

2020-12-08 - Arianna Huffington - Creator Series - audio_only

Eric Koester

Welcome to our awesome creator session tonight. And we are so grateful to have Arianna join us tonight. And again, I think I've been excited for this conversation largely because, again, someone who really has championed creators and authors and the written word as her special to get to hang out with us, and especially as all of us are in the midst of our own turmoil of writing and creating, it's good to have someone else who can share that positive news and things like that behind it. So, we're excited to have her join us. And we'll just spend a few minutes with her, and then we'll do our group photo so we can memorialize this moment. And I'm excited to see what her charge is to us for the group photo that we take. I'm always excited by what folks do. So, we'll keep cameras off during the session. And then when we have our speakers, we'll make sure to turn cameras on for all of us to hang out and see one another. We'll do that one and she'll be here in a couple minutes. I'll wrap it up with a couple things and we'll get after. But excited to have you guys and it certainly should be fun. And again, feel free to comment and drop your thoughts here in the chat as we're going along the way, interesting points and comments. And I'll do my best to try and manage the conversation. But we'll make sure that everyone gets to experience the conversation and walk away with a little bit of inspiration. So, I just want to say a special thanks to Nico tonight for helping facilitate this. She's been amazing to help make this happen. And I do owe her a big debt of gratitude for arranging this conversation. So, we're glad to have her and her help. There she is! The woman of the hour. Thank you so much for joining us.

Arianna Huffington

I'm delighted to be joining you. What a great community you have been.

Eric Koester

Well, we were saying here, you are a lover of the written word and a lover of writing. And so, what better to get together than a group of writers like this? So, thank you so much. I think this group, we have about 400 people from all across the country who are writing their first book to share something good in the world. And it's been pretty wild. So, thanks for hanging with us.

Arianna Huffington

Amazing. So, I would love to know how did you collect these 400 people?

Eric Koester

So, this is one of those things. As you know, writing a book is one of those things, it's very lonely. And so, I think when people started to say, "Hey, we could do this together. This is where this community has been built." And "Hey, you should meet my friend and my sister, my cousin." And next thing we know, we got this amazing community, people from all over the world. About half of the folks are doing creative works, fiction, memoirs and half of the folks are doing nonfiction. And we get together every week and hang out together.

Arianna Huffington

And everybody also has a job, are they in college? What's the situation?

Eric Koester

Yep, we got people who are people are either full time students in graduate school or undergraduate or people who are working full time. So, the book is that passion project that lives on the side, that's important for them to do. Some have all of those books, school, life, family, all those things in one fell swoop.

Arianna Huffington

I love it. Congratulations to you and everyone for putting so much energy into their passion project.

Eric Koester

I agree. Well, so I thought I'd start by asking, in some ways your entire sort of career has been the love of writing. How did you develop this passion for writing? Because with your own writing and celebrating others, why is writing so important to you?

Arianna Huffington

I just love moving hearts and minds. And that's really what writing is about. When I started, frankly, I didn't think I would end up writing 15 books. What I love as a mother is that my youngest daughter just published her first book as an Audible original.

Eric Koester

That's amazing.

Arianna Huffington

So, I love this continuation of the tradition. And what was interesting, in these times when people are talking a lot about resilience and how do we navigate these difficult times, she wrote the book. She's an artist, she's a visual artist. She started writing this for herself, as many people do. Like keeping a journal to help her sort out through this very hard experience of being hit by a bike in the streets of New York and suffering from debilitating headaches for three years. And she started writing it to help herself and not to despair. And then, in the course of writing it, it became like a spiritual journey where she started coming to terms with the universe, with her own voice, what's this about. And then audible published it under that it 'Map to the unknown'. And the response has been amazing. Because a lot of people, even though it's her own story, she wrote it in a very funny way. Because again, finding the humor in the darkness often helps us and also makes an interesting writing style. Because it's not too heavy. And the truth is that life is a mixture, right? A mixture of the dark and the light. Anyway, it's been interesting going on this journey with her.

Eric Koester

Apple doesn't fall very far. I've little kids, so I'm hoping one day my daughters will decide to write books. So, I always love to hear the process that people go through of deciding to write a book. Because as you know, you've written 15 of

them, and they're diverse all across the board. How do you decide that you're going to invest this chunk of your life in a topic? Is there a process you go through? Or is it just emotional striking?

Arianna Huffington

Every one of my books has been different. The last two were very personal. I collapsed from exhaustion and burnout in 2007, and started studying the whole phenomenon of burnout, covering a lot of it in the Huffington post that I was running at the time. And then I started wanting to write about it. So, that's how 'Thrive' came about it. It was really my new passion. And then after 'Thrive' the book came 'Thrive' the company. And I left the Huffington Post in 2016 to find my new company to end the stress and burnout epidemic. And now, with the pandemic, of course, these issues have become much more central, because people are recognizing that if they don't take care of themselves and they burn out, the mental health consequences, the physical consequences are much harder during a pandemic.

Eric Koester

And you've seen your daughter going through the book, you've gone through it. It's a stressful process to go through it. You talk a lot about balancing wellness and all these pieces, the three legs of the stool. How do you encourage an author or someone, a creator who's doing something important and personal to find that balance when they're doing something that's both hard, but also really important to them?

Arianna Huffington

I don't think it's a balance. I actually don't use the word 'Balance'. Because the truth is that if you are in the flurry of creativity and you end up writing all night, that's fine. Just make sure you take time to recharge. And make sure you are not operating with diminishing returns. I mean, sitting at your desk doesn't mean you're writing.

Eric Koester

That's the best way. To clean the house is to start writing your book. That's the best way to clean the house.

Arianna Huffington

Exactly. Also, I think some people can only write on their laptop. Barack Obama wrote his whole latest book on a yellow pad. I have started with my last two books, dictating them into a tape recorder. Because I realized that I actually can speak for an hour or more without notes. I thought why not use that to create a first draft? And once you have a first draft, it's so much easier to sit down and write.

Eric Koester

And the goal here is, we tell people, the mediocre first draft. And even lower than mediocre is okay, because it gets better certainly as it goes. When you go through the process, do you have someone who's with you? Do you have a collaborator or an editor? What's your process of building the idea part of this out?

Arianna Huffington

No, it's very much just me. And I think probably most writers find that. That's the truth. It's a pretty lonely profession. I love music. I love classical music. And I wrote one of my books through all of Haydn's over 100 symphonies. And that was before Spotify. So, I find that having tea, I love certain things that keep me going. I also have candles on my desk. I try to remember to blow them out. So, these are sort of things that helped me stay focused. And here's a thing. I don't know how you are dealing with it. But avoiding distraction, especially now with social media and the desire to want to consume Coronavirus news. And one of the things that I always do when I'm writing, which is most of the time because I'm not writing a book now, but I'm writing articles etc, is, I have put an end to all notifications coming to my phone. If I want to get the news, I'll go get the news. Being interrupted is the worst thing for a writer. And you need that uninterrupted time to come up with even your first draft.

Eric Koester

It's true. The first session we do together is all about the science of distraction and interaction. And so, I think you're absolutely right. You have to prepare to do something great, in some ways, whatever it might be. You've gone through this journey of writing a book years ago to today. Do you see the process changing? How technology has helped you, hindered you or how have you seen that evolution as a writer and author?

Arianna Huffington

Well, I think for me, technology hasn't really helped except in research. It has helped a lot in research. And I don't write fiction. For those who do research, it definitely helps tremendously. But I think both for myself and for some of the writers I talk to, the distractions of technology, the addictive nature of social media, is something that we need to be very relentless about to control.

Eric Koester

Yeah. And in your book, you do share a lot of these powerful moments and things. How do you balance that fear and that openness and willingness to be vulnerable and authentic? How do you get to that point where you're willing to share some of these inside stories?

Arianna Huffington

I think if you're not willing to be vulnerable and open, you shouldn't write a book that includes your life. Because it shows. You can write books that don't involve your life. But there's only one way to write about your life. And that's to be willing to be raw and vulnerable. And not to try and be perfect. And I would love to invite everybody writing, to share their stories on Thrive Global. We have about 36 million users across all our platforms. If there's a book that you could research for, you can invite people to share their stories. And you own all the rights. We've created a system where anything that appears on Thrive is owned by the writer. And we don't care about exclusivity. You can pass it wherever you want. And you can send it to me ah@thriveglobal.com or to our editor, rebecca@thriveglobal.com. And we would love to invite you to share your stories. Eric, that was fantastic. Thank you.

Eric Koester

We'd love to do we do with this group photo with the class. We always love to do an important group photo. And we let you as our guest of honor, tell us what to do. So whatever you want us to do, we'll do. We've had a hostage negotiator, we've had a phone call, we've had jazz. So, what would you like to have us do to memorialize this moment together to take our group photo together?

Arianna Huffington

How about blowing kisses?

Eric Koester

I love it. Blowing kisses feels like a great way. All right, everyone will get our group photo here everyone blow your kisses and I'll take a few photos here for us. Kisses blown. Thank you so much. Arianna, thank you again for your time and just your passion for authorship and writing. We're so grateful. And we're going to do something fun here too is the authors in this community are going to share some of the work you've helped inspire here so we can have things in the community to add in your bookshelves at some point to see the work that you've inspired.

Arianna Huffington

That's amazing. I'm really so grateful to you have for doing that. And I would love for you to write how this idea came about and how you made it happen.

Eric Koester

The power of the community, certainly. So, I know you have very many things, thank you so much for the time. Nico, thanks for organizing this. And we appreciate it again.

Arianna Huffington

Bye, Eric. Bye, everyone. Thank you.

Eric Koester

Thank you so much, Ariana. That was amazing. I'm so grateful to get the chance to hang out with her. We appreciate it. And we do really appreciate Nico's help for kind of arranging this one so much. And we'll find ways to make sure that we can get your books into the Thrive community and those sorts of things. But again, very grateful to have all of you hanging out tonight and some amazing comments and conversations from it. And it hopefully inspires you guys to write and create. So for those of you who did want to stick around and hang out in chat with one another together, we would certainly love to have you guys hang out in some small groups and talk about your books, your experiences together. And we'll certainly be able to find a way to get all of you guys to continue to meet one another. So for those of you that wanted to move on and go keep writing or do those things, please do. If you want to stick around and chat with a couple of other authors, hang out with one other, we will leave the session open. But I'll let folks drop off they're gonna go, go write, go create. And for those of you who want to stick around, I'm going to open up a couple rooms to give you guys a chance to hang out. But hopefully, you walk away inspired. It's kind of amazing to have some of that pristine come in and say, I'm excited what you guys are all doing and creating and be excited to support us. So I'm opening rooms, let you guys hang out with each other. Jump in and stick around as long as you guys want. And we'll see hopefully many of you guys on sessions this week. We'll talk more about it. Thanks for hanging out everyone.