

Check It Out! Podcast Transcript
Episode #8
“Evolving Through Adversity With Seconde Nimenya”
Sno-Isle Libraries, Nov. 8, 2018



Ken Harvey: 00:09 Welcome to episode 8 of the Check It Out Podcast, from Sno-Isle Libraries. This is the podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds, and made possible by the support of the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation.

Cindy Tingley: 00:21 In this episode, we're going to chat with someone who came to the US via Canada after leaving her homeland in Central Africa, a place where she'd never even heard of a library until she went to a university. Among other things, we'll learn how her formative years led to a career based on evolving from adversity. I really think you're going to enjoy this interview as much as I did.

Cindy Tingley: 00:44 The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 00:52 Well, we're back in the studio for another episode of Check It Out Podcast from Sno-Isle Libraries, and I am your host, Ken Harvey, and I am delighted to have alongside me Cindy Tingley.

Cindy Tingley: 01:04 Thanks, Ken. I'm happy to be here.

Ken Harvey: 01:05 So, Cindy, just for folks who don't remember who you are, and ... Because I, and I actually don't expect them to know who I am, but you, you work in our HR department.

Cindy Tingley: 01:17 I do, for the talent development group. So, my primary focus isn't the benefits, and the time off, and all the policy stuff; mine's more focused on learning, development, and facilitating learning for our employees.

Ken Harvey: 01:29 And your ... So, your title is?

Cindy Tingley: 01:31 Right, now, it's Training Technician, which isn't very explanatory for what I do.

Ken Harvey: 01:36 Yeah, but it's for talent development.

(Continued)

Cindy Tingley: 01:39 Mm-hmm (affirmative), exactly.

Ken Harvey: 01:40 Hmm. Well, you ... I know you do a lot of work for me and others to help make sure that we are kind of up to speed on things that we need to be relearning, or making sure we're refreshed on.

Cindy Tingley: 01:52 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 01:53 And helping us just kind of stay up to speed with things that are changing in and around libraries, and just organizational things, so I appreciate your work.

Cindy Tingley: 02:04 Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 02:05 There's a lot of interesting positions that, in the library world.

Cindy Tingley: 02:09 There sure are, absolutely.

Ken Harvey: 02:11 And, you know, on top of making sure that everyone's trained.

Cindy Tingley: 02:14 Trained and, you know, getting knowledge that can perhaps take them further within the organization, as well.

Ken Harvey: 02:20 So, what's also interesting about you, I found, is you have a, like me, you have a varied background.

Cindy Tingley: 02:26 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 02:28 So, or some might say a checkered past.

Cindy Tingley: 02:31 That's surely true.

Ken Harvey: 02:32 Like me, and you also, we share a common background in radio ... Radio.

Cindy Tingley: 02:38 Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. Absolutely.

Ken Harvey: 02:41 So, you used to be an on-air talent?

Cindy Tingley: 02:43 Yes, I started in my hometown, which is Key West, Florida, and spent the last few years that I worked in radio between the Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico markets.

Ken Harvey: 02:55 So, and my, you know, some of my early years were in the Spokane, Washington market for working in both, I think, adult rock, contemporary rock, and also country.

Cindy Tingley: 03:10 Oh, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 03:10 Urban country.

Cindy Tingley: 03:13 Yeah. Did a little stint in that, myself, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 03:14 So, those were fun years. Well, we are ... I wanted to mention that we've got some statistics that have been handed to me about people who've been listening to this, the podcast, and gosh, we're just delighted to know that we've got thousands of listeners out there, already.

Cindy Tingley: 03:30 Fantastic.

Ken Harvey: 03:30 And that right now I'm showing, like, over, you know, close to 4000 listens.

Cindy Tingley: 03:36 Excellent.

Ken Harvey: 03:37 So far.

Cindy Tingley: 03:37 Great.

Ken Harvey: 03:37 So, for those of you who've been listening, we really appreciate having you out there, and hope that you not only continue to listen for each episode, but letting others know about it.

Cindy Tingley: 03:49 Yes, please. Get the word out, and, you know, we appreciate any and all feedback we can get.

Ken Harvey: 03:54 Yeah, we would love to have you go on one of the podcast stores, wherever you're listening through, subscribing from, and giving us your ratings.

Cindy Tingley: 04:03 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 04:05 Of course, we would love 10 stars, but I think it only goes up to five, so we only have five stars you can find.

Cindy Tingley: 04:10 Oh, darn.

Ken Harvey: 04:11 And, if you can leave a comment or so, that would, we'd really love that.

Cindy Tingley: 04:15 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 04:15 And, for those of you who feel really inspired, we'd love to just get your feedback even directly to an email through the library website-

Cindy Tingley: 04:25 Right.

Ken Harvey: 04:25 About something you like, about the web, about the podcast, or something you would love to have us talk about.

Cindy Tingley: 04:31 Absolutely. Not everybody likes to leave a public comment, so I think the email's a great idea, as well.

Ken Harvey: 04:36 Yeah, we'd love that. Well, we are delighted to have with us in today's episode a very special studio guest. So, I happen to know her as an international award-winning author. She is also a professional development trainer, coach, and a keynote speaker, and in her work she bridges the gap between race, culture, leadership, and education.

Ken Harvey: 05:05 She has a message that's evolving, that is around the evolution that can come from adversity, and how you can improve yourself to fulfill a potential that resonates with people around, and her work resonates with people around the world.

Cindy Tingley: 05:20 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 05:21 Seconde Nimenya.

Cindy Tingley: 05:24 Welcome.

Seconde Nimenya: 05:24 Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Ken Harvey: 05:27 So, did I say your name almost right?

Seconde Nimenya: 05:30 Almost right.

Ken Harvey: 05:31 Almost right.

Seconde Nimenya: 05:32 Mm-hmm (affirmative), mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 05:35 So, Seconde, Sigund?

Seconde Nimenya: 05:38 Seconde. Actually, it's derived from French, which is the second number, I guess, "Seconde"-

Ken Harvey: 05:47 Second number being the second most popular language in the world?

Seconde Nimenya: 05:51 You mean French? Yes. But, I found that people speak English find, have a hard time saying "g," the "g" sound, so Seconde, or [Sigund 00:06:01].

Ken Harvey: 06:00 So, you answer to both of them?

Seconde Nimenya: 06:05 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 06:07 Gosh, you are so gracious.

Seconde Nimenya: 06:08 I don't mind.

Ken Harvey: 06:13 So, I also came to know you because of your work as a

Seconde Nimenya: 06:17 Sno-Isle library speaker, and you gave a talk in 2016 on race and other identity constructs.

Seconde Nimenya: 06:25 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 06:25 And that talk was entitled, "We Are Not All That Different," and that, her talk, her TEDxSnoIsleLibraries 2016 talk, is available for viewing on the Sno-Isle Libraries website and Ted.com, what website. So, would definitely invite all of our listeners to go and check that out.

Seconde Nimenya: 06:47 Absolutely.

Ken Harvey: 06:48 Your talk, I think, continues to inspire people worldwide.

Seconde Nimenya: 06:51 Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 06:52 And you made the case that we're far more alike than we're different.

Seconde Nimenya: 06:56 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 06:56 And one of the wonderful things about Ms. Nimenya is that she was honored with a Seeds of Hope award by a global organization named Results.

Seconde Nimenya: 07:09 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 07:09 And they're working to end poverty through grassroots advocacy. So, congratulations on that award.

Seconde Nimenya: 07:15 Oh, thank you. Thank you so much.

Ken Harvey: 07:17 Well, we're delighted to have you with us on today's episode, and we wanted to just have a conversation with you around the work that you've done, and the talk that you gave through the TEDxSnoIsleLibraries opportunity, and more about, you know, what makes you tick. So, why don't we start with your TEDx talk? So, what was the basic idea behind your talk?

Seconde Nimenya: 07:47 Thank you, Ken. Thank you for having me. Well, the basic idea, really, I presented in the 2016 Sno-Isle-TEDx was from an experience I had while giving a presentation at an event, and during that presentation there was, before me, a keynote speaker who shared his experiences of being gay and Jewish, and the things he had gone through, and ... So, that experience really touched me, and I realized that even though his experiences were very different from my own, I realized that the human level, you know, the very essence, we were not that different.

Seconde Nimenya: 08:43 I think that's where the idea came from, and then evolved into what I was already doing on diversity and inclusion, and then I thought, "Why don't I share about that idea of, you know, seeing our differences as a positive?" And that's when I started preparation for We Are Not All That Different, idea was spreading.

Cindy Tingley: 09:11 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 09:12 So, your, you found yourself accepted to become a speaker in the process that Sno-Isle Libraries put on, and you went through an experience that lasted how long?

Cindy Tingley: 09:33 The preparation, you mean?

Ken Harvey: 09:34 Yes, the preparation.

Cindy Tingley: 09:36 The preparation, I think, from the time I was one of the, accepted as one of the candidates, to the stepping on stage, was about three months. Three months' preparation.

Ken Harvey: 09:45 So, what was that like for you?

Seconde Nimenya: 09:48 It was an experience that we really never forget, because when I got the news that I was accepted, and I started working with Ken Harvey, who is one of the organizer-

Cindy Tingley: 10:06 What?

Ken Harvey: 10:06 Who?

Seconde Nimenya: 10:08 So, Ken, you know, you met me and we discussed about the idea I had ... Initially, I had a different idea. I wanted to share about the theme I wrote about, I wrote in my first book, *Evolving Through Adversity*, and you told me that there was already someone else who was going to present on the topic of overcoming adversity, and then ... So, I told you the other idea I had on my mind, and you approved, and that's when I went to work to craft the speech and draft the first speech to, you know, with the ideas I wanted to present.

Ken Harvey: 10:56 And so, that, so that was, like, three months of work that went into that.

Seconde Nimenya: 11:02 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 11:04 And you were already a speaker before, before the TEDx experience, and ... Weren't you?

Seconde Nimenya: 11:10 I was.

Ken Harvey: 11:11 Yeah, and you, you've been a trainer and a coach for others. How was this different than the other work that you had done? Or was it different?

Seconde Nimenya: 11:21 So, what was different is the TEDx format, you know. TED in general, the format, especially the timing. That's where I had the challenges, because I seem to have a lot to say on the topic, and it had been in the time when we were, at the country, were going through the presidential elections, and then I observed what was going during, going on during the campaigns, and til the election results, and I realized people were really, like, freaked out. There was a lot of fear-

Cindy Tingley: 12:02 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 12:03 And people fear differences more than I had realized before, so I thought maybe we're missing some points of view, here, some bridging points of view, and that's what really prompted me to share about the topic. So, I had a lot to say on the topic, but then I was restricted by the timing format of TEDx, and that's when coaching came in and helped me to get concise and clear about what I wanted the world to learn from my talk.

Ken Harvey: 12:41 And when you mention kind of constraints, there was a time constraint that you couldn't exceed how many minutes?

Seconde Nimenya: 12:49 Usually, the TED Talks and TEDx, it's 18 minutes, of my initial speech, I had, like, 33 minutes, so I had to trim down a lot. And then, my final-

Ken Harvey: 13:03 And so you probably heard from your coach, "Cut! Cut! Cut! Cut!"

Seconde Nimenya: 13:04 Yes, yes, right. And, the final presentation is about, like, 12 minutes and a half.

Cindy Tingley: 13:13 Wow.

Ken Harvey: 13:14 That's remarkable.

Cindy Tingley: 13:15 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 13:15 So, it was one-third the size, or one-third the length. So, for, for others who, out there, who are speakers-

Seconde Nimenya: 13:24 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 13:26 How ... Tell them how difficult is it, or how simple is it to trim back, to cull and prune the things that you want to say down to, from the 33-minute talk to a little bit over 12 minutes?

Seconde Nimenya: 13:44 Yeah, well, when I speak, for instance, if I'm giving a keynote speech, usually they would say between 25, 30 minutes, so I'm fine. I'm always around that time frame. But, for TED, TEDx, 18 minutes being the maximum, I had to trim some, you know, backup ideas, or too much explaining [through 00:14:10] ideas, and just bring out poignant stories I thought maybe that would make sense and that people can relate more to those stories, and then, without me having to explain, go into details.

Cindy Tingley: 14:29 Right.

Seconde Nimenya: 14:29 So, that's what I did.

Cindy Tingley: 14:29 And you hit all those important, key points that you wanted.

Seconde Nimenya: 14:33 I sure hope so.

Cindy Tingley: 14:34 Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 14:35 Well, I thought it was an incredible talk.

Seconde Nimenya: 14:37 Oh, thank you.

Cindy Tingley: 14:37 Yes, absolutely.

Ken Harvey: 14:39 And I remember sitting in the audience ... I had decided to go up on the second tier of the Edmond Center for the Arts theater balcony, and watch you from there, and I must say, I was very proud of you.

Seconde Nimenya: 14:56 Oh, thank you, Ken.

Ken Harvey: 14:57 Yeah, I thought it was an incredible talk, and I thought it just very much resonated with me, and individuals around me. I saw them nodding, and their body, their body language seemed to indicate that the points that you wanted to make you were landing on them, and they found themselves in agreement.

Seconde Nimenya: 15:20 Oh, thank you. Thank you.

Cindy Tingley: 15:22 Absolutely. What was it like, though? I love to ask this question: you've done all that preparation, it's been three months, you're ready to go, you've got it down to your 12 minutes-plus, and you've hit that red dot carpet. What is that moment like for you?

Seconde Nimenya: 15:38 I mean, well, it was both nerve-wracking and exciting. So, once I stepped out on the TEDx stage, at first I was kind of nervous. You know, you see all these lights on you, and so many people, and ... but then, 20 seconds in I took a deep breath and just, I felt peace.

Cindy Tingley: 16:06 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 16:06 I felt peace, and I felt the audience close to me, and I felt that I could just share from my heart.

Cindy Tingley: 16:16 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 16:16 Yeah.

Cindy Tingley: 16:17 And I felt that way. Even watching it now on video, the pacing, the beauty behind your words, how profound it was, it really does come across.

Seconde Nimenya: 16:26 Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 16:28 For Russell Wilson, quarterback of the Seattle Seahawks, he's very fond of saying "The separation is in the preparation," and

you and your fellow TEDxSnoIsleLibraries speakers put in a significant amount of preparation.

Seconde Nimenya: 16:46 Everyone.

Ken Harvey: 16:46 To ensure that when you stepped out on that red circle, which was on the stage for the TEDxSnoIsleLibraries event, you knew what to do.

Seconde Nimenya: 16:55 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 16:55 And you knew how to do it.

Seconde Nimenya: 16:57 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 16:58 And you certainly delivered. So, when your talk was done and you said thank you to the audience, how did they respond?

Seconde Nimenya: 17:12 I felt like people responded really positively. Right after the talk, many people came to me and, you know, gave me their feedback of what they thought from the, you know, the talk, and appreciated that I was able to share a topic that was really timely ... their words, not mine ... but I know it was timely. During those times where, you know, we so change, we so change in many, many things in the country.

Seconde Nimenya: 17:48 And so, they said it was timely with, about time we start healing communities and having those kinds of conversations, and I think it's important that we heal each other, and we lean on each other and offer support in our communities, no matter who you are, you know, how different we are.

Cindy Tingley: 18:16 Mm-hmm (affirmative). I mean, at our core, we're all human beings.

Seconde Nimenya: 18:19 We are.

Cindy Tingley: 18:20 Yeah.

Seconde Nimenya: 18:20 Definitely, yes.

Ken Harvey: 18:22 Well, how did that experience affect you?

Seconde Nimenya: 18:26 That experience, from the feedback, to me confirmed that I shared a topic that was important, and even later the feedback I continued, and continue to receive even to this day, it's the same. You know, it's a talk that brings out the best in people, to

actually sit down and have an open mind, and step back and think, "Hmm, before this and that, I'm a human being, and how can I relate to other human beings, regardless of their race, their culture, their national origin, their sexual orientation, political affiliation?" So, that's what people have said.

- Seconde Nimenya: 19:14 I had one teacher actually send me her feedback and say ... Let me just read it for you.
- Ken Harvey: 19:22 Oh, yes.
- Cindy Tingley: 19:23 Yeah, yeah.
- Seconde Nimenya: 19:24 Yeah, I brought what she said. She said, "Dear Seconde: I used your TEDx talk in all five of my sophomore classes last week to kick off small group discussions about acceptance, what does it look like and feel like, how important is it. Next, groups discussed race and culture in our school. Did they think students felt comfortable here, what problems or successes did we have in these areas.
- Seconde Nimenya: 19:58 Finally, each group decided on three to five guidelines or [knowns 00:20:04] for how our class should function together. These ideas were posted to an online discussion board, where, once I got the patterns, we would follow up by voting on our top choices. We felt your talk was powerful. All my teens were attentive. I teach many students of color, who, it seemed to me, appreciated your compassionate, yet direct approach."
- Seconde Nimenya: 20:35 And, this was from Ms. Hanson, a teacher in the Lake Washington school district.
- Ken Harvey: 20:41 Thank you, Ms. Hanson.
- Cindy Tingley: 20:44 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Seconde Nimenya: 20:44 Yes, indeed.
- Ken Harvey: 20:46 Yes.
- Seconde Nimenya: 20:46 So it is, you know, these kinds of feedback that really affected me in so many wonderful ways, knowing that someone appreciates what I shared. Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Ken Harvey: 21:02 Well, TEDxSnoIsleLibraries is not your only claim to fame. You have written two books, and why don't you give us the names of both of those books?

Seconde Nimenya: 21:20 So, I wrote both fiction and non-fiction.

Ken Harvey: 21:23 Wow.

Seconde Nimenya: 21:23 My first book is titled "Evolving Through Adversity: How to Overcome Obstacles, Discover Your Passion, and Honor Your True Self." This is a story of my life journey, in which I share the life lessons I've learned along the way, to share and inspire others on their journeys, as well.

Ken Harvey: 21:47 So, this is non-fiction.

Seconde Nimenya: 21:49 It's a memoir, actually.

Ken Harvey: 21:50 So, it's an authorized autobiography.

Seconde Nimenya: 21:53 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 21:53 Memoir.

Seconde Nimenya: 21:54 Authorized by, yes. My second book, it's a novel titled "Hand to Hold." Hand to Hold is a story of adoption, and the challenges and opportunities of being an adopted child. But, most important, it's a human story of healing, love, and compassion.

Cindy Tingley: 22:20 Now, I'm curious to know: what was your inspiration for that one?

Seconde Nimenya: 22:24 For the novel?

Cindy Tingley: 22:25 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 22:26 I think, actually, all those two books are [inaudible 00:22:31] the same theme, which is evolving through adversity.

Cindy Tingley: 22:35 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 22:36 Even in the novel, it kind of reads like a non-fiction, even though it's fiction. It's showing how people can evolve and transform from inside out, but sometimes we're focused on the external stimulus, and we forget that the only person you can change is really you.

Cindy Tingley: 23:00 Right.

Seconde Nimenya: 23:01 So, that's what I tried to communicate, that it's not about what other people do, it's about what I'm doing to better myself, and to better others around me.

Cindy Tingley: 23:14 Right, and that's actually where your memoir is so much more than just a memoir, because it really is quite a self-help book, and I love the workbook aspect of it.

Seconde Nimenya: 23:23 Yes, yes. The workbook is like a companion workbook to, to go read the memoir, then give tools to people to work on their own stories, because we all have a story.

Cindy Tingley: 23:36 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 23:37 We all have a story, and we ought to tell our own stories, because they matter, and then give them those tools to be able to craft their stories.

Cindy Tingley: 23:49 Yes.

Seconde Nimenya: 23:49 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 23:51 So, what was it that inspired you to write?

Seconde Nimenya: 23:57 I would say that initially, like, I grew up in the country, where I didn't really have access to books, so books in my-

Ken Harvey: 24:07 So, public libraries weren't around at every corner?

Seconde Nimenya: 24:09 Public libraries, no, no. The word "library" was ... I didn't even know that word.

Cindy Tingley: 24:14 Wow.

Seconde Nimenya: 24:15 Until I went to the university in my native country, and even then, it was a university library and we didn't have that many books.

Ken Harvey: 24:25 And native country being?

Seconde Nimenya: 24:26 In my native country of Burundi-

Ken Harvey: 24:28 Burundi.

Seconde Nimenya: 24:28 Which is in the Great Lakes region of East Central Africa. So, I didn't have access to books, and when I came to North America, where there are a lot of books, I started reading insatiably, and

before I knew, I was inspired by what I read, and I started baby steps: first, journaling my thoughts, my emotions, my ... As a way to heal, really, what I was going through at that time, and before I know, my journals were piling up. So, I started having an idea, maybe I can turn these journals into a book, yes, and then that's how I started.

- Ken Harvey: 25:17 Well, I'd like to just go back and kind of probe a little bit about your early public library experience, you know, once you came to North America. You said you were an insatiable reader: what were you insatiably reading? What were the types of genres or subjects?
- Seconde Nimenya: 25:38 My favorite genre was always non-fiction. I read fiction as well, but it was non-fiction, and also for me was another way to learn the language, to learn English, because when I came to North America I spoke French fluently, and I spoke my native language of Kirundi, of course, but English wasn't ... I wasn't fluent in English yet, so it was another way to learn the language, but then, before I knew, I preferred to write in English, then in French. Yeah, and, you know, until I could be able to write in English, as well.
- Ken Harvey: 26:23 Why was that important to you at the time, to be, you know, to become, to master English?
- Seconde Nimenya: 26:29 Because when I moved here from my native country, I first lived in Canada.
- Ken Harvey: 26:33 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Seconde Nimenya: 26:35 Initially, I lived in Quebec, and in Quebec they speak French, so it wasn't a problem once I got, you know, the hang of Quebec French, but then later I moved to Ontario, and Ontario, Canada, is mainly English. All of the provinces, except Quebec, is ... They speak English. So, that's when I started seeing the challenges, that even though I spoke French it wasn't helping me in an English province. So, to be able to find work I had to speak the language, and that's why it was important.
- Ken Harvey: 27:14 So, a non-fiction reader: history, or geography, or science, or math books?
- Seconde Nimenya: 27:25 No, not math books for me today, unless I had to help my child with homework. But, I read mostly non-fiction, with especially self-help books. Self-help, yeah, was my favorite genre.

Ken Harvey: 27:44 So, so you were journaling.

Seconde Nimenya: 27:47 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 27:47 And you said the journals just started piling too high.

Seconde Nimenya: 27:51 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 27:52 And there, but there's something, I think, in the soul of a writer that becomes self-evident, that you have to write.

Seconde Nimenya: 28:04 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 28:04 You have to put it into writing. So, how old were you when that happened, and when did you really start kind of moving into the *Evolving Through Adversity* book?

Seconde Nimenya: 28:21 I think the theme of *Evolving Through Adversity* was always something that I wanted to, to explore, because you know, I came from a country where there was a lot of strife, and I came from a country and a culture where-

Ken Harvey: 28:41 Was there civil war?

Seconde Nimenya: 28:44 There was civil wars, and that's why I ended up staying in North America, and then all that goes on with when you become a war refugee, and you, you know, you lose your sense of place, and I ... Everything you're accustomed to, you shift your perspectives. So, I saw that as a challenge, yet it was also something I wanted to explore so I can help others. So, I was helping myself, but helping others at the same time.

Cindy Tingley: 29:21 I noticed in the intro of your book you made reference to how sharing your childhood survival stories was ... You were a little insecure, at first, wanting to do that.

Seconde Nimenya: 29:33 Yeah. I think that's, that, the journey of any non ... Especially if you're writing a memoir, your own story or your own account, you don't think this can help anyone else who's never, you know, your life, would never be in the same shoes.

Cindy Tingley: 29:51 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 29:52 So, it was that, you know, in that mindset, at first, but then I realized that my story, my experiences, could help someone else overcome their own adversities, their own lives, and then that's why I persisted and started to share those stories.

Cindy Tingley: 30:15 I know a lot of people are happy you did.

Seconde Nimenya: 30:17 Oh, thank you.

Ken Harvey: 30:18 Well, it seems interesting to me that you were able to either avoid the trap or climb out of that trap that kind of can have two sides that can catch us: one is that, the side that says our differences are things that we should fear, and the flip side is "My own pain or my own experience is so different that no one else will be able to understand, or be able to appreciate or learn anything from."

Ken Harvey: 30:55 And so, as Cindy said, there are many who have appreciated that you were willing to see that, yeah, there's something that you can learn from my own adversity. So, the ... Who did you ... One of the other things that I have found with writers and speakers, TEDx-Sno-Isle speakers and others, as well as performers, is that sometimes there can be a little bit of a fear and trepidation that "What I have to share and give may not be accepted by others."

Ken Harvey: 31:38 So, how did you get past, or did you actually even experience this when ... Once you had written a draft of your first book, being able, being willing to risk putting it out there for anyone else to see it and comment on it?

Seconde Nimenya: 31:56 Definitely. Yeah, I mean, I tell people "You don't want to read my first draft," okay, because, yeah, it was loaded. But then you go through layers, and layers, and you edit, and I took it ... I even took a writing class so that ... It was, like, to confirm that I can write.

Cindy Tingley: 32:22 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 32:22 It was more for confirmation than anything else, because I had written the manuscript, and I parked it, and I put it in a drawer for five years.

Cindy Tingley: 32:32 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 32:33 Five years before I could even consider to share it.

Cindy Tingley: 32:37 Wow, wow.

Seconde Nimenya: 32:39 So, I took part at an event I went to, a writer's event, where I met a book coach, and he was a speaker at that event, and I shared what I've done, what I've written about. So, he

encouraged me to share my story. He said, "You know, Seconde, this is no longer your story. This is everyone's story, only written in, with, you know, from your own experiences and in your own voice. But, this is a story that can help others, so why don't you share it?"

- Seconde Nimenya: 33:24 When you have someone like that give you an impartial perspective, you get out of your own head, and that's really what helped me see differently, and be able to then decide, yes, this is a story that can help someone else.
- Ken Harvey: 33:46 Oh, wow.
- Cindy Tingley: 33:47 Yeah, and you have it contained in this RRU model that I found fascinating, for personal growth. Did that come before the book? Was that part of the process? How did that all come to be?
- Seconde Nimenya: 34:00 When I was writing, initially when I was writing the book, it was about the recollection of memories from my childhood, my adulthood; the good, the bad, the ugly.
- Cindy Tingley: 34:12 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Seconde Nimenya: 34:13 And what I have learned from all those experiences. Then, at the end, I saw a pattern of what I did, how I crafted the story, and that's what I wanted people to use as a model for them to craft their own story, and, "RRU" you just mentioned stands for Reflect, Rectify, and Unite. So, reflecting means go back and think what's happened in the past, because you can never really move past the past until you deal with it.
- Cindy Tingley: 34:55 Mm-hmm (affirmative), very true.
- Seconde Nimenya: 34:56 There are things people, sometimes they try to suppress and, you know, say "I moved on," but they come back to haunt you somewhere in that ... So, until you take that reflecting journey, it doesn't go away. The past just doesn't go away until you deal with it and heal it. So, that's what, where reflect came from. Then, rectify simply means change the things you can change and let go of what you can change.
- Cindy Tingley: 35:29 Yes.
- Seconde Nimenya: 35:29 Sometimes you waste time on things you cannot change at all, and learn from the mistakes, learn from the experiences ...

yours or others ... and then just move on, which is really Unite, move forward.

Cindy Tingley: 35:45 Yeah.

Seconde Nimenya: 35:46 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 35:46 So, I wanted to just remind our listeners: you're listening to the Check It Out Podcast, and this is Ken Harvey and Cindy Tingley, your hosts, and we're talking with Seconde Nimenya, who is a, just a lovely person, who is a, has an MBA, is a internationally-recognized speaker and author, and wanted to just ask you, Seconde, about your heroes. Do you have a hero? Or any heroes you'd like to mention to us?

Seconde Nimenya: 36:23 Hmm.

Ken Harvey: 36:24 Someone in your life who's really made a difference, or you've just really looked up to.

Seconde Nimenya: 36:29 Yeah. Actually, one of my heroes is my shero grandmother. My maternal grandmother is the one who raised me since I was a toddler, and Grandma instilled in me some values without even telling me what she was doing, just watching her through her actions: the way she cared about others, the way she was accepting of others, and that really shaped who I would become, and I think that's why I do the work I do today. I think it came from those early values that were instilled in me by my grandmother, you know, accepting others for who they are, and just being compassionate and empathizing with others. That, yeah, she was my shero.

Ken Harvey: 37:33 Was there a favorite saying that she had, or something that you remember? I mean, was-

Seconde Nimenya: 37:39 There were probably many sayings, but I, you know, in a child's mind, sometimes you fight it.

Ken Harvey: 37:45 Yes.

Seconde Nimenya: 37:46 You don't see the value right away. It's only ... Well, she died when I was in 6th grade, but she had already imparted in me the values that I live by today, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 38:00 And you, you, you're a mom, as well, right?

Seconde Nimenya: 38:05 I am. I am a mom of three.

Ken Harvey: 38:07 Congratulations.

Seconde Nimenya: 38:08 Yeah, thank you.

Ken Harvey: 38:09 So, are there some ... Are, so when I think about your shero, you know, one of the things that I think we are called to is to be that in someone else's life.

Seconde Nimenya: 38:23 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 38:24 And so, what are some of the things that you hope that your life's journey has helped you reflect to your own children, or others around you?

Seconde Nimenya: 38:37 For my children, for example, I think my kids, they grew up in a different environment than the one I grew up in. We raised them with this kind of dichotomic perspective: the culture where I grew up and the culture, the North American culture.

Seconde Nimenya: 39:04 So, it was a kind of a mix, and I think they have been able to navigate that. It was a challenge for them, I'm sure, but what they've done is navigate that dichotomy and be able to pick the good from both cultures, and use it to set their own journey, and today I'm really proud of my kids, because they're good people. They, you know, they respect others, they're very accepting, and I think they also teach me. I learn from them, as well. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 39:45 So, are they, any in their teens, or young adults, or?

Seconde Nimenya: 39:49 They are young adults. My two oldest have already graduated college, and they are adults.

Ken Harvey: 39:57 Congratulations.

Seconde Nimenya: 39:58 And my youngest is a sophomore in college.

Ken Harvey: 40:01 Ah.

Seconde Nimenya: 40:01 So, they're pretty grown.

Cindy Tingley: 40:03 And you kind of started this trend, because if I recall correctly, you were the first in your generation to graduate university.

Seconde Nimenya: 40:10 I was. I was the first girl in my village to graduate university.

Cindy Tingley: 40:17 That's fantastic. And the other story I really like, Ken, because you know I'm big on learning-

Ken Harvey: 40:22 Yes, you are.

Cindy Tingley: 40:24 Going to elementary school. I don't know if I could have done what she did. 20 miles, barefoot in each direction, you walked to elementary school.

Ken Harvey: 40:35 That sounds like a story that parents and grandparents tell their children and grandchildren.

Seconde Nimenya: 40:41 Yeah, you bet.

Ken Harvey: 40:41 Barefoot, uphill, both directions.

Seconde Nimenya: 40:43 Mm-hmm (affirmative), mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, it was true. It was true that that was the journey, because we didn't have school buses, or we didn't have schools in our neighborhoods. Usually, when I was growing up there was one primary school within 20-30 miles, even more. Some kids traveled more miles. So, rain or shine, yeah, I had to go and I had to walk back and forth, every single day.

Cindy Tingley: 41:12 That's amazing.

Seconde Nimenya: 41:13 Yeah.

Cindy Tingley: 41:14 I couldn't do it.

Ken Harvey: 41:14 So, what-

Seconde Nimenya: 41:16 I mean, when you don't see any other alternative, you do it. There's not a choice.

Cindy Tingley: 41:23 Yeah.

Seconde Nimenya: 41:24 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 41:25 So, what does that say in terms of the value of learning to you?

Seconde Nimenya: 41:31 I mean, persistence for what you believe in, persisting in what you want to achieve. You know, life is not a straight line. You got to go through the waves until you reach the destination. Education, especially in developing countries, was not a given, and it is still a challenge, even today.

Ken Harvey: 41:59 Hmm.

Seconde Nimenya: 42:00 And when it comes to educating girls, it wasn't a priority back in the day when I was growing up, so I had to fight. I had to fight to get that education, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 42:14 Well, congratulations.

Seconde Nimenya: 42:15 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, thank you.

Ken Harvey: 42:17 You must be such a ... Both role model and just someone who inspires so much pride with family and those who knew you growing up.

Seconde Nimenya: 42:31 Yeah. I mean, I have stories to also get back to my kid if they misbehave.

Ken Harvey: 42:37 Yes.

Seconde Nimenya: 42:37 So, I start one of those stories: "You know, in my time," so, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 42:46 Well, what would you say is your passion these days?

Seconde Nimenya: 42:52 My passion is really what it's always been, and it's about helping others see themselves differently: spark minds, inspire people to see themselves, because when you see yourself in a new light, then you're able to extend that light to others. You are so lit others shine theirs, and my passion's always being able to share my life lessons, and share different perspectives, and that's what it is about, and bridge the gaps between our diverse and multicultural communities.

Ken Harvey: 43:41 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 43:42 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 43:43 Would it surprise you at all to know that not everyone who lives around you really values having a public library in the community? And, do you think that, maybe that they're right? That just having the internet available is a great alternative to having a library?

Seconde Nimenya: 44:09 I mean, I've always loved to go to the library. Like I said, I loved books, I loved to read, and my budget in books was, like, the highest. You know, whenever the people went to the mall to see the latest fashion, I would go to the book store and buy

books. But then I realized, "Wait a minute, there's a public library and the books are free?" Right, it's not hard. So, the library became my second-favorite place to go and get lost in books, and to read.

Ken Harvey: 44:45 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 44:46 So, I think public libraries will always be needed, and I don't think they can go out of time. I don't think so.

Ken Harvey: 44:57 Well, in the time we've got remaining, in the next couple minutes, or last couple minutes, what would you say to ... I'm going to have you speak to several different individuals.

Seconde Nimenya: 45:08 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 45:09 So, there's one individual that I want you to speak to, who's in the audience, who has gone through some very hard things, unfair things. Things that were undeserved.

Seconde Nimenya: 45:26 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 45:27 And is wondering how to go forward. What would you say to this person?

Seconde Nimenya: 45:33 I would say, take time first to heal yourself, and the way you heal yourself is, go back to that event. Don't try to suppress it, because sometimes society will tell you, "Ah, move forward already. That's in the past, the past is-" The past is never gone until you heal it, so go back to that event. What was it? How did it affect you? Who are the people who impacted you in that event?

Seconde Nimenya: 46:06 And then, see where you can forgive. Maybe it's something you did, and forgive yourself, learn from the lessons. Maybe it was something done by others to you. Learn to forgive them, because forgiving them doesn't mean you're letting them off the hook. It simply means you are taking the burden off of you, because it's not your mistake. It's not something you did. It's them.

Seconde Nimenya: 46:39 So, forgive them anyway, let go of them, and move forward with your life, knowing that from this time forward you're going to go places. Use that adversity, use that, whatever it is, that pain, and turn it into life lessons that can inspire others. My saying is, "Everybody goes through adversity, one way or another, but it's how you respond that makes the difference."

Cindy Tingley: 47:16 Yes.

Seconde Nimenya: 47:16 Because two people can go through the same thing, and one responds better than the other. We cope differently: we're different people, we're unique people, but it's how you respond. And the way you respond to really heal yourself and heal others is by reflecting on the event, and then forgiving the event, forgiving those involved, and let go and move forward, because the only person you can change and improve is you.

Cindy Tingley: 47:48 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 47:49 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 47:49 So, what would you say to that person who is, is trying to decided whether or not they should just move forward with pursuing a dream, or not? It might require some education, it might require just more effort, and they're thinking, "Oh, I just don't feel like I've got the energy to do it." What would you say to them?

Seconde Nimenya: 48:15 Step by step, okay? Take steps, because, as the saying goes, "Rome was not built in one day." So, if you've got a dream, you have to believe in it, and if you believe in the dream you take the steps, and it's a journey. Enjoy the journey. Don't wait until you achieve something to celebrate. Celebrate the journey, celebrate each step, each moment, what you're doing to get that destination. But, in the meantime, enjoy the journey.

Ken Harvey: 48:53 I think that's what we told all of you as TEDxSnoIsleLibraries speaker candidates.

Seconde Nimenya: 48:56 I think so, seeing how it goes back to you.

Ken Harvey: 49:01 So, finally, what would you say to just the person who may live in your neighborhood and who is thinking to themselves, "Oh, I don't think we need a public library here. I don't ... You know, I'm paying for it through my library levee tax, and I'm not sure that it's really worth it."

Seconde Nimenya: 49:18 I mean, public library's not just about reading books. It's about community. It's a community gathering place. It's a safe space for people to come and learn, and meet, and encounter one another. The library has a lot of programs ... I actually, just gave a "Crafting Your Personal Story" program.

Ken Harvey: 49:45 Oh.

Seconde Nimenya: 49:45 At the Mukilteo Library.

Ken Harvey: 49:49 Mukilteo Library.

Cindy Tingley: 49:49 Yeah.

Seconde Nimenya: 49:50 Mm-hmm (affirmative), the Mukilteo Library. And so, those kind of programs, people have to go somewhere and pay for them, but the library made it available for free to them.

Cindy Tingley: 50:00 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 50:02 We have a lot of programs and classes where people can learn how to start a business, where people can learn how to grow their business. A lot of learning, and then you have young people in these programs, whether it's high school homework help, whether it's, you know, from kindergarten, all the way ... Even babies have programs.

Cindy Tingley: 50:31 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seconde Nimenya: 50:31 So, those are the things the library, the public library, makes available to people for free, because of the taxpayers. If you pay taxes, then you know they're being used to create programs for your community. I think it's money well spent, because sometimes you pay taxes and you don't know where they're going.

Cindy Tingley: 50:54 Right.

Seconde Nimenya: 50:56 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 50:57 Well, this has been an incredible pleasure.

Cindy Tingley: 51:00 Absolutely, and I just ... I, before we go, I just have to say, one of your quotes from TEDx that I absolutely adore-

Ken Harvey: 51:08 "It is within."

Cindy Tingley: 51:09 "If we see others for who they are, not what they are, we might even change the world."

Seconde Nimenya: 51:16 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Cindy Tingley: 51:17 So profound. I love that.

Seconde Nimenya: 51:18 Thank you, thank you.

Ken Harvey: 51:20 Gosh, that is a good way to end.

Seconde Nimenya: 51:22 Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 51:23 So, thank you so much for being with us.

Seconde Nimenya: 51:25 Thank you, this is-

Ken Harvey: 51:25 Sharing your time.

Seconde Nimenya: 51:25 This was fun.

Cindy Tingley: 51:28 Absolute pleasure.

Seconde Nimenya: 51:29 Yes, it was fun. Thank you so much.

Ken Harvey: 51:32 Coming up next, we have an interesting featurette for you. We're calling it "A Library Surprise."

Rilee Louangphakdy: 51:46 My name is Rilee Louangphakdy. I'm a student at Washington State University Everett, and a communications intern for the Sno-Isle Libraries, and I want to share something that surprised me about the library.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 51:57 You know, as a college student, I get assigned a lot of homework, and sometimes too much homework. Oftentimes, I go to the library to get it done. Despite this, I've never asked the librarians for specific help on my homework. To be honest, I thought they could only help me find just books, but I found something that really surprised me. I want to talk about a service called "Book-a-Librarian."

Rilee Louangphakdy: 52:21 Just like how it sounds, Book-a-Librarian is a personalized, one-on-one library service that allows me to book an appointment with a librarian, who will then essentially teach you how to find information on any topic, which is essentially the help I was never asking them for. So, how does it work? A few weeks ago, I dropped by the Marysville Sno-Isle Library, which, by the way, is my hometown library, so I could experience the service for myself.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 52:47 I was able to connect with a Book-a-Librarian expert there, Mark Barnett. In one of my college classes, I'm working on a case study about the library's industry. So, I asked Mark to teach me how to search for the information I was looking for, as well as other resources where I could find different articles about the library's industry.

- Rilee Louangphakdy: 53:04 Mark spent about 30 minutes with me in my Book-a-Librarian session. Using his computer, he showed me step-by-step on what I should do, where to go, and what to look out for. He also shared his own insights about the library sector, as well, which was a big help. I noticed how all the information and advice, as well as the process he went through with me, seemed to be refined through the countless appointments he's had in the past, regardless of the subject matter, and that, to me, is actually the coolest part.
- Rilee Louangphakdy: 53:33 When you book a librarian, not only does the librarian serve as your personal information guide and consultant, but they're also information veterans who truly know what they're doing. The librarians don't just give you the information you're looking for, they actually teach you on how to find that information on your own. The Book-a-Librarian sessions can last from 30-60 minutes, and you can book them in-person, over the phone, or through email, and the best part is that every one of our community libraries has this service available, which I think is awesome and totally convenient.
- Rilee Louangphakdy: 54:06 Book-a-Librarian can also help someone figure out how to use a specific technology or resource, and those kinds of appointments were handled by librarians who have experience in those topics.
- Rilee Louangphakdy: 54:17 But, let's say you're wondering about a few questions involving the Sno-Isle Libraries. For that, I would suggest checking out the library's Ask Us/Tell Us tab on the Sno-Isle website. This is a communications hub about all things related to the Sno-Isle Libraries, so we can even chat online with a librarian. You can also use that feature in this hub to contact staff or book a librarian appointment.
- Rilee Louangphakdy: 54:39 As a college student, I'm always finding myself pinching for time or resources on homework, so I was surprised and actually excited when I found out about the Sno-Isles' Book-a-Librarian. In my opinion, this is extremely helpful and underrated. So, if I were you, I would definitely check it out.
- Rilee Louangphakdy: 54:58 My name is Rilee Louangphakdy, college student and intern, looking for my next library surprise.
- Ken Harvey: 55:06 This podcast has been brought to you by our legacy sponsor, Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation. Your private, tax-deductible gift to the library foundation provides seed money to expand and fast extra early learning and lifetime learning opportunities through foundation grants for innovative library classes,

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