

EPISODE 149

RA: *"I had these really bad anxiety attacks, and it came in these waves where I would just be completely debilitated by this experience. There was really no explanation. I was on medication at that point and it didn't help. The medication didn't really do anything. It didn't stop me from – because when you have anxiety, or you have panic attacks, you become so hyper-vigilant and hyper-aware of what's happening to your body because you have this weird thing happen, where your heart is beating, your palms, and you have cotton mouth, and you feel like you're going to pass out, or throw up, or die.*

You become really hyper-aware of any time, anything remotely close to that experience, any movement, any irregular heart palpitation, you go straight into panic. So, I was just having these moments of panic, and then they would randomly happen. I'd be at school and then I get into that agoraphobic state of not wanting to leave the room I was in because I thought something terrible is going to happen. Obviously, years later, we diagnosed it with PTSD, and obviously, like growing up in an environment where there was violence, and there was drive-by shootings, and people were getting stabbed, and this sort of traumatic environment, that everybody else is in the same space, so you don't really know any better, any different, and it starts to manifest itself in different ways for different people. For me, it was having these sporadic moments of panic attacks.

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:01:47] LW: Hello, friends. Welcome back to The Light Watkins Show, where I interview ordinary people just like you and me who have taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified as their mission in life. In doing so, they have been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who have either heard about their story or who witnessed them in action, or who have directly benefited from their work.

This week, I'm in conversation with a dear friend of mine. She's also a teacher, a longtime podcaster, and she's the author of a book called, *You Are Radically Loved*. Her name is Rosie Acosta. I met Rosie years ago in Los Angeles, and I appeared on her podcast, which is also called Radically Loved. I was on there a couple of times. Rosie is one of those individuals that I become friendly with in the wellness community, but I didn't know a whole lot about her backstory. That's one of the things that I love about having a podcast, is you have an opportunity to go deeper into someone's backstory. And when you do that, you always find the most interesting twists and turns and plot points.

In fact, several of you have commented in the reviews for my podcast, how I bring on the most interesting guests, and I thank you for that. But I'm also a big believer in the idea that everyone has an interesting story if you go back far enough into their life.

Long story short, Rosie grew up in East LA, both of her parents are from Mexico, and as she was growing up in East LA, she was exposed to a lot of gang violence. She ended up getting into trouble herself. She was arrested a few times. And then finally, in 1999, she found herself in the Los Angeles court awaiting sentence for stealing a police car. And then later, I won't tell you what happened, but I'll let you listen to that. And then later, her mother ended up giving her a book by Paramahansa Yogananda who some of you may remember from *The Autobiography of a Yogi*. And the next thing she knew she was on a bus to the Self-Realization Fellowship Center in Los Angeles, where she heard a spiritual lecture that started to turn a light on inside. The next series of experiences led Rosie to a yoga practice, and then she became a yoga teacher, and then she got into meditation. She was later featured on the cover of Yoga Journal, and she started a blog post about the idea of radical love, which became the podcast Radically Loved, which is now 500 plus episodes in and counting. And then, that culminated in her book, *You Are Radically Loved*.

So, in our conversation, Rosie opens up about what inspired her to turn her life around specifically, and why she felt like she was living on borrowed time due to a serendipitous experience that she had while growing up. She talked about what it means to love radically and how to know if you are living your purpose. As you've noted, these are some fascinating conversations on this podcast. This one is no exception. I think you're truly going to be inspired

by hearing Rosie's story in her own words. So, without further ado, let us get to the conversation with Miss Rosie Acosta.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:05:13] LW: Rosie, thank you so much for coming on to my podcast. This has been a long time coming, I feel like, because I was on your show, I think in like 2018? Earlier?

[00:05:26] RA: Yes, I think –

[00:05:29] LW: I was in the one in Laurel Canyon. I came to Laurel Canyon.

[00:05:33] RA: Okay. Yes, that would have been 2018. That would have been when *Bliss More* came out. And we did it again a couple years later for *Knowing Where to Look*.

[00:05:42] LW: That's right. That was virtual though. That was during the pandemic. So, here we are, the tables have turned. You have published – what was the pub date for *You Are Radically Loved*?

[00:05:55] RA: Oh, the pub date was 02/22/22.

[00:06:00] LW: Wow.

[00:05:59] RA: Uh-huh.

[00:06:02] LW: Are you into numerology and all that? Or is that just a big coincidence?

[00:06:06] RA: My inner Buddhists practices non-attachment. But my heart-centered astrologer says, this absolutely means something. I mean, I don't know. I thought it was kind of a cool thing to have happen, although there was a little situation that happened during the publishing time, because some people thought it was 2/2/22. But the actual pub date was 2/22/22. So, it was really interesting to just kind of experience that confusion with launch dates and things like that. It was quite interesting, but I thought it was like, that's a good number. It felt lucky.

[00:06:47] LW: That was your first book, right?

[00:06:48] RA: Yes.

[00:06:50] LW: So, you've been out for one year. What's your favorite interview so far? You've done a lot of interviews, you've conducted a lot of interviews. No, this is going to be right up there. But I'm just curious, which one is going to be second after we finish our interview?

[00:07:03] RA: Second after this interview, I've had such great conversations revolving around the content of the book. But I have to say, just going on what we were talking about earlier. I love asking questions and I would say, "God, it's really hard."

[00:07:28] LW: You're thinking one right now, but you're trying to think of another one.

[00:07:32] RA: Yes. I'm thinking of one. Well, I did one with one of my dearest closest friend, Sahara Rose on the highest –

[00:07:38] LW: She's a good interviewer, yes.

[00:07:39] RA: She's a great interviewer. I mean, she's really great at what she does and it's no surprise why she has amassed such success with her podcast, her platform. She really knows. She's one of the hardest working people I know and she really has such deep wisdom and knowledge and she really –

[00:07:57] LW: And she's so young, too, which is so impressive.

[00:07:59] RA: I know. Right?

[00:08:01] LW: Think how young she is. She's had so much life experience.

[00:08:05] RA: Yeah, she's lived many lives, and I would say that that is up there for sure with experiences. To me, it's always so special when, like us, you have a relationship with somebody

who is interviewing you, or has done some research about your content. It's always, to me, more relaxing, I guess, to answer questions, as opposed to somebody who I've never met, and you go and you do these interviews with somebody who doesn't have any knowledge, which is also can be really interesting. But I think for me, just as a person, obviously, it's a little bit more. I feel like we're just having a conversation and nobody else is listening, right?

[00:08:45] LW: Beautiful. Shout out to Sahara Rose. Got to check out her stuff.

[00:08:48] RA: Shout out.

[00:08:50] LW: All right, cool. So, I like to start off my interviews, or conversations talking about childhood, and you have described your childhood growing up in East LA, as idyllic. There were barbecues. There were beach trips. There was music. And there was Catholicism.

[00:09:13] RA: Yeah, that thing.

[00:09:16] LW: So, growing up with two parents who were both born in Mexico, first of all, what language was spoken in the house? I'm assuming Spanish. But I'm also wondering if they spoke good English, or they had to learn, or were you the interpreter when people called?

[00:09:31] RA: Yes. Spanish was my first language and Spanish, it was – the majority of our conversations were in español, and my mom did go back to school when I was little, and she went to learn English, and so then my mom became fluent. She was also really young. She was still a teenager. So, she was able to really integrate into learning the new language, but my dad still fully understands English, but again, just for the purposes of my aunt, my uncles, and my grandmother, everybody spoke Spanish. So, that was the language of the land.

[00:10:16] LW: I wonder, I mean, you mentioned that you were a good listener, as a young person, as a five and six-year-old. I wonder if that has anything to do with it having to interpret or translate, or figure out what people were actually saying?

[00:10:28] RA: Well, it was interesting, because Spanish was my first language, and my dad always tells me this story, that when I was little, and my cousins would come over, a lot of my

cousins, myself, my sisters, my older sister, were born here. So, my older sister, since the age I can remember, spoke both languages. And my dad said that anytime we would have family gatherings, I would always come crying to him, asking him, what they were saying, because I didn't understand what they were saying, because they were speaking English. So, I had a hard time learning English, I think, because –

[00:11:08] LW: There weren't enough conjugations for you, so you were confused.

[00:11:13] RA: I was like, “What is happening?”

[00:11:12] LW: Wait a minute. Is it masculine? Is it feminine? What's going on?

[00:11:16] RA: “Que pasa?” It was tough for me as a kid. But then as I got older, yeah, you become the translator of languages. And my grandmother was the one that took us to school, and she didn't speak not even a tad, tiny bit of English. So, it was always trying to figure out how to tell her what the teacher was saying and the translation. There was a big number of Asian communities in this specific area where our elementary school was. So, there were many different languages and learning the difference again, at a young age, between Vietnamese and mandarin.

It was just such an interesting experience, to be able to understand that there were different languages that people spoke. To me, it just became normal to be able to speak different languages, right? To be able to speak English and – it was always English and Vietnamese, English and Mandarin, English and Spanish, English and Russian. It was kind of a, I don't know, I'm really grateful to have had that experience. Because, again, it taught me how to be really attentive to what people were saying, because even if I couldn't understand the language, I could always try to intuit what was happening. And I think that's a way that we integrate learning any language or learning emotional language from people. Like just being attentive.

[00:12:54] LW: You are a prolific writer. You have one of those diaries with a lock on it, and you journal. Were you writing in Spanish, or you're writing in English?

[00:13:01] RA: In kindergarten, there's both. I have both.

[00:13:03] LW: Because if you don't want anybody reading it, and obviously you would write in English, because nobody else spoke English.

[00:13:08] RA: Exactly. There were plenty of times where I got in trouble for some of the things that I would write. I would talk shit about my parents or something, and my mom would find it, and I'd get in trouble, and I'd be mad because they didn't let me go outside and play or something. My writing got me in trouble at a young age.

[00:13:26] LW: Yes. Was there any foreshadowing? I know, we're going to talk later about how your mom gave you this book that really changed the course of your life. As a young person, was there any foreshadowing for that? Was she like a spiritual person? Was she just open to those kinds of things when you were younger?

[00:13:42] RA: My mom wasn't really around. Neither of my parents were really around when I was –

[00:13:49] LW: You were latchkey?

[00:13:50] RA: Yes, pretty much. I mean, my grandma was the one. My little abuelita was the one that –

[00:13:55] LW: Abuelita.

[00:13:56] RA: Yes. My little abuelita was the one. She took care of us. My parents worked long hours, and so they weren't really around. But there was a time later on, when I think my mom at that age, time in her life, having kids so young, my older sister and I as a teenager, where she was going through this sort of self-discovery phase. I think it happened at the perfect time because of what was happening in our lives. Her being open to, I think, anything that would work was really the key for me to be able to see what was possible for my life.

[00:14:41] LW: But what were some of their philosophies, life philosophies? You mentioned they worked hard. They talked about that? Like you have to work hard. We're immigrants. Never take anything for granted.

[00:14:49] RA: Yeah, I learned compassion at a really young age because my dad would just tell me these awful stories that again, as a child, you don't really want to hear about, your dad going hungry and not having food to eat, and growing up in a shanty with dirt floors, and having to work as child labor because they had nothing. And hearing my grandmother talk about, yeah, just really horrific things that happened in their little ranch or village. How they would have to survive. How my dad would go days without eating. And my dad only went to school up until the fourth grade because he had to start working at 10.

I mean, if you can imagine, he's telling me the story, and I'm like, "Ah, I can't even imagine having a job. You're a kid, right?" Not being able to go to school because you have to work to help feed your family. So, these stories would come up as a way for him to teach us that we have to be grateful for everything that we have, even though we didn't have much, we always really appreciated any toy we would have, or any piece of clothing.

I had this thing with my shoes, I think because my dad would talk about having to walk for miles without shoes, and he would get to school. Sometimes the kids would make fun of him because he wasn't wearing shoes to school. I remember those things really impacted me and made me realize that there are other worlds, places, where people don't have what I have, and I have to really be appreciative of what I have and make the best with what I have.

So, I think my dad's philosophy was always one of equality. The reason why it was the equality point, or philosophy was because he knew that we would grow up in a place where maybe we didn't have the things that other people had. And he always instilled this idea that the sun comes up for everybody, right? The sun shines on everybody equally. So, don't ever feel like you're inferior from someone because of either you don't have enough resources, or you don't look like everybody else, or you don't speak the same language as everybody else who said, just remember, everybody's the same. Humans, we're all the same.

I think, for him he was such a heart-centered — is, because he's still here. He's such a heart-centered, emotionally connected, man and I've always appreciated that about him. He's always been honest with me. He's always told me things, almost to a fault of too much honesty. But I've always appreciated his softness because he has always had softness. Don't get me wrong. I mean, my dad is a functioning alcoholic. There are issues and there's so much history. Things that have happened in our relationship that are sort of cringe. But at the end of the day, to answer your question, I think those lessons were so vital to the person that I became.

With regard to my mom, I think there wasn't so much interaction. There wasn't so much of this sort of philosophical interaction, other than her big driving point was always to be humble and not ever allow anybody to humiliate you. That was a big thing for her to sort of have grace and to work hard, and to just stay on course. That has been her motto. I mean, this woman came from a family of 16 brothers and sisters.

So, she had this very sort of rigid way of being — I always told people that my mom had more of the male masculine traits and my dad was always the artist. He was a singer, and he was all about emotions, and being expressive, and being this artist, and it was interesting to have that dichotomy, I think.

[00:19:22] LW: So, when you grew up in East LA, did it feel very separate from what people imagine LA like? Did you guys associate it with when you would see movies? Oh, this is actually in LA. Or does it seem like a faraway place even though you're still in the same relative vicinity, Beverly Hills, and all these other areas, Hollywood?

[00:19:39] RA: Come on, Light. Of course. This is like East LA. You go anywhere in East LA, you're in a different, completely different world. I mean, even now. Well, now it's like all of those — Silver Lake, Echo Park — areas that you couldn't go to as a kid are now million-dollar homes. That's a separate thing. But back in the day, I mean, you just did not. There were certain areas you just would never go to. When I was little, it hadn't become overrun with gangs and violence, yet. It took a little bit of time, I would say, early nineties is when it started to really change where we weren't allowed to go play outside anymore. We wouldn't go on nightly walks. We would pick and choose when we would leave our neighborhood and —

[00:20:33] LW: And your abuelita still wondered why you wore black all the time.

[00:20:38] RA: Yes. Oh, yes. This was – actually, I was just talking about this earlier today with my sister-in-law, because we were talking about what our identity was, as a young child, or a teenager, and we were talking about you having all these different sects of kids. You got the skater kids, you got the punk rock kids, you got the preppy kids, and I was a misfit. I wore all black all the time because this was my way of staying safe. When you live in a border neighborhood where there are two different gang-affiliated colors on each side, and somebody can just decide that what you're wearing is the wrong color in the wrong neighborhood, and that can cost you your life. Many times, it did to a lot of people. And it's such a nuanced experience when you grow up in an area where gang violence is so prevalent, and it just becomes such a normal thing where you don't really think about it. There's a point in your life when you're growing up in a neighborhood, like the one that we grew up, where you have to decide which side of the fence you're on. And for some, if you don't live on the side of the fence that you've chosen, you're essentially in danger, 24/7.

[00:22:07] LW: Even women. I know guys are definitely in danger when they wear certain colors, but women too?

[00:22:11] RA: Oh, yes. Of course. There were so many – yes, because you think you're in a neighborhood where women, girls, your uncles, your brothers are gang affiliated. And so, what do you do to be a part of your family? You become gang-affiliated yourself. Just the template repeats itself, whether you're a boy or girl. Yeah, it made no difference.

[00:22:34] LW: So, when you were about 15, you had these two childhood friends who died in this freak flash flood accident, and this is the year before you were arrested. I'm just curious, if there was a connection there between your relationship with God. Where you like, “F it. I don't know if I'm going to live tomorrow.” Did it have an effect? If so, what was that effect?

[00:22:56] RA: Yes, by the way, you're the first person who's brought up the connection between the two. So, thank you for being –

[00:23:04] LW: Well, you don't mention the flash flood until the end of the book. So, maybe the other people don't get to the end of the book.

[00:23:07] RA: They don't get to the end. They don't find that little Easter egg. But the fact that you did, that's awesome. Thank you for getting there.

There was a group of five of us. In kindergarten, we had our little crew of gals. And so, these two friends, Gigi and my friend, Dulce, her brother also passed away in that flash flood. Those five kids that died and two of them were my good friends. One of the boys was my friend Dulce's older brother. And then there was two others that passed as well. But we were just so close. We went to elementary school, junior high together. And unfortunately, we had to split ways during high school because our districts were just in two different places.

Actually, the truth is, we were in the same district, but my mom just wanted to get me away from – I'm going to do air quotes, the “bad kids”, and wanted to put me in a different school district. Somehow, she was able to pull it off, I think, in a desperate attempt. She saw the writing on the wall. She could see that I was just on this path and I think about it a lot. And what happened essentially, and I tell the story in the book, we often would gather and we would still do our same little stroll to the bus stop, and then we would part ways. At times we would ditch school together and go and smoke some pot at the wash, which is this like channel of the LA River where the runoff of water goes whenever it rains.

We had a severe storm that year. It was El Nino storm and we had – yes, gathered as normal and there was this – I'm trying to remember exactly what happened that day. Oh, yes, I had been in trouble. I'm like, “What happened?” Because that day, I had been in trouble or I was grounded, and my mom didn't let me walk to school. She wanted to drive me to school to make sure that I went to school. So, she had to do this thing where she would get to work late. Can you imagine also being a single mother, and having to figure out your work schedule, so that you can drive your misbehaving child to school, so that you can make sure that she was going to school, so that she stays safe? Right? It's just, I have so much compassion for her now.

So, she drove me that day. And yes, they ended up ditching school and went down to the wash. This water came and it washed them out. They all drowned during this flood and it was all over

the news. It was a big, big thing. It was part of this experience at that point where there was a lot of people that we had known that had passed away, drive-by shootings, or gang-affiliated deaths, drunk driving accidents. I mean, death was at that time in my life, felt like it was just so prevalent. It was everywhere. And this though, I think, hit different because these were people that I grew up with. I saw, I talked to, it was somebody that was here, and I think that's sort of where that connection came in later on where, yes, I just wanted to hit the F it button and say, "What is the purpose of all?" I was literally having an existential crisis in that moment, thinking, "If this whole God thing is real, why does this happen to two of the most amazing, beautiful human beings that have ever walked this earth?"

I mean, these girls were good girls. Yes, the occasional ditching school, whatever. But they still got good grades, still showed up, and then this happens, right? So, the connection then comes later on, as you said, this is the story at the end of the book and it just gives people some insight as to now going back to the beginning of the story where I get these moments of catastrophizing moments in my life, because I know that the other shoe can drop in any moment. And also, that having this unprocessed emotion, created my desire to be Rage Against the Machine, right? And just say, "Nothing matters. There's no point to it. So, why not just do whatever I feel like doing? Because we're only here for a short amount of time."

[00:27:58] LW: What were your career aspirations after that incident happened, that the death of your friends? Did you envision what you would want to be when you grew up? Did you think you will grow up?

[00:28:07] RA: My plan was to – I don't know why Brazil, but my plan was to just move to Brazil and go live in the Amazon. That was my plan.

[00:28:17] LW: Okay.

[00:28:19] RA: Why? I have no idea. I had no connection. My aunt had a Brazilian best friend, but there was no other connection other than there are trees, and there's forest, and you can get lost in there and that's where I want to go. That was it. Interesting, right?

[00:28:39] LW: Okay, so then, the next year, you're up to no good, you're hanging out, ditching school, and then you're in this park with your friends. What happened?

[00:28:50] RA: I'm at the park with my friends and I'm fully sober. I always say that to people because I wish I had the excuse of not being sober, so that it would explain my completely void of intelligence answer to whatever was happening at the time. We're at this local park by my school, high school, and there was a bunch of kids hanging out. There happens to be a police car. I don't want to say chase, but I didn't see the chase happen. But they apparently had been pursuing this vehicle, this red Honda Prelude. They pursued it to the park. The guys got out. The police officers got out. They pursued on foot, allegedly. And I show up with my friend and everybody that's at the park is basically telling me to go get in the cop car. Because why not? There is no reason why I shouldn't, right?

[00:29:47] LW: It was an undercover car, though, right?

[00:29:49] RA: It was an undercover, but it still had all the – clearly a police vehicle. I mean, it wasn't like, “Oh, I had no idea.” I mean, it was very clear. So, I get in and start pushing buttons. I put the seatbelt on because at least, well, I had that much conscious awareness. I put the seatbelt on. I turned the car on and then the black and whites show up around. It felt like it was just like a swarm. I couldn't tell you right now how many there were, but there was a lot.

[00:30:26] LW: The place was crawling with undercover cops.

[00:30:29] RA: Oh, yes, crawling. And they come out, I get out really quickly, and I think I start moving too quickly, where police officers have their guns drawn and the scene is just unreal. I'm wearing all black, my uniform, black hoodie, and I'm wearing these fingerless cut-off panda gloves from Hot Topic or something, and they're telling me to put my hands up and I'm looking around scanning for who they're talking to, because I'm still in disbelief that these people are coming for me. Because I didn't do anything. I was just sitting in a car. I wasn't doing anything –

[00:31:09] LW: Also, this may sound sexist what I'm about to say, so you'll forgive me. But you're very beautiful woman now. I'm sure at 15, you were like a really pretty little young girl and

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[00:31:18] RA: I mean, thank you. That's so sweet. I had short black hair. Short black hair. My hood was on most of the time. So –

[00:31:28] LW: Still, you're 15, you're a kid. I can't believe they took it so seriously and like arrested you and brought you in, and all these things for a 15-year-old girl.

[00:31:36] RA: Yes. Oh, they roughed me up. I was on the floor, cuffed me.

[00:31:42] LW: If you have tattoos on your face and all that, that'd be another. But, I mean, come on.

[00:31:45] RA: Yes, they didn't care. They did not care. Also, it was the Monterey Park PD, so part of me was just like, “Really, guys? This is your excitement because you're whatever.” It doesn't matter. I'm like, I'm going to strike that because I do know some Monterey Park PD people. But yes, it was definitely extra. But again, growing up seeing a scene like this, I knew how they treated my uncles, my cousins, and other people, other neighbors. You just knew.

The LAPD has a reputation because they have a reputation. It's not for no reason. So, I was freaked out. Because regardless of how I looked, I was being treated just like everybody else and that was no surprise to me at all. They cuffed me and yes, they put me in the back of the police car, and they drove me down to the police station. That was it. I mean, I knew, I mean, I'm like, “This is it.” I had a record at that point already and I didn't know if this was it. If I was going to the SHU. If I was going to juvie, or the SHU, actually is probably where I would have gone or Eastlake juvenile detention facility. But I just succumbed to this idea that this is just what was happening now.

[00:33:06] LW: How scared were you? Or were you not scared at all? Or you're just kind of like, “Okay, whatever.”

[00:33:10] RA: I was a little bit indifferent. Also, I was a little bit apathetic to the whole thing. I think I was more scared of my parents. What they would do. I knew that my mom from the last time I had been arrested and she had come to bail me out. She said, that if it happened again to

not call her because she won't come get me. So, I called my dad because I knew he would be fighting for me.

[00:33:36] LW: You called your dad, instead.

[00:33:38] RA: I called my dad, he was at work, and I felt so bad. And he left work and I knew he would at least come bail me out. But in that holding cell while I was getting booked, where the officer said to me, as he's booking me kind of making fun of me, being sort of snide and a little bit, yes, like poking fun. I go back to that humiliating thing that my mom has always been so afraid of us experiencing like, "Don't ever let anybody humiliate you." And I think that that was a moment where I felt a little tad bit of shame. But also, I had to keep this facade of, well, if I do go to juvie, I need to be tough because I've heard what it's like in there, and I can't show emotion and I can't pretend. I can't be scared, right? I have to put on a brave face. That's when the booking officer, basically, kind of smirked and in the snarkest way, basically said to me, "Welcome to life in the system."

I just remember feeling so angry at that. I think that was actually the moment where I felt some emotion, and I just felt this internal no, that yelled no. I can't really describe what happened in that moment other than it just felt kind of out of body experience. This, I guess you could call it intuition. This sort of intuitive inner knowing that just said, "No, this is not happening. I'm not going to be part of the system. This is not my life." That was the first time I ever felt like, I could make a different choice. I could have a different life. I could have a different experience. Because up until that point, I had never even known that that was possible. It just felt like this life was just an experience and we're here and then we're not here, and that's all that there is. But there was in that moment, this feeling of, "Oh, I have to go through this." For some reason, I can't really tell you why or how, but this is not my life. This is not where I'm going.

[00:36:10] LW: So, spoiler alert, you got a lucky break. The judge only gave you six months of probation. What does that mean? You can't do certain things? You just can't get in trouble again?

[00:36:18] RA: Oh, my God. Light, let me tell you, it sucks. I mean, it ended up being a year, because after the six – so basically, when you're on probation as a teenager, depending on what

your background or what your record is, I basically wasn't – I had a curfew, so I couldn't be out without adult supervision and adult, meaning one of my parents. After 6 pm, I couldn't leave LA County. I don't think I could leave LA County or the state, I can't remember. I had to do a hundred hours of community service, and there were thousands of dollars in restitution from the damage I had done to the vehicle. I had to go to anger management. I had to go to therapy. My parents had to go to parenting classes.

[00:37:10] LW: Now, I see why you had all that anxiety.

[00:37:11] RA: Oh, yes. Right? Yes, there was just like a lot of hoops that my parents had to go through. And at the end of the day, I mean, again, all of it, it introduced me to therapy. It introduced me to doing work, doing the work. Those hundred hours of community service I did, and I write about it in the book, I did them at the public library. It really opened my eyes and my world substantially. I did every single minute of those hundred hours. And you know what sucks is that so many of my friends that have – because this is a standard thing. All of my friends at some point had been on probation, had been to juvie, or were on their way. So, everybody knew these tricks to, “Oh, get this community service. I hope you get this probation, PO. I hope you get this. Oh, make sure you go to this courthouse and have your public defender make a request to go to this, and get this person.” There's all this intel as –

[00:38:13] LW: Street law tactic.

[00:38:15] RA: Yes, totally. What's funny, I've not ever talked about that before, but you kind of get all this intel. I remember one of my friends saying, “Oh, you should go do your community service at the library, because the manager at the library kind of hooks you up on the time. I mean, he will write extra hours on there. So, you'll do your hundred hours like in no time.” And think about it, I could only do my community service after school, and I would get out of school at 3:30. By the time I'd get to the library, it was 4. I could only be there for two hours because I had a curfew at 6.

So, I was doing these little incremental 90 minutes, if I was lucky 45 minutes, and the manager that had been at that library before was gone. So, the lady that was there now wrote down to the second. I mean, I did hundred hours – it's like been how many years now and I'm still like –

[00:39:18] LW: You've got some hours left. You got to get off this interview go to the library.

[00:39:25] RA: Yes. Man, I'm so – but it was great. In the moment, it was brutal. It was hard to do that time. But at the end of the day, all the anger management, all the therapy, all the parenting classes, everything really did its duty. The reason why I ended up getting six more months was because my grades were still not – I think the judge was a little harder on me because –

[00:39:50] LW: He saw a potential in you, probably.

[00:39:52] RA: Yes. He saw the potential and he saw – what I didn't understand was if I'm doing better, why is he giving me six more months? I think it was the best thing that that judge could do, because now, I have a full year of being consistent. And having that consistency really helped shape this work ethic and this sort of civil etiquette that I had to learn in that process. I'm so grateful that it did happen and that I was able to actually take from that experience.

I think, somebody asked me once what the hardest part of that process was, and I always go back to having to essentially change my entire friend base. I mean, these are people I grew up elementary school, kindergarten, and some of my cousins. So, essentially, I had to cut myself off from people who I was blood-related to, because I couldn't be around them. It was also against my probation to be affiliated with some of the people that I was around. When teenagers or family members feel spurned by you, they don't always react in a great way, especially teenagers. When one of their best friends is now unable to talk to them and they are listening.

So, they thought that I would just continue on the path, on this hanging out with them and ditching and going to these house parties. I didn't. I really followed the rules and essentially cut myself off from everyone for a year. It was a very nuanced dance that I had to do in high school, because I was unable to now hang out with my friend base. But I also had to be able to get in trouble to get detention during recess, so I wouldn't have to go hang out with them, because they wanted to beat me up.

Again, these are people also I'm related to, but it was sort of part of this feeling of rejection. I was rejecting them and now, somehow, I thought I was better because I was distancing myself from my tribe. So, I think the hardest part wasn't all the community service. It wasn't the jumping through hoops, and having a curfew. It was cutting myself off from my people, my tribe, the people who I had grown up with. That was, I think, the hardest, the hardest part to navigate.

[00:42:36] LW: Did you try to have a conversation with them? The closer ones and say, "Look, I can't really affiliate with you guys for a while." Or you just ghosted them.

[00:42:46] RA: They weren't interested. I think the one and only time I tried to have the conversation was right after I received my sentence, telling everybody that I had to be good, and I had to – they just didn't do that. They essentially rejected the system and they rejected – and some of them ended up going to jail or other worse things. But it was sort of the stance for the organism of our tribe. They rejected doing the work. So then, I also needed to reject doing the work, because why would I think that I'm better than somebody else.

Obviously, that's not the case. But when you're a teenager, you don't know. I didn't have a voice. I didn't know how to express myself. I was a people pleaser. I'm the person that decided to not choose a color. I chose black. I completely did my best to be on this neutral path to not have to hurt anybody's feelings or put myself in danger.

[00:43:57] LW: You also had that cold shower moment, though, with the booking officer who said that to you. I don't know if you mentioned that to anybody at the time, or is that something that you reflected on as you were writing this book, like that was the moment. Is that a story you've been telling for years? Or is that something that you kind of reflected on?

[00:44:11] RA: Yes, that was definitely – I've only said it a couple of times when people have asked me, like if there was a pinpoint moment. And yes, that only came as a reflection in writing the book. I mean, a lot of this information, it's not like I go into a yoga studio and start telling everybody I had a criminal background.

[00:44:32] LW: Although, that's a good story to tell in a yoga class, though.

[00:44:35] RA: Imagine, it's like, "Just so you guys know, I've been arrested four times."

[00:44:39] LW: I'm a real spiritual gangster. You heard that term?

[00:44:42] RA: Right. Yes, exactly. I remember seeing those t-shirts and thinking like, "Wow, really? Let me tell you something." I don't know that you want to mess with real gangbangers, because if you know real gangbangers were like, I don't think it'd be good. I mean, now, whatever – I'm like, I wouldn't be saying –

[00:45:02] LW: The library was a foreshadowing to your yoga career, because that's how you started doing your yoga. But before we get into that, let's talk about the bus system in Los Angeles. So, you were used to taking – what was the bus you took most often? Which number?

[00:45:18] RA: I think it was, I want to say it was like the 23 line. I think it was like 23 or 80. I can't remember, 80 or 23. It's been so long. I took that bus for I mean, I started taking the bus in the sixth grade.

[00:45:36] LW: That was kind of like your meditation, as a young person, because you get to listen to music, you got to like have a little break from everything. So, going from East Los Angeles, well, let's talk about this first. Your mom drops his book off on your – I remember, when I read that, I thought about a moment my dad came in, my brothers and I were all watching television. I was 15 years old. I was the age that you were when this thing happened to you. He comes in from work, and he puts a box of condoms on the television, on top of the television, and we're all looking at each other like, and then he just leaves. He doesn't say anything. We've never even talked about like sex or anything like that. It was the weirdest little thing. Anyways, your mom comes home from work, and she puts a Paramahansa Yogananda book in your bedroom for you. What was your response to that?

[00:46:25] RA: We all shared a room. So, we're in the same room together. Let's be clear. Single mom. We had one room and we shared it, all of us. But this is how we would communicate. She would leave stuff on the bed or on the counter by the phone or something. I was struggling with – I had these really bad anxiety attacks, and it came in these waves where I would just be completely debilitated by this experience. There was really no explanation. I was

on medication at that point and it didn't help. The medication didn't really do anything. It didn't stop me from – because when you have anxiety, or you have panic attacks, you become so hyper-vigilant and hyper-aware of what's happening to your body, because you have this weird thing happen, where your heart is beating, your palms, and you have cotton mouth, and you feel like you're going to pass out, or throw up, or die.

You become really hyper-aware of any time, anything remotely close to that experience, any movement, any irregular heart palpitation, you go straight into panic. So, I was just having these moments of panic, and then they would randomly happen. I'd be at school and then I get into that agoraphobic state of not wanting to leave the room I was in because I thought something terrible is going to happen. Obviously, years later, we diagnosed it with PTSD, and obviously, like growing up in an environment where there was violence, and there were drive-by shootings, and people were getting stabbed, and this sort of traumatic environment, that everybody else is in the same space, so you don't really know any better, any different, and it starts to manifest itself in different ways for different people. For me, it was having these sporadic moments of panic attacks.

So, my mom was working at a children's hospital in Hollywood, close to Vermont, and Sunset Boulevard. And a friend of hers was the one that suggested I tried meditation. She was a follower of Paramahansa Yogananda. She was part of the Self-Realization Fellowship. And my mom had no, like, she did not know what it was. A friend of hers at work said, “She should try this. Tell her to read this, to try meditation. It might help.” My dad had also, given me a book, again, it's like, bless my dad, not speaking English, trying to do his own research, to try and help me. It was this book called *Don't Panic* and I read it from cover to cover. And every time I would get anxiety, I liked reading about the physiology of what was — because I wanted to know what was happening in my body.

I'm like, “Okay, this is my sympathetic nervous system. And this is what this is, and this is why this is happening. A thought is triggering this. I'm okay. I need to do my breathing exercise.” So, that had already started to happen in the background. My mom shows up with these pamphlets with this, who I thought was a lovely lady on the cover. I didn't know it was a gentleman. I just started to read and it felt very, like woo. And at the time, I didn't know what woo was. I only knew

that – I knew about cults and different things because of stuff that would watch on the news or, yes, like my family would talk about or whatever.

There was a couple of things that happened. I don't know if you remember. Do you remember the Hale-Bopp? The comet thing? The Hale-Bopp people?

[00:50:06] LW: Yes. The Nikes and all that.

[00:50:09] RA: Yes. I don't remember what year that was. But just like culty things were kind of like, no-go zone, right? So, I already knew that cults were not good. Aside from knowing that, I had no idea of new age-y things other than horoscopes. I'm sure you know this. I would hope that you know this. If you don't, we'll have a talk afterward. But do you know who Walter Mercado is?

[00:50:38] LW: Well, I heard it in an interview that that's the Mexican psychic that you guys would watch on television.

[00:50:44] RA: Exactly. Walter was like, that was as woo as we went, right? It's like, "Oh, whatever is happening, everybody has stopped to hear their horoscope for the day." So, reading this book, it was like, how the literature, I mean, I don't know, you're familiar. I think you are, right? Yes. You're familiar with fellowship?

[00:51:06] LW: Oh, yeah. Of course. I used to go there all the time. I've sat in those lectures that you – it couldn't have been further from where you're coming from, like East LA, and that scene, all these white people and they're all dressed in robes.

[00:51:18] RA: Everybody's smiling. Why are you smiling?

[00:51:20] LW: Yes. And it's so bright and sunny and it's like white, the whole building is white, and it's just sparkling, and you have the lake. It's really beautiful. If anybody listening to this goes to LA, you have to go to the Self-Realization Fellowship in the Pacific Palisades. So, you show up, you turn off –

[00:51:37] RA: That's not the one I went. I went there, but I went to Hollywood location, which is same energy, same vibe.

[00:51:45] LW: Okay. You said sunset and I thought, I just assumed it was Pacific Palisades, the one in Hollywood is also on sunset as well.

[00:51:50] RA: I went to the smaller one. And it's so funny, because I will call it a spiritual awakening. But really, all it was, was me feeling my body breathing. Because up until that point, I had never felt safe in my body. My body was used to feeling anxiety and fear, and so I was used to just sort of going into a disembodied experience. It's like, "Okay, I'm having this experience. I'm in fear of this person. Oh, we're having a robbery go on right now. Okay, yes, we're just going to stand here and let them take what they're taking, and then they're going to leave. And then we're just going to continue."

These experiences that again, just create this trauma where it just didn't feel – I had never felt my body feel good, I guess, in this moment. So, I show up to this place, just like you said, you describe the scene perfectly. I go into this meditation hall, and this lovely English woman is talking, she just like having this talk. And I was just kind of looking around waiting for the guy, whoever was going to get to show up and do whatever the thing that is supposed to happen here. I realized it was her, which I thought was cool, because I'm like, "Oh, this is" – I'm used to going to Catholic Church. So, that was a really interesting experience.

She's talking about happiness and our responsibility to the pursuit of happiness, and all of these things that felt interesting. I didn't understand fully what was happening, but then she guides us through this meditation where I talked about not wanting to close my eyes, and I had a really hard time doing eyes-closed meditation. Obviously, for me, in my experience, it was challenging at first, but I remember just having this sense of – and it could have been the smell like the incense or just the vibe, the building felt safe to me, which was another thing. You grew up scanning for exits. You grew up scanning for anybody who might cause trouble. When you're in a place where you feel like you can fully relax and somebody that is guiding you, telling you that you're in a safe place, and you can relax, it just felt completely – it was bliss. I felt in complete bliss in that moment, and it wasn't because of a substance I was taking, and it wasn't because of any other reason other than my body just regulated itself.

And then, the instant the mind, right? The mind, she is tricky. The minute I felt that surge of peace. The first thing I thought was, "This is going to end. How long is this going to last? Oh, okay, wait, my heartbeat. Oh, my gosh. Wait, am I having a panic attack? Am I going to have a panic attack? Am I going to have a panic attack the minute I walk out of this place?" That thing that happened, I didn't have the mental training at that point. But that experience was so – I say that, because it took still some time to really learn about mindfulness, learn about meditation, learn about yogic philosophy, for me to really integrate it into my lifestyle. But that moment definitely showed me a pathway that I never even knew existed.

[00:55:32] LW: Did you go back much or not?

[00:55:33] RA: Yes, years later, I went back and often times –

[00:55:38] LW: But I mean, in that time, did you go back?

[00:55:40] RA: Oh, in that time? Yes, I went back a handful of times.

[00:55:45] LW: Did you come back to East LA and report, "Hey, guys, you won't believe what I just experienced."

[00:55:49] RA: Yes. Actually, I remember one of the times I came out, we went to the Bodhi tree. I went with a friend of mine because I was telling her about this crazy experience and we went to the Bodhi Tree.

[00:56:00] LW: Via bus?

[00:56:01] RA: Via bus. We took the bus and we switched. We walked down –

[00:56:03] LW: Wow. Those are some long bus trips.

[00:56:05] RA: Dude, so long. A lot of quarters and we would look on the street to try and find dimes and pennies and whatever we could find. And then there was a couple of times when we

walked. Oh, my God, we walked so far, what felt so far, but back then, it's like you just did what you did.

[00:56:25] LW: You ever go to Elixir across the street from Bodhi Tree?

[00:56:28] RA: Yes. But that didn't open for a while. That was more like early twenties I would go there. And yes, I love that place. That Zen garden in the back, Light.

[00:56:37] LW: There's no place like that. I can't believe it's closed.

[00:56:39] RA: There isn't. Yes, I would go and do a little meditation practice back there. I would just go and drink tea and bring my book and people watch. I'm like, what is it like? Because I had a job at that point. I was working full-on career jobs.

[00:56:55] LW: You were working as assistant, right? Or something like that?

[00:56:56] RA: I was. Well, at that point, I was working at the salon. I was like the salon managing and it was right up the street, because the salon was on West Born and Santa Monica Boulevard, right by the Trader Joe's and yeah, Elixir was just right down the street. So, I would just sometimes walk down there because I didn't feel like finding parking. And yeah, it was like, "Oh, it was lovely." Oh, my God. I love that you brought Elixir up. They should bring that back.

[00:57:24] LW: I'm sure if it was profitable, they would bring it back. Unfortunately, it's a bunch of 20-year-olds sitting around sipping tea all day long.

[00:57:29] RA: I know. Hello.

[00:57:30] LW: And you're paying \$50,000 a month for rent.

[00:57:33] RA: Welcome to LA. And then there was like the little bookstore in the back. Right? It was like a store, they have crystals.

[00:57:39] LW: And little spa. So, give us a little montage. Okay, so the next years you're learning yoga, you're working at the salon, you're assisting, you have a bit of an eating disorder, you're running marathons. Are you living in LA at this point?

[00:57:56] RA: Yes. I'm living in LA. I'm living in LA. I'm trying to live my best life and I was just so into spiritual growth and healing and learning. Yes, learning different healing modalities. I had already started going to yoga classes back before it was YogaWorks, Center for Yoga on Larchmont. That was my first yoga experience.

[00:58:24] LW: That's where I trained at the Center for Yoga.

[00:58:25] RA: It is?

[00:58:27] LW: I took Diane, what's her last name? She was the one that was doing all the trainings back in like 2002. I can't remember. But yes, that's where I trained in yoga back in the day.

[00:58:38] RA: Back in the day, Light. We had to cross paths at some point back then, I would imagine.

So, yes, that became my life. I just was really compelled by this life of balance, because I was searching for peace. I was searching for balance, because I still felt so much obviously, you know, I was in a really high-stress job. The salon at the time was doing a reality TV show. It was just like a mess. I just met Tori. I was trying to finish college. I was just trying to do the most, and for no other reason other than it felt like I really needed to prove something to myself, and it was like when you feel so completely out of balance, you start seeking things that'll bring you back into balance and you try and all kinds of different things on for size. Yes, that was what was happening during that time, and I was the person that would go party on the weekends and go get wasted, and then like show up to yoga Monday morning, ready to be vegan and clear, and completely doing the work, being on the path.

It actually took a couple years. I had a lot of sober friends at that time that were in recovery, actively in recovery, in AA, and my dad. I'd had experience with a lot of people in sobriety. So, I

was really drawn to people in sobriety because I experienced so many of these AA rooms when my dad would go through these bouts of sobriety, and I would go to these AA meetings, and hear these super graphic stories.

But again, I'm such a good listener, I would sit there and just listen to the stories of people's lives. So, during this time, I was hanging out a lot of my sober friends. And, yeah, just not really thinking I had a problem, or thinking that there was anything wrong with the way I was living my life. Also, my desire to find balance, and I just slowly started to shift my life choices. I decided after like my 22nd birthday, or 21st, or 22nd birthday, that I didn't want to drink anymore, that I was just going to try being sober for a year. That year turned into two, then three, then four. And slowly, my life just started to – I never personally considered that I had an issue with alcohol, because growing up in a family of alcoholics, alcohol just was never my thing. I just never enjoyed it. It just was not something – I did it because it was a social thing. And when I would do it, I would always take it to the extra. So, I'm like, “Oh, maybe it's something to look into.” So, I just decided to stop.

It's interesting when these things happen in people's lives, where we start to reflect on things that we think or consider might not be serving our highest good. If you are open to finding balance, how you get opportunities to do that, and so, I feel like the years that would come really allowed for me to thrive in choosing my health, and my mental well-being. I went back to therapy. I think, I started my vegan venture shortly thereafter. I just started to really go deep into my yogic studies. I did my first teacher training at Center For yoga, or YogaWorks during that time and decided, I really loved yoga, and I loved the world of wellness. It felt like putting my life and energy into something that was going to serve me, and my highest good, was a great way for me to live my life.

Mostly, what I wanted to do was, I saw how privileged I was in the aspect of being able to have access, to going to therapy, going to yoga, even though again, it was like I was the odd woman out, right? It still felt like this is something that everybody needs. This is something that I want to bring to my family, to the people, like the people I grew up with, and that was always my incentive to continue to learn because it wasn't as accessible. You know this, right? It wasn't as accessible as it is now back then, early 2000s, mid-2000s. It still was very much a privileged hobby for people.

[01:03:30] LW: It's where meditation is today. Back then, yoga was only practice in these kinds of communities.

[01:03:36] RA: Yes. So, that was like the montage. I always like tell people, this didn't happen overnight. It took many years. A lot of practice. I started to see the benefits of living this sort of clean lifestyle. I loved the way I felt. I loved who I was, when I was on this path, which is another thing I had an experience, obviously having had an eating disorder, having had the PTSD, having had the panic, having sort of grown up in this environment to get to this place of, "Oh, I accept who I am. I like the person I am. I like this kind and caring, compassionate person who cares about people and is actively trying to help others, and trying to figure out ways to educate people in ways that they can help themselves." So, that's what I did. The path just started to open – how they say, when you're on the right path. These synchronicities happen. These opportunities come into your life, and your life just starts to change and it's absolutely true.

[01:04:48] LW: Was that flash flood that you were miraculously spared from, because your mom dropped you off at school that day. Was that something that was still on your mind at that point as you were starting to identify your path and your purpose? Like, "Oh, this is why that didn't happen to me and I need to take this seriously."

[01:05:05] RA: Yes, I mean, look, I thought about it back when I was a kid, and my dad would tell me how he would go to school without shoes on. I just felt like I have shoes. I get to go to school. I have an opportunity to make a change, even in the immediate people's lives that I have. I think for many years, I don't know, it's not that I had survivor's guilt or anything like that, because again, it's like, there is no knowing. But for many years, I would even say this to Tori, like I shouldn't be here.

There were so many instances in my life growing up, situations I put myself in as a 13, teenage-year-old girl, situations where anything could have happened, getting into cars with people that are driving erratically and are completely under the influence. Just things that –

[01:05:59] LW: Dumb shit.

[01:06:00] RA: Yes, like just shit that you shouldn't be doing and like, so many, again, so many instances where I think back and I'm like, "Man, I can't believe that I'm here, that this is my life that I get to do this. So many people I know and knew aren't." I like to reflect on it, not as a way to say, "Okay, yes, this helps me keep going. Because I'm like, some warrior on this path." No. I'm just like everybody else. I'm just, I don't know, I want to say I'm lucky. But I don't think I'm lucky. I really just believe that everybody has the potential to choose a different life. The potential, not the opportunity. The potential. And I think that's a big difference, because there are plenty of people with potential, that'll never have the opportunity to move forward, because of their circumstances, or where they live, or political system, whatever. But the potential is there.

[01:07:08] LW: I also love how you reflected on that as motivation when you were in that marathon that was also happening during the worst rainstorm in race history. That's what you really thought about that got you through your wall, when you hit the wall.

So, you said that your book, your whole platform, really, your podcast, the Radically Loved brand, it started with a blog post. What I'm wondering is, you've been writing your whole life. Why did you start that blog post? What was the inspiration? Or if you can remember it, was there something, an event that happened that said, "I'm going to start a blog. I know I write, but people need to read what I've been writing."

[01:07:49] RA: Yes, you know what's interesting is I don't really spend too much time reflecting on the whys. I just do. I just do shit. "It's like, "Oh, that sounds good." But if I had to answer the question, I guess, I spent so much of the beginning portion of my life in that rebellious state, feeling like we don't matter, and I am insignificant in the grand scheme of things, and I don't matter, and the world is a terrible place. I've seen some really gnarly shit happen to really good-hearted people for no reason.

So, the whole everything happens for a reason, I stopped believing that as a really young person. I think, radically loved resonated with me, because it's the path that I have to take myself. I have to believe the opposite. My work in this world, people sometimes think that I'm this like happy go lucky, optimistic, looking on the brighter side, like the half is cup full person. And it's funny because I'm not that person. That is not who I am at my core. I am the person that sees the reality of the world and knows what people are capable of. And my work is to believe

that the world will support me in my endeavors because the only experience I have is the one I have, and I'm here, right? I'm still here.

I have to believe that the universe will support me, and that the universe will provide, that there is some sort of energy essence, higher power, God, Mother Nature, whatever it is for people. I have to believe that there is something greater than myself that is going to be ever-present. Sometimes, for me, that anchor is change. Change is inevitable. You can always rely on change, because she's always going to be there. Constant.

So, I think that radical love, for me, the sort of tenants of you are radically loved, you are radically present, you are radically resilient, in a way they are anchor points in my life, that I have to believe, in order for me to continue the work that I do, and continue to live this life, right? It's like, it's my purpose. My purpose is to feel radically loved, right? To be in that state of, it's not a state of bliss, or wholeness, or contentment. These are the goals, right? They are the aspirations. But for me, it's just to be radically loved is to be radically present. I don't know what's going to happen the next hour, the next day, the next year. But I do know that I'm here, right now, in this moment, in this time, and everything I need is right here right now in this perfect moment.

[01:11:31] LW: You're also early in the podcast game, earlier than most other people. And you're now 500-something episodes in. So, I'm curious, if someone, young woman from East LA, reached out to you and said, "Hey, Rosie, I'm thinking about starting a podcast. Do you have any advice suggestions for me?" What would you say?

[01:11:56] RA: I would say, don't do it. No, I'm just kidding. I would say, I mean, I wouldn't do it again. I mean, I would do it again, obviously, like I would, but I couldn't do what I do now. If I started my podcast right now, it's like, look, we age, we get a little bit tired, and there has to be a driver there for you. I say, I'm a big fan of doing things, because it makes your heart sing. Because it makes your heart happy. Don't do things because you want to get a million downloads, or you want to make millions of dollars, or you want to achieve overnight success. That shit does not happen.

If you want to do something because you're really excited about it, I don't want to say passionate because I have like a sort of – I'm in a phase in my life where that word bumps up against me. So, I'm going to use a desire, excitement, enthusiasm, and you're truly in your heart. It's making you lose sleep, and making you forget to eat, because you're just so super stoked. I say, “Girl, you get that podcast going. Don't care about what anybody else has to say. You get your podcast. Don't listen to anybody saying that there are too many podcasters. It's like super, what is it? There's like an overabundance of podcasts.”

[01:13:26] LW: Saturated market.

[01:13:27] RA: Yes, exactly. That was the word. In my mind, I was speaking in Spanish. And I'm like, “[inaudible 01:13:32] saturated.” I say, go for it. Do it. Do what your heart sings.

Look, there are millions of books out there. But people still keep writing books and people still keep reading them and buying them. So, do it. If it's something that makes your heart sing. If you want to write a book, if you want to start a podcast, if you want to be a yoga teacher, if you want to be a meditation teacher, because you think it's going to achieve X, Y, Z, you have to go back and do some self-inquiry and really ask yourself what your motivations are.

I had to get really clear with what I wanted to create with my career because I like to practice non-attachment. I really do. I can feel those moments where I'm grasping at wanting an opportunity, or want – some people could see my podcast and the platform I've built and think “Wow, look how amazing you've been able to monetize. You've been able to build and look at this community and look at what you've done.” That's great. But I can look at it also and say, “But why am I not here now?” I've been doing this for almost seven years. Shouldn't I be up here instead of where I'm at? That type of thinking is always a red flag for me. That says, “Okay, like what's going on? Like what's up? What's your motivation here? What is it that you're actually trying to do?”

So, I think it's really important for us to be in that – I'm in a constant state of self-reflection. I mean, to a fault. And I really try my best and I say this with great humility to practice what I preach. It's not easy. But I would never do something that I would tell somebody else to do, or vice versa. So, that's a great question. What about – I mean, you've been doing the podcast for

a long time now. How do you feel about it? Would you do it again if you had to start right now in 2023?

[01:15:40] LW: I would. Absolutely, 100%. I think it's the best thing I've done. It's the hardest thing I've done recently, and it's the best thing I've done. It's like, you know how writing a book can be hard. It's like always writing a book. You always have a book that's writing. There's no finish date to it. There are like periods where you have to go do a lot of work, and then periods where like this, where we're having the conversation, that's amazing. And that makes it all worth it. But then the in-between, the pre-production and post-production, that's where it's just a grind, a weekly grind. But it's totally worth it. Because I get to have these wonderful conversations, and I get to go deeper than the surface level with people that I admire and respect. I think, that in and of itself, is just worth it. And being able to add value, having someone listen to this conversation and being excited about you and your life and your work, and then go and look it up and listen to a dozen of your episodes, just expands their understanding of things like love, which was my – I have a couple more questions. How should we be thinking about love, the word love? Is there a definition that applies to everyone? Is it more of a verb or –

[01:16:52] RA: Yes. I'm the believer that love is a verb. I think it's both something that you do and something that you are and I'm a romantic. I love, love. I love my friends. I love my community. I love my people. I am your best friend, like we just met and we'll go deep. I love conversations with people. I love to observe. I'm like an anthropologist. I just love, love. And I feel like, yes, I don't know that I'd give people a full definition of it.

One of the things that came up a lot during the titling of the book, titling my podcast is like what is radical love? It's like radical, the word radical stems from the root word, root, right? It's the root system. If you think of a root system, as this tapestry that connects everything, and everyone to be radical, and to be radically loved, it's like, a love that is unconditional. It's hard to have that unconditional love even in our families, sometimes. I grew up in a system where I didn't always get unconditional love. I got conditional love. So, I want it to build a world and a space where that love is just present. I think, in our world, and the world of spirituality, wellness, whatever you want to say, it's like a beautiful, fertile ground to practice that type of acceptance, and that type of unconditional love, which again, is hard. But the intention is there and to me, it's like when you approach meditation, you approach meditation, there's an intention, there's a

practice, there's an integration. So, I think love is the same thing, right? It's the same way we go into a new space, a new relationship.

[01:19:06] LW: And finally, just because you mentioned metrics and how to gauge success, how are you defining success overall at this stage in your life, having done all the things you've done and seeing all the things you've seen?

[01:19:19] RA: I mean, do you want the – I'm doing a podcast answer or do you want like my personal answer because those are different.

[01:19:23] LW: Your personal answer. Your personal 10,000-foot view answer of success.

[01:19:29] RA: I mean, I've merited success as being in a state of peace. That to me is success. When I'm at peace, I'm not thinking about what I'm doing, when I'm creating, what the next thing is, how am I going to do this? How am I going to do that? And it's like, "Oh, this is the next thing. This is the next opportunity." I think for many years, I merited my success on acquiring accomplishments. "Oh, I did this. I got to this episode. I have a million downloads. Now, I got a book deal. Now, I got this epic teaching job. Now, I'm working with this celebrity." That to me, it doesn't fill my heart. It doesn't make my heart full. I think about the things that make my heart full. I'm like, "Oh, just spending time with the people that I love, having great conversation, playing with my dogs, raising butterflies, reading books, drinking tea, watching the sunset, watching the sunrise. Those moments of just pure bliss, like more, more, bliss more.

Those moments, those true moments of being in that state, it's like, I think this is where *Knowing Where to Look* comes in. Because when I read it, I think, and I don't know if you remember this or not, but obviously, it came out during COVID. So, we were kind of having this full-on, not knowing what was going on in the world. But I think I read that at a time, during this transition. In 2020, I kind of used it as my opportunity to retire from teaching yoga. And I just felt I was truthfully really burnt out. I'd been traveling. I don't know if you remember this, but I was doing four retreats a year. I was doing teacher training that was just like, it was a lot and I was just done.

I think that year, it was just like, I felt like I needed to hard reset. I needed to figure out what I wanted to do, because I felt like my life has now – as an entrepreneur, you know this, right? You built this system, that's like, as an entrepreneur, self-employed person, then it kind of grows its own little legs and arms and head. And then all of a sudden, it's just this entity that's just navigating the world and you're like, “Oh, shit, now, this thing is happening. And now I'm like responsible for this thing, and it's kind of going all over the place, and I'm still responsible for it. Now, it's in charge. And now, I'm not in charge.”

I think I was having one of those existential moments where I felt like I really needed to shift where my attention and where my energy was going. I just loved reading some of those stories you wrote in there. The Wanderlust one, where you're like driving, and it was like this experience. I don't know if – I wasn't there. I didn't go to that one. But I know you were teaching and I'm just like, “Man, the answers are just all around us.” They're just all around us all the time. It really helps shift my perspective. I mean, truly, and I was like, “Okay, so how do I merit success now, if it's not the standard way, people see?” Oh, I got to win this award, or I have to do this, or I have to accomplish this. I have to make X amount of dollars, or I have to buy a house and I have to – and then you took off on your sabbatical. You're like, “I'm getting rid of everything. I'm leaving.” I'm like, wait, what? I mean, he's really doing the thing. He's not messing around. I think that also, seeing people like yourself, other friends of mine that really just committed to following that path, and committed to living this life, this practice of non-attachment, like these things around me don't define who I am.

So, this is a long answer to how I view success. But I guess to me, success is just an ability to feel at peace and accept where you are, I think.

[01:23:40] LW: Beautiful. Check this out. This is my next book that I'll be coming onto your podcast to talk about. Speaking of going on this nomadic adventure. I wrote a book about it.

[01:23:51] RA: Do you have a digital copy?

[01:23:53] LW: Of course.

[01:23:57] RA: I'm stoked for you, Light. That's going to be so rad. Wow.

[01:24:01] **LW:** Thank you. Thank you. Yes, so anyways, we got to wrap this up.

[01:24:06] **RA:** Yes. Otherwise we'll be here for another fucking two hours.

[01:24:08] **LW:** I know. I know. But I want to thank you so much for sharing your story in the book, for sharing it on this podcast, and for just being a living, walking, talking example of what that intent listening is actually like. The listening that you displayed as a child, and you're still doing it in your conversations, in your podcast. It's like some people have to meditate. Some people are meditation. It's like what Salvador Dali said, "I don't do drugs. I am drugs. What are you talking about?"

[01:24:40] **RA:** I love it.

[01:24:41] **LW:** You are meditation. You're walking, talking meditation, and was an honor and pleasure connecting with you after such a long time. So, looking forward to seeing you again at some point in person, and coming back on to *Radically Loved* and talking about *Travel Light*.

[01:24:59] **RA:** Yes. Wait, we have to do it in person, because – we got to do it in the studio. We got a studio.

[01:25:07] **LW:** I love it.

[01:25:08] **RA:** It's a different experience.

[01:25:10] **LW:** Yeah, it's all the rage now. That's something I'm even thinking about doing. Like, how can I do a studio from my backpack?

[01:25:17] **RA:** I know, right? You know what you could do too, is just whenever you're in LA or in Austin –

[01:25:21] **LW:** Just rent a place.

[01:25:22] RA: Just rent a place and stack your people.

[01:25:25] LW: That's what Sean Stephenson was doing for a while. He was just renting a studio and stacking and stacking.

[01:25:31] RA: You know Ruben Rojas?

[01:25:33] LW: Of course.

[01:25:35] RA: So, Ruben, do you know Chase Chewning?

[01:25:38] LW: Not by name, probably by –

[01:25:40] RA: He does. He's producing – essentially, he's producing Ruben's podcast. So, they just got a studio space. If you need people, or you need a studio setup, like that's where I'm going to – I'm going to have them do the next sort of round. They're great. And the quality's epic and you can just have them record and then you can have them do it or like, I just, I still have my people that edit my stuff together that have a lesser rate. And yes, so that's how I'm planning on doing it for the next season. I want to see how it goes. But I'm saying because they have a space if you come out to LA and you want to stack some stuff, I think that would be worth doing.

[01:26:23] LW: I like that. I like solution-oriented thinking. I have to figure that out.

[01:26:29] RA: Well, if you need help, just let me know. Happy to help. Happy to be of service.

[01:26:34] LW: Thank you so much, Rosie. It was an honor.

[01:26:36] RA: Thanks, Light.

[OUTRO]

[01:26:38] LW: Thank you so much for listening to my interview with Rosie Acosta. For more inspiration, make sure to follow Rosie on the socials, @RosieAcosta. That's R-O-S-I-E A-C-O-S-

T-A. Of course, I'll drop links to everything else that Rosie and I discussed in the show notes, on my website, lightwatkins.com/show.

And if this is your first time listening to The Light Watkins Show, we've got an incredible archive of past interviews with many other luminaries who share how they found their path and their purpose. Such as Yung Pueblo, who many of you may follow on social media. Ava Duvernay. You may have seen some of her movies. Ed Mylett, an incredible motivational speaker, and many others.

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Finally, to help me bring you the best guests possible, it will go a long way if you can take 10 seconds to rate this podcast. All you do is glance down at your screen, click on the name of the show, and scroll down past the seven previous episodes — you'll see a space with five blank stars. Just tap the star on the right if you enjoy this podcast, if you like what we're doing, and that will give us a five-star rating. If you want to go the extra mile and leave a review, maybe just one line saying what you like about the podcast, or which episode a new listener should start with, then that would be greatly appreciated as well.

I want to thank you very much, again, for tuning in week after week. I'll be back here next week with another story about someone just like me and you taking a leap of faith in the direction of

their purpose. And until then, keep trusting your intuition, keep following your heart, and keep taking those leaps of faith on your end. And if no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you and have a great day.

[END]