and I wonder what life experience or experiences or events have really galvanized you and shaped your trajectory that you can look. I mean, sometimes things happen, right? And we're like, we don't know that it's shaping us in the moment but as we look back, we're like, "That was a really, really a galvanizing moment that pushed me in the direction of my purpose-driven work now."

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, it's so interesting. When you ask first origin story, my mind goes to little Marla. Like being raised right by the border and I'm the only person in my family who was born here in, what is known as United States. Everybody else is born in what was known as Mexico, or is known as Mexico. And I came and was born during a time where I think my mom was in a lot of turmoil and her relationship and the trauma and the drama for that. And so I think that kind of fighter energy has always been in me. And I was the only girl. And had those two big brothers who were like eight and 12 years older than me and they were total bad asses and always messing with me. And I always felt like I had to kind of fight for myself. And I was always packing my little suitcase all the time, like threatening, I'm just leaving.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Like I'm out.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And it's just I'm out. And so I think that there's a way in which I also felt deeply loved and wanted. So I know what that feels like to be deeply loved and to be deeply nourished and wanted and protected almost as a little Mexican girl, and who was... In our house, that had a lot going on, it wasn't an easy place to be. And I think sometimes when you... Not sometimes I would say most times actually, when you are raised in environments, that can feel like trauma or alcoholism or where there's just intensity, most of the time your intuition is really strong because you have to walk in, you don't know what's going to happen. You don't know what's going to jump off in any moment.

**Marla Teyolia:**

So you kind of really create this sense of like, okay, I'm on alert, but I'm also just like I can read people's behaviors. I can see something before it's going to happen because you're already primed. And so I think for me, there's a way in which taking what could be trauma, as making it also like a superpower because in the way in which I work with people, even if we're working, the majority of my work is virtual, like I will feel, how to express this? It's almost like what I know to be a superpower is that, when I am in a space with someone I'm working with and we hit on either a truth or a wound or like we got to the seat of something pure, like my whole body just rushes.

Like it's full on, from my feet all the way up, I will get goosebumps, it's a very visceral sensation. So I know we haven't gotten there and I don't know necessarily what your story is and where it's going to lead us, but I know we get to something that's like super pure. And so there's a very physical kind of embodied experience. And I think I've always had that because I almost had to have it. I had to have this kind of level of awareness. And so that's been one of the ways in which I work.

It is one of the superpowers that I feel like I have. So there's that piece. So there's like the little Marla, I think that was just an evolution. I was always kind of questioning and seeing what is next and that there had to be something beyond where I was raised and all the kind of cultural expectations that came from being young Mexican first gen girl raised by the border in a kind of, I would say, working and middle class background. And I knew that there's a whole world that I'm interested in exploring, right? And so then I went and *lived* that world.

Then I went and moved when I was 18, up to the Bay Area to go to school and then moved to New York in '96 to go to grad school.

I think that is another flash point that came up when you asked the question, in terms of what's defined my life. I went to Columbia for grad school and it was the first time that I wasn't living in California, that I wasn't surrounded by majority Mexican folks. There was a lot of the foods were new. Mexicans were at that time were very much from Oaxaca and I'm from the north, so we just look really different and it was hard. I remember feeling like I lived in The Mission in San Francisco where you could get this amazing burrito for \$3.25 and moving to New York, it was \$7 and it sucked. And I was like, oh my God. So all these things.

And then I went to Columbia and it was this, a grad program that was majority white women and it was a social work program. And so there was a lot of white saviorism and helper-ism in that. And so it almost I don't feel like I computed to have somebody who was intellectually equal or dare I say, even better at school and to see me as a leader and the fullness of who I was. So I experienced a lot of animosity, a lot of microaggressions, a lot of just challenges. And I had nothing to do with this, I was still getting As, it had nothing to do with actual coursework and so add that on top of all the other shifts of moving across the country.

And so, I felt so within six... Maybe not even six months, I would say three to four months, I felt like, oh my God, I could see the anxiety. I could see depression. I could see and feel that this is like I am not feeling well. In New York, energetically... I'm from California, which is like total driving culture. And even though I lived in San Francisco, I had a car. To move to New York and live in Brooklyn in Park Slope and go to Columbia in Morningside Heights, that's an hour commute in sardine-like conditions in a train. I would be wiped out by the time I got there, just energetically. And I don't even know that I knew that at that time, I just was exhausted by the time I got there.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And so in this moment of feeling like I was in real crisis, my husband, then boyfriend, was visiting and I was just kind of explaining just what I was going through. And he's like, "I have somebody you might want to talk to. And she's this elder, amazing African American woman, who's does a lot of like spiritual work, that she does this, like talks to you, guides and I don't know if that's your thing." And I was like, "Sure." And then I started talking to her and she starts at the ritual of how she begins her kind of ceremony. And the first words out of her mouth, they are, "Oh, your ancestors have been calling for you." And I just started crying.

**Sarah Greenman:**

*Marla.*

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, and so it ended up being this beautiful beginning to what is a 27-year old relationship with her, she ended up marrying us.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Amazing.

**Marla Teyolia:**

I consider her this amazing, powerful mentor and spiritual guide for me and she set me on a path of what it looked like to reclaim my power. And that was very much centered on ancestral practices, on meditation. And it kind of started me on this path of like, I was doing all this spiritual work and I got into some yoga. Then I became vegan for 13 years.

So it was almost like cleansing from the inside out and there was something really powerful about being in what felt like a really toxic environment in my home, with those roommates and then at school. And at one point, I was asked by the department too if I would be part of training incoming freshman for the following year. And so they have you kind of go through the training again, right?

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah, yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

So you experience it as a participant. And so I had done the training earlier on, when we got there and I remember feeling, rating myself really low in terms of power. You had the privileged walks and like all that stuff... and rating myself really, really low, except for like a few identities around citizenship or light-skin privilege or things like that. And then when I went back to do the workshop as a participant so that I could be a trainer, I rated myself totally high. And at that moment, I realized nothing externally had changed, but my liberation was an inside job, like it had nothing... Yes, could have been easier, absolutely.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Sure.

**Marla Teyolia:**

But everything like the environment, the system was still the system, but I had shifted and I felt powerful and I felt strong. And so that for me is very much defined the course of my work because I work with... My heart work is like the BIPOC leaders that are in toxic environments. And I feel like they've kind of lost their sea legs and they don't have their footing. And they're trying to figure out like who they are in these spaces where white supremacy structures and environments are constantly showing them and telling them that they're other and it's a level of violence that I know intimately.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And I know what the impact is on your mind, body, spirit. So for me, that is like my soul work. And then there's many, I would say, evolutions from that time.

I ended up training with the *curandera*, Elena Avila, she passed away, but studied with her as an apprentice for four years. So I find it interesting that I wasn't necessarily going to more Western ways for my healing because I realized that the West was what was hurting me.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Totally. Tell us for those who don't know, what a *curandera* is.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, so *curandera* is a direct translation, it would be almost like a Mexican shaman, like a Mexican traditional healer essentially.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And she was very much a generalist, so she had been a trained psychiatric nurse and really recognized not only just the power of indigenous and traditional folk healing, but recognized the emptiness of the kind of allopathic model or like the Western medical model. So that training was very much about when someone is in front of you, how do you work with them to heal mind, body, spirit? And that it's so deeply connected. And there's a beautiful aspect of the work that is like, when you greet with *curanderas*, you kind of greet heart to heart. You do this hug that it's like two-sided, right? And it's like you're greeting your hearts. The work is based on a *plática* in this training, which is like a talk, right? So you're having a heart to heart discussion and that is sets the foundation for your healing with the

*curandera* and the word that is used, is my favorite word in Spanish. And it's called *desahogar*, which means to undrown yourself.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Undrown yourself.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yes, it's a beautiful word. And it's basically this like converts heart talk conversation to undrown yourself, right? And so the idea is that we are holding it all inside and as we're in that, kind of sacred container, to be able to just be fully seen and heard and share where we're wounded and where we're suffering, it helps you undrown yourself. And then there's like a physical practice. And depending on how the *curandera* has been trained, you might use herbs, you use an [inaudible 00:17:34], there might be body work, right. But it's like then all of that energy now is on your physical outer body. And so the practitioners helping them release that energy and kind of smooth that energy out. So that is also how I've been trained, right? So when I was in grad school, I had a clinical training and then I was trained with [Elena] and then had my own kind of apprenticeship with Asunna Mekarú who was the elder who helped me. And I did other work, right? I did a coaching thing.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Of course.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And I did a workshop. And so for me, I bridge, like the e... I won't even say "East" because it's very indigenous. I just bridge the traditional and ancestral with some of the leadership development, and best practices. That's the space I live in.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I also hear you pointing at using and imbibing and inviting these indigenous and ancestral ways as a center for how we move forth as leaders.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Absolutely.

**Sarah Greenman:**

And that creates value, right? Because that is not a traditional way or a pathology that we value in Western culture at all. And so I love that you've completely centered those pathways for your clients.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, thank you for that. Yeah, I mean, it's, I don't think we've traditionally done, if anything it's, there was an active stamping out of it to this practices, right?

**Sarah Greenman:**

Totally.

**Marla Teyolia:**

So...

**Sarah Greenman:**

Erasure.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Absolutely. And a level of violence that came with that. And, I just finished a session about an hour before you and I spoke, with a leader and like a senior leader, right? And this is like a culture maker and somebody's like making films. And some of the work we're doing was like, it was Yoga Nidra, and there's a specific practice I was trained with Tracee Stanley and by her book *Radiant Rest*, it's phenomenal. And she had opened me up to her practice. It was like a... I call it embodied affirmation, it's like as Yoga Nidra practice and you're placing in kind of a mantra, your *Sankalpa*, your soul's kind of deepest longing into these 60 minute energy points of your body, right? And so I just came and shared that practice with him after like six sessions. So we've been working together for about three months until we got to distill, like what needs to be healed within him to be a good leader. Right?

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And so for me, if you're going to work with me, we're going to go to those places, right? I'm not a good fit for you, if you're not willing to go to these deep places, or you just want me to do like Type-A strategy, which I can work with you on, but that's like doesn't... It's not generative for me in any way really. But I do feel like... and this is like a white man, like middle aged white man from Midwest, like these are, right... So I don't just work with BIPOC leaders. And that is like the heart of my work, but it's not the only part of the work because I recognize we need allies in that space to create more liberatory environments.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

But this is like a guy from the Midwest, who is like... He's like, "Heck yeah, let's do it". And so I do think there's an opening because we're recognizing the intensity of where we're at.



**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And if that anything, that is one of the, dare I say, gifts of the pandemic, like you got to do shit differently.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh totally.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And people who were like really asleep to that, were like, "Oh, oh wow, okay".

**Sarah Greenman:**

I think that's... I mean, there's been so many gifts of the pandemic and I think that there's a kind of veil that has dissipated for some folks between their rejection of their ancient and more ancestral ways and sort of, and are now waking up to it, the subtle is becoming more forward for so many of us, I think.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, I think so. And then I think with that, there's also huge backlash, right? Like you see that as well.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Totally.

**Marla Teyolia:**

So we're in that, those times, that I feel like so many indigenous cosmologies of these systems have predicted.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yes.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Right? We're just living in them and it doesn't make it easy, but I do think it helps, at least for me, it helps tether me...

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

... To what I know to be true. And what I know to be true about what I want my role to be.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah. You are an extremely creative human. I know this about you personally, but how do you think creativity shows up for you in this work?

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Greenman:**

And where does it show up?

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, that's such a great question. I think it's something that I've really been kind of grappling with. I think when you're doing work that can feel hard, right? Like I'm holding space for people's deepest stuff.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And helping people see the systems that they're not necessarily always seeing because they haven't had to, right? The work can feel heavy. And I feel like play has gotten away from me. And the last few years, I've tried more intentional, this year, I feel like I have been more intentional about it. Right, so the other day I went, I bought some roller skates. I went roller skating with a girlfriend, which was [crosstalk 00:23:02] so fun. Yeah, no, it was totally fun. Like we were at a middle school in the parking lot, right? Because we're both like, "We were both roller skaters as kids, but whoa, feeling a little wobbly". And so at one point, and she's an African American woman, I am a Mexican woman, and so this white woman walks by and she's like, "Wait, are you guys teachers here?" And we're like, "No". She's like, "Oh my God, you're just two moms, rocking out, right". And we're like, "Yes". Because my girlfriend had brought her little speaker, we had disco music going on and we were just going round and round. It was so much fun, right?

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh my gosh, that's its own kind of ancestral magic!

**Marla Teyolia:**

It was awesome, it was so awesome, right? And so I've been trying to be more intentional. In 2020, I had said, I want to work smarter and I'm going to work four days a week because I was feeling so burnt. And so Mondays were like my day to not be client facing. It was like filling up my well, but I still felt like

things still fell into it. Like it's hard when you're trying to disrupt old patterns, especially the kind of productivity and working and...

So in 2021, I was like, I'm keeping that, I'm still doing this, I'm needing it. But I was more intentional to give myself that time. And this year, now that we're in California and the world has opened up for us more, I've been much more intentional about going to the beach on Mondays. It's been beautiful here. And so for me, the creativity is just giving myself the space to unwind and unfurl in order for creative visions and energy to come forth. So one of the things that I want to do is write a book and- [crosstalk 00:24:51]

**Sarah Greenman:**

Please write a book, [crosstalk 00:24:53] please, oh my gosh, Marla, I'm here for it.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Thank you. I appreciate, and I receive all that reinforcing, that's super scary. And so what I recognized in my real putting the intentions out this year to take Mondays off and leave, just even in the driving, I was getting information about what the book needed to be, like I would just pull up my voice memo, like open voice memo and voice note and just start speaking into my phone as things were coming. So the creativity has looked like creating space to just see what will emerge.

**Sarah Greenman:**

And you say "getting information." Where do you, like, somatically feel that? How does that feel to you when you *receive*?

**Marla Teyolia:**

It's at I'm really mental and I'm really... It's funny, I'm really, really mental and very intellectual and analytical, which can also be my Achilles' heel. And I'm also incredibly sensory oriented. Right? Like I remember once walking into a store and it was a textile store and I was looking for something. I was touching all the fabrics and the woman's like, "Are you a designer?" Because actually just the way that you touch and like you were...

So I'm super tactile. And so for me, it starts off as like a mental rumination and as I was driving and then it was like, "Oh", like there was a sense of the exhale and then a opening, like almost a lightning of my own kind of heaviness, that I'm holding with the intensity of what my days can be like.

So when I can release myself from that, it feels light and it feels like an opening in my chest and in my heart space. And I think when I can give myself the freedom to just be and play in that, then the thoughts start coming and I really see them as downloads and it was like, oh my God, this is oh, okay. And just had to like capture them on voice memos to myself, as I was driving.

**Sarah Greenman:**

You've also started a pretty robust journal practice.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, so I wouldn't even say I started, I feel like I've had, right? So I, about maybe... I don't even know how many months ago it was. I think it was in the fall, early fall. I had a vision and I can't remember if it was a dream because I get a lot in dreams or whether it was like a vision or meditation.

It might have been meditation honestly, because I can't think of the dream as much, but I had this flash and I was sitting on a bed, surrounded by journals, like all of my journals and I was in the desert and I was going through each journal and reading what was written and pulling out the medicine I knew needed to be shared and burning the rest. And so I did that. I kind of knew that it needed to happen. And I booked to myself Airbnb in Joshua Tree and took all of my journals, because I have a trunk full of journals and we had cleaned out some of my mom's house where she moved out here with us. And so there were bags of things that she'd kept that were mine and there were journals in there.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Wow.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And so, in total, I took about 40 journals with me.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh my gosh, it's just this image of you showing up with this car, with this trunk full of like journals and words.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And it was so deep because it was like, I had them in like two bags and they were heavy and I was like, wow, what have I been holding?

**Sarah Greenman:**

The literal weight of your story.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Literally.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And the first book I started with, was one from when I was in eighth grade.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh my God.

**Marla Teyolia:**

So it was really powerful to go through all of these journals and witness with compassion, some of my struggles, parts of my story, also see that, oh, there's some clear themes here that I had from like eighth grade into the forties, like whoa, okay, there's some clear themes.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And the universes has jokes. So one of the themes was around fear, like physical safety.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

I was a little kid who was very... I was really frail. Like I was really super skinny, tiny. I was born, I think like five pounds, left the hospital like four something, right? I was a really small kid. My mom is from that old school tradition, like everything needs to go to doctor and we lived right by the borders, so you always go get antibiotics and from the pharmacies in Mexico. And so I think that deeply informed a level of hypochondriac in me that was like, "Oh my God, am I going to die?" Like if something's wrong, it's all of a sudden it's cancer, it's something like- [crosstalk 00:29:53]

**Sarah Greenman:**

...happening, yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah and I feel like throughout the years, I've healed that and then it will rear its head... and I've healed that and it will rear its head.

**Sarah Greenman:**

That's not always the way it is with growth. You're like, thank you! I have grown. Check box.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, like huh, funny.

**Marla Teyolia:**

So I drove to Joshua Tree, people who know Joshua Tree are going to laugh. It did not compute to me that it was high desert and I was going to go up elevation, I don't do well in elevation, so and the last few times I have been in elevation, I've gotten really sick.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh no.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, right. So once I was six months pregnant with the twins in Santa Fe and by the second time being in the ER, the doctor's like, "You need to get to sea level". I mean, so it's a thing, right?

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

That I don't fully compute until I'm there. And so as I'm driving up, I start realizing like, "Oh shit, this is really high. And I'm by myself". So all these fears start coming up, right? So I started looking at like, "Okay, how high is Santa Fe? How high is Joshua Tree?" Like recognizing it's not, I mean, this is different, but not that different, like I'm really high up.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And so I was in a beautiful spot that was this kind of modern vibe. And half of the house was like windows, which I didn't realize till the second night, that you could close them with the remote. So I felt super exposed.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Like you're in a fish bowl.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Totally. And there's only like a fence around half of the property and the rest is just open wide. So I felt so deeply exposed. I was really having to wrestle with fear, right? And so to be able to have this internal dialogue, that's happening in the moment, not sleeping well, because I'm hearing all these noises that's so windy and I'm freaking out and then going through these journals and recognizing that fear had been a theme, was like, "Oh wow, universe, you are funny, like you are just like..." So it was a really amazing and powerful trip, because by the end, I did pull out the medicine that needed to be shared and I did burn everything down, right. And left a lot lighter.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh wow. Marla, did you do a lot of writing while you were there? Or were you mostly just working with the journals that you've had written?

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, it was just going through each one and some journals were processy stuff, some things had really clear medicine. Some things had real important lessons, some things were just like, oh God, I'm sick of this story. Let's keep on turning the page. But it was powerful to recognize everything I'd been holding.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Because I was holding it and I physically walked in with it. And by the time I left, that bag was so much lighter. Like I brought a few journals back, that were like, oh, this is actually a workshop that I take. And you know what I mean? That I didn't mean to bring that blend or whatever, but that was a powerful experience.

**Sarah Greenman:**

This is why I love journaling as a practice, a way to sort of mirror back to ourselves, the trajectory of our lives.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Absolutely and especially if you keep them, right, over time and you can kind of start seeing this, like these patterns. And when I came back, there was such a spaciousness that I recognized and I was in integration, that was like that center, I was like, I felt so much lighter. I felt so much spaciousness within my own body. And that was just delicious.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Well, it's interesting because after you came home from that, you stepped away, I think from social media for a while, like you took even more space, which I loved seeing you just like claim that space and you recently came back and it's one of the reasons I wanted to talk to you and have you here because you shared with us this idea of not hiding your gifts anymore and really showing yourself, getting visible.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Greenman:**

And I want to know a little bit of more about that, impulse, that impetus and how that's working through you now.

**Marla Teyolia:**

So, I have a pretty strong meditation practice. It's one of my consistent practices and I'll get downloads and usually that are just for me. And then there was one that was very clearly like, oh, this needs to be shared. And I think this is a conditioning. I can definitely speak from a Mexican woman tradition, I also think I can speak of it as a woman in this country, around not fully claiming or using our voice or those other ways of being as a fully valid, like that there's a questioning and I think through Catholicism and Mexican culture, a lot of like, there's something called Marianismo, there's like a suffering, like a suffering in silence, right? That happens, that engenders a lot of behaviors that are acceptable or not acceptable. So you don't want to shine... Like shine brightly, but you don't want to shine too bright.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Because also, shine too bright, you can be... That's an unsafe situation too and so I think it was a lot of that conditioning, that I've had to really work through, the sharing of the gifts, like there was something that felt so clear during that time, that it was like some of this parts of this journey have to be shared. And when you saw that post, it all felt really new and tender and vulnerable. And where I'm really have come to, I would say months now, there was still a part of me, when I was going through that process of going through all the journals and pulling out the medicine, there was a part of me that thought that the medicine that needed to be shared, was outside of myself.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh.

**Marla Teyolia:**

And that the medicine was like, it was indigenous teachings, it was practices, but it felt like it still was coming from something external. And so that was creating this gap for me that I didn't feel I could fill, that I was like, it was filled with, well, who are you to do this? You know what I mean? All this self-doubt and that moment where I'm sharing with you, that I earlier this year, I'm driving to the ocean, what I recognize, what came through was, no, your story is the medicine.

No, your life is the medicine, being reflected and showing another way of healing, that you've reclaimed your power and your agency by connecting deep to practices that make you hold, that is the medicine. And people don't want to be told about that. They want to be able to see it and experience it and hear the stories of that. And I think that has been a shift in how I'm holding the sharing. And I'm also really conscious that I've only been writing a few times. Like I'm still... It's still this baby inside of this little seed, that's like, "I don't know yet", but I know, but I'm much clearer. And so a lot of it is about now stripping away parts of my days and responsibilities and shifting them to turn them towards this.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Beautiful. I mean, my gosh, Marla, what you just spoke could be a prayer. I feel like it is a prayer.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Thank you.



**Sarah Greenman:**

I have one more question before... I want to honor your time. I have one more question before we close together, which is, what is bringing you abject unadulterated joy right now?

**Marla Teyolia:**

I would say my life, yeah.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Best answer ever.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah, like I'm really good. Like I'm finding this flow that feels really authentic to me, where I'm minimizing the overdoing, I'm turning up the play, I'm turning up the music, the skating, the doing something every day for myself physically, whether like yesterday was just a 10 minute core class, right? Like a Peloton working on my core, right? Today, it was like a 30 minute walk, the day before was a 30 minute yoga class, like just Santa Fe, I'm finding joy in living into the possibility of what I wanted.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Thank you so much, Marla.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Thank *you* so much.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Just beautiful to be with you and such a privilege to hear you tell your story.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Thank you.

**Sarah Greenman:**

So thank you. Keep telling it, I am thrilled that there is the possibility of a longer form of storytelling, in front of you.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Thank you, I'm excited and scared.

**Sarah Greenman:**

As somebody who's finishing a book right now, it is so hard, but it is so worth it. It's just like this beautiful gift that you give to yourself [crosstalk 00:39:02] about...

**Marla Teyolia:**

That's beautiful.

**Sarah Greenman:**

... The fact that you're worth it and your story is worth it.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Thank you so much, Marla.

**Marla Teyolia:**

Thanks so much, Love. So great to be in sisterhood with you.

**Sarah Greenman:**

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