

Ep #4: How to Get Great Speaking Gigs



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With Your Host

Michelle Barry Franco

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You are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast episode number four.

Welcome to *Beyond Applause*, a podcast for mission-driven leaders, coaches, and creatives who are ready to share their expertise and stories through public speaking. Here's your host, Michelle Barry Franco.

Hello, hello, my speaker friends. My favorite day of the week. I know we're still early in the *Beyond Applause* podcast but I'm already so looking forward to each week, the time when I get to just sit down with you and share with you some of these juicy nuggets, some of the stories and inspiration that I hear and gather and have gathered over the many years.

So I'm super excited to be with you again this week. We're going to start with our Story of Inspiration of course, and this one comes to you from my seat in the airplane this past week. So this past week, I was at a workshop in Oregon and it was an awesome workshop full of beautiful, amazing business owners, and as I usually am after a live event, I was pretty exhausted.

And our plane had been delayed significantly, so I was especially exhausted because I'd been sitting at the airport like all the other people around me for a really long time. Anyway, I was sitting in my seat, so grateful to finally be on the plane and getting ready for takeoff, and a woman starts walking down the aisle toward me. And I was sitting in the - is it called the bulkhead?

There's no area underneath our seats, and she had all of this stuff that she was balancing and you could tell she was really frustrated and angry, and we were two of the last people to get on the plane. And so she couldn't find a place to put her stuff and she, you know, figures it all out and finally plops down into the seat next to me. She was in the middle seat, I was on the end, my favorite seat.

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And she was just sort of like, talking about the people who worked there and I had my AirPods in actually, I was listening to a book on tape, just kind of trying to come down from all of the connecting and rich conversation of my last three days. But so I took my AirPods out to, you know, because she was talking to me when she first sat down. And we chatted for a couple minutes, you know, she was frustrated about something and trying to figure out where to put things.

And I put my AirPods back in and then she started saying something else to me, and ultimately, I just decided to just leave them out for a little bit because it was clear she was going to keep talking anyway and I don't know, for some reason I just decided that I was good with it.

But she was really frustrated, so I wasn't really sure how this was going to go because I didn't have a lot of energy in me, you know? So she says, "Did you even know that you could buy a ticket where you can't bring a carry on? Like, who's even heard of that?" And I was like, "No, I did not know that. I would have never known that." And she said, "Well, that's what they're telling me. Like, that guy" - and she was, you know, calling him all these names and - but then she showed me her ticket and it really was nice and big, it said like, no carry on, which you know, just public service announcement, I didn't even know that you could buy that kind of ticket, so maybe you want to know about that too.

I would never be able to go on a plane without a carry on I don't think. Actually, that's not true. Sometimes I just bring my backpack, which is a "personal item" but I can always fit it under the seat. Anyway, so she couldn't bring on a carry on, she was really upset about that because she hadn't realized she bought that kind of a ticket, but the point is she was just really full of this like, negative energy and a lot of blame for all the people at the airline for things that obviously just were not their fault.

You know, we were delayed because of weather in San Francisco. It happens all the time. So if you fly very much, which I do a considerably amount, you know that when you're flying into SFO, things can go awry. But after a while, you know, our conversation just kind of evolved and I

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learned that she was sort of in the coaching and spirituality industry, and since I am in the coaching world as a speaking coach, we had that kind of crossover.

And not too long into our conversation, I could feel her just kind of start to calm and you know, come into her body a little bit more. And she started talking to me about how she was noticing how triggered she had just been, and how she had really gone sideways in her thoughts and that normally, she doesn't react to things in that way and she was really surprised by that reaction.

And we just started talking about the power of our thoughts and how we really can at times, even those of us who've been working on this kind of thing for a long time as she has and as I have, we still can get caught up in our thoughts and it can really take us sideways in our behavior. It can make us feel really stuck, which happens for me, happens for my clients for sure as well. And that was what she was experiencing too.

But the beauty of this conversation and the realization that I had that I wanted to share with you as part of this Story of Inspiration is that you know, we can come out of it too, right? So yeah, it's going to happen sometimes because we're human. You know, it's like a normal thing. But we can also come out of it. We can have the realization, "Oh wow, I'm really tangled up in my thoughts right now, that's why this feels so crappy."

But then we can turn away from that and with whatever tools work for you. For me, even just having that insight allows this big - it's almost like I can see a physical space between my thoughts, which are kind of above me in this thought storm as one of my teachers, Amy Johnson talks about, and then me down here, this like, wise knowing self that's like, "Oh, those are just thoughts."

Anyway, so a little Story of Inspiration for you around thoughts that we can actually no matter how sideways we might feel and be going, we can come back from them pretty quickly and get back into - we had a lovely

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conversation and we were both feeling great by the time we got off the plane. So, Story of Inspiration.

Today, we are going to talk about how to get great speaking gigs. This is the question underneath the question for so many of my clients. And really, people at workshops, people that I meet, you know, they're asking other questions at the outset like, you know, "I don't feel clear enough on my message. How do I get clear on my message?" Or, "How do I make my message distinctive?" Or you know, all of these different things, but really underneath that is so that I can get on some of these stages that I am so excited about and want to get on.

And this always makes me think of my client, Grace, and if you've read my book *Beyond Applause*, you've heard me tell - I told a bit of Grace's story there. Grace is a founder, entrepreneur, brilliant speaker, dynamic, wonderful human. And I had just - on this particular day of this story, I had just facilitated a training - a speaking event/training at her organization.

I was standing outside of her office and as we were standing there talking, she kind of leaned into me and sort of whispered, "You know, I've always wanted to do more speaking. I imagine myself on this big stage inspiring hundreds or thousands of women, kind of like a feminine version of Tony Robbins." And I'm looking at Grace thinking there is just no reason you couldn't do that. She's got all that.

And I said, "So what's stopping you?" And she said, "How do you even get on those stages? Like, I even know people at some of these conferences, I have warm introductions, and I still can't get on these stages." And I realized in this moment that this really is what so many people are struggling with underneath all of the other questions and uncertainties.

How do we get on these stages so we can make the kind of impact we dream of making? So that's what we're going to talk about today, and that's really what my whole book, *Beyond Applause* is about. And again, I don't want to do a whole commercial for my book, but what we're going to talk about today is really kind of like, an overview of what is in that book. And

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it's really because I had that sudden realization that day that this is the thing.

Like, if you know how to get those kind of speaking gigs, really what I call the path to thought leadership. So the answer to that question is you step on the path to thought leadership and you become recognized as someone who serves, who makes a difference, who makes an impact in the lives of others in this particular area of expertise, in your arena.

So what we're really going to talk about is what is the path to thought leadership, how do you step onto that path and then work through that path. It's really kind of an ongoing thing. You're going to go back and forth across these. I don't want to make it sound like then you arrive and you're done.

Although in some ways that happens because once you become known within your industry, speaking opportunities start coming to you much more easily. So that is really what we're setting up here is the place where people recognize that you're the go to person in your industry.

Now, that doesn't mean you're not still going to - you're not going to seek out some of these great speaking opportunities. And so you still want to have things like a speaker page, you want to have really great descriptions of your talks and pictures of you speaking and all of those things, which I will talk more about when I talk about the third step on the path to thought leadership.

But really, you've got to do these first parts first. So here is the path to thought leadership. You ready? You take a stand for something that matters. And that might sound familiar because we talked about it in episode three. So if you listened to episode three then you've heard me talk all about taking a stand. This is the center of your thought leadership, this is the center of the impact you make in the world. It's your core message and in your business. You take a stand for something that matters.

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The second part is you commit to serve through that stand. And then third, you go where they gather and serve. And then part of going where they gather and serving is having things in place like your speaker page that helps them know that you are the one to serve and how you do it. Again, we'll talk more about that in a minute.

But let's start with taking a stand for something that matters. Now again, I won't belabor this because we have a whole podcast episode on this. But the core concept here is you have to be crystal clear on the message. You know, you've got your rooftop message, again, which I talk about in episode three. What do you want to shout from the rooftops? And who's on the streets of that town where you're shouting from the rooftop? Who are you here to serve with that message?

And then when you get that message crystal clear, especially for that audience, then you'll be able to commit to serve through that stand. But here's the thing: many people skip over the clarity of taking a stand for something that matters. That is what's missing in so many people's desire or ability to get the great speaking gigs. Nobody knows what to bring them on to their stages for.

Or knows that why they are the best person to bring on to their stage. So you definitely want to have that. And I'll just give you one example. So my client Monique, I wrote about her in *Beyond Applause*. For example, so she works with nutrition and wellness, and she does some really deep nutritional work. She's got all kinds of expertise in that arena, real deep expert around gut health and wellness and all kinds of other thing related to health and wellness.

And the people on Monique's streets are expats who are living in other countries because they have very unique issues, right? When you move from the United States to a totally different country with different food, different water, different organisms, right? Then your system can be quite upset by that shift. And people don't necessarily know that it's happening, they don't know that that's why they're exhausted or they're - and they may

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have some idea, you know, because they've read some things about what it's like to be in this new country, they don't know what to do about it.

So because Monique has decided to take her deep expertise, turn it into a message that says, "You can feel vibrant and healthy and well even in this new country with this new environment," because she has been willing to get that clear on both her message and who she serves, she can call their name very clearly.

So if I'm a meeting professional or an event professional in this other country and I'm serving expats, I want to help them live more vibrant, healthy lives, and I want to bring someone onto the stage who can help them from a health perspective, I can't wait to get Monique on my stage, right? It's really clear that she serves them in this distinct way, and that is how Monique is brought on to stages.

So take a stand for something that matters. You got to know who it matters to as well as what that stand is. Now, let's talk about committing to serve through that stand. What does it mean to commit to serve through that stand?

There are so many elements to this. The things I will highlight here are this is really about becoming the person, the kind of speaker who makes a powerful impact, who makes a difference so that the people in that audience and the event professionals who brought you on are so blown away and excited and delighted by what you've delivered that they can't wait to tell other people about it. Because their lives were changed or for the organizers or the professionals who put on the event, that they saw how delighted and served their audience felt.

So it is becoming the speaker who does that, and that happens when you learn best practices in great speaking. That also happens when you do the internal work that it takes for you to deliver talks and be out in the world as a thought leader in a way that pushes your own edges, with courage and conviction.

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And I know that can sound kind of vague, so here's the way I often invite people to look at it, or at least do this kind of like, self-diagnostic. And I'll tell you a little story about how this came to me. Probably about five years ago, I was really frustrated, I had gotten yet another email from a client after we did a deep dive VIP day together and she said, "You know what, love the work we did, it's amazing, I know I'll use it someday, but I think I better go get this particular certification before I can go out and call myself an expert or a thought leader."

And I was like, why? I mean, she was so qualified and so ready to serve with her message, there was no reason she needed to do that, and this was not the first time that I had heard this from a client. So I went out on a walk with my dogs and I started just asking - I like to talk to myself out loud when I'm out in the woods and nobody's around.

I was just saying, what is the difference between my clients who go for it, who like, go out there and serve in a powerful way, and those that keep sort of like, stopping and starting and don't have enough confidence or think they aren't qualified enough? And the answer came to me in kind of one of those like, divine downloads that I feel like happen to other people but never happen to me until that day.

And here's what came to me: what did those clients have? They have clarity. Clarity of message and clarity of who they serve. They have commitment. They're committed to making a difference, even when it gets hard. They have confidence, and I don't mean that like vague nebulous like, what do I mean by confidence. I know that can be a hard word to get our arms around, so I break that down into they have conviction and they have competence.

They have caring, they care deeply about this topic. And then they have charisma, and I don't mean charisma like something that some people have and some people don't. I always put parenthetically after charisma, the word natural. They are connected with their own natural charisma. And these five C's of thought leadership, speaking, I've called it all kinds of

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things. These five pillars - whatever you want to call it - you can use it as a diagnostic tool.

If you are not feeling like you are really out there just going for it, usually, something is missing in one of those areas. And if that's the case, in my book, *Beyond Applause*, I give exercises to embolden each one of those because it's such an important part. Really, it's so fundamental. People think that it's about well, if I know what my message is and I know who it's for - actually, if they even think that then they're ahead of the game. They're often thinking if I know what my message is and I can craft a really good talk, I can be dynamic on stage, then I will be able to make the biggest impact.

But it's just not true. When you have all five of these elements, you can be the person who continually delivers impact and difference in the lives of others. That is how you get the best speaking gigs. So really, committing to serve is about becoming the person who delivers talks at that level.

And then of course there's the best practices in great speaking, which you can you know, learn in a book, and there are lots of them, and I'm not saying they're not important, but you've got to be the person who can deliver that great talk that you craft, right?

Okay, now let's talk about the third step in the path to thought leadership. Go where they gather and serve. And this is really as simple as it sounds in that you want to go where those people that you are meant to serve are already gathering. Often to try to solve the problem that you are solving with your own message, but not always.

So for example, if you're serving, you know, entrepreneurs and business owners, you might, of course, go to a business conference, but you might also speak at a health and wellness conference if you happen to specifically serve people who are in the health and wellness industry, right? They may just be there for continuing education.

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So the clearer you are on who you serve, the easier it is to find more places where the people that you serve are gathering. And it might even be broader than that, right? So if you serve moms for example, sometimes they come together for you know, mom groups, which is a real obvious one, or at the local school, but you might also speak at the gym or at writing groups or even entrepreneurial groups because you know moms are there.

And all of that is going to depend some on - it's actually going to depend a lot on what you know about those moms, right? The specific interests of those moms. So when you think about where they gather so that you can go where they gather and serve them, you really want to go back to that who am I here to serve and what are the things that they're thinking and feeling and what do they enjoy doing, what are their hobbies, what makes them come together and gather, both around this issue or problem they're trying to solve that you help solve, and also around other things that they have in common in their lives.

So how does this help you get great speaking gigs? Here's the thing: when a meeting professional, an event professional is trying to find the right person to put on their stage, there's so much uncertainty. Unless they have someone they already know, right? Which is your best connection. If you know someone who puts on an event that is within your topic area and the people that you serve go there, that's the perfect connection.

When they know you, the uncertainty is at a much lower point. But the less they know you, the less they know of you or about you, the harder it is for them to determine whether you are the right choice. And this is high stakes for them. Remember, their audience is going to give them feedback and they're going to be either delighted or terribly disappointed or somewhere in between about the speakers that they have on their stages.

And they want them to be delighted because they want them to come back next time. They want them to tell all their friends about it, right? And so the more you speak and gather experience, testimonials, pictures of you speaking, video of you speaking, even on the smaller stages, even if it's that you're speaking at one of the little rooms in your local gym because

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that's what you have available to you right now, you can get testimonials, maybe some photos, depending on the configuration of that room, maybe even some video.

If you can put that on a speaker page, then when you submit your speaking proposal or make a phone call or talk to a friend who you know knows the meeting organizer, you have somewhere to point them to decrease the uncertainty around how well you will serve their audience. See, that's the big issue, right? They need to decrease the uncertainty so they can feel more and more confident that you will delight their audience.

The other thing that starts to happen is that as you're out there speaking more and more, people will be sitting in your audience who are a part of other groups that are related, and they will either come up to you and say, "Wow, that was so great, I'd love to have you speak at our group or organization," or they'll go back to that group or organization and talk about you and the people who are organizing that particular upcoming event can get in touch with you.

So in either case, this is another way that you get speaking gigs. You're out there, you're recognized as someone who speaks on this, and so word will start to get around if you're doing an awesome job, if you're committing to serve through your speaking, and you're taking a stand that matters to a specific group, and you're going where that group gathers and serving. You see how it all plays together.

So this is how you really set the foundation for getting great speaking gigs. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean because you've built this whole thing they will come, right? It doesn't necessarily work that way. Over time, you will find actually that people will seek you out some, at least most likely that's the case, but it probably won't happen as fast as you want it to, so from here when you've set this foundation and because you've been able to gather testimonials, pictures, video, and you've created a speaker page, and you've got talk titles, so because you've been out there practicing and delivering, you can refine your talk titles and your descriptions, you can check in with new audiences.

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This is why starting with smaller audiences, less high stakes audiences is such a great way to start and set the foundation. So that by the time you're submitting to speak at a big conference, you've got all of this there ready for them to use as part of their evaluation as to whether you would be the right person to bring on to their stage. See how that works?

So if you want to get more great speaking gigs, you become recognized as a thought leader within your industry, as someone who serves in a meaningful, powerful way within your industry for the audience that you want to serve and set that foundation and then you let everyone know, everyone you know, know that you love to speak on this topic and you would love to speak at their particular organizations.

You also do your research. You like, look out and see where are the conferences here, where are the meetings happening, and you contact them and you offer the speak, and you send them to your speaker page, which has all those things on that I told you about.

So I know this is a lot, and good news, I actually have created a guide to help you move through all of this in pretty good detail. It's called Five Things You Must Do To Become a Go-To Speaker in Your Industry. And we will put a link to this in the show notes so that you can get access to that, use it as your guide so that you can get out there and start making a big difference far and wide with your message.

It's been an honor to be here with you today, take good care. See you next week.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Beyond Applause*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more, head on over to michellebarryfranco.com/start to get your free complete guide to stepping into leadership speaking right away.