

## SELL FROM LOVE PODCAST -Transcript



### **Episode 4: Take That Risk and Move Forward. Let Your Voice be Heard with JeNae Clark Johnson.**

**Finka:** Hi, JeNae. Welcome to the *Sell From Love* Podcast.

**JeNae:** Yay. I am so glad to be here!

**Finka:** I am so excited to have you here. I wanted to start with some really amazing news this week. You have been featured; not just featured, you were on the cover of the *Houston Chronicle*! How does that feel for you?

**JeNae:** It feels so surreal. All week long, my phone and then my inbox has been going off! Then this weird thing has been happening where people that I have been connected to for 20 plus years, people from high school, early college that I'm still connected to on Facebook. They're making these comments "Well Jeanette, we always knew that you were super talented, and you would always talk about the value of having your own business".

And I'm thinking, I don't remember being that deep that young. I just have no recollection. They come out with all these stories. I have had some close friends who know me enough to know that I sometimes miss the moment and not really soak it in. I have had to force myself this week to soak it in!

I really thought the whole article was a scam when the reporter first called me. I thought wait a minute. I was literally talking to her and Googling her name at the same time, looking her up on LinkedIn. And I asked her "can you connect with me on LinkedIn? Just so I know that this is real?".

I did not think it was real. And then; I didn't know it was for the cover for the business section! They have an excerpt magazine that comes out every Monday. I didn't know it was for the cover of that until the photographer came to my home office.

He casually mentioned it. "I had to take a lot of pictures; this is for the cover". Wait, what? What do you mean cover? My nails aren't even done. I had to tell him to cut off at the wrist because I don't want my nails to actually show in these pictures.

I thought, I'm not a model, and these pictures are gonna look crazy. I had no idea until the story actually ran. I have not been published in media on this scale ever. It is so unfamiliar, but I'm so grateful for it because the story is really

about black businesses thriving. It' about the experiences that I've had. And it's also a way for me to talk about what I've seen work. It's a good case study for change versus the companies who say they really want to do something about racial equity, but not sure what to do.

There are programs that I've been a beneficiary of, and they didn't take six months to figure it out. They did it in four weeks and it's had a huge lasting impact. I'm just grateful to be a part of that story, but that's the broader story that I want to tell, particularly around corporations who are leaders, corporations who are looking to make a change and they're sort of still getting stuck in their own processes and bureaucracy. There is a way for you to do this and be impactful in a short period of time.

**Finka:** I love that. I love everything that you just said. We're going to unpack it a little bit. When big things like this happen, or when we experience successes, we so quickly dismiss them or deny them as it's no big deal, even getting reflected back from your childhood and your younger self where they say "we always knew you had this and you're always like this".

It's so funny how we don't see those parts of ourselves that we actually need reflected to us by other people, because we definitely have that inner negativity bias. We're ready to see the things that are broken and wrong with us, but the things that are right and the things that we do well we need to see, it's so important for us to get another person's perspective.

Everyone is mirroring it back to you and saying, "yeah, we've known all along". I think that is amazing. I want to pull out one more thing; then we're going to jump into how all of this unfolded for you, because I'd like to rewind the clock for you to share with us what happened and what the impetus was. Then what's the next piece of work that you're moving towards. But before that, I did notice something that you posted on LinkedIn this week. Stopping and smelling the roses and just giving yourself a moment to absorb and relish in the feeling and success of this moment.

I'm going to say, we're always off to the next thing, that we don't get off the wheel. What was it that had you do that differently this time for you?

**JeNae:** I think it was a few things. I have learned that I need to listen to people around me. They told me in the past "Hey JeNae, you just need to appreciate this moment". And you mentioned, I'm so quick to say, yeah *that was a thing, but it wasn't that big of a deal.*

I think a part of it is a little bit of imposter syndrome, feeling like I'm not cover worthy. Having that feeling, how did I end up on the cover and listing all these other people in my head that they could have interviewed instead.

What's referenced in the story is this pitch program called "*Share The Mic and The Money Now*". It was pulling together 40 black women business owners in the greater Houston area. If you know anything about Houston, there are amazingly successful black owned businesses in Houston. I think the number that I saw was that there are around 90,000 black owned businesses in Houston. Of course, not all of them are wildly successful, but there are a lot that are.

I thought, look all these other people that you could have gotten, why me? Why, why would you choose me? Being able to get rid of that thinking and say okay, I was chosen for a reason. Obviously, they thought I had a good story. And more importantly, my story and the work that I'm doing right now is not really about me in the first place. So when I bring it back to that, this helps to elevate the issues that I'm pushing for in times of change, inside of corporations and really around the globe, but not just in corporate spaces; everywhere. This article allows me to do more of that. Coming to those realizations helped a lot.

What was funny though, is that I saw the digital version of the article first before I could even get out of bed that morning on Monday. My phone was going off because some friends who subscribe to the *Houston Chronicle*, and friends in PR get the preview of the articles and they were sending it to me. They tagged me in posts. And then maybe only a handful knew that this was coming out because honestly, I was scared to tell people. I didn't know if this was real, that maybe they might pull the stories.

When it came out, there was all this activity. It wasn't until that night that I was able to go to our local grocery stores, and I actually went to another grocery store. They were sold out of the *Houston Chronicle* at 8:30 that night. I had forgotten and I needed to get a print version because I'm actually in it! I never get a printed newspaper anymore. They had one left. And I grabbed it. When I opened it and saw my likeness printed, I had to look away and put it down. That's me! I was looking at myself, but I couldn't believe that it was this huge likeness of me on this printed page.

I think the progression of seeing it all in that first day on Monday, when the story came out and then seeing how real it was; was like being tested.

**Finka:** Do you think we are so used to not seeing ourselves in this way, with this light, with our brilliance? And then when it happens, there is this moment... whoa, you picked me why me? We start questioning, why did you pick me? There are so many other people you could have picked, why me?

And then, you open the paper to see yourself gracing the cover. In that moment, I felt, I don't know if this was the feeling you had, you could tell us, did you feel overwhelmed with the likeness of you? Thinking; this can't even be me, and get overwhelmed with our own light and brilliance, and it's then

that we react and say, no let me put that away. Because I think part of it is the way we are wired. We're always looking at the things that aren't working that are wrong and broken with us.

We are not used to embracing our lightness, our brilliance, our strengths, or our value; because it's always up for judgment. Always being assessed. Whether other people are criticizing it or we're doing it for them. That it's not this traditional way of how we see ourselves. I love and think about this moment of celebration for you and for all of us, I think for all of us, even listening in, and for me right now in this moment is how do I appreciate and celebrate and overwhelm myself with my brilliance?

How do you do that? How do you just take it all in? Let's practice more of that because we've got a lot of practice on the other stuff. I'm a pro at that stuff. How do I practice doing this? What do you think?

**JeNae:** It reminds me of when I was little and admit I was a strange child. I had some very interesting habits.

**Finka:** Well, let's get into those right now.

**JeNae:** One of my interesting habits was that I really wanted to wear glasses. Now I have to wear them. I always wanted to wear glasses, I thought they were a cool accessory. I also wanted braces, and a cast, wheelchair, crutches. Unfortunately, I think I went through all of those at some point in my life, but when I was five or six, I wanted all these things. It was almost like wanting earrings or something.

I had my first eye exam. The optometrist said there was nothing wrong with my vision. I think I saw something on Sesame Street or Mr. Rogers, maybe read it in a book that if you look into the sun, it will damage your eyesight. I would go outside, thinking of my mom telling me this too, don't look into the sun, it'll damage your eyes. I thought, it will. I would go outside and look into the sun and I would stare for as long as I could until I would have to look away because my eyes were watering. But here's the thing, I had that same experience right now, looking at my own brilliance.

It felt the same way. I would look at the cover of this newspaper and see my likeness and look at it for only long enough until I had to look away because it was so much, it was overwhelming. Mind you, I had other intensions when it came to looking into the sun when I was little.

I didn't want to go down that path again, but it felt the same way. I couldn't even look at this for longer than five seconds at a time. I would look away and maybe I could come back to it. Is that really me? And then look at it and say, what's going on with my shirt, and my hair's out of place. And why is it so big on the cover? It was all these things. That's the only thing that I can

attribute to in terms of the experience, but, I love what you said that we do have to get comfortable with being able to look at our own light.

The classic quote by Marianne Williamson is that we're afraid of our light. The part about who am I to be brilliant and it's really who are you not to be? And I'll always love that quote by her, but I didn't even understand what it meant to live that, until this year, until 2020. I've known about the quote itself probably for 20 years, since she first wrote it, but I now understand it. I now get it.

**Finka:** What made it this year, the time or that moment that had you understand what it meant to embrace your brilliance and who are you not to be?

**JeNae:** I think this is a good segue into talking about the journey of how we got to right now. I have known you for a while now. You know that I have had this frustration around what to do, and that I'm doing something, but something is missing. There's more, I just don't know what it is, or I don't know how to put together this piece plus this piece and really make the most impact. I have been trying to work through that probably over the last year and a half or so, just trying to figure it out.

In May of this year, as many of you know, George Floyd was murdered. And at the time, I had a major contract that was cancelled because the company that I was contracting with were hit pretty hard financially, due to COVID. Almost immediately anything that was not essential got cut. It represented a huge portion of revenue for the company. I had to sit with that and say, all right, so now what.

That was in April, and in May, George Floyd was murdered. I was showing up to these spaces, I just needed a safe space to be able to process what I was feeling and what I was seeing. Other people try to process, struggling with it and failing, needing a space to say that they are not okay. I haven't been okay for a long time and I've been suppressing it. I sort of accepted all of these experiences that are tied to systemic racism as the norm, like this is what my life is going to be.

I had to figure out how to deal with it and how to thrive in spite of it. I think for me, I couldn't find the space. I created it, which was the birth of *Bold x Brave*, which started out as a conversation series. It was very quick and dirty, my thought process was, we're going to put out a zoom webinar, promote it on LinkedIn. There was no marketing strategy, no paid promotion. It was just word of mouth, email, LinkedIn; that was about it. And it had such a huge overwhelming response that left me feeling like, well, wait a minute, I'm looking to all these other people that I would think would be the ones to do something big like this and it was who I was attracting to these webinars that told me no, you're the one, there's nobody else is coming, it's you. For the

longest time I kept feeling like, no, it's going to be somebody else, but it was me. Tying that back to the quote by Marianne Williamson, it was about recognizing that this whole time I was thinking, well who am I going to be the one to lead this type of effort. It's really, who am I not to be? That I'm actually prepared for this moment that it is a divine appointment. I believe that. Understanding that I was afraid of my own light and I had to get the courage to actually get rid of that fear of my own light before I can lead anyone else.

It allowed me to show up even more brilliantly, in a way that influenced and inspired other people. To have the courage to speak up about things that were really hard about my own experiences and about things that I've observed in the world. I can tell you, there's not a week that goes by that I don't get a text, a phone call, an inbox message from people that I know and people that I've never met in my life that say, JeNae, I've been paying attention. Please keep speaking up. You are giving me courage. I feel like when you speak up, I can speak up too.

**Finka:** This is part of when we think about embracing our brilliance and using it to add value and make a difference. It's not for us. I call it our brilliant difference, but it's not for us, it's for other people. It is what it allows, enables and facilitates for them.

Every time you show up with your light and with your brilliance, you are actually creating an opportunity for someone else to embrace their own, especially because it's coming from a place of positive intention. There's an element of service but also an element of "how do you make change", especially in a moment that is most needing change today.

One of the things I want to go back to is being afraid of our light; then we will move ahead to how you overcame it. But before we go there, I'd like to touch on something for all of us that are thinking, "I have got to find my thing". We're all searching for the thing that we're going to be doing, that we're going to be known for, that thing we're going to contribute with. For us that are seeking this, trust that it will come and the fact that you are a seeker, putting one foot forward in front of the other. Eventually, your thing will show up for you. And JeNae for you, it's a perfect example, how you didn't let it stop you from moving forward when you started. Putting out your voice; *Bold x Brave* wasn't a thing yet.

**JeNae:** Not at all.

**Finka:** Not at all, right. It was, but you had to actually go put that foot forward in order for *Bold x Brave* to appear. For the seekers in us that are always looking, I have Abraham Lincoln's quote right here. "My wallet says I will study and get ready and perhaps my chance will come".

**JeNae:** I love that, it's powerful. And I think it's such a great representation of how I had to get out of my own way in that whole preparation. Because when you are a secret, you keep waiting for the answer. Honestly, there were certain habits that I needed to build, certain mindsets that needed to shift for me before the answer would present itself.

I think if the answer had presented itself before now, it would have been premature because there were certain things that I wouldn't have been able to do. So even speaking from a very practical and tactical standpoint; I do a lot of engagement on LinkedIn. Finka, you and I talked about this, how I was hit and miss with LinkedIn before I would be on it, then I wouldn't think of something. Then go away for a few weeks, I didn't have any consistency. What was beautiful though, I remember you and I had a conversation months ago and you were able to pull out from me that there was this whole notion of corporate courage.

That was a theme. it's come full circle now because corporate courage is all about being able to speak up and to do the things that are hard in service of something greater. I simply started talking about courage in general, to be courageous. This was right when COVID started and I was posting articles and names and talking about corporate courage.

I did that consistently for maybe a week and then George Floyd was murdered. That whole notion about courage, it turned into something different. I started to see the pieces coming together because it took courage for me to even say anything about it on LinkedIn, because as we know, LinkedIn is a very, quote unquote professional platform.

My first post about it was basically saying that I understand that this is a professional platform. I almost didn't share this, but I need you all to know that, as professionals, we are people first and this person is hurt and this person is struggling and this person is not okay. And as the mother of black sons, and as the wife of a black man, when I see these images, there's no way for me to be okay.

I see them in those images and that's what I shared on LinkedIn, which had nothing to do with the services that we offer in business, it wasn't about providing professional advice or support it. It Wasn't about doing some kind of soft sale, or an upcoming event, it was none of that.

It was "Hey, I'm a person and I'm hurt".

**Finka:** I got emotional just listening to you. It's those places where it may feel inappropriate because it hasn't been the place because we need to be professional or show up in a certain way. You demonstrate courage by doing and saying the things that need to be said to connect us to what really matters. And that's what you did, in that moment, in that post. I think about

your family, and I remember even a couple of conversations we've had of the things that happened even in your neighborhood. To be the voice, I know it was all around corporate courage, but it takes a corporate courage To go into an environment that normally doesn't talk about this kind of stuff and start having a conversation and talking about this, because that is what corporate courage is all about.

**JeNae:** Absolutely. And when I'm working with clients now, one of the things that I always make sure to insert is that up until this point, particularly in America, racism has been looked at as a poverty issue, a policy issue, a policing issue. But really, corporations have been able to turn a blind eye to it and pretend as if those systems don't exist inside of their own organization. That their employees who are black and other minorities have not been directly impacted. They've been able to throw their money towards whatever external organization and community partnership that they sponsor and wash their hands of it.

And in this moment where we are in 2020, that's no longer the case. They're being called out for it. 'Listen, you're a part of the problem', and I think even beyond that, they're a big part of the solution. If you think about all of these massive corporate structures, they have the power to influence change on a global level. They have the resources, they have the contacts, they have the connections, they have an influence. If we think about corporations as an entity, they can be so influential and so impactful in a way that I don't care who the most influential politician, or who the wealthiest individual is, corporations have even more power than they do.

And so that's why it's not just about changing them internally, but it's also about what do you actually exist for and how do you make an impact in the world outside of your organization?

**Finka:** What I love about what you just said is the fact that we can no longer allow organizations and leaders in organizations to make missions or their values a tick box activity, that it looks really great on an about page or in their boardroom or on their customer brochures, and that they're producing what we actually need. To have leaders take responsibility and be accountable for making real, okay. That it's not something that we just put on paper and we put on a website, but it's actually something we live and breathe and I agree with you 110% that corporate has power, control and influence to change the trajectory of a racial inequality, environment, the climate, the economy, capitalism, all this stuff that we are feeling the negative consequences as a result of. They hold a lot of where things can move forward with.

I remember a story you shared with me and it's important because when we're looking to make change, sometimes we're sitting and waiting, thinking okay they're going to do the right thing, or they're going to say the right thing,



or they're going to come out with the right initiative or they're going to do it this time.

What I love about what you did is you were waiting, and you weren't noticing change happen. You actually reached out. I think it was a client or someone you worked with in the past and said, Hey, why aren't you saying anything or what's happening?

Take us through that story, this is a demonstration of, again corporate courage, of being the voice that matters, today more than ever. Tell us what happened.

**JeNae:** What's interesting is, that same scenario presented itself probably three or four times. The example that you're referring to was with a current client who leads a company. They have probably about 200 employees or so, and they are a change management, change leadership consultancy, and very big on being people focused and being proactive about culture change.

To me, I get that maybe, if I own the manufacturing company, then maybe that's not my thing. Maybe I'm not people focused. I'm focused on products, so I might struggle with this. But for a people focused organization, I felt like, you've got to have this under control.

They were saying nothing. It was silent. I reached out to the managing partners and I basically said, I'm disappointed by your silence because this is your area. It wasn't a day or two, this was two weeks going into the third week where all these other companies had at least made a statement.

From those conversations, I sent an email and then immediately got pulled into some conversations with them. They were tough. And what it came down to was that one of the managing partners, and for those of you who are familiar with the fascinate system, he was mystique, which basically means that he was very thoughtful about everything that he did.

He got stuck because he finally said, "Jeanette, I've written six drafts on what to say. And I've talked to my wife and I talked to my teenage son and my son said, Oh you can't say that. And my wife said, Oh, not like, you've got to change that. And I just got stuck". I learned so many things from that experience. I was able to say to him, "What's important is that you get something out there, you need to say something. And it's also okay to lead with this idea that you don't know what to say". What he said to me over the phone was, "I am usually very eloquent in what I have to say. This is just weighing on me so emotionally that I don't have the words. I'm afraid I'm going to say the wrong thing". I also learned that I was judging him, because before I reached out, I was angry, why are you not saying anything? You're supposed to be this amazing leader, and you're all about people focus. What

is it; just that you only care about certain kinds of people? I had all these misconceptions and really it wasn't that he didn't care. It was actually the opposite. He cared so much that he didn't want to get it wrong.

From that experience I've been able to share with clients and with colleagues and say to them, a lot of times we look at how other people are taking action or how they're not, and we automatically assign a conclusion to what they're doing and what they're not doing.

It was tough to reach out to him and the other managing partner. It was hard to hear that he was struggling with it and also for me, having to acknowledge that I was still frustrated that he didn't get it out, but I also now have a better understanding and to acknowledge my own judgment in it, because I really did judge him that he was doing something that wasn't actually true.

**Finka:** What was it, and this is one thing that you do so well. You hear the inner voice saying, do this. You get the idea and then you go do it, I'm sure there's still a zillion ideas you don't act upon. This was a big one. You heard the voice inside your head, say something like why isn't he saying anything? Time's ticking. People are making statements. People are posting and sharing their point of view. Why isn't he saying something?

What was it? How did you make the ask? What was it in you that said you had to act, I think that's oftentimes what happens is we struggle because we get this great idea or want to reach out, or challenge someone; because that's what you did. And then, we don't know what's going to come after, but you did it. And so many of us stop, or we listen to the other voice. They're not going to care. This is a stupid idea. I shouldn't do this. I'm going to ruffle feathers. And we lean back on that. What made this situation different for you that you actually took the leap on it?

**JeNae:** That's a really great question. I think, what I've talked about is, before George Floyd was killed, there was always this notion that I would prioritize other people's comfort over my own, making sure that, yes I might push the issue a bit, I might be outspoken and vocal, but let me make sure that I do it in a way that still keeps them comfortable, particularly have them be comfortable with me as a black woman. I felt like that was the only way that I was going to thrive. I didn't even realize that I was doing it. I had a lot of filters. It wasn't like I was always talking about the history of racial injustice around the world and I wasn't an activist. I wasn't. Instead it was, let me figure out strategically how do I thrive in these situations? When George Floyd was killed something in me snapped where I just had no more filters or politeness left and it was almost like I'm done prioritizing other people's comfort over the truth, because that's really what it was, instead of showing up fully as who I am, and also being able to tell the truth, the full truth about something. I was doing it in a way to make sure that people could still be comfortable with the

message. So that was one thing. And I think secondly, I literally did a countdown in my head, before I sent the email and I thought about it maybe two days before I actually sent it.

And I was thinking, I'm going to give him another day. Nothing happened, then today is the day, and then I sent it. I sent it in as a play with words at the very end. I said in the end about giving the benefit of the doubt, 'let's assume that you have a draft that is sitting in your inbox right now, ready to go out. If so, please disregard everything that I said in this email'. What was so funny is that both he and the other managing partner, they responded in 10 minutes with their draft right away.

**Finka:** They did, they did!!

**JeNae:** Yes, and their response was Oh wait, we have a draft, we do care! I think it was something in me snapped and I thought, it's enough. I'm also willing to take the risk in the name of growth. I'm clear that there can be no growth without risk, it just does not happen.

It wasn't just about my personal growth; it was about my belief that the work we're doing right now is far more than business. It's about starting a movement, it happens one leader, one company at a time. I have to be willing to take that risk to say, this is wrong, and I'm not just speaking for myself, I was thinking for all the other people who are not in that place yet, where they feel like they can speak up.

**Finka:** I love that. I'm going to say three things that I'm taking away from this. How you found your voice to speak up in this moment. One was something really traumatic happened to give you the courage to make a stand and take a stand for this. And as a result, I love what you just said. You stopped prioritizing other people's comfort over the truth. That is huge because I think so many of us can fall into their diplomatic self, making sure they play the fair scale, people pleasing, you don't want to upset them or ruffle their feathers but also put them in an uncomfortable, awkward position. But that's actually what we need most. That's what they're waiting for. That's what you're talking about is the growth opportunity for one, for us to challenge the status quo, to make others uncomfortable, make ourselves uncomfortable. Because that's really what we're doing. And then it's an invitation for the other person. If they choose to, they don't have to, but for them to say yes, I'm willing to step up on this, and take the risk with you.

**JeNae:** Can I tell you something? I got this feedback just this morning from a client. I facilitated a session with her and her team of about 60 people who work for a major oil and gas company. And she said that someone on her team emailed her this morning and said, I am so glad that we're being edgy about this because the whole conversation was about setting the tone for how do you move forward with racial equity inside of the workplace? And this

company has rolled out this diversity equity inclusion plan, but now it's up to the leaders to start implementing it within their teams. We dove in, and I think it's a testament to how much people are wanting it.

They're done with the politeness about this topic. We have to have a real conversation. It's not for everyone. But I'm just surprised at how many people are wanting it. There have been light conversations and they're not impactful, and you still leave wondering, this didn't change me; I'm not transformed in my thinking. I don't have anything new to consider or even challenge. It's been beautiful to see how you just take that risk to really be edgy with the truth, that how much people are open and finally somebody's saying something.

**Finka:** It is refreshing. I think about those corporate boardrooms. When we're rolling out diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, if it doesn't have the edge today, all we're getting is the standard status quo. Then it's like an eye roll, oh we're doing *this* again, or this is what we say, it's not what we do.

Where you're pointing us towards, and what you're inviting us to do is have the edgy conversation. Let's be uncomfortable. Let's stop making this easy on people because it's not an easy task. It is going to be challenging and we have to feel uncomfortable, as a part of the process.

I love everything that you're facilitating in those discussions with those organizations, especially for an oil and gas organization who has a huge infrastructure, the systems that are in place because they've been around for years. Those are some of the hardest ships to turn. And to hear that you're having these conversations in these organizations, I think is it's very inspiring and I'm a very optimistic, which is great, so thank you for that.

**JeNae:** Well, what's interesting too is that these DEI plans; and I've talked about this in other spaces about how diversity and inclusion has really become a check the box exercise for a lot of companies; as long as we can pass the diversity I test. We have a few women on the board, our token minorities in different parts of the organization. It looks good on our website. We also sponsor all of these community organizations and we're good. And there's no accountability either. We can set these targets and metrics, but it's kind of like, 'Oh no, we didn't meet them, so oh well'.

Look at the data over the last 20 years on the efficacy or lack thereof of diversity programs, they have failed in comparison to the amount of time, resources and the dollar amount that's been invested in them. The first thing I say is, I'm not talking about diversity inclusion. I clearly believe in both of them in concept, but they've gotten a bad name. They have a bad brand because what it means in a corporate space is that we do some unconscious bias training. We've checked that box. We may have an annual something or other diversity day, and then we're good. We're done. You never really have

moved forward to equity and belonging. You'll never get there because it's just checking a box.

**Finka:** I love that as a frame equity and belonging, the ENB strategy, Right? I love it. I love it. Looking back; or as you think about that fear of embracing your light, and embracing your brilliance, what are you learning about yourself that is making you less fearful of doing that moving forward?

**JeNae:** I think when I reflect on even my career path and my life journey, it's been a winding road. It's all kinds of what I felt like were very random experiences, you know, I used to be a high school teacher. I was an instructional designer. I was an e-learning developer then I went to change management consulting. I became a Fascinate certified advisor. I was a marketing director for two years. I had all of this rant that felt very random. What is this? I felt like in all of those cases, I could bring a portion of my brilliance to that situation or to that job, but not all of it. Because it's not relevant for that, or people are not going to accept it or whatever the case is. I think one of the things that I've learned is that even when you feel like things are very random, they're not. Because where I am now, literally Finka, I think I am able to pull on every single experience, every single failure, the things that I tried that just didn't work.

Whether it's programs that I tried to launch or things that I tried to sell in my business or the structure of my business. I mean, we went through a whole rebrand in a week, and this is current, we have a new website and everything, changed the name of the company from Content That Matters to CTM Unlimited in a week because one it needed to happen, and two, it came out of some failure. It came out of some feedback that I got about confusion around the brand. What I've learned is that all of that contributes to what I'm able to do now, where I'm able to make the most impact. It pulls on every single skill, pulls on every single failure. It pulls on all the success. It pulls on every contact and conversation that I've ever had. And so even for example yesterday, when I was facilitating this session, there was one question that people were a little hesitant to answer, and I quickly said to them, I said now in my former life, I was a high school teacher so I don't mind calling out names. Then people started talking, it was funny, but it's true. I felt, hey I survived teaching high school for six years, I can do anything. That's what I've learned the most.

What it feels like is it's random. This is for everyone who maybe feels like I'm close to what I'm supposed to do, but I still feel a little bit lost. I just keep showing up, just keep going and you'll continue to discover what's next. And stay open to the possibilities. I'm big on that.

Start thinking about and reimagining what your life could be, what your business could be, what your career could be. And that doesn't necessarily

have to look like what anyone else's looks like. If I think about the structure of our company right now, the differentiator is that we're just doing things very differently.

Even when we think about being in the DEI space, we call it disruptive DEI. That's what it is. I want to come into companies and flip the table on diversity. Just throw the papers on the floor and start over. We're not doing this anymore in the way that it's been done.

I've learned that all the things that felt very random to me then are now all coming together. My encouragement to everyone is just to keep going, stay in action, be okay with imperfect action. That was so hard for me. Everything had to be baked and ready and perfect. And if it wasn't, then I wouldn't do it. I have been in such imperfect action. I mean, we rebranded in a week. So clearly we had a whole other brand.

**Finka:** When you know, and when you're clear, I think there's momentum that happens when you continue to take action. So by the commitment to that week starting with corporate courage, just post and talk and post and talk, and then you continued with *Bold x Brave* with the webinars, presenting your pitch; all those things kept you moving forward. Thinking is good, being thoughtful is good, but overthinking, that stalls us and paralyzes us, and it's what holds us back. I'm hearing from you JeNae, you can tell me if I'm totally off course here, but I resonate with everything that you said around the randomness. It's like everything didn't work, everything didn't. I felt like I had to be part here. A part of me there, and the last few years, I just feel like I can bring all of me everywhere I go. Part of that has been in my experience. And I don't know if this has been the same for you is, I'm getting goosebumps just thinking about it. I hope I don't cry. I feel like I'm going to get teary-eyed.

I feel like as I've learned to accept and embrace my own light, all of it, even the parts that didn't go well, the parts that aren't perfect about me, that I'm willing to share those, and that acceptance makes my life not feel random anymore.

**JeNae:** Oh, I love it. I love that because the things that I look at as failures or awkward moments or embarrassing or I may have had moments of shame. I get feedback from other people, "Oh yeah, cause JeNae when you did that", that was not my brightest moment at all. Or thinking about how I've had other business owners reach out and say, Hey, do you have some kind of coaching thing you can do with me to show me how to run my business? And I'm like, are you kidding me? I just figured it out, like on Tuesday and it's Thursday. And I actually don't have it figured out.

I'm constantly learning and I always look at all the failures and stuff that doesn't go right. Or the things, where I hit a wall or, lost projects, lost contracts, or conversations that I have that I think, Oh, that was horrible, you know? But

I've learned to embrace it, I think it's so interesting how, a lot of times we're so judgmental about ourselves. And what we look at as being awful, someone else looks at as a treasure and they get so much value and inspiration from it. I'm still working on it Finka, I think I honestly haven't figured it all out. I still have moments. And when I say I still have moments; this week even with all of the media attention. Oh my gosh. If people really knew how this company is structured in the background or how my website is still not optimized. We're still working on refining the logo.

**Finka:** I hear you. I hear you. And they don't want that stuff. They want you, and that's the thing I think we get so bogged down with. We're never going to have our stuff together. It's never going to be, you know, those things that make a team run well and be engaged. Those are always a work in progress. And we have got to be okay with--are you willing to take me as I am, as of today, in this moment? I think it starts from us being okay with that first, and when we're okay with that, it makes it easier for everyone else to see that light in us.

I know this acceptance in this moment that I feel about myself in this light I have, you know, probably call me tomorrow afternoon and it'll be different. It's so temporal, that's just life's experience. Enjoy it for the moment and know it's true, it exists. And then everything else is life moving away from our light and ourselves and we are either moving away from it or towards it. We know it's true because we know that moment that we had, we've had it and we know that feeling.

**JeNae:** Within that same vein, one of the things that I've been saying when I'm engaging with companies, particularly around having this very hard conversation about race and racism and privilege and all the other words that people don't want to say at work, and helping them through that and partnering with leaders to lead their teams through it. I always start out by saying that we have to give ourselves permission to fail. I even, as a black woman leading a conversation about race, having whatever credentials and background and professionally, but also my own life experiences, I will still get it wrong.

What I hear a lot, particularly from colleagues who are white, is that I don't know what to say, and I'm not going to say anything because I don't want to get it wrong. Well, guess what? You're probably going to get it wrong and that's okay. You have got to be okay with that. What I also encourage people to do is to really check your heart because our head and our mouth will get it wrong. What's important is, does your heart get it right? That's a conversation you have to have with yourself before you engage in any difficult conversations. Because we're human. Myself, as quote unquote, being the expert in leading the conversation, I tell people, listen I don't have

all the answers. We do a lot of research. I try to make sure that whatever I'm sharing is data driven and I still don't always get it right.

**Finka:** I think the message in there is when we don't know what to say or how to say it, or we are afraid to speak... Two things. Number one; connect to your heart. That is what makes us all human. And number two is to ask for help. We don't have to go it alone, we don't, we may not have the right words to articulate it in that email or to get on that zoom call and address our team because something difficult needs to be said or something challenging needs to be put forth. True leadership is demonstrated in those moments of vulnerability or where we think where weaknesses are going to show up, it's actually asking for help. It is reaching out and saying, hey JeNae, how do I craft this? How do I lead my team? How do I help my team get the edge on this problem that we've been trying to solve for eons and we've yet to get a leg up on it. JeNae, I am over the moon grateful for you, to have you in my life, to be in your circle and to you being the championing voice. And I know, activism is a strong word at times, but I do see you as a championing voice for bravery, for boldness and for courage for the human heart.

**JeNae:** Thank you, that means so much. And you know, I'm so glad that not only are you observing the story, but you're a part of it. You're a part of the story. I said this on LinkedIn in one of my posts, the reason why I'm able to do what I do is that I have a silent army behind me.

You're a part of that silent army. I'm privileged to be on your show to see all of the great things that you're doing, that the book is coming out. I'm excited about all of it, and I'm honored that when we have these conversations. I'm not just reporting to you on something that you don't know about, that you're not actually a part of. In some ways you were the catalyst for me to even be able to build this habit with speaking up and talking about courage and then the catalyst again, to create *Bold X Brave*. But it was because you gave me a space to just say, I'm not okay. I don't know what happens next. I think I'm open to all of the intriguing possibilities, but I'm so grateful that you were a part of the start of all of it.

**Finka:** I look forward to walking alongside your story with you as you continue to tell it, as it continues to unfold for you. And I can't wait to see where it leads you next. Before we close, There's three things I'd love to close with. One, I love to ask our guests, this is all about selling from love and how do we show up in that posture where we're connected with authenticity and integrity and courage, which you're an expert on. I'd love to know if there is an organization or a company, because we need more models like that, who does it well out there? Does any company, individual, maybe even an experience that you've recently had that for you, that sells from love that maybe gave you experience of what it's like to buy from love. And who would that be?



**JeNae:** This is a local company called Accountants One on One, based in the Houston Texas area. I just recently had a conversation with their owner, and this was really about me being an imperfect action and realizing that I have got to get some stuff together on the accounting side too, because it's so not my thing. I knew that I needed help. And in the probably 40 minutes that I talked with her, she really listened. She didn't make it about herself at all. It wasn't, well, let me tell you all the things that we can do for you. No, she really asked me questions, and then based on my responses, she would provide suggestions, and what have you thought about this? Or you could do that. She gave me resources and I jotted down ideas, things like funding for the business. This was outside of the scope of what I actually engaged her with. What was so impressive is that she said, I'll send you a proposal and then we'll review it. And if it looks good, we'll get started. Even if you decide not to go with me, I really want you to stay in touch and make sure that you reach out if you have any questions about anything, because I really do care about the success of your business. There was something that was so genuine about what she said, and the way that she said it, that it wasn't like a sales script.

It was clear that she really does care. It was evident in the conversation, evident in the way that she easily provided solutions, the way she structures her packages, it's about the best way to serve you as an individual client.

**Finka:** I think that's a great example when it comes to selling from love and someone who's demonstrating it. It's not about them. It's about you, the client. And you might end up being her client, but it doesn't matter. What matters is that she's done her best to give you value, give you resources, listen to your needs, and understand what you're looking for.

And I think that when we're selling from love, put your best foot out there and if they choose you great, if they don't great. What we are attached to is giving and making sure that we serve them the best that we can with what we've got.

**JeNae:** What I love about the concept of selling from love too, is that it's really about abundance, right? When you sell from love, it's not from a place of scarcity. So even when I was talking to accountants one-on-one, she said, I probably should kick myself for all the times that I've given away all this free advice and free information, because I could just sit on the phone for hours and just talk to you about your business. But you know, I really do want to see your business be successful. I experienced that And I experienced this with her. Because what she provided in a 40 minute phone call, she could have easily charged me for, and she didn't.

When you have an abundance mindset, you're not thinking about, I could add value in this way, ml'm going to need an invoice for that. It doesn't mean

that we're not fiscally responsible in our business, but it is about how we approach those conversations.

**Finka:** I love it. JeNae, it sounds like you and I are going to have another conversation around diving deeper into selling from love. I look forward to having you back again, if you're in.

**JeNae:** You know, anytime!

**Finka:** Awesome. Any final thoughts, and then if people want to get in touch with you or learn more about you and the work that you do, how could they learn that more?

**JeNae:** Sure. You can go to our new website, [CTM unlimited.com](http://CTMunlimited.com). You can also find me on LinkedIn. If you search Janae Clark Johnson, I'll give you the actual link Finka.

**Finka:** Yeah, we will have them all in the show notes as well.

**JeNae:** LinkedIn or our website and the website has contact information on there.

**Finka:** Perfect. And I will also put that wonderful article that has a couple of really brilliant quotes that Jenny has in the Houston Chronicle as well in the show notes. People can read a bit about you and the outcome of all that wonderful work you've been doing over the last few months.

Thank you, JeNae. I wish we could talk for more, let's keep going, we will continue the conversation, we will have you back again and keep on that. Keep that corporate courage charge going and *Bold X Brave* and keep doing the work that you're doing, so meaningful and is going to make waves. Thank you.

**JeNae:** Thank you so much. This was so much fun. As soon as you're ready for me to come back and tell some more stories about staring into the side of the child.

**Finka:** Awesome. Can't wait, bye for today. Thank you.

**JeNae:** Bye.