

# DEAR MINDFUL CHANGEMAKER,



HOSTED BY  
MEICO MARQUETTE WHITLOCK



## Dear Mindful Changemaker Podcast

### Episode Twelve - Ronnell Perry Transcript

#### Podcast Intro

**Meico:** As a changemaker, you're dedicated to making a positive difference in the world. You love what you do, and you're good at it. But here's the thing. With all the things on your plate, you may struggle with finding the right balance between work and having a fulfilling personal life. And as the world becomes more complex, it may seem change, disruption, and uncertainty have become new norms in your life and work.

**Meico:** But it doesn't have to be this way. I'm Meico Marquette Whitlock, and I'm on a mission to help changemakers like you improve your well being while increasing your well doing and changing the world without burning out. In every episode, my intention is simple, to share practical wisdom about the inner and the outer work required to take care of yourself while building a better world, especially when it feels like work doesn't love you back.

**Meico:** So, let's get started.

#### Part One

**Meico:** I'm excited to be here with our guest Ronnell Perry. I'm going to give you a little bit of a rundown of who he is and then we're going to go ahead and jump into what I know is going to be an exciting and inspiring and I think for many people a transformative conversation.

**Meico:** So I'm excited to be here today and with my friend, with my colleague, I think a brother from another mother, and so I'm excited to be here today. So let me tell you a little bit about Ronnell, and then we're going to dive into, a robust conversation.

Ronnell is a former project manager and Scrum Master, that built e learning products to educate and empower.

**Meico:** And he was laid off, during the tumult of all those things that happened in the tech industry in 2022. But the universe had another plan, and so I'm excited to talk to him about what that plan is. He is the founder. of Afro Buena Ventura, a travel company that engages in sustainable tourism by facilitating transformative travel experiences to communities of African descent in Latin America, and he specializes in immersive experiences in Salvador, La Bahia, and Brazil.

**Meico:** I've had the honor of being a part of the excursions that you've done in Mexico, and I really enjoyed that, and you've been very instrumental in the travels that I've had in Colombia, so I'm excited to see where the conversation takes us as it relates to that. And, something I did not know, but he is the chair of the board of the Amazagi Global Service Learning, which is a nonprofit that uses educational service learning experiences to facilitate empathy and create social change around the globe.

**Meico:** So you can tell from this brief sketch, that Ronnell is a global citizen, is all about doing that in a sustainable and ethical way. And so Ronnell, welcome to the podcast.

**Ronnell:** Thank you, Meico. It's great to be here. This is like my first big interaction since my travelers left town, so it's really refreshing. To be able to engage and talk about my experiences. I'm happy to be here.

**Meico:** So I gave a brief sketch of who you are based on the bio and I guess what you have to tell people, in words. but if you had to describe in your own words, very briefly, like who is Ronnell, what do you want people to know about you?

**Ronnell:** There's one thing that I constantly post on my Instagram, and it's, it's a tag that says always creating. At heart, I'm a creative person when I was younger that showed up in wanting to create beautiful images, painting, drawing and those things when I was in high school is about poetry and creating words and expressing myself in that way.

**Ronnell:** Now, it's using the world, and travel, and people, and communities to create beauty and create connections. At heart, I'm a creator. In any situation that I've been given, I found a way to create something out of the things that were around me. So I think, at core, regardless of what situation it was, whether it be within the tech industry, whether it be in my bedroom, whether it be at my grandmother's kitchen table, I'm always trying to create beauty.

**Meico:** Awesome. I love that. Create beauty. And what I, the other part of that I got is you're in this phase of your life about creating beautiful experiences specifically. So I love that.

**Ronnell:** Yeah.

**Meico:** So let's talk about how you started because this is where you are now, but this is not necessarily where you started from.

**Meico:** And so I'm curious, can you tell us a little bit if you remember your first quote unquote real job, however you define that. Do you remember what that was, what you were doing?

**Ronnell:** My first real job was that I made actual money for was, I've had several so I will. I'm going to start way back then. My cousin during family reunions, she would buy my art. So she would pay me 10 for some sketches that I had a notebook and we would go through and she would say, Oh, I like this and I would give them to her.

**Ronnell:** So that was what that was, I think, probably one of the first times where I realized somebody would give something to me of value, like money, for things that I created. That's what I realized that this is something that is monetizable. Also, the other people found value in. I think that was like, the real time, the first time I earned money for something that I created and then throughout high school, I used to volunteer at a library in my community.

**Ronnell:** Then I volunteered at a natural history museum in Chicago, but then my first real, pay stub job was working at the Gap and Old Navy in downtown Chicago.

**Meico:** Okay. All right. So I'm loving this. The sketches, what do you remember what the sketches were, like what the range was with those?

**Ronnell:** As far as the price or what that subject

**Meico:** No, that's what subject matter?

**Ronnell:** Yeah, Black people. I remember one of them was a Black boy's face. That's the only one that I really realize, that I remember. But I used to give my sketches away as gifts and stuff like that. That's how creative, creativity showed up for me.

**Ronnell:** And also how I felt like I could show value and provide value to other people.

**Meico:** Okay. So as a creative right now, can you bring us forward to where you are now? So how are you currently? Making an impact. And let's talk about the professional aspect. And so professionally and the professional world, how are you currently making the impact in the world?

**Ronnell:** Currently, I'm making an impact in the world by creating travel experiences where folks can come to enjoy Black culture, identity, and history in a way that is stress free as possible for them. When many folks think about Brazil, they think about Rio, they think about beaches, they think about pretty women.

**Ronnell:** They don't necessarily think about Salvador, which is the nation's largest Black, or has the largest Black population outside of Africa, or that it was Brazil's first capital. And so there's so much that people miss out when they just stay in Rio. And so

what I really do, and I think the backbone of a lot of, what I do around travel is try to highlight and bring to the 4 communities of color, Black communities that don't always get the attention that or notoriety that other destinations do.

**Ronnell:** So that's really what I do as far as travel, in creating value for folks there. My thing is I want people to show up, and for like, they don't have to think about what's the transportation. They don't have to think about where I'm going to eat. They don't have to think about the quality of the lodging.

**Ronnell:** I've learned a lot since the very first time that I hosted a trip to Mexico. When you came, you brought a friend. I've learned a lot about really what people want, what they will pay for, what they find valuable. So that's really how I try to position and differentiate myself from folks booking for themselves on Expedia or something like that.

**Ronnell:** I can really curate these experiences. So there's very predictable and they understand exactly what they're going to get, but also they don't feel like they're stressing themselves out or that they're not able to relax because they're still worried about how things are going to turn out during the trip.

**Ronnell:** I really want folks to leave feeling rejuvenated, feeling like they were able to get what they came for, and to not feel like they need another vacation just to recover from traveling with me.

**Meico:** Yes. And that's, I think that's very beautiful. And as, as a, avid traveler, particularly internationally, I can, I really appreciate that. So let me ask you this. I want to make sure the audience understands what we're talking about here. So what, tell us where you are right now.

**Ronnell:** I'm in my lovely, beautiful, light field apartment in Salvador, Bahia, which has an ocean view, which is in the reason why I lit up when you asked me that question, because I literally wrote this and this is what I wanted. I remember, I started, restarted therapy during COVID and my therapist was challenging for me, challenging me to create a vision.

**Ronnell:** About exactly what I want it to be, where I want it to be physically. And a part of that was to have a quiet, clean, beautiful, comfortable, ocean view apartment in a place where I could be near queer and Black communities, where the climate was beautiful year round, where I would have access to all the things that I wanted and needed to feel good in life.

**Ronnell:** And that is literally where I am right now.

**Meico:** Awesome. And you're doing immersive experiences in Salvador for folks that want to come and experience Brazil. But you've also done experiences in other places, so can you tell us a little bit about, maybe just very briefly, a couple of other places where you have created these experiences for folks?

**Ronnell:** Yes, I've created experiences in Veracruz, Mexico. There are Black communities in Veracruz, Mexico. Havana, Cuba, Cali, Colombia, Cartagena, Colombia, and this has been my first group experience that I've hosted here in Salvador.

**Meico:** Okay, awesome. Again, congratulations on that and excited to see how that continues to unfold and also some of the other destinations that maybe you might be adding as you continue to have even greater impact. So can you tell us about maybe a specific experience or project that really got you started on the journey to where you are right now?

**Ronnell:** Yes, let me think. So I know, the way, the reason why I am the way I am is a lot due to, I think there's two factors. One, learning about how to have an appreciation for the world outside of the one that I exist in at a personal level, and then also Black women and other women telling me that I should do or be supportive of what I wanted to do.

**Ronnell:** When I was growing up, my aunt was a French teacher in the Gary public school system, right outside of Chicago, the same place where Michael Jackson's from. And every year she would sneak me and my sister into a program that they had at the Gary, in the Gary area was called SAIL, Study Alternative International Languages.

**Ronnell:** And this program was a four week program for kids, I think, under the age of 13 to be immersed in language, different languages, Russian, German, Arabic, and some other ones, for four weeks. And then you would go on a trip with the group. So our first trip was like, Toronto, Canada. We went to New York with them.

**Ronnell:** We went to the 1996 Olympics with them. So that's the first time I realized that one, I have a responsibility to learn about other people's cultures. Sometimes as a kid, when you hear somebody speaking a different language. Or you hear your family talking down about folks who are from a different culture.

**Ronnell:** It's like a thing you laugh at and the thing you're kind of like leary about. But this program really taught us that, this is something that's valuable about the world. There are people from other places. They have amazing food. They have they dress differently. You can be a part of that.

**Ronnell:** You can learn about it in a respectful way that values their heritage. And so that kind of grounded me in that and also language learning that kind of started my affinity for language learning. I went on to high through high school every year, taking Spanish and then also college. So that's where that's that started.

**Ronnell:** And that Black women let that entire process. My aunt was a Black woman. The lady who run the program was a Black woman. The lady who, helped us get in the program, my dad would pay her, for the program fees, and she knew that we didn't belong to that school system, but she was a Black woman that helped us get in there.

**Ronnell:** So I think they were, like, key people helping me to create this, understanding about my role in the world as a global citizen. And then I was in Peace Corps. So that also taught me a lot about how to suspend my own privilege to try to suspend my own

privilege when I'm coming into a community and wanting to integrate into that community.

**Ronnell:** How to just be observing, how to really be open minded, how to share with community and build community in order to reach a goal. So even with my travel business now, I've been here for a year and a half. And this is the first trip that I've done here, right? I couldn't just show up off the flight and say, Hey, I'm doing this.

**Ronnell:** I'm about to make money by bringing foreigners here. I have had a Brazilian boyfriend who taught me a lot, who introduced me to a lot of people. I have friends in the tourism industry who taught me and introduced me to a lot of people. I've just sat in places and gotten to know people. So it's really about me sitting in a place, appreciating it for myself, getting to know people trusting me and liking me and understanding how this community works and the highlights about it. That was that, those things had to happen first before I was able to actually create an experience around highlighting and showing this to other people. So that's where I am now.

**Ronnell:** That's how I got to where I am now.

**Meico:** So you're, you've talked a little bit about your journey and how you got to where you are. You've talked about the experience that you're creating for the folks and the intentionality that goes into that, right? And the journey that you've been on to learn what people want, what people value, how do you make a valuable experience from the client perspective?

**Meico:** But I'm wondering if we could take a moment to pause and to really dive into the impact on the communities that you're bringing people to. Because, you're not just making money off of experiences, right? It's more than that, right? You're putting resources back into the community, and there's an intentionality about which communities you're bringing people to, how you're bringing them to the community.

**Meico:** Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Ronnell:** Absolutely. Yes. At the foundation of what I do is really supporting Black economies where I am. So the difference between you traveling with me and you traveling with another company is that I personally have a relationship with the folks that I'm contracting and I'm not the tour guide. Many folks come to me and they say, Ronnell you're giving a tour of Pelereo, which is a historic district.

**Ronnell:** And I'm like, no, I have someone who is a tour guide from this place who has been here for 20 years that is doing the tour. So I'm paying them.

**Meico:** So let me back up here. So my process, so you have somebody that's from the community and knows the community. You're not giving the tour as an outsider. You have someone that's actually from the community that lives there, knows it, that's giving the tour.

**Ronnell:** And that's why when people ask me what I do, I'm not a travel agent. I'm not a tour guide. I call myself a facilitator, because I connect the services and the people that I know that give these who make a living off of doing these things. I connect them with my business and therefore they provide services to my clients and I pay them.

**Ronnell:** I pay them for the price that they asked me. I usually don't try to bargain or try to lowball folks because I know that's really what happens in a lot of tourism sector. With the folks who are at the bottom, giving the services, they don't always get the money that really represents the value that they're providing.

**Ronnell:** When my contacts say, hey, this is how much it's going to cost per person. That's what I pay them. And so the thing about it is, they're from the community, they know the community, they're part of the community, and therefore they're getting financial resources that are going to help them to fund their lives, but also help them to continue to exist in the way that they do.

**Ronnell:** That's what I do, and that's how I believe that our economic impact. Showing up in this place, I wanted to actually somehow go through and make an accounting of all the amount of money that I, that just this one trip that I actually did at Salvador put back into the Black economy here, because I think it's gonna be large.

**Ronnell:** Actually, one of my clients, she was like, she was telling someone else. She was like, yeah, I think 85% of the people that we've worked with, and the places that we've gone have been Black owned. And it's true from the restaurants to the tour guides, to the stores, the places that I go, and then I take my clients and where they spend their money, are owned by Black folks, created by Black folks, Black folks work there, and there in Black communities. That's seriously important for me.

**Meico:** So let's unpack that a little bit. So we're going to, we have folks that are non Black that are listening to the podcast as well. And so for folks that don't understand why this is important to you, why is it important that you support Black economies where you go. Like you're from the U S right. You're us born, right? so you're from Chicago. So like, why is this guy from Chicago concerned about Black economies and other places in the world?

**Ronnell:** Yeah, I'll give you just a really, I think, concise example of that. The very first time before I even started my travel business, I wanted to go to Cali, Colombia. Because it's the largest Black community population in Colombia. I went there and I was looking at this town called Buena Ventura.

**Ronnell:** It's on the Pacific Coast and it is really, even outside of, even within Cali, it's really the place where a lot of Black folks are concentrated. When I looked in the tour books, there were the general, the tour books if you were going to Barnes and Noble's, the ones you would see on the shelf, that brand, those brands, okay, there's two or three brands that are really big.

**Ronnell:** Tour guide, tour books, every book I picked up said, do not go to Buena Ventura. It's home to a lot of Afro Colombian communities, but it's dangerous. There's really nothing of interest for you to see there. Just use it as a place to hop to go

somewhere else. And I was like, wow, they really said this? And it was repeatedly that I saw this, but I went anyway.

**Ronnell:** And then I ended up in a remote fishing village right outside of Buena Ventura and I didn't have any reservations for hotel. I didn't know what I was going to be doing. I didn't know anything about this place, but I knew that they were Black folks. I got off the boat. Found a hotel came back out to the beach and there were kids on the stage during a festival singing about being Black and Colombian and just reveling and celebrating their Black heritage.

**Ronnell:** That's the moment when I knew that I needed to lend my voice to telling folks about these communities because the mainstream white tourism sector was not doing it justice. They were actually pushing folks away from these communities. So that's what I realized my role as somebody who loves tourism, who loves to explore communities.

**Ronnell:** My role will be to help folks from these communities tell their stories and amplify them to my audience.

**Meico:** I think that is so amazing. I think it really gives us a more nuanced understanding of how we can have meaningful travel experiences, And not engage in, I think what Tim Ferriss calls it binge travel, when you go to places and you're there for a hot second, and you're doing the checklist of things that are in the guidebook. But is the community better off when you leave, right?

**Meico:** Are you better off, right? Or did you just scratch an itch and you're on to the next thing, right? So I think what you're doing and how you describe it is so beautiful and so very important. So let me ask you this, you mentioned one of the ways that you're, being intentional and, being mindful of the communities that you're in, by investing resources back into the community, but you've gone above and beyond that, right?

**Meico:** So you've done service related things. And so I want to ask you this. So is there something as you think about your particular journey, something that you're particularly proud of when you think of a project or an initiative? And can you tell us why? And so as you're thinking about that, I'm thinking about there was a flood, right?

**Meico:** And one of the communities in Bahia, which is the state that Salvador is in. And you were instrumental in actually galvanizing people in the U. S., bringing U. S. dollars to that community to support people in need. That's just one example that I can think of, but is there one example that really stands out for you and something that you're proud of, and can you tell us why?

**Ronnell:** I'll talk a little bit more about the flood thing because I'm trying to think as well about something else. But with the flood, there was a flood that happened and I was just at home. My, my ex and I were just chitchatting about what we could do to get money because, honestly, Brazilians, they make low wages. A lot of Black communities, they are really in the informal sector. And so when a flood happens,



these folks are severely impacted. Their whole ability to create money and stay in their communities is literally washed away. And so I was like, I love these communities.

**Ronnell:** They've been so welcome to me as a foreigner here. I can use my leverage and my community to try to help them out. So we raise money just by Instagram. We raised over, I think it was almost \$2,000 and that bought a lot of food, a lot of water. And we had it shipped out there, but also we not only gave them

**Meico:** Can we pause there? Let's pause it for a second. So you raised 2,000 U. S. dollars. Can you tell us what that translates to in terms of impact for the folks there? Because \$2,000 that might not seem like a lot to people here, particularly folks that are listening to the podcast that are used to raising tens of thousands or millions of dollars for their cause. Tell us about the impact of 2000 US dollars in the community that you're talking about.

**Ronnell:** Yeah. So just for everyone who doesn't know the conversion. Doesn't have it memorized for every 1, you get five Brazilian pieces of dollar back. So that's a reais, so for one U S dollar, I get five reais, so that's over 20,000 reais. I'm sorry, that's what 10,000 reais. And so that literally allowed us to buy thousands of bottles of water, diapers, food, just regular beans, rice, all those kind of staples that folks need, but also we gave money directly to communities.

**Ronnell:** A lot of communities have civil societies within the community, whether it be the indigenous community, they might have a group of folks that are cooperative and we gave money to them. We gave the money to an Afro Brazilian group that specializes around keeping culture and things like that in their community alive.

**Ronnell:** So we gave money to them. It's not just we gave physical items, but we also gave them dollars because they know exactly. What is the most impactful way to spend it in that community?

**Meico:** Okay. So I think that is amazing.

## Sponsor Break

**Meico:** All right, it's time for a break. We'll be right back after a brief message from our sponsors.

**Meico:** Changemakers like you are driven to do more and more, often with fewer and fewer resources. But there comes a breaking point where your passion dwindles under the weight of pressure, the mission suffers, and you feel like you love the work more than it loves you back. That's why I wrote the book *How to Thrive When Work Doesn't Love You Back*.

**Meico:** A practical guide for taking care of yourself while changing the world with a forward by Beth Kanter, author of the "Happy Healthy Nonprofit." This book is a succinct, practical, and action-based guide for changemakers seeking to make an impact without burnout. Learn more and order your copy at

mindfulchangemaker.org/books. That's mindfulchangemaker.org/books. The reality is, if you really want to make a difference, you must start by taking time for yourself right now because you can't change the world if you're not around long enough to make that happen. This isn't about working harder and smarter, it's about making a commitment to work differently so you can take care of yourself while making an impact for the long haul.

**Meico:** In "How to Thrive and Work Doesn't Love You Back", I share practical strategies grounded in the well being while well doing change framework. And I wrote this book after experiencing more than my fair share of burnout and overwhelm in the name of saving the world during my previous career in government and non profit work.

**Meico:** I share what I've learned to be the most impactful strategies for my personal practice and my experience helping changemakers around the world just like you create lasting balance in their lives. These are the same strategies I teach teams and organizations through my live trainings, self-paced courses, coaching programs, and tools like the Intention Planner.

**Meico:** Each chapter has a summary of key ideas and a checklist of practices you can start implementing right away. I know you need practical strategies and resources to help you create sustained balance in your life and work so you can lower your stress level. And focus on getting the important things done right now.

**Meico:** So, this book isn't about theoretical concepts. It's about what to do and how to do it. Learn more and order your copy at [mindfulchangemaker.org/books](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/books). That's [mindfulchangemaker.org/books](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/books).

**Meico:** All right, let's get back to our conversation.

## Part Two

**Meico:** And so that, that helps me know to really. I want to transition this back to you and how you are taking care of yourself in the midst of this, right? So we're talking to you at a specific point in your journey. We know that when it comes to life and work, particularly when it comes to change making work, it's not all sunshine and roses, right?

**Meico:** When we do a podcast like this, when we're doing social media, we're always putting the best forward. And so I give you that setup to really ask you, how do you stay inspired and motivated? Because every day is not sunshine and roses, right? They're, you mentioned working with the vendors and so on and so forth,

**Meico:** I imagine there's a lot of stuff that goes on behind the scenes and not everything unfolds as you would like it to. So how do you say, how do you stay inspired and motivated? Maybe is there a practice, a go to for you, when things get tough for you when you're doing this work?

**Ronnell:** Yeah. when folks asked about Salvador, I remember there was actually somebody in Facebook group yesterday who asked, should I go to Salvador or should I go to Rio? And they said they're laid back. Well, if you're laid back, Salvador is a place for you. Things are not on schedule.

**Ronnell:** Things don't happen when you want to or how you want to. So what I do is I just try to fall into that and really just chill out. With a lot of things that I do, I always want it to be on time. I want to be up to the specifications that I listed. But here I have to realize that I'm not running this place and that my responsibility is to chill out.

**Ronnell:** And so that's what I try to do. I try to go to the beach. Every day I go to the gym, I try to eat two or three times a day, healthy foods, take advantage of the local fruits and vegetables. So that's really what I try to do, is just try to do things that I enjoy doing that make me feel better about myself physically and mentally as well.

**Ronnell:** So just chilling out and enjoying having friendships and meeting new people. Brazil is a very social place. There's parties, there's carnival, there's street festivals. So I really just like to get to know other people and create connections. That's really, I think, one of the ways that I've found to recharge myself is just enjoying the company of other people.

**Ronnell:** Because there's always something to learn. There's always a new cultural thing that I'm trying to navigate that other people can help me navigate. So really just letting things flow on the terms of the people who live here. But also getting to know people more intimately here. Those are ways that I've found to recharge and just try to not, try to keep this grasp on everything and every detail like I would maybe in the U. S.

**Meico:** Okay. And so diving a little bit deeper into this, let's talk about the work that you're doing with your business, AfroBueno Ventura. How do you balance the demands for that with your life outside of this? You're just coming off a really big, hosting a really big group there.

**Meico:** There was a lot that went into that. And so you could, I'm not sure what your plans are moving forward. But, obviously, there's a lot that goes into that, right? That there can be an intensity there, especially when people are actually on the ground and ready for their live experience.

**Meico:** So how do you balance that with taking care of yourself?

**Ronnell:** one of the things that I learned from you is to, block out time for myself and my calendar. That's one of the things that I've done, is like to say I'm off, Even though I, when I was working at the tech company, I would have those kind of blocks in my calendar. When you're doing your own thing, sometimes that doesn't seem like a thing you should do, but I'm actually starting to do that now.

**Ronnell:** And not only am I, this trip is over, but the work doesn't finish. I'm actually doing private consultation with folks. those are polka dots all over the place, all over my calendar. So I do find that it's good for me to just block out time and we're saying I

don't have to get up for a meeting or I don't have to talk to anybody and I can do all those things that I feel like are putting back into myself.

**Ronnell:** So blocking off time and space on my calendar is helpful for me. Traveling to other places outside of this town is actually very helpful to me. There's some beautiful places that, I want to explore. So that's one of the things that I'm doing as well.

**Meico:** Okay. Awesome. So is there anything else you want to say about your life in general, outside of just your work you described, you gave us a sketch of some of the things that you're doing outside of work and, being social, being engaged, eating great food, and going to the gym, and going to the beach.

**Meico:** Is there anything else you want to share or you want to just dive deeper in, in terms of just giving people a portrait of what is your life look like in, in Salvador?

**Ronnell:** Yes, my life in Salvador is everything that I wanted it to be. Like I said, it's about proximity. One of the things that I'm, that I always tell folks here when they ask me about coming here, I tell them this is the gayest Black city I've ever been to. And previously I probably wouldn't have said that, but I'm realizing that living here, I'm recognizing my fullness, right?

**Ronnell:** I want to be around Black folks. Yes. I want to be around gay folks. Yes. And I want to feel safe in the community where I live. And I've never felt safer. I've never felt more welcome than I do here as a gay Black man. So I want to put that out there as one of the primary reasons why I have not left.

**Ronnell:** I think even Chicago or Atlanta could not really stand up to the amount of inclusivity, diversity, and just openness with people's identities that I see in the streets that I've never seen anywhere else. So that's one of the big things that really feeds back into me while I'm here. So yeah, I think that's really important.

**Ronnell:** The other thing is that I'm doing things that I really do enjoy. So I recently, I love shopping. I love handmade clothes. I love jewelry. And so I'm right now thinking about how do I help other people explore the beautiful things that are created by folks hands here. And as you saw, I launched a jewelry piece that was in homage to one of the Yoruba goddesses here, named Yemanjá.

**Ronnell:** And I sold those and I didn't sell it because I thought other people like it. I really sold it because I loved it and I love handmade stuff and I love creating a relationship with people who make those and other people in turn like them too. So that's what I'm finding out the things that I value that I like, when I share them out into the world in a way that I would also purchase and engage them, other people are liking those things as well. That's one of the things that I feel like I'm building my business around is the things that I love, that I do well, that I appreciate, when I offer those to other people, they also appreciate them as well.

**Ronnell:** I'm not just trying to figure out, okay, what are other people going to like? I'm like, what does Ronnell like? What does Ronnell appreciate about travel experience?

What does Ronnell appreciate about a piece of clothing or a jewelry item? And I found that other people respond to those things positively as well.

**Ronnell:** So it's really about honoring myself and a lot of the things that I offer to my audience is honoring myself and appreciating my eclectic taste and all those things. And there are other people who also appreciate those as well. And it's more authentic when I'm offering those things to other people, because I can talk in detail about this piece of jewelry that was handcrafted by a lady that lives in Palo Rio and a guy from the lower city, has crafted this from, silver in their home. And the meaning behind this Yemanjá image that the local fishermen have revered for hundreds of years and every year there's a festival honoring her. And so this is the biggest festival, every year that honors her in Brazil.

**Ronnell:** So like, when I talk about these things, it's because I like them and I enjoy them, I find value in them. And I feel like that just comes across to my clients as authentic and real and something that they also want to be a part of.

**Meico:** Awesome. I think that is so beautiful. And I know for sure the people that are listening to this are going to be inspired and I think transformed and perhaps transported. From this conversation that we're having and how you're just sharing your life and your experience and your journey with us so freely.

**Meico:** So before we wrap up, I want to take us backward a little bit in your journey. So you have worked in the nonprofit space. You've worked in the association space, you've worked in the tech sector. And so you haven't always been at least where you are right now in terms of work and, I guess how free you are in that work.

**Meico:** And so I want to tie this to, we've known each other for a number of years. You've had an opportunity to participate and observe some of the trainings that I've done over the years and put the work around well being, well doing for changemakers. And I'm curious if you could maybe share a little bit about any specific impact anything that stands out to you in terms of those trainings. I know that you shared previously the strategy around blocking out time that was been impactful.

**Meico:** You shared something in your newsletter that I thought was really powerful a few weeks ago, but I'll just give the floor to you and see what you have to share here.

**Ronnell:** Yes, I've been so grateful to have you in my life as a friend and also someone that's like almost a mentor showing me really like how to start a business, how to create a specific and niche things that really resonate with folks and how to share those to the community. So I want to thank you for that.

**Ronnell:** One of the things, besides just the time blocking that you taught me, and I think I was in one of your online trainings and also sat in on some of your in person trainings was about creating the vision. No, my therapist and I had this one thing about this vision, but the very first time I heard about it was from you.

**Ronnell:** And it was about like, really, what do I want my life to look like at a specific time and to be real specific about it. And so I remember doing this, creating this vision

based on your template and printing it out. And putting it in my office that was at an association in the D. C. area.

**Ronnell:** This was in 2018 or 19 and I want to read it to you all because it's something I just shared in my newsletter when I was telling my audience that I got laid off and I was realizing that when I was writing this newsletter, I wasn't going to include this vision because I hadn't thought about it.

**Ronnell:** But when I got towards the end, I was like, wow, actually, I have everything that I included in that vision several years ago. I just didn't realize that all these bumps and detours were putting me and aligning me with that vision.

**Meico:** So

**Ronnell:**

**Meico:** can I make a, can I make a request before you share that? So can you take us back to where you were in that moment? You don't have to tell us the organization, but can you tell us the type of work that you were doing and can you tell us what the impact of that was having on you mentally and emotionally?

**Ronnell:** Yeah, so I was working for, the 1% ers in, in a job where I was developing programs for folks who run and oversee some of the world's largest companies, most successful companies. I was creating programming for them. I wasn't passionate about the work. I was pretty good at it, but I wasn't passionate about it.

**Ronnell:** I felt disconnected from it. I was ready to figure out how could I live on my own terms and make money for myself? What would that look like if I really had a free canvas to do that? and so I was just over it, I guess you would say. I stuck in, I stayed in there for another two or so years, but I was really just not, I didn't want to be there any longer.

**Ronnell:** So like creating this vision helped me to latch onto something in the future that would help propel me and pull me through even these times when I felt like I was ready to check out.

**Meico:** Awesome.

**Ronnell:** Yeah. So that vision was I run a highly profitable self care centric travel lifestyle consultancy that is my main income source and I'm a thought leader in the industry.

**Ronnell:** I traveled between the U S and Latin America for business and pleasure. I experienced an abundance of joy and self awareness that exudes from my being, allowing me to give my time and energy generously. And maintain fruitful relationships with associates, friends, intimate, and business partners.

**Ronnell:** So yeah, I have all those things right now.

**Meico:** And, can you tell us a little bit about the process? Did it just magically happen? Or, what was the in between that point and where you are now? What are some key things that stand in terms of maybe milestones or mileposts?

**Ronnell:** Yeah, one of the things you told me is that even if I'm working a job that I don't really love, use that job as a way to continually invest in my own things. So even when I was working at that association or if I was working in tech, the money and the skills and the connections that I was finding in these places, I was still on the side stashing these little nuggets away for myself and still working on my own business.

**Ronnell:** So it wasn't just oh, I have to be 100 percent focused right here. I could also still continue to develop on the side. And so when it was ready to go full throttle, I would be ready to embrace that. And even though it was involuntary, the way I was forced to embrace it, I felt like I was ready at that point.

**Ronnell:** And so now I can't sustain myself on the income that I make from this business. Now, I feel like my days are full and rich and valuable. And I find meaning in them in a ways that I hadn't when I worked for other companies and was doing stuff that I really didn't love.

**Meico:** Okay, awesome. I think you give us a really beautiful example of what it means to work outside of the space on your own terms. Like many people are going to work inside the space and figure out how to make that work. And, I work with, obviously, with change makers that want to do that. But I also look at folks like you who have made a decision that well, maybe working inside the space is not the best place for me.

**Ronnell:** I can make more impact on the outside in a different way. And how can I do that? So I appreciate you, you sharing that. Is there anything else you want to share about that before we wrap up? When I was laid off, I went through a range of emotions and I had, and it wasn't just that when I was laid off, I realized, Oh, I had this vision. And actually now I'm in a place to pick up where I left off. No, I was enraged. I was probably almost depressed. I was shocked and I was just, I was like, let me just shut up and be quiet.

**Ronnell:** I was quiet for many months. I didn't tell many people that this happened to me. I was just quiet and the quieter I was, the more clear the opportunity started to come into my mind that this was, that this was an opportunity for me. I had to just be quiet and let these emotions come through me.

**Ronnell:** And then once I was setting that stillness, I realized that I had a blank canvas, and I had all the tools, all the paintbrushes, all the colors right here waiting for me. That's, that, and that happened three or four months later. That's when I realized that, okay, this is not such a bad thing right now, and I can take advantage of it, and I'm in the perfect place to do it.

**Meico:** Awesome. I think what you described too reminds me of one of the things that I talk about, which is that for many of us in the change making space in particular, one

of the things that we have in common for many of us is that we have a trauma or traumas that bring us to the work that we're doing, right?

**Meico:** Whether it's primary trauma or secondary trauma, we have traumas that bring us to the work that we're doing and that push us to make an impact. One of the spiritual teachers that I follow, Michael Bernard Beckwith, says sometimes your pain will push into your vision calls you, right? And I think you just gave us a beautiful example of exactly that.

**Meico:** I would describe maybe part of how you described the layoff experience. It sounds like it was partly traumatic, right? But that trauma, you had a process for processing that trauma and allowing it to play out and heal. And that you were able to experience what I think some psychologists call post traumatic growth, the PTG, where, you were able to experience a positive outcome as a result of the trauma as opposed to PTSD, which is like where it compounds and you're even worse off.

**Meico:** Thank you so much for sharing that. As we wrap up, I want to ask you, based on whatever you were able to share, what's next for Ronnell?

**Ronnell:** The next thing for right now is to continue creating amazing experiences for folks and actually really actually try to hone down on the niche. The niche where I can serve people and provide value, really differentiate myself in a way that specific people that are willing to pay a specific price are willing to engage with me.

**Ronnell:** That's the next thing is really honing down on that, and refining really what I offer and how I offer it to my clients. Cause I've, the first time that I found, I think I'm speaking generally to folks out there. The first time that you realize that somebody likes, enjoys, and is willing to pay for the thing that you offer, but it's just like groundbreaking.

**Ronnell:** And so I'm honing down on that even closer more to realize, how do I tweak things? How do I realize that not everybody's my customer? How do I really get into the groove of really offering something that's of extreme value to folks who are willing to pay the price for it?

**Meico:** Awesome. thank you so much for your time. Thank you so much for joining us from the beautiful Salvador de Bahia. we appreciate you sharing your time, your energy, and your story on this journey. So we appreciate that. So tell us, where can listeners go to learn more about you to stay connected if they're interested in doing that?

**Ronnell:** You can go to [afrobuenaventura.com](http://afrobuenaventura.com) and I'm on Instagram as well.

**Meico:** Awesome. Thank you so much for having us on the show. We'll make sure that folks have access to the information after the show, but I want to thank you for your time and know that we are wishing you well and much success in your next endeavors.



## Sponsor Break

**Meico:** I want to take a moment to tell you about a live virtual program to help changemakers like you take better care of yourself while creating a positive impact in the world. It's a live virtual two-day interactive experience designed to help you increase your well being so you can increase your well doing.

**Meico:** This retreat focuses on practices and strategies connected to the change framework for well being while well doing from my latest book, "How to Thrive When Work Doesn't Love You Back." The framework addresses the U. S. Surgeon General's five essentials for workplace mental health and well being. Learn more at [mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat). Again, that's [mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat)

**Meico:** During the retreat, we tackle the inner work of things such as guilt about not being able to always get it all done, fear of setting boundaries, the anxiety of imposter syndrome, and adjusting to the world of hybrid work, among other things. We'll also tackle the outer work of things such as setting intentional goals, effective priority setting, especially when everything seems urgent and important, setting and protecting boundaries, and making space to rest and recharge in a sustainable way.

**Meico:** When you sign up, you get support from a community of smart, heart centered changemakers just like you. And also, one year of unlimited access to video lessons, handouts, and an invitation to return to any of the live monthly retreat sessions we host. Learn more at [mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat).

**Meico:** That's [mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat).

## Outro

**Meico:** Thank you for listening to this episode of the Dear Mindful Changemaker podcast. Are you ready to finally prioritize your well being so you can increase your impact in changing the world? Join the Mindful Changemaker community and take the next step on your journey to increase your well being while well doing.

**Meico:** It's 100 percent free when you join at [mindfulchangemaker.org/join](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/join). Again, that's [mindfulchangemaker.org/join](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/join). Until next time, I'm Meico Marquette Whitlock. Take it one intentional moment at a time.