

# S2E8 Where Working Motherhood and Maternal Activism Intersect: A Conversation with Raena Boston

## Transcript

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We don't have to be perfect at it, but we could know enough to be dangerous and ultimately, We could become a voting block that is as scary as the chamber of Commerce is for these elected officials because the Chamber of Commerce is the thing that is blocking paid leave. They go on and on and on about how paid leave is a job killer.

And it's not true. It's not true. There are so many economic benefits to paid leave in affordable and accessible childcare.

[00:00:54] **Kaitlin:** I'm your host, Kaitlin Solimine, and this is the Postpartum Production Podcast. [00:01:00] Here we hold conversations about the intersection of caregiving, creative practice, and capitalist production as well as what it means to be producing art while also being a parent in modern society. Find out more at [www.postpartumproduction.com](http://www.postpartumproduction.com) where you can also sign up for our newsletter.

I had something to say at the start of this podcast and it felt really important, and now I've totally forgotten it. I'm sure that never happens to you. I'm sure it happens to you a lot. Tell me, what are the things you've forgotten? Did you remember them? But let's just dive in here. I'm excited to introduce you to Raena Boston, who I had the great pleasure of speaking with by day.

Raena is an HR professional for professional services firm by night. She's been described as a table shaken sailor [00:02:00] token truth teller, at her expanding corner of the internet called the Working Mom, TRAs. The Working Mantras is a community where she discusses all things, motherhood, marriage, careers, and parenting.

It was through that online community that I found Raena's inspiring activist content. In this conversation, we dig in about how we can be the parents to our children we wish we could be, while also maintaining creative careers and pushing forward with important activist agendas.

[00:02:36] **Raena:** This

[00:02:36] **Kaitlin:** podcast started as a way to investigate the intersection of caregiving and motherhood and postpartum and creativity. And I know that the work that you do circles in and around that, and I'd love to hear from you regarding that experience for you. Like, let's dig in and start from the beginning.

Tell us how you. Came to consider yourself a [00:03:00] content creator, how you came to consider yourself a writer, how you came to consider yourself a mother, like what do those terms mean to you? I'm kind of wanna pull it back a little bit and start from the beginning if we could, whatever that means to you.

Where is the beginning for you actually is a good question.

[00:03:14] **Raena:** Oh, that's a man. Those are good, juicy questions. Let me think. So, I mean, I guess my origin story is when I got pregnant with and had my first son, Axel. He's seven. And I had an idea of what it was gonna be like to be a working mom. And there's your expectations and then there's reality.

And I think that after having him, it was a lot of reconciling with that reality of like the difference between how I thought it was gonna be and how it actually was. So I grew up, my mom worked, she sold insurance. She was just like, amazing. I, I wanted to be like that. I wanted to feel successful, whatever that looked [00:04:00] like.

And so I, at the time that I had Axle, I was working in higher ed and I was a campus recruiter. And I just remember feeling like, well, if I have to be away from him, then I need to make it worth it. So I need to like have some big. Career right now. I've gotta find it right now. So what that looked like for me was I decided to move into campus recruiting for an accounting firm because it paid better and there was more opportunity.

And it was horrible. It was miserable. It was so miserable. And I think that was probably my first professional failure of. Realizing like this is really, whatever this is, is not for me. I don't wanna do this. I'm not happy in this role. I'm not happy in this organization. I don't like the people I work with.

And instead of being like I. It's the system. I did what every mom does.  
[00:05:00] Mm-hmm. And I internalized it and I'm like, well, I just need to be better. I need to have a seven step morning routine and get up at 5:00 AM and exercise and say my affirmations and do all of these things so I can be a boss bitch.

And when I left that job, I had some time off, like just with my kid. So I was off of work for about three months. I took the full 12 weeks unpaid, which just about broke us financially. Mm. And then I found myself unexpectedly out of a job, and I was feeling very unmoored, very untethered, very unsure of myself.

So I made my way back to higher ed and in that time period, like I left that job I want to say in July, and my dad died in August and like it was just a very rough initiation into motherhood and working motherhood. So I went into higher ed and I remember feeling [00:06:00] like, okay, this is fine. Maybe I just need to do this.

You don't have to work that hard. Like I can still pay the bills, like it's fine. But I was also very bored and underpaid. So my next door neighbor at the time worked for a different accounting firm, a larger accounting firm, and she was like, Hey, we are about to have all these rules open. You should work for us.

And I was like, okay, cool. But I'm seven months pregnant with my second, so I like went back to work, left that job. After three months, my dad dies the next month, and then 10 months postpartum I find out I'm pregnant with Asher. Wow. And it was 2016. So I find out I'm pregnant and then we find out Trump is gonna be president.

[00:06:46] **Kaitlin:** That's heavy. That's a lot. It was a lot.

[00:06:48] **Raena:** Yeah, it was a lot. Yeah. And so I'm seven months pregnant. I'm like, that's great, but nobody's gonna hire me in this condition. She's like, nobody cares. Just apply an interview. So I did and I went to that interview smelling like [00:07:00] Thai food because I was certain. That I was not gonna get it, and I got it.

And so I took that job, rolled into that job, seven or eight months pregnant, big and pregnant. And the tenure requirement to qualify for any paid leave was three months, and I was there for two months. So I had to go back at six weeks postpartum, and I think maybe like the next month after I went back to work.

We had Hurricane Irma that was scheduled to be a direct hit to my area. Mm-hmm. And the hundred ounces of breast milk that I tirelessly pumped in that time that I was off all lost due to power outage. Oh my God. And so devastated. Wow. I feel

[00:07:52] **Kaitlin:** like you need federal assistance for breast milk. That should be like a priority in terms of, that's insane.

Yeah. Oh my God. [00:08:00] I'm so sorry.

[00:08:01] **Raena:** Uh, yes. I'm like giving you this long backstory to tell you how it was radicalized. Let's fast forward. So 2017 is when I had my second kid. Mm. And then in 2020 I took a promotion that I was excited about cause I felt like this is the next step. Like this is my time to kill it in my HR career.

And it ended up being the wrong move. It ended up not being a good fit. On a lot of levels. And oh, by the way, I took it in February of 2020 and we all know what happened in March and my husband is a healthcare professional, so he was going to a hospital every single day, never had any time off, never worked from home, anything.

So I had the stress of this novel virus. My husband is exposed all the time due to the nature of his work. He worked [00:09:00] at the time he worked in physical therapy, and I think that combined with the stress of my job in Florida being very late to close anything. Mm-hmm. And feeling like, I don't know if, I don't know when daycare is gonna close.

Like I don't know what's going to happen. Really catapulted me into a depression. And what I now know is I was one of those women who was diagnosed with D ADHD at the tender age of 34. What I now know is a D H ADHD burnout. I wasn't aware of like everything that was happening mentally, and I then taken on this new job.

Which was requiring all this executive function, which was requiring all of these different things of me that I just didn't have, especially in the time that we were in then. And I ended up taking a leave of absence from work because I just remember I had one day where I was in my kitchen and I didn't remember what I was supposed to be doing in there.

I didn't remember the steps to [00:10:00] make breakfast, and I was like, oh shit. I think I dissociated. My anxiety was so bad. Like I would maybe get like four hours of sleep at night. My heart was constantly beating fast, and I'm just like,

Ugh. I just don't know why I can't get my heart rate under control. And then by the time I finally talked to a psychiatrist, she's just like, you're having panic attacks literally all day long.

Oh, you're just existing and not knowing that something is actually wrong. So I took some time off to get my mental health together and I did. Also in 2020, I should back up, is when I started the working mom trusts, and I think I was still under that delusion that, oh, if I just do this, this and this, I can maybe redefine having it all and doing it all and all of these things.

And I just remember when like I'm waiting for the Lexapro to kick in. You know, it takes like four weeks. I'd never been on an antidepressant. I'm watching the Mr. Rogers documentary. Which is not exactly a light watch in that time. [00:11:00] And he said something like, he got a lot of criticism for saying that kids were special.

Mm-hmm. And they had focused on a part in the documentary of talking about the blow back he got from that. And he was saying, I'm saying that you don't have to do anything extraordinary to be loved. And that hit me like a ton of bricks because I, up until that point, felt like I had to be extraordinary, to be loved.

I had to do all of these things. I had to be not only a working mom, but like somebody who's crushing it in their career and doing all these things. And I realized that it was all a scam. I'd really been scammed out of my own agency, my own inner knowing, my own anything. And the next day my Lexapro kicked in.

Like I swear to God, like the next day I felt a marked difference. I'm like, oh, this is like [00:12:00] when I got glasses for the first time and I could see like I'm supposed to feel like this, not like that. And at that point, I didn't know what I was gonna do with the working mantras because I just thought we were all one life hack away from figuring it out.

And the working mantras really morphed into a space of, I don't know, I'm not a guru, I'm not an influencer. I'm doing this side by side, and I want to talk about my experience of. Mothering and marriage and postpartum and mental health and all of these things in a way that I feel like is the opposite that's presented to us.

I think there's so much, there's a guru, there's somebody who's the authority on working moms and all or or anything really. And I just remember coming away

from that feeling like I wanna be the opposite of whatever that is of having it all figured out. And I want my space, my corner of the internet to feel like.

A place where we can have very honest conversations about [00:13:00] how doing it all, having it all being, it all is a scam. Mm-hmm. Hmm. First

[00:13:06] **Kaitlin:** of all, thank you. I have such a beautifully rounded impression now of your path, and I know that there's still a lot more, I have lots of specific questions, but the thing that struck me most was that.

You were talking about your mother and seeing her journey and you said, I wanted to feel successful. That just really dug into me and also how that then holds space next to you don't have to be extraordinary to be loved. I think those two little moments were talking to each other to me, and I love if you're willing to dig in on.

Versions of success, and especially vis-a-vis motherhood, because you're really saying, I'm gonna show you what's really happening here. Let's get under the hood and see what, as you mentioned, that it's the system. It's not me. I'm not internalizing or lashing out at [00:14:00] individuals when we're all part of this system that has so many problematic facets.

So I'm curious what resonated to you in regards to. How defining success potentially has changed for you? You know, you talked about being radicalized and I, I feel that, and I'm curious like, how's that going? Where are you today given that you just took us through to basically 20 20, 20 21 and, you know, we're in 2023.

[00:14:30] **Raena:** I think that the whole issue was defining success as having it all. Is there is no end point. The goalposts are constantly being moved every second. It's a Sisyphean task. It's just not possible. And so now success looks like to me, am I in integrity with my myself? Am I making this decision based on how I want other [00:15:00] people to perceive me or somebody else's definition of success or my own?

And. That's really tough cuz it is so much easier to outsource those things to other people. Mm-hmm. I think as opposed to like really getting to know yourself and then even after having a baby or two or three, you're a different person every time. Like mm-hmm. Things have changed, values change. Like I think a big part of my career thing after my first kid was I.

Wasn't accepting of or didn't have any frame of reference for the fact that I would change after my son was born big time. My values would change, the things I wanted to do would change and, and what does that look like? Mm-hmm. It could be very scary to have your definitions or your sense of self shaken like that, and I think it's much [00:16:00] easier to.

Well, if I just follow, like if I just do all these things, then I can be happy, then I can be successful, then I will be. But like the end of the day, then I will be a good mom. Mm. And that's a scam. Mm-hmm.

[00:16:18] **Kaitlin:** And holding that against you don't have to be extraordinary to be loved. That really zinged you. And I'm curious if that relates or not, or just how that then.

Catapulted you into the work that you do?

[00:16:32] **Raena:** Mm-hmm. I would say that you don't have to be extraordinary to be loved. Kind of hit me on a lot of levels because my identity is at the intersection of a lot of different things. I'm a black woman. I live in the south. My husband is white and I have biracial kids.

I mm-hmm. Grew up in a white, affluent neighborhood, despite not being either of those things, and. I feel like growing up I did have to be extraordinary. Mm-hmm. I did have to prove myself to people [00:17:00] who thought, who made judgements about me without knowing me, or I felt like it was a very much of, I lived in a proving other people wrong energy because, One, it's a trauma response, and two, like I kind of did, I kind of had to overachieve and like mm-hmm.

Be amazing at school and be charming and be funny, and be approachable and not aggressive and not angry and all these things. Mm-hmm. And when I was sitting on that couch and it hit me like, oh no, I don't have to do any of those things. Like I really could opt out of all of this bullshit. That was like the beginning of the radicalization of what does it mean to not have to be extraordinary?

What does it mean to just be myself and that be enough? What does it mean to be more of myself as opposed to being some template of somebody else? What does it mean to [00:18:00] actually be myself and who is that person?

[00:18:12] **Kaitlin:** I know there's a lot that's written and researched in terms of when you become a parent, right? It's such a radical shift in terms of your

identity because now you're responsible for a child and you go back to your own childhood, and there's all of that. Juicy psychologically, potentially. Obviously really therapeutic and really beneficial stuff.

Or it can go the opposite way, right? Where you're reenacting old childhood traumas or tropes generationally. But I can feel in you that clearly becoming a parent was such a shift and it did shift you professionally. And so the work that you're doing now, if you could talk a little bit more about what that looks like and.

How that fuels you or the challenges because I'm there with you in this creative space where it sometimes feels pointless, honestly, and I'm [00:19:00] maybe I'm selfishly needing you to tell me, like, tell me

[00:19:03] **Raena:** this matters. Yeah,

[00:19:05] **Kaitlin:** I'd love to hear more.

[00:19:08] **Raena:** So I think that 2020 really brought in an anchoring. More into myself and like I feel myself sinking deeper and deeper and deeper into who I've always been and discovering that.

And so like I regret to inform you, I still work in hr. I have to have something that funds, funds my, I, I call my job my angel investor for like the life I wanna be living. And one of the things that I realized probably in 2020 and with the working mantras is that. I've always been a writer, and I thought that in order to be a writer, I had to legitimize it somehow.

So my parents would say like, well, lawyers write all the time. You should be a lawyer. And I thought about that and like, studied for the LSAT and ultimately decided, no, I, I actually do not wanna do that. Mm-hmm. But [00:20:00] I was a journalism major and mm-hmm. So I did freelance work for a while and I realized I don't wanna do this either.

I don't think that this is for me either. And then I realized I could just be a writer. I could literally just call myself a writer. And my friend Kelly Kutcha always says that you could just decide that you're a writer. And that's that. And I think that it was me kind of deciding, oh, I could literally write just about my experiences and that would be enough.

Like it doesn't have to be tied to some career path. Hmm, either. And so that's really what the working mom trust has become, is me just writing whatever I



want about motherhood or sharing my experiences or talking about things that matter to me, like childcare, parental leave. And I will say, thinking about my Chamber of Mother's work, which is the nonprofit I co-founded.

Mm-hmm. What brought me to that work is all of the radicalization that [00:21:00] I experienced up until that point. So with my first two kids, I had no access to paid leave. My third kid, I knew that I would have paid time off and it really was transformative for me in ways that I don't think I ever could have imagined.

I, I dealt with some postpartum, something with both kids, but I really didn't have time to address it and lied on my questionnaires because I did not want to deal with that. And I realize now that, okay, maybe I was depressed, but maybe I was really financially unstable because I did not have access to paid leave and neither did my partner.

Mm-hmm. So like I had access to paid leave, I could pay my bills. It wasn't stressful. My husband was able to take time off. He worked for a hospital. So of course any place where there is a strong. Contingent of women, you can guarantee that they will not have paid leave. So academia healthcare, so there's no paid leave for him, but he did take F M L A, [00:22:00] but me having paid time off allowed him to be home for nine weeks.

Mm. Mm-hmm. And I will also add, at the same time, we had the child tax credit, which also helped big time. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And so I have this third child. I'm at home. She was born in October. I'm hearing all of the build back better stuff about how we're gonna have universal Pre-K, we're gonna have paid leave, community college is gonna be free.

All of this stuff that is making me feel so proud to be an American. And I watched all that shit get yanked out one by one, the last one being paid leave. And it really broke something in me like just. The depths of rage I cannot even convey. And a lot of other people felt the same way because I knew what it was to not have paid leave.

And then what it was to have paid leave and thinking to myself, everybody's gonna get this. Like wow. Mm-hmm. And then to watch it be gone completely just really enraged me. And it [00:23:00] enraged a bunch of other people in the motherhood space online and we were like, what is it? Is it a union? Is it a strike? And then it, it was cheaper for mothers and we formed that.

Thing, and it's a huge part of what I do now, is advocating for paid family leave and accessible and affordable childcare and improve maternal health and how all of those three things work together.

[00:23:32] **Kaitlin:** Because this conversation with Rena focus is a lot on unpaid labor. I thought it was a good time to remind our listeners that here at the Postpartum Production Podcast, we're experimenting with sustainable ways to ensure our podcast team is paid for their work. While you also receive the quality, beautifully edited content that you enjoy, we are really trying our best.

Not to ask you our dear beloved listeners for paid subscriptions or paid CK because we know many of you are busy and very cash [00:24:00] strapped as is. So as we've mentioned previously, we've looked to alternatives to support our production costs. To that end, today's episode features two sponsors whose products feel aligned with our mission of providing increased support and care for caregiver artists.

Once such sponsor is needed, a leading women's health supple. Limit brand recommended by nutritionally trained practitioners needed was founded by two mothers navigating a fertility journey, which I personally appreciate as I had my own fertility challenges. For years, the needed founders were shocked to realize that 97% of women take a prenatal vitamin, yet 95% still have nutrient deficiencies.

So they teamed up with a group of perinatal nutrition and health experts to redesign the prenatal vitamin and supplements women need from the ground up. Needed's products are based on the latest clinical research and in practice experience of nearly 4,000 women's health practitioners needed, provides a range of support from your everyday prenatal vitamin to more pregnancy specific pre probiotics, egg quality.

Support, sleep, stress and more. [00:25:00] You can save 20% off your first order of any vitamins or supplements@thisisneeded.com with code postpartum production, and that will all be linked in the show notes as well. Another sponsor of our podcast is Better Help the world's largest therapy platform, whose mission is to make professional therapy accessible, affordable, and convenient, better help offers access to licensed, trained, experienced, and accredited psychologists.

Marriage and family therapists, clinical social workers and board licensed professional counselors. Their mission to break down barriers to mental health resources is one that definitely resonates with me, and I hope is also of interest

and assistance to our community of listeners. As a postpartum production listener, you can save 10% off your first month with the code postpartum production, or by accessing the link.

Better help.com/postpartum production, which will also be linked in our show notes. Both needed and better help our postpartum production [00:26:00] sponsors and via your purchases. Our podcast will receive referral funds that help keep our lights on literally, and we hope that eventually we'll be able to raise enough funding to build out a caregiver artist residency and grants, as well as additional programming.

Now back to our conversation with Rena Boston.

Can you talk a little bit more about Chamber of Mothers, just for listeners who aren't as familiar with it or ways that they can get involved? I'd love to hear a little bit more about the work on a daily basis and how we can all contribute.

[00:26:36] **Raena:** So we are a national nonprofit and we are focused on securing.

Federal paid family leave, affordable and accessible childcare, affordable and accessible childcare, and improved maternal health. And we are rolling out local chapters nationally. We are lobbying, we are doing all kinds of [00:27:00] things to make those things reality and. We are working really, really hard to make sure that mothers in this country have a place to become a strong voting block and advocate for decisions that will improve the conditions of motherhood in America.

When you were describing

[00:27:19] **Kaitlin:** the, the removal of all the build back better, I dunno what they were called, like provisions, I felt that same rage and I felt that same honestly, like despondency and. It's so hard to put this on the backs of mothers of small children right now, and that alone pisses me off, honestly, that this falls to us to be responsible for essentially building and supporting this society of consumers.

What do we stand for as a culture, as a country? What is the approach? What have you looked at that works and what doesn't work? Or from a really practical standpoint, you can look and try to find the company that you can work [00:28:00] for. If you're privileged enough to be able to do that and to get that job, then yeah, great.

Google will give you six, nine months leave. But for the everyday American, and furthermore, I would argue, why do you have to be working outside of the home to receive those benefits? Why are you not given pay for the work that you are doing on a daily basis in the home? That's another Sylvia Federicci style question, but where does it work?

Where does it, like what are you finding in this work

[00:28:28] **Raena:** that I, that's a really great question and I think that number one, anchoring into those pillars that I mentioned is so helpful. There are a lot of nonprofits who've come before us who are doing this work. Mm-hmm. And so sometimes it's as simple as we're amplifying the work that's already been done.

Mm-hmm. So when I think about our efforts with Paid leave, there was an organization called Paid Leave Us and mm-hmm. They really relied on us and all of our motherhood communities on [00:29:00] Instagram and the following that we amassed to get. Mothers too connected to their elected officials. Mm-hmm. They were like, Hey, can you connect us with moms in West Virginia and Arizona?

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. We have the ear of their elected officials and we wanna get them in the room to tell their stories. So paying attention to the things that are already happening. So for example, there's this guy, his name is Elliot Hasell. He is a childcare policy expert, and he talks a lot about how childcare in the United States is a failed market.

We are relying on individual people to prop up an entire industry when it's a public good, it's infrastructure, things like that. A part of our work is just elevating and amplifying that stuff so that it's like things that we're regularly talking about. Mm-hmm. Because I think the biggest part of doing this work is realizing the blueprint in many ways is already there.

We just need to organize people to know what to do. Mm-hmm. I think a lot of Chamber of [00:30:00] Mother's mission is you don't have to go it alone. We could all join together and we don't have to know every single thing. We don't have to be perfect at it, but we could know enough to be dangerous, and ultimately we could become a voting block that.

Is as scary as the Chamber of Commerce is for these elected officials because mm-hmm. The Chamber of Commerce is the thing that is blocking paid leave. They go on and on and on about how paid leave is a job killer. And it's not true.

It's not true. There are so many economic benefits to paid leave and affordable and accessible childcare.

Mm-hmm. It will pay for itself. Mm-hmm. And people also get really grumpy with us because, We talk about it in those terms, but if these elected officials, if capitalism, if any of these businesses gave a shit about the fact that you needed to actually recover from childbirth, then it's probably not in your best interest or their best interest to have you back at work 2, 4, 6, 8 weeks after [00:31:00] having a baby.

Then it would already be done. So we have to talk to them. In capitalism, we have to talk about the economic benefits of why we should have robust policies. That support people in the course of just having a life.

[00:31:18] **Kaitlin:** So I'm in San Francisco as I mentioned. We recently actually should know, and I don't know the political background to this, but we now have universal tk, I guess it's all of California, right?

I think now it's rolling out across California. And again, that's like one tiny fraction of a piece. Of this puzzle, but it got me thinking. Is that something you've seen, I guess is what I'm asking, and local jurisdictions, right? You have a city that approves something. Does that have enough momentum? Does that work?

Or is it more federal that you're looking

[00:31:52] **Raena:** to shift? Or both? I think it's both. I think you can't have one without the other. I think that you're gonna see more and more [00:32:00] states are pushing for things that would expand childcare access, would have paid family leave, things of that nature. We need a federal solution because this piecemeal mm-hmm.

It's different from state to state, the administrative burden, all of these things are not good. We need to have one uniform way of how it's gonna be. And, and you know, you mentioned something about Google, it's like, We can't rely on companies to treat parental leave like a perk or a benefit that they could just take away at any time.

What's happened now is that they fired people on parental leave. Mm-hmm. And are refusing to honor the leave beyond the severance agreement. Mm. Mad madness. So, mm-hmm. That's what we're doing with local chapters is like everybody knows their community best. They know the things that could

realistically happen or the change they could advocate for, or maybe even partner with organizations that are already doing this.

And we are still very new Chamber mothers is basically the same age as [00:33:00] my daughter, and so we're still babies and we are working through how all of this is gonna look and partnering with very smart people who can help guide us. And also just being a place for moms to feel like. They're not alone because you also mentioned something like, ugh, it's one more thing that shouldn't be on us.

Mm-hmm. And I wholeheartedly agree with you. And if we want things to change, nobody's coming to save us. Mm-hmm. They're just not. And that's heavy and that's rough. And that's why I think we have to do it in community.

You know what I find so fascinating and what is so disheartening and raging, such an impediment to progress is the focus on the individual in our country. And so when I say my husband took nine weeks of [00:34:00] unpaid leave, people are like, what did he do all day? And I'm like, Okay. First of all, I'm not a cruise director.

Second of all, he took care of me and the baby in the household and the other kids. Like, what do you mean? What did he do all day? Like, did he need to be entertained? I'm, I'm just, I'm very confused by this. And then the other thing is, is I'll hear from women who maybe live in a state where they have access to paid leave or their partner works at a place that offers paid leave.

And they'll say things to me like, He didn't wanna take leave because there's still a stigma. Mm-hmm. And it was gonna impact his bonus and promotional opportunity. And I think to myself, my friends, you are so close to the point, you're so close to the point, like all of the hits that you're taking, if your partner was also taking those hits mm-hmm.

Do you think the hits would still keep on coming? Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [00:35:00] Because everybody would be impacted. Right. And now we're in a discrimination situation. Mm-hmm. Or, or how do you think that the pay gap happens? Like how do you think that the fatherhood bonus and motherhood penalty happens? It's because mm-hmm.

Men, by and large are not impacted because they don't do anything that would impact them. Mm-hmm.

[00:35:20] **Kaitlin:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. Is it Norway? The mandatory paternal and maternal? Yeah, yeah, yeah. I have a friend who lives there and all my friends in Europe, like I can't, first of all they, when you talk to them about what's happening here, they're just like, wait, what?

In fact, one of the women who works with me, postpartum production is based in England, and when we started having these conversations on the podcast, she was like,

[00:35:41] **Raena:** you don't wait. What? Their bathroom? It's inhumane. Inhuman. It's absolutely inhumane. It's uncivilized. It's just. Deplorable. It's morally reprehensible.

I mean, every strong piece of language that I could use is what our situation is in the United States. [00:36:00] And I also have people who are friends of my space on line and they're reaching out to me from other countries and are like, I just, wow, this is unreal. Cuz I have a highlight of people sharing. All of their experiences with unpaid leave.

Mm-hmm. And they are absolutely heartbreaking. Mm-hmm.

[00:36:25] **Kaitlin:** All right, so in the little bit of time that we have left, where do we go from here? You know, our listeners are often parents, often creative, which in many ways is a double bind because as you know, creative pursuits don't pay as well. So in terms of being in a capitalist.

Society

[00:36:41] **Raena:** as moment. This is why I have a, a corporate angel investor.

Where do we go from here? That's a really great question, and I find myself always coming back to the fact that joy is resistance. We're not gonna disrupt these [00:37:00] oppressive systems. We're not gonna be able to muscle our way through it. We're not gonna be able to do it miserably. We're not going to be able to not treat this like the long game that it is.

Because it is a long game. You have to find ways to still have joy. You have to find ways to still prioritize and seek pleasure. I've said this before, but do this work in community and also remove the feeling that it's on you to solve. It's not on you to solve. It's a societal problem. It's a collective problem.

How can we bring people along on the journey? To do that. And sometimes if you have money, it looks like donating to causes that can help be your voice. Other times it looks like I'm gonna attend this chapter meeting, I'm gonna understand who on the down ballot, who in my local elections is calling for the types of things that are gonna make a tangible impact in my community.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And it doesn't mean that you need to knock on doors. It [00:38:00] means that you need to know who the candidates are that are going to be supporting things that are gonna make your life easier, better. Mm-hmm. Just like rich people. Prioritize politicians that are gonna make their life easier and better.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And tax cuts. Yeah. I think it's those things.

[00:38:18] **Kaitlin:** Okay. So here's a request from me just to put more on your plate. No, I'm, I'm semi joking. But you mentioned earlier they get up and like wash the face, the routine that like mm-hmm. That life hacks. I feel like, I don't know if you already have this, if not, I would love the life hack list.

Just like you were talking about, who is the local, you know, like we need to work together to build those. They're not life hacks, but Well actually they are if they're changing our lives. But I mean, just in terms of this activism, I'm thinking of ways in which I'm like, I wanna build it for myself, like the structure, because we don't have time, right?

So how do we, how do we create

[00:38:56] **Raena:** efficiencies for people that are. When you go [00:39:00] and find out who your senator is, go to their website. Mm-hmm. And control Fine childcare control. Fine. Paid leave or parental leave. Interesting. Yeah. Yeah. See if that is anywhere in their anything. Mm. And I think that's the easiest way when it is election time, city council, whatever.

Mm-hmm. What is their position on that? Mm-hmm. And like, just search their website. Literally control F. Mm-hmm. Whatever it is. That is what Control F and see if they're even talking about it and if they're not talking about it, that is so telling. Mm-hmm. And look for the people who are talking about it.

[00:39:42] **Kaitlin:** Yeah, that's a really good point. And obviously we need a lot more women in power, as you mentioned, like across the board in different positions all over



[00:39:51] **Raena:** Vote Mama Us is actually working on getting more mothers in. Elected positions. So that's a great [00:40:00] organization to follow. Chamber of Mothers, like we are very active on our newsletter of just communicating things that we're updating, communicating about local chapter meetings.

So I hosted my first chapter meeting last month and it was just so nice to be together to talk about the things that we're feeling. And I think we downplay that feeling like it's not doing enough, but absolutely being in community with other people. Is so important to this work that we do. And it could be a virtual community, it could be in person, it could be anything, looking for ways that feel accessible to you.

Another thing I will say is if you're thinking about people who are concerned with birth or something like, There are so many organizations that like, you don't have to do it all in terms of advocacy. You could focus on the things that you're already passionate about, cuz I guarantee there's something abysmal going on.

Mm-hmm. That could use your presence.

This

[00:40:57] **Kaitlin:** is bringing me back to the beginning of this conversation, which is [00:41:00] you can't do it all. You're not doing it all. And so I really appreciate as you're talking this feeling of, I have to remind myself of this a lot that you do your thing. Like the more we each do our thing, then we don't all have to feel like we have to do all the things.

And maybe honestly that thing is raising children. The fact that we discount that, that, you know, people in my life still say like, oh, is she just a mother? Or, I can feel, because I work in the home and I work outside of the home, in the home, so I'm in the home physically a lot. I feel like my time. Whether it's with school volunteering or things like that are just expected of me because my schedule is flexible and I think about that a lot.

There's, yeah, there's a whole other subject matter, but I guess what I'm saying is that. If we are to value the experience of caregiving, and that includes elder elder care, that includes caring for those that have chronically ill family members. I mean, all of that [00:42:00] is valuable. It's such a monumental shift that needs to happen, even a linguistic level.

[00:42:05] **Raena:** I love that you brought that, that up, and I think like even if we take it back to the beginning, Raising kids that know that they don't have to do anything extraordinary to be loved, and that they could be focused on being more of who they already are. Half the battle is like unpeeling, all that shit.

Mm-hmm. Other people give you mm-hmm. Before you can even get to doing anything else, right? Mm-hmm. And so raising kids like are taught to anchor into their gifts and like that they don't have to have somebody else's talents in order to be great. They could just be themselves. Is so radical. I wish it didn't take me 30 plus years to know that.

Mm-hmm. I wish it didn't take me like dissociating in my kitchen to know that. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And the most radical thing I could do, like all of these things I'm doing are great, I think. But raising kids who can be who they already are. Who they've [00:43:00] always been, always have been. Mm-hmm. And giving them the knowledge and support to know that that's enough.

Is enough. Mm-hmm. That's radical because there's still so many places where are like, your child needs to know Mandarin and be able to be a competitive gymnast and also be an equestrian in order to be lovable and make straight A's. You know what I mean? And so what if you just raise kids who like didn't have to do all those things?

Mm-hmm. I think the work that

[00:43:31] **Kaitlin:** you're doing clearly at Chamber of Mothers is, like you said, it is a piece of the puzzle and we're not all responsible for all of the pieces, right? We are doing each of those pieces, and I think that's something that has continued to be a theme I feel like in this podcast, and I've really appreciated because I need to hear that.

So I hope that others can feel empowered and feel more positivity and joy in that as well. But I have a whole bunch of other stuff I want to talk to you about offline. Yeah. [00:44:00] But for now, if you were to look at yourself today and look at Raena seven plus years ago, what would you say to yourself then deeper in the early initial trenches of early motherhood?

[00:44:17] **Raena:** I think I would say that, Nobody has it figured out. Nobody knows what they're doing. You're not having a unique experience of feeling like you don't have it figured out. Nobody does. And anybody that claims to is trying to sell you something.

All the authorities and the gurus and the right, they're all trying to sell you something. Because they're all trying to make living under the weight of capitalism less oppressive too.

[00:44:52] **Kaitlin:** And the only solution we have is to buy something to solve our problem. Like let's create the problem so that we have to pay to fix

[00:44:59] **Raena:** it.

[00:45:00] Yeah. That, and make enough money to insulate ourselves from the worst of it.

[00:45:04] **Kaitlin:** Right, right. And what is that number, as you said,

[00:45:07] **Raena:** always a moving goalpost. Mm-hmm.

[00:45:10] **Kaitlin:** Well, thank you Raena. I really appreciate that you took the time to sit with us today. And I do really feel validated in the work that I do, and I think that that's actually like, in some ways, so much of the first step, right, that we don't, the despondency doesn't propel us forward, right?

And so I really appreciate that and I feel rejuvenated even though I haven't finished my coffee and it's, I gotta keep working on this coffee.

[00:45:41] **Raena:** I'd like to add one more thing. I heard a rabbi once say that we are here, our whole purpose is to confer our unique gifts to others. And I think to myself all the time, am I, am I doing that?

Mm-hmm. Am I able to, mm-hmm. Do I feel connected enough and confident in my gifts to do that? And [00:46:00] I often wonder, like if people were feeling like they didn't have to do it all, they only had to confer their unique gifts to others, how much better would things be if they didn't feel like they had to mask and pretend and be somebody else?

They could just do that thing that they were already, always meant to do. Mm-hmm. And be the person they were always meant to be.

[00:46:24] **Kaitlin:** I'm your host, Kaitlin Solimine, and this is the Postpartum Production Podcast. If you like what you've heard today, please subscribe wherever you get your podcasts and give us a rating which will help us reach more listeners like you. For regular updates, visit our website, [www.postpartumproduction.com](http://www.postpartumproduction.com).

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