



Episode 4 Transcript: Advice from Women Changing the World

- Recording: Welcome to SunStorm, where we get real about what's happening in the world and what we are doing about it, because we are the light in the storm.
- Ai-jen Poo: Hi, I'm Ai-jen Poo
- Alicia Garza: And I'm Alicia Garza. Ai-jen, I'm so pumped for our beautiful Sunstorm listeners to soak up all of the joy and wisdom and goodness and realness from this conversation that we are about bring you.
- Ai-jen Poo: This is such a special conversation. A while back we sat down with five of our friends, our sisters who also happen to be five badass women leaders in our movement for change.
- Alicia Garza: And just so you know, normally we're in a studio recording this podcast, but for this, we were all set up in a nice, cozy, sweet den. There was a little fire burning in the fireplace. We had facial mists, and face masks, and lots of delicious food and drinks and snacks, and it was after hours, so we were all letting our hair down and kicking our feet up. I know I had warm socks on and we were really just handling business.
- Ai-jen Poo: Yes we were. And that was exactly the conversation we wanted to have. It wasn't a panel discussion. We've all been on 10 million bajillion panels. We wanted the opposite of a panel, which is just the seven of us together as friends and as sisters who depend on each other in this work. The suns in our storm.
- Alicia Garza: That's right. I remember in one part we said, this is not a panel and everybody went oh. And these women are total bosses. I cannot emphasize how lucky we were to get everyone in one room at the same time, late at night on a crazy weekend and fully stocked with tequila.
- Ai-jen Poo: And what we asked them were the questions that we had because we want those answers from them too.
- Alicia Garza: It was amazing. So we're bringing you some of the most precious gems from that conversation.
- Ai-jen Poo: To kick off the conversation, our first question was reflecting on the decade that just ended. We asked, what are you leaving behind in 2019, and what are you



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bringing forward into 2020, this new decade? Here's what my sister Sarita Gupta, a woman I've known and worked with for more than 15 years, I think, here's what she had to say.

- Sarita Gupta: My leave behind is just the people who just refuse to believe in a different kind of leadership that looks vastly different from them. I'm done. I'm done managing that and trying to make it okay. And I think what I'm bringing into this next decade is the many moments in this last decade when we really worked hard to make possible what seemed impossible. And thanks to work I got to do with so many of you, we know what we need to do, and I'm ready to just stay focused and energized and put all my heart and soul into making sure we win.
- Ai-jen Poo: That is so true. That is exactly what we do. We make the impossible possible. And that was the brilliant Sarita Gupta, the former executive director of Jobs with Justice and co-director with me of Caring Across Generations. Now she leads all the efforts around work and shaping a better future for workers in this country at the Ford Foundation.
- Alicia Garza: So one thing that we wanted to know was the practices that these women are bringing into 2020 that aren't their resolutions per se, but they're the things that you have to adjust in order to make sure that you can reach your goals in 2020. So speaking of making the impossible possible, this next clip is from one fierce sister who I am proud to call a friend. Her name is Monica Ramirez and she is the co founder of the Latinx House. She is the founder of Justice for Migrant Women and the Bandana Project, and I'm pretty stoked that I get to work with her at the National Domestic Workers Alliance.
- Monica Ramirez: So what many people don't know about me is that I'm actually very shy, and it takes a lot of work for me to be out and open and in the world. All of our work is out in the open and in the world, and so I struggle with this, and it's hard and it takes a lot of energy and a lot of work. And so this year I've been giving myself permission to just say, I need quiet time. I need to have a space where I can take 10 minutes or what have you. And so I've been asking for more help around that because it takes so much for me to be out in the world all the time. I felt like I could never take that space for myself because I don't know, I felt like I shouldn't or I don't know.



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- Monica Ramirez: I felt like I just needed to keep showing up in a certain way. But the reality is we are who we are. And if we're quiet or shy or however it is our personalities and we work, we have to abide by that, and be okay with that, and feel like it's fine to do that. So I've been asking for more help in that way. I've been saying to people, I need 10 minutes to be quiet. I've been trying to just give myself more, I guess, freedom to just be quiet because that's what I actually need to run.
- Ai-jen Poo: Man, I so relate to the introvert thing. When she said the thing about needing quiet space, it spoke to my heart in this way. I was like, Oh my God, you said it, you spoke it.
- Alicia Garza: She's amazing.
- Ai-jen Poo: She's amazing. And now we're going to hear from Teresa C Younger. She's the CEO and President of the Ms. Foundation.
- Teresa Younger: I've spent a lot of time in the past couple of months at least really recognizing that we don't have to do everything. I think I look at those who have come before me, and I have a plaque that talks about obligation. I do not have to do everything to fill my foremothers' and fathers' dreams and wishes for me. I just have to do one thing. And sometimes that one thing is just offering grace and space to those that need it, and remembering to say thank you to those that support us every day. It is okay to always learn, and that we don't have to have the answers, and our failures are actually, we don't have to recognize them at the time that they're happening, but when we reflect on them, they actually make us our greatest friends. They actually are the things that have made us what we are.
- Ai-jen Poo: As we reflected with these amazing women, my sister Tarana really dropped some wisdom. Every time I listen to her I feel like she blows my mind. And this night was no exception.
- Alicia Garza: Oh, and if you don't know who Tarana is, which you should know, because she is changing the world and has changed all of our minds around what it means to support survivors as the founder of the Me Too movement.
- Tarana Burke: Whenever I get asked this question about what I'm bringing in, what I'm taking out, I'm always thinking I'm saying the wrong thing, but it's sort of the same



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thing. I'm leaving a lot of negativity in 2019. I'm sure you all had similar answers because I know everybody here. 2019 was a bear personally and professionally. And so I want to leave a lot of the negativity, but I'm also bringing a little bit into 2020. I'm not bringing negativity, but I'm bringing the memory of that because I just don't want to do the same things twice.

Tarana Burke: I feel we often are like, I want to leave all of this behind, but I'm going to take a little sample with me and keep it in my pocket, because everybody can't come. If that's what she was in 2019, I'm going to need you to hold that in 2020. I think it's not strategic for us to just wipe the slate clean every time and forget. Listen, I want to remember in 2020 so I don't make the same mistakes, so I don't make the same choices, so I don't have the same associations, so I don't trip up into the same negativity. So I think that's what I'm saying, it's sort of bone. I want to keep some of that.

Tarana Burke: We are a part of this really unique moment and relationships have to grow from that. We have definitely gone through the burning sands, but who better to do that with? Imagine having to do that. I feel sorry for people who see this as a moment to climb in their life, social climate, political, because you may get a little further from where you were, but two things, I'm clear that what is meant for me, is meant for me. And I watch other people scratch and climb and try to do the thing, and I know it's just not meant for you. So all of the things that you're trying to do, you're doing it for naught, and you're bringing all this negativity in your life. So I don't have to do all of that.

Tarana Burke: Then who else it's meant for will also be there and you're like, look, we ended up together. What's the odds of us all being in each other's lives in this very close way if it wasn't meant to be. So I trust that this was meant to be. I just trusted it was meant to be that we walked the red carpet, or that we have Celeste in common. We have these things that brought us all together, but I really trusted that's what was supposed to happen.

Tarana Burke: So you made me think about this because of Kavanaugh, which is another part of our pledging to a net together. But I think, obviously, the longterm vision is around healing and action, and that people understand it's to interrupt sexual violence, that we have to have a conversation but also a plan around what healing can look like. The part of the work is not just the change in the laws and blah, blah, blah, blah, but it's that they're still human beings who have dealt



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with this, who are holding this in their body, who we expect to show up every day in the world in a particular way. And they're not equipped to because something was taken from them. They were robbed of a thing.

Tarana Burke: The thing that I want to do in 2020, and I think Me Too Voter does, and I think some of the other work does, is that we have to shift how people understand survival and what it is. It's taken for granted. Because we say it all the time. Shifting a language is important. So shifting from victim to survivor is important, but then we're just at survivor and it's like, what does that mean? What does it look like? What does it cost? Emotionally, mentally, physically, financially, what does it cost?

Tarana Burke: If in 2020 we can show not just the world but also survivors their power that's in survival, but also help people understand it looks like. Because I think part of what happened at Kavanaugh's or Dr. Blasey Ford's testimony is that because people don't understand what survival looks like, they don't recognize it when they see it. And they have a judgment that is based on stereotypes and flawed ideas and all this other stuff. So if we can have a narrative intervention, if you will, where we tell different stories, but also help survivors see the power in their stories is not just what happened to you, but how you survived it.

Tarana Burke: We are telling a portion of the story and a portion of the story that people demand is what keeps them in a place where they can just pity us. Oh you poor thing. That thing happened to you. I'm so sorry. And that's the end of it. And it's like, no, I'm a superhero and you need to know it. But I think also the survivors need to recognize that too. Count every bit, every day you get up and breathe, every day you put on your clothes, especially those who are in the work. So I feel really passionate about that. How do we get more information out, more stories, more work on the ground that helps people recognize their power but also helps the world see that power?

Alicia Garza: Yeah. So of course we had all these wise and beautiful and brilliant organizers and strategists in the room, and that got us thinking about who's coming up behind you, and what is the work that you're doing to make sure that their path is smooth, but also thinking about what our connection is to the generation in front of us, and how do we take those lessons and apply them in the present?



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- Ai-jen Poo: And here's what the brilliant Fatima Goss Graves had to say about that. She's the President and CEO of the National Women's Law Center. She's a former litigator and the co founder of the TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund.
- Fatima: I have a piece of advice. It's to show up. When I think about the work that we do, sometimes just showing up and doing the work is doing the work, and so there's all this anxiety around what does it mean? How do I? Just show up and do the work? I tell my team all the time, the person who has actually read the thing before the meeting is often driving the meeting. Read that bill before the meeting. So I just show up.
- Tarana Burke: Fatima said get prepared. Just do your work. [Crosstalk 00:14:36]
- Fatima: Do the work. Exactly. Be focused, do the work. But for this year I want to show people, all the people, I have a list of all the people I want to show, that women are powerful. It took me a long time to see the Kavanaugh campaign as a win. Some of y'all know it took me a real long I before I was able to say that we demonstrated power in a different way, and I want to show that again and again. I think we can do that in 2020.
- Sarita Gupta: I think the advice I would give is to really trust your gut and really be the person you want to be. I know sometimes, when my daughter was younger, I would read books to her at night. And there were moments when I'd read books, I'd be like, Oh my God, there's a million people who need to read this book because it's all about be kind and be brilliant. And you can be both those things. It's not an either or. You don't have to be a jerk and be smart. Have curiosity, hold onto your curiosity. Yes, when you step out and you take risks and you lead, there's a level at which people expect you to know your shit, but it's also okay to say I don't know, and I'm still learning. The beauty of being able to do that, to hold onto what you know and to hold onto the curiosity to learn more.
- Sarita Gupta: So those are a few things I would say as just advice, and to ask for help. Ask for help. The thing that drives me crazy and I did it myself for sure, is felt like I had to be the best at everything. And so the ability to just say I need support right now, I actually don't know how to manage this situation, or I'm just emotionally tired. So just to ask for the support I think is so important.



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- Sarita Gupta:** This work is relational. We act as if it's not, which is so mind blowing to me. When I think about this question of 2020, I think so many of us stepped into roles and especially running organizations without support at all. So I feel my job in 2020 is to figure out how to support more women of color in the roles that they're stepping into and to really support the next generation of leadership. Really support with resources, just moral support with networks to be built to support their ability to lead and shine and be able to swim in the sun amongst the storm. So I feel like I'm trying to figure out how to use all of what I've learned and all that I have access to right now to just be able to do that.
- Tarana Burke:** I think that the piece of advice that I would give to folks, because I do speak at a lot of colleges, young people are so, we remember those, they're so anxious. I want to get in, I want to do it, I want to do it. And I get this question all the time of how do I start a movement? I want to start a movement and I'm like, there's movements happening. You don't have to bite off the whole thing. You don't have to be an Ai-jen, a Fatima, a Tarana. You don't have to do that. We didn't start our lives off with an intention to be this person or that person. You go where the work is, and I tell people this all the time, following the work is like following your heart. You just follow the work and it will take you in some really different places, places you didn't think you would end up, but it's okay. I think folks need to have a vision even if it's just your own personal vision of whatever the issue you're working on.
- Tarana Burke:** I want to end this thing. I want to impact this thing. What is your vision for how to get there and follow that? Maybe it's joining an organization, maybe it's starting something. It's okay if it's small. Just be consistent. Find like-minded folk and just keep following the work, and also be okay if you're not the voice. I was not the voice for a long time. I was the person who made sure we had the things, the person who made sure we had a permit when we showed up for that march so we didn't all get arrested.
- Alicia Garza:** Yo. I soaked up so much wisdom from that gathering and I soaked up some moisture from those face masks and I certainly soaked up some tequila that night.
- Ai-jen Poo:** Every time we sit down with our sisters, we learn so much. It's amazing. These people that we've known for years and work with almost daily, still are so full of wisdom and insight that helps us be better people.



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- Alicia Garza: Absolutely. And we adore every single one of them. So we hope that you got to learn a little bit about why we adore them, and you probably started to adore them too.
- Ai-jen Poo: What a blessing.
- Alicia Garza: It really was. I'm Alicia Garza.
- Ai-jen Poo: And I'm Ai-jen Poo, and you're listening to Sunstorm. We had a great conversation that night, but it wouldn't be the same without you. So we need to hear from you. We want to know what things you left behind in 2019 and are bringing in to 2020. We also want to hear about your skincare routines because that's just really important to us. So tell us all about it. We're @Ai-jen Poo...
- Alicia Garza: And @Alicia Garza and this is @sunstormpod. Hit us up. We cannot wait to hear from you. Ciao Ciao.
- Ai-jen Poo: Ciao.
- Recording: 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 Mashup Americans. Producers are Jocelyn Gonzalez, Shelby Sandlin, Mary Phillips Sandy, and Mia Warren. Original music composed by Jen Kwok and Jody Shelton.
- Tarana Burke: Why don't we do this more? I just want to come and cuddle underneath you.