

Agency for Change Podcast: Katherine MacHolmes, Founder and Strategist, Collective Futures Design Lab

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Katherine MacHolmes

We are actually infinitely powerful to impact and effect change. And while we may not see a fully liberated society in our lifetimes, each one of us can create pockets of liberation.

Announcer:

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

Lisa Bowen:

Calls for diversity inclusion in corporate America have ramped up since 2020, and it's easy to see why. According to ABC News, Black CEOs make up just 1% of Fortune 500 companies. To put that in simpler terms, that's just five out of 500. Here's another startling fact, a bureau of labor statistics survey found that Black workers amount to just 7.8% of management roles in U.S. companies. White workers, by contrast, make up 83.6% of those roles. In the wake of these calls to action, businesses have turned to consultancies like Lead with Equity, who we spoke with on the podcast back in May, to help them address longstanding inequities and form new, more inclusive policies. We're going to learn about the work of another one of these organizations on the show today, Collective Futures Design Lab, as we discuss the work they're doing to help shift systems of belief, the honest conversations behind DE&I work, and how you can find out more about them.

Lisa Bowen:

Hello everyone. I'm Lisa Bowen, vice president managing director at KidGlov. Welcome back to the Agency for Change podcast. You're going to be hearing more from me in the coming months as I jump into co-hosting and I have the opportunity to talk with lots of new changemakers in the community. On today's show, we're speaking with one of those changemakers, Katherine MacHolmes, the founder and strategist of The Collective Futures Design Lab, previously known as K + R Strategies. They're a collective, collaborative, majority Black owned change navigation firm that centers on equity and justice. Katherine, I am so eager to talk with you today and learn more about the great impact you're making on the world.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Lisa, I am so excited to be here. Thank you so much for having me.

Lisa Bowen:

You bet. Should we jump right in?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah, let's do it.

Lisa Bowen:

All right. So for people who may not have heard of Collective Futures Design Lab, can you walk us through what you do and who you help?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah, absolutely. I would be shocked if many people have heard of Collective Futures Design Lab, because that is what we have transformed into. Initially we were founded in July of 2020. It feels like forever ago, but I feel like it also feels relevant to say, like most of us know, at the time there was the racial uprisings around racial equity and particularly focused on what happened with George Floyd. And so, one of the reasons why initially we founded as K + R Strategies, but now Collective Futures, is to create an organization that is really at the cutting edge of utilizing Black, indigenous and people of color's thought leadership around striving for collective liberation. So what we do in a practical sense is, we do a lot of workshops, a lot of trainings, but specifically focusing on being in deep, immersive and reciprocal relationships with our partners.

Katherine MacHolmes:

So instead of just coming in, we can come in with maybe a 60-minute workshop, but that's not my favorite. And it requires so much more deep, relational building, rapport building, consciousness shifting, paradigm shifting, than what we can do in 60 minutes. So we can do a one-off workshop, but our preference is something like what we've done with Nebraska Children's Home Society, which Lana Temple-Plotz was on this podcast as well, talking about her brilliance and her strategy and vision around culture shifting within her agency. So what we want to do, is do the deep partnership of sitting in the space, in the room, and working with folks in skill building, capacity building and deepening their own analysis, because each of us have the capacity to impact the world greatly. And that takes just a little bit of time to sit with each other and to have those conversations and to realize our space and our place in change-making work. So that's what we do.

Lisa Bowen:

I love that. I love that you recognize that's not a one-and-done, and you don't settle for that. And you're really diving in and helping people make that change on their own. That's amazing.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Thank you.

Lisa Bowen:

So we're going to talk more about your current business in a moment. But first, I wondered if you could talk to me a bit more about co-founding K + R Strategies and the work you did with your previous business partner.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah, so it was all the same work. The only thing that's really shifted is, she's moved on and gone into being in-house for a local nonprofit. And so none of what we did before, isn't what we're doing now. It's just that, now I'm the sole owner currently. I have dreams and designs for that to change again. But for

now, we have shifted in from being a majority Black-owned to being Black-owned. My partner, my former business partner is white.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And so now we have the same level of strategists that we had, the same diversity in our representation of identities, both racial, sexual orientation, gender, all of those things. So we're still able to do the same work that we did, which was really being able to speak from diverse perspectives within our partnerships. So nothing has changed, except everything has changed. And we still do the same work that we did before. Maybe I would say with more emphasis on centering Black, indigenous and people of color's voices than we did before by nature and virtue of having a white partner. Yeah. The name, a little bit of the approach, but the work remains the same.

Lisa Bowen:

I love that. It's all the changes behind the scenes, you're still continuing the great work just in a little bit of a different way.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah. And I think the only other thing that I would say is, we had a ridiculous amount of success, especially for a startup. And a lot of that, I think, was... And I really want to emphasize how amazing it was to see how much support for what was K + R Strategies, what continues to be Collective Futures, and the critical component of this success that we had was the interdependence of my relationships in the community.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And so I really want to elevate and uplift that the success that I have experienced would not be possible without the faith of people placing the trajectory of their organizations in my hands, in our hands. And that came with a high level of burnout. I think that's where I currently am, is in a position of resting and going much slower. So our pace has changed a little bit too, because this work is so critical and to do it with a sense of urgency that doesn't need to exist was not serving my sustainability in this work. And this work will burn folks out if we are not careful. So yeah. So pacing, name change. But other than that, we're doing the same work we did.

Lisa Bowen:

I love it. I'm sure you'll be up to speed again in no time though.

Katherine MacHolmes:

I hope not. Although I hope so. A gentler pace would be lovely.

Lisa Bowen:

People need to, people need to. So Katherine, I feel like this work is more of a calling for you than a job, and I can hear the passion in your voice when you talk about the work that you do. What events or experiences in your life drew you to this work and how have those experiences helped you and informed your approach?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah. Oof, that's a heady question. So I have the beautiful fortune of having had the parents that I did... Both of my parents are servants to populations of people that have always been underserved. So my father, his whole trajectory is deeply interesting, but I won't share it here because he'd probably kill me. But the things that I think are really relevant to my own story is, I grew up with my dad working with at-risk youth who were in a residential program called Cooper Village. Also, he did work at Uta Halee as well.

Katherine MacHolmes:

So understanding the complexities of what causes youths to arrive in residential facility. So whether they had histories of personal abuse of various kinds, but also thinking at a systemic level, because no one is bad. We have options and life experiences and limited options sometimes. So thinking about poverty, cyclical abuse, thinking about underrepresented in power structures like government. All of those things create the people that we then have to support. And so, I would have all of these stories throughout my own childhood, listening to my dad talk about the people that he was serving, the youth that he was serving, and how, if only a few things had been different, their complete life would be different.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And then the same thing with my mom. My mom was a public school teacher, administrator, et cetera, for almost 30 years before she just retired.

Lisa Bowen:

That's a whole nother calling, isn't it?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Whole nother calling. And then, because teachers are not paid enough, she had a part-time job working with Community Alliance, serving those who were in residences and being supported with mental health needs or... Yeah, mental health, differing levels of disability. And so, that is my home, my childhood is growing up with these stories, surrounded by folks who are deeply underserved. And then my mom being a teacher, my dad being a sociologist, really always hearing about a systemic level of analysis, and recognizing that even when we are only able to work in direct service with a limited group of people, are we still making a profound difference. And I had the pleasure and the privilege of seeing my parents former clients when we would go grocery shopping at like, Bakers that used to be in north Omaha, and kids would come up to both of my parents, alternately throughout our lives, and just thank them for being the type of adults they were at the time that those children, now adults, needed. And that was my life.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And that was the way that I grew up, was always knowing that someone's conditions were never the measure of their worth or value, and it's only their conditions. And that we each are implicitly and explicitly responsible for the way that other people's lives turn out to a degree, because we participate in these systems unless we actively try to disrupt them, but we're complicit, nonetheless. And so it was always this call to be involved and to bear witness to the ways in which people's lives are disrupted based on false notions of who they are, and what they're capable of, and what their value is.

Lisa Bowen:

Wow, that's amazing. I'm sure they're both incredibly proud of the great work you're doing.

Katherine MacHolmes:

I hope so.

Lisa Bowen:

My next question is, before our interview, you mentioned that society still struggles with talking and thinking about biracial individuals. Why do you think that is and how do we meet that issue head on?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah. So race is a construct, which is both factually true and feels revolutionary to say. And I think that my existence as a biracial Black person just highlights that. I think that the intersections of... Living at the intersections of two racial categories kind of stress tests the quote-unquote reality of race. And so, living as a biracial Black person myself, I find that no one really knows what to do with me. White folks don't-ish and Black folks don't-ish. And that's fair because that's the sort of binary, the false binary, that we've set up about race. We subscribe to this construct that doesn't actually hold up in reality. And so the rest of it is about trying to force people to stay in the box. And so, especially with black folks or excuse me, especially biracial Black folks, myself, my identity, what I also have to tell folks is that I identify as a Black woman.

Katherine MacHolmes:

I have a white mother, but I am a Black person. And the reason that I say that is that, I don't know how controversial this is going to sound, so we're just going to go with it because it's what I believe. So Black identity was forged in the crucible of slavery and the crucible of the history of Black oppression in the United States. And so that is where Black culture comes from, in my opinion. It comes from being part of a diaspora formed in slavery. Whiteness is a construct that was originated at the beginning of the history of the United States, the way that we see whiteness in the United States specifically. And so, for me, I identify as Black because if I were, and I've seen this happen in my lifetime, because I am fairly light in my complexion, and so I am oftentimes what people call ethnically ambiguous. Although that drives me nuts.

Katherine MacHolmes:

I've been in conversations with white people who hold a lot of bias against Black folks. In the conversation, they would talk to me as though I was a white person until I interrupted them and said, "Yes, so what I believe as a biracial Black person is this." And I would see the way that they looked at me shift, in real time. So the reason that I identify as a Black person is that I know that once white people who hold anti-Black bias know that I have a Black father, I am a Black person.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Which is not to negate the ways in which having a white mother and being a light complected Black person positions me in proximity to white privilege. But I am deeply proud of being Black, I'm proud of the legacy and the history that that means. And for being a biracial person, being a biracial black person, what that means for me is that I have to name the proximity to privilege that I hold at the same time that I'm proud to be a Black person, and making sure that I do not center my voice as the only voice that represents Black people. I actually have to leverage my privilege to platform on behalf of other Black people, until those Black people can get in the room and talk more specifically about their experiences. Yeah. I think I hit all the things.

Lisa Bowen:

Wow. That's deep.

Katherine MacHolmes:

It's a lot for... What is this? Thursday?

Lisa Bowen:

Yes. We're almost done with the week though. All right. So there's a lot of discussion around the idea of crafting anti-racist and anti-oppression policies. Can you help our listeners understand these concepts and what they look like in practice?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah, I would love to. So one of the things that I want to emphasize, so when we talk about anti-racism and anti-oppression, one of the reasons that we break out anti-racism from the anti-oppression umbrella, because truly, anti-oppression is sort of our largest umbrella. One of the reasons that we break out anti-racism specifically is because of how detrimental racism is and has been and will continue to be in our society if left unaddressed. And so, speaking specifically about anti-racism, but using that sort of as a proxy for the rest of anti-oppression, anti-racism is really about saying, we know what racial oppression looks like, and we continue to see and understand its manifests as we're having... How it manifests, excuse me, as we're having these conversations. So Ibram X. Kendi, who is the foremost leading expert thought-leader on anti-racism, really, I think simplistically breaks it down and says what we typically hear is, there's racist and there's not racist.

Katherine MacHolmes:

So anti-racist is sort of the third thing that enters this conversation. I think we all have a general idea of what racism is, but it's essentially holding up racist notions, notions that either implicitly or explicitly craft the narrative that one race or some races are inferior to other races. So that's racism. There's also a level of power and institutional power and the ability to impact the realities of people deemed inferior. So that's racism in a nutshell, obviously more complex than that, but racism. So then usually what we get is we have folks saying, "Well, I'm not racist." And "not racist" looks like just not perpetuating the most explicit forms of racism. It's just doing nothing. Anti-racism is the practice, the act, the ideology of issuing racism and acting against it in an active way. So in that vein, anything that is anti-racist actively tries to counter the narrative or disrupt power and privilege in racism.

Katherine MacHolmes:

So one of the things that we can point to pretty readily is the CROWN Act. So the CROWN Act was an act that really sought to ban or to create anti-discriminatory practices against natural hair for Black women. The reason this is important is because Eurocentric beauty standards have always prioritized the way that Black women should conform to standards of beauty measured against white women. What makes it anti-racist is saying that we have a history and a legacy of causing women, through societal and even legal pressures, to change the way that their hair looks. Now, the CROWN Act is anti-racist because it says, actually, Black women deserve to show up in the ways that they decide without external pressure and without any type of limitation or negative connotations about what natural hair looks like, and if it's professional or not. So anything anti-racist seeks to actively disrupt the narrative of racism.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And in terms of institutions, because they have so much power, power over our lives as people, as employers, as employees, there's so much power that an institution is granted in our society. So my argument would be that an institution can either choose to uphold the status quo, which is inherently racist, or it can be anti-racist. There is no non-racist, especially when you have power granted to you by society. And so for your listeners, it's a beautiful- I know it sounds really heavy, but I really want to emphasize that there's so much power. There's so much power that we have as people to be anti-racist, to be anti-oppressive. Anti-oppressive covers all of the other ways in which we can think about folks being oppressed. Whether that's the ways in which fat people in our society are regarded, the ways in which mental health is regarded, poverty is regarded, pretty much any structural oppression that we can think of, the corollary is anti-oppression. The diametric opposition of that is to be anti-oppressive, which is to strive to remove the barriers that falsely define the value of people in our society.

Lisa Bowen:

Wow, I love that you talk about that as being active or passive, pretty much. That's really the difference is, are you going to be a bystander? Are you going to make a difference? I love that. So you kind of answered this question, but for those listening right now, what can you do in your everyday life to practice anti-racism and anti-oppression? Little things that we can do.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah. I think the beauty of this too, is returning the power back to ourselves, which is to say that, so me, as Katherine, if my livelihood and if my life's work weren't attached to this, five minutes before I go to bed at night, there are anti-racist things, anti-oppressive things that I can be doing, which is like, checking in with myself throughout the day. We, as human beings, we're social animals, we innately know when we have either caused a misstep in someone else's life or have had that happen to us. We register injustice in our bodies before, oftentimes, it happens in our minds. And so, if over the course of the day, you have a feeling of like, "Ooh," or regret, that might be an indicator that you have some reflection to do and can go back to yourself. And maybe even to the person and change the interaction, change the narrative.

Katherine MacHolmes:

If I find that I have done something and, oh, this is the other thing that I really want to emphasize for our listeners of this conversation, is that literally, I get paid to do and to think in anti-oppressive ways, to do the strategizing, policy writing, culture shifting, paradigm shifting work, all of that work, it's my bread and butter. I eat, breathe, sleep this. My partner is like, "Dear God, can we just watch a movie?" And I'm like, "No, because all these things are problematic." So saying all of that, I want to emphasize that this is my life's work and I am so imperfect at it. I say things that are micro-aggressive a lot on accident because that is our rote conditioning. It is the rote conditioning that I have and that we all share.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And so the thing that we can do to begin this journey in those tiny, tiny ways, is to recognize one, that we all are conditioned in white supremacists, CIS, heteronormative, capitalist, patriarchy, which is Bell Hooks' analysis, for anyone who's like, "What just happened?" You can look her up, she's brilliant. But we were all conditioned in these systems. And so one of the biggest things, in order to remain sustainable and striving in this work, is to forgive yourself, to practice self-compassion. It is awful and icky and embarrassing to hurt someone. And I want to acknowledge that. And there is no place for shame in this work, because shame is what creates and keeps those barriers between us.

Katherine MacHolmes:

But if I say, "Lisa, yesterday we were having a conversation," this is completely hypothetical, obviously. But if I say, "Lisa yesterday, we were having this conversation and I said something and I don't feel good about it." Worst thing that happens is you're like, "Oh, that didn't even register to me. But thank you for saying something." The best thing that happens is you're like, "Yeah, that really struck me the wrong way, too. And I'm glad you said something because..." And we get to have a deep, connective conversation. We get to heal, and chances are, we're stronger in our relationship than we were before. And it's those micro instances of reflection and then action upon reflection that can really like, honestly, I think depolarize the society that we live in. Because if we are able to acknowledge our mistakes, acknowledge our imperfections and maybe even embrace them, we become more human, and we allow people around us to be more human as well, and human with us. And there's, to me, no more beautiful outcome of anti-racism, anti-oppression work.

Lisa Bowen:

That's amazing. I was in a situation like that not too long ago, where someone close to me had said something that, after he thought about it, came back and said, "Wow, I'm sorry, that was probably offensive. And I shouldn't have said that." And it was uncomfortable for like two seconds, but then I was like, "Wow, that was amazing." And I really appreciate them stepping up and acknowledging that. So, totally agree with that approach of, just get it out there and put it on the table and have a discussion.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah, absolutely.

Lisa Bowen:

So what's a misconception that people have about anti-racism or DE&I work. And how do you respond to that? Probably lots of those.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah. So I think a deep misconception that I experience a lot of times is that this is political, and that is a misconception because actually what we're talking about is human lives. And that has been politicized, to be sure, but I do not believe that the work of anti-racism is naturally a political thing. It has been politicized and used, and in our political structures, divisiveness is what fuels it. And so the work of anti-racism and anti-oppression is actually the opposite, which is to try and to deepen our human relationships to each other instead of trying to divide. And so oftentimes, one of the initial things that I hear quite a bit is that by surfacing conversations about racism, we are dividing people. And the reality is, we have never actually fully dealt with oppression and the ways that it is truly baked into our society.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And so, yes, it can feel divisive at first because we're also taught and conditioned to be uncomfortable with the conversation. And that's actually what keeps it perpetuating. And so, it's not political. I don't care if somebody is a Republican, a Democrat, a Bernie Sanders supporter, a whoever. What I care about is being in relationship and having my identities seen and having access. At a very base human level, this is about giving everyone access to the things that they need in order to thrive. And I think that all of us, in our different ways of behaving and striving for survival and for thriving, all of us, I think, can start to see ourselves in each other at that very, very, very base level of human desire. And from there, it's nothing but conversations that build common ground, it's nothing but shifting policies so that everyone

has access to the things that we need, not just to survive, not just our basic needs, but to realize who we were supposed to be the entire time.

Lisa Bowen:

Yeah. Great, great, great. So, because of the nature of your work and how systematic change takes time, it probably isn't often, or maybe never, I don't know, you'll tell us, that you get to celebrate a quick win. But are there any moments that you can think of over the course of your career where you really, really, really felt like what you're doing is making a difference?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah, I think it... So, one of the things that I really love to rebut is this idea that it's hard. One of the first things that I always hear is that this is going to be hard. And it's like, yeah, but we know that because anything that we do that's worth doing is difficult, requires striving, requires work. And I think once we stop trying to scale ourselves up to the level of what it looks like to have achieved all this, if I make my practice about the people that I can impact, and if that's where I'm paying attention, then I see wins all the time. Is this a multi-generational project? Absolutely. Will this happen in my lifetime? Maybe not. I'm going to leave the like 5% chance that it could. I'm 32, I got a long life left. And, this is actually about scaling my understanding of my own power. And my own power is in my direct community. It's in this conversation, it's in my relationship with my partner, with my parents, with my clients, with my friends.

Katherine MacHolmes:

If I scale down my expectations of how much I'm able to impact, to my interactions that I have throughout my lifetime, the way that I will raise my future children, then I see wins everywhere. I see wins when I have members of an agency converse with each other in radically vulnerable, transparent ways. When someone says, "I'm really having trouble with this concept and I can feel myself being activated in my body, my stress and my fear response is activated. And I don't know if that's okay, but I'm going to say this thing." And people demonstrating this deep willingness to be wrong, to be vulnerable, to stay in it when it feels gross.

Katherine MacHolmes:

When it's activating the parts of our bodies that are telling us to fight, flight, freeze or fawn. When people are staying in that conversation, that's a massive success to me. And it's other people doing it, and I just vicariously get to feel elated that there are other people in this world doing this work and willing to stay in it. I'm going to share with you something, if it's okay. I love... This is how I've had to reframe my own sustainability and the sustainability and the work of everyone. I saw it on, as a true Millennial does, where I get my facts and my information, which is social media. But this was a meme that was going around a while ago. And it was basically, it's called the parable of the choir. And it's essentially the way that I think about sustainability and movement work, which is, the reason why choirs can sustain musical notes much longer than one human can is because they're doing it in a collective.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And when one singer needs to rest and take a breath, they drop out knowing that the rest of the choir continues the note. They breathe, and then they rejoin the note so that others can drop out, rest and rejoin. And this parable of the choir I think is so beautiful because it's like, I see... The wins that I see every day are the fact that people that I get to work with are carrying the note, even as I'm in this period of resting and recovery. And so what fuels me is that I know that people who interact with me go about

their daily lives also doing this work. And that is the way that we achieve the multi-generational project. We trust that other people are in it with us, and we see that every day. And that becomes the joy, that becomes the win. Because again, it's about human relationships, it's about human connections and I get to connect and plug in and see other people in the striving that this requires of us. And so I see wins everywhere, almost every day. And I'm blessed in that.

Lisa Bowen:

I love that. And the marketer in me has to ask you another question. And it is, did that parable play a role in the name of your organization?

Katherine MacHolmes:

I... Ooh. I don't-

Lisa Bowen:

You've got the name Collective in there. It makes a lot of sense.

Katherine MacHolmes:

You're so right. I think maybe it did in that beautiful way that like, things are always kind of floating in the background and you never know when they touch you and inform the ways you do things. Yeah. But I truly, Collective Futures is about the recognition that like Lisa, you are thriving, your sustainability and your future are directly and independently tied to mine. And the recognition that we are all deeply human, deeply valuable and that all of our futures matter, was part of that. So yeah, maybe unknowingly that would...

Lisa Bowen:

We could pretend like it did because it's amazing. Love it.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yes, Lisa, thank you for asking. The parable of the choir is absolutely what inspired that.

Lisa Bowen:

I love it. I love it. Okay, so we've talked a lot about what you've done in the past and what you're currently doing. Let's just focus on the future for just a moment. What are you most looking forward to for Collective Futures Design Lab in the coming months and years? Any big goals or hopes that you're aiming towards? I know you want to fix everything and make this huge impact, but you also are a realist and you understand it's not going to happen overnight.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah. So one of the tensions that I've always had with contract-based, partnership-based work, I love it, it fuels the work that I do, and I've been blessed in that. But one of my tensions has always been, this work consistently is happening behind a paywall. It's happening behind a paywall and only with companies that see the value in it, and maybe only the value up to a point that their risk tolerance allows. And so one of the things that I have been pretty preoccupied with, even from the founding of this is, what is my responsibility in removing the paywall? What does that look like? What does it mean to have community conversations? And honestly like, how scary that is. Because I know from working with

other organizations that have community engagement programs about having difficult conversations, that there will be people who show up just to be contrarian, without an open mind and open heart.

Katherine MacHolmes:

And so what does it mean, for me, to make this conversation more accessible, even while this is also what sustains my livelihood? And so the tension of knowing that we are skilling up organizations that see a value, but not making this information, these conversations and this lens accessible to the broader community, when that's frankly, I think, the better growing ground, is the community, because that's where we're less forced to be with each other than an agency, an organization where you at least have to go along to get along with your colleagues. I think the true experiment is in the community where people don't have, or see themselves as having that much buy-in in the future of another person. And how do we grow and cultivate those bonds? That's a question that I don't have an answer for, but I see such a deep need and I have such a desire to start to experiment with removing the paywall, with skilling up the community and being more accessible in these conversations.

Lisa Bowen:

What a great goal to have. There's no doubt that you'll accomplish it either.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Thank you.

Lisa Bowen:

So I can't wait to hear your answer to this next question, this is my favorite part. I, like many other people, am inspired by motivational quotes. Can you give us just a few of your own brilliant words of wisdom for our listeners?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Oh, yes, maybe. I don't know if they'll be brilliant. I hope they're helpful. This is not going to be in a few words because I'm exceptionally verbose, so I apologize for that. But I think the thing that systemic oppression has been really successful at is one, causing us to not see ourselves inside the problem, especially when we have systemic privilege. And two, making us feel powerless in the face of change. And so what I would want to say, what I say to everyone is that we are actually infinitely powerful to impact and effect change. And while we may not see a fully liberated society in our lifetimes, each one of us can create pockets of liberation that we can exist inside and that we can invite others in to practice and to exist inside with us. We can be so much more powerful in generating liberation at the micro-scale than we are led to feel.

Lisa Bowen:

That's like four fabulous quotes in one. So for our listeners who have enjoyed our conversation today and want to learn more about your work, how can they find out more about Collective Futures Design Lab?

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah. Like I said, we're in a transformation period. So just getting folks to curb their expectations about where we're at, but we are findable on Instagram and Facebook under Collective Futures Design Lab. You

can find me on LinkedIn or any of the social medias under Katherine MacHolmes. I love to be in conversation and community and so either one of those ways gets you to us.

Lisa Bowen:

So this is going to be another tough one for you because you have such a way with words. But as we wrap up our time here together today, what's the most important thing you'd like our listeners to remember about the important work you're doing.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Yeah. There is no starting point. No, there is a starting point and it's wherever you are right now. That's it. Just begin and try. There is no perfection in this work. It's messy, it's human, and it takes all of us. And so wherever you are in this moment is the first experiment towards anti-racism and anti-oppression that you have the pleasure and the ability of doing.

Lisa Bowen:

There are more great quotes in there, too. You're just full of them. Awesome.

Katherine MacHolmes:

The problem is that I'm like, "What did I just say?" After it's been said, so I'm glad you're recording.

Lisa Bowen:

We are yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. So Katherine, I fully believe that the world needs more people like you. Thank you so much for taking the time to be with us today. I'm hoping the podcast will help you spread the word about the great work you're doing, and that you're obviously going to continue to do. So thank you so much.

Katherine MacHolmes:

Thank you. This has been such a joy and it's so wonderful to be in community with you. I hope we get to do it again.

Lisa Bowen:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Announcer:

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities, or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from, visit KidGlov.com at K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com to get in touch. As always, if you like what you've heard today, be sure to rate, review, subscribe, and share. Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.