

Finding Our Way Podcast

hosted by

**Prentis Hemphill with
guest Kazu Haga**

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Prentis: [music] We are in a moment of profound truth-telling, discovering how we have been harmed and how we are implicated in harming. We are naming with clarity the everyday and ritualized violences that people face. Underneath all of this opening sits a quiet question and wait, it might be the hardest question- "What do we do now? Where do we go from here? Where do we need to change, now that we know? Do we choose comfort over challenge? Do we choose fracture over repair?" My conversation today with Kazu covers a lot of ground, but really circles around these fundamental inquiries. When harm happens, when violence exists, where are you and what are you willing to do to repair? Kazu Haga is the founder of the East Point Peace Academy. He's a core member of the Ahimsa Collective, and he's the author of *Healing Resistance: a Radically Different Response to Harm*. Kazu shares with us, the principles that we can choose to hold onto to practice when things fall apart. I really, really enjoyed being in this conversation with a fellow facilitator and someone who is such a thoughtful, generous leader. I hope you enjoy this conversation.

Prentis: Hi, Kazu I feel really excited that you're here to talk with us today. It's been a long time.

Kazu: It has been awhile. Yeah. Thanks so much for having me.

Prentis: So the kind of impetus, I guess, for this podcast is that I wanted to gather people together who felt like they were offering some way forward or some piece of what the future could be, to share kind of the texture, the richness of what they see that experience. And so I always start off each episode with the question; where are we right now? And asking that to you from whatever vantage point you want to offer it, but how would you describe this moment? Where are we, what is it important to be paying attention to? What do you see? Yeah,

Kazu: We are in interesting times for so many different reasons, right? I mean, obviously with the pandemic and everything that's happened in the last year, but even before that, I think we saw patterns of what's happening right now, starting to emerge for a long time. Um, obviously with, with, uh, like climate stuff. I think we're in a really precarious moment in human history. And I think it's really important for us to acknowledge that we are in a very particular moment in the history of our species, where we have some big choices to make and a lot of opportunities come with that. Um, you know, I think one of the things that I've been thinking a lot about is I do a lot of work in trauma healing, and I think we're witnessing a time when a lot of our traumas that been holding as a nation, as a collective is really starting to manifest and come to the surface on a collective level. I think, um, having had a president like Trump for the last four years and, you know, I see him and I see how deeply traumatized he is. And I think having someone who's so clearly operating from a place of trauma on such a public stage has awakened the trauma of a lot of his supporters. And so you look at a lot of Trump supporters and a lot of what's happening on the right and it's like trauma responses happening at scale.

Kazu: And I think it's also happening on, on the left too right? Like when all we're doing is dealing with the pandemic and supporting people in crisis and, and witnessing, uh, incident after incident and the incident of black people getting murdered by the police. Like those are all traumatizing things. And I think we can oftentimes start to operate from a trauma response as well. And so I think we're witnessing a moment where like it's trauma meeting trauma out in the streets. And so, um, a time when we really need to be doubling down on our own healing work and on working on our own trauma and, and, and really looking at what does that look like to be doing that work for ourselves and in our communities, but also at scale, as we engage in systemic change work as well, like what is, you know, a trauma informed resistance movement look like?

Prentis: Mmhmm, mmhmm. I feel really excited to dig into that question. Cause I, I think that is a question or a series of questions I'm often sitting into, how do we heal from trauma? And how do we heal from trauma at scale? In your writing and in your work, you bring forward this concept of 'beloved community.' And I want to get into it a little bit and then talk about kind of what it takes to do it. But first I just want to just hear from you about beloved community. I was introduced to this concept through the work of Dr. Martin Luther king and also one of my mentors, uh, Auntie Puanani Burgess in Hawaii who, um, does a lot of work around beloved community. And, uh, I just wanted to hear from you, like, why is that concept so important to your work right now? And when you just talked about all the kind of fissures and breaks and challenges that we have, why is it that you reached for something that could feel so challenging or far away?

Kazu: Yeah, so beloved community originally, it was a term coined by a American theologian, then Josiah Royce, and was popularized by Dr. King. And I think when King spoke to it, you know, he spoke about a world that all people can find healing, and all people can find belonging and all people can fulfill our potential as human beings. And to me, it's such an important term because it speaks the idea of interdependence. That we live in this interdependent world, where my liberation genuinely depends on the liberation of all life. And, you know, when I talk about beloved community, a lot of people oftentimes say things like, "oh, well for me, but beloved community is my church community or my organizing community or my family." And, you know, I oftentimes want to challenge people into thinking a little bit wider because I think when Dr. King was talking about beloved community, you know, I've always talked about how building beloved community isn't about loving the people that are easy to love. And it's not about loving the people that are already in your sort of loving community, but it's about stretching our capacity for compassion and empathy and understanding and recognizing that we're not going to be free until all people are free. And when we say all people, it's literally all people. And so, you know, coming from, um, you know, I spent a lot of time in Buddhist communities and studying Buddhism and doing Buddhist practices. And so much of that is grounded in this unwavering faith that we are dependent on each other for survival, for healing, for reconciliation. Um, and so we're really trying to figure out, you know, I have more questions than answers, but it's like, there's a lot of harm being done in this world. And how do we hold people accountable, while knowing that the person that is committing that act of harm

is also, uh, uh, a part of this web of humanity? And I think that idea of beloved community forces us to ask those questions.

Prentis: That kind of takes me right into kind of the non-animal meat, vegan meat or something of what I wanted to talk to you about today- conflict. I do a lot of facilitation around conflict transformation and it, it feels like the greatest barrier we have to living in a beloved community or practicing beloved community is, is how we currently navigate conflict. Um, the way we engage in conflict now. And I wonder if you could just, uh, talk to that, how you, how you think about conflict, how you practice conflict. I know you do a lot of work around conflict. Just what do you see about conflict, how we currently hold it and its relationship to, um, this beloved community concept?

Kazu: Yeah, one of my favorite quotes that I've been repeating nonstop over the last couple of years, is a quote that says "conflict is the spirit of the relationship asking itself to deepen." And I've never been able to, to fully track it down. I believe it comes from Malidoma Somé. Um, but I think at its best conflict is an opportunity for us to really deepen in our own understanding of how our own trauma manifests, um, how we deepen in relationship with ourselves, with each other. Uh, you know, one of the things that I learned in studying King and non-violence is that things like yelling and fighting those things, aren't signs of conflict they're signs that a conflict has been mismanaged and *mmhmm* within each conflict is, is a gift. It's a possibility for us to really look at, um, yeah, how we're relating to each other and how can we do it better and how can we heal from all of the wounds

Kazu: Like I know when I get into an argument with my partner about who does the dishes, it's not just about the dishes, it's like generations of harm that I'm bringing into that moment. *mmhmm* And so when a conflict erupts, it's an opportunity for us to really slow down and figure out what are all of the factors that are coming into play in this moment and how can we begin to tease them out? How can we begin to heal through them? So that next time, um, there's less of that history coming into the picture. And I think that's the case when you know, my partner and I might be getting into a conflict about cleaning the house, but it's also the case in larger social conflicts when we're talking about Black Lives Matter, right? It's 400 years of history that we have to unpack the Line 3 resistance that's going on in Minnesota right now. It's, it's 500 years of colonization that we're having to unpack. It's not just about this one, um, pipeline. And so, yeah, I think each conflict is an opportunity for us to go back into the past and really look at everything

that we're bringing into the present moment and to heal all of that, whether we're bringing into the present moment,

Prentis: That's so rich. I mean, it feels like that is the gift. Conflict can reveal culture. That's what I always say, a conflict in an organization or in a, with a group of people it's revealing to you, what's at play here, what's active here. What's not being addressed, what needs to be addressed. And there's a great gift in that as a revealing in that. And then there's also this piece that you're saying it's like hundreds of years of conflict, you know, to put it almost lightly can be embedded in a moment, the history can kind of live in each moment. How have you seen, or how have you facilitated or opened up a space for conflict that has been able to hold the kind of historical force of how, that can come rushing in when you have conflict, but also be really rooted in the present moment. Do you have any, anything to say about how we might do that?

Kazu: Yeah. You know, I'm involved in a lot of restorative justice dialogues and circles and, and, and that world. And I think sometimes one of the mistakes that we make in engaging in conflict is we rush too quickly into bringing the two sides of conflict together **Absolutely** before we've had an opportunity to do our own work. You know, um, I have the privilege and the honor to work with a lot of incarcerated communities and facilitate what are called Victim-Offender dialogues; which are dialogues between incarcerated people and the people that they harm. And oftentimes, these are obviously cases of physical violence, but we oftentimes spend as much as two years preparing for that dialogue with each side. And then sometimes at the end of the two years, we decide that they're not ready for that conversation, right. Because when you're talking about harm that a person has experienced in their own lives, as well as beginning to unpack how that is related to 500 years of colonization, it's a lot of work.

Prentis: And I think, you know, restorative dialogues at its best by the time the two sides are actually, face-to-face, they've both done enough of their own work that we as facilitators don't really even need to do anything. We just step back and watch the process unfold. Right? And so I think recognizing that, like, there's so much harm that is happening, that we want healing to happen right now. But if we're really serious about unpacking the generations of harm, that it's term work, that like committing to healing through a conflict, isn't just, "alright, I'm going to have a conversation with this person tomorrow and it's going to be over," but it's really a commitment to a lifelong process. And I think

that's, that's hard, you know, because so much harm is happening right now that we need to stop. And so how do we hold that tension of things needing to move right now, but also acknowledging that this is generations and generations of work that's ahead of us.

Prentis: Yeah and I think some to, to that point too, is that we sometimes, I think, uh, obscure or, uh, kind of leave to the last moment the need for healing. So even in processes, I've, I've witnessed, there's a kind of rush to engage or have parties engage with one another. Um, but there hasn't been an attention on what actually do people need to heal? Have people actually had space to feel what's there? Um, I think the way we get so trained inside of punitive systems is you gotta rush to a court and get a decision, get a ruling on what happened, but we miss that ingredient of like, what would this, what would be the pace of this process if healing were at the center? What would be the next step if healing were at the center? It feels like we miss that critical component. So often when we, um, are trying to create processes around transforming conflict or, or addressing conflicts my experience.

Kazu: Yeah. And knowing that like sometimes taking space is actually the best way to stay in relationship. *mmhmm* Right? It feels, um, yeah, uh, not natural at times, but I think oftentimes giving ourselves space to not be in relationship with someone is actually the best way to move towards reconciliation. And that it's okay if that's what you need to really name that. I think oftentimes we put so much pressure for us to like, "oh, we have to stay in relationship. We have to stay in relationship." And that could, that perpetuates a pattern of harm. Um, and I think it's really important to, to know that space and time is a part of the process for healing.

Prentis: Mhmmmm. There's something I want to ask you about, but I don't know that I actually want to talk about this in the podcast. So I'm a little bit hesitant. That's what's happening for me right now. Um, just because I feel like there's so much conversation happening around cancel culture and anti-cancel culture. And I have been personally so reluctant to engage in that conversation. Uh, I, I don't feel adherent to, 'oh, I'm in, this is what I believe is the way to engage with every conflict' or I don't feel like I'm on a side of that debate I guess is how I feel. Um, but it feels important to just touch on it if we're talking about conflict. Um, I would love to hear your thoughts on kind of that, that conversation or that argument that seems to be happening in the public around, um, cancel culture and anti-cancel culture and how we

actually address harm or how we actually address conflict. If you have any thoughts.

Kazu: Uh, so many thoughts on that. [Prentis laughing] So many thoughts *I bet* I was actually, yeah, it's a big thing. I was actually just listening to a really beautiful conversation between, um, a dear friend of mine, Sonya Shaw and adrienne maree brown, who just published called 'Cancel Us'.

Prentis: I saw that.

Kazu: Yeah. So, you know, folks, listen to this, haven't, haven't checked out, uh, that, that, that new book - definitely recommend it really nuanced perspective on what's happening around that. But I think, yeah, I mean, a lot of it is like, there's a lot of harm happening in the world. Right? And we need to find ways to address that harm. And I think one of the biggest conversations that we need to have in our society and in our culture is what does accountability actually mean? And what does it look like? *hmmmm* There's a beautiful Zen Buddhist teaching that says "words are fingers pointing at the moon, but it's not the moon itself." And we always use words like accountability and peace and nonviolence and restorative justice, but we rarely actually have the conversation about what does that actually mean? And so to me, you know, accountability is, is not something you can shove down someone's throat. *Yeah yeah.* Right. People talk about community accountability processes oftentimes use the language of transformative justice and restorative justice, and then come up with a list of demands for the person that perceived, that was perceived to have caused harm. And there's no space for dialogue and there's no space for that person to be able to be engaged fully in that process. And, you know, I talked about it a little bit in my book too. Like to me, accountability at it's best is an act of love because you want growth from the person that caused the harm. Right. Um, and I think it's possible.

Kazu: Like, you know, again, I go back to like how privileged I am to be able to do this work with incarcerated communities. And I remember this one dialogue that we held between an incarcerated person and the mother of the young man that he murdered 20 years ago. And there was, I mean, I could say so much about that dialogue, but there was this one moment where the mother, the, the man, the incarcerated man was, was completely breaking down in tears. And the mom reached out her hands and took a hold of his hands. And she said, "you know, I had a dream last night that I needed to hold your hands because these are

the hands that took my son's life and I needed to have a different relationship with them."

Prentis: Hmm Hmm. Wow.

Kazu: And just, you know, I'm sitting there watching this happen, like what did I do to earn such a privileged seat *mmhmm* at this table that I get to witness such deep healing? And, you know, I've seen conversations like that. So I know what we're capable of, of as human beings, right? Like I know what we're capable of bouncing back from. And I know what accountability could look like, even in the cases of the most extreme forms of violence and harm. So I know that it's possible to do this differently. I know that it's possible to hold someone accountable for harm in a way that you're still able to hold their hands through it all. And so yeah, a big part of cancel culture for me is about, yeah, how do we create spaces for people to cultivate a sense of accountability without casting them out of society? Because I think the moment that people are afraid of being cast out of society, they get defensive. It's natural. Like we're relational beings. If we feel like our relationships are going to be cut off, *mmhmm* we're going to get defensive. But the more defensive we get, the further away we're getting from real accountability. Right. Um, because accountability requires real remorse and an acceptance of the harm that you committed. And if you're getting defensive, that is the opposite of accountability. So yeah. How do we, how do we do that work? And I think that's, that's the big question that we need to be asking ourselves is what does accountability look like?

Prentis: Mmhmm, I think just to kind of throw some more in the mix too. One thing I've been thinking a lot about is that, you know, I think the pushback that I've heard to some of what you shared and that perspective is that there ends up being an overemphasis on the person who may have caused harm in any particular incident. Um, and again, I mean, I think that points to, how can we hold multiple things at once so that we can be attentive to a person's transformation. And we're also attentive to, if someone has been harmed, what, what healing is actually required, what resources do we actually have, who is actually there to hold. And, uh, I think that that can get missed, especially when we start getting into kind of binary thinking like, "okay, if we're paying attention to getting this person involved in the accountability, accountability process, and we are necessarily kind of ignoring the needs of the survivor." Um, but there's also this piece around, um, you know, I think if there's not a community around us, if there aren't

people, friends, your homeys, whoever who are also there in the process; if a survivor or someone who has been harmed is trying to lead a process. That to me feels like a failure of the community and not just about, um, th that a survivors should be supported through a process. They don't necessarily need to be designing all the processes for accountability. And I think that's often the case. And I think that's where a lot of the feelings of resentment or frustration that we're attending to those have who've been harmed can come from because people will feel like they're kind of holding more than is their share. I don't know if you've seen that in kind of community spaces too.

Kazu: Yeah, definitely. In community spaces, as well as like clearly with the criminal justice system as well.*Right* Like I've talked to so many survivors who say that, like their experience going through the quote unquote accountability process through the criminal system was nothing more than like just retraumatizing for them because they didn't feel supported at all in any of the ways that they needed healing. And the criminal justice system actually doesn't focus at all on the needs *noo* of the quote unquote victim, right and the survivor, *exactly* like they're not even part of the equation. And so I think because most of us grew up with that system as the default, it's hard for us to really think about how, what does it mean to hold space for survivors of harm and what do they really need? And that's a whole other thing that we need to explore as well. And, you know, I recently learned a thing, um, that comes from the tradition of Jainism, uh, as a teaching called anekantavada. And anekantavada translates to like 'many sidedness' or 'not one sidedness.' And within this concept, they have seven different understandings of truth. *mmm *And they say in every truth, there exists seven truths, which is: in some ways it is; in some ways it is not; in some ways it is And it is not; in some ways it is and it is indiscernible; in some ways it is not and it is indiscernible; in some ways it is,it is not and it is indiscernible. And all of those things are happening at the same time. Right. So I think when there's an instance of harm, there's just so many truths that are happening. *that's right* And like you said, we need to kind of get out of this binary and be able to hold all of that.

Prentis: Mmmm. Thank you for that. Thanks for going down that road with me. Cause honestly I was a little nervous to do it. It's like, are we going to talk about cancel culture? [Kazu laughing] We did it. Um, I guess what I asked you, you know, you said, I've heard you say a couple of times that the slowing down that's part of what have to do in this moment. And

can you say more about kind of what your practices are? What do you do everyday that helps you find that rhythm or that pace that serves this work that you're doing in the work?

Kazu: Yeah, there's another quote that I heard once. Um, someone told me that "slow is smooth and smooth is fast," *mmm* and it's another paradox type of thing that I think there's a real urgency and us needing to learn how to slow down. Um, as another quote that I heard from an elder that I was at a conference once who said that, you know, "the work for social change is a marathon. And the difference between a marathon and a sprint is in how we breathe. So we need to learn to breathe." And so for me, it's finding moments throughout the day, just to take a breath. And as someone who's had a meditation practice for a long time, I get much more out of a single, intentional breath than I did 10 years ago before I started my practice. Right. *mmhmm* So all of these things take practice, but the more we practice things like slowing down. I remember having a conversation a couple of years ago from a friend of mine who just came home from prison after a 19 year sentence. And he talked about how he really notices and appreciates the scent of flowers every time he walks by some flowers. And how I take that for granted. And so just like slowing down enough to smell some flowers, to feel the, the, the wind across my face and just finding these moments throughout the day, just to like take a breath. And I think all of that contributes to my ability to remain grounded when I'm in a conflict or remain grounded when I'm at a direct action, you know?

Kazu: And I think, um, you know, when we go to like nonviolent trainings, I think we're used to learning about how to like form blockades and how to work with the media and all that kind of stuff. But I think these kinds of emotional regulation tools actually needs to be incorporated into our practices and preparation for direct action work. Like how do we slow down when we're facing a riot police that are getting ready to tear gas us? Because we can't respond to that moment from a place of panic, we need to somehow learn to be grounded. And so, yeah, the short-term emotional regulation tools like breathing like bodywork, but also the long-term process of healing our own traumas because that contributes to our inability to *yeah* slow down as well. Right. So a lot of things,

Prentis: Absolutely all that unhealed trauma manifests as reactivity, *that's right* because it takes you to time-traveling mechanism to take you back to another time. I realized that we didn't, we haven't so far kind of given you the space to talk about, um, the non-violence aspect. You've

mentioned it a few times throughout our conversation, but I just wanted to, I think there's a way maybe I'll root it here is like, I feel like my work is deeply informed by nonviolence. And yet I realized, I think when your book came out, that I sometimes hesitate to say that.

Kazu: Me too [laughing].

Prentis: And [laughing] yeah, and I think it's because of the way that the dichotomy around violence/nonviolence has been set up and the stories. I think people have people that are doing change, work, amazing work in the world, the stories that we have about what non-violence means and how it, it, um, is almost an assault to our dignity. I think sometimes we hold it that way. It's either, um, that my dignity is important, non-violence I'm not going to just let people run over me type of thing. I'm sure you hear that all the time. *mmhmm* So I wonder if you could just break down when you talk about non-violence, what do you mean and what do you mean in relationship to this, this understanding we have of non-violence versus kind of violence?

Kazu: Yeah. So much I could say about that to, um, uh, if, if it's cool, I'll share a story, um, that I share a lot because I think it's the, it's the perfect example of it. Um, I think, you know, oftentimes these criticisms of non-violence are, are super, super valid and oftentimes they're not talking about non-violence as I understand it, right? It's, it's, it's a misunderstanding of non-violence that comes from the fact that the idea of non-violence, the word non-violence, and in some ways non-violent movements have been co-opted and have been colonized. Um, and I oftentimes talk about how the idea that not being violent equates to non-violence, is the biggest and most dangerous misunderstanding of the idea of non-violence.

Kazu: And I oftentimes talk about a story when there was a fight, um, that was happening right outside of my apartment years ago. And there was a woman on the ground who was getting beat and I was taking a nap when it started. So I woke up and I ran downstairs and, and, and ran across the street to break up this fight. And by the time I had gotten down there about 15 of my neighbors had heard the commotion, and they had all come outside and they were just watching this woman get beat, not doing anything to help. And I always argue that all of my neighbors who were just watching this woman get beat, we're practicing non-violence in the sense that they weren't being violent, right? They weren't the ones throwing the punches. They weren't the

ones throwing the kicks. And I think that's how a lot of people understand the idea of non-violence; is like, as long as I'm not being violent, as long as I'm not punching anyone, throwing any Molotov, cocktails, breaking any windows, that's me practicing non-violence. And to me, non-violence, isn't about what you don't do. It's much more about when you see violence in your community, what are you going to do about it? How are you going to interject yourself in the situations of violence and injustice and work to transform it? Right? It's easy to see the destruction of climate, the destruction of Black Lives and say, "oh, well, that's none of my, I'm just going to chill over here and do nothing about it." Right. That would be practicing non-violence if your understanding of nonviolence is limited to not being violent. Right. But to me, a not a non-violent and approach is about like, what are you going to do to transform a cultural violence? Right. And, uh, you know, one of, I think another really important piece of this is that for me, the role of non-violence is not to cast judgment on communities who choose to use violence as a form, particularly of self-defense. And that there's a lot of value in using violence to keep you alive and to keep your communities alive. But one thing that violence can never do is to strengthen and heal relationships. And so to me, a commitment to non-violence, isn't saying that we can never use violence. It's saying that even if we get to a place where we have to use violence to protect ourselves, that's not enough, right? Like we need to be doing more than just barely surviving to live another day. We need to be doing the work of reconciliation and healing relationships. And so to me, non-violence is, is, is an exploration of like, what more do we need beyond violence to protect our, our lives?

Prentis: What are we going to do to transform a culture of violence? I think that's what you said. That feels really critical. Cause I, you know, as you were speaking about how people interpret non-violence, I'm like, oh yeah, that approach, I think the way that I've interfaced with that perspective throughout my life and throughout my organizing work is that people are like, "be quiet," "settle down." "Don't be so loud." "Don't make a fuss," you know, um, "get out of the street." That's the way that it ends up trying to shape my own response or our, our responses to the things that are happening to an, in our community. So, um, I love that the way you're bringing it forward, it's like, "no, what actions will you take? What will you do to transform the way that we live right now?" It feels, you know, we're in such a moment where violence, the culture of violence is, is I think there's always been not, not always, but for a long time, there's been a culture of violence here, but right now it's it's so I

guess glorified is the word that I want to use. But I can go on any website and they may be kind of advertising, you know, a bulletproof vest at this moment. There's kind of a militarization of the, of the, every day, of all of us, that's happening right now. Um, so it feels like a scary thing to even enter into a conversation for me around non-violence I'm like "non-violence, while people are ramping up? While your neighbors are, you know, having militarized weaponry?" Like how, how do we have that kind of principle in a where the culture of violence feels like it's growing and it's so central.

Kazu: Yeah. And you know, for me, I want to create a movement where long-term, we acknowledge that violence itself is the thing that we're trying to defeat, right. *mmhmm* That as long as we have a culture where we feel like we can justify using our power to impose our will over another person, then no communities will ever have sustained peace. Right. And, and actually that, that idea that you were talking about of like, you know, how the state oftentimes quotes Martin Luther King to tell a Black Lives Matter protestors to shut up and be quiet. It's a concept called 'negative peace' that, that a peace educator and Johan Galtung came up with. And that Dr. King spoke really articulately about in a sermon that he gave called 'When Peace Becomes Obnoxious', which I really recommend, like everyone knows the Dr. King, who had a really nice dream about Black kids and white kids getting along and everything, and, you know, sermons like when 'When Peace Becomes Obnoxious' and 'The Crisis in America Cities' and all these like radical sermons we never hear about. But in, um, that sermon, you know, he talked about that sort of, uh, negative peace. And he said of that. He said, "it's the type of piece that," um, :all men of Goodwill should really resist." And that it is a type of piece that quote "stinks in the nostrils of the almighty God." When we think that we can create peace by telling people who are resisting and demanding dignity to be quiet, but that is not a real peace, right? Like as, as another misunderstanding of the idea of peace that like, if someone's screaming in my, in my face and I punched them and knocked him unconscious, they're not screaming at me anymore. So did I just create peace? Right? And that's the skewed way that our society tries to create peace is by telling protesters who are fighting for their lives to be quiet, right? And to lock up all the criminals and to kill all the terrorists. And these are the ways that we try to go about creating peace. And Dr. King was very clear that from a perspective of non-violence, that is not a real peace, that is a grossly misunderstood way of going about creating peace.

Prentis: That's so helpful. I, you know, it, it just helps illuminate for me the way that cultures of violence and cultures of denial really have to sit so close to one another, you have to be, uh, it has to be at the root that you want to deny kind of your accountability or your interdependence or your responsibility to something that violence really, uh, needs that mechanism of denial, because we are so connected *that's right* and we want to suppress that in other people. That's also a part, an extension of our denial. Wow. There's so many things I want to ask you. I want to talk to you for another hour, but, um, I want to leave us with, um, maybe this last question of what do you feel is most important for us to be practicing or embodying in this moment, um, to be disrupting this culture of violence or to be building beloved community? What is it, what, uh, what's it emotional capacity, I guess that we might be practicing or living or nurturing, so that, that world becomes more possible?

Kazu: Yeah. So a lot of the work that I've been doing right now, and I'm actually trying to put it down on paper, as well as I work on, I'm working on another book. And it's, it's really about just when we look out in the world today, the, the level of violence and destruction that we are witnessing is unparalleled *mmhmm* in human history. Right. *mmhmm* And in non-violence we teach that the more, the level of violence is escalated. The more our response to that has to escalate with it. Right. Which is why like going to someone who is about to cause physical harm and telling them that 'everything is going to be okay, just take a deep breath,' might not be the appropriate response and filling out a petition for the movement for Black Lives Matter may not be the appropriate response. Right. But one of the things that I've noticed in my years of organizing is that the more we escalate our tactics of direct action, the more we also tend to escalate this binary worldview of 'us versus them', 'right versus wrong.' And it's that binary worldview, that to me, is at the heart of what is destroying this planet. And so how do we, but, but we also like, we need that escalation, right? Like it's not, this is not the time to be asking nicely. And so how do we escalate our tactics and create resistance movements that can harness power in a way that we haven't been able to, at least in several generations in this country? While doubling down on a commitment to healing and reconciliation? And how do we look at direct action work as a modality of collective trauma healing? And what can we learn from the work of restorative dialogues and trauma healing to take into direct action spaces, knowing that we're trying to like have a conversation with this society, with this country that it has refused to have for 500 years, like how do

we create spaces? How do we create the power to force that conversation onto the table and yet create a sense of relationship and a connection. So that, that conversation can actually open up? You know, a lot of the things I've been thinking about is like in direct action movements. There's this culture of shut it down. Like what you had to shut things down and tactically, we may shut down a highway. We may occupy a government building, but spiritually, how do we move the spirit of 'we're here to open things up.' And what's the work that we need to do in our own personal lives and in our movement spaces that allow us to heal through our own traumas enough, so that we can be agents of creating space to heal the trauma of this nation. Right? Like if we haven't worked through our own stuff, then we're not in a position to go around pointing fingers, saying those people need to work on their own stuff. Right. *that's right* And so I think we're really in a place where we really need to look seriously about how we're building relationships in our own movements, how we're holding each other accountable in our own movements, um, how we're growing and how we're challenging ourselves, all of that for the explicit purpose of engaging in direct action in healthier and more skillful ways.

Prentis: Wonderful. I feel like there's so many other conversations we need to have on the podcast and off the podcast, but I feel really excited to talk to you today. Thank you Kazu for your time.

Kazu: Thank you so much.

Prentis: [music] Finding our way is co-produced and edited by Eddie Hemphill. Coproduction and visual design by devon de Lena. Assistant editing by Amy Piñon. Please make sure to rate, subscribe, and review wherever it is that you listen to this podcast. You can also find us on Instagram at finding our way podcast or email us with questions, suggestions, or feedback, and findingourwaypod@gmail.com. You can also help sustain the podcast by becoming one of our Patreon subscribers. You can find us on Patreon @findingourwaypodcast. Thank you for listening to finding our way [music].