

“The Great Resignation Movement” – a conversation about workplace culture, communication, and how to advocate for yourself

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SPEAKERS

Jamie Lin, Elaina Norlin

Jamie Lin 00:00

My name is Jamie Lin, I am the Education and Professional Development Manager at Atla, which is a member association of Religious Studies and Theological Librarians. And today I will be facilitating a conversation with my colleague, Elaina Norlin, who is the professional development and DEI coordinator at ASERL, the Association of South Eastern Research Libraries. So while we work for different sort of user groups, the work that we do is very similar. And I think and so we're colleagues in the Professional Development Alliance, you know, we met about a year ago, and we've been sharing professional development opportunities over the last, whatever, 12 or 14, 15 months now. And so one of the really great things about I think the kind of work that we do is that we have sort of a pulse on on the larger profession, like what's happening, and try and and figure out how to bring these conversations into, you know, for our particular user groups. And Elaina, you know, I have the highest respect for you, you have done some really incredible programming this year, really, you do not shy away from programming, difficult topics. You know, I mean, you you did a whole series, that was uncomfortable conversations with librarians, why I left the profession. You also scheduled several interviews with leaders in our field, including Dr. Carla Hayden. So, you know, gold standard for programming, I think everyone who does this sort of work is like, wow, it's Elaina doing next. And, and so, you know, the PDA, the Professional Development Alliance wanted to have a, a way of highlighting one of our own and the work that we do. And so, Elaina Welcome, I'm so glad to have this conversation with you. When we talked about it way back in early October or so, you know, you said, you had just your, your book, um, you know, the six step guide to, to library worker engagement had just come out. And you wanted to tie that to what was happening currently, with the great resignation movement. At the time, it was a that was a term that was, you know, sort of people, their articles have been written about it, but it wasn't as well known as it is now. That's for sure. So I think everyone at this point has at least heard of it, can you tell us a little bit, just like, provide a little bit of background into what this great resignation movement is? Why it's happening?

Elaina Norlin 02:50

Yeah, I mean, um, you know, sort of, for the research part of it, it's people starting to acknowledge that not only are people leaving the profession, or whatever profession they're in, and don't have a job, or they're deciding to do something else, or deciding to go part time or something like that. But they're making decisions outside of the norm, or what normally would happen, and which is left scholars and other that sort of stock market and things like that, and perplexed because in some cases, what normally happens is like, oh, we'll just give people a little bit more money, and they'll calm down. And what they've been finding is that it's the money is not the incentive. And it's not the the rash, the automatic gut reaction rationale to get people to stay in their organizations. And so now people, scholars, researchers, whoever is having to dig a little bit deeper to find out why people are leaving and in making decisions of leaving without, in a lot of cases, not another job in the horizon.

Jamie Lin 04:08

Well, I was even seeing it was like stats, like 4 million people per month over the last few months. So this is huge. And what does it mean? Like, how is it showing up in libraries and library spaces? A lot of people, so you're not like, Yeah,

Elaina Norlin 04:26

well, it's interesting, because I mean, there's a portion of our profession who are still in denial, who are like, Oh, it's, you know, it's just a fad. And it's going, you know, it'll go away and stuff like that. But I've also talked to other deans and directors, even in my membership and other in other areas, who are losing people. Many people don't even do the exit interviews and stuff like that. So some of them they know why they left and some of them they don't know why they left. But there is, you know, significant libraries that have gaps or people who have left and some of them know, I have a fight. A lot of times staff know why they left the, you know, deans and directors might not know why they left. But I think we, you know, we are, for the most part still in denial that this might be something that we need an urgency that we need to do something with, I guess it's what I'm saying. So people have acknowledged that people are leaving, but it's like, oh, we'll just try to figure out to give them more money, they're still in the let's just give them a little bit more money. And you know, and people will come in and everything will be okay. It's, I don't know, if we are digging underneath the surface yet. I'm not sure we are as a profession. Yeah.

Jamie Lin 05:41

So So in your conversations with people? What are you hearing then, as actual, some of the grievances and frustrations and reasons for why people leave?

Elaina Norlin 05:53

You know, I mean, you know, people are, how to be polite, and, and there is still a, you know, I mean, if you're leaving, and you're going to try a new adventure, it might not work you, you might still want to come back. So they're not going to, to give out too much information. But what I've been told now is that, you know, when people leave, people tend to forget that once people leave, the work doesn't go away. It doesn't evaporate with them, right. So somebody might have left or two people left or three people could have retired or four people could have retired and they retire. But they were really fed up. So the left, right, so but they retired, what's been happening is that the work hasn't went away. So people are being taking on more and more work. And if they're in a hybrid situation, it's great. But the

rationale, it's like, well, if it's a hybrid situation, you could do more work when you're at home, right? That's the reward for you being at home, like let's power on some more work. So people feel sort of, I've been people I've talked to feel sort of like tension between, you know, I feel overworked, I feel stressed out. I don't feel imbalanced. But I don't want to complain, I don't want to look like I can't measure up, you know, you know, the, the the organization sort of, sort of penalizes you for sort of complaining about being overworked. So. So there's always I can't tell you how many people have apologized to me about I feel stressed, I feel overworked, I feel burdened, but I'm really sorry, I don't really want to complain, I don't want to, you know, make you know, I don't want to make waves and stuff like that. So, I'm getting a lot of burnout feelings, you know, and a lot of people telling me about burnout. And I was telling Jamie the other day that we're going to start a Burnout series, just because I've been hearing it over and over again, that secretly people are burnout, but they're nervous about talking about it.

Jamie Lin 07:54

Why are they nervous about talking about it?

Elaina Norlin 07:57

You know, I, you know, my, my, my impression of it is, is the assimilation within our organizations, not all organizations, I hate to say, a broad stroke of everybody. But for the most part, we are assimilated to do a lot more and not complaint, right. And then people who do kind of complain look like whiners, they look like they're not carrying their weight. You know, maybe they start to become marginalized. You, you know, it's not direct pressure, but sometimes it's indirect pressure to take on the work, shut up and do your job, right. So I find that there's a balance of, you know, I want to like Hey, I can't do much more of this, I've got to do it. But what is the sort of long term implications of you as a sort of productive person within your organization for saying that this is enough is enough, right.

Jamie Lin 09:04

So it sounds like it sounds like these larger workplace cultures are not supportive. It correct me if I'm wrong, and what I'm hearing from is that you're saying that these workplace cultures are often not supportive of people's emotional needs. The there's overwork and stress and no outlet for it or no way to express it. And so how does leaving a job? I mean, I imagine though, that if if you leave a job and start another job, the same problem could happen again. And I guess I guess what, okay, so, so it's not that every organization is a terrible place to work, but there's a there's a larger overarching cultural workplaces issue of, you know, overwork and or too much work? And no, no way to express it. This sounds like something that is really something that institutional leaders should be really concerned with, is this something that's really only changeable at that leadership level?

Elaina Norlin 10:27

No, I don't necessarily think so. I mean, I think there's a lot of other I mean, burnout. Scarcity is really real, right? It's a real thing. I mean, we do operate on the scarcity mindset, like, you know, take it on the chin, do more with less, do more with less. But I think the other thing that also goes on in the organization is there is sort of seething undercurrents. And that goes into your culture of not dealing with conflict, personality, conflict, Team related conflict conflict. But you know, supervisor versus their employees conflict, there's, there's other interpersonal dynamics that are going on. And when people

are usually leaving, then statistics still say regardless of burnout, when people have left, the numbers are in the has not changed, 80% of people have left because of that leadership conflict that just doesn't get resolved in tension at work, that just adds to the stress when you're already burned out. And now you're stressed out because of this conflict that's not getting resolved. You got a bad boss, that's just not working out. And that sort of usually is what pulls people over the edge. The statistics say that probably on average, about 40 45% of supervisors and bosses are not really equipped to do the emotional empathy work that needs to be done in most positions. So if you're looking at 40 to 45% of people who are not really equipped for doing it, you've got a lot of people who are having very tension feel conflict at work, that just is not either not being resolved or being resolved in in a very negative way.

Jamie Lin 12:19

Thanks for that, by the way, I want to tell the those of us those of you who are watching to feel free to use the q&a to ask any questions for Elaina, we'll get to after, after our conversation, I think if you use it in the chat, I may not see it just because I'm focused on listening to what Elaina saying and talking with her. So please do use the q&a. So um, so what are some examples of like a good organizational culture and a good workplace?

Elaina Norlin 12:52

Well, you know, one of the things that I did study, when I was doing, I started writing my book back are writing researching my book back in 2019, before the pandemic, and one of the things that I was telling Jamie, the other day is that when I went in to talk to libraries about, you know, what would be considered good organizational culture, and I kind of took the research and said, This is what I'm looking for. I got, like, literally rejected, like, you know, I was that lover that couldn't come back in or something. I mean, I over and over again, and libraries, were telling me that they, it's not my organization, we're not doing a good job, we're not measuring up, we're not this, we're not that we're not this, we're not that. So I ended up going back to LA and saying, Hey, this is really, I'm not finding good models within our library profession. I'm going to have to go outside of libraries in order to understand good, good organizational structures, and then see how I can mesh it back to libraries. And so I did spend some time with network perfect organizations. And I think that's part of our library problem is that either we're perfect or it's, we're a failure. You know, it's there's no sort of in between, but people who were not perfect, but we're making strides, you know, and they were very clear that yet everything's not 100%. But here are some things that we're doing. And for the organizations that I saw that were like, felt really good, and I talked to the staff and talk to the employees and they felt really good was that they work on the foundation of the organization. They worked on, on treating each other better. They worked on better leadership. They had a leadership vision statement, which I have in my book, it's sort of like they had a vision of how, what how they want it to lead the organization. It wasn't just a strategic plan. It was how do we treat people how do we resolve conflict? How do we praise our employees? How do we know Make them feel special and appreciated. And not just the superstar employees. But the everybody appreciated. They were very conscious and very, very intentional about developing and strengthening the organizational health. And then from there, once they were, you know, doing better with interacting with everybody, then there, what they found is that their D AI initiatives actually automatically got better, because their focus is was on strengthening the foundation and making it better for everybody, and not just a small view. So I took that information, I was really

excited about it, and came back to libraries. And, and I got a lot of resistance towards that. I mean, we don't spend a lot of energy on the foundation of our organization, we spend, and we do our strategic plan, and we do our vision statement, and we do our goal statements. But we don't really think about how do we treat people? How do we strengthen people? How do we, if we hired you, and we spent the money, time and energy to bring you into the organization? Then why are we now left you to a hunger game kind of situation where we're looking for you to make a mistake, so we can pounce on you and make you feel bad? I'm like, what? Where are we at? What are we thinking? What's our What's our goal? How do we want people to feel when they're in their organization? How do you want people to feel when they're there, and a lot of times, I get blank stares, no one's thought about it. I you know, we're giving them more money, we're giving them more this. But money and benefit packages keeps people there. But it doesn't inspire people. Money does not inspire. It's how you treat people. It's how you motivate inspire people, what you're there is what brings them up, not just throwing more money at the problem. So not the money's not important. But it's what that's that was the major learning lesson I got from going outside of libraries is that money is important. But all of these other things that they were doing to make people feel good, is what actually brought the whole organization up.

Jamie Lin 17:12

And also nobody becomes a librarian for the money. Yeah. Right. Like, we were drawn to the profession for other reasons for you know, for the values of it. And, and so that's really interesting that the new one in libraries, you know, really wanted to talk about what they were doing well. And I feel like, like, I don't I don't think it's true that there are no libraries doing things. Well, I you know, and so, I feel like that's reflective, too, on how librarians, like the pressure that we put on ourselves, maybe you know, this, this example of because we have this ideal of a librarian and who a librarian is, we never quite hold up to that standard.

Elaina Norlin 18:01

Yeah, no, it was funny, Jamie that, during my once I got that knowledge and was talking to people, it usually was the quiet introverts that I had to in my book that had to talk them into, like, you know, where I'm like, your are doing a good job. It is good. No, no, no, no, it's good. No, it's good. And, and I am one, there's a few people in the book that I had to literally have multiple conversations with and do pep talks in order to get them to acknowledge that this is a good thing. But then I had other sort of narcissistic egomaniacs who contacted me who kept telling me about what a wonderful job they were doing. And, and you know, and then I would talk to their staff and their staff were like, this place is sucks, you know, and, and, but it was sort of like, they were the ones calling me going, I'm great. And you need to put me in the book, you know, like, but it's not about you. It's about the organization. And but it is funny, just the difference between, you know, the personality, and that whole process of determining who I was gonna highlight in the book. Yeah.

Jamie Lin 19:15

So for somebody who's an individual contributor than you know, someone who's not in management and leadership, what can they do? To You know, we can observe what's happening and I wish it were like this. What what really can somebody do when you're not in a position of leadership of direct change?

Elaina Norlin 19:37

You know, I'm gonna, you know, jump on my on my soapbox bandwagon, but one of the things that I, that I always talk about is that we, what tends to happen is that we tend to do a climate survey, you know, how do you feel what's going on with you? Are you good, whatever, you know, you get some people who go everything's fine, and then you get some people on like this place sucks. And either we're going to either I find organizations focusing on Oh, everything's fine. So we're just going to ignore the people who say it sucks, or they overcompensate for the people who said that it sucks, right? So what tends to happen is that they'll develop some kind of Climate Group or a staff development group, or D eyes in this other category. Because if bipoc People say, This place sucks, like, well just form a D committee and go off into corner and figure out it make yourself happy, right? And so. So what I say instead is that we need to do still need to form a group, we have to put our energy into making our organization better, we can't expect leaders and some of them are good, and some of them are not. And some of them have empathy. Some of them don't, some of them have the, the soft skills to lead and some of them frankly, don't. And so we can't, you know, expect miracles that they're going to get an aha moment and turn into people who they're not. So my always suggestions is, if we form a group number one, we have to work on conflict. I can't stress it enough. I mean, a lot of times, we're as an organization, I mean, as an association as a libraries, we tend to be conflict avoidant. And that doesn't mean conflict doesn't go away. It just means it's simmers and seas and people hold grudges. And five years ago, you know, Jamie stepped on my toe, and I'm still mad, because you know, I'm still smiling, but I'm at, you know, that kind of thing. We, we need to have a group that actually looks at how can we have more honest conversations? I know, we always said we should have difficult conversations, but we really don't. So how can we, you know, form a group that gives strategies and techniques that we're going to actually implement. So when there is there is conflict, we can figure out a way to, to have disagreements and have difference of opinion and personality conflicts and all these other different things that are normal. But how can we resolve that? I think that's number one. And I think we can form that without the leaders going, we will do this, you should just say that we need to do this, and people need to do it. Number one, because I think that a lot of times when I go in as a consultant, nine times out of 10, the cultural breakdown is based on four or five different conflict avoidance issues that are just not getting resolved. The second thing is that I think we need to focus in on recognition and praise I, I talked about, I don't want to focus too much on my book, but I go into a whole chapter on that can't be done enough, it doesn't mean that we have to loudly tell people about each other at a staff, you know, good job, you know, meeting, but how can we figure out individually how to shine light on people who are not being seen. There's always people who are the superstars, the number one people, whatever, who are the ones that get the attention, then there's other people that you know, might fight for this attention to maybe get some, there's so many other people who are doing a really good job, doing their job doing it well, quiet, might be in a corner, might not be doing glamorous, sexy jobs, but they're still doing a good job that are that are totally ignored. And totally not know in not giving a hey, you you are a valuable part of this organization. You can't do it enough. There's no There's no like let's do it once a year and everybody's okay, you cannot do it enough. And how can we set something that's very formal, and very intentional, on how to, to recognize people and and in and figure out ways for them to shine and be able to give their input and be able to feel that they are a part even though they're not the glamorous superstars I'm not you know, I'm not making fun of that because in most of the organizations I was the glamour superstar so I am definitely not making fun of that. But I knew when I was a director, I spent a lot of time trying to to

Elaina Norlin 24:19

spend time with people who normally are not being seen, you know, people shoving the books people back, they're doing the technical processing, the catalogers the the people were doing the metadata in the back, they're not they're not the people had programs and that kind of thing. So what can we do and how can we all be a part of you know, elevating each other up instead of pulling each other now?

Jamie Lin 24:46

And I really love the way you ended that one. I had to mute myself for a minute because my cat decided to start crying and I was like, no, let's not have a cat crying he was so so so I'm, I'm hearing you know that we do have a responsibility to fork to do what we can to, however much we can to change a culture from where we're at. And you did mention, you know, when you were a director, what you were doing. And so I do want to, you know, something I know that is personal in your life is that you actually chose to leave a director level position for your current role. Some might say, Wow, that's a step down. Because I think we've we've all been taught that there's a you know, there's a process you go from individual contributor to manager to Director, etc. And that's what you aim for. So you made a decision to do something a little bit different. And you've been at a circle now for like, two years, I think a little Yeah. So what, what made you decide to do this, and how do you feel about it now?

Elaina Norlin 25:54

Yeah, you know, it's interesting, because, you know, I, when people ask me, you know, about my, my very career, I always tell people, I'm a library Mutt and I, I've done a little bit of everything I started off in academia. I went to IMLS. And when I left IMLS, people are like, are you smoking something? How did you leave IMLS and I went to OCLC and and people thought that was the weirdest thing ever. And, and I left OCLC to to go, be the director of the African American Research Library night had no director experience at all, they're like, Are you lost your mind? How could you have left the comforts of OCLC to go down to Florida to do something like that. And then I ended up being a regional manager, I didn't know anything about that, because I was, um, it was part of a public library system. And they were and they, and I found quickly in public library systems, they can send you in do you, whatever you, they can just tell you, this is what you're doing. And you're doing it right. So I went from that to, you know, being a director to being a regional manager back to me and director. And to be honest, I set this in another meeting, I, when I went down to Florida, I didn't think I was going to be there more than two years. i My love always was consulting and training, you know, and that's why I loved CLC, because that's what I was doing. And I kept, but I felt like I wanted to get management experience, I wanted to understand conflict, I wanted to understand how to lead people, I wanted to understand it. And sure enough, the way the universe works. All of a sudden, the opportunity opened up and I was like, Okay, put your money where your mouth is. And so I went, and I'm like, I'll only be here two years, and then I'm out of there. And I'm gonna go and consult, Do this, do that. And two years turn into three years, three years, four years, four years, sort of five years. And probably back in around 2016 17, I was really starting to feel the edge like it's time to go. And to be honest, I started apply for jobs, and I got jobs I got offers to as, as you would say, the left, I went from, you know, a bigger library in director of a bigger, bigger space. And what I found is, I didn't really want to do it. i If not that I didn't love supervising people. I absolutely love it. I love it. I am one of those people, like I know a lot of people that didn't like doing management, I loved management. That was like my best part of the job. But I didn't when I went to

other organizations, our organization was kind of dysfunctional. And when I went on interviews, I found that a lot of organizations were dysfunctional. And the selling point was our organization is super dysfunctional. Can you turn us around? And I was like, I don't, you know, and I really had to sit back and think, do I really want to spend three, four or five years turning an organization around, and I didn't, you know, I did it a little bit at arlec at the previous place, but I didn't want to do it again. I'm like, I'm older. Now. I just and I remember just telling them I'm older now I don't really want to go to a place that you got to fix. I don't really want to do that anymore. And so they somebody said, I just kept but I kept going just because of what you said Jamie that you know, I it's what you're supposed to do. So I kept interviewing, and every time I was there, I was like, I don't really want to do this. And I felt bad because I didn't

Elaina Norlin 29:47

I didn't want to do it. But I didn't know what I wanted to do anymore because being a director was my identity. Right? So some things happen and I decided to leave and I decided after like the fifth Interview, and I was one of the places was so toxic, I end up having to take a nap in the middle of the day when I came back I just laid out it was so it the energy was so bad that I was like, I need to just take some time out. And that's when I start reading my book, I wanted to learn about places that that wasn't so bad. And I felt like the libraries that I went to were just so toxic. And then I was like, every library can't feel this way. And so that's what was the motivation for my book. It was like this can't be this is not it going from one toxicity to another. I can't you know, is this is this it? And so when I started writing my book, I remember I talked to a mentor of mine, and I was still looking at director jobs. And she's like, Elaina, what do you really want to do? What do you really want to do? And I said, Actually, I want to go back to teaching. That's what I used to love and training. I said, I really liked working at OCLC. So she's like, well, that sounds like you want to go back to a consortium. And it's like, actually, maybe, and she's like, and you want to teach? And I'm like I do. And she's like, you want to train. I'm like I do. And it's like you don't want to work from home. And she's like, it wasn't glamorous and sexy there because it wasn't a pandemic, yet. She's like, work from home. I'm like, Yeah, I think I want to work from home. And, and she's like, well put it out there. Work From Home teach, train. And I work at a consortium. And sure enough, honest to God. Two weeks later, a friend of mine said that this job was opening up you should apply. Honest to God. So it wasn't exactly what I was thinking. And when. And then a friend of mine was like, you said you wanted to teach you wanted to train and you wanted to work from home. And they're offering all three. So what are you talking about? So, so that was the decision? Yeah. And 100%? No regrets. Yeah.

Jamie Lin 32:03

And it sounds like this great resignation movement is a lot of people having that internal conversation that you were having a few years ago, I think probably brought on you know, instigated by the pandemic. But I think also beforehand, just like there's that there is a shift in in just how we think about work and how it fits into our lives. And so this idea of questioning, what will make me happy what will be, you know, what feels true to myself, seems to be really, part of that drive of this job is not fulfilling that, let me fit, you know, take some time to figure figure it out. So, I do want to, I'm going to put in the chat, the link to your book, the six step guide to library worker engagement. So instead of becoming, Yes, awesome, instead of becoming another library director, trying to fix an environment that, you

know, was struggling, you wrote a book so that everyone can, you know, benefit from your wisdom and expertise and

Elaina Norlin 33:10

tell, it's also really, it's also really helped my job, because, you know, my job is also to visit my member libraries to help and support them. And my, what I found is my my years as being a director helps my job, you know, I can see things from so many different vantage points, you know, then I might have before if I just stated OCLC, I wouldn't have understood what it'd be like to take an organization and move it forward. And, you know, stumble and fall and in all the different things that you have to do. So it's helped me in that sense, in doing the research for the book, also really made me understand what good things look like. And actually, I could feel it, I could see it. And it helps me be able to diagnose things a lot faster than if I would have just left my former job and literally went into this job. I don't think I would have the same same vantage point, then, then the time and I really only was was not, you know, working working for about maybe four or five months before I got this job. I wasn't out very long, but it was still long enough to really be able to do the research. Yeah.

Jamie Lin 34:30

What was your favorite part of the book? Like what what's your favorite chapter, the most fun to research and write about?

Elaina Norlin 34:38

You know, the book actually was always a work in progress. I don't feel like it's still finished. Like it's really crazy. It's like, I kept wanting to take the book back because before I start writing the book, I was what sort of like, remote was sort of like on the outskirts, but it really wasn't a thing, because it was you know, I started writing back in 2018. And then 2020 happened and Pandemic happened and remote with was normal. So I asked to take the book back because I was like, oh, we should consider remote. That doesn't mean that was like out of date, right. And so as, as I sort of did more and more consulting work, because I was still consulting, I always felt like, oh, I want to take the book back and say this, and I want to take the book back and say that, Oh, I want to take it back. And if I took it back, like two or three times, and they finally said, you can't take it back anymore, you just need to just be okay with what it is right now. And stop taking it back and adding your own little two cents. And so I always tell people, it's, it's a, it's not going to change your, you know, it's not going to change world problems, but it definitely will provide sort of a resource guide, you know, reminder of things that, you know, when you get sort of lost, like, oh, yeah, you know, yeah, she did mention that in chat, you know, the chapter on teamwork or something. But my favorite chapter, which was my 100% Awakening, was the DI chapter. And it really was, that whole thing that I just said that I, I was under a completely different thinking, when I first started, I was under the same traditional thinking that we needed to try to convince people and have under people understand about what they're doing and spat and unconscious, you know, unconscious biases, and this and that, and the other. And, you know, we just need to talk about this and figure out a way for people to get an understanding that, and I think I started off waiting in that way. But as I spent more and more time talking to corporations and organizations and people, I realized that I, it was the wrong way to think about it, it really, is that whole foundational thought was based on talking to people. And it clicked on me, like I was, you know, on a crossword puzzle, it was like, oh, it's not, we're never going to get anywhere with the, unless we strengthen the foundation, we're just never

going to it's just not going to work. And that was an aha moment for me. So that that is sort of where I was sort of like, oh, that that's that was sort of that's why the diversity chapter is last, the DEI section is the last chapter because to me, if we do the work and all the other areas, then that area is will be a better ground for us to do the training. Like a lot of times, it's a dysfunctional organization with a lot of problems, and a lot of crap in elephants in the room and crazy bosses and secret people bullying and all this other crap that's going on in the organization. And then we go, let's ignore all that. And let's just talk about being nice to bipoc people, it's like, no, they're still glowing, they're still craziness. They're still, you know, scarcity, craziest, is all the stuff that's going on, that we're not addressing. And then we expect a training session on unconscious bias to like completely change the organization. And it's just not going to happen. So that that was just I mean, that section, and that. And when somebody finally was telling me about, you know how much they love their job, and it was basically, she, she was a BiPAP person, and it was at Salesforce, and she started naming off like, this is the reason I love my job, she went, boom, boom, boom, it was all the other stuff. We changed our leadership, we have better recognition and praise programs, you know, we worked on our teamwork, where we're working more functionally, we let go of some of the stuff. So we have a work life balance, all the other stuff was the main reason she loved her job. And I was like, when I came, finally left that world and came back to libraries, I realized we're not working on any of it. We're just not. But we're sort of mere expecting a miracle to happen that all of a sudden things will change. So that that is that was my best chapter that was that really, it really, really impacted my work.

Jamie Lin 39:24

Yeah, you know, and just having this conversation too, is a way of highlighting what we don't talk about. So we're talking about what we don't talk about and saying we need to talk about it. In to really start to think about what it is in our profession that is not supportive of its workers and allowing us to be our best selves and to to, to strive to be the people that we want it to be when we chose To enter this profession. So thank you, Elaina, so much for, you know, for talking for being willing to talk about these conversations today and in your previous programming, we do have a few questions. And I think we'll start going through. So anyone else with a question, please do include it into the q&a? So our first question is, what is the citation for 45%? Not capable of empathy work? It's very interesting.

Elaina Norlin 40:33

Um, I would actually have to go find it. I got I got a pile of research and stuff like that. So whoever's asked that question, send me an email, and I will go back into my documents and find find the article for you. Yeah, gosh, I wouldn't want to pay him.

Jamie Lin 40:51

Um, okay, what are some? What are some things that those organizations outside of libraries were doing that made their employees feel good? You did touch? Yeah.

Elaina Norlin 41:02

The first thing, like I said, that there was formalized recognition and praise programs. I mean, they had peer recognition they had, they were meeting with their staff a lot more regularly, a lot of them eliminated this sort of the performance evaluation programs, you know, the the annual review, which is not really that productive, then they went much more towards meeting with people a lot more regularly

developing, where the direct managers, supervisors had much more of a relationship with their staff, and it was more of a dialogue conversation than it was sort of, I barely meet with you. I mean, once a month ago, here's the goals and check to check to check. And then at the end of the year, you get wham with something that you had no idea that somebody was even upset about, you know, so. So, number one thing is that they changed the dynamics of how they interacted with their staff. And it was a lot more partnerships communicate better communication, was was said a lot of times, and there was a multiple ways for, for their staff to be able to communicate things. And a lot of times, like if somebody said, Oh, we should do work from home, then it was sort of like, okay, so let's all get together and figure out the best strategy for us to do that. So the staff was involved in the decision making process. So there was, but the number one thing that most of the staff who I talked to who said, you know, it was supposedly a great place to work set that the communication ramped up, they got rid of that just big, they got rid of supervisors that weren't good. They didn't fire them, which I'm a good proponent of, you don't need to fire people. Sometimes people are just not the right fit. And so they've just moved them and gave them a position that made more sense for their skill set. And they named it like I told you, there was a leader, a lot of times people had leadership vision statements. And they had a leadership vision of how they wanted the operation and how they wanted to manage their, their staff. And then they pick people based on that vision. And I, you know, one of my favorite webinars I do now is stop hiring that bosses is because we don't spend that time or energy thinking about how we want people, how do we want to treat people and what type of leaders do we need to have that done? And so and so, that was like, the major thing they got the better managers in there. And their number one focus is to develop the relationship with their staff, in figure out positive ways to move them along.

Jamie Lin 44:05

Okay, so the next question is, we have organizational dynamics statements which reflect how we want to be treated at our organization. A goal was to have congratulations, by the way, that's amazing right there. The goal is to have peer accountability for these statements. How can we hold each other accountable peer accountability for the statements, despite the existing power structures? Or how can you assure folks that there will not be a retaliation? If someone points out something that's an uncomfortable for some?

Elaina Norlin 44:39

Well, that kind of goes back to what I was saying that regardless, I mean, that whole accountability is a slippery slope, right? Because one person's accountability can be completely different than another person's accountability based on their personality. I can't tell you how many times like when I was a director that somebody came to me and was appear Who said so so needs to be punished because of Bla bla bla bla bla bla wasn't necessarily a punishable offense, but it was their, their sort of, you know, version of what they felt that should be punished. So it's, it's a slippery slope of when you leave it to peers, it also depends on that peers personality and what they think is right and wrong and all these other different things. But it also goes back to what I was saying from the beginning, that the number one thing is to think about how to handle conflict, because there's always personality dynamics, we are not all the same. We are, you know, regardless of what people will say, we not only, you know, racial and ethically but the way we approach work, the way we are background, the baggage I was I talked in my book about the bag that we brought in, you know, the baggage from whatever the other jobs we have, we bring in a lot of other stuff that people don't see into the organization. And having tools to be

able to handle conflict, to me is his number one key. Even if we you know, we all got together figured out Appreciative Inquiry, we figured out whatever we needed to figure out, but we need to figure out what strategies in order to, to handle conflict when it happens.

Jamie Lin 46:27

So I'm hearing just a little bit more support for you know, even education around conflict resolution would be helpful for, you know, for those who can to bring in that kind of training to an organization. Salaries may not be good motivators, but low salaries are perfect D motivators, comments. Yes, that was one of the comments there.

Elaina Norlin 46:53

And I wanted to stress on this is that, you know, one of the things that I do talk about is about the workplace as it relates to sort of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. And you know, as you guys know, what the hierarchy needs that. That is you go through the pyramid, when you're at basic needs, which is food, security, shelter, that kind of thing, salary and being paid, what you're worth is down there and one of the basic coordinates? I am no, I am not advocating that they should, you know, you just work for nothing as long as they treat you. Well, I'm just saying that. Once we get to that level, what I tend to find is that people assume that, once you know we're paying you or maybe pay you a little bit more, that that automatically motivates your maximum performance. And all I'm saying is, is that that is not true, there's plenty of people get paid three, four or \$500,000 a year walk away from the job. I'm not saying that it's not important because it is it's one of the basic needs. It's just not. If I had \$1, literally when I was in management, for my boss to say, they should we're paying them so shut up at work, I would not be here, I would be in Hawaii right now sipping on a Mai Tai. So that is that is the wrong thinking. It's not where we're paying you. So shut up and work. In order for you to get to where you say you want people to be, you're going to have to put a little bit more effort than Oh, just give them some money and know, they'll be fine. Yeah, it's all I'm saying.

Jamie Lin 48:40

Um, so an attendee writes, I've never been in a management position, are there ways that you've experienced or learned about for leaders to be more open with staff about their own management style? I've been hearing a lot of frustration from a new hire, who feels they're being left to guess what the manager wants or doesn't want from their staff?

Elaina Norlin 49:02

Um, yes, I mean, is, it's it goes to me, which is a strike to my craw, is that a lot of times and, and I get a lot of pushback from libraries. And so I was like, I can't keep saying enough. We don't really put that much time and energy on outside of outcomes and in you know, the right look or credentials and friends and all this stuff. When we pick in order to leave lead to be a supervisor to be a manager. We don't we don't put the energy that we need into it. We just kind of pick people and it's your turn and all this other stuff. And what you end up getting is people who are very nice people, there's nothing wrong with them. It's just that's not we don't have a leadership focus. We just So, in most organizations, we don't really think about how we're supposed to be interacting with staff. So a lot of times what I find what I do leadership management training is that the supervisors will tell me, it's the staff who should be figuring us out. In reality, you're getting paid extra money, because the reason you're getting paid more than the

staff is because you should be figuring them out, not the other way around. So that's my rant, before I give you the advice, you should not have to be playing mystery games, guessing games, as a manager, you should be figuring out your staff and figuring out the best way to interact with your staff. That's my rant, on your thing in your specific situation? Um, I will, one of the things that I would suggest is to figure out the style of interacting with this particular person, if you can't, are they face to face person? Are they a email person? You know, Tat, you know, text person? How can you interact with them? I was telling Jamie, the other day that when I had an initial conflict with my boss, I realized that he was not a pick up the phone to check kind of got I'm gonna pick up the phone to chat, but I realized quickly that he was not. So I just emailed him. And then from there, asked for a conversation, right, so and then once we had a conversation, I kind of had my points, written down on what I wanted to talk about. The thing I also would say that I was telling Jamie the other day is that you need to kind of know who you are, how you work. How do you have what motivates you? How do you get things done? How do you feel that you are what brings out the best in you, you need to know that they're not going to just like you're not guessing they're not guessing they're obviously not paying attention. So you need to know who you are. So when you have a dialogue with them, like, hey, either, you know, we need to figure out how to interact with each other, we need to figure out how to have this as the best situation possible. I'm not really sure of you, but let me tell you a little bit about me, I think that's always a good way to start. Let me tell you about me. And then they can then tell you about them. And then you can figure out, you know, sort of a win win situation there. But don't expect them to figure you out. And then vice versa, I think you have to be very clear on who you are. And if you need if you need coaching or advice on that, you know, just send me an email, whatever, I'm happy to talk it through with you. I used to do it all the time. So I'm very happy to do.

Jamie Lin 52:53

Thank you. So that our last question is related to that. And it's are the resources that you can recommend for learning how to navigate difficult personalities as a man as a manager navigating different personalities? I think so. So for instance, I have a staff member who takes critique very personally and will shut down when confronted, I'm constantly afraid of making the situation worse when trying to make it better. So I think that ties into what you were saying, Can you any elaborations? On what you were talking about?

Elaina Norlin 53:24

Um, yeah, I would I used to have it, I used to have a when I was a director, I had a staff that took things rather personally, and I wasn't, I was in she had a conflict. She, she was directly being supervised by somebody I supervised. And that particular person didn't have a lot of patience. So they were always at odds, right. And sometimes I did have to give the bad news. And I knew that that person wasn't going to be able to do it. And so what are some of the strategies that I I use was I actually, number one, I don't I don't ask them to come see me, I wouldn't say I went to see them, you know, sitting in their office, instead of them coming to see me where I'm in charge, you better do what it already sets up a dynamic of anxiety. So I would actually just go see them. And I and I really wouldn't go initially with the news. I got into a habit of just kind of going into people's offices and just sit down and chit chatting with them. And to just get to know them. And so if I had to give a bad story or whatever, I would go to chat with them. And then at the middle of the talking, I'm like, hey, what about this or whatever, and I listened to what they were saying it and I was like, you know, we were just thinking about it and this and

that and that's it, you know, whatever and then we would interact that way. But for me sitting in their office interacting where they could see my expression and see that I really wanted the best in this situation, not coming in and launching into the, the Hey, you're, then I found that the dialogue was a better way of getting that information. And sometimes I might have went in thinking it was worse than it was. But when I had the casual conversation, I realized that it really wasn't that it was something else. And I was able to navigate it without putting my cards on the table and realizing it was the wrong parts. So I, for the people who were what I always would say, every strategy, every staff person was different. And I always felt my my belief was that it was my job to, to figure that out, and then adjust my strategy based on whoever I was talking to. Because other people, I could just get on the phone like, Hey, what's up with you what's going on? And that would be totally fine. And okay, and they would be okay with it. And I would be okay with it. But some didn't, I couldn't do.

Jamie Lin 56:12

Right. All right. Well, thank you, Elaina, for talking with us for this last hour sharing, you know, your research that went into this book, and just your experience in you know, in your training and consulting work. Thank you, everybody, for attending. And remember, Elaina did say that she was open to you reaching out to her, if you had other questions, or specific, you know, circumstances that you wanted to talk through. I do think, you know, do purchase the book to get those gems of wisdom and have them with you forever. I think is you know, lately, maybe you should start setting up an independent consulting, you know, fee for everyone, if everyone jumps to say, hey, help me with this. That's why you wrote the book, so that you know, so that you can help as many people in that way and preserve your preserve your time as well. So, thank you all for attending. Thank you, Elaina, again for this conversation. And we'll see you in the near future. The New Year, perhaps maybe the end of the year. So Happy Holidays to all.

Elaina Norlin 57:24

Thank you guys. Yes. And happy holidays. Happy holidays. Thank you, Jamie.

Jamie Lin 57:31

Thanks. I'll talk to you soon.