



## Episode 6 Transcript: Getting Into Good Trouble | We love Protests

Ai-jen Poo:

Welcome to Sunstorm, where we get real about what's happening in the world and what we're doing about it because we are the light in the storm. Hi, I'm Ai-jen Poo.

Alicia Garza:

And this is Alicia Garza and lady, I am so excited to be here with you today. It's been a whirlwind and a blur.

Ai-jen Poo:

And it's just going to be us two ladies on the pod, having a place to catch our breaths together, reflect a little bit.

Alicia Garza:

Yes, girl. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I have been thinking about how fast and how urgent everything feels lately, so I'm really glad we can just take a moment and chill. Yeah. Let's talk about being present. How do you get present, get centered when things are going wild around you? How do you get your focus and stay clear? What are the tools and tips you got for that?

Ai-jen Poo:

One of the things that helps me feel present, centered and focused, especially in this crazy political moment when it feels like there's just so much chaos and all of these attacks, all of the time on people we care about and progress that we've made that we've fought so hard for, is really actually being at a meeting or a protest where we're actually in community with people who feel the way that we do.

Speaker 1:

We are what democracy looks like. What do we want? Climate justice! When do we want it? Now!

Ai-jen Poo:

One of the things about that that's so special is there's no feeling like the feeling of not being alone when what's happening is designed to isolate you. Right? And so I think that's what great protests do for people and I always think about that phrase that Maya Angelou says, "People don't remember what you say. They remember how you make them feel."

Alicia Garza:

Oh yes.



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Ai-jen Poo:

I love that one. It's such a good organizer principle of just remembering that you're creating a feeling for people. A feeling of power at a time when they may be otherwise feeling powerless. A feeling of community as a way of pushing back against the division and the isolation.

Alicia Garza:

Protesting makes you feel like a boss. You know you're about to break some rules and you don't care and you're like, you know what, bring it bro. You know what I'm saying?

Ai-jen Poo:

Totally. But I used to get nervous at protests and it was part of the excitement of it, but I definitely remember that feeling of like excitement, borderline anxiety, nervousness, too.

Alicia Garza:

I love it. Tell me about your first protest. Do you remember your very first political action?

Ai-jen Poo:

I think it was in high school when George Bush senior came to my high school to plant a tree and we did a reproductive rights and justice protest there and I think that was... It was old school. We were carrying hangers and homemade signs. It was old school. It was good.

Alicia Garza:

Yes, I'm good with the hanger. I'm here for this. Yes. Excellent, excellent. I think my first protest was in college. I had gotten organized into a campaign called Justice for Janitors, which really was about making sure that the people who cleaned up after all the students and made sure that all the buildings were clean and all the grounds were clean, could actually like take care of their own families. Fancy that. What a novel idea. People that clean up after you can also to take care of their families. I know, I mean it's fascinating. And it was my first direct action ever. And so the idea was that the janitors were fighting for better wages and for a contract. And the university at the time was not trying to do that.

Alicia Garza:

And so, what we did was we blocked off the main entrance to campus with a human chain. So it was an intersection with four directions and we blocked every direction. And then in the middle was a group of people who were ready to take arrest. And so I was a part of the human chain, but I was too scared to take arrest. So I didn't, I did jail support, which was amazing. Amazing. Shout out to baby activist Alicia. So look, I know that you've been doing a little bit of protesting lately.



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Ai-jen Poo:

Yes. In fact, we had the Sunstorm team with me when I went to join Jane Fonda's amazing fire drill protest.

Alicia Garza:

Jane Fonda is the boss.

Ai-jen Poo:

She's amazing. She-

Alicia Garza:

Literally, I know people say Bruce Springsteen is the boss, but Jane Fonda is the boss.

Ai-jen Poo:

She's unstoppable and-

Alicia Garza:

She's like 80 right? And she's out here killing it. She's been arrested like every week for the last like couple of months. Right?

Ai-jen Poo:

She basically heard Greta Thunberg's call to action on climate change and decided to move her entire life to Washington D.C. and get arrested every Friday-

Alicia Garza:

Come through Jane Fonda.

Ai-jen Poo:

... Until there was action on climate change. Like literally, she was like, "The young people are calling on us to take action, so I'm going to do it."

Alicia Garza:

So she stands up at attention and is like, "Look, let's handle business. I'm here for it."

Ai-jen Poo:



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Yeah. Yeah. And every week she gets arrested and then she gets her friends like Sally Field and I mean all of these amazing legendary actors and actresses.

Alicia Garza:

So what's the deal then? What's the deal with this fire drill protest?

Ai-jen Poo:

So every Thursday there's a teach-in on some way that climate change is affecting our world and threatening our future. And they have different organizers and experts come in and educate people. And then that's all in preparation for the day of action. And there's a different theme every week. And the week that I participated in the theme was about health. And so it was just a whole bunch of amazing speakers talking about how climate change is bad for our health. And it's urgent. It's an emergency, it's a fire drill. And then the protest begins.

Speaker 1:

What, three, two, one, three, two, one. All right, let's do this.

Ai-jen Poo:

And it's a beautiful demonstration of our shared commitment to a healthy and sustainable planet in the midst of a whole bunch of lies that this administration and others are telling us.

Alicia Garza:

We need action, action, action on climate change. I would like clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and I want everybody around the world to have the same thing. And you talked to a bunch of women on the street who are like saying the same, right? I mean, people are showing up to this fire drill to change what's going on in this country. Let's take a listen.

Emma Wolf:

I'm Emma Wolf. My dad is a big Catholic worker and he's friends with John Deere. And he told me about this and I also work in sustainability. And so that's a big part of it. And it felt wrong to work in sustainability but not come and be a part of something like this that's so historic and important. I came here for the first Women's March and it was a lot of hope and anger, and there's a similar vibe to that now, but it is like more peace and they want to do this in a peaceful advocacy way, if that makes sense. And I think that that's really important because I think to be angry is one thing, but to do something with that anger and channel it into a force is a really powerful thing. So I think it's important not only for yourself and for your soul to know that you can do something.



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Emma Wolfe:

I think it's so easy to feel so hopeless. It's easy to just fall away in that, but I think coming here and challenging that hopelessness that you feel and challenging the things that you hear from Congress and from the Trump era, I think that's incredibly important for yourself. You go into the White House and you see photos of all these men that have changed history, but to see women of color, women a part of the LGBT community here and advocating, it's important to see that because it's inspiring and calming to know that there's people like you who are worried and that you can relate to.

Speaker 7:

I came from New York. I'm a professor of nursing and I'm a member of the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments. Everybody's health is being impacted and this is not out in the distant future. This is today. This is now, this is kids with asthma coming into the clinic not able to breathe because the air is getting dirty again because the EPA is rolling back protections of the Clean Air Act. We have an administration that's rolling back protections. If we don't start making really good decisions really fast, the largest, most powerful country on earth, the richest. If we can't do it, if we don't do the right thing, who's going to do it? Women are, we're so under-recognized and underappreciated. We're the ones getting everything done. We always have been. We don't need the accolades and we don't need the microphones in our face, we just do what needs to be done.

Speaker 1:

What do we want? Climate justice! When do we want it? Now! What do we want? Climate justice! When do we want it? Now!

Ai-jen Poo:

So for people who are just starting to get involved, what kind of advice would you have as somebody who's been organizing your whole life?

Speaker 8:

Number one, we know that as women that we are the ones that have to change the world and can change the world. Our biggest handicap that we as women have is our own self doubts. And so never, ever think that you can't do what you was trying to do here and that you are a participant in and part of making it happen. Think of the kind of energy that you need to be able to tackle all the rest of the issues that you have in your personal life.

Alicia Garza:

Dude. Oh my gosh. Activist, activist, activist, activists, organizers, organizers, organizers, action, action, action. Everybody's doing the thing. This is the energy that we need to be taking in. This needs to be the



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decade of taking action. I love me a good protest. And you know what? I feel like for people who haven't done it before, there are some pro tips for how to protest safely, but also have the things you need when you're standing up and taking action. So what are your pro tips, Ai-jen? What do you take with you? If you know you're going to a protest and maybe you might be ready to start a little trouble, what are you taking with you?

Ai-jen Poo:

Well, this is actually really important. Honed over hundreds, maybe thousands of protests, always wear sneakers. You have to wear your most comfortable shoes. You just have to be comfortable.

Alicia Garza:

I love a sneaker, but you know me, Ai-jen. I'm like fashion girl, so I love a sneaker wedge for my protest. I love me a sneaker wedge. I got arrested in sneaker wedges one time and it was fantastic. Sneaker wedge when done correctly is everything. Problem with sneaker wedges sometimes is that like the back is too big, but if you get the right sneaker wedge, I'm telling you, you cannot go wrong and then you can like see what's going on. Which I also love.

Ai-jen Poo:

I never bring a purse and over the years I've experimented with different carrying devices and I think the best is really undeniably a fanny pack.

Alicia Garza:

Yep, fanny pack. I love a fanny pack.

Ai-jen Poo:

If you can rock a fanny pack because all you really need is an ID, a little bit of cash. You don't actually want to bring a ton of stuff with you. It's going to be a drag and sometimes it can just be not good. So just an ID, some cash, some Kleenex, some essentials, maybe a power bar or some kind of an energy snack and a bottle of water and layers. Right? Because it'll get hot and then it'll get cold and you just want to be ready. What about you?

Alicia Garza:

Oh, okay. So I, being the queen of carrying everything with me, hundred percent agree. Don't bring your life with you. Get you an ID. Make sure that somebody has a copy of your ID, as well. Somebody who's not at the protest with you, just in case things go wild and you need to be found or something. Just make sure that people have information about where you're going, where you are. Water, snacks, fanny pack, ID. Also bring your fun, bring your A game. Like, don't go to a protest and be mopey. That sucks.



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And people can feel it. So if you're not feeling the energy, try to get it up, get up your energy. Because that's what protests need. They need your very best present energy and to add to the energy that is already building there. And if you bring funky energy, there's going to be funky energy around. So bring your A game, like, I am ready to change the world.

Alicia Garza:

When we went to the Women's March together, I was talking to people all over the place. Tell me where you came from. You know, what motivated you to get on a train or a plane or a bus or in a car? You could be doing absolutely anything right now, why are you doing this? And those stories honestly are super inspiring.

Ai-jen Poo:

They're amazing. The Women's March, like I remember the night before, we basically had taken over the city of Washington DC. And so every restaurant, every hotel that you went into was all women, all people there to March. But we were all kind of trying to figure out if we were marchers. And so, the night before, because nobody was wearing their pink hats or anything, right? You would just be sort of sitting in the restaurant and people would come up and then they'd kind of drop that they were there for the March or that they're excited for the March or something like that to try to find each other. And we inevitably would end up like one table would join with another table, would join with another table. I think we sat with a group that had rented a 15 passenger van from Ohio and it was a bunch of mother-daughter duos. It was the most inspiring.

Alicia Garza:

That's kind of awesome.

Ai-jen Poo:

It was beautiful. I mean I think for people who've never been to a protest before, it can seem like a angry thing or a scary thing or a particular kind of thing and it makes sense that that's the perception. And they are just places where you can really find inspiration and a sense of community and just a feeling of not being alone in how you feel. And it's a pretty unique and awesome experience. And 2020 should be the year that anyone and everyone who's never been to a protest or just even if you think like I'm not the protesting type, like just show up at one and see how it goes.

Alicia Garza:

You know, protests are cathartic for me. Sitting at home and watching my TV and throwing things at the TV doesn't do it for me. I need to be in community with other people who are pissed off about the same things I'm pissed off about and who are taking action together. And by action I just mean showing up in



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the same place and being in solidarity with each other. But sometimes, right, protests also equal getting arrested. I've been arrested before. Ai-jen, you?

Ai-jen Poo:

Yeah, many times.

Alicia Garza:

I mean, in fact I think you got arrested with Jane Fonda. That's kind of boss. So you know, I think you're right. A lot of people are like, I don't want to go to a protest because I don't want to get arrested. Let me just say, I don't think you should expect at a protest to get arrested. I think you can go to a protest and show your solidarity. And that's awesome. I also know that most of the time when people get arrested at protests, it's actually planned. Little known secret. People want to get arrested.

Ai-jen Poo:

It's a form of what I'll call disruptive power. It's a form of kind of throwing a wrench in the status quo, dramatizing what's wrong. It's about saying that there's so much injustice that we feel like in order to bring attention to it, we're going to have to do something dramatic like break a law. And there's a long and beautiful history of civil disobedience as a part of social change movements, whether it's Gandhi in India or the Civil Rights Movement and the King tradition. There is a long history of unjust laws that needed to be broken in order to create a new set of possibilities, a new future. And I think that today what we have are more orchestrated protests that are about really highlighting an injustice and bringing attention. But the origin and the tradition that it builds on is really bringing attention to and breaking laws that were unjust to begin with.

Alicia Garza:

So yeah, this is like super serious. And I know probably some of our listeners are like, what? Arrests. So tell me a funny story about getting arrested at a protest.

Ai-jen Poo:

I think it was around police brutality. In the year 2000, there was a whole group of us that were protesting and we were in for at least 24 hours, maybe 48 hours, and all they had were these crazy, I'm convinced they were rotten, but I had never had baloney in my entire life and that's all they had. They had these white bread bologna sandwiches.

Alicia Garza:

Those things are awful.



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Ai-jen Poo:

It was so disgusting. But I was so hungry. I think I was a vegetarian at the time, too.

Alicia Garza:

Oh God. Oh God. Okay. So look, everybody who's listening right now, if you do decide to take arrest, let me just tell you, try to fill up before you do because the food in jail not good. Those baloney sandwiches are not really baloney. I mean, bologna is not really baloney. Let's just keep it real. Bologna is like the nastiest, most processed food ever. However, bologna in a jail is like, hmm, just don't eat it. Just don't eat it. Anywho, I guess the point of this is we're not saying go out and get yourselves arrested, but if you do, A, do it in the name of justice, and B, if you do it, just come prepared. And now you've gotten some of our best tips for how to protest safely with sneaker wedges looking good.

Ai-jen Poo:

And 99% of the time that's not even on the table. Right? Most of the protests that get planned are permitted and totally safe and no one gets arrested. And that's all part of the plan. And whenever people do, it's usually also part of a plan.

Alicia Garza:

Tell us what sorts of good trouble have you gotten yourselves into or even tell us what kinds of good trouble you plan to get yourself into. Write to us, tweet us, tell us about how you are making your way through the storm.

Ai-jen Poo:

We're Ai-jen Poo and Alicia Garza. Hashtag Sunstorm and we cannot wait to hear from you.

Speaker 1:

Sunstorm is a project of the National Domestic Workers Alliance in collaboration with Participant. Sunstorm is executive produced by Alicia Garza, Ai-jen Poo, Kristina Mevs-Apgar, and Jess Morales-Rocketto. Sunstorm is produced by Amy S Choi and Rebecca Lehrer of The Mash-Up Americans. Producers are Jocelyn Gonzales, Shelby Sandlin, Mary Phillips-Sandy, and Mia Warren. Original music composed by Jen Kwok and Jody Shelton.

Jane Fonda:

All the precious species teetering on the brink need an army of us ready to take the next step. To leave our comfort zones as Greta has called us to do. But maybe doing this will put us in a more profound



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place than comfort because we will know we are putting our bodies in alignment with our deepest values.