

## **With Love and Justice For All**

### **Ep.106 - Grieving While Oppressed**

Recorded September 12, 2023

#### **Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Welcome to the official podcast of project\_SANCTUS With Love and Justice for All. I'm Rev Kelly Isola. I'm here with my partner in Crime Consciousness and Co-Creation, Rev Ogun. How are you doing?

#### **Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

I'm doing well. Streaming to you from Casablanca. I am back on my Morocco leg of my nomad life. Here to spend a couple months with one of my partners who lives here. And off the top, yes, I was here for the earthquake. Fortunately, the earthquake happened a little southwest of Marrakesh, which is about 150 miles, if I do my math correctly, from where I am. And so there was no damage done here in Casablanca. I was awake when it happened. We did feel tremors all the way over here. The building ship for a little bit. And I wouldn't call myself an earthquake veteran, but this is the third earthquake that I've been feeling... that I've felt the tremors for. Interestingly enough, the worst one happened when I was in Brooklyn a few years ago and it was bad enough that we hauled ass out of the apartment building. Yeah, it was something. This one didn't feel so bad and lasted a few seconds and nothing compared to what folks in Marrakesh and some of the outlying towns that they are experiencing. As we know the death toll as well over 2000 right now...

#### **Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

It's three.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Oh it hit three? I've not been keeping up. Yeah, so the king here announced it's three days of National Mourning. I think we're on day three right now and it's... the mood in this normally loud vibrant crazy city is very subdued as far away as it is because people here have got folks in Marrakesh. My partner has some friends and family, fortunately, none of them have... all of them are okay. As far as she knows she hasn't lost anyone, but some of our work colleagues have, and it's just, it's very surreal. I got here Thursday, and what was it? Friday night, Saturday night, that this happened? I've lost track I think it was Friday night that has happened. )r maybe it was Saturday night. Sorry, it's... I've only just gotten over the jet lag. Having trouble keeping up with the days now, still. But it's, yeah, it's a little surreal to be here when all this is going on.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

They're not... the Moroccan government is not taking aid from other countries that are equipped to deal with this kind of disaster. That's disconcerting.

**Ogun Holder (ogunholder@gmail.com)**

Not entirely. They have accepted help from a couple of individual countries that they're more closely allied with, but yes, they're being very choosy and also they're being very, very slow to respond to some of the smallest, most outlying villages. Marrakech has gotten a lot of attention. I am sure because it is, you know, basically the economic and tourist center of Morocco. But the people who are there are no more important than those who live in the outlying villages and some of those folks haven't seen any kind of relief effort yet.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yeah, I know, no water, no food, no, yeah, and can't get to them. So anyway, just, you know, holding up everybody in, you know, I'm sick and tired of hearing thoughts and prayers and, you know, from where I sit, that's about the extent of what I can do except, you know, find the right

places for donations because they're going to need, you know, they're going to need it.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Yes, yes indeed.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

So this is, as I said, With Love and Justice for All, the official podcast of project\_SANCTUS, where we have conversations around embodied anti-racism, dismantling oppression, fostering liberation, and the special challenges that arise as spiritual seekers, and sometimes even at, you know, whole communities, not just individuals. As always, we want to thank our listeners and our subscribers. We have many here in the United States, at least 45 out of 50 of the states, more than 24 countries around the world, like Morocco, Germany, Sweden, Australia, Canada, India, Singapore. Just, and that's always, it always tickles me, even if what we're talking about is not necessarily, you know, uplifting and inspiring, it always tickles me that there's people around the world. If you want to join in our conversation... go ahead...

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

I was going to say, even if it's the same ten people that keep traveling to all these different countries, at least they're taking us with them.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Right. I don't have any way of knowing if it's one person who's globe hopping. I like to think it's not, but if it is, I'm glad they're taking us with them.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

There you go. Yes.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

If you want to join in our conversation, right now it is Tuesday, September 12th, and we're live streaming to Facebook, so you can always join their live or listen to it whenever. You can also connect with us on Instagram and our handle on both platforms is @getourholyon. And we also have a phone number you can leave a message. It's 413-438-4659, which is in letters, is 413-GET-HOLY.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

There we go. On today's episode, oh, before I jump into today's episode, just a quick reminder that our ongoing affinity groups are meeting online. These are safe spaces on Zoom where all bodies can come and have discussion around current events through a lens of embodied anti-racism. Our next gathering is next Wednesday, so depending on when you're listening to this it might be this Wednesday, but it is September 20th because we meet every first and third Wednesday. So September 20th at 7:30 pm ET, which is really going to be fun for me here in Morocco because that's going to be 12:30 am on Thursday morning, but I'll be okay. Done it before I'll do it again.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Have a little coffee. Have a little espresso.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Have a little espresso. There's good coffee here in Morocco. So, please join us, visit [projectsanctus.com](http://projectsanctus.com) to get more information about how to sign up for that so you can get the Zoom link if you haven't done this before. And also at [projectsanctus.com](http://projectsanctus.com) you can leave some donations for us to help keep the train on the tracks.

Today's episode we're actually going to be talking about grief and grief through the lens.... No, talking about grief while existing in this world where we tend to all be influenced by what we like to call the three big systems of oppression: white supremacy, patriarchy and capitalism. The reason we're talking about grief today is for a few reasons. You know, I'm in a place where there's a national collective grief going on. In the US, we just had a collective memorial around national grief as it relates to 9/11. So that happened. I know if she'd like to speak on it, Rev. Kelly's got some personal grief going on in her life. And both of us, well, we've just been grieving dead people for years. So we've got that going on.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

[laughing] Hold on. Just the way you said it. It's like, oh, by the way, you know...

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

I mean, I'm just saying. There's very specific and then very non-specific reasons for us to be talking about grief. But as we do, grieving is a different experience depending on the extent to which any one of us, any one of you listening, are oppressed by one of these, or all three of these systems of oppression. So I think sometimes we don't often realize how much these systems of oppression just affect what we do from day to day.

And grieving is one of those things where I think all of us can relate to. We've all experienced it. We've all had losses, small and big, near and far. And I think that it's important to have conversations around not just grief itself, but around how we are impacted by the systems of oppression that affect the way we grieve, that affect what we believe about the way we should be grieving, or shouldn't be grieving. All these things play a part.

So we're going to break down some of that today. Of course, as always, we'd love to hear from you. So as you listen to this and resonate with some of the things that we say, feel free to reach out to us. Kelly shared how you can get in contact with us at the top of the podcast. But also now you can email us. I am [ogun@projectsanctus.com](mailto:ogun@projectsanctus.com) she is [kelly@projectsanctus.com](mailto:kelly@projectsanctus.com) and we would love to hear about your own experiences and how these things relate to you.

### **Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Well, I was going to say, I wanted to start with the 9/11. Because I think it's a good place to, in terms of grieving, but within those patriarchy capitalism...within systems of oppression.. go ahead...

### **Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Well, I was going to even take it a step back and just briefly touch on grief itself. Because I think it might behoove, at least you and I, to share when we say grief, wWhat are we thinking about? Right? Because everybody seems to have this idea of what grief means, maybe delineate it from mourning, bereavement, know, things like that.

So I think for me grief is that process whereby we come to an acceptance of our loss, an acceptance of who we are after the loss, and an acceptance of how we continue to live with that loss. And for me, the important word there is acceptance. And that means acceptance of what arises emotionally, what comes up, what we're called to do differently, how we feel moment to moment. That's for me... when I speak of grief, that's kind of the framework I'm coming from. And how we express all those things, how we express who we are, post-lost.

There's an interesting quote that I came across just today and I put it on my web page because of all the things that I also do, grief counselor is one of them and it occurred to me today... this is funny... It occurred to me today that I assumed everybody knew that about me and I didn't even have a page on my own website around grief counseling. So I thought, you know, maybe I should add that. Just don't make an assumption.

But this quote is interesting. It's by an author named Victoria Alexander and she writes, and this is a line from one of the novels because she's a fiction writer, "There are three needs of the griever: to find the words for the loss, to say the words aloud, and to know the words have been heard."

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Say it again...

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

"There are three needs of the griever: to find the words for the loss, to say the words aloud, and to know the words have been heard." And, you know, I'll say this about the quote: yes, there are some things that we just can't articulate with words. And at the same time, I think finding the words for the lost is, again, how I come to that place of acceptance. I don't even say understanding, because there's some things about the losses that I've suffered that I can't begin to comprehend how, why, where, what, when...

But for me to be able to at least have a place of even silent articulation or understanding is an important need and continues to be an important need for me. And then to be able to speak that out into the world and to others and connect with others around the loss and around how I feel and how I have changed and how I have been defined by the loss. So I love this quote and I think it speaks a lot to that.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Well, I could say ditto. And, you know, it's interesting that you said grief, bereavement, and did you say lamenting? Mourning. And it's interesting because they're not, they're actually not the same thing. So if I take the word bereave, like bereavement, the root of the word means to take away. So, you know, to be robbed. The bereavement is in those moments when, you know, this person has been taken away, or the job or the relationship. But I'm kind of staying in the place of

people, death of people, because that's kind of where things are at for me right now.

But to, I mean, there have been multiple times where I have the sense that that's just the best way to describe what I'm feeling in a moment, that Frank has been robbed. And it pisses me off when people go, well, he's still with you. Got it. But he's not here. You know, he's not physically in front of me. I can't continue this relationship, this love, the way it's been. It has to transform. I don't have to, but it transforms into something else into a different journey, right, and building a new relationship with the absence of the physical being.

So there are these moments of bereavement where it's, "I've been robbed; something's been taken from me." And then, you know, grief is more of, I think, for me, is this lifelong journey with that. You know, and it's different every day. And sometimes it's very intense, and sometimes it's not. Sometimes I'm very much at peace with the loss. Sometimes I'm not. You know, when something really, really good happens, I, you know, I get hooked. Or when something really horrid happens because I can't, I can't rush to my beloved and say, you know, "Hey..."

And also grief has a collective feel to it. I think, bereavement, you know, that being robbed or something taken from you is more personal, you know, more individual. But grief is very collective, you know. And mourning is for me, I know we can go to Webster's dictionary, but mourning is the activity, like the outward manifestation of my grief, of my bereavement, of, you know, the lamenting, which we don't do and white folks don't do lamenting. Now I'm getting going into...

### **Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

I was going to say what we do is we invade other countries when we are collectively lamenting.

### **Rev. Kelly (she/they)v**

Yes! Well, that's very true. We work out, project our stuff. You know, let me take over this colonized, right, this other group of people, this place. So then I'll feel better, which is just, you know..



**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

That was your segue to 9/11, by the way.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yes, I got that. I actually could pick up on that. So what I wanted to say about 9/11 which... you know, yesterday was honestly, I don't even, what, 22 years? And I think one of the things that I've come to understand and that I've come to... that it's one of these both/and things and it has, you know, certainly has tension that lives within me is that, you know, that I don't want to take away from how horrific and heartbreaking that was and is, you know, still for people. And yet, I think there also needs to be, you know, the attention around how horrific and heartbreaking this legacy of slavery, right? That I think it's another kind of ground zero, you know, where there is grieving and there are wounds and there is bereavement and, you know, we, I mean, how many millions of Americans have been, you know, harassed and killed and incarcerated, you know, beyond just, you know, the events of 9-11.

And I think it's in, you know, within the context of our systems of oppression here in the US, it's time that we started acknowledging, you know, the people of Arab and South Asian descent that have been killed, that have been hunted, that have been ostracized and excluded, families that have been torn apart because of immigration policies, mass incarceration, all of the black and brown communities that have been targeted, it just... it's this never, you know, it's this never ending grief and death and loss that we don't... when is there... it's another 9-11, it's another ground zero. It's... what about the millions of indigenous people that we killed and take their land and there's never a... that's another ground zero that we don't ever acknowledge. And it's because it's wrapped up in this legacy of separation and supremacy and scarcity.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

I don't know that we don't acknowledge it. I think it's being acknowledged. I think where the real continual harm is that it's being acknowledged but with a... almost like a shrug of like, well, that happened so long ago, none of the people who are responsible for it are still around, so there's really nothing we can do about it, or should do about it. That was way in the past and that I mean it's categorically not true that it was way in the past. Last episode we talked about the March on Washington, we talked about Emmet Till, which again didn't happen that long ago. It's not true to say that nothing can be done about it if people are willing to have honest open conversations about what reparations can look like. It involves many things. see a trickle of indigenous peoples being... having their land restored to them, but it's a trickle. We see a trickle of that happening with African Americans as well, Black folks' land which was stolen from them. But again, just a trickle. Am I suggesting that we just give the land back? Yeah!

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yes actually we are!

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Actually, we are. There's that. In my home country, Barbados, I just a rather story about... there's a British organization made up of people who acknowledged their ancestors role in slave trade in Barbados and are working to establish organizations in Barbados to help with education and even in some cases, yes, give back parcels of land that are still owned by these British families, hundreds of years later. So there's ways for that as well.

But when we talk about collective grief under these systems of oppression... so like these are great examples where we have all three of them, but I would say in this case, really, white supremacy and capitalism saying to the collective grief of indigenous peoples, of the descendants of African slaves, "Too bad, so sad, but we maybe can't exploit your labor as much as we used to, but you sure as hell ain't getting the land back, because that has value."

Right, so not acknowledging that the wounds, as you were saying, from the horrors that happened decades or even centuries ago, still play a part in the daily lives of peoples, or to not acknowledge the policies that are simply stems from those oppressive systems that not just hurt people, but kind of sort of kill people. Right, so there's that aspect of it. I mean, think of how capitalism is set up so that labor... I mean, at the root of capitalism is labor, exploitation of labor, right? Which is why it is still a system of oppression. And generally those who are oppressed under capitalism are the poor, which generally tend to be people of color.

And that's not by accident. That's how the system was set up. And we have people who just grind and toil, grind and toil, grind and toil, and die early deaths as a result. So, capitalism literally kills people. And then the people around them, it's like, depending on where you are and what job you have, you can't take enough time off to properly grieve and mourn your lost one, your loved one. Because you've got to get back to work in a hurry. You might be the sole breadwinner in your family. And yeah, so it's, we're in this system that both kills us and then in many ways, it does not provide the space for us to really, for many of us, to truly grieve.

### **Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

There's all these rituals and ceremonies to, in this case, commemorate the memory of, you know, almost 3,000 people that, you know, were lost on 9/11. People gather at their firehouses and churches, in parks, in, you know, in many places to acknowledge, to commemorate their memory. And I don't want that to go away. My, my beef, I guess, is that we don't ever stop, you know, and to remember the millions of indigenous lives that were sacrificed for the colonizer. There's no holiday that reflects how many Muslims were killed in the war on terror, the supposedly war on terror. And the millions of, you know, Arab and South Asian descent, it's just not...

### **Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

They can't, yeah, and they won't be because that will, I guess, force the country to be, to acknowledge its complicitness in those crimes...

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yeah, I know.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

So that can't happen.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

I just wanted to call it out.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

You know, because it's the, it's how we remember it. If you, you know, think about it, the politics of memory and remembrance and commemorating is really told by people that benefit from it. So, you know, I just want a broader audience to understand, you know, expand the memory, right?

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Was there more than 9-11 that you wanted to...?

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

No, I just wanted to... because it's the kind of thing... that event is a good example of encapsulating the patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy. And again, I'm not suggesting not commemorating and not honoring, it's just expanding the view of how we look at it. And what about this group of people and what about all the groups of people that we've colonized and oppressed and murdered and and and...

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

And part of the, I think, us not having truly a good handle on, as a collective, nationally around grieving and mourning is what led to the retribution of invading the other countries. We call it justice, but it really was retribution. And of course, we invaded a country that really had, as we would find out, directly nothing to do with the event. And thanks to the American war machine, many people made many billions of dollars from war. War is a very profitable enterprise.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yes, it is.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

So, when we speak about connecting capitalism and grief, it's been responsible in that way for many deaths, many people, having to be that space of grief and loss to line the pockets of many people. And I don't know that even at this point as we look back, I don't know how many people would agree that going to war with Iraq, invading Iraq, invading Afghanistan, was the right thing

to do. Because where are we now with that, right?

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

We're in an endless cycle of violence is what we're in.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

We are. And notably, we recently withdrew from Afghanistan and turned it back over to the Taliban. That's been a whole mess. It was like all of that was for nothing. I think it's a cautionary tale for us as individuals, when we're in that place of deep hurt and we get stuck in anger around it, then we don't make the best choices. We seek blame, seek vengeance, we seek retribution, we get stuck in the anger, which gets us stuck in life, gets us stuck for moving forward and slowly... I think anger is that poison that just affects everything, just poor choices.

It reminds me of, speaking of that, I want to segue to that quote that I made a comment on recently that's generated a lot of discussion amongst Unity and New Thought folk. There was a quote from Unity's co-founder Charles Fillmore. Rev Kelly and I are ordained Unity ministers. The quote was, 'You can quickly be released from the prison of pain or grief if you will sing and praise and pray.' I'm going read that again: "You can quickly be released from the prison of pain or grief if you will sing and praise and pray." So the quote was posted without any real context and I took umbrage to it.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Really? I'm shocked.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

As I do. So much umbrage, somebody actually in the comments was like, “Are you still in unity? Do you still belong to Unity?”

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

No, not really. So my thought was when I saw it, I'm like, what a load of crap.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

So my whole thing is, again, regardless of the context of which it was stated, what is always the thing I always have to say to people is, we always have to be careful about one, how things are taught. Because this statement's standing on its own. It's like a poster statement for spiritual bypassing. And two, I really take umbrage to the quickly release from prison. And I have to say, listen, grief is not a prison. Yes grief is painful but it is not a prison, a thing to escape from.

I'll read what I wrote: “It's a deeply emotional and at times painful process of navigating loss and it can be a lengthy journey. And while we don't want to be stuck in the most debilitating periods of it, it can't be rushed. It has to unfold on its own time and often we need the help of others. Yes, we can experience moments, even seasons of joy and pleasure during our most intense times of grief. But that doesn't mean our grieving is done. Such is the both/and complexity and nuance of healing from loss.”

And for the most part, my commentary on that quote got a lot of response. And I also spoke about the need to be able to, not just take for granted everything the founders have said, but we get to question, we get to criticize, if we don't, then we are becoming a cult.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Not becoming. [laughter]

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Well, but listen, no, hang on. Hang on. I'm still part of Unity and I was able to comment and criticize and question and get a lot of support. And no one's taken away my Unity credential tomorrow. Right? Or kicking me out of the movement. So we're not a cult. But listen, some of the responses were cult-like, I'll say that. And there was some rush defense to the quote.

But yeah, we're not, we're not a... and I think when we look at sometimes, you know, circle back to 9/11 again, the retribution, the sense of vengeance, I think a lot of times those acts are meant to be an effort to release us from the pain. To say like, we're doing something about this, you know, we were attacked and we have to, and again, this is a nice patriarchal influence, we were attacked, we can't appear to be emasculated, we can't appear to be soft. We have to strike back. So, we just spent how many years and how many billions of dollars and most importantly, how many lives, trying to strike back and do something to release ourselves from this "prison" of grief and pain. I don't know, maybe we should have suggested some singing and praying and praising and see how that worked.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

You know, the other thing about that quote is it's also out of context. So what did he say before it and what did he say after it?

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**



Oh, did you look it up because I didn't want to work that hard?

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

No, actually I did not, but I certainly can. But it's just like reading scripture. It's proof texting. What came before and what came after, which won't necessarily change, you know, that it's spiritual bypassing. But if it's taken in, you know, it could be taken in a context of when I can get stuck in challenge, and I can get stuck, I can take a moment and sing to unstuck the energy, not to get away from, not to spiritual bypass, but to move the energy through the body. So what was the quote again?

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

You can quickly be released, I'm looking it up, from the prison of pain. We're doing real time work here folks because we didn't do it before. So this comes from the Healing Power of Joy.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Well Fillmore didn't write that.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Oh, who wrote that? The... Well, I mean, he didn't write a lot of books. A lot of stuff he said was collected...

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

But I think if you, you know, you look at, like I said, like scripture, what was said before and what was said after, because often a quote can be taken out of scripture, especially when it comes to,

you know, to grief, to sadness, to loss. You know, pulling, find something about joy, we got to say something about joy or, you know, or acceptance or, you know, something to change the mind, right, something to not feel the way you're feeling, which, you know, is the antithesis of grief. It's the antithesis of, you know, of bereavement, of mourning. So I am, so anyway, so that's what comes to mind... It happens a lot when people make these little memes of quotes. There's not a context for it. So you think you understand what the person said.

So which actually the irony of that is if I come back to your other quote of there aren't words and then finding the words and then was I heard that the... I think it's a similar kind of thing. If I don't have words for my grief or what's happening around me, I think we're too often... And this would be a spiritual bypassing or uncomfortable... This would fall under the umbrella of white body supremacy cultural norms. I need to say something or do something to get you out of what you're feeling, to get you out of, to make you feel better, to...to that right to comfort. And very often, it's... I'm the one that's not comfortable with your grief. So I've got to find something to change it all. And this erroneous belief that if I'm feeling pain, I must be thinking something or something's amiss rather than opening to the idea that everything's welcome at the table.

Which, uh, it brings me to the idea of mourning. When I look at white folks and I look at people of color, there's very different ways of mourning. It's almost like white folks haven't given themselves permission to lament, to really mourn, to like wail, you know, wailing and grieving and physically, you know, expressing like just... whether it's with guttural expression or song...

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

We have to remain civilized and observe decorum, right?

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yes.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

That's a thing that's been... and it's interesting because, again, a little segue here, we see decorum being weaponized in places like a lot of state houses right now. Where are the Justins, again? Is that Tennessee State Courthouse? Where the rules of decorum are being used to silence them? But this idea of not being emotionally expressive, not given into the emotions, has often been used as like this benchmark, this... distinguishing between the civilized and the savage. The savage gives it to their emotions. Indigenous people, the African slaves, they give in to their emotions. They don't have the intellect to maintain themselves in a proper way, a proper fashion. And that gets passed down.

It's also internalized because it's fascinating going to a funeral in Barbados, for example. Barbados was a British colony I don't know how long.. well, I do know how long I can look that up we got independence in 1967 it's been a while... But to go to funeral in Barbados is this kind of this like hybrid of decorum and expressiveness. I remember when my grandmother died and my grandfather as well we had two services for each of them. The first one was at their family neighborhood church, the village church, which was small. There was singing and people were beating tambourines, the bands going, it was just like, yes, people were crying but mostly it was just like this joyful acknowledgement, the celebration of life. And then we go to the parish church where the graveyard is, which is an Anglican church, and there's a lot of formality and some pomp and circumstance and decorum, where all of a sudden we're quiet, and reserved and be singing hymns out of the hymnal and read Bible passages and there's an order of service and all these things. Then we go to the gravesite and as the coffin is being lowered, the wailing is coming back and it was a very bizarre journey of seeing where the Indigenous influence and the colonial influence are meeting each other head to head in this place.

I think we've come to a place where we don't know any different right now because it's all we've known. The hybrid of these two things and yes folks in Indigenous communities are now beginning to, and when I say Indigenous I guess I should say original, looking back to what did our ancestors do? How did our ancestors honor life and death, how did our ancestors celebrate life and death and mourning and grief and bereavement and to re-institute some of those practices and slowly come away from the colonial mindset of decorum and confinement almost.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yeah, and manners. And how often are we around someone who is... you're in a conversation or in whatever kind of experience and they're starting to get emotional and you could see the tears are welling up in their eyes and the first words out of their mouth is sorry. Sorry for.. and I'm like, you know, it's such a whiteness thing like to apologize for...

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Yeah, and it's also a patriarchy thing. Yeah, especially with men because we're not supposed to be the one to cry. We're still... we've internalized the 'men don't cry' thing we have to be strong we have to be the rock. And if we're crying in public, that means we're getting too emotional like you women who cry at the drop of a hat and get all hysterical about stuff.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Right! That's exactly what I was going to say. Damned if you're a man, damned if you're a woman. And anything between, it's just not okay, which is crap.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Exactly. Right? So that's the patriarchy's influence. I'm looking at how we grieve. If there's any place I've come on my grief journey is that I no longer try to withhold or try to squash my tears when they start to arise. I don't care where I am. If I gotta cry, I be crying. And it's a thing. You've heard me talk about, especially those few early years after Jennifer died in 2015, about crying at the gym. Right? Because weight lifting was that embodied exercise that got me down into my body. And I'm at Planet Fitness suddenly just losing my shit and wailing and crying hard on a workout bench. Getting all kinds of strange looks, mind you. But realizing like, yeah, okay, can we normalize crying in public? Can we normalize people mourning and grieving and wailing in public and collectively hold space for them as they're doing it and somehow send that message that it's okay.

And if we're the ones doing it don't feel embarrassed, and don't feel the need to apologize for it. And also don't wait till we're by ourselves do it as well, because that's the other thing, right? We tend to also wait till we get by ourselves so no-one can see us, and we cry and then all we're doing is making this connection between isolating and grief. And feel like we now can't be out amongst the people when we're grieving where is exactly the place we need to be.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yeah, because we have this unconscious, unexamined belief that if I express my grief, if I be upset and I wail, you know, however I'm mourning, I'm going to make you uncomfortable. And I think we need to stop caring about that.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Back to that white supremacy norm of the right to comfort. Yeah. Yeah. Let's get uncomfortable. Let's get messy with our grief.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Well, that's why it's actually why I like the word lament and lamenting because you don't hear the word very often. And when you do, you know, where people often go is they think about the wailing and the loud, some guttural sounds or just from the gut like that instinctual animalistic... just let whatever is deep in, out, and it may or may not be actual words. But wailing... like you said at the gym, it's the same idea. It's engaging the body because that's where trauma lives, is in the central nervous system. It lives in the body so being able to connect to the body and bring it up and out so that the body is not a prison.

So bringing it up and out and frankly, fuck everybody around you. It's also a way to... we have to do it collectively to get,... for people to get uncomfortable to learn that they don't need to be uncomfortable. But somebody has to, we have to be doing it, not wait for the other guy to publicly lament. But like you said, at the gym, you just, you know, you just do it. And whatever

people are thinking is whatever they think. And I would venture a guess that anybody that saw you at the gym and thought, whoa, what's going on? I would venture a guess they're probably not going to forget that day anytime soon.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Or if they do, I don't care.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

No, I know. But I just mean in terms of just, you know, it's kind of thought provoking. And it's something that someone could potentially carry with them to maybe somewhere down the road, you know, giving themselves permission.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

I see what you're saying. Yes.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yes. Yeah.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

So what you're saying is, what you're saying is by me making an emotional public mess of myself, I was an inspiration. Thank you.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

I think so.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

All right. I'm going to take it.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

The other thing that kind of got us on this road today was I was, and you mentioned it at the beginning about grief going on in my own life, and in part how we landed on this topic today, was about a week and a half ago I lost a friend. She died unexpectedly. And as I was talking to.. about her, to a few people, and kind of who she is in my life, is, I'm a single woman that doesn't have children, and she was also a single woman that didn't have children. And it's really fascinating, and at times really hard to walk through this world, here in the US, here in our society, as a single woman that doesn't have children. Like it's not okay. Which then makes it even harder to grieve. Because then your people go, oh, thank God she didn't have children. What does that mean? Not realizing that... I mean I understand their intention...

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Or sometimes the... She didn't have children, her legacy is done, her life is done. She didn't leave anyone behind. It's like a compounding loss to us because that person didn't have kids. Something went wrong with them for some reason that they didn't bring kids into the world.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

And it... I don't know that people think about it. Or pay attention to... I know people don't necessarily think about what they say or how they say it when they're with someone that's grieving. And it just makes me think of when she was alive, and in my own life, that it's so unconscious and people are so... don't pay attention to what they say and how they say it about a single woman not having children. I mean if you're 30 and you're single and don't have children, that's fine. But if you're 50 and you're single and don't have children, well, you must have done something wrong along the way. Like you don't fit the narrative. So then when it comes to death and dying and loss and grieving, that comes up and unexpectedly.

For me it came up unexpectedly because I just, I don't have a lot of women in my life that are single around my age and don't have children. But I didn't, you know, it just really, it hit me hard because I realized some things I was hearing, you know, like you said, the whole legacy thing, which then when you hear that kind of stuff, then it comes back to me and I'm like, okay, so I'm going to get to the end of my life and have nothing to show for it because I wasn't married and I don't have children, which I don't need help getting depressed. But that's the message.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

It is a message, which is a horrible message because you've contributed so much to this world. Again, let you take the inspiration compliment now. In your teaching, your writing, your speaking like all the things that you've done... to imply that the only reason that a woman, again, is that comment is, "As a woman, your only value is popping out children. Tip of the hat to patriarchy, again, doing its thing. And then, also how it shows up again is like, let's say you had children, especially if they were younger children, and that expectancy that in the midst of your grief, your bereavement, your mourning, you still do all the things.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Yes. Yeah, you're still expected to.



**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Yeah. So, so there's that too as well. So, you know, damn if you do damn if you don't. By the way, I finally just saw the Barbie movie. I just finally did. Took a while. But yeah, I finally just saw the Barbie movie. And, you know, there's a little speech or monologue by America Ferrera when she talks about it's impossible to be a woman, right? I remember when the Barbie movie first came out and people were watching that first week and like how many women on social media were like, "When I heard this I was in tears, and how this just hit home." Again, tip of the hat to patriarchy for that.

So I guess the invitation we have for you this week is first don't be in a hurry to run away from grief and embrace a journey that it takes you on. But as you're on this journey, can you be mindful of how these systems of oppression are influencing your grief journey, any journey in your life really, we're speaking specifically on grief today. And notice the way it shows up because then how we begin to shift the culture from white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalist culture is by grieving differently, grieving authentically, grieving in a raw way, crying out loud in public. Don't be in a rush to go back to work or if you know, I know some people don't have that luxury or that privilege to go I need more time off. And if you don't, then really consider making a big fuss about it out of your job to go like this is intolerable. Draw attention to it, make some noise.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

And it's, and you know, the overarching thing is carving time out of the time in your day for morning, for grieving, for creating a little ritual. So I get that some people make it stuck in terms of, okay, we'll give you three days off for your father's funeral. Make a fuss at work, like push there, we're so afraid. And if that doesn't work, then, you know, look at how you invest your time when you're not at work. It comes back to that, you know, rest, restore.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Yeah, yeah, a year after a profound loss, and there's a resurgence of grief as happens with

anniversaries, do you work somewhere that will give you time for that? I bet a lot of places don't. I was very fortunate at the time of Jennifer's death I was working for a church that was compassionate enough to give me time off at the anniversary. And I think, listen, it's a thin line between the compassion of them giving me time off and them realizing he's going to say something he's going to regret if we don't give him the time off. I was not doing well. So they were like, we need to protect us from him and we need to protect him from himself because he's not okay. So good for them for recognizing that, you know, and going like, all right, you need no more time, you need time off again. And because of that, I could do my job I think much better than if I hadn't taken that time off a year later.

And again, yeah, let us recognize that not everyone has that or is in a place of privilege that they work around that. And nod to the self-employed folks who also believe that I can't take time off from myself in employment because, you know, if you're a contract worker, if I don't work, I don't eat, I don't get money, so I can't afford to do that. You know, how do you carve out time because you have to otherwise it's just going to explode later?

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Well, it's, yeah, because you're building a new relationship with grief.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

And with yourselves and the rest of the world.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

You have to be willing to let go of how you've done things and pay attention to what you say and, know, how you say it when you're talking about yourself as if there's, you know, like just yesterday, I heard a woman, you know, her husband died three months ago and I can hear her saying things, you know, and this is going on and still this and I'm looking forward to when, you know, and it was just some of the phrases, I'm like, yeah, there's no destination here and there's

no time frame. I refer to it as healing at of the speed of Kelly. There is no timeframe.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

There is no timeframe but we do have a timeframe for this podcast. We can't keep talking with no end we do need to wrap up.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

So, yeah, we could, but I don't think it would go over well.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

No, no, no, it wouldn't. Plus, I just, you know, I just realized it's seven o'clock in Morocco and I haven't had dinner yet. Because in my brain, in my brain, in my brain, I'm thinking, oh, it's afternoon because we record our podcast usually in the afternoon. No it's not.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Well, it's a little after one o'clock here and I haven't had lunch, so...

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Yeah, this whole time difference thing, you know, when you get past a two hour time difference it really does a number you, right? I'm like, you know, I'm usually on the East Coast and now five hours ahead of East Coast six hours ahead of where you are. It's, yeah, my whole day just all messed up.

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

You'll get there.

**Rev Ogun Holder (he/him)**

Will I? I'll be waking up texting people. I'm like, why are you not getting back to me? It's been like three hours. Oh, that's right. They're still sleeping. It takes a minute. But so again, as you've listened to this and you've had your own experiences and journeys with grief, we'd love to hear from you, your thoughts and your comments, hit us up on the socials, Facebook, Instagram, @getourholyon, can call us again leave a voicemail 413-GET-HOLY or 413-438-4659. Tell your friends about the podcast in this episode, if you've got some friends who are on the grief journey, they can find us on all the podcast platforms or if they don't know what a podcast is on the old school interwebs at [withloveandjusticeforall.podbean.com](http://withloveandjusticeforall.podbean.com).

So until we meet again...

**Rev. Kelly (she/they)**

Let's get our holy on.