

# 76. Decolonize Your Brain Part 3 with Dr. Kimmery Newsom

## SPEAKERS

Vanessa, Kimmery

### Vanessa 00:00

Welcome to coaching for Latina leaders, the only podcast dedicated to the advancement of Latinas at every level of life with your host Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Latina with over 20 years of leadership experience, Harvard grad physician, and mother of two

### Vanessa 00:22

Hello, marketers Welcome back to the podcast. I have a very special guest with me today Dr. Kim Marie Newsome, who's a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a marriage coach, relationship coach, but also a DEI consultant. And today I have her here speaking to us with her D, I had on talking initially about internalized racism. And what you'll see is this is a two-part episode. Part one is us digging deep into internalized racism, and how to do our own work to overcome that. And the second part is a special interview where I get to talk to her about a book she just published called sounds of the soul. So without further ado, Dr. Kim Murray, welcome to the podcast. It's so wonderful to have you.

### Kimmery 01:06

Thank you so much, Doctor. Goodness, I appreciate you having me on this absolutely. stuff.

### Vanessa 01:12

Yeah. You know, so I wanted I brought you on because, you know, as America has had, its sort of what I call racial awakening when George Floyd was murdered. A lot of people have been asking questions about what you know, anti-racism means, and what is white supremacy. And I think one thing that's sort of left off the table is how we all internalized racism ourselves. So you know, me as a brown, Latina, really a person of color. I've had my own issues with internalized racism and a ton of issues with feeling inferior to white people, for example, that I had to sort of work through myself. And so I think what I've come to realize is the way oppression works is when the oppressor starts to believe the stories told to them by the person being, you know, by the oppressor. So as the person being oppressed, once they start believing that I really am inferior, that's when the oppressor winds. And so I realized that for myself, as I've been doing my own work over the last few years, and it's been, you know, healing, and also sometimes really challenging to question a lot of these thoughts that I've had. And I know a lot of people out there are sort of curious or haven't done the work themselves, or might even question Do I have internalized racism, some people might not even realize that they're holding on to these sorts of things. So I'm wondering if we can start maybe from the beginning and talk about where this comes from. A lot of people have heard the term, you know, the colonizer or you know, to decolonize your

brain, for example, is a term I like to use. So if we can maybe start there, and then talk about how to sort of do your own work to work through internalized racism?

**Kimmery 02:50**

For sure, for sure. And, you know, the I want to add to that, that's a great introduction, by the way. Thank you. I want to add to that, that, the internalized, you know, racism isn't just for people of color, white people have it too. And there is something to be said about that. And having an understanding because internalized racism from white people perpetuates racism. If we think about what it means to have internalized, you know, anything, it's toward self, right? And so if we have internalized racism towards ourselves, then that means that we have, this idea that who we are, how we show up in the world, and the color of our skin is wrong and can create some issues and problems. And so we know from historical perspectives, that with the colonization of the world, in essence, there is this propagation of ideas, that white person, people who look like white people, because white people have a culture as well. But they get to blend into what is called the white culture, because that is the, quote, unquote, superior, more powerful culture. And so a lot of people don't identify with their culture as white people, you know, you have Germany of Italian, you have Irish and all of those different racial categories and countries of origin. And people don't identify with them. But, you know, back to my point, we started with the colonization of the world, and that started with Britain. You know,, they colonized a lot of the world. And those people were white people. And when they went to these different types of countries where there were lots of indigenous folks who were minding their business and living their lives, their best lives ever and decided that they were savages and that their way of living was not conducive to what they thought was, quote, unquote, the right way to live. And then they started writing about it and sending it back to their countries of origin and then those writing As you know, became kind of the quote-unquote law in a way that people thought about different people from different countries, mostly brown people from different countries. And that's why they call it the African diaspora. Because there's lots of different cultures included in that. And there's also, you know, Afro Latina, you know, there, there are people who are black people who live in different South American countries, you know, those sorts of things. And so I could go on, and on and on about that, but I won't. But the main premise here is that the ideas of white to being right, is what started this whole colonization process, the mind is only colonized when it is occupied by thoughts and ideas that are contrary to, to what one believes to be true about themselves, or one has believed to be true about themselves. And one of the things that's really important to consider in this is that the ideas were forced into the minds of people and not through, let's come and sit down and have this class, it was forced into their minds, by abuse, by violence by force. And so it's a stripping away of the way of life, and a putting on or forcing onto a way of living that is completely foreign. And so when the people who were of the indigenous countries, and countries of origin did not conform to that, easily, then they were seen as outcasts. And we're treated as such. When we think about the 1619 project, that Nicole Hannah Jones, you know, started with the New York Times, and how much controversy that caused you and I'm talking particularly about, you know, enslavement in America, from African countries, in particular, I think back to the reality of what I learned, I'm from a community that was predominantly black. And I didn't know about these things, I didn't learn in school, about these things. And that is the level of white supremacy and, and colonization that took place. And I grew up in the American South. And so that tells you a lot too because that's where a lot of the, the enslavement and the abuse and atrocities of slavery happened. And so the mindset there, of my grandmother, and you know, even my pain, my mom's generation, was that you do

what you can do, and you be quiet, and you make as little noise as possible, so that you're not noticed, and you do what you need to do to get your work done. I remember I'm going modern here, I remember, when there started to kind of be this. The unnecessarily barrage, because it's been happening, but police brutality that became more and more visible against black men in particular. And I remember my grandmother, who is she'll be at three this month, saying to me, we had a conversation about I think it was Mike Brown, who had been murdered. And we had a conversation about that. And she said to me, they just need to comply. They just need to do what they're told to do. And then this won't happen to them. And I had to explain to her, I said he did comply, he had his hands up in the air, and he did do what he was supposed to do. And he was killed anyway, you know. And so the idea there, she grew up in the South in the 1930s. Right? She grew up in, in farm country, picking cotton doing those types of things. Yes, enslavement was over. But this was still the time of Jim Crow, where it was pretty much a crime to be a black person in the South. Right? And so she grew up with a mindset from her parents and from her grandparents that generate those generations telling her, just do what white people tell you to do. And then you don't have to fear you don't have to worry about what's going to happen to you or your safety, just do what they say they tell you to do something, just do it. Right. And so

**Vanessa 09:35**

that's so interesting. It's like the Franz Fanon has this book called *The Wretched of the Earth* where he talks through the four different stages of colonialization. You know, step one is like, here, white people come to occupy a land and really just exploit all the resources, slavery, you know, cheap labor, whatever else is there. That's sort of the definition. colonialization right. It's like you're coming to will land to exploit the land. And where what you made me think about is, I think it's like step three or step four in his book where he says that, you know, I think it's step three where he says though the third stage justifies the work of the white person by framing it as the white man's burden to tame control educate. And so the fact that your grandma had that mindset of you know, they just have to comply, it's like, because, you know, during colonization, what happened, you were either supported and celebrated when you followed the white man, or you were terrorized, murdered and punished when you didn't, you know, and so, it's not surprising to me to hear that. The other thing you said earlier was, that internalized racism is not just in the minds of people of color. And I love that you said that, because just the way I sort of see patriarchy as having no gender, everyone is affected by the patriarchy, men and women alike. I see racism, also internalized racism, also having no race, you know, because in order for, in for white supremacy to continue, the white person has to continue to believe that they are superior, even like, you know, good meaning people that you know, don't want to believe that they have biases, even then we all have it. And until we do the work, you know, we can all sort of liberate our own minds.

**Kimmery 11:23**

Yes, that is exactly right. And you know, Rasma Metacam, has a book called *my grandmother's hands*. And in that book, he talks about the white body supremacy that exists within people of color, as well as in white people. And, you know, it's interesting that the conversation that he has about that, and it's not a civil conversation with anyone, but you know, reader writer, right conversation that he has about that. And, you know, one of the things that was really significant that I found in the book anyway, that I use for my, my master's students that I teach, when I did teach on trauma was that it was important for

everyone in every situation to understand that white body supremacy was always present. It was always present in all of our bodies. And so even though there are people who say, my parents weren't there, when people were being beaten and enslaved, I wasn't there when people were being beaten and enslaved. We talk about generational trauma being passed down through people's DNA, because of colonization because of enslavement. And this is around the world is not just in America, right? And so that white bodies supremacy is generational trauma that's passed down from generation to generation, not just through those who are black and brown. It's also passed down generation to generation through the people whose blood runs through the veins of those who perpetrated those acts. So it's there. And it's very, very pervasive. And I believe that a part of that, pervasiveness is the responses that people have, when they hear phrases like, all white people are racist. And people hear that and they have a visceral response, like, wait a minute, no, I'm not. No, no, I'm not I do this, this, this, this, this? And I give to this, this, this, this and this. Yeah. But the idea is, how do you look at the people who you're giving those things to? You know, are you looking upon them as the colonizers did as people who are, whoa, I have got to do something to help and change who they are, in order for them to be the best that they can be, when in reality, who they are, maybe who they're meant to be. And so, yes, your contribution to whatever it is, may be helpful in providing resources, but are you viewing it from a lens of they need to be more like people like me, people who have my skin, people who will look and act in the way that I look and act in order for them to be okay in society for them to be accepted in society?

**Vanessa 14:19**

Yeah, that um, that's really profound. Because even you know, I don't think I white present, but I probably white present more than my sister. So why presenting is when you are a person of color, but you have light skin. So for those that don't know what that means, and my older sister has sort of darker skin than I do. So, you know, I guess if you were to compare us, I could probably easily white present. And I know that I like tactfully chose to code switch, you know, the way I spoke with depending on who I was around, and that was, you know, a very conscious, you know, tactful decision because I wanted to sort of Excel and that's, you know, and so but But back to the point of even when you're thinking Helping others, what are your thoughts about who you are helping. And for me, someone that's been, you know, 100% dedicated to service my entire life. He even thought before I realized that missionaries went in and you know, kind of forced everybody to believe in one cup one God, I thought I wanted to be a missionary, because I thought that all they did was went around and help people. Anyway, but I digress. But the point being here is that even me as a person of color growing up with, you know, a first generation Latina, growing up with my brown parents speaking Spanish until I went to school, being like, completely proud of who I am, where I come from, I even have internalized racism. And remember how it used to show up for me when I would do a lot of pipeline mentorship programs. And I would go and help thinking I needed to pull people out of communities, you know, to lift them up, as opposed to like, letting them lift themselves up, you know, empowering them. And I don't even know if empowering is the right word anymore. But point is like, giving them the tools that they need, where they are to be their best selves, as opposed to thinking that I need to help them all the time I need to them up all the time, I need to like, do all these things because they can do it for themselves. Like those types of things. And I think that's the difference. It's like when you support a community to lift itself up, versus you think you know, what's best for the community, or you think you know, what's best for those people?

**Kimmerly 16:19**

That's exactly right. It's exactly right, you know, and I was Regina. King did a movie, and it's called one night in Miami, and it had portrayed Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, Sam Cooke, and Malcolm X. And they had one night in Miami, where they all were friends. And they got together. And there was a switch, there was a Jim Brown people who don't know, it was a very, very famous NFL player in the 1960s 70s. And he had had, he was from the south, and he had had a family who had been very, very generous to him, and, you know, treating him really well throughout his college career there. And, you know, so when he was visiting, he came and he was on the porch. Like they had those big screened in porches, you know, in the south and, and he was on the porch with one of the men who had been very influential who was a white, older white man. And, and so one of his maybe housekeepers, or servants or whatnot, came out who was a white woman came out and said to the white friend, that, you know, there was a piece of furniture that they needed assistance moving. And Jim Brown was like, oh, you know, let me help you with that. And, and the white men turned around and said to him, Jim, you know, we don't allow inwards in the house. And this is someone who had been so influential in his life. And yet, he was not welcomed to step into or over the threshold of the home, he was only allowed to be on the porch. Right. And so here's a man who had who has enjoyed enormous amount of success, and he's still alive today. But he had enjoyed him enormous amount of success. I mean, astronomical amount of success, and yet still, he wasn't completely welcomed. Right. And so what was the thought pattern behind the help that this man provided? Jim, when he was a child? When he was a teen? What was the mindset? Still, that he wasn't good enough to be inside of? The man's the white man's home? Right. And so I think that it's important for us to understand that we have to think about our motives behind doing what we do. And that's just in general, I think it even more so is applicable to what we're talking about with the internalized racism, because the mindset here is, I'm going to give and do these things be hands off, because so I don't have to interact with the people of different colors, but I'm gonna do this thing, and donate to this thing. And some people may see that as being admirable, right? You just anonymous, you don't want people to know, you don't want to, as the Bible says, you know, I don't want my right hand and my left hand is doing right. You want to kind of be, you know, philanthropic in that way. And that's wonderful. However, you still need examine your mindset, because when you hear a phrase that all white people are racist. And it causes a visceral response within you examine that, right? What is that? What is that about? What is that about? Is it about the idea that I wasn't there? So I didn't do this. So why are you blaming me for this? Right? Always blaming you is your issue. If you're continuing to perpetuate the cycle, then it's Your issue, but if you're not doing that, then there's no guilt to be had. And that's where the white body supremacy comes from. Because in the mind of the white person, in the south, or wherever now, but mostly in the south, during the Jim Crow era, and civil rights movements, I'm helping these people, they won't survive, or they can't survive without. And so it's my job to take care of them. And that's what happened with Native people, as well. When their lands were taken, and stolen from them, it was the same kind of thing, civilization, teaching them to be civilized, meant that they needed to do their entire lives different.

**Vanessa 20:46**

Yeah, it goes back to that, like white man's burden to help you know, or what is now sort of called the white savior complex, you know, as what we refer to as white. And I guess what I want to just presents for a second here is if you are someone that, you know, volunteers, donates a ton of money is philanthropic. If you're doing all of those things, I want to honor you, because I think that that's

awesome. And there's nothing that you are doing wrong, the only question that, you know, you might want to pose to yourself is why, you know, and the why behind the why is even more important, because I want to help people, why do you want to help them, you know, and, you know, if you were to ask yourself why, by the third time, you might get down to the motive. And I just think it's really important for everyone to do your own, you know, internal mindset work, because all of our brains have been colonized just the way our lives our lands had been colonized. And until you're able to do that work, and you know, it sounds kind of like, you know, a cliché, but it's true that we do need to decolonize our brains, do you no matter your color, no matter who you are, where you're coming from, like, it's really important to do that work. And, again, now I want to also just, you know, encourage everyone to have grace as you're doing this work. Because when you start to do the work, and really question your beliefs, you're actually what you end up doing is questioning your own identity. And that can get, you know, it can get a little challenging mentally, emotionally, it's why a lot of people kind of quit, because it gets a little hard to do it. So creating a safe space for yourself to do that is really helpful. So we have about five minutes left. Dr. Newsome, do you think we can just share with a few people how to start doing their own internalized, you know, like, what I call decolonizing the brain work? And how to sort of deal with your own internalized racism?

**Kimmerly 22:46**

Yeah, for sure. And, you know, I think is really important, this is important work, as Dr. Vanessa said, and I think, you know, we have to be really intentional about it, it can't be a thing that I'm engaging in, kind of dabbling in, it has to be something that you're committed to. And so one of the ways that I think is really important for the decolonization to happen is to recognize that it's there, that there is colonization within the mind that there is internalized racism within the mind. And that, that's okay. It's okay that it exists. It says nothing about your weak your weakness or your strength. It just is. Right. It just is, and then contend with that, because for some people, that's, that's the thing that they have to have to kind of grapple with for a little bit and really examine that for themselves. And what does that mean? And then I think the second thing that's really important about it is to read as much as you can get some, get some good resources, get some good books, talk to people, talk to friends, who are doing some of the same work, or even if they're not just ask questions and be curious about the process. Because it doesn't necessarily have to be done in a vacuum. You don't have to do this by yourself, it can be done with people. And then the third thing is be willing to go there. And I say there in air quotes, because wherever that is, for you may be different for the next person. So there for me, for example, is how do I see the ways in which white people have assisted me to get to where I am now? How do I view that in the context of who I am? Right? And does their motive to me matter if the end result is exactly what it was that I wanted? And so that is a part of the work for me. That's a part of what I've been doing for years because a lot of what I have been put in place and opportunities and opportunities placed before me I have been not necessarily given only by white people, however, they have been executed and funded by some white people. And so I think that that's really important for me, as a person who consults with Dei, teachers dei writes about Dei, you know, work to really be able to look at that and take it out and remove it from myself, because that's a part of it, too, it cannot become your identity. So you take it out, and you examine it, you look at it, and you sift through it, like it's a drawer, and you just look, and you keep the things that fit with you, and that resonate with your life, and you get rid of create a process of getting rid of that. And that's the decluttering. That's the decolonization because you can still exist within the context of understanding colonization. But the

decluttering of your mind is something that has to happen continually. And that's a part of the decolonizing.

**Vanessa 26:03**

Wow, that was amazing. I'm just like, emotional, just thinking about a lot of what you said, I just really want to highlight one of the second things you said, you said, start by recognizing that it's going to exist in you. And that doesn't make you wrong, that doesn't make you a bad person. I just really want to highlight that because I think so many people reject doing this work. Because, you know, we the human brain likes to make judgments. That's how the human brain works. And the judgment call that you might make if you start doing this work, and recognizing that it exists in you is that you that you're wrong, or that you're bad or that there's something wrong with you. But as Dr. Newsome said, start by recognizing that it exists, because it's going to exist in everybody. That's it's just the way everybody has two eyes. Everybody has internalized, you know, racism or internalized patriarchal beliefs. And until you can just recognize that it's going to be there. Because as soon as you recognize, for example, let's say I have two eyes. That's just a fact. I recognize that I have two eyes. Now I can go and do an eye exam and say, Oh, look, I need corrective eyewear for this. Oh, look. And there's nothing wrong with that. I just need corrective eyewear, no big deal. You know, it's the same way acknowledge that it's going to exist and sort of make that objective. Just the way my eyes I have two eyes. That's an objective response. I just have two eyes, no big deal. It's when you add the judgment to that, then that this work becomes hard. So I love that you said that so much. And then you mentioned be curious and learn as much as you can. I just want to one like petroleum percent. Lift up, lift up what you said, because, you know, there's you can anyone can go and do the work. Go to Google, you can read a million books. And Dr. Newsome mentioned my grandmother's hands. Oh, that book is heavy and so good. And I love the way the writer writes it. I just love that book so much. That's a great book. So. And do you have any other recommendations of books that they can read?

**Kimmery 28:01**

There's one I haven't over here. It's called. So you want to talk about race? And that's by a Joma? Oh, yes, yes, I

**Vanessa 28:13**

read that book. That's good.

**Kimmery 28:14**

So that's one for sure. And then sometimes a part of that process is dealing with trauma to that can be associated with racial injuries. And, and so you know, there's the body keep score, you know, by Bessel, Vander Kolk. And really reading through that as well, and kind of doing some, some of the bodywork to and somatic experiences is, you know, something that really can, can be helpful as well. So those two, you know, are pretty major ones that I think are going to be really important.

**Vanessa 28:51**

I'm going to throw one other one is, which is the some of us by I think it's Heather McGee, Israel. Last Name, I can't remember Heather or something. But it's called the some of us and the reason why I like that book is she's brilliant. She's an academician. And but sort of the data that she gives to tell the

stories of how internalized racism exists, but how when you do the work, everybody gets lifted up, including white people, not just communities of color white, which is why it's called the some of us, I just thought the data she gives was so compelling. So, so for Dr. Camrys, point about learn as much as you can, we've given you a ton of resources, including Google. And the one thing I will just say is this, if you have a friend that is a person of color, and they're willing to talk to you about this stuff, great. But I just want to caution you against making them your source of truth and saying that they have to be the, you know, going to them for everything for it because there's a burden on that too. Can you imagine if you were the one person that had ever been sexually assaulted, you know, now I want to learn everything I can about sexual assault, and I go to you over and over again to ask you those questions. What's that doing your cause? In that person to sort of relive a lot of that trauma, and there are some people out there willing to talk and willing to educate. And so if you have that person in your life great, but just be just be cautious when you do that work, I would say. And then I love what you said about be willing to go there, wherever there takes you. I love that so much. Oh my gosh, for me, it's a lot of like, you know, what you mentioned about the people that have mentored you champions you paid for, like, you know, the funders of the work that you've done? Yeah, for me, too. And for me, a big one has been like, why is it that I accept words of you know, like, my champions have always been men or, or white women? You know, and there have been a few trickle down black men in there, because I've been in organizations that have been pretty progressive, where leaders have been black men, but very rarely have they been female Latinas, you know, and not until very recently, as until I started doing this work that I asked myself those questions and come to understand that maybe I didn't value their input, because I didn't think they were valuable enough, you know, as I'm doing my own work. Anyway, I just want to highlight that. And the other one big thing which you didn't mentioned, Dr. Newsome is one of the most impactful ways to do this work and really get that transformation, if you're interested in doing it is hiring a dei coach. And I know Dr. Newsome, your relationship coach, but you also do DEI coaching and consulting. So I maybe we can sign off if you have any last words, but also just let people know how they can get a hold of you.

**Kimmery** 31:27

Yeah, yeah, definitely. I do that work. And that's something that's really significant to me. My website is under construction right now. However, you can reach me at Drspecialk81@yahoo.com.

**Vanessa** 31:50

And I will put your email address in the show notes for people that are interested in reaching out to you so you can find her information there. So if you are interested in having someone come speak to your entire organization, do consulting work for your organization, or you're looking for a DEI coach, I'd recommend you reach out to Dr. Communism. She is a wealth of knowledge. Thank you so much. Kimmery been wonderful to have you.

**Kimmery** 32:11

Thank you very much for having me. I really, really appreciate it. Thank you.

**Vanessa** 32:21

Hey, if you love what you're learning, then you've got to check out my free Ultimate Guide to stop people pleasing, where I teach you a simple five step process to stop saying yes. When you really want

to say No, you'll be so glad that you did. There's a link to the guide in the show notes. I'll see you next time.