

**Sarah:** My name is Sarah Ratliff, and I am a contributing writer for Suit & Artist. I'm going to do something different today: I normally write articles for Suit & Artist, but I'm going to interview someone because I really want you to experience everything that I get to experience when I talk with this incredible person. Her name is Zarinah El-Amin, and she is a Detroit native and a cultural anthropologist, the owner of Book Power Publishing, a writer and published book author. What else am I missing, Zarinah? Thank you very much for letting me interview you. I think you are really, really one of the most dynamic people I've ever had the pleasure of knowing. So thank you for giving me this time.

**Zarinah:** Thank you so much for inviting me. I'm excited to get to speak with you.

**Sarah:** Thank you. I know I didn't give you the best introduction. Can you share a little bit more about yourself?

**Zarinah:** Yeah, sure. I guess in general I'm an eclectic person, but a lot of my focus lately has been around legacy building and utilizing the power of the written word. So utilizing books to help people build their business, build their legacy, and also build their impact in the world. My background is really eclectic, from working in corporate America in computer science to moving to Egypt and working there, teaching English, to working in other parts of Africa in international development and coming back to the States working in academia. My life is kind of ... really, everything centers around culture, and everything centers around helping people to live both creative lives and really bring forward the things that they are good at, the things that they are called at, bringing those things forward, outwards into the world. That's kind of been the driving force through everything that I've done.

**Sarah:** It's interesting, I only met you after you went on this journey of, kind of discovery, and to figure out what you were called to do, and so I'm seeing kind of the combination of all that. What I've been curious about since I met you is: how did you last in corporate America? Did you feel kind of spiteful? Because I just can't see you ... I know, I was in corporate America for 20 years, and I didn't fit it, so I really just can't ... you seem like you should really be outside with people, understanding culture and experiencing culture. How is it like working in IT?

**Zarinah:** Yeah, it's funny. This was during my college years, so these were primarily lots of internships, and then after for a little bit, a short little stint that I did. But the only times that I was able to make it work were when I would add in, like, other programs where I'm meeting with other interns, or where I am adding something spicy. The year that was the absolute worst for me was the time when I was in this cubicle and it was like ... just the whole environment, the culture of that space, it didn't even allow me to express myself at all within what they had already had going on. It just wasn't the best overall fit for me, and that was when I really kind of decided like, you know what? I think I'm going to have to go a totally different route ... a totally different route.

That's when I moved to Egypt and everybody as like, "What? You are crazy. Why would you turn down the good-paying job with the benefits and all of that?" That is what we are supposed to do, right? You are supposed to go to school, get a great job with benefits, and then you live happily ever after. So they were kind of like, 'Why would you turn down a move to Egypt where you know no one, you are not going to be making a lot of money?' Like, it just doesn't make sense. But honestly, that was one of the best ... that was like a pivotal moment in my life. That little turn right there, even though everybody else thought I was crazy, but that thing right there literally changed my life for the better.

**Sarah:** How old were you?

**Zarinah:** I was ... What was it, 21? 22? Somewhere around there.

**Sarah:** Wow, wow, to have that kind of insight at such a young age. I think you know, my husband and I moved to Puerto Rico. We quit our jobs then did the same kind of thing, we really felt like we were square pegs in round holes, spiteful in our cubicles. I used to dress up my cubicle in different things that were representative of my personality, and people thought I just stood out a little too much. I know I felt spiteful, so I can only imagine you. We kept it up for years, I mean, we kept up the façade for 20 years, and then one day we just thought, what are we doing in this? I mean, we still have another 20 years before we retire, that just seemed so ... it seemed painful. It was painful, and never have I been more free since I've been able to be on the farm and express myself as a writer. I think your moving to Egypt ... it just made perfect sense because it looks like your life kind of took off from that moment, would you say that?

**Zarinah:** Yeah, yeah, you are absolutely right. I love the word that you use as far as façade. Like we put up this façade because so many of us live not authentic lives—we are just doing things that look good on the outside, and everyone thinks we have it all together, but when you kind of peel back the layers it's, like, this is not really what I want, you know. It takes a lot of courage to kind of make the decision that you all did to go there. I think for me that change, moving to Egypt: 1) even for myself it taught me that I could do something like that. I wasn't afraid, I didn't have this fear like, 'oh, moving over there'---I never had that type of fear, of like, what was going to happen or anything like that. I don't remember having that fear at all. I do remember, when I was making the decision, I do remember thinking this is going to be the start of something. I really thought I would live a nomadic life forever, pretty much. I didn't really think that I would come back here and stay here as I am now. I learned two things I think, really big in Egypt: one was, like, who is Zarinah? Who am I?

**Sarah:** Yeah.

**Zarinah:** How I fit into places where nobody knows me. There were no pre-scripts. There was no script that was given to these people about who this chick is, or how she is supposed to look, or how she is supposed to be. It was like my full authentic expression of myself that I put forward. I think that's one of the beautiful things that travel does for you. Especially solo travel because, when you travel by yourself to someplace where you don't know anyone, like ,it's just you—you show up the way you are going to show up and nobody has any notions of who you are, who your parents are, who your family is, any of that, so you get to really see who you are. So I learned who Zarinah is.

The second part was that I learned that I loved the world. Like I love travel, I love meeting new people. I love seeing the different ways that we can be human, and that was like an eye-opener for me.

**Sarah:** I've always had the conviction, if you will, that everybody within their own financial means should travel, especially if we come from a first world country. We should get out, we should see how other people live, and as you said, it not only gives us insight into how other people live and kind of put in context with the way that we live in the United States or other first world countries, but also it

helps us figure out who we really are, because we don't really know who we are in an environment where everyone is living this façade. But when we are living in an environment where people are living their authentic selves, I think it really does bring out who we really are. I've always thought that it sounds like that's what you discovered as well.

**Zarinah:** Yeah, for sure. I'm one who will sacrifice the luxuries, if you will, of my ... not necessarily the luxuries of my day-to-day, I don't care about certain things, I don't really care about driving, like, a real luxury car or any of those things. My money is good for me to go for travel, like, that's my priority. I'm saying I didn't start out with having a lot of money when I was first starting to travel. It was an intentional thing that I sought out. Also, though, there are ways that you can get outside of your own cultural background or safe space even in most metropolitan cities. Like here in the Detroit area: The Detroit area is very diverse, but it is also very, very segregated. We have pockets where the Orthodox Jews live over in this area, over here the Bengalis live, over here it's 'Mexican town,' over here it's where you have the largest concentration of Arabs outside the Arab world or such—so you have all these different enclaves, you know?

**Sarah:** Yeah.

**Zarinah:** So really, if you are intentional in many metropolitan cities you can go and find...

**Sarah:** Culture.

**Zarinah:** Yeah. You can go and find culture and put yourself in there. I remember we took a group to the Hare Krishnas. They are a group of different spiritual background people or whatever. We took a group over there to their temple, and it was like a whole different world, right? It was really in the city, but it was a whole different world. I think just making intentions to get out, go explore your area, meet some different people; it can do all of us a huge wealth of good.

**Sarah:** I agree. Detroit and New York are not all that different. I grew up in New York City. Many parts of New York City are very integrated, at least when I was growing up there in the '70s, the Upper West Side was very integrated, so I got an opportunity to mingle with people from different cultures, different religions. I think it helped build the foundation of why I easily accept people when I meet

them, because I've just been exposed from a very young age. Outside of that little enclave where I lived in Manhattan, pretty much everywhere else I went was very segregated: Williamsburg was Hasidic Jew; you go further down into Brooklyn and then this area is mostly Italian; this one Black; this area is mostly Chinese.

So the good and the bad is that, as you say, you get to see how other people live by going into a certain section that's different from the section you were raised in, but then there's also ... I love the integration personally. I love being to go in, but I also love ... the integration feels the best where you can integrate with people. I'm curious about two other things, two really seemingly important things that kind of seem like they define you, if that's okay, if that's the right word. Head wrapping and book publishing: which would you rather talk about first?

**Zarinah:** I'm going to start with the head-wrapping and then move into publishing. You want to know how I started in head-wrapping?

**Sarah:** I do, I do, because, in addition to this podcast, if this is okay, I'm also going to give a link to your TED talk because I learned a lot about head wrapping from your TED talk. I would love to hear how you got into it.

**Zarinah:** Well, my background: I'm an African-American Muslim woman. So my parents converted to Islam in the '70s, late '70s. Then, when my younger brother and I were born, we were both raised in a Muslim community. So head-wrapping was always a part of our community. We always saw people with different types of scarves and such. I wore scarves off and on until about my junior year in college. I went to Howard University in DC. Then my junior year in college something clicked. I wanted to start wearing my hair covered every day, so I started wearing head wraps every single day in junior years in college. I haven't taken it off since then, which was year, 2000—that's 20 years. So I've been wearing my hair covered literally for 20 years now.

When I moved to other places, people would ask questions like, "Hey, how do you tie that? That's so cute, I want to learn." So I started doing little impromptu tutorials in the bathrooms, at restaurants and stuff like that. Then it kind of grew to doing workshops. I remember some of my early workshops, like after-school programs, I would go to the after-school program and then I would talk to them

about culture, Africa and head-wrapping. Then that led me to start selling head wraps at little festivals, things like that.

Later on... I have a mentor in Senegal, she runs a program for the deaf in Senegal, rural area in Senegal. I wanted to donate to her program. I wanted to be able to be like a philanthropist in her program, but I was broke. I learned that you can't be a broke philanthropist. So I was like, man, how I'm I going to donate this money? I really want to support these girls she's working with and stuff. So I decided that I was going to publish a calendar. So I put together this calendar—at this point I had already published my first book, so I kind of had some publishing experience. So I put together this calendar that I was going to publish, and I paid for 5,000 of these calendars to get printed. 5000! Our first print done was in Korea. We got the first ones from Korea. So it was a lot of work that went into getting this calendar produced.

But people fell in love—they loved that calendar. They loved it. They loved it. They loved it. What I did was, instead of just having the African-American Muslim for photos, I decided that I was going to use photos from all over the world. Like, there are so many different ethnic religious groups, cultural groups that were part of the head-wrapping. So that's what we did. We published that first calendar, and then our first calendar led to bigger workshops.

I love museums. I love museums and I love curating experiences for people. So I was like, what if I made a mini exhibition of the photos from the calendar? So then, when I'm doing my workshops, I can have the exhibition up there too and it would be like two things in one.

So that was what we did. I started with the very first calendar. I blew up the photos, and that became an exhibition that still travels now—expanded of course, but it still travels now. Then it went from the calendar into the exhibition, and that went into us creating our own expo around head-wrapping, still from a global end. So we were bringing the Orthodox Jews, we were bringing the different African tribes from Nigeria—different places. We were bringing different parts of the Muslim community, the Sikhs—you know, the Indians. We were bringing all these different groups to have, like, a physical representation of what the exhibition was. It was like all those people in live color in one space.

**Sarah:** Wow.

**Zarinah:** We really created like a movement around head-wrapping and around ... not just head-wrapping but, like the cross-cultural nature of fashion, like the cross-cultural nation of fashion. So that's what we did with the beautiful wraps and the workshops. I'm still doing workshops now. You probably can't see it that well...

**Sarah:** Oh yeah, I do.

**Zarinah:** Okay, the calendars are there because I've been doing other virtual workshops now. Yeah, it's been really cool. But I'm really proud of what we've been able to do. I have an amazing team of folks of head-wrapologists, I call them. Like, these are my head-wrapologists. They are my head-wrapologists—they come in different styles and such. It's been beautiful, though, really beautiful.

**Sarah:** You teach me something every time I talk to you, but watching your TED talk ... I'm a pretty culturally aware person, I've lived in different places in the world: I've been in Nigeria and I've been in Europe, I've been in New York a lot, and even I, feeling like I'm pretty culturally aware, hadn't made the connection that people in Bulgaria, people in Italy, Jewish people are into head-wrapping. I really didn't put that connection together until I saw your TED talk, and then it made perfect sense, of course. And a lot of times it is around women who get married or who are widowed—there's probably a significance within the cultures that I may not have knowledge of. What made me bring that up was: how do you deal with people who say that teaching, say, a white person, to get into head wrapping is not cultural appropriation? Or do you feel that it is and what are your feelings about that?

**Zarinah:** I always laugh. There certainly are some things that are cultural appropriation in some ways. That's without a doubt, right? But there is a recent story—I don't know when this will air, but there is a recent story now of this academic who basically is a white-Jewish academic and...

**Sarah:** She is white.

**Zarinah:** She's been living her whole life as this Afro-Latina, and it's, like, why the heck would they think that that was cool to do?

**Sarah:** Another Rachel Dolezal.

**Zarinah:** Right, yeah. It's just absolutely crazy. That's subject to that stuff, right? But with head-wrapping, when you look at so many places around the world, and if you look at the traditional clothing of that region, many, many, many places include some type of covering for the head. So it's not a black thing, it's not an African thing—it is actually a global thing. So I always tell the women who come to my workshops, if they have this question about cultural appropriation, or can they wear wraps, or can they not, or whatever ... I tell them, one, it's very good to educate ourselves on everything, but then, also, for the scarves, if they look back in their own history they will find that there also scarves, they were worn by their great grand-mamas too, so don't really worry about that, don't worry about that in that sense. Again, there is cultural appropriation in other senses, but in this sense, don't really worry about that.

**Sarah:** Okay, that's good to know. This is kind of funny because I'm a little bit the opposite of you: when I'm home and I'm not out in the world, I wouldn't say I double in head wraps, I just wrap my head up, I mean, wrap my hair up, because this is a good day, like it's not too humid, but in those days when it's really humid I've got this big puff ball, and when I'm working I usually pull it up and wrap it up because it's just ... I live in the tropics, you've been to the tropics, it's fun. But I don't generally do it out in public because Puerto Rico is just a bit ... Puerto Rico has a lot of influence of African culture, but depending upon where you are it's more obvious, but where I live it's not very obvious, so I would really stand out,- which is not really a bad thing. I mean, I'm not against standing out, but I've probably done things a little bit the opposite.

But I've considered it because I can see so many benefits, not just culturally, but I can see practical benefits to wearing head wraps. You talked about them in your TED talks. Not that I think we are going to have any sand storms coming in Puerto Rico, but you never know. I've been thinking about it more and more, and since being exposed to you I've been really thinking about it more and more.

**Zarinah:** The whole thing about the standing out part is that's true. It's like a conversation within the Muslim community especially, about wearing hijab, not wearing hijab, taking your scarf off, things like that. I know for myself there is going to be a moment, probably sooner than later, that I'm going to stop wearing my scarf every day—I can feel that in myself. I know that it is coming.

**Sarah:** Wow.

**Zarinah:** It's coming for sure. There is this notion, though that ... I think I will probably miss ... I don't know yet because I haven't done it yet, but I think that I will probably miss my standing out-ness. There is a part of me that is just used to that. Like, I'm used to walking in a place and looking the way I do and being okay with it. I'm comfortable standing out. It's like a default almost, like I'm comfortable in those places standing out. I wonder whether it will feel right to actually blend in—like, what does that feel like to blend in to the regular side or whatever? I just wonder. So, that's part of the reason I'm wondering how that will feel. But I know for many Muslim women ... like, the other day I was walking ... this is so outside the topic I guess, but I want to share it anyway.

**Sarah:** Please.

**Zarinah:** I was walking with my girlfriend, we were walking through this little woody area, where it's like trails and stuff in there, and she is Muslim and wears her scarf like in a traditional wrap style. So this guy saw her, it was an older Arab guy, and he was like, "As-salaam Alaikum." He was so excited to see her. This is one of the powerful things about wearing dress in a certain way. Like the way that she styles her scarf clearly communicates to the outside world that 'I am a Muslim woman,' right? I have a bit of anonymity, because of the way I wear my scarf they may not necessarily see that I am a Muslim woman right off bat. They have some other assumption or whatever. But being a part of a community and having a visual representation of that community can be, like, a really powerful, powerful thing.

**Sarah:** Yes.

**Zarinah:** I know for myself, I'm probably going to take it off in a little while, I don't know how yet, or when, or whatever. It will just happen one day. It's like an evolution, I guess, of self. Let me not say it that way, because somebody will actually take it and think, like, I was elevating. I've had some other folks say that to me, "You don't have to cover up. When you become your full authentic self, you don't have to cover up." That's actually not what I mean. What I mean is that you are constantly changing. You are changing. So, not like a positive evolution where I

take my scarf off I'm growing as a human being or something. I don't mean it like that. I just had to clear that up because you always have some...

**Sarah:** I'm so glad you did, because I agree with you. I could see where somebody could hear that and say, "What is she saying? Is she saying that that's, like, a better step?" No. Everything we do is long and evolutionary scale and doesn't necessarily mean progress or regress. It just means we are further becoming who we are. The neat thing about growing and evolving is that we continue, we want to continue...

**Zarinah:** Sorry about the sneeze. I've been having these really early morning sneezes lately. I don't know what it is.

**Sarah:** Oh no, allergies maybe.

**Zarinah:** Yeah, but it's not even allergy season here. I don't know. I'll just figure it out.

**Sarah:** So book publishing: if I remember, you said earlier that you published a calendar. So your calendar came out in 2013, is that right?

**Zarinah:** Yeah, it was in 2013, no, 2011. 2011.

**Sarah:** 2011. So you had already published a book before 2011, which would have made you pretty young. What got you into book publishing and writing?

**Zarinah:** As an anthropologist, I'm always looking at what are the tools that we can use in order to effect change in society? What are the most powerful tools that we can use? And when I was doing my Master's thesis, I was conducting a study around Muslim singlehood. That's what I was conducting a study around. When I finished doing my studying, people were asking me for the results. They were like, "Zarinah, what did you find? I know you were doing that study, you were talking about it. What were the results?" So I kept responding to people via email, and after a while, after the 15<sup>th</sup> email, you are like, 'Look, dude, I cannot keep writing these responses anymore.' So I was telling them, go read the thesis. I wrote this whole long paper about the subject, you can go read that.

But nobody thought the thesis was, like, sexy enough that that was intriguing for them to go read. That made me figure out a different way to put the information out: the same information but put it out in a format that they would actually

accept and that they would want to value. So that's how I published the first book. It was the same thesis, but I had to change some things for the audience, but when I published that book, man, it was like I put the book out, I went to a conference for my audience where my people were, and literally I sold out at the conference.

**Sarah:** Wow.

**Zarinah:** It put me on the map. People were like, "Oh yeah. That's the anthropologist girl, she does studies..." Literally, I started giving speaking engagements, and this is when I realized the power of books. I was like, wow, if you do a good book you can literally create a whole platform, a whole business for yourself.

**Sarah:** Yeah.

**Zarinah:** That's how I got into publishing. People started asking me for help—you know how it goes, you know they ask for help, and then I was like, oh, this is a business. That's how I established our actual author services company in our service offerings and such. It all came kind of organically through my experiences.

**Sarah:** So, because you became an authority, then you started thinking, well, if I'm already an authority, why not continue putting out books? It sounds like. The part was ... is that, you are not just keeping the wisdom to yourself, you are sharing it with other people who are having, for whatever reason—and we both know because we are writers—there are many reasons why people are blocked to put out their first book. But what you are doing is saying, no, no, this is my wisdom, but I'm not just going to keep it to myself; I'm going to share with you, how you can unblock and become a published book author.

**Zarinah:** The thing is that everybody—not everybody, but many, many people have the desire to write a book. New York Times has done studies on this, and they say something like 80% of the United States population at least say that they want to write a book at some point in their life. We are talking about other people, so obviously not everybody does, because they don't know the processes; they don't know how to do it; they think they don't have enough time; they think they are not smart enough; they don't have a big enough audience and blah, blah, blah, all these different reasons. But the people I like to work with are people that have an idea, they have a skill, they have a message. They have something

that, if they put that out it, could really be a benefit to the society. Like, whatever it is they are sharing could really be a benefit to society.

So, I love being able to help them get that out there. On the other side, for the individual themselves, it also allows them to build up their platform, their business if they are going that route, and then also leave a written legacy. It's like twofold: you get to help society, at the same time it's helping that individual build up their own things for their life. I found that our academy could take something that seems so complex and out of reach and make it a reality for people.

**Sarah:** Demystify, it sounds like, taking the mystery around it out and just ... I remember this movie called What About Bob?

**Zarinah:** Oh my god, I remember that movie.

**Sarah:** Baby steps, baby steps. You are teaching people baby steps to publishing their books, because I think we look at things ... I know this is not really the best analogy, because that was such a...

**Zarinah:** Because I love that movie. Actually, he used to say something else, he used to say, "I just never gave up hope. I just never gave up hope."

**Sarah:** I loved that movie. Oh my god. My husband and I were just talking about it the other day and just laughing so hard. I know that that wasn't quite the best analogy, but I just remember the whole baby steps thing.

**Zarinah:** Yeah, you are absolutely right. We take this complex thing ... our system is five parts, as you know: we break it down into the five sections and then literally you move through the process step by step. I think the bigger thing here is no matter what people want to do in life, it can seem very daunting at the onset. It can seem like, oh my god, how I'm I going to get this thing done? But if you chunk it down into smaller bite-sized chunks and you take little incremental steps consistently, you will be able to achieve those things that you do. I hope the people that are listening to this or reading this or whatever, whatever their dreams are, they don't just see them as out of reach. You can really do whatever it is that you want to with a system and with determination to do it.

**Sarah:** Oh yeah. Without breaking any anonymity, do you feel comfortable sharing some of the topics of the books that people are writing? Or do you think that that's off limits?

**Zarinah:** Oh, yeah. Like some of our old books ... have done books before, like this one is sitting right in front of me, I'll just pull this up. We have Terry Lister who ... Immersed in West Africa is the name of his book. He did a book about his solo journey across Senegal, Mauritania, The Gambia, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau—this dude is a prolific traveller. He has travelled literally all over the world. But this particular book is his journey across that particular region. We have other people who are doing anthologies now, and the current course they are doing some anthologies.

There is one young lady who is doing an anthology of women who have graduated from the Detroit public school system. She wants to be able to inspire other young girls who are in the urban school setting to know that although people tell you and they write you off, like, oh, you are in this school, that you can't do anything. These are graduates of that same school system and have gone on to do amazing things. So she is writing an anthology of those—she is organizing an anthology of those stories. We have other people who are doing some how-to books. There is a lady down in Arizona, Dr. Anisa ... she is working on a book on premarital counseling, like how they help people prepare for marriage before they get married. This is something she has been doing and teaching workshops and stuff for years, and now she's finally going to put her stuff down into a book format so that it can bring more people into the work that she is doing, and also solidify her position as a thought leader in that industry.

There are some dynamic folks, people who are writing about their stories of ... even hard topics like sexual abuse, how they heal from that, and they want to help prevent that for other people. The range of subjects is all over because we are humans and the humans are all over, but every single one of them has the ability to share their experience and be able to help somebody else.

**Sarah:** Yeah. You mentioned Dr. Anisa. I had a chance to talk with her about what she's doing with her book. What I was fascinated about is that she said it kind of follows not only what should really go on in a marriage just from a cultural or just

the marriage perspective, but also it incorporates Islam. What she shared with me that was interesting to me is that this is not something that is done in the Islam religion—that's something that she came up with, having these workshops to teach people before they get married. It's kind of like they do in the Catholic Church, but it looks like she is taking it to a very ... she is really expanding it, because I can tell you as a former Catholic, the counseling you get before marriage is a few sessions, it's not very much. It doesn't really expand on anything.

But when I talked with Dr. Anisa, I saw that she is putting together something that's really much, much more expansive than the few sessions you get in the Catholic Church. I'm not comparing the church, I'm not comparing the different religions; I'm comparing her approach, which is more holistic.

**Zarinah:** Robust.

**Sarah:** Robust, it's more robust. Some of the things that she says—I was fascinated by it. I'm dying to read her book. I'm not Muslim, I'm not even religious anymore, but I'm dying to read her book, just because of the things she shared about her approaches to marriage from such a broad perspective, but then also from a more focused perspective. I'm fascinated to read her book and I can't wait till it's completed.

**Zarinah:** Yeah. The thing about that is that, you have people like that who have been working ... She has tons and tons and tons of couples that she's worked with, and the thing is, we don't capture that stuff. If we don't capture people's knowledge and experiences, like, none of us are promised tomorrow, like literally everything that she knows could go into the ground if we don't capture it and put it into a format that can outlive her, or outlive any of us. So this is why I'm really a staunch believer in power of the written word and capturing what it is that you are doing, and leaving the written legacy. Like, what you know shouldn't be just for you—it has to be able to serve other people, and it shouldn't be here only while you are here, it has to be able to survive you. That's one of our big focuses around legacy and sharing what we know.

**Sarah:** Because historically, all cultures, not just those of African descent, all cultures have handed down stories from oral tradition, and it's great, it's great. I think I

can think back to some of the stories my mother shared about her Japanese father and her African American mother, and my father who is Irish. I can piece together some of their stories, but without reading it it's difficult to know how many times it's lost meaning in translation or something through the generations. It's difficult to know, but if you've got a written, a historical, a book to fall back on... you don't have that again with telephone where it essentially goes through the generations and then it either can be muted or it can be embellished. Know this is exactly the way it was if it's written down and people can read it and then apply it to their own experiences today, or however it influences us, whatever kind of book that we are reading.

What you are doing, I think it is critically important because a lot of what you do is critically important. I think it helps bring self-esteem and awareness about culture, but also the book publishing. I think that you brought this up, despite the fact that 80% of Americans have a desire to write a book—I didn't even know the number was that high—there are so many barriers. People think either they don't have enough education—you mentioned that—or they were educated in a different field and feel like just because they were an IT person and they don't have it in them to write a book. We all have it in us to write a book, every single one of us can write a book. I think that's what the goal of your classes is, is that correct?

**Zarinah:** Yeah. The goal of our classes is to be able to help socially conscious entrepreneurs, professionals and coaches to organize their ideas, their skills, get it down out onto paper and build their business, build their legacy and build their impact in the world. That's ultimately what we do. I'm not going to try to convince somebody like, 'Oh, you have a book and you...' I'm past that now. My thing now, my energy is focused on the people that know they want to do this, and when they are ready they come and we'll help them. I think before, I used to try to I guess validate what it is that I was doing by saying and trying to inspire other people. It's not the way I want to say it, but it's like at this point where I am, I work with the people who have made the decision that they want to do it. You know what I mean? Like, I'm not going to spend any energy trying to convince them that they should, I just work with the people who want to.

**Sarah:** People who raise their hands and say, hey...

**Zarinah:** Yes, thank you.

**Sarah:** I want to do this, I just don't know how to do it.

**Zarinah:** Yes, yes.

**Sarah:** That's where you come in.

**Zarinah:** Yes, yes.

**Sarah:** Alright, good. Is there anything before we go, is there anything you feel like I should have asked you but didn't? Is there something maybe you want to share with people that I didn't ask you? Anything I missed?

**Zarinah:** I think the only thing is that I would ... for the people who know that they, or even curious I should say: people who are curious about writing a book and they are kind of confused about what the first step should be, how did they go about it, we put together a robust checklist. So this is literally the exact steps that I used into publishing my books, and then help our other authors publish their books including eight of them that we've gotten into #1 bestsellers on Amazon. This is the exact same system that I've used. We've broken it all down into baby steps, as you mentioned, and they can download that for free. It's [bookpowerpublishing.com/checklist](http://bookpowerpublishing.com/checklist)

**Sarah:** Okay.

**Zarinah:** [bookpowerpublishing.com/checklist](http://bookpowerpublishing.com/checklist) and they can download that checklist. At least start to wrap your mind around it. Maybe you are thinking about writing a book and you want to see, like, what it possibly looks like, you can download that. If you already know that you want to write a book then, bam, here is a play-by-play look at how you can go about doing it from somebody that's already done it so you don't have to overthink it. You can just literally follow the steps. So that's there.

**Sarah:** I'll include any links to websites, social media. After we wrap-up, I will make sure that I have every single URL that you are associated with because I know you do a lot with the head-wrapping, with the book publishing. So I want to make sure I capture everything.

**Zarinah:** I was actually just telling my friend, I was like, you know, I'm going to redesign my main page so that I can just give one link and everything will be on that one place and people won't...

**Sarah:** Yes, that's a problem you and I both have, because I have my content marketing agency, I have my personal writing, I have my farm, and then my travel and tourism company, and each one has separate URLs. I keep thinking, should I link them all because they are all me? But they are all ... like you, they are different aspects, different facets of who I am, and they are not necessarily related. So I grapple with that. Tomorrow will be a different story, but right now I'm thinking they are separate, I'll keep them separate. I would love to see one link for you because they are all related.

**Zarinah:** Yeah, we are working on it. It's in the final stages of design, so it will be here.

**Sarah:** Yeah, and you've got a really good ... I have to say you've got a really good web master, he's awesome. Ali is great. I don't know if that's who you are working with, but yeah, he's great.

**Zarinah:** Yeah.

**Sarah:** Do you feel like there is anything else we should say about...?

**Zarinah:** The only thing I probably didn't mention about ... I think I need to right now: did I tell you I take women on trips around the world? I don't know if I told you that or not.

**Sarah:** You didn't tell me that. I actually found that out when I was watching your TED talk again. I missed it the first time, but when you said you took some to Egypt...

**Zarinah:** Morocco.

**Sarah:** Oh, Morocco, I'm sorry. Then I started to wonder because you also mentioned how you loved Indonesia. Let's talk about that because I want to know about that.

**Zarinah:** Obviously I didn't do anything this year. It might not be relevant, I guess. I'll talk about it, then you don't have to use it, I'll just say it. For a long time, when I used to travel and come back, especially where I live ... you know I'm from Detroit, Michigan, and I live around a lot of people who didn't have the opportunity to

travel, who's always been like a bucket list, dream item for them, something they will do later. The idea of taking a cruise was in their mind, but the idea of going to Indonesia or something like that was never really in their minds. So, when I used to travel and come back, I used to have a lot of women ... not just women, just people who would say, "Oh my god, I wish I could do that. I wish I could do that. I wish I could do that."

And I was, like, why are they keeping saying they wish they could do that? I'm not rich, and at that point I wasn't rich. I had hardly anything. Where does this notion come that people think that they can't travel? Where'd that come from? So I was like, okay, the next time maybe in a couple of years I'm going to organize a trip, and then take other people with me so that they could experience it. That's literally what I started doing. My very first one was to Morocco. It was 16 of us on that trip to Morocco. My mom was there. I brought in another sister who was kind of like my co-host type of thing. She facilitated a couple of sessions on Reiki and yoga and stuff like that. We went all over that country. We had an amazing, amazing time.

Basically I was like, oh man, this is gold, this is absolutely gold because I got to travel at the same time while helping other people travel—and not just travel like to a resort. I have nothing against resorts. I went to a resort last year in Jamaica. I have nothing against resorts, but they stay on the resort, because I can't. I have to get out and go into the community, and that's what we did in Morocco. They had the off-the-beaten-path experience. They got to go up into the mountains and meet with the people that make bread. They got to go and see where the Argan oil is made and things like that. They got to go outside of the regular touristy areas. It was life-changing for many of them. One lady did her own book: she took pictures of doors all around Morocco, like the doors of Morocco. She did her own book.

**Sarah:** Oh my god.

**Zarinah:** Yep. That one experience sparked the love of people. I did Morocco like three times. We did Indonesia once and Senegal. I took a group of women to Senegal as well. I can't wait for this COVID thing to be over so we can have kind of a restart and go back, because I definitely want get back into—I'm built for that, and it's great for the people who get to come and experience it. I'm really looking

forward to COVID ... COVID, go away. I'm surprised nobody's written any songs about it, you know what I mean?

**Sarah:** Yeah, COVID, COVID go away, come again never.

**Zarinah:** Yeah, never ever.

**Sarah:** Yeah, there are so many people I know. My experience with travel business is dead. I'm getting queries, and I like to help people. When the pandemic is over I'll be happy to because the thing is, like you, my experience with travel business, I'm with them. It's not like I give them papers and say, go do this, that or the other. I'm with them, I take them all over, and I want them to experience Puerto Rico, not what the tourism magazines say, but I want them to see how people live. Just the same way: I want them to see people, how they live; I want people to understand the culture here and the three races that make up Puerto Rican Taíno and Spanish, I want them to see how all three are represented in the culture here.

That's not what you see when you go to San Juan, it's not what you see when you go to El Morro. That's the biggest tourist attraction here. You don't really see that because you see tourists. It's the same kind of thing. I can't wait for this to be over. I know you want to come with your family, and I want to show you Puerto Rico like you've never seen it. It's that same thing I see in your ... You are doing this, you want to see it and you want others to see what's going on in other cultures. Yeah, you are born to do this.

**Zarinah:** Yeah, I was actually thinking about coming to Puerto Rico this October. I'm actually about to look into it, like next week or whatever.

**Sarah:** Come.

**Zarinah:** Costa Rica, like every place is closed. Costa Rica opened up for 12 states: you have to be a citizen or a resident of the 12 states and you can go, but I'm not. I am from Michigan. So I'm trying to decide where I'm going to do my next book launch, which is coming out, which I didn't actually mention.

**Sarah:** Yes.

**Zarinah:** My book is coming out. Yes, I'm excited about that. We've put together a book that you are helping with. Thank you so much Sarah.

**Sarah:** You are welcome.

**Zarinah:** We put together this book, which is like the basis of our publishing system, and I'm super excited because we are going to pump that thing and really ... that I will say will be to inspire people to see that they can do it, right?

**Sarah:** Absolutely.

**Zarinah:** I'm hoping for it to be an inspirational way to, as you mentioned, demystify the publishing process, and help people see what goes into it, and inspire them to really do it now because tomorrow is not promised. Do it now.

**Sarah:** Absolutely. Do you have a working title of the book you want to share, or are you still...?

**Zarinah:** I'm still kind of working on that, but it's just going to be Book Power, and it's the 5-step self-publishing system for entrepreneurs, socially connected entrepreneurs and professionals who want to build their business, build their legacy and build their impact with a good quality book. That's like the working description, if you will, of that it is that's going to come out. But it's proven. The reason I like it is because it's not just theory, it's not crap I made up and I was like, oh, this sounds good. It's actually stuff I do and it's based on reality, so people can take it and they can implement it and get some really good results for themselves.

**Sarah:** Yeah, and you've already had graduates of the class so we know that your system works. And Terry Lister is an exceptional example because I've even heard of Terry Lister, and I don't get out much. I live essentially under a rock—I've lived under a rock for the last 10 years or 12 years I've lived in Puerto Rico. So that says something. Your system works, and we know it works because you've had graduates of the class go on to publish books. It seems like that's your reward.

You want to see chickens, they hang out right underneath my window of my office. They just hang out there, there is a big plant box, and they hang out there and just do their thing. They've been quiet for hours.

**Zarinah:** I love it.

**Sarah:** Well, you'll see them when you come because you'll experience it all. They're free-ranging, so you'll see them running around the farm.

**Zarinah:** I love it.

**Sarah:** You know you are welcome any time. The idea of meeting you in person is just really ... We met through a mutual friend, Stephanie Biki. I love Stephanie Biki. I've known her for almost 30 years. She knows a lot of people also as a designer. She knows a lot of people, so for her to introduce us and to recommend me to work with you was, like, wow, thank you, thank you, thank you! The few months that I've been working with you and getting a chance to become your friend, I am inspired by you—I'm not here to hype you up, I'm here to tell you that you really ... I know that you can produce because in the short period of time I've known you, I've been inspired to do more.

**Zarinah:** Oh, you are awesome.

**Sarah:** Thank you so much. So I know whatever you touch turns to gold, because I've seen it. I'm not one of these people who just believe everything. I'm actually quite a skeptical at heart. So yeah, I can't wait to see more from you.

**Zarinah:** Thank you.

**Sarah:** Yeah, thank you, thank you.

**Zarinah:** I'm excited about new friendships, and I think that that's kind of a takeaway. One of my prayers has always been for god to send me good friends, people that I can support and people that support me at the same time. So I'm so thankful when those people come into my life. It's just a beautiful thing to be able to make new friends—all throughout our lives, I think it's really important.

**Sarah:** Oh, it's true, and the very steps along the way as we progress in life and as we evolve, as we were talking earlier ... Wow, they must be telling me something. On friendship, as we evolve we take new people into our lives. It's fascinating how they come to inspire or they just ... Friends: you can't have too many of them.

**Zarinah:** Yeah. Well, thank you so much for this interview.

**Sarah:** Thank you.

**Zarinah:** I'm happy to be able to share with your audience and the people that are going to read this. If anybody wants to connect, they can always email me [Zarinah@bookpowerpublishing.com](mailto:Zarinah@bookpowerpublishing.com), and I would love to be able to help them in any way with getting their stuff out into the world.

**Sarah:** Definitely. Thank you, thank you so much. I really appreciate you taking the time because I know you are really busy. I know you are working on the book, and I know you are working on the workshop and everything else in your life, and personal things, family. I know you are busy and getting ready to travel again. I really appreciate you taking the time. So thank you very much.

**Zarinah:** Thank you. Thank you.

**Sarah:** You are welcome. Alright, you have a great day, and I'll see you around, probably in a couple of hours on Facebook.

**Zarinah:** Yeah, I'll see you soon.

**Sarah:** Alright, I'm going to stop recording.