Corey Andrew Powell ([00:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Hello everyone. I am Corey Andrew Powell. And this is another episode of Motivational Mondays. I'm very honored today to be joined by Siddarth Kara, who is an author, researcher, screenwriter and activist on modern slavery. Now, he's also a British Academy global professor based at Knight Aham University, an adjunct lecturer at Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and a senior fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health. He joins me today to discuss this new book, which is called Cobalt Red, how The Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives. And it is fascinating. And Sidharth, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Siddarth Kara ([00:36](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, thank you so much for having me, Corey.

Corey Andrew Powell ([00:38](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, it's my pleasure. And, um, as I spoke to you a little bit, uh, before we began to record, your book blows my mind because it's like, it talks about things that most people interact with every day and have no idea where it comes from. But before we get into that, just a a little background on you so people understand who you are. You are, of course, an author, a winner of the Frederick Douglass, uh, book prize, which he's one of my favorite civil rights heroes, by the way. I have happen to have his book on my desk, like at all times. You know, this is your life's work, basically exposing these sorts of child labor violations around the world. But your very first book was about sex trafficking, and it became the foundation for a very popular film called Trafficked that, uh, started Ashley Judd like 2017, I believe it was. So I'm just curious to know about you, you know, what is it that drives your passion to keep putting yourself in danger, potentially, because you have laid out in the book that there's some dangerous times in your, in these moments, but what drives you to keep going to put your life in danger to expose these crimes around the world?

Siddarth Kara ([01:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Corey, I think one of the most dark and enduring inhumanities that we commit against fellow human beings is slavery, uh, going back, not just, uh, generations and centuries, but millennia. And so, I, I'm a student of slavery. I'm a student of abolition movements. And a little more than two decades ago, it came to my attention that these kinds of offenses still exist in the world. And it just shocked me and startled me. I thought, wait, didn't we settle this? Wasn't slavery abolished? Isn't that all done and dusted and we're moving on? But in fact, slavery, the slave mind continues busy at work, evolving, ever oppressing and exploiting people of color across the global south. And, uh, it just seemed, uh, that this was my calling. And so I started traveling without really a plan at the time, but I started traveling to try to understand what is happening with modern day slavery. How and why does this enormous offense persist? And if, if the totality of my efforts can move the clock one second closer to that hour when we can finally put this inhumanity to rest, then it would be a life well spent. Hmm.

Corey Andrew Powell ([02:50](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Well, it's admirable, and I appreciate it, and I know the world does too. And when you lay it out in your book, like there's these examples that you give that are really terrifying. But I I, I love that you do draw that correlation between, Hey, I thought we settled this already. Why is this still happening? Because it's in various forms with the sex trafficking would also be, you know, not just with minors, but a adult women can find themselves kidnapped. And that's not even in foreign countries like this is happening here, which is I think, the most disturbing thing, right?

Siddarth Kara ([03:21](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, that's right. I mean, we, we have this notion that modern day slavery or human trafficking is some something happening far away. And, and, and of course it is happening far away, but it also happens in developed economies. It's happening in our backyards. Uh, wherever there are vulnerable people, there are traffickers and slave traders who will find a way to exploit them. And the exploitation now as threat history is not cruelty for cruelty sake. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it's not violence for the sake of it. It's to generate profit. Yeah. Uh, to make money off of other people's labor and services. And that's exactly what's happening around the world, including in this country till today.

Corey Andrew Powell ([03:56](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Well, yes. And that brings a great up, uh, a great point to the Congo in general. I mean, when you think about Africa as a continent, just from the beginning being colonized, uh, I don't say from the beginning, but from the beginning of colonization, it's just been robbed continually for, for like generations, for centuries, for centuries. And here I was thinking, okay, well that had been resolved. Clearly that's, we're done with that. And I, I, we know about the precious stones, we know about the diamond mines. You know, those are sort of common things. But you talk about something in this book, it's titled, it's actually Cobalt, but it's called Cobalt. So please share what cobalt is and why it is such an important element that's driving this sort of labor crisis.

Siddarth Kara ([04:42](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yes. Well, so cobalt is, um, a metal used in rechargeable batteries. So people like you and I and everyone listening to us right now cannot function for 24 hours without cobalt because it's in just about every smartphone, tablet, laptop and ricard rechargeable gadget in the world today, as well as most every electric vehicle that's being manufactured today, cobalt allows these rechargeable batteries to hold maximum energy density while remaining thermally stable. What does that mean? It means it can hold the most amount of charge, cuz we don't wanna keep plugging our things in alt lets that battery hold the most amount of charge without catching on fire. And that's why it became so crucial to rechargeable battery chemistry. Now, around three quarters of the world's supply of cobalt is mined in a small impoverished patch of the Congo. Uh, and that small impoverished patch of the Congo is sitting on more reserves of cobalt than the rest of the entire planet combined. And so that comes back to what you just said, Africa blessed and cursed with resource riches. Uh, and wherever there are resources, there are pirates not far behind, wherever there's treasure pillers are not far, far behind. And so that's been the legacy, uh, and the dark, uh, history, um, of Africa. Uh, it's sitting on all of these enormous resources, including today with cobalt, um, and pillers pirates, uh, co colonialists, imperialists, and, and now multinational corporations descend on Africa, uh, to ransack those resources for profit.

Corey Andrew Powell ([06:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

My gosh, it's just like, it's, it's devastating to me that that's still continuing. And I would think that those countries, if you just can imagine how stable they'd be, uh, independently if they were able to excavate their own resources and sell them to the world as a global source versus it being some other companies. But speaking of other companies, you do also talk about how there's this sort of like weird, uh, well, you don't call it weird, that's my word, but it's a weird sort of like dichotomy where all these major brands from Tesla to Apple to whomever, like the, the, uh, I think it was Samsung was another one, the biggest companies for electronics. You know, they are all aware that this is going on. They all have these corporate statements that are sort of prepared for the press that we know we only engage in ethical excavation of cobalt and, you know, various <laugh> variations of that. But there's a disconnect happening clearly. Right. So how are, how are, how is Apple and Samsung and Tesla making that claim when your book clearly lays out that it's not working? Where, where's the disconnect?

Siddarth Kara ([07:25](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. The disconnect is an age old disconnect. You know, you go back to the slave trading days and the, the, uh, um, the, the slave captains and the slave plantation owners would all say, no, no, the conditions are very pleasing. Don't, don't be worried about, um, mistreatment of slaves. And, and the crossing of the Atlantic is, is very comfortable. And the, the, the Africans play games of chance on deck and enjoy cordials. And so the public says, oh, okay, that, you know, that doesn't, that doesn't sound so bad. And of course, the truth was something completely opposite to that. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and truth seekers had to go and pull that truth out of the darkness and bring it to the attention of humanity. And yeah, that exact same dynamic is happening today in the Congo. So these big tech and ev companies that all rely on Congolese Cobalt will say, well, our supply chain down to the mining level adheres to international norms on human rights.

Siddarth Kara ([08:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

We have zero tolerance policies on child labor. Every aspect of our supply chain is fully audited and compliant. And you think, oh, okay. Lo and behold, when you actually start walking the earth in the Congo, you see virtually none of that is true. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, there are thousands upon thousands of children scrounging in toxic pits, digging cobalts out of the ground into the supply chains of these companies. The entire landscape has been destroyed. Millions of trees, clear cut earth water, air contaminated with toxic effluence. So that's not sustainable, as they say. And then there's just hundreds of thousands of some of the peop poorest people in the world eeking out this subhuman existence, scrounging in hazardous conditions, suffering fractured bones, and spines being buried alive in tunnel, collapses only being paid a dollar or two a day when they make it through the day, which is base survival income for them. And then you sit back and say, now wait, how are these companies all saying they adhere to human rights standards all the way down their supply chain when you walk around in the Congo and the moral clock has been dialed back to colonial times? Yeah.

Corey Andrew Powell ([09:30](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. I mean, your opening story, or one of your opening stories is about the boy, the little boy that you, you know, there was an explosion of some kind or some, some, some sort of implosion, and everyone goes and gathers around and there's like armed guards. You were trying to kind of keep people from the spot, obviously there to more on behalf of the, the, you know, to protect the mine more than the people. But, um, you see the result of that, a little boy dies and, you know, you tried to make out what it is. You said you really couldn't make out his face, but then you realize that this little child just died in this situation, was just laying there lifeless and this plume of smoke. And you make the interesting analogy, which explains the title Cobalt Red, because cobalt is actually a very beautiful blue color where you talk about the earth. However, in those minds have always been this sort of copper, clay, red, and you make the, uh, the comparative of like what, you know, blood. Maybe that's what's causing that. What is that like for you to see, for you personally, when you hear these companies say that? I mean, you just sort of shared it a little bit, but what's it like for you when you literally see that, what goes through your mind?

Siddarth Kara ([10:40](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

You know, there's so much pain right now in the heart of Africa, so much suffering, and it's impossible to describe. I did my best in Cobalt Red Yeah. Uh, to do justice, um, to the suffering, uh, of parents losing children. And, and there are 10, 15,000 tunnels that have been dug by hand to get cobalt bearing stones out of the ground and up the chain. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, and young, uh, boys, uh, climb down there sometimes with their fathers, and they're crouched in darkness, breathing, toxic particulates, up to 18 hours, 20 hours at a time. And these tunnels collapse because they have no supports, no ventilation shafts, uh, and everyone who's in there is buried alive. And I'd heard these stories, I've been to the Congo so many times, I had heard these stories, and I'd met parents pounding their chest in agony. Uh, and then one day it happened not too far from where I was standing, and the, it felt like the end of days, the amount of pain that was unleashed by this tragedy.

Siddarth Kara ([11:47](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And when you overlay that, that level of degradation and disregard for the basic humanity of these people, when you overlay that with these puffy proclamations from tech companies and ev companies worth trillions talking about human rights standards in their supply chains and dignity all the way down for all the millions of members of their supply chains, including the cobalt digging people in the Congo, it's, it's utterly galling. It's utterly galling because they know what's happening on the ground, and yet they put out these, uh, fictitious, hypocritical and insulting statements, uh, which can only lead to one conclusion. They genuinely don't see the people in the heart of Africa as worth their time or attention. They don't see them as equal to themselves. And that's the, that's the essential truth revealed by this onerous piracy cloaked to commerce.

Corey Andrew Powell ([12:57](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Wow. That is very, I mean, that's, I mean, that's, there's no other conclusion really, if you think about it, like you said. I mean, like, what else could it be? Because if you really had, if you really did revere other people as, as being humans, in most cases, you would not put, want them to be subject to those situations. But that does make me wanna ask somewhat of a hypothetical, but it could be really a real question as well. For example, today when people sign on to do really dangerous, uh, infrastructure jobs, building bridges across, you know, dams and oceans and, and or skyscrapers, I mean, there is a level of danger with those jobs, and those people are made aware of those dangers and they make a decision. And usually it's because there's some really great compensation and they say, we're gonna do it, especially with bridges and skyscraper buildings.

Corey Andrew Powell ([13:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I just happen to have read about that. It could, if you're, if you're not terrified of heights, it's a great job. So do you think if those companies were to go to Africa and say those very same people in the Congo, listen, this is some dangerous stuff. We get it, but somebody's gotta get it out there. We're gonna make it worth your time and value to go and do it. We're going to pay you a living wage, we're going to put some workplace protections. Like, is that such a hypothetical or, I mean, it seems like if you're making 100 trillion like trillions of dollars, you can just pay the local guy, especially in Africa, where probably the cost of living in their village is not New York City <laugh>. It seems like a, like a really easy thing to remedy if you have a conscious, what do you think about that?

Siddarth Kara ([14:34](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

That's the tragedy. I mean, that's the tragedy upon tragedy here is that this could be resolved if there was will to do so. And you're right, there's dangerous work all over the world mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But when it's our people over here, they'll be given safety equipment, they'll be given a a, a, a commensurate wage, and there'll be a whole long list of safety precautions and so on to try to mitigate negative outcomes, right?

Corey Andrew Powell ([14:57](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. Yeah.

Siddarth Kara ([14:58](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Under the law, under the law, you know, you can't go to a construction site without a hard hat on. Uh, you can't do sc uh, uh, skyscraper work without scaffolding and ropes and all right, we have all these protections in place to try to mitigate risk, and then people are paid. Now you go down to Africa and the bottom of the supply chains linked to companies that have more money than God. And you say, now, where's the safety precautions for these people? Where's the mitigation of risk? And where's the commensurate wage payment? And it's all vanished, it's gone. It's, it's an apparition. None of it exists. And you come back to that conclusion, well, wait a minute. If we do these kinds of things for our people here, wages, protocols for safety, p p e, and all these things mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and we don't do it over there, you come back to that one conclusion. Those people are, there are deemed worth less than our people over here. And we're dialing the clock back again to the 18 hundreds Yeah. When the people of Africa were deemed to be worth less.

Corey Andrew Powell ([16:00](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. I just property themselves to be brought in box sold, um, yes. At, at high value where they made nothing off of it. Um, so I wonder then, how do we hold companies accountable? Do we hold them account? I mean, you know, is it, I guess I, I look for the fault. Like, what is it? Is it Africa? Because certain things can't really go on unless governments allow them. Is it that in Africa there's not enough people who are actually African now in those key decisions? Maybe it's a bunch of other people from other foreign companies, like I guess I, I just don't understand how it could be resolved. I mean, do you have any theories on how we might hold someone accountable?

Siddarth Kara ([16:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Of course. Absolutely. You know, dema in, in this case, right? So there's a lot of resources, uh, being extracted from Africa and a lot of miserable conditions. We're talking about cobalt, in the case of cobalt, demand for cobalt starts at the top of the chain. Apple, Tesla, Samsung, all the legacy car makers, all the other tech companies and so on, they created demand for cobalt. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Okay. Everything happening downstream is a consequence of that demand. Okay? All. And then there's bad actors and bad things happening e every level down the supply chain, down to the child caked and toxic filth in a pit. But it's all a consequence of demand that starts at the top. And where demand starts, that's where the solutions have to stop. So those companies, here's the thing, they all proclaim that they're ensuring adherence to human rights norms, yet not doing it.

Siddarth Kara ([17:30](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Simply meet the commitments. You publicly proclaim your meeting, get your boots on the ground in the Congo and say, wait a minute, we have a zero to owns policy on child labor. And I see 2000 children digging over here in that mind that is linked to our supply chain. Let's sort that out. Uh, wait a minute. Toxic a cobalt is toxic to touch and breathe. And if it was our people, we'd be giving them p p e, but nobody here has anything more than flip flops. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So why don't we give them some boots and gloves and masks and hard hats and so on, and you go down the list, but it'll only happen when they get on the ground and accept responsibility for the people digging their cobalt. Then all the things that need to happen will happen. But as long as they just sit back and say, well, you know, it's someone else's problem. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, no one's gonna accept responsibility.

Corey Andrew Powell ([18:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. That's almost scapegoat for them. And they really seemingly, um, you know, not to accuse a new company, but I'm saying in that instance, it's like there's someone in Africa at the mine, let's say trusting, like you brought, brought that point up earlier that, that they're claiming to trust, to say, oh, yeah, everything is fine, everything is good. Yeah. The kids are having a great time. They're good. Just they're on lunch break right now, chilling. And they'll be, they're gonna go back to work in a moment. And then the CEO of a major company here in the states goes, oh, okay, great. Thanks. If you were really serious, you would create a position, you would create a presence on those minds representing the firm. I mean, you're right. These are not difficult things to figure out. I mean, we do it at other aspects.

Siddarth Kara ([19:04](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, you're right. It's harder to figure out how to make a smartphone <laugh> than to put, than to put a team or, or an electric vehicle for that matter mm-hmm. <affirmative> than to put 10 boots on the ground, 24 7 monitoring your corporate supply. That's the easy part. That's the completely easy part. And to your point, they're not taking a step back and just taking the word as some random person. Okay. This is why it's a problem. Most of the mining operations in the Congo are run by Chinese companies. Hmm. So what they're doing is Apple, Tesla, Samsung, the rest of them, they're sitting back and saying, oh, the Chinese company is telling me human rights standards are being maintained. Mm-hmm. And that the mining is being done sustainably. Now, really, we're gonna start taking at face value declarations from state run Chinese mining companies, that they're maintaining human rights standards for people in Africa. They don't, they don't even do it for their own people in China, but they're gonna do it for the people in Africa. And that everything's being done sustainably. They're not clear cutting trees and dumping pollutions. I mean, doesn't that statement, rather than just being accepted at face value, need to be interrogated by a corporate team that puts some boots on the ground and says, hold on. What you said doesn't match with what I see. That's a problem. Because back at headquarters, we're telling people that everything's okay.

Corey Andrew Powell ([20:26](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. affirmative>, you know, it's something you tapped into earlier when we first, when you first, uh, started speaking, when I asked you about what, what drives you, what motivates you. And very often on the show, I still always like to talk to people about their own personal experience. So I'm just assuming from your name, which looks like it's of Indian origin. Is that accurate?

Siddarth Kara ([20:45](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yes.

Corey Andrew Powell ([20:46](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Okay. I wonder how much of your own ancestral personal ancestral connection drives you as well, right. With the connection with imperialism in India. I know for me, colonialism drives a lot of my advocacy work. So is there a personal thing for you too, when you think about the work you do?

Siddarth Kara ([21:01](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. You know, uh, absolutely. You know, I mean, I wasn't subjected to the British colonial empire, of course that was before my time, right. But I'm the latest or maybe one generation removed from the latest generation of Indians who bear the consequences of three and a half centuries of British pillage of Indian people resources and, and labor, uh, and oppression and tyranny. I mean, this is what western Europe did to the global south, you know? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, their supposed age of discovery was just an age of invasion as they went right down south and, and ransack pillage and enslaved people. And so yes, that does absolutely inform how I think about things. But it's, it's also very personal. You see, when I was a child in India, and I wasn't born exceptionally well off, but compared to most people from my country, I'm, I was very well off.

Siddarth Kara ([21:55](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Most people in my country didn't have enough food or clothes. They lived in shanty towns and shacks and slums. And I remember distinctly as a child looking at a slum. A slum was like, just down the road. And there were children my age who looked just like me. And I thought to myself, you know, I was eight or nine at the time. I could have been born there. They could have been born here. And so it was just this fluke of birth that I had these opportunities, these benefits of education. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and clothes and good parents and so on. But they didn't do anything to deserve their bad roll of dice. And I didn't do anything to deserve my good roll of dice. So what if it was the other way around? And I had been born in their shoes, what would I hope for?

Siddarth Kara ([22:35](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

What would I, what would I dream for? And I would dream that the other person who got the good role of the dice would see me, would care and use their gifts and opportunities to try and help those of us who were less fortunate in some way. And so I took that on very personally because I didn't do anything to deserve my good role of the dice. And the least I can do is apply the benefits and gifts and good fortunes I have in some manner to address and, and try to assist those who got the, the bad role of the dice.

Corey Andrew Powell ([23:05](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I must tell you that soundbite right there is so aligned with who we are as an organization, because we are a leadership development honor society for young college and, and non-traditional aged students. And our main mission is to help develop people who will go out and make the world a better place. Be it community projects, global projects, just go out and make a difference. So what I just got from you is such a great message of empathy and just understanding that, you know, it's all a luck of the draw. And you bring up that, you know, you're one generation removed and I'm in the same place, whereas my mother, who's 74 and thriving alive and well, she was born, um, one generation ago in a country that said, no blacks allowed <laugh>. You know, I mean, that's literally her existence, and she's still living on this planet and in America. So we're not far removed from that. And so I'm driven by the same thing, so I totally get it. But I also think that's why there's such a problem with this movement now to sort of erase history in this country.

Siddarth Kara ([24:08](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, yes, yes.

Corey Andrew Powell ([24:09](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

You know, that's problematic.

Siddarth Kara ([24:11](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

It, it's, it's, it's enormously problematic. And, you know, you use the word that's important, empathy, compassion. So many of the problems we face today emerge from an empathy deficit. We don't try to inhabit the shoes of these people who we don't understand or, or, or dislike or whatever. We don't take a moment to empathize with them. And you see that in the governance of our global economic order, where the top of the chain, which is swimming in, in privilege and wealth and resources, doesn't see, let alone empathize with the people at the bottom. And it's just, it's just fluke. It's historical legacies and fluke of birth. And if you took a moment to just empathize with a family that's desperate to cross the border and escape poverty and war, or the family that's just eeking out this base existence on the ground with no one there to see them, hear them or help them, if we stop and empathize, you know, there's so many of the pain, so much of the pain, so many, the problems would go away. And that's why you can't erase history. Hmm. You can't, you know, that's, that's, that gives you the excuse to stop having compassion.

Corey Andrew Powell ([25:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Siddarth Kara ([25:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

You know, you need, you need to understand history in order to understand where are people coming from, what kinds of multi-generational traumas are they living with mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Uh, and, and if you erase that, then you're just giving yourself an excuse to not care about anybody but your own little tribe.

Corey Andrew Powell ([25:37](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I will say this is a fascinating read, and I have, um, two copies. I, I'm going to make sure I give one away. And Siddarth Kara, thank you so much for being here today on Motivational Monday's eye opening wonderful book. And I'm gonna make sure that everyone out there in our audience knows all about it. Thank you so much.

Siddarth Kara ([25:53](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Thank you very much, Corey.

Corey Andrew Powell ([25:55](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8-V9I2nXKpMvg3EP2TBfOtMrUEjTCu9ejKt_7bjlNjUFa79reZSt_Rbk9zDMwY5pMtOLT7hVPfepCCQ777X0Xp3K7pA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Thank you for listening to Motivational Mondays presented by The National Society of Leadership and Success, and available wherever you listen to your favorite podcast. I'm Corey Andrew Powell, and I'll see you again here next week.