

Barrett Brooks (00:01.419)
Bonnie Wan, welcome to the show.

Bonnie Wan (00:03.371)
thanks Barrett. And I just learned that you're almost a neighbor.

Barrett Brooks (00:08.285)
I know we're like basically down the street, huge missed opportunity for my, one of my life briefs as we'll get into is having a really beautiful and welcoming podcasting studio where I can do live recordings. And, so that's coming, but not here yet.

Bonnie Wan (00:24.248)
Well, I'm here to help as soon as you have that. I might hang out there.

Barrett Brooks (00:26.867)
I like it. Yes. And I'll welcome it. so I want to start, as I understand it, you have kind of a certain side of you that only comes out rarely and with very trusted people, which is a dark and raunchy sense of humor. And, I won't make you tell any jokes. If you have a mild one, you want to give us an example. That sounds great, but I'd actually love to hear the origin story of where this dark and raunchy sense of humor came from.

Bonnie Wan (00:45.941)
god.

Bonnie Wan (00:52.734)
Yeah, eighth grade, public library, across the street from our middle school. I spent a lot of time there because I wasn't always sure that I was going to get picked up after school.

and I immigrated from Taiwan when I was six, so I was really shy because I had the language barrier, although it was very fast. You know, I realize now for kids that our brains, their brains are just, you know, so flexible. So I actually learned English very quickly and I worked really hard to hide my accent or bridge any gaps. I remember going home.

This is not the answer to your question, but it is related. I remember seeing the word fuck written on the bricks at the dodgeball, kind of where we played dodgeball. And I didn't know what that meant. So I went home and I asked, mom, what does fuck mean? And her face just, the shock. I think that was my first indication that you can really get a rise out of people, you know, with certain things. So.

When I hung out after school, there's this carousel of books right when you walk into the library. And I would just peruse them. were books around Charles Manson, Helter Skelter. That's what I learned

about awful serial killings. You know, I mean, these were things that a young brain should not be exposed to. But also in there was a book of really dirty, raunchy jokes. All kinds of things that an eighth grader should not be.

talking about, but I memorized some of the jokes and I honestly I didn't really know the meanings you know I would talk about how green &Ms make you horny and I didn't know what horny meant so I was just really naive but I knew there was something provocative in there and because I was so tired of being the shy buck-toothed brown girl on the edge and the fringe not included I had made a decision that in high school I was gonna change all

Bonnie Wan (03:06.338)

I wanted to know what it felt like to belong. I had a longing for belonging. And so one day I just kind of put myself out there. I started telling these jokes and I was shocked, amazed at the reactions, belly laughs full on and people yelling across the blacktop saying, hey, you gotta come listen to this.

And it was my first realization beyond my mom that, wow, I could be something different than how I've been kind of portrayed to date.

Barrett Brooks (03:45.803)

Hmm. Hmm. Yeah. There's so much of your early story feels like this pursuit of acceptance and assimilation as you talk about it and just trying to find a way to fit in, know, to be, to have that sense of belonging that really kind of gets ripped away from you when you move to a new place. And that's been such a wonderful and surprising theme of the show over time.

It's just how many people have had that shared experience and, how common, how common, but kind of tragic that that process is along the way. Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (04:23.542)

It's so human, it's so fundamentally human to want connection and acceptance and to be seen.

Barrett Brooks (04:30.635)

Yeah.

Yeah. So that move from Taiwan and were you born, your family is Chinese by cultural heritage. Were you born in Taiwan or were you born in China?

Bonnie Wan (04:43.692)

I was born in Taipei, but both of my parents are from mainland China.

Barrett Brooks (04:45.173)

Okay.

Barrett Brooks (04:49.471)

Yeah, I should I should be specific mainland China not to get myself into any trouble around here. Yes, yes.

Bonnie Wan (04:52.556)

Yes. A lot of politics there. But they fled, they both fled China when the communists took over during the Cultural Revolution. And they met actually in the United States. They were both attending university here. They were 10 years apart. And my mom did not want to marry my dad. She wasn't into him. She wasn't.

Barrett Brooks (05:09.529)

interesting.

Bonnie Wan (05:21.728)

She was gorgeous. She was absolutely stunning. And he just chased her, you know, frowned and around. She dated his friends, everyone but him. But finally, he scored and they got married. They went back to Taipei, got married, had my brother, me and then my brother. But my dad, I didn't live with him until I immigrated because he was here trying to...

make a living and establish himself so that he could bring us over. And my real first experience with the lack of acceptance was really through his energy, probably.

Barrett Brooks (06:06.85)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (06:07.086)

because his family was a big respected established name in Asia. My grandfather has a biography about him. He was the governor of Hubei province. So my dad was born in a very esteemed family and he went to private schools and he had a great education.

But when he immigrated to the US, and at that time, everyone in Asia, know, you know, America was, the United States was on a pedestal. That's where you send, that's where wealthy people, privileged people sent their children to be educated. And he came over, he met my mom. And then when he was trying to establish himself, it was really hard for him to suddenly become no one. In fact,

Barrett Brooks (06:46.283)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (07:00.128)

at some instances less than no one, given the discrimination and how people viewed Asian men in particular, Asian women had a whole

different set of barriers and challenges, the deferential, the beautiful, the, I don't know, here to serve in all kinds of ways. But my dad, it really robbed my dad of his...

Barrett Brooks (07:20.51)
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Bonnie Wan (07:27.786)
his confidence, his pride, you know, and he suffered the recessionary times. He was laid off several times and he became an alcoholic. And so when I moved in with him, when we all came over, it was a really tense and volatile household.

Barrett Brooks (07:49.857)
Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (07:50.52)
But I had that at home and then I was really on the outskirts of the social circles at school. So in a way that longing for belonging was survival. It wasn't just, hey, I wanna be an insider and I wanna be a popular kid. I did, I did. I thought that was fascinating. But it was more of a deep human craving.

Barrett Brooks (08:16.116)
Yeah. Yeah. A sense of place, a sense of community, sense of, dignity, just all the things that come from being connected. you know, one of the, the thing I love most about the, your book, the life brief, which we'll get into a little bit is that it's really a biography. And, so I took this memoir writing class listeners will have heard me talk about this and talk about the category of kind of memoir plus.

Bonnie Wan (08:24.856)
Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (08:35.117)
Mm-hmm.

Barrett Brooks (08:44.287)
And this is almost like the inverse of that. It's a, it's a personal development book. That's also a memoir. I loved that the parts I loved the most were your story. And I just made note of kind of the collective cost of coming to the United States on your family of you assimilating in this longing to belong of the bullying and the racism that you and your brother and your whole family encountered.

You know, your dad going from this respected place in society and having access to resources, to, being laid off, failing as an entrepreneur, his business failing, I should say, after he became an entrepreneur, the alcoholism, your mom having to go into bread winter mode. was just so much weight that came from all of this. and one of

the stories that was most heartbreaking was you sharing kind of your, your sweet little brother.

coming to get you at the end of the school day and using this term of endearment for sister, which I'll, I'll ask her, but I'll say it is JJ basically. okay, great. my, my wife is, she speaks, Mandarin. And so I get a little bit of practice here and there. And so I wondered if you just might share that story about your brother coming and calling to you and this kind of term of endearment from, your language of origin.

Bonnie Wan (09:49.09)

Very good, very impressive work.

Bonnie Wan (10:08.512)

Yeah, first to set the portrait, the picture, my brother was perhaps the most adorable little kid. He had that 70s bowl cut, but he looked like

a little girl. In fact, a lot of people would call, would say to my parents, your daughter is so beautiful, so adorable. He had big eyes and this little adorable bowl cut. And he would come to my classroom and he'd stand in the doorway and patiently wait for me to walk home together. And jie jie, jie jie, you know, he would call to me and

The other kids would just laugh. They just break out in laughter and then repeat after him with the, I don't even know how to call it, the fingers to the eyes slanting, know? Chia-chia, chia-chia, you know? And it was really, it still gets me really emotional to think about it because I felt really protective of my brother.

Barrett Brooks (11:01.619)

Mmm.

Barrett Brooks (11:05.483)

it

Bonnie Wan (11:14.542)

And at that time, it was just fine to have casual racism. That was just a part of the fabric. We didn't have any PC rules or, you know, I don't know where we are today. I don't know what's happening today. I feel like I'm in another world. But during the 70s, that was just part and parcel for growing up, you know, the cruelty of kids. And it was the era of latchkey kids.

Barrett Brooks (11:27.594)

Yeah, yeah.

Bonnie Wan (11:44.084)

So parents were at work, kids were on their own, you had to fend for yourself. But I was okay, for the most part, with people making fun of

me. It really just crushed me to watch it happen to my brother.

Barrett Brooks (12:00.309)

Yeah. Yeah. You know, I, so much of, my coaching work ends up relating to how the kinds of things you talk about in therapy show up at work, the old pain, the old habits, the old brokenness and how that continues to show up in our lives. And no matter how hard we try and hide it, it's always there. And I think about that younger you, you know, being so protective of your brother and how surely that must've also been a reflection of the pain that you weren't.

Bonnie Wan (12:11.459)

Mm-hmm.

Barrett Brooks (12:29.905)

even allowing yourself to go to from all of this at the time, because it probably would have just been too much. You know, was,

Bonnie Wan (12:37.08)

disassociation we call it, right? Yeah, that started really young along with assimilation. And it's only now in this period of adulthood that I really have names for that. I can see that show up. And it was survival at that time, because there's much more harrowing things that happened to me during that time that I didn't talk about in the book.

Barrett Brooks (12:43.808)

Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (13:01.087)

Yeah, yeah.

Bonnie Wan (13:02.158)

and that is a particular, I think those slivers are the ones that really tattooed in me the nature of power and how powerless, how powerless kids are to adults. It's very easy to take advantage of kids, how powerless girls are and women, and then how powerless immigrants are.

Barrett Brooks (13:14.879)

Hmm. Say more about that.

Barrett Brooks (13:30.47)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (13:32.106)

And when you don't have power, you don't have voice, authority, agency, credibility, really awful things can happen.

Barrett Brooks (13:42.485)

Yeah. Yeah. You kind of end up invisible, disappearing. You know,

there's no one there to take care of your actual needs. Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (13:52.056)

Yeah, so disassociation was literally my survival tactic. And you know, there was something that happened to me when I was eight. And it was from my girlfriend's father and over a sleepover. And I was absolutely helpless.

Barrett Brooks (13:56.865)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (14:18.377)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (14:20.466)

And also, it was such a introduction to something that I had not entered. And I can recall how now I can recall all the steps that led up to him seeing me as an opportunity. But I didn't remember that moment that night until I was in my 20s.

Barrett Brooks (14:38.581)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (14:47.692)

And that's how strong the disassociation is.

Barrett Brooks (14:50.529)

Isn't that interesting how these things happen to us? I've talked a little bit about my experience, uh, with being abused as well. Well, I won't say as well, but I have an assumption about the story that we're talking about. And, um, it was in my twenties as well. I was sitting at this conference and, uh, speaker was on stage giving a talk called the myth of masculinity. name was Louis house. He's a big podcaster now. And it ended up being a story about his experience being sexually abused growing up.

And it was just like this curtain on my life fell down around me and this distance I had created between my experience and my life, you know, my life, just completely collapsed all in one moment. was like a black hole sucking everything in. And it's just so interesting how it comes back around. know, eventually we have to, we have to confront these things if we're going to live fully, if we're going to really step into the life that we're meant for, think.

Bonnie Wan (15:45.728)

It's so true, I'm so sorry that happened to you. Thank you. And I know that black hole feeling, you know? And what I've learned since is that it's not special to me. It's not just because I was an immigrant or just because I'm a woman. It's so common. And that's the horror of it.

Barrett Brooks (15:47.829)

Yeah, I'm sorry it happened to you too.

Barrett Brooks (16:07.167)

Yeah, unfortunately. Yeah. This is why, I just made a conscious decision after processing, confronting, integrating, that I was just going to talk openly about it. That one of the best things I can do, you know, there's like a different set of things that men who have gone through this face, which is that it challenges all the ideas of, of strength, of power, of control that men are supposed to have and all the things that come with, you know, quote unquote masculinity.

And, so many men go through it too. And it so rarely gets talked about because it's so shameful. It's so shameful period. and so I just think there's a great service to, you know, to you being willing to talk about it. that's a story I tell myself anyways, about me talking about it as it opens up the door for people to be able to get the help they need.

Bonnie Wan (16:40.577)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (16:58.678)

Absolutely, I think the more everyone is able to talk about it, the curtain comes down on the shame, right? And we see that, my God, I remember the first day of Me Too, right? The hashtag was used. And my husband had known about my history, but he called me that morning and he said, my gosh, Bonnie, every woman I know is posting her story.

Barrett Brooks (17:11.457)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (17:27.242)

I can't believe this. And I said, wait a second, you've been living with that story with me for so long. But it was in that moment of how prolific it was that it really sunk in to him what kind of society and culture we living in.

Barrett Brooks (17:48.127)

Hmm. Yeah. And all of the brokenness that it reflects, you know, all the brokenness that it reflects the pain that it reflects. And, and that was just a lot of what you had to live through. You know, that was a lot of what you were faced with as a young child, you know, your dad dealing with his problems and his way through alcohol, the surroundings that you were in, people being unkind because they were uncomfortable with people who were different.

Bonnie Wan (18:14.734)

Mm. Mm-hmm.

Barrett Brooks (18:17.691)

And one of the things that I think is beautiful about, talking to you, also hearing you talk about your story is how much you are able to own it and be what appears at peace with it now, in a way that you can really, you're so gifted as a messenger, you know, I think reflective of your work. Like I just made so many notes about the phrases you use about your life that are so good. They're like,

They're like advertising taglines, but for describing stories of your life, it's wonderful because it really sticks with you.

Bonnie Wan (18:45.518)

you

Bonnie Wan (18:51.456)

Language is so important. Writing, I have discovered, you know, and the different forms of writing. Writing to uncover what we've buried inside, letting the pen lead, not planning the writing. And I'm always surprised what comes out of my pen. And then writing for distillation and clarity and commitment.

Barrett Brooks (19:04.533)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (19:13.814)

Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (19:18.958)

two really different ways, you know, to engage with writing. But I'm a reluctant writer. I'm a procrastinating writer. I prefer to speak and do this with you, Barrett, you know, have a conversation because something activates in me. Writing and the blank page really terrifies me. But the opportunity to do it was such a beautiful, big challenge that I had to say yes.

Barrett Brooks (19:37.888)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (19:47.646)

And I've discovered so much in that practice. But I didn't intend it to be a biography or a memoir. Those were not planned parts of the vision. But I realized it's a great responsibility to tell someone else's story and to take it to the rawest edges so that the reader feels safe and seen. And like I said before,

Barrett Brooks (19:59.937)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (20:05.813)

Yes.

Bonnie Wan (20:17.856)

Sexual abuse discrimination.

alcoholism and other vices, addictions, these are all really common to our personal histories. They show up differently, the circumstances and situations might be different, but the through lines, the suffering, the pain, the choices we have to make, whether we confront it, when we confront it, how we confront it, these are all things that are more universal than they should be.

And I felt that I couldn't ask people to do this work unless I could show them that I have done the work. This is not me as some ivory tower strategist giving them tools. It's me having used those tools and now I'm giving them the map of how those tools really work and can work in their own lives.

Barrett Brooks (21:17.289)

Hmm. Yeah. And creating them even just to serve yourself, you know, you created them from scratch so that you could work through these things. I resonate so deeply though, with the piece about it's a great responsibility to hold and tell other people's stories. And there's so much consent and permission required. And then there's the implication of, need you to give me consent to share your story because I'm trying to make a point. And I faced this a lot in my own speaking and writing where.

All of the richest stories that I have available to me are from my clients. And one of the deepest and most important things that I promised my clients is it's not mine. You know, I'm not going to go out and do tell your story in any way that could be identified. I'll pull trends and I'll talk about the general things people face, but I'm not going to tell your story in a way that could compromise your ability to own it. It's so challenging though, cause then what do you pull from, you know?

Bonnie Wan (22:12.212)

It is and, you know, Barrett, that when you're working with someone, so whether I'm interviewing them as a strategist or you're working with them as a coach, you are sensing their story as much as they are telling you the story. So you can transcribe that session and have AI map it out. Right. But the words don't tell the whole story. And so if you are a storyteller and a writer.

Barrett Brooks (22:26.306)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (22:41.876)

You also need to speak about what you're hearing between the lines. And that is a big responsibility.

Barrett Brooks (22:45.769)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (22:50.177)

Yeah. It's also a skill, you know, or practice as you like to talk about the practices. Um, while we're there, I want to, where we're going to jump back in, in your story is this like longing to go to art school, but as long as we're here with the practice thing, you use this word practice a lot. And it seems like an important piece of language to go back to your point there. Talk to me about what's different about a practice versus other ways we might talk about that kind of thing.

Bonnie Wan (23:20.16)

Yeah, my agents, my editors, publishers, everyone around me wants to call it a tool, a method, a process. And I keep insisting, no, it's a practice. And they like all the business terms, framework.

Barrett Brooks (23:38.089)

Mm-hmm. Mental model this that yeah.

Bonnie Wan (23:39.946)

Yes, yes, and it's great. It's great. And I know there's a whole segment of people who need it to sound like an HBR case study in order for them to weight in. But the practice is so intentional for me because I need people to know that this is accessible. Yet it takes them showing up and trying it and doing it time and again for it to become easier. So the more you put into it,

Barrett Brooks (24:06.035)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (24:09.378)

the more you get out of it, the more you do it, the easier it gets. And so I'm really inviting people to wade into this and find the parts of it that really speak to them, but at the essence of the practice, it's to come into a deeper relationship with yourself. Because when I work with people,

I see all the ways that they suppress their voice and their truth. They bat it away. Their inner judge or inner critic stops them in their tracks before they can even get to the explosive power of creative ideas and possibility. They've already shut themselves down, right? And so the practice is opening yourself up little by little and finding the ways that work for you.

What are the questions and the prompts? Is it writing? Is it drawing? Is it speaking? That allows you to safely start to be nakedly honest with just yourself. It's a private practice. But so many people are

out of practice with it.

Barrett Brooks (25:22.175)

Yeah. Yeah. Deeply dissociated or just distanced from what's going on inside in their lives. I had, you know, speaking of client stories, one of the ways that I work is I, as I learned through my coach training, we start with a client or a coaching commitment. And so the beginning of any engagement, which typically starts with six months with a client is helping them form a commitment to themselves. It's not to me and say themselves.

Every session starts with, right, let's start with your commitment. And then we talk about the topic of the day because it ladders up to the commitment. And it's amazing to me how many commitments revolve around, and these are like highly successful people. know, these are not, not that that means anything in particular, other than that you, you think something happens when you become successful, you know, the, but the public perception is that something changes and all of a sudden, you know, everything and you see exactly what you need to do.

How many of the commitments in these folks are basically a version of living in inner and outer alignment, believing my experience of my own life, being honest with myself, fully leaning into my capabilities as a creative or a leader or whatever. And all of it reflects this just desire to be whole, to not have this gap between what's going on in here and what's going on out there. And it's fascinating to me. And it seems like that's your work too. Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (26:42.03)

Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (26:48.906)

It's beautiful. It's beautiful because it's proof that we are more similar than we are different. When society and culture wants us to believe we're extremely different from each other because that's what makes power powerful. It helps power stay in power.

Barrett Brooks (26:57.889)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (27:11.734)

as long as we're all against each other. I won't go down that track right now, but I want to ask you, the word commitment is also a very choiceful word. Why do you call it a commitment?

Barrett Brooks (27:20.747)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (27:33.343)

Well, I think what most coaching centers around is a goal and what

people think they're hiring me for is to achieve a goal. I want to double my business from 1.5 million to 3 million, or I want to go from a million followers on Instagram to 5 million or whatever. And I'm not saying these things aren't valuable. Sometimes there really is something there.

It's a reflection of your creative potential. It's a desire to resonate or make an impact. Like I know that these things can be important. And also so rarely does the work end up actually centering on the goal.

whatever the goal is, is a reflection of an inner longing or transformation someone's trying to go through. And so the commitment piece is why is it commitment? It's a commitment to self. It's a commitment to a way of being. It's a commitment to a transformation that you want to experience. And what I find mostly is once people really get comfortable with commitment to themselves and embrace that,

And I have two different ways that I offer people to start the session. It's I am committed to, or I am a commitment to.

Bonnie Wan (28:49.454)
Mm-hmm. Tell me the difference.

Barrett Brooks (28:52.417)
So the coach training program I went through is called Presence-Based Coaching. It's beautiful, it was founded by, oh, I'm gonna forget his name in the moment weirdly, Doug.

Bonnie Wan (29:06.718)
Hahaha

Barrett Brooks (29:07.325)
Doug Sills be good grief. it's like the thing I'm most steeped in Doug Sills be founded. He died about a decade ago. tragically of lung cancer and, his, one of his mentees took over the business, BB Hansen. And she has been the primary trainer that I've trained under and, and my coach for a period of time. And so I learned this from them and I want to make sure I give credit where it's due. So I am now.

we could call it like a disciple of presence-based coaching, teaching my learnings. The difference between these two things is really the sensation it creates in your body. And I hear you talk about this a lot, actually, the felt sensation of things, like feeling into when you write down anything in response to one of the prompts you give people, one of the penetrating questions, as you call them, that you ask. What does it feel like in your body?

And people will hear this and they're like, in my body, I don't know, here's what my brain says. And so the difference between I am

committed to and I am a commitment to, I experience it as a difference between what my brain thinks and what my body feels. I am committed to feels more logical, it's more brain centered, and I am a commitment to feels more embodied, more present, more whole, I guess.

Bonnie Wan (30:27.924)

I love that. It reminds me a lot of Gestalt therapy. Presence coaching, you know, which is very embodied and believes that your body tells the story. Whatever you're feeling right now has a story behind it. I'm a huge fan of getting embodied, especially in this neck up world that we live in now, right?

Barrett Brooks (30:31.553)

Mm. Mm-hmm.

Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (30:53.08)

technology is so beautiful that you and I can talk like this, even though we're only blocks away, worlds away, but we can imagine we're worlds away. But it is very neck up. And I work with a lot of neck up client, right? Where the intellect is on the pedestal, but there is knowledge and then there's knowing. And the knowing...

Barrett Brooks (30:59.402)

Yeah, right, I know.

Barrett Brooks (31:08.745)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (31:20.91)

exists in a deeper part of ourselves. You want to call it a heart, your instinct, your intuition, your gut, whatever name you want for it. That's where the truth lies. And as a strategist, that's what I'm trained to hear, to look for, unlock, is someone's essential truth. And when we unlock that,

Barrett Brooks (31:39.232)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (31:49.676)

or those, it can be plural. That's the heart of transformation.

Barrett Brooks (31:56.841)

Hmm. That resonates with me.

It's interesting. You talked earlier about how frameworks and mental models and process and all of this can appeal to a certain type of a certain, certain segment of people who would benefit from the work, but it may not resonate as much with other ways of describing a

practice or, I find that similarly true with the body, the somatic experience stuff, which is kind of how we refer to it. the thing that

helped me embrace it at first, because I have this subversion like most people do to, you you talked about in your book, personal development or coaching even as a practice. and so I had to do a lot of my own work around, can I embrace this enough to be this? but in the body stuff, the one, something that broke through to me was that we get, if we're talking about data,

and sources of data of our experience of life. The body gives us like 90 % of available data to us.

Bonnie Wan (32:59.318)

Yes, I call it emotional data.

Barrett Brooks (33:01.185)

Yeah, and it's everything it's all your senses. It's what's going on throughout your body You know in your shoulders and your jaw and your gut and your heart and all these different Places and it's just so rich once you start exploring it and you notice

Bonnie Wan (33:18.318)

Can I ask you another question? Do you find a difference between men and women in terms of their journey to the somatic sensory experience?

Barrett Brooks (33:31.307)

huge difference. Something, something I notice about, and I want to get your perspective on this too, because obviously we represent two different perspectives on it. Something I noticed about my client base generally is that it tends to skew both more female and more, BIPOC AAPI like that direction, fewer kind of traditional, you know,

Bonnie Wan (33:33.688)

Can you unpack?

Barrett Brooks (34:00.007)

white male type person. Highly masculine, know, if we want to call it that.

Bonnie Wan (34:09.762)

I turned that off.

Barrett Brooks (34:11.091)

Okay. That's what we have producers for. Love you, Adam. and, and I found this fascinating, you know, this is a source of data for me. What is it about my practice that attracts a certain type of client? You know, I'm certainly not putting it out there in that way, or specifically naming it in that way, but I do think it's something about the approach. I think that a highly kind of stereotypically

masculine, successful man.

Bonnie Wan (34:13.902)
Great.

Barrett Brooks (34:42.367)
especially white men have a harder time with soft, soft stuff as they might refer to it or woo woo stuff as they might call it, you know, and, I have a hard time when it gets called that because then I feel like I get on the defensive and I get reactive and it's like, I'm trying to justify myself to my peers. And I have all my own relationship to that. And this is fascinating to me. It's like, why do we not? I think it's, it's changing.

So let me also say that it's not universal. It's not true across the board. I think there's a growing kind of movement to allow for softness in men. And I think it's really important. I want to be a part of that, that change. I think that you can be both masculine and soft. Thank you.

Bonnie Wan (35:23.81)
Yeah, thank goodness for you Barrett. Thank goodness you exist. I want to call it wholeness because we all have those softer sides. I have a son and so the beauty of raising a boy, giving birth to a boy, watching him grow is I see how tender he is and how much he feels. But as he...

Barrett Brooks (35:32.896)
Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (35:50.518)
Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (35:52.6)
goes out into the world. The world wants him to be different than that. And the world shapes him to be different. And luckily, I have a very flipped household where his father is the lead parent and has, you know, spent so many days on the playground with him with the scrapes and the falls and his night terrors, you know, when I'm out of town and

Barrett Brooks (36:10.976)
Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (36:22.338)
I love that for my son and my girls, they get to see what whole masculinity looks like, right? A whole man who embraces his intuition, his emotional intelligence, as well as his intellect and that his strength comes through in such rich ways.

Barrett Brooks (36:45.921)

Hmm. Yeah. It's a beautiful thing. think there's a corollary to that, which is having a mom who's the breadwinner. So my mom, had my mom on the podcast, actually. Uh, some folks will have listened to it. Some folks will have said, I'm never listening to two hours of you and your mom. my mom was the breadwinner as well. And, um, she was a really strong leader and executive in business. Um, and I imagine you all face similar things in your journeys through the world of business and.

Bonnie Wan (37:00.91)

I love

Barrett Brooks (37:16.329)

male dominated hierarchies and just all of the things. and I notice in myself that I show up with a lot more softness and wholeness and tenderness because my example of leadership in the workplace was my mom. And my example at home was a very like, you know, in many ways masculine dad, but who was also taking care of us. He was cooking our meals and taking us to practice and whatever else.

And just that dynamic, that default dynamic of observing the world and how it works, shape something. It shapes something deep in you. Yeah. So I've just, I love that for your kids. And, I think it's beautiful.

Bonnie Wan (37:54.168)

Absolutely.

Bonnie Wan (37:59.468)

I have a funny story. My middle daughter, so I have four kids and she is very much the middle. So she has an older sister who acts like the oldest of the four because girls mature more than boys. My son is technically the oldest, but my number two kind of beats him at.

not beats him, she's the first to learn a lot of it to hit all the stages. But my third, who is the true middle child, said to me recently, I think just last year we were in the car together and she says, Mom, I remember the moment I found out that not all women need to be the breadwinners. Like that you are actually not common, not as common as I thought. thought.

Barrett Brooks (38:30.346)

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Bonnie Wan (38:56.65)

And she goes, I was so relieved.

Barrett Brooks (39:00.563)

Isn't that funny?

Bonnie Wan (39:01.814)

And I thought, okay, yeah, relief. She was like, I don't want that pressure.

Barrett Brooks (39:07.969)

Yeah. It's fascinating just how that default dynamic shapes so much, you know? Yeah, exactly. And that comes back to that wholeness piece and really this central question of what do you really want? What do you really want? And breeding that in, you know, it's something I hope to breed my kids that they don't lose so much touch with that question along the way that they have to really dig through cruff to get back to it.

Bonnie Wan (39:15.766)

I love that she has choice.

Bonnie Wan (39:31.928)

Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (39:35.35)

I have an add to that question because I love your commitment, the difference between I am committed or I am commitment. I was recently at Yale, on the board of a new program at Yale that helps C-suite executives define what's their next chapter, because we're all living longer, right? 50 % of the children who were born

Barrett Brooks (39:37.473)

Please, God.

Barrett Brooks (39:43.946)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (39:59.937)

Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (40:04.718)

in the year 2000 and forward, 50 % of them are going to live to 100. So we're going to have more centarians. this whole, we're going to have to reimagine what retirement, you know, that last chapter, the third chapter of our lives looks like. But in this program, and part of it is taught by a professor from the School of Divinity. And he's written a book very similar to mine, but much deeper.

philosophically, he really reaches back to the roots of Buddhism, Christianity, Greek philosophy, literature, and it really unpacks at a deep level. And he gave me the next level question. So I start the book with this question, what do you want? And then I add on to it because

Barrett Brooks (40:34.507)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (41:01.89)

The beauty of words is you can really change the emphasis and dynamic of a question just like you did with what is your commitment. But I add on and I say in your heart of hearts, what do you really, really want? And then I add on that you might not have admitted to yourself yet. And he takes it one level deeper, which is

Barrett Brooks (41:17.984)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (41:31.242)

What is worthy of wanting?

Barrett Brooks (41:34.721)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (41:35.606)

What is worth wanting? And I love that because I've always struggled as a strategist to, there's two words in strategy that are very hard to define and help people understand. One is insight. What the hell is an insight? And then values. People get just so confused. What are my values? What's the difference between values and beliefs? But what I love about the question, what,

Barrett Brooks (41:56.841)

Yeah. values for sure. Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (42:04.448)

is worth wanting is it bakes in your values in the way that it is constructed and asked. It immediately puts a new filter because what do you want can be interpreted so broadly, expansively. It can go from everything from craving to calling. Right? That's a big ocean. But what is worth wanting is this beautiful distillation. What is it worth?

Barrett Brooks (42:09.057)

Mmm.

Bonnie Wan (42:34.24)

to you.

Barrett Brooks (42:35.455)

Yeah. There are these implied assumptions that go into the worth piece. You have to fill the worth with meaning, you know, to answer the question, what makes something worth it? I love that. That's good. What is worth wanting? had a, wonderful coach who's also been on the podcast before Andy Christinger and, worked with them for five years during my time as an executive at a software startup and.

He used to ask me, what is the longing underneath that? or what do you long for? You know, and this is another one that gets deeper is this kind of like nine aching longing. And that's what was coming to mind as you were sharing that. And, and I've been thinking a lot about this. was telling you about my creative agitation recently, and I'm not going to get too far into it because I don't like the meta breaking the fourth wall of talking about the podcast on the podcast, but.

Bonnie Wan (43:28.334)

no, the meta is beautiful and I love anything about agitation and creativity. So you put those words together. I'm all here for it.

Barrett Brooks (43:34.688)

Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (43:38.759)

And I've grown a huge tolerance for it. You know, it took me a long time to get okay with the fact that that's part of the process is this creative agitation is, is productive. It's the messiness as you talk about. but one of the things I think I long for, and I'd love to know your answer to what you long for. One of the things I think I long for is both to understand and to be understood. And what I realized was that for a very long time in my work, I was

Bonnie Wan (43:46.03)

Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (44:08.057)

Over indexing on understanding being a support system, understanding the needs of others, filling those needs, being there before they even knew they needed it. I was always kind of in a number two type role, a support type role and everything I did in my career. And so much of going out on my own again for the second time and launching this business a couple of years ago was leaning into the being understood part.

the expressing myself creatively and trying to communicate something about my view of the world now and what I see from my seat, having focused so much on understanding others for so long. And, and I think that's been part of this podcast is like, is about understanding that that's the joy of it is really digging in with someone on their background, their story, who they are, how they got here, what they struggle with.

But the reason I don't just shy into the background the way a journalist interviewing someone would, because that's the teaching, right? You're not supposed to be in the way, is it's not just about that. It's actually about the balance, about seeing each other in

conversation.

Bonnie Wan (45:18.924)

Yes, yes, that connection, right? The interplay is so important because I think that's what allows you to access even deeper riches than just the factual, you know, let's mind the surface. I to go back to what you said about creativity. Creativity is inherently agitating. If it was easy, it wouldn't be creative.

Barrett Brooks (45:23.925)

Mm-hmm.

Barrett Brooks (45:31.637)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (45:36.65)

Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (45:47.622)

then it's already done, if it's comfortable. And I think that's the hardest thing about being a creator. Because you have to mine deeper. You have to ask more penetrating questions. You have to sit with those questions, let them stir. If there were easy answers, then it's not going to ever break through. It's, you know...

Barrett Brooks (46:10.389)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (46:12.63)

So that was hard for me too as a strategist because just like diversity, it's inherently uncomfortable.

and you have to embrace the agitation of creativity or the discomfort of being different. Sameness is so comfortable, fits like a glove. And that has a role, that certainly has a role. But we have really over-emphasized comfort, convenience, and define happiness with those two terms.

We want ease and our struggle to get ease makes life so much harder. But we know that the beauty of growth lies in agitation. Creativity lies in agitation. Learning from people who are vastly different from us is uncomfortable because those differences force us to examine ourselves through a new lens and then also practice deep empathy.

Barrett Brooks (47:14.433)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (47:24.536)

for walking in somebody else's shoes. And I think what I long for is for more people to want to embrace that discomfort and see it as part

of the definition of a good life.

Barrett Brooks (47:43.285)

Hmm. This reminds me of this quote you had in the book. you know, I think this comes later in your story maybe, but it was with regard to how much change happened in the world and how much movement happened inside of you, in the pandemic after George Floyd was murdered, but especially after the very brutal racial.

racially motivated killings of Asian women in Atlanta, which is where I grew up. And so this hit really close to home because my wife is an Asian American woman. our children are half Asian and we grew up in Atlanta. And so it just really hit close to home for us too. And, and maybe we'll get into how that shifted so much of your work, but you had this quote in the book that was true equity and lasting change come from deepening our relations with one another.

And that this was kind of the core insight of a brief, wrote for yourself at the time about what your work was to do related to all of this. And I just wonder if you might say more about that, about the relations piece.

Bonnie Wan (48:51.054)

Yeah, it's only when we allow ourselves to meet relationship and connection with curiosity, not fear or bias or whatever judgment, would be the word, or assumptions when we can really lean into the curiosity and particularly in the moments that frustrate us.

and we can stay there and want to learn more, want to know more. That's where bridges are built. But it's so easy to turn away from each other. And as a leader, parent, spouse, all those roles, it's so easy to be too busy to engage at those deep levels.

Barrett Brooks (49:25.696)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (49:43.905)

Mmm.

Bonnie Wan (49:46.644)

It's hard as a parent to really listen and create space to hear your child and see their perspective. As a leader, I spent so much time with the other leaders because politically that's what happens, right? Leaders hang out with leaders and you talk about leader stuff that nobody else...

knows about because it's under the tent. That's how we call it, The big business decisions.

Barrett Brooks (50:15.114)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (50:19.106)

But it takes you further and further away from how employees, your people are experiencing the company, experiencing the changes happening all around the industry, and then experiencing what it's like to be vulnerable. And again, like in my childhood, not on the inside of the business.

Barrett Brooks (50:26.944)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (50:41.774)

And politics are part of the human existence. When you bring lots of people together, there's going to be hierarchies. There's going to be natural divisions, organic divisions. And for me in 2020, I could see so clearly what I couldn't see before, is that starting from that eighth grade playground decision, I had been so focused.

Barrett Brooks (50:56.916)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (51:10.132)

on first surviving through belonging, then achieving through assimilation, right? I could read the room. That's what being an outsider really taught me, how to read the web of social dynamics between people and how to find my place in it. And that worked really well for me for most of my career. And I got to the top.

But in 2020, I saw all the ways I was defending, excusing, and protecting a system that was not designed for people like me. And I could see all the ways that I was not using my position and power to change the system.

And that was a huge opportunity for me. so I immediately, so relations, not just solutions, because advertising, you know, in the creative business, we like to pride ourselves as coming up with innovative creative solutions to business problems, right? To culture problems, to people problems. And that is our, that.

Barrett Brooks (52:16.694)

Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (52:22.606)

pumps our egos, that's what gives us pride. We don't see it as disruptive, annoying ads in the world. We see it as creativity. But as long as we're looking at solutions, it keeps us at an arm's length from actually getting to know each other. So I can be working on...

Barrett Brooks (52:40.693)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (52:44.214)

you know, racial equity campaign and coming up with a brilliantly creative idea to solve or help solve that. And then I would go home and say, well, I'm not racist because I work on these campaigns, work at it. have tangible proof. Yet when I come to work, am I actually engaging with those employees who everything fill up to work?

feeling that you'll have multiple jobs, more jobs than, as you called it, the white man. And we know all the data. We don't want to see the data. And right now, we're in a climate where we don't want to talk about any of that. But the data is real. If you are in a privileged group versus an underrepresented group,

By the time you're in preschool, your children are already very far apart from an equity standpoint. And there's socioeconomic dynamics that go into that too. So from preschool, now you see how wide that starts to get as you go all the way up to university. And then those who can afford it to go to the most elite schools.

And it's not just what you know in college, it's who you know. And those elite schools have the most elite pools of contacts. And so there are just all these ways that we create the health gap, the wealth gap, the education gap. And in corporate culture, that happens too. And so assimilation becomes the way to.

achieve and move up a ladder and it means forsaking some things and not bringing to work your truth.

Barrett Brooks (54:48.149)

Yeah. And it seemed like you had a moment of kind of inner reckoning and a moment of courage and vulnerability at work and a partner meeting at one point, it seemed unexpected. It was almost like you just couldn't hold it in anymore. You had this realization, you know, you had put words to it on some level, like you've said, and your body, your mind, your efforts started to organize around.

building this deeper relationship, both to yourself and then to others. And so you're in this partner meeting and what happened.

Bonnie Wan (55:23.864)

my gosh, this was, I think this was the buildup of all that disassociation we were talking about earlier, right? Something unzipped in me very early in the pandemic. So we weren't, we weren't all used to the new format of work. So we were all on Zoom and we got on Zoom every day as a partner group. We went from not meeting even every week.

Barrett Brooks (55:44.713)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (55:48.942)

pre-pandemic to suddenly every morning. And so my fellow partner spent more time in my bedroom than my husband and I did together. So that was what, you know? But I had watched a film, one of the strategists in my group had sent me the film called Color of Fear. It's a really dated, if you look at the clothes, know, a documentary of men. And I think it was in the mid.

Barrett Brooks (55:51.893)

Wow.

Bonnie Wan (56:16.718)

90s and men of different races sitting in a circle in conversation with each other for an entire weekend. And that's the documentary. And they're all talking about their experiences. And there were black men, there were Hispanic men, were Asian men, and then there were white men. And it was a really potent view window into men.

Barrett Brooks (56:17.569)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (56:45.262)

one and then the differences. And there was a point in the film where one of the Asian men said he was at the grocery store, he's telling the story, and he was next in line. And the customer was at the cashier and they finished the transaction and left. And the cashier looked beyond him to the person behind him and said, next customer please. And he looked around and said,

This happens to me so much. I am just invisible.

And that just portaled me right back into elementary school. The young bucktooth brown girl in the corner, invisible. And it just unzipped in me when I saw that moment in the film.

and the next day at our partner meeting. And I had sent an email the night before to all the partners saying, please watch this film, please give it a shot. Because there were so many truths happening. I think two of the partners did it, and I understand why. But in the partner meeting, somebody said, well, we really need to respond.

Barrett Brooks (57:46.827)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (58:04.302)

to our black employees. This was just immediately post George Floyd. And we need to respond and help our black employees. And the revelation I had had overnight after watching the film is we have to

own the problem. Only until leaders own the problem that we solve the problem.

Barrett Brooks (58:22.746)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (58:28.6)

But if we see this as somebody else's problem, they have to, we can support them, but they are the solution to fixing their own problem. That divide is not going to bring change. And so...

Bonnie Wan (58:46.856)

One of the partners read a letter in the meeting and it pointed a finger at the partner group and said, you're all hypocrites doing all this racial justice work when you are an all white partner. And boom, there was my invisibility.

Barrett Brooks (59:08.585)

And how did it hit you in the moment? How'd you feel it in the moment in that meeting as you heard this?

Bonnie Wan (59:14.036)

I heard it and immediately thought there are two Asian partners. It is not an all white partner group. So I spoke up and I said, well, we should address that letter, but we also should point out that we are not an all white partner group, that we have two Asian women in leadership. And then I put like, I stopped there.

But I could feel the rise, the emotions start to come up my body and I thought, it's okay, it's fine. Where all these little cubes on Zoom, no one will notice. I wear glasses, no one's gonna notice, but it kept rising up my neck, know, up behind my eyes. I could feel the hot tears welling up and I still thought it's gonna be fine. But then they started to spill over and run down behind my glasses on my cheek. So I...

Barrett Brooks (59:43.487)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:00:11.554)

took off my camera. I just shut it down and I let it out. And it was, I call it in the book, an ugly cry. And it was like the greatest meltdown. I would beat any of my toddlers. I just, I was wailing. So much came up and out of me. It was as if everything I had suppressed had come out in that single moment.

And then I heard one of our co-founders say, what is that sound? Is someone crying? And I just wanted to die.

Bonnie Wan (01:00:56.842)

I had forgot to mute myself. And I have a friend who says, that's a brilliant phrase, you forgot to mute yourself on so many levels. Because so much of my rise and many women's is you don't speak your truth. It's like our black employees and when you just suppress and swallow.

Barrett Brooks (01:00:58.484)
Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:01:05.563)
Hahaha!

Barrett Brooks (01:01:09.6)
That's good.

Barrett Brooks (01:01:15.638)
Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (01:01:22.626)
the indignities that you face and you just get used to that as part of being in the business environment, right? Because if you're going to call it out, you're going to really put yourself in danger. And so women are so pressured if you do get to that level in the boardroom to act like a man. And if not exactly like a man, at least emotionally, you don't feel it. You got the moxie, you're badass, you're impenetrable.

Barrett Brooks (01:01:26.209)
to

Bonnie Wan (01:01:51.788)
You know, I mean, we bring that in athletes and everybody don't show your emotion. Here I was ugly crying and wailing in front of my partners. It was worse than death to me.

Barrett Brooks (01:01:53.707)
toxic.

Barrett Brooks (01:02:08.417)
I feel so compassionate for you in that moment because you know, this is my observation and it doesn't have to be true for you, but my observation is that you're having this really important moment of processing of like finally acknowledging to yourself. God damn it. I'm tired of being invisible and I'm going to finally say something and it's just going to be one thing, but I'm going to say it finally. And you're having this beautiful release of all of those years of eating this pain basically.

Only to be basically, you know, called out. He wasn't trying to call you out, but, and then you have to shut it down all over again.

Bonnie Wan (01:02:47.598)

And I didn't because I couldn't. It was already done. So I felt like that was the hand of the universe, you know, saying, okay, here we go. We're going to shove you out here because you feel so called in this moment. And I got, I turned my camera back on because I was nothing. I had to face the music and my

Barrett Brooks (01:02:49.643)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:03:06.026)

Yeah, what'd you do?

Barrett Brooks (01:03:09.995)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:03:12.542)

My face was all puffed up, my eyes were red, know, everything looked like I had the ugly cry. So the proof was on the camera. And I just spoke the truth. I said the things I said to you. We have to own this problem. This isn't somebody else's problem. We have to examine how we can do things differently. Where are we?

creating this problem? How do we take accountability? And then I went into my personal history of I realized I have guilt by assimilation. All the ways that I am creating a culture and an environment that does not help solve this problem. What are we each going to do to own it?

Barrett Brooks (01:03:59.787)

That was such a perfect example of your power of language, by the way, guilt by assimilation, you know, the way everyone's heard is guilt by association. And here you, you're, you're turning that phrase into guilt by assimilation. There's so many of these great little phrases that really stick. It's like a perfect one. And, you know, I, well, let me ask it as a question. It could feel like to someone, well,

that shouldn't be my burden to carry. I already carry enough burdens. I don't want to carry the burden of the guilt of assimilation. and I think that that's not how you want it to feel either, but you also felt this responsibility to step up. So how did you handle that for yourself? Because it's on one hand, even more weight to carry and on the other, it's something that you knew you couldn't not do at that point.

Bonnie Wan (01:04:31.886)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:04:54.87)

Yeah, one of the penetrating questions I ask in the book is what is

sacred? What is non-negotiable to you? And that's very similar to what's worth wanting.

Barrett Brooks (01:05:08.289)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:05:10.528)

And so when I wrote my new leadership brief coming out of that period, Relations Not Solutions, it immediately got me to look at my schedule differently, look at the pay gap differently, look at who I promote differently. And I wasn't promoting people or changing the pay gap based on race, but I was trying to erase the gaps that were already

in existence that were wrong, that were inequitable, right? So the easiest thing I was, I could do was flip my schedule. So I started having weekly one-on-ones with my most vulnerable employees because I wanted them to have a direct line to power.

And I wanted to understand how did bias and discrimination or all the subtle ways they experience barriers, not just racial, but in any way, just being a junior employee, being an intern, being a mid-level, how did it all come about? I wanted to step in their shoes and that required me to have continuous contact with them. So instead of spending all my time with the other partners,

I flipped my schedule and that was the first thing I did. And then I looked at the gaps that were under my control. I couldn't do anything about the other departments. But I saw how quickly, one, men and women, that's the highest populations, right? If you're gonna look at gender, men would negotiate so hard upon interviewing.

Barrett Brooks (01:06:31.361)

Mm.

Barrett Brooks (01:06:53.408)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:06:54.72)

and they'd immediately get a higher salary, right? Whereas women would be much more thoughtful in their assessment. They'd say, I'm really strong here, but here's what I want to work on and I'm here to do it. And then when you give them the offer, they don't negotiate. And this is stereotypical, but it was definitely the norm, right? And so immediately, just like the preschool kids,

Barrett Brooks (01:07:08.021)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:07:23.382)

when they started, they started at a very different pay level, right?

And even more pronounced if you're underrepresented.

Barrett Brooks (01:07:27.233)

Yeah. Yeah. And the thing that, yes, the thing people don't realize in this is the way the math works out on this. If you do, and this isn't how it works in all businesses, but if you just play it out and you have someone starting at 50 grand and someone starting at 60, and then you do cost of living increases over 10 years of 3%, 3 % of a bigger number is a bigger number.

Bonnie Wan (01:07:53.472)

Yes, let's go.

Barrett Brooks (01:07:53.939)

And so the gap gets bigger and bigger and bigger in real dollars over time, just because of the starting point. This was one of the most revelatory things I ever learned about the data behind pay gaps was that it's the starting point that actually matters the most because that dictates everything that comes after it. Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (01:07:58.488)

That's right.

Bonnie Wan (01:08:13.164)

That's right. So once you're, if you start behind, you're always behind. And that gap, that's what you're pointing out, gets bigger. It doesn't stay the same. It grows. And what I found is more often than not, men who negotiated hard and presented them hard had the most feedback when it came to performance reviews. Whereas the women were just over delivering.

Barrett Brooks (01:08:25.419)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:08:42.828)

because they had set this such an even assessment of who they were at the beginning, men, and again, this is a big generalization, but for the most part, they had oversold themselves. And then when they get in organization, they're making more but delivering less than expectation.

Barrett Brooks (01:09:08.033)

Yeah. And even if it's the same amount, you know, it's like, that's also the problem, right? So, gosh.

Bonnie Wan (01:09:13.846)

Yes, yes. Yes, let me correct. It's not that women outperform men. It's how they package themselves, the expectations they set and the forcefulness of their negotiations.

Barrett Brooks (01:09:33.439)

And just, you think of it in business terms, it's an ROI calculation. You know, if you have two people, a woman and a man performing at the same level, and they've started at significantly different spots, the ROI to the business on the woman's time is much higher. There's a higher margin on that time. And so that, you know, that's ultimately what it comes back to is that men tend to capture more of the value that they're creating, whether they are or they aren't.

Bonnie Wan (01:09:37.612)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:09:51.618)

Yes.

Barrett Brooks (01:10:00.907)

that they are perceived to be creating by their organizations.

Bonnie Wan (01:10:04.406)

And this has a natural effect. Like we talked about the preschool gap, right? So if you are privileged and you're raised in a privileged way, you're not experiencing some of the real problems. You you and I started the podcast talking about some wow.

some abuse problems, but if you have none of those, you are so confident and your confidence exudes through not just your words, but your handshake, your willingness to look authority in the eyes, ask bold questions, and you start to really know the mold for excellence and you shine in all the cues.

Barrett Brooks (01:10:23.167)

Mm-hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:10:49.951)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:10:51.394)

But if you have experienced trauma, prejudice, abuse, you are always scanning for safety. And so during the interview process, you're not walking in bold with that strong handshake, direct look in the eyes, bold questions right from the start.

Barrett Brooks (01:11:03.487)

Yes.

Bonnie Wan (01:11:16.918)

And guess what happens when they assess which candidate do we want to hire? Well, we have a very narrow definition of excellence and that tends to fit the culture of privilege. And until we can expand it and see people in a more empathetic way and look for other cues. And then

the surface immediate ones.

We're going to always go with the candidate who appears to be excellent.

Barrett Brooks (01:11:50.401)

Yeah, most, most, yeah, most matching the existing patterns that we've seen, you know, which are based on a very selective piece of data. so I want to, maybe I'll give a quick little word of encouragement to folks listening to this part of the conversation and then we'll take a break and we'll come back for the second half. So my word of encouragement is that, I think it would be easy maybe to hear this conversation.

And look at the systems that are in place. If you are from a background that is underrepresented or underprivileged or didn't have economic resources or you faced abuse or neglect or some of the things that we've talked about, that doesn't sentence you to this experience, right? That's the other piece of it is it doesn't sentence you to it. It's a huge process and challenge to grow beyond.

you know, these experiences to like really dig in and get in touch with what's inside and close the gap on the disassociation that we talked about before. But it is possible. You know, you can, I call it integrate the experience, you know, you can confront it and get okay with it and accept it and forgive yourself and integrate it in a way that it does give you power and the power of healing from trauma.

and moving beyond these experiences is that now you've seen the well of strength that you have within you. This is my experience of it anyways. And that becomes a freaking superpower. And so you're gonna have to, you have to work really hard to get, it's so painful. Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (01:13:22.284)

Yes, yes,

Bonnie Wan (01:13:34.286)

Practice, that's practice, right? That's why we invite that work. The more you do it in the tiniest ways, but every day, the stronger you get at it.

Barrett Brooks (01:13:43.041)

Mm-hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:13:47.081)

Yeah, and it can become your superpower. So that's my little word of encouragement here. So we'll take a quick break. We come back. I want to talk a little bit. One of the things that gets missed in a lot of the interviews I listen to with you is that when we're talking about

you sitting in a partner meeting, you were a partner at a very well-known advertising firm and head of brand strategy doing incredible work and often.

that whole thing gets skipped over because the starting point was kind of the breaking point of all of that in your book. So I wanna capture some of that. And then I also wanna talk about you've just made a new transition, which is really exciting. And I would totally miss the opportunity of being together if we didn't talk a little bit about that. So that's what we'll capture in the last little segment together. All right. All right, so I'll leave this running and we'll take a quick break. Three minutes, four minutes, whatever you need. I'm gonna run to the restroom and then

Bonnie Wan (01:14:33.23)
Let's do it.

Barrett Brooks (01:14:42.293)
back in and then we'll go from there. All right, see you in a second.

Bonnie Wan (01:14:44.846)
Great, see you soon.

Barrett Brooks (01:17:35.691)
All right, how you doing? Good.

Bonnie Wan (01:17:37.484)
I'm doing great. I was just going to say I have to meet you now. Because you can't spend two hours with someone and not kind of fall in love. And I say that in the most safe, most iconic sense. Human being to human being.

Barrett Brooks (01:17:42.497)
That sounds wonderful.

Barrett Brooks (01:17:51.253)
Yeah, yeah, yeah, no, I know.

Barrett Brooks (01:17:55.553)
I am, I'm always both fascinated and delighted that I tend to meet Portlanders in one of two situations like this, or at conferences that are in town. And it's like, what is that? You know, how is everyone, this place has incredible people here, but everyone's kind of hiding, doing their own thing, like living their own little peaceful life. And so whatever that is, we just tend not to collide with each other. And it's so funny to

Bonnie Wan (01:18:24.014)
Well, I don't know where to go to collide with people because it's all spread out, right? People have their own little indie spots and they

go. Just like we all have our own individual media fingerprints now, we're not gathering in the same places.

Barrett Brooks (01:18:25.77)
I don't either.

Barrett Brooks (01:18:34.901)
Mm-hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:18:39.839)
Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (01:18:43.359)
Yeah, I know it's funny. okay. We should definitely do that. I would love that. coffee have y'all over for dinner, whatever, whatever we want to do.

Bonnie Wan (01:18:52.8)
You don't need to be making dinner with two young kids. I think we can find another way to break bread.

Barrett Brooks (01:18:57.435)
Okay. All right. That sounds good. I do love making dinner for folks, but it is definitely an extra, an extra thing with the kiddos. So, okay. Let's talk more about that. cause I've got a lot of ideas there already. you ready to dive back in? All right.

Bonnie Wan (01:19:04.928)
Yeah, I get it.

Bonnie Wan (01:19:16.195)
Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (01:19:19.167)
So I wanna try and capture this rise in advertising that you experienced. And the place that it feels like it started was you told a story at one point on some podcast about a corner study on baseball cards. I wondered if you might tell the story about that.

Bonnie Wan (01:19:39.67)
Yeah, a man on the street.

my gosh, I was an NYU student living the big city life. I mean, New York was so different than the South Bay beach town I grew up with, grew up in California, and I was just mesmerized.

and I was ambitious as fuck, you know. I was at NYU and I was like, yes, this is where I belong. So I took a job at the Peninsula Spa, which was at the top of the Peninsula Hotel on Fifth Avenue to meet ad execs. Of course, right?

Barrett Brooks (01:20:23.115)
Brilliant.

Bonnie Wan (01:20:24.064)
Why not? And I did. I also met some amazing celebrities. Miles Davis, I think the week before he passed. Rod Stewart, you know, all these people. But I did also meet an ad exec, Jane Gundell, and she was the managing director of a very tiny creative boutique agency downtown. And

Barrett Brooks (01:20:33.28)
Wow.

Bonnie Wan (01:20:48.968)
I was just like, wow, Jane, hi. Every time handing her her locker key and towels. And finally, after I don't know how many months, she said, hey, Bonnie, I hear that you are really interested in advertising. Do you want to come and work for us for three days and stuff envelopes? Because we're doing a mailing for new business. So I'm going to date myself if I talk about the age of technology I entered advertising. So I said, yes, I am there.

And then the day came and I caught the flu. And so I was so sick, hacking, coughing. And I was like, I am going. Come hell or high water, I am doing this job, not letting this opportunity go. So I showed up at the agency and I did my best to mask my flu.

But it started coming out because I was licking envelopes, right? And I was hacking coffee. And they put me in a completely empty office in another wing of the floor. And that was fine by me. I just sat and I said, I'm going to get through as many as I can. I don't know how many I got through, but I stayed till two in the morning.

somebody had to come find me and give me the keys to the agency. I mean, that would never happen now. You trust this strange, strange young girl. They gave me the keys. I locked up the agency and went home and came back and did it again. I did that for three days and they said, we have to hire her. She's nuts. Just nuts. And so that's how I got my first opportunity. But then I volunteered to go interview people.

on the street corner about baseball cards because we're pitching a baseball card brand and company. And I said, yes, I'll do that. And so I went up to strangers at Korean convenience stores, you know, at comic book shops. I went inside, I observed them. you know, and I, you know, as easy as a young girl, because you just kind of say, hey, excuse me. You know, you're not threatening at all. And in New York, that's a good thing.

Bonnie Wan (01:23:05.23)

Although I think it takes a lot to threaten a New Yorker. So I did that and I came back with my findings and I'm sharing it with the two of the partners and the head of strategy said, oh, you're not an account person. You're a strategist. And that's how I became a strategist.

Barrett Brooks (01:23:24.765)

It's such a good origin story. It's so good. I just love it. Did you even know anything about baseball at the time or you were just doing the assignment?

Bonnie Wan (01:23:34.712)

Wow. I did know a lot about baseball, but not baseball cards. I was the baseball scorekeeper in high school and friends with George, yeah, and friends with George Brett. So George Brett would come in when he was on the Kansas City Royals and play the Yankees and give me free tickets when I lived in New York.

Barrett Brooks (01:23:39.273)

Okay.

Barrett Brooks (01:23:42.901)

That's hilarious.

Barrett Brooks (01:23:56.681)

That's awesome. yeah, yeah, this is such a good story. So, you know, one of the things I was thinking about in terms of your rise is how many campaigns you must've worked on and how many of these briefs you wrote and how much of that fueled the creative department's work. And just like you were at the helm for 30 years, 25 years of this creative industry that power so much of the way we view.

Bonnie Wan (01:23:58.51)

So I did know a little bit about baseball.

Barrett Brooks (01:24:25.525)

brands and products and culture in so many ways. We don't have a time for as many as I'd love to get into, but I wonder if you might just share an example of one of the campaigns you worked on and how both you shaped it and it shaped you.

Bonnie Wan (01:24:42.702)

Oh, there's so many to choose from. This is like asking a musician, oh my gosh. You know, there's some dark ones which are the most meaningful ones, you know. I'm probably not gonna go into it because it's so dark, but child sex trafficking and prostitution was...

Barrett Brooks (01:24:47.707)

I know, I can't believe no one ever asks you this. That's what I was

saying.

Barrett Brooks (01:25:03.966)

Okay.

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:25:08.938)

one of my favorite pieces of work because it made impact and it was really getting underneath the skin of the human psyche, you know, which are child pornography users online. And so I'll just say a couple things. Anonymity brings out our worst behavior. We don't have...

Barrett Brooks (01:25:34.965)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:25:35.822)

I just want to pinpoint that, we see that every day, right? In terms of what people say online behind their handles. But that was very much the case. And so our job was to serve up advertising that didn't look like advertising. We partnered with Google. I guess I am going into it.

Barrett Brooks (01:25:57.27)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:26:01.397)

Yeah. Let's do it.

Bonnie Wan (01:26:04.066)

But what we learned is law enforcement has such a hard time going after the worst of the worst perpetrators in the dark net. But there are millions of men who accidentally go down the rabbit hole and find themselves in child pornography. So they are looking for pornography.

Barrett Brooks (01:26:14.709)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:26:28.908)

but then they're served up things, I draw them deeper and deeper, and that was the audience that we could reach through advertising. So we partnered with Google and we looked at the top search terms that led people to child pornography.

Barrett Brooks (01:26:36.735)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:26:47.729)

this is fascinating. Okay.

Bonnie Wan (01:26:49.42)

Yeah. And then we partnered with Google to serve up our ads. And I say ads in air quotes because they didn't look like ads. They looked like exactly what these perpetrators were looking for. And when they clicked on them, we served up different messages and we were testing which messages would be most effective. So the first type of message was a Google map with their location.

right there and said, the internet is anonymous, might be anonymous, or no, sorry, I'm gonna say that again. And we served up a Google map showing their location with the line, the internet is not anonymous, but help is, and a hotline. So we had another execution where we showed a fogged up window in the hand of a young girl.

Barrett Brooks (01:27:36.129)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:27:39.937)

that's good.

Bonnie Wan (01:27:49.07)

behind it, saying this could be your daughter, your niece, your sister, your wife.

call this hotline. And again, the line was the internet is not anonymous, but help is. And then the third execution looked like pornography, but it looked like a video that was waiting to load and it served up the same message. And then this was at the beginning of tracking technology where ads followed you across the internet. So once we had someone and they would click out right away.

Barrett Brooks (01:28:00.681)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:28:07.137)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:28:22.145)

Right.

Barrett Brooks (01:28:28.137)

Yeah, yeah, right.

Bonnie Wan (01:28:29.064)

And it was the jailbait one, the one that looked like porn, that had the most action taken. Most people, or it had the most people calling the hotline for help because it looked like what they wanted. And so they stayed. And then when they read the message, that's what got them there. Whereas the map they clicked out of immediately, the empathy

one did nothing.

Barrett Brooks (01:28:41.075)

Yeah, yeah, yeah, right.

Barrett Brooks (01:28:56.65)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:28:57.856)

And then we track them across the internet when they showed up on their news site or somewhere else with the same message. We know what you're doing. The internet is not anonymous, but help is. So people don't often think about that when they think about advertising. They think about Superbowl ads, which we did plenty of, and I'm not part of plenty of those, but it's really about how do you understand the psyche of the audience and how

Barrett Brooks (01:29:03.423)

Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (01:29:09.921)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:29:19.007)

Yeah, yeah, right.

Bonnie Wan (01:29:27.822)

Do you use communications and creativity to drive behavior change?

Barrett Brooks (01:29:32.169)

Hmm. It's really powerful. It's especially powerful in the context of some of where we began, you know? and so I won't overemphasize that, but this, relate to this on two levels. One is we had to think a lot about this when I was in software, as we opened up a free tier of our software, which allowed people to build kind of small websites and landing pages. One of our primary concerns was by making it free.

And inherently anonymous, because you can sign up with any email address. Do we expose ourselves to. Nefarious users, you know, who want to spread things like child pornography. And we did a lot of work on how do we prevent that? What's the best practices here? How do we detect it once it goes live? And it's surprisingly difficult. So this is, I love hearing the story about a different way of coming out the problem of since it's difficult to get rid of all the material, how do you stop the usage of it?

and then the second thing is it makes me think about, before I had the curtain drop moment, I volunteered at a camp for abused and neglected children who were in the foster care system in the state of Georgia. And it was this beautiful experience. I ended up serving as chairman

of the board of the organization and I didn't yet realize why I was so connected to it. Like why it mattered so much to me.

to help these children in this situation. And of course, now I can look back and see like, a part of me knew like that was me trying to heal and also help through helping others heal.

Bonnie Wan (01:31:10.306)

Well, that's why our intellect doesn't always serve us, right? There's something deeper inside you, your intuition, your somatic, sensory, you know, engine operating at a different level.

Barrett Brooks (01:31:15.392)

Yeah.

Mm-hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:31:25.535)

Yeah. Yeah. That's really beautiful. Thanks for sharing that. I'm actually really glad you went there. It's a great example of the experience that.

Bonnie Wan (01:31:32.578)

I like to go to dark places. I think we talked about my dark humor, but I also like to examine the darker shadow sides of the human experience.

Barrett Brooks (01:31:39.391)

Yeah. I think acknowledging it allows us to be more honest about the fullness of the human experience. that's my take anyways. So, there's so much here I wanted to get to and I'm, I'm we're running out of time. So what I want to do is I want to hear what your experience was like the moment you found out you were making partner.

Bonnie Wan (01:32:04.49)

gosh, good question. I didn't believe it. I didn't know how to feel because it was never on my radar. And in fact, this is what makes it so, such a good story and such a good descriptor for our leadership at that time. I was living in Portland because my first creative brief for my life, my first life brief.

Barrett Brooks (01:32:26.017)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:32:32.939)

Take our time.

Bonnie Wan (01:32:34.616)

take our time, took us from the Bay Area where our agency is headquartered, and took us to Portland, Oregon, where we could shift

the makeup of our marriage and our roles so my husband could afford to step back from his work, become the lead parent. And I was able to take a four-day week instead of a five-day week and have a remote

work remotely. This was 10 years before the pandemic and we even had words for it. And so this was really tremendous one that my agency let me do that because we didn't have any other remote workers. And when I got promoted, this was six years into that chapter. So again, I'm working four days from home. I have four kids.

Barrett Brooks (01:33:30.057)
And how old are they at the time?

Bonnie Wan (01:33:32.046)
very young. think my fourth was already only a year, a year old. Yeah, so they were all very young. And I got a call from our agency president, and he said, Bonnie, are you sitting down? And I said, No. And I thought it was getting fired. You know, thought, okay, this experiment is over now.

Barrett Brooks (01:33:39.956)
wow.

Barrett Brooks (01:33:56.073)
Right, of course.

Bonnie Wan (01:34:00.544)
And I sat down and I said, okay, I'm sitting down. And he said, well, we would like to make you the head of strategy. And I knew that that had come up in front of me a couple of times for the conversation about it. And I wasn't in a place as a parent of many young children to take on that responsibility. So he said that and I said, okay. And he said, and.

We'd like to make you a partner.

And that's when it went silent. And I had to really process because it was very difficult to make partner. It took a decade for us to have our first woman partner, Margaret Johnson, who eventually became our CCO. But it was an all male leadership team for as long as I had known. So I never even aspired to be partner.

Barrett Brooks (01:34:47.392)
Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:35:01.15)
And when that hit me, I didn't say anything. And then so he kept going and he said, but we need you to move back to San Francisco in order to do that. You can't do that from Portland. And I said, okay, I understand. And it took me six weeks to get back to them with an

answer because my family did not want to move back to Bay Area. And we had to really navigate that change.

Barrett Brooks (01:35:10.067)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:35:25.152)

Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (01:35:28.543)

Yeah. beautiful story. It gives me chills. Just thinking about that moment and all, and all that comes with it, all the costs that come with it too. You know, it's not just this obvious answer. You had very consciously made this change to come to Portland to change your lifestyle, to live more consciously with your time to make, to invest it. As you put it, you know, you talked about spending and spilling and moving more towards like a spending and investing way of spending your time. And so you have this moment, you go back.

Bonnie Wan (01:35:39.904)

No.

Barrett Brooks (01:35:58.305)

to the Bay area, and for eight years, you were a partner.

Bonnie Wan (01:35:59.821)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:36:05.132)

Yeah, it was a wild ride.

Barrett Brooks (01:36:06.419)

And I bet I can only imagine all the stories we can mine from this period of time, but I want to, I want to round it out because now that period is actually ended. made another transition away from advertising your lifelong career and you're in this new chapter. And I wonder what, what are you feeling right now as you're in this new chapter that's really just emerging.

Bonnie Wan (01:36:18.126)

Stay safe.

Bonnie Wan (01:36:31.626)

I feel alive-ness.

which is an intoxicating mix of excitement and terror.

because I'm in an unknown space now. I have been in this beautiful container 25 years at the same agency, 30 years in the same industry, but so much scaffolding from teams and now, you know, as a partner

assistance and all the makeup of a company life to being on my own and

But it was long overdue, I think, because I always knew that doing the life brief, which was what I called my joy hustle, along with my job, and it made me a better strategist doing the life brief, that at some point, the crossroads, I would meet the crossroads. And that came when I launched my book.

Barrett Brooks (01:37:15.797)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:37:37.727)

Yeah. So how did you know? How did you know you had reached it?

Bonnie Wan (01:37:40.974)

burnout. That was the first sign. I was trying to hold both and I was trying to prove to the world that I could hold both. And I knew the agency didn't want me to hold both either. So it was pretty mutual, I think. But I, it was really hard. I knew it was the leap. In fact, it was probably my life brief, but I wanted to cling on.

Barrett Brooks (01:37:48.192)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:38:08.952)

to both for as long as I could because the other path meant wholesale change. And that's what has happened. I've moved my family again. I only have two out of the four, but we moved back to Portland, Oregon. I made this leap from career to vocation, which is a beautiful yet terrifying ride. And I've just moved my mom in with us.

Barrett Brooks (01:38:35.039)

Yeah

Bonnie Wan (01:38:36.27)

because she has early stage dementia. And so I'm now caring for her as I raise our second two, our two beautiful daughters and forge a new path.

Barrett Brooks (01:38:37.963)

Okay.

Barrett Brooks (01:38:45.258)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:38:51.915)

Beautiful. I'm curious. I derive meaning from the shift from career to vocation. Everyone might not. I wonder what that means to you, the shift from career to vocation.

Bonnie Wan (01:39:07.768)

There's three types of work. There's work. And I get this from Carolyn Meese, if anyone's read Anatomy of the Spirit. So this is not my framework, but there's work where we clock in and clock out. It's for a paycheck. And that's for survival. And then...

After that, many of us discover a career, something that we want to go from beginner to expertise, really dedicate ourselves because it unlocks a passion or a curiosity or an interest, right? And that acceleration and climb to get better and better at it and get to the top of your game is gripping for that middle stage of our lives. And then...

Barrett Brooks (01:39:55.318)

Mm-hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:39:58.414)

I don't know if it's for everybody, but for many people I have met with and I meet with now abundantly is a different calling. A calling to be of service beyond me and mine.

call for meaning and I think that call for meaning is easy to dismiss because it is scary. Anais Nin has a great quote, many people prefer the certainty of misery to the misery of uncertainty and I had to face that myself but the call for meaning eventually gets so loud.

Barrett Brooks (01:40:37.354)

Yes.

Barrett Brooks (01:40:46.549)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:40:47.842)

that you'll take a risk. And that's the risk I want to be of greater service. And that gives me fulfillment.

even though it throws up the cards on financial abundance, on even time abundance and certainty, predictability, stability, the things that we often, you know, look around and want for ourselves and each other because it's terrifying not to have it. But we are in an era where it is volatile. It is ambiguous. The change is happening. And so security

even in a stable company, I am seeing this across advertising, the marketing, and the creative services, it is crumbling. All the traditional paths are evaporating. And so what seems safe is not safe. What seems terrifying is actually safe because when you learn to surf the waves, the uncharted path, and with practice,

Barrett Brooks (01:41:36.512)

Yeah.

Barrett Brooks (01:41:46.218)

Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:41:58.936)

take it on with confidence. Now you are really living, right? And you're able to navigate what life throws at you. But you need to have a very clear compass. And that's why the life brief is so important for me at this point is it's helping people get in touch with their essence, their truth, their voice.

Barrett Brooks (01:42:05.014)

Hmm.

Barrett Brooks (01:42:14.666)

Yeah.

Bonnie Wan (01:42:24.522)

so that they can pivot, take turns, meet the twists whenever they show up.

Barrett Brooks (01:42:30.911)

Yeah. Hmm. That's really beautiful. One of the things I noticed is how, how much of our, reading interests overlap. know, he talks a lot about David Brooks's book, the second mountain, beautiful example of him talking about this transition. talked about David White's, the three marriages, another wonderful book, you know, Anais then her work, their work.

And there was one, you talked about the psychology of money and Morgan Housel and how that landed with just like, yeah, there's so many good ones here in your book. The life brief fits right in to this kind of category of different ways, deeper ways of looking at life, work, love, you know, all the things that really matter at the end of the day. so I love hearing just how it's sitting with you as moment of transition.

Bonnie Wan (01:43:03.384)

Yes.

Barrett Brooks (01:43:25.099)

So I have two questions I always end on. The first one is, what is the most beautiful version of the future that you are working to bring or to make true?

Bonnie Wan (01:43:37.164)

my gosh. It's a future where people are very clear about their truth and they use that truth to guide their agency and that we live in a culture of accountability and that we harness technology to forge more

equity and we aim our values.

towards the collective, not just me, myself, and mine. And that work falls into four different categories, not just the paid work, but also our gift work, and our homework, and our self work.

Barrett Brooks (01:44:29.097)
Hmm.

Bonnie Wan (01:44:29.25)
and that's from Charles Handy, but that we have a much more celebrated harmonization between the four types of work that all make for.

a rich three marriage life as David White paints it, right? That we're all pursuing a second mountain existence as David Brooks puts it. And we're so tuned in and we see that we have agency and accountability and that harmonizes our own inner game.

Barrett Brooks (01:45:01.419)
Hmm. Hmm. And as you do this work, as you make this transition into this period of vocation, you know, you pursue your second mountain, pursue this beautiful future you just described. Who are you becoming in the process?

Bonnie Wan (01:45:19.468)
Well, the first trade-off, and it's a beautiful one, is I'm less egoic, because advertising is a big ego place, you know? And I'm more humble, and there's more humility in how I show up. More openness and more desire to really hear people, see people, sense people, and understand them.

and to serve them with my clarity of my strategist's clarity, right? Where I can hear the truth, detect the truth, and pick it out, pull it out, hold it up for them, and express it in a way that enlivens them and helps them see all kinds of possibilities for where they can aim that truth.

Barrett Brooks (01:46:11.936)
Hmm.

Hmm. Beautiful. Bonnie one. Thank you so much. It's been wonderful.

Bonnie Wan (01:46:20.024)
Gosh, thank you, Barrett.