

Transcripts from the Creative Tips for Building Community When We Don't Agree episode:

Renia:

Naomi, thank you so much for being with us today. I would love for you to tell us, first of all, we're normally talking to business owners here. So this is a little bit of a unique thing for us, and I'm super excited about it. So tell us a little bit about who you are, and your journey that you're on right now.

Naomi:

Yeah. Yeah, so I am actually a business owner, and I think it's been kind of fun in this journey that I'm on to realize the components that overlap, between my journey and being a business owner. I am a native Nebraskan, born and raised, in the middle of the country. I am biracial, my dad is black and my mom is white. And so my whole story kind of pivots around, finding belonging. And so as a biracial girl in the seventies, figuring out where I fit in, we were homeschooled, my entire life. At the time, it was not legal to do so in Nebraska, so that was another realm of like watching my mom, model behavior, around finding ways to fit in. I worked as a bartender, and a paralegal, for my early adult years. And then I met my husband, and we went on a, around the United States, and in two overseas locations journey, we raised our kids overseas in India and Singapore. And then when we moved back, I started a real estate company, mostly, because I felt that most real estate professionals, don't prioritize family, and helping them thrive. So started a real estate business, moved back to Nebraska, which has been it's a journey in and of itself, and have been working in housing nonprofits, the last four years, and currently am running for city council.

Renia:

So that's a few things. That you've done in your life, right?

Naomi:

Just a few.

Renia:

Just a few. And for those of you who are listening to this and not watching this, Naomi is not 75. So, Naomi, let's break that down a little bit, because I've got all the questions, just from that overview, and you and I know each other, a little bit already, but just to tell other people about this. So you raised your kids overseas, which is a very different thing, from, the middle of the country.

Naomi:

It is.

Renia:

What did you learn, by doing that? That you're bringing back, into thinking about families with what you're doing now?

Naomi:

Oh, that's a great question. I think that one of the things I learned, when you're a serial mover, when you move a lot, whether it's because of the military, or because of, one of the adults is career in the household, you kind of adopt this like energy, around going into a new place. And everyone's excited, and it's really, really fun to go to the new place. And then you have the, you know, the honeymoon is over, and you settle in, there's a thing called placemaking, so you work on your placemaking, and you find your favorite coffee shop, and the kids know, where they can safely bike to or whatever. And then, pretty soon after that, you know, that you're on your way to the next place. And so you start a practice of leaving well, which is something that I feel strongly about, for anyone who is moving, or going through a change. And I think that for folks who have been born and raised in the same spot, who marry high

school sweethearts, who then live five miles from where they grew up, I think, we can easily miss that, that wave of excitement and that wave of getting to know the place that you love and live. And so I think one of the things I bring back is, just encouraging people, no matter how many times you've moved, or if you haven't at all, to actively rediscover, the things that you love about where you live. That can include, you know, things like frequenting new businesses, especially during all things pandemic. That's the way that we can help give back to our local economy, is to seek out new businesses, and then really just identifying how, where you fit, and why does it matter that you are a part of that community? So that's one thing. And then I think as it relates to my campaign, if I can raise three children in India, without a lot of help, I can handle a campaign, and a city council, elected officials seat.

Renia:

That is, yeah, that's pretty amazing. And you spoke of two concepts there that as a person who's lived in, almost the same place her whole life I've never heard before. So can you tell us what that, living well, what that means?

Naomi:

Yeah. So leaving well is something that I borrowed from a friend who is a serial mover overseas. He works in the education space for ex-pat kiddos, and he coined it first in just a way of making sure that before you leave a place that you leave it well, and then I kind of took it and expanded it, with some actual physical things that you can do. So for people that feel gutsy, I encourage them to let their kids write a little goodbye message like on the inside of their closet, in their bedrooms, intentionally going to the places that you love, and saying goodbye to taking photos, on the favorite park bench that you walk by every day when you go to school. And the reason I think it's so important, and it applies to relationships, it applies to jobs, when you say goodbye and you leave well, to whatever you're putting in the past, it opens up your space, to go into the new thing, with that much more openness, and awareness, I think of what you're leaving behind. So, that's a short description of leaving well.

Renia:

I love that because if it really feels like honoring a place in a way that is, I would think doing something like running for city council that is so tied to place.

Naomi:

Yap.

Renia:

And to a commitment and a love, for this very finite location, that understanding how to honor.

Naomi:

Yeah.

Renia:

A place would be really important, to understanding how to honor that job.

Naomi:

Well, and I think it works well, the concept of leaving well also, when you're in business for yourself, oftentimes you have a partner that might leave, after a while, or the priorities of the business change, leaving well is a really great thing to do, when you have a change in your team. And I think for city council, or any time, there's a shift in who your elected representatives are. Leaving well also honors, what you're leaving behind, in terms of how, that city, or that country was led, to just sit with, you know, for example, 2020, what has 2020 taught you? What are you happy to leave behind? What are you looking forward to in the future? So it can be, a concept that you apply very broadly.

Renia:

I love that. And so I have no doubt knowing you, that you will be an amazing city council woman, but, why would you want to? That's my first big question is like, it's not the easiest thing in the world to do, especially as a biracial, you know, woman in the Midwest. Why would you want to do that?

Naomi:

Yeah, I think it's interesting to kind of identify what things are going to be challenges on the front end, so that I know what to expect. And so in addition to being biracial, I am also, I'm a registered Democrat, and the majority of my district that I'm running in, is majority Republican. But all of the things that are my through lines, and kind of my red thread of my life, prepare me very, very well for that. And I'm married to a very conservative Republican. So we have, the same conversations together, that I'll be having with voters so. The reason that I am running for city council, is because I have lived in and worked with systems, for what feels like my entire life, that I have built boxes, you know, this is the policy, this is the legislation, this is the rules of the game. And I just started realizing that in my second half of my life, I'm 44. I wanted to be a part of rewriting, the policies, instead of just figuring out how to work in them, let's bring equity, and let's bring healing, and let's bring true collaboration to the table, and then rewrite it so that our kids, and their kids, don't have to just work in these, confines in these constructs. So, that's the nutshell of why I wanted to run.

Renia:

I love that. And it's refreshing to me to see, because I think a lot of us, if you're listening to this in real time, it'll come out about three weeks after the election. So, but we're recording a couple of days before the presidential election of 2020, so we don't know, what's coming yet, but regardless, a lot of attention, and intentionality and anxiety and things like that, go towards presidential elections, even some towards Senate, maybe a little bit more towards Congress, but we, a lot of us don't really think so much about our local races, and how much they affect our day-to-day lives. So is there, was there a thought around that, why you chose to run for this specific position?

Naomi:

I think that you're so right in saying that about our day-to-day lives. You know, the things that I've heard my friends talk about, this year, are things like, it's such a bummer that the libraries had to close. We are driving less. So there's less complaints about potholes and traffic, but more complaints about the fact that we don't have city-wide wifi. Like that is really been a huge hurdle, for so many families. Things like rent assistance programs, that are on a local state or city level or County. And we're having to flip our way through it, because of our lack of leadership right now. And so, locally, Omaha has always kind of flown under the radar, like literally we're called a flyover state as Nebraska, Omaha flies under the radar for so many reasons. And this year we have been in national headlines, for reasons that I think most of us are kind of embarrassed or sad about. And I watched our leadership Dodge, and we've enfumble and stumble. And while fumbling and stumbling is okay as leaders, I think we need to give more leaders, grace for that. They're just not equipped, that the folks that we have currently elected in Omaha, and I'll just be very blunt and saying this, are not the right leadership, they're not equipped for what we need going forward. They've done a fine job. There's no, great negativity that I have to say, but our kids especially, like they just deserve better. I don't think I really answered your question, but.

Renia:

Well, I would say I would love to follow up to and say like for, because this is, there are people all over the country listening to this, I have family in Lincoln. So I know a little bit about Omaha, I've flown in there a lot. But tell us about Omaha. What makes it unique? Because I think most people only know it, as like the tagline from a counting crows song. E.g myself, but.

Naomi:

That, are what Peyton Manning calls the Omaha play, like that's pretty much it. Omaha is as a Metro, about a million people. It is a river city, so on the other side of the river is council Bluffs, Iowa. And so we share, you know, kind of a downtown area, and then Omaha goes out in this like big expanding ring. And so Omaha proper has about 500,000 people, and then all of the Metro area around it is another 500,000.

Our public school system, is the largest in the Midwest, and it's even larger per by the number of students, and the number of nationalities and languages. It's bigger than Atlanta's public school system.

Renia:

Wow. So it's one of those places that you always hear, is a clutch nice place to raise a family. And then when you start to really understand it, and get into it, it's super nuanced and complex. And we lose a high number of our young people every year, we're one of the top States that loses our kiddos. And that's something that our voters are sad about. They're losing, they're literally losing their kids to other locations, which means family ties. So we also like a lot of Midwest States, had a large percentage of our state that is rural. And so Omaha being the largest city in the state, has kind of an insulated municipal situation, that then the rest of the state doesn't really relate to. So that's been interesting. And for the first year, this year, I think in a long time, Nebraska is one of the districts, it's from a congressional standpoint, that's really getting attention. So I think, we're on the cusp, of more people knowing about Omaha, hopefully for innovative and leadership reasons in the future.

Naomi:

Very cool. And so I am a person also in a majority Republican area. And all the things that when you're out, and proud about your status in the world, right? Can cause challenges. How are you, doing that when you're out talking to constituents, especially in a moment like this, where it feels like there's like a giant chasms, between Democrats and Republicans, that like the crossover vote, seems like, sometimes this figment of our imaginations, that doesn't exist anymore. How are you crossing that?

Renia:

I think it all comes down to, you know, there's the concept of how quickly we judge people, it's a matter of seconds, based on their appearance and what our biases say. And I think about that often when I'm talking to voters, now we're having to do it a little different. So a lot of it's phone calls and zoom, which takes even more of that,

into play when, how we identify and relate to somebody. The one thing that I have noticed, works the best, is when they, when I ask them what issues they care about. A lot of times it's very surface, you know, it's teenage drivers, potholes and property taxes.

Naomi:

Yap.

Naomi:

And then when we dig in, and I say something like, well, do you have aging parents, or do you know anyone who does? And then we just start to talk about things that matter to all of us, that are not political with aging parents, all of us have, or know somebody, who is dealing with an aging adult in our life. Do they wish to stay in their home, instead of having to go to a nursing home? Do you know what the city council, can impact in terms of aging in place, and sustainability for, that human to be able to say, I just want to grow old here. I don't wanna go somewhere else. So before you know, it, you're having a really engaged dialogue, around something that has nothing to do with party line. I think about housing, is another hot topic issue, instead of talking about the hot button issues, I talk about whether the teachers that teach our children, can they afford to live in the communities, that we live in, or do they have to drive 45 minutes, where it's more affordable. That is a good conversation that we can have, without party lines coming into play. Honestly, though the first and foremost thing that I'm noticing, is someone needs to take away the shame, for voters, around not knowing enough, about local government. And so, I've done a lot of that work in education, with people, and then before, you know, it, none of us remember what party we voted, you know, what we're registered as. So I think it's just demystifying, and redefining politics a little bit, to just talk about what matters, to us in our daily lives.

Renia:

Yeah, I love that. And I think it's interesting, when you know, and when you're close up that, I think of that Brene Brown, line, it's hard to hate people close up. When you're close up with people already, who have different views from you, I think

sometimes it's easier to, find at least a way to see, humanity that we often miss. So this is kind of a sideways question, but I'm curious when we talk about that, what do your kids think of this?

Naomi:

So our kids are at, 25, 17 and 14. When I first talked to them, it was kind of a, a half asking them, and a half telling them.

Renia:

Yeah.

Naomi:

Which is kind of how, I live my life anyway. They were all like, Oh, okay. Like it's just the natural next thing for me to do. I think then as the weeks went on, and they started overhearing conversations, and they started seeing, my reaction, to the difficulty that is running for office. I think that they're concerned, you know, they see the media portrayal of candidates, and I think they wanna just make sure, that I'm being cared for, and treated well, but they're excited. I think they're also kind of like giggling in the background, like, Oh just wait. You don't know my mom yet. And so there's a little bit of that. And then there's honestly, there's a lot of just, they wanna be in the background right? There, you know, teenagers and young adults. But I also think that there is a moment, where they're proud. Proud that I'm willing to shift, and I don't wanna say Up level, because all levels of impact are important, but shifts the way that my impact, will serve the community so.

Renia:

Yeah, that's, so let's talk a little bit about that if you don't mind. So, you're, one of the things that I appreciate so much about you, is you always seem to show up, as your whole self. And when you start, I knew you just, as you were starting to run for office,

right? And I was like, Oh, is she gonna like, conservative herself down? I mean, I don't know how else to say it, like, get the pantsuit or whatever.

Naomi:

Nop.

Renia:

And you haven't done that at all. You have continued to just show up, as you're full.

Naomi:

Yeah.

Renia:

Yeah no whole Naomi. How, like was that something that you thought about, intentionally? Is it something that you, or is, it, was just never occurred to you, that you would do it any other way?

Naomi:

So I'm gonna say something that I might, the campaign team might be like, Oh. Why did you say that?

Renia:

I do want you to know I'm being very good and not cursing in this episode. Just for you as a kid.

Naomi:

So I think it's too fold. First, I wanna acknowledge the fact that it has taken me, a hot minute, to figure out what my true self is. It, you know, it's, I'm 44, and I would say that it has been the last 10 years. I've really been able to identify, how I show up as a biracial woman, how I show up in my power, but yet approachable. I did actually a piece of work, I would like to call it with this woman named Cindy. And, she takes you through your closet, your body image, she says, do not lose a pound. Like, don't change the way you look, let's just find the way that you are most comfortable in how you present yourself. And I think about her every day, like it literally like on my shoulder, what would Cindy say? And so it comes down to the earrings that I wear, my hair style, the fact that I wear rings, the fact that I have a visible tattoo. It lets me show up as approachable and funky, and it invites curiosity. There's always a conversation about my earrings, no matter where I go. And so that to me, is something that I wanted to make sure that the campaign held tight to, I will say the flip side of that, is that there is a constant hour by hour, inside fight, with watering down my voice. I'm being told, by folks that I very highly respect, to rub the edges off, and to dilute the message or to shift it in some way, and so that, I will just be honest, that is a struggle. And I think I'll have that through the entire part of the campaign. When you, you know, how is it that you can balance, and meld and combine heart and empathy, with politics, and can we redefine politics? And I think we can, so ask me again in may, how it's going, but I get a lot of input from people that say, oops, nope, that's not gonna resonate out here, can you strike that? Or I heard you say this, or I saw this, or your video, elicit something that I don't think is. So it's constantly absorbing all of that input, and then being able to have space, and trust in myself, to then decide what to put back out. So it's a yes, and so I think maybe part of, I'm just thinking this out loud, as you asked that question, maybe part of how I can, retain some of self, is through the way that I show up physically. Cause you can't complain about that, right? I mean, people probably will talk about something, as we go on, but I want it to stay true to, at least the physical way that I show up.

Renia:

I like that. And I was gonna say like, yeah, I'm sure they will, because that's the double bind, that I mean, women in politics, women in business, especially, you know, women of color, that's the double bind that women get in, right? Is you're not feminine enough, or you're too feminine, or you're not funky enough, or you're too

funky, or you're not safe enough, or you're too safe or you're like, and somebody is gonna talk about your clothes, because I don't know why I would do this, but we did.

Naomi:

When I do it, I realized, how bad I have been myself. And I've realized how terrible I've been, to women, who are in elected office, or who are running. And so I just, I keep that in mind all the time. Like I have been, just as bad.

Renia:

Yeah.

Naomi:

You know, in thinking negativity around people who are brave enough to run for office.

Renia:

Yeah. I often have to stop it with women, particularly certain types of women and say, do I actually not like them? Or is it my social conditioning, that is making me have this reaction?

Naomi:

Yeah.

Renia:

Because we all have it.

Naomi:

And I think it goes back to, what has happened a lot with our racial pandemic, is, you know, so many people called us to diversify our feeds. And I think that that is the same with politics, and business role models, is you have to have a diverse set of examples and role models, to be able to then, sit squarely in who you've decided to be. And so for me, I've got 5 or 6 women, that I just fill my feed with, for verbally, and in real life, to help remind me, of that, that we come in all shapes and sizes and we should.

Renia:

Yes. I love that. And so, that's, it's almost, it feels almost like a sieve or something to me, where you really do have to, you have to Polish a message, whether it's in business, whether it's in politics, it's not enough, to just show up completely as we are, and let it all out. Right? It does have to be polished, it does have to be packaged in a way that people can hold it. And so knowing what, is something you can't bend on, or what is something that you can't flex on, and what you can't. So I love the, what you said about using your, the way you show up physically, as kind of a guidepost.

Naomi:

Yeah.

Renia:

And a holding space. Tell me, like you spend a lot of time in business, you know, in nonprofits, and in real estate, where there are a lot of rules, about how you're supposed to look and behave stuff as well, right? So tell me about how that experience has informed, how you choose, messaging and the way you show up now.

Naomi:

That's a good question. I think the one thing, I'll say two things. One is that I realized a couple of years ago, when I was going through some exercises, to help me determine what I wanted my impact to be. The idea of riverbanks has been kind of my mantra. So, if you work in an environment, or if your business industry, sets riverbanks for you, whether that's guidelines, governmental restrictions, things that you can, or can't say as a business owner, whatever. If you view those as riverbanks, those are your pillars of absolutes. And then it is up to you then, to navigate the water in the middle. And that can change, that can shift, it can look however you want it to, as long as you don't mess with the riverbanks. I think sometimes we see, in lack of leadership, or in a lack of accountability, the riverbanks lower, and then that's when you get seepage, that's when you get mess, that's when you get confusion. And so, I think that I just, being able to picture riverbanks in my mind, helps me understand that I do have control of, I mean, I guess you could say, you don't have control over water, but, inside that is what I can mess with, and play with and be creative with. And I think it's the same with politics. There are predefined rules, of how to do it, but that doesn't mean I can't be very innovative and Naomi eyes, how we get there. And I think that my encouragement for folks that are, in business or entrepreneurs, is push on the edges a little bit too. You know, there's a book called *The Power of Onliness* by Nilofer Merchant. And she really talks about, there's a spot in this world that only you can stand in, and so play with that and explore, what it is that you bring to the table, that literally no one else can. And so, you know, there are the constructs of the box and the rules, but, you can be creative, I think, inside of it.

Renia:

Yeah. I love that, and it seems like to me, the more of a loonshot you're taking, I'm looking at the book in shots right now, which I'm sort of obsessed with. The more of a loonshot you're taking, the more necessary it is, to play with those edges, right?

Naomi:

Yep.

Renia:

We've been having that conversation a lot, internally, lately, as we're trying to help clients navigate, what to say or not say in this moment, between the, you know, pandemic, and the racial pandemic, and the presidential election, and like, our stance is pretty out there, because of the type of people we work with, we're just like, it's all, you know, we are a hundred percent in my personal values as a company.

Naomi:

Mm-mmh.

Renia:

But not everybody has that luxury right? There, maybe their banks are a little bit narrower or, so when you are looking at that and navigating that, do you feel like, because you are doing this really difficult, maybe against the grain of what people think as possible thing, maybe it allows you to take more risks, or how do you, or do you think it makes you maybe feel a little bit, more afraid?

Naomi:

I think it lets me be really strategic. So, I am a forward thinker, and a to what end person. So, every time I have my team with my nonprofit, my day job, when we're thinking of something, it's always toward end, like, what is the future, want us to do today? So I think it's the same with taking risks in politics. My toward end, is day one of post-election, of being in the door. So I mitigate, and make my decisions very strategically along the way, so that I can get in the door. And that's another thing that my campaign team, is probably gonna be like, why are we sharing our secrets? But it's true, like we do have to navigate the world that we live in. And I think that women are uniquely positioned, to strategize in a way that is still very authentic. To our values, we do it every day with our children, with our partners, with our, the way we spend our money, the way we negotiate, and so I think that just taking some of

those things that are innate, in us as women into the arena, and I get it can work in our favor. I do think the one thing I will say, whether it's business or politics, is making sure that you've got a solid cast of characters, to call it the end of the.

Renia:

Oh, oh, I think we're frozen. Oh, there you are. Are you back?

Naomi:

Yes.

Renia:

I think we lost like 2 minutes there.

Naomi:

Oh no, did I say anything about the cast of characters?

Renia:

You started the cast of characters.

Naomi:

Okay. So to shorten that, it was just that, I think it's also very important in that strategy to have a cast of characters that you can call at the end of the day, that will either check you, on what you've done that day, remind you why you're amazing, or

just be able to listen. I think that's super important regardless of business entrepreneurship or politics.

Renia:

I think that is really important. And I would love for you to, if you're up for it, speak about how you choose, who gets to be in that cast of characters, because I think that's really important, .

Naomi:

Yes, it is. So I always have envisioned a car. And so if I'm the one driving, I need someone right next to me in the passenger seat, that can manage the roadmap, watch the gas gauge, know what's going on around us. Like they need to be hyper-organized, and on it, like on a whim, just be able to be there. Then I need people in the back, that like, can handle refreshments, like, you know, they've got the cooler in the back, and they can, like, for me, it's zebra cakes are my, like, I love zebra cakes, or the bottle of water, or whatever we need to stay replenished, and nourished and taken care of. And then you also need the people on the side of the road that are like, go, go, go. And they don't care what you've done, they don't care if you mess up, they're just like cheering you on. But I also think there's somewhat, there's something to be said about the hurdles, and the things you have to Dodge and weave around, because that helps with those edges, and that helps with reminding you of your values too. I will say about the cast of characters that it can sometimes feel very lonely because you, if you were being true and honest, there are people that you consider very good friends, who are not going to be the best for you, they're just not reliable. And that can be sometimes a really hard moment to be like, Oh, I have to not, they can't be in the inner circle right now. And then, you know, it comes down to physically, like sometimes I pick up my phone to text someone, and I'm like, they're not gonna be able to give me what I need. So that's some hard reckoning, I think that that needs to happen. But being aware and being able to talk about the fact that not everyone can be that for you as important.

Renia:

Yeah. I think recognized, I feel like one of the secrets of adulthood, is knowing how to recognize other people's capacity before you ask for certain things.

Naomi:

Yeah. And the one thing I'm learning with campaign, it is not about me. None of this is about me. And so, I have to figure out how to get my fuel up, in different ways. Because every person I talk to, is either a, potential right now is either a potential donor, a potential voter, or someone who could potentially use something against me. And so I'm always very cognizant, of how does this impact my legacy, and what people will say about me when I leave the room. So that also shifts, and makes it more lonely, who I can talk to about, the hard stuff, or the honest stuff. So I think if anyone's thinking about politics, just be aware. Be aware that you'll need to find your safe space.

Renia:

Yeah. And that seems a little more difficult in this moment, that maybe in years past, because everything is recordable.

Naomi:

Yep. I will say, that there is a local group of candidates who are women who have become that. Some of them are in it, you know, they're about to find out their results, or some of them are in it with me in this municipal race, and that has been my go-to generally, or the way that we know each other, with deer grown-ass woman, and being able to just have people that don't interact with my universe at all. So yeah, it is difficult, but it's, I think it's doable.

Renia:

Yeah. That's a great point. I'm glad you pointed that out. That is sometimes you need people outside of that sphere, that have a little more neutrality.

Naomi:

Yeah.

Renia:

Yeah. And with the, with your candidacy. And so you're working with people, I mean, you've worked with other businesses for years, but you're working with a lot of experts who I'm sure have their opinions, and think they know, right? About what you should do, or what the standard like this is what candidates do. How are you thinking about choosing, where you want to do, kind of the standard operating procedure, versus when you're like, nah, I'm gonna try something new.

Naomi:

You know, it's interesting because I feel like, I have the luxury of kind of like leaning on the fact that we are in 2020 and no one, literally no one has ever done this before. No one has ever campaigned, except for the people doing it now. I'm in the middle of a global pandemic, with the current, presidency that we have, like, so it gives us so much room to just like, we're gonna have to pivot. I'm actually really grateful, to be doing this candidacy right now, especially after the racial awakening, that our entire nation has had, it's kind of, it gives me that extra step up, to be my full self, whether it's because I identify as a disabled woman, my biracialness my lack of an education, that's proper and traditional. One of the ways that I am, doing things non-traditionally, is by making sure that my campaign team is diverse, and diverse in not just the way that they look and appear, but in their ideology, I've got someone that's working on my campaign team that votes differently than me. And I think that's important to not normal. I also wanted to make sure that the PR team that we hired, is extremely diverse. It's like a beautiful combination of all of the right things. And that's important. We also are prioritizing a slow campaign, so while we know that we have some deadlines that we have to hit, we also want to honor the way that people work, with the campaign. So, we make sure that we have accessibility as often as we can, with captioning, sign language translation. And then the beauty of being able to be remote right now, is that I can hire really amazing experts, that aren't in my district.

Renia:

Mm-mmh.

Naomi:

They could be anywhere in the world honestly, and helped me do research, and help me with voter contact. You know, so we really are in this kind of new playground of, what campaigns look like. And so, it gives me excitement to be able to strategize, and then be able to help folks in the future, whether I win or lose, on how to run a more sustainable authentic campaign, so. That was a lot of words.

Renia:

It was, but I love it, and I have to ask you, I know that we're almost out of time, but I wanna ask you here. You said prioritizing a slow campaign. And I'd love for you to tell us a little bit more about, what that means, because like I have, this is the first election cycle in 15 years that I haven't worked on a campaign. And the reason is, you give your life.

Naomi:

Yep

Renia:

I've never been a candidate, I've been a digital strategist on campaign.

Naomi:

Me no, I mean, it's.

Renia:

You give your life, to that campaign.

Naomi:

Yeah.

Renia:

So what is a slow campaign, and how is that different from?

Naomi:

So, you know, when I first started deciding to run or not run, I am a learner. I love, I mean, like I love books, I love knowledge. And so I absorbed all of the webs, all of the webinars and the workshops, and I read all of the things. And the thing I kept hearing, was this panic, behind everything, rapid response, you have to get a rapid response team, so that when someone attacks you, you're on it, when something happens, a tragedy in your community, you can respond, beating other people to the donors. You've got to door knock first, and I was like, that sound's terrifying and exhausting. It also makes the voter, and the potential donors, a commodity. And I was like, that is, that's just not the way that I work and function. So I started just doing a lot of writing around it, and I realized that our rapid response, is letting people know ahead of time, that we will not respond right away, to something. We need a chance to gather our thoughts, we need a chance to research, we need to talk to people on all sides of an issue, if something has happened. So we don't have a rapid response team. We have a rapid response team that will respond to you on social, if you have questions, right away. But I think just redefining, how accessible we are, and our quickness to something has been good. When I started my real estate business, I had a practice that I did not show clients on Saturdays and Sundays, and that took a little bit of messaging, and holding up those riverbanks.

But I kept saying like, you don't call your dentist office and say, could you do, you know 4:00 o'clock cleaning on a Sunday? And I learned then, how to ask people to respect my boundaries. So, it's another benefit of this COVID pandemic virtual everything time, but I am going to control my access to, that one-on-one boater time. I cannot be exhausted, if I'm exhausted, I'm no good to anybody. And so that's another component of the slow campaign. And then the other piece of it is that as I bring people onto the team, for example, we want transcripts for every podcast or every live event, that I do so that my words can be read, as well as listened to. And so the team that does that work, I just ask that they get it back to me, in three weeks, instead of it being like, we need it in 48 hours turnaround. I think we're all tired of quick, and fast, and urgent, and so we just wanna slow it down a little bit. Plus, I mean, we're in the Midwest, where like it's Nebraska nice? And like, we wave at people as we drive, you know, as we pass each other on the streets. So, it's a good place to practice, and to see whether a slow campaign, is something that's tenable. So.

Renia:

I just love that, because we're in, we're very much in the space of that, in our work right now, because agency work is like that.

Naomi:

Yes.

Renia:

It's all go, go, go, go, go, go, go all the time, 80 hours a week. And because of that, agencies burn people. Like a marketing manager and a digital agency, their average tenure is 3 years.

Naomi:

Oh my goodness.

Renia:

And these are like highly skilled, highly paid people, and they burn out after three years, because they just run them to death.

Naomi:

Yep.

Renia:

And so we have every year a little bit more, every year, a little bit more every year, a little bit more, to hold the boundaries of what we're willing to do, to the point now that we're booking clients, like three months in advance.

Naomi:

And, but it's so counterintuitive. And I feel like campaign work is very much like that. Like it's, I don't know if you listen to the pod save America guys, but three years ago they were like, the presidential election is tomorrow.

Renia:

It's too much.

Renia:

Yeah. So that's beautiful. I am so excited to hear like may or June, I wanna like study of this with you.

Naomi:

Yes. Well, and I think that's the other piece of the slow campaign. This campaign is existing, so that we can start asking ourselves better questions. And so that we can take away the shame, around what civic engagement looks like. And so that, takes away toward end, is that that happens. It might end up that I get elected, and it might not. And I think that's even a shift to have that mindset of like, I am not nose to the grindstone, so that I'm the next city counselor, I'm nose to the grindstone, so that more people know that, they can campaign for something and run. They can ask better questions of who we do elect, and that we can just know more, about being community members and being good neighbors. So, that takes away some pressure too. I mean, there's a shit ton. I'll just cuss. There's a shit ton of pressure, and it's hard. But, that's the end goal. And that lets us be a slower campaign too. So. I'm here for the case study at the end of this.

Renia:

I love that. We're definitely gonna have you back and do that. So tell us, I like to ask this question, when I feel like people are doing like big, giant things in the world. If you could like wave a magic wand, and make one thing happen right now, to make things more better different, than they are. What would you do, besides getting rid of the pandemic?

Naomi:

It would be, and this is something that is not a popular issue, in my district, because of the demographics of my district. But I still believe that it is the one magic wand thing, it would be stability in housing for every single household. As a social determinant of health, safe, and stable housing is something that everything else pivots off of. And so that's been an interesting thing to navigate, because my district, is safe and stable housed, and that's not the same for every one of our neighbors. And so the magic wand would be that. And it's a collaborative effort, it takes developers, it takes our real estate professionals, it takes our elected officials, it takes our federal government, it takes all of the pieces to make that work, but we can do it, with a magic wand.

Renia:

Beautiful. And we'll post your links and things online. But if, is there anything you wanna share that I haven't asked you? Or where can people find you?

Naomi:

I think that the only thing that you haven't asked me, I would love to share, is just an opportunity to say that it's no question is ever a silly question. I know we talk about that a lot, like it's not a, you know, it's not some like rocket science idea, but I think the more we get into this pandemic and regardless of what happens with the election, like find a group of people that you can trust to questions or that you feel that, they won't shame you for asking, because that's the only way that we move past some of our biases, and some of our assumptions, is to just know more. You can find me on all of the socials, either @Naomi or city council. I love books and reading, so if you are wanting some recommendations, hit me up on Instagram, and I will gladly have a conversation about books.

Renia:

Love it. Yes, we could go on about books forever. I was like, how and we can't even go there on this, or we'll be here 4 hours. Thank you so much for being with us.

Naomi:

Right. Thank you so much for having me. Yeah, this is good.