

Ep #20: When You're Afraid of Being Judged



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With Your Host

Michelle Barry Franco

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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. So I am on the East Coast and right now on the East Coast, we are under extreme flood watch, hurricane watch with flooding to possibly overtake this area. And it's kind of fascinating because on the West Coast, where I live, we are under evacuation watch near our house because there is a fire.

It actually has receded some, so we are out of, I think, the imminent possible danger, but it's just so wild to be in this world right now and being all the way on the other side of the country and having these extreme conditions out of our control. And it kind of reminds me of the topic we're going to talk about today, in its own way.

They're very different, but really, it's another thing that's completely out of our control. And in fact, one of the things that I have learned over the many years of speaking and trying so hard to do everything perfectly – which is impossible and I absolutely have never even come close to getting there – is just realizing that that goal is causing me all of the angst and pain.

So just like trying to control the weather on both sides of this country, one where my family is – and I slept maybe three hours if I'm lucky last night thinking about, worrying about, tracking whether the fire was getting closer to them – and then over here while I wonder whether I'll be able to get my flights out. And all these things are out of our control.

So we're going to talk about this other thing that's out of our control, which is what if I am judged, or the fear of being judged. And this can come up so much around speaking. So while I'm over here on the East Coast, I am working with this large financial organization and I'm facilitating some training for them.

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And while we were in the training room today, we did this exercise where I just say tell me all the questions you have, all of the concerns you have that you want to be addressed over these next two days that we're going to spend together. And I always do this at the beginning of a training, a facilitation. I put this all on this board and it almost fills the whole board.

It's all the details of things that they're wondering, that they've been not sure how to handle. So we put it all there and then at the end of the session – it's really fun because at the end of the session, I go back up to the board and we go through each one and make sure that each one got answered. And it's cool. Most of them get answered, and if they didn't, I can answer it in that moment.

So it's a fun exercise, but here's what struck me, especially as I was reading over the list and thinking about how I could best serve this audience. So much of what's on that list this time, and every single time I do this, which is countless times at this point, it really comes down to the same thing, which is, what if I am negatively judged by this audience?

So some of the things that came up specifically are what do I do with my hands, where should I look when I'm presenting? Should I look people in the eye? Should I look above their heads, like I've heard? Should I be moving around? How do I tell a good story? How do I know what language to use for this particular audience? How do I engage my audience virtually? How do I answer questions if I don't know the answer?

So all of these – I mean, there's many different aspects to it, right. Many of these are also, like, how do I be most useful for this audience? But most of these are charged with two things. One is, how do I be useful for this audience? Of course, of course asking questions like, how do I engage my audience when I have a virtual audience, has the audience in mind. But there's also this undercurrent of, what will they think of me if I can't figure out – if I don't engage them well?

So that's what you're going to hear next is what I said in this video, because it really answers that question, what do we do with this fear of

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being judged? So I hope you enjoy this and it serves you powerfully. I can't wait to share it with this room full of people and I'm so excited that I get to share it with you too.

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Hi there, Michelle Barry Franco here. Let's talk about the fear of being judged, because that fear of being judged is at the heart of pretty much everything that blocks us from making the biggest difference with our speaking. And this comes in the form of a lot of different thoughts and some of these may be familiar to you.

Things like, what if I bore them? What if I'm not as smart as they are and they realize that they actually know more about this than I do? What if I'm not funny or charming or attractive or, you know, whatever enough? What if I make a mistake while I'm up there on the stage? I mean, I could go on and on with the many thoughts that we can have and that we do have about putting ourselves out there in this way.

They all come back to the same thing – or almost all of them come back to the same thing, which is, what if I am negatively judged by this audience? So what do we do with this? Because the truth is, as you know, we are judged, right? We know this because we judge.

When we are in an audience, we are judging the speaker. So we know that our audiences are judging us too. In fact, that's our brain's job, to judge things, to decide, will this serve my goals? Will this save my life? Will this cause me to die? Our brain is in constant survival mode, right?

So our brain is actually going through this discernment process, this judgment process, all the time. So really, it comes down to, what do we make it mean that our audience is judging us? And I'm going to offer you some ways to think about this.

First of all, does the judgment matter? Should we ever care what people think of our speaking? And yes, of course we should because we're on this

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earth to serve and there is a set of people, there's a kind of person, a subset of the human race that we are intended to serve with this message.

We need to know if the way we're sharing it is actually working, and we will get so much rich good information when we are open to hearing their judgments about what's working and not working for them. So yes, there are times when we definitely want that judgment and we want to do something with it.

There's also a huge part of the population that we are not intended to serve. And in that case, their judgment is not useful to us. It does not help us serve with our message. It will confuse us and it is essential that we not listen to their input and ideas. And I can tell you this because oftentimes, when I work with clients, what we are needing to do is untangle these two sets of feedback that they've gotten over the course of many years, usually; the people who you're meant to serve and the people who you're just not meant to serve.

Other people are meant to serve them with their messages. Your stories are not going to resonate for them. You're not going to be the kind of funny or charming or whatever that they're looking for. That's actually right and good because the style and content that you are choosing is intended for this particular audience.

So this is where we want to focus. Yes, we want to know, what are their judgments? What are the things that they think we can do even better to serve them? And then finally, I just want to offer to you this perspective on what do we make it mean when others are judging us. And I mean that for both of these audiences.

So of course, it's obvious when you're getting negative feedback from people who you aren't even intended to serve. There is, of course, a discomfort that, my gosh, we kind of want everyone to think we're awesome, right? But we can practice actually releasing them with love. Like, "Okay, you're not my ideal audience member anyway, so that's okay."

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But we still sometimes make it mean something about us that we didn't know that they weren't our ideal audience member. So maybe we spoke to a whole room full of those people and we're like, what was I even thinking? Forget it, that's a lesson learned, right? Don't make it mean something about yourself that you learned a lesson through that process.

And then, when it comes to your ideal audience members, what do you make it mean that they taught you something new? We get caught up in the whole, why didn't I know that before? If I was an expert, I would have already known to teach them that way.

Those are the kinds of thoughts – the judgments we're making about this very valuable feedback – that are getting in the way of our ability to serve. So it is our own judgment thoughts about this new learning that messes with us. So I want to offer you that as a new way of looking at judgment.

Yes, judgment is going to happen. You're going to do it too. You're going to judge yourself about this whole experience. Make sure that when you're doing that judgment process and when you're allowing information in that you're going to take in and use, that it's from your ideal audience member and that you are processing it in a way that serves your mission, which is all about making a difference for those ideal audience members.

Okay, so yes, judgment is going to happen. There's a lot of radical acceptance and releasing of the people you're not meant to serve and there's a lot of really rich learning from the people that you are meant to serve.

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Alright, my friends. I hope that was useful for you. The fact is, most of what gets in our way around sharing our ideas with conviction and clarity and confidence is what we're telling ourselves, what we're making things mean. It's the thoughts that are running through our head. And the more you can just keep looking in that direction – oh, this isn't about the circumstance, it

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isn't that I have an audience that is impossible to engage, it isn't that I'm inherently boring. It isn't that my topic is impossible to make engaging.

None of those things are true. What's true is we think these thoughts about what's happening in our experience and then we make those thoughts mean everything and it stops us from making our biggest impact in the world. It's those thoughts that get in the way.

So take that with you out into the world. Share your ideas with passion and conviction and be willing and ready and understanding that some people are going to love your message; the right people, it will resonate with in a way that could totally change their life. And there are other people that are going to hear your message and it's just not going to fit, either stylistically or just from a message perspective. Those aren't the people you want to listen to, right.

And above all, remember that even your thoughts, they do not reign superior and you often don't want to listen to those either. So get out there. I know that you were made for this and the more you can see that you were made for this and that actually you have everything you need already to get out there and change the world and change lives with your message, the more you're going to get out there and do it. And I am over here cheering you on all the way.

Thanks for being here this week. I can't wait until next week. Take care.

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.