

KEYNOTE · SIGNATURE TALK

Creativity as Power

How we navigate Chaosmosis without losing ourselves to it

Dr. Pardis Mahdavi

Anthropologist · Author of 8 Books · 2x TEDx Speaker · Former University President

We file creativity under leisure, the reward once the real work is done. We have it backwards. **Creativity is the oldest survival technology our species owns, and the most underrated power in any room.**

Drawing on twenty-five years of fieldwork from Tehran to Dubai to New York, Dr. Mahdavi traces the same reflex in people facing impossible odds. Iranian women who turned a police crackdown into satire through lipstick and jazz. Trafficked women in the Gulf who turned shipping containers into galleries and safehouses. Immigrant New Yorkers who keep rebuilding the city that tries to push them to its margins through an underground art scene. When systems break, people do not save themselves by bracing. They save themselves by making. This talk moves from creativity as resistance to creativity as the life force that pulls individuals, companies, and whole societies forward.

WHAT YOUR AUDIENCE LEAVES WITH

- A reframe they can use Monday: stop asking what you are doing, start asking what you are making.
- Language for this moment of Chaosmosis, and why a creative practice is what keeps chaos from curdling into burnout and paralysis.
- Permission to treat creativity as serious power, not a guilty pleasure.

THE STORIES

- Tehran: resistance and satire under the morality police.
- Dubai: shipping-container galleries as underground organizing.
- New York's comeback: the Knicks, and Cats: The Jellie Ball, the underground rising into the mainstream.

“Chaosmosis is the condition. Creativity is the practice. Without it, chaos curdles into psychosis.”

FORMATS

18-minute TED-style keynote · 45–60 minute main-stage keynote · fireside chat · workshop. Customizes deeply for corporate, founder/investor, university, women's & culture, and health/consciousness audiences.

Columbia PhD
Medical Anthropology

8 Books
Stanford · Duke · Hachette

**TIME · WaPo ·
NPR**
Foreign Affairs · LA Times

CFR + YPO
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“Revolutions start in culture.”

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