

EP116

Elaine Lou Cartas: This episode's releasing on Juneteenth and. I just wanna pause to recognize that it marks the delayed freedom of the last enslaved African Americans in 1865, and reminds us how important it is to learn from history. Especially the parts that are uncomfortable, so we do not repeat it, especially now. And that means creating space where we can have real conversations with each other.

And speaking of real conversations, I just wanna say this is going to be a personal one and heads up, if you've got little ones around, you might. Wanna pop in your earbuds instead. Don't worry, I'm not gonna yell or swear. I'm just gonna speak from the heart and share things. What might feel heavy because this season is heavy.

Plus, I'm PMSing, so this is real talk and no, I'm not here to complain. I know we're all being hit with algorithm triggered hot takes. Endless should advice, but I'm not gonna be shitting all over yourself. Get it? I got that joke from a conference. Anyways, I just think sometimes the most radical thing we can do is tell the truth of our lived experiences and be human.

With one another. As a proud Angeleno and oldest daughter of a Filipino immigrant farmer, these past few weeks have been a lot, specifically the ICE raids. It's been really heartbreaking watching families be torn apart even when they're here legally and still. I love. This city. I am a product of L-A-U-S-D and California Public Schools.

I grew up with classmates and friends who were Vietnamese, Nigerian, Salvadorian, Mexican, Jamaican, Thai, Chinese, German and more. I gotta have a whole podcast episode just listing the countries that not gonna bore you and. This week I've been messaging a lot of them with the raids going on, one of my friends messaged me.

When I was checking in with her, Hey, I am not okay, it reminds me of my mom giving us instructions for what to do if I ever got taken when I was a kid 35 years ago. Another friend after the shooting near her home in Minnesota to the politicians personally messaged me. This happened 15 minutes away from us.

These are real friends. By the way. This is not me watching the news or social media. These are personal friends that I've had throughout my life, and if you're wondering, Elaine, why are you sharing this on your podcast? it's called WOC and Allies Business and Career Real Talk. It's because this is what so many of us are quietly carrying.

I know. Not a lot of us might be reposting IG stories, and that's okay. Maybe it's too much. Do what honors you. This isn't a Hustle podcast. This is a human podcast. I'm a human talking, not ai. And today we're talking about how do you even work right now without losing yourself? 'cause let's be real. We got bills to pay.

All right, grab your coffee, tea, boba, or drink of your choice and let's. Drop the beat.

Reality check work might feel heavy. 'cause I don't know. It feels heavy right now, right? I live in la. We have the fires in the beginning of the year. Then the raids, the past two weeks and layoffs have

been happening in shaky markets. Then there's ai. There's just a list of things. So maybe you have these questions.

How do I keep earning with help betraying myself? Interestingly enough, that has been a conversation with folks I've been talking to, not just clients and people who are possibly interested in working with me, but also friends. Second question, how do I keep working without shutting down? And third, how do I scale without selling out that one?

I've been working on that definitely. And you're not alone. Like I said, I've been having these exact conversations with clients. I feel like it's been. Louder the past year, I've been saying this with people I've met, even friends. I think what's happening in a macro level has created a self-awareness for my clients of what's happening to them individually within their work, within their life.

So what to do with all of this. And it's interesting 'cause despite it all, and I'm not sharing this to brag, I'm just sharing it more so as an example, an inspiration. And don't worry, I'll go through tactical things that despite everything happening, my business is doing well this year, already hitting last year's revenue, but I'm not doing it, pushing myself into the ground.

Especially with everything happening, I'm doing it in a place where I am taking care of myself. So let's get deep into it. Now. Don't worry, this is not negative. I'm just, we're just gonna have a talk because I have relatives that ask me, so what do you claims pay you for? I'm like, they pay me to pause.

So we could actually sit and listen to those thoughts, untangle it so we could see. What we need to do as individuals to realign to what will make us happy and successful in that definition is different for each person. So let's go with the first question now. How do you identify what feels like signs of betrayal for you?

when you're saying yes and your gut is screaming, no, I'm gonna give you a simple example. We are so addicted to our phones. Ugh. Social media. And in the past two weeks with the raids, it's oh, I need to look at my phone. Even similar to when the fires happened in LA and I was talking to a friend of mine over lunch and we were talking about the self-awareness with opening up our phones and realizing how we were feeling, anxious and nervous.

And I will, I'm grateful to my friend for having that conversation with me because I have limited my social media. To not be on it. I think there's a sense of oh, I'm connected to what's happening, but for me, how, and I'll go more in depth in detail, it's like I would just rather be connected with the people who might be directly affected, checking in with friends and loved ones rather than feeling connected with social media.

I, it's, I, talked about her in a past podcast episode, but it's Social media is like an artificial drug to connection. Like it's not the real thing, right? We're not really having a date with our partner. It's oh, that's cute. We're just watching this. It's not real. I, I don't know if I like that comparison or it's kinda like eating.

Veggies and fruits compared to you just snacking on things you probably should snack on. Okay. I'm digressing. Let's go back. So how to make sure you are aligned to yourself. Are you honest with your time? I am currently creating two online courses with a company and the original plan I was. Supposed to film both courses and the courses were like, when it's done it's five to 15 minutes.

Okay. Just five to 15 minutes. And I thought, oh, me and my team could do this all in one day. What actually happened? We filmed one and it was humbling, but thank God I. Like I planned a day of rest after, and I just realized I wasn't being honest. One of my team members did say I think it might take us longer, and me and my other team were like, no, we could do it.

So I wasn't honest with myself. And are you giving yourself buffer and space around big deadlines, meetings and launches? And most importantly, are you honest with your team and collaborators when you are at capacity? Even with this specific episode, and I know my podcast producers listening to this, is I could not record an episode last week.

It was too heavy for me with ICE raids. They were just hitting hard emotionally, so I. I told my producer, Hey Pete, who's recording this? Hey, I'm gonna send this to you three days before we dropped the episode. 'cause it's been a lot. And you know what? He got it and he understood and I was just real and honest with him.

So at work, can you be real and honest? Is there things. Deadlines that you could shift. Alright, let's go back to the question earlier. Even just the title of this episode, how can I even work right now? But before we talk about work, let's start with your non-negotiables in life. Mine, family, my relationship with my partner and mental health.

I'll, give an example. So this Saturday it's gonna be my Godson's one year birthday party. And because of that Father's Day just passed, I was not gonna go visit my dad for Father's Day 'cause Oh, I'm gonna see him 'cause he's grandpa. I'm gonna see him for my Godson's birthday because it's a 90 minute drive there.

90 minutes back. It's that's three, three hours. It could be three or four hours in the car. But with everything that was going on last week, I just needed to be with my family. I filmed yesterday and I'm like, no, I need to rest. I was like, no, just like in, I just, needed to be connected with my family.

So I drove, saw them in person, and that filled me up for mental health, doing Muay Thai, kickboxing. I've been doing it for 21 years, and the classes at 10:00 AM I block off like two to three hours. 'cause I. Make a break for driving there, the class coming back, cooking lunch with my partner, and then eating, showering.

I'm giving you way too much details. I realize. I'm sorry and it's really important to me. It gives me a lot of energy. I also start my day earlier because I have that two to three hour break, but I need to move and because it's at 10:00 AM there tends to be important meetings. So unless it's a really important meeting.

I am gonna go to class, but if there's an important meeting, I'll take that meeting. And what I love about Muay Hai and I talk about mental health, it just see, it helps me stay present. It is a martial art, so if I am not present, I will literally get hit and get a bruise on my leg, and I have plenty of them, by the way.

How can I work right now? Like I said, being honest with your team. Like I shared earlier, I had to be honest with my podcast producer about sending in my recording last minute. Sorry, Pete. All right. Now let's talk about advocacy Without the burnout. Due to popular belief, you do not have to be the loudest person on the internet to make a difference.

I used to be a grassroots organizer in my twenties old school phone banking. Knocking on doors, I burned out 12 hour plus days. because I had, I thought I had to do everything, and when I say phone banking and knocking on doors, I was also having hard conversations with voters, talking about what was an issue that was important to them, and then coming from place of curiosity and if it was important to them.

Then we talked about how they wanted to vote. I actually really appreciated what I learned as a former grassroots organizer because I learned to be curious, be observant, not try to sway them to vote or think in a different way. But this allowed for conversation. And now, even though I'm not a grassroots organizer, I do vote.

I have hard conversations with people who think differently. I will also say I do that with people I feel safe with and grounded enough to do And let's take Muay Hai for an example. I. let's just say before the martial arts, not everyone there has similar beliefs as me, and I've been doing this before I got popular.

I've been doing this like I said, for 21 years, but I approach it like a scientist, curious, observant, not reactive. That's how I used to do it as a gradus organizer. Never forced anyone to. Vote a certain way. I asked what mattered to them and I listened, and then I connected the dots. And I think in this unfortunately polarized world where I feel like it's just yelling and you should do it this way.

I can't believe you. I. I don't think we're just listening enough and talking enough. Yes, we have social media, we have all this tech to connect one, one another, but at the same time, I just wanna remind you, agro algorithms feed similar thought process beliefs and values as you, and that's okay, but ugh.

I just feel like for us to move. Forward. We need to be in more conversation, healthy conversation. Now, I'm not saying you go talk to every single person that you don't feel safe with. I pick and choose who I am willing to have a conversation with.

I know this episode is so good, and you're like, how can I get more of this? I have a newsletter that comes out every Thursday. That's free, fun, and full of real talk. It's a live journal LGA on Leadership and Life with actual scripts behind the scenes stories and lessons from mistakes I've made so you don't have to for work and life.

Just go to elaine.liu.com/join. That's EA

join. So however you show up now, it doesn't have to be public or performative. You can advocate in your own way. Like I said earlier, text a friend who might be affected with anything. And I did this with a former client who owns a restaurant in downtown la one block away from the protest one block away.

And the news the. Both the big news outlets as well as social media has shown downtown to be crazy and for you not to enter it. So I checked in with my former client. She was like, no, it's a ghost town and this is actually affecting our business as well as other restaurants in downtown because the protests are literally for blocks.

And I know there tends to be replays of the bad actors who are rioting, but that's not everybody. That's not the majority. And I double check the facts and went to LA Times and I saw, oh yeah, it is

three to four blocks. It's not that. It's not that big. And I went to see her for lunch and I was able to find parking in downtown LA That is crazy.

And I felt completely safe. Not because I do Muay Thai, but. It was just so quiet. So text a friend. Second, you could offer support without needing credit. So what I mean by that is you could text a friend and be like, Hey, I'm here if you need anything. But no need to respond. Be unattached to the results.

Another thing you can do is even choosing presence. Over performance. For example, for me, I was thinking it was Father's Day. I was thinking, oh, I could do a post about my dad. 'cause I'm so grateful. My dad is an immigrant farmer, so he worked with a lot of folks who were undocumented. I also went to school with a lot of friends who were undocumented and I was like, you know what, I don't just because I know how social media is.

I don't need to go more in detail. And I'm like, where do I feel safe? Where can I be more present? And that's this podcast here. My podcast I'm speaking. And hey, some of you may not like this podcast episode. That's fine. You could stop listening to it. You have agency and choice and social media.

I feel like there's no agency and choice in terms of what's in your algorithm, but I also know my clients and my community. All of you like it when I'm real. And I could be real and honest here in my podcast. Alright, when it comes to working, how can you check in with yourself to make sure you are aligned?

So I have three things you could do. One pause before replying to your request. You could give yourself 10 minutes or 24 hours to check in. For example, I shared earlier that I worked with the company to do two courses, and they wanted a two week turnaround. And my instinct automatically was, yes, I could do it because I want the money.

But then I checked with my body and it said, Nope, girl, did you look at your calendar? How are you gonna do it? And I asked for more time and that's fine. And fortunately because I only recorded one course, I'm gonna have to say, Hey, I need more time for the second course. Two, Hey, name the cost when you say yes to something.

'cause when you're saying yes to something, you're also saying no to something. And I recently turned down a speaking gig from a friend because it was the one day I was in between a conference and vacation. It was the one day I was gonna be home. And to be transparent, I also wasn't gonna get paid for it.

And I knew in that day I needed that rest before going on vacation. Third is choosing resonance overreach. If something expands your energy, great, if it just gives you exposure but drains your spirit, then hard pass. You don't need to do it. Just a reminder, you can say no. And what are practices. You can do to make sure that you are okay working?

One is what I've been doing every day. The past. I try to practice every day, but I'll be real with you. I don't. But I will say the past two weeks, because it's been heavy, I have been reflecting on both my wins and my lessons. Even feeling into my body with everything that's happening. So work-wise, I was like, oh, how can I even stay focused and work?

I'm like, okay, let me see what's working, what's not working, how I could improve, and. As I've shared before, Google, SEO, has been really huge in my business, and I was looking at my analytics. I was just diving deeper into my Google Analytics and I realized, oh my gosh, 47% of my visitors are using mobile, and my website is optimized for desktop but not mobile.

So that is something that I am currently working on. This is both a win and a lesson, and so for you it's Ugh, how can I do work right now? It doesn't have to be all very performative or. That you're working on. It could just be, wait, let me look under the hood of what is working, what's not come from a place of a scientist.

And observation for me, I was just like, oh, let me look at this. Oh my gosh, I need to optimize my mobile. Checking in with your values. So I'm embarrassed to share this, but you know what? This is real talk. So like I said earlier, I've been updating my website. I just did a pitch where I won first place.

I have the recording of that in my podcast. It's a couple podcast episodes back and there's beautiful pictures I took with friends and there was one with me and a friend of mine and I was like, great, this is me and another friend. I was updating photos. One of them was for private coaching and I was like, oh, I could put her in there, just me and her.

'cause it looks like we have good vibes. But I was like, but she's not a client, so she's a friend, so I shouldn't put her in where it says private coaching with me. And it just didn't feel right. So I. I put that picture somewhere else in the site. Not that, but that was just a values aligned. So different from my twenties.

'cause I remember I used to like make decisions and things, not just my business, but in work and life so quickly. Like I, I had like always a rushed deadline, but I didn't take time to really think things through. If this aligned. Third is what drains versus energizes, you and I shared earlier, Muay Thai.

Energizes me as well as meeting people in person. So know your energy inputs what you need. This is why I honor like my 10 to 12 block, because I just, I need to move my body. I need to be connected to my body so that I could be the best human every single day. And finally, what happens when you actually honor yourself?

I just wanna share what's possible for you and for me. Like I said earlier, having that two to three hour break to do more tire weightlifting already hitting my revenue from last year, and it's only midyear. And for my clients, someone's for them. One of them has seven figure business and is about to go to maternity leave, and another works full-time is a parent and is buying real estate.

So yes, it's possible to survive. And even thrive. But let's be real sometimes, just like, how can I breathe today? And how it just starts with trusting yourself, honoring your capacity, and staying grounded in who you are in this season of life. So my challenge to you is, will you give yourself that pause to think about it?

If you're still here, I'm guessing this episode resonated with you and I know. It's been tough. So if you have a friend, family member, or loved one that needs to listen to this episode, share it with them now, send them a message about why they should listen and if you feel called to, would love for you to leave a five star rating and review.

It would help more folks like you find this podcast, especially since my intention is to create an accessible resource for all. And if you need support on creating your own definition of work, I would love to support you. Just book a call@elaineluu.com slash call. That's E-L-A-I-N-E-L-O u.com/call.