

Kerri:  
Hi, Shannon.

Shannon:  
Hi, Kerri.

Kerri:  
I'm so glad you're here. I want to just say I've been wanting to do this since February of 2020.

Shannon:  
Oh my gosh.

Kerri:  
That was when your book came out.

Shannon:  
Yep. March 1st.

Kerri:  
March 1st. But like a fucking lifetime ago, let's be clear.

Shannon:  
It feels like years ago to me.

Kerri:  
So wait, it came out March 1st, 2020, and then the pandemic hit two weeks later?

Shannon:  
Yeah.

Kerri:  
Yes.

Shannon:  
No.

Kerri:  
Was it in the middle? No. Yeah. That was not what happened?

Shannon:  
Oh my gosh.

Kerri:  
That's what happened.

Shannon:

No, my book came out this year. See, I don't know what years are anymore.

Kerri:

Your book came out in 2021?

Shannon:

March 1st, 2021. So yeah, you're not that late to the party.

Kerri:

Isn't that so weird? Time is a different thing now.

Shannon:

Yeah. No, literally, it didn't even register to me because 2020 and 2021 are like the same year.  
[crosstalk 00:00:54]

Kerri:

The same thing and yet completely different. I'm not even ready... Actually, maybe we should process 2021, but I haven't begun it yet. This is the end of the year. Processing 2020 was hard, but maybe more clear in strange ways. This year has been weird.

Shannon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kerri:

I don't know what else to say.

Shannon:

Well, I don't know if it's just me and what I've got going on in my life, but this year, literally, when my book came out this year-

Kerri:

Which again-

Shannon:

... which I thought it was last year, when you told me it was last year, I was like, "Uh-huh (affirmative)."

Kerri:

It was last year because March 2021 was a year and a half ago. I don't know. That's how long this year has been.

Shannon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. So time is something that we're adapting to, a new relationship with time. I mean, doesn't that feel like a thing that-

Kerri:  
Totally for me.

Shannon:  
... at least for me...

Kerri:  
Yeah. Well, and we've just been kind of cooped up for a really long time. And in some ways, time feels so slow and in other ways, time feels so much faster, and I literally can't tell which it is.

Shannon:  
That's where I usually am in that place of it feels slow and fast, but right now it just feels slow. I don't get it.

Kerri:  
I think it just feels weird and I don't understand what's happening and why there's only a couple of days left in 2021, and that 2022 is next. I'm just like, "How did we get here, Shannon?" What many people don't know about us is that we're neighbors. I actually want to say we're more than neighbors. We're probably more like roommates, but not entirely roommates, but we share a wall like we're intimate neighbors.

Shannon:  
Yeah. We're not roommates, but we're not neighbors.

Kerri:  
We're going to start a whole slew of rumors about this. So we're in a commune together and it's a... No.

Shannon:  
Basically.

Kerri:  
Basically.

Shannon:  
But no.

Kerri:  
But yeah, so we have been here now for two and a half years together, and through a pandemic, in this unique formation of being neighbors and roommates and whatever label we

want to put on this. And I was reflecting as I was preparing for this interview, how valuable that experience has been for me, especially in the context of facing this totally weird, horrible, uncertain global event, which was the pandemic, and then all the other pandemics that were happening simultaneously. But how our living in proximity to one another, and Trevor obviously is here with us too, taught me a lot about community and mutual care, the role and the possibility that community care offers in times of great uncertainty and chaos.

Shannon:

Yeah. Yeah. And you're good at that.

Kerri:

I'm good at what?

Shannon:

Community care.

Kerri:

Because I cook for you. That's the only reason you're saying that, because I make food and I bring it over to you.

Shannon:

That definitely happens. And thank you. It's really good, by the way, you get a chance to eat some Kerri Kelly food. But because at first, we would only go grocery shopping once every three weeks. We would try and buy as many groceries as we could to avoid going out in public in actual March 2020. And we would check in and be like, "What do you need? What do you... Do you need tons of groceries? I'll get all of them. Send me a list."

Kerri:

[crosstalk 00:04:43]. That's right. "I'm going to make a trip out into the real world."

Shannon:

Yeah.

Kerri:

And I feel like people should know that we live in Los Angeles, but we actually live in the mountains, which in a million years, when I met you five years ago, I would never have dreamed of like, "I'm going to move to a house in the mountains with Shannon Algeo." And yet here we are. It's also relevant that we were far from grocery stores and from public interaction, we were kind of in this secluded little neighborhood where we could hide away while all of this was happening. So yeah, you would make a trip down to the valley, that's what we call it, and check in on me and be like, "What do you need?" And I'd be like, "A bottle of tequila is the first thing that comes to mind." Just kidding.

Shannon:

IPA. Like, "Do you need any food?"

Kerri:

Yeah. "All right. Spinach."

Shannon:

"Spinach and tequila." I'm like, "All right."

Kerri:

But that was super helpful, being able to have each others backs in that simple kind of way.

Shannon:

I would've been screwed.

Kerri:

But also-

Shannon:

I would've been screwed. If I moved to Topanga as a single person, without you and Trevor, I would've been alone during the pandemic. The groceries is one thing, and that's very practically helpful, but we would have dinners, we would barbecue, I would sit on the hammock and Trevor would walk around the corner with an IPA and he was like, "What are you doing?" I'm just like, "Reading another book. I don't know what I'm doing."

Kerri:

Well, and I'm even thinking about how helpful it was to have someone else to talk to as we were navigating like, "What is this? What are we allowed to do? What are the new rules? Can we leave our home? Can we come back? Where can we go?" You got a ticket climbing up a mountain.

Shannon:

Oh my gosh.

Kerri:

Hiking up a mountain was forbidden at one point in Los Angeles, and Shannon felt the burden of that, big time.

Shannon:

Yeah. A mountain in our own neighborhood.

Kerri:

That's right. Of all people, you're like the only one, but you got got.

Shannon:

Yeah. Well, because that was during the pandemic when-

Kerri:

We were in lockdown.

Shannon:

Yeah. And parks were closed. State parks were closed. Beaches were closed. It drove me nuts because people were packed in a coffee shop in Venice, getting coffee-

Kerri:

With masks on.

Shannon:

... but I couldn't be alone.

Kerri:

On the top of a mountain.

Shannon:

... meditating on a canyon.

Kerri:

Shannon, coffee is serious, okay. Don't fuck with coffee.

Shannon:

Yes. Exception shall be made-

Kerri:

For coffee.

Shannon:

... for coffee.

Kerri:

But I do want to just say all of those little things... Yes, so you're right, there's the practical things of I needed medicine and you had it or something like that. Those things were happening all the time. And or when I got on a plane for the first time and you gave me one of those really big helmets.

Shannon:

Oh my god.

Kerri:

"I have an extra helmet." I was like, "Great." And that was the most ridiculous look of my life. But I'm also just thinking about how we made memories during a really difficult time, and the dance parties we had, and the singalongs, and the barbecues and the many, many, many, many meals that we cooked.

Shannon:

Sunset walks and hikes when we could finally hike. And we've also been through... we've done two evacuations because we've had fires.

Kerri:

That's right. That's a whole other level of, I feel, community resilience. When someone in... and we live in Topanga, which is a hardcore wildfire canyon. And we've had people come to our door at three o'clock in the morning and knock and say, "There's a fire three miles away. We're going to have to evacuate." And that's when I woke you up. Basically I was like, "Because you share a wall and you live here, you will be evacuating, but we will not leave without you Shannon. Get up."

Shannon:

I just hear, "Shannon. Fire." I'd lived here for like 20 days. I was like, "What is happening?"

Kerri:

That's my not so regulated nervous system responding to a wildfire.

Shannon:

Oh, because you're good in an emergency.

Kerri:

I'm a good emergency person, yeah.

Shannon:

People might assume this about you. Like, I might have assumed it about you, but you are full-on like firefighter. It makes so much sense that you do community organizing and the work that you do because you're on Twitter, you know what this person is saying, you know what... you know how to get information fast and respond.

Kerri:

And I kick into action very quickly. And you learn a lot about yourself when your life is being threatened, right.

Shannon:

Yeah.

Kerri:

And so that was... I didn't even think about that. So we had the pandemic of the pandemic, but we also had the pandemic of many wildfires tearing through our backyard. And last year it almost burned our house down in May. Okay, so I forgot about that part. And then I'm also thinking about-

Shannon:

Well, and also, I mean, the pandemic obviously of systemic racism and we broke quarantine and went into Hollywood and marched together.

Kerri:

[crosstalk 00:09:40]. That's right. Our first break of quarantine was to go to the protest around George Floyd. That's totally right. And you and I also did Election Defense, remember?

Shannon:

Oh my gosh.

Kerri:

We did it on Election Day in Beverly Hills, when all those Trump [crosstalk 00:09:52].

Shannon:

We defended the Beverly Hills polling station, as we were assigned to do.

Kerri:

Which I just want to say may sound ridiculous to people, but Beverly Hills was an area in Los Angeles where an entire Trump constituency, Proud Boys constituency, was parked throughout the entire summer leading up to the election, right.

Shannon:

Yep.

Kerri:

So, strangely, it was a hotbed for confrontation. And we signed up to defend the polls and to be mediators and de-escalators and make sure people felt safe going to the polls and weren't being intimidated by all of that.

Shannon:

Yeah. Because literally, not even a block away from that polling station, there was a barricaded parade of people and trucks going by and-

Kerri:

Weird.

Shannon:

It was weird.



Kerri:

It's back to this has been a weird year.

Shannon:

But we met. I met you in New York. It was around the time that you were starting CTZNWELL, it was around the time that I was starting my podcast, SoulFeed.

Kerri:

SoulFeed. Yeah.

Shannon:

And so yeah, I never would've imagined this either.

Kerri:

Right. We've come a long way, baby. And I feel like we're revealing something to the world like, "Shannon and I live together."

Shannon:

We share a wall.

Kerri:

We share-

Shannon:

Currently it's raining in Topanga, which never happens. And the wall is dripping.

Kerri:

When we have family dinner, Shannon's there. We've also had Christmas and Thanksgiving together and all the holidays, which has been really beautiful. So anyway, so I just want to say that being in relationship with you in this way during a very difficult and profound time has really... I understand intellectually, right, the idea of community care and mutual care, but I really understood it on a visceral and an embodied level in my relationship with you, especially given that we were constantly responding to threat in different ways.

Kerri:

And it's changed me, I think about that... We're going to be moving soon and I'm away from you, which is going to break my heart, but I'm like-

Shannon:

I'm going to cry.

Kerri:

But I'm like, "How do I recreate this..." I don't know what to even call it because I don't want to put a name on it. It's like, "But how do I recreate this sense of mutuality and community?"

Shannon:

Yeah. The collective care. Collective of shared experience-

Kerri:

Totally. Totally.

Shannon:

... and shared care like, "I've got you." That's how I feel about you and Trevor and our, whatever the name is for this, is like collective care like, "I've got you."

Kerri:

Well, and I also just want to say that the other thing that happens when you share a wall with someone is you're in really close quarters. You know everything about me, next to Trevor and a couple of girlfriends, do you know what I mean? You know as much about our life. You've seen us in breakdown and temper tantrums, and you've heard us fight and you've heard us love and all of... Do you know what I'm saying?

Kerri:

There's also something about allowing yourself to be witnessed when you're living with community and how you really have to have the deepest kind of trust, right, to let yourself, 24/7, be witnessed and be accompanied by other people. And that too was, I think, really profound. And I couldn't have... I don't know that I could have done that with anyone else, Shannon, do you know what I'm saying? I couldn't do that with just anyone. And so it's a testament to who you are, and to the depth of our relationship.

Shannon:

I love you. And it's familial, and I'm-

Kerri:

You will always be family, now.

Shannon:

Same. You're hooked. We went through the coronavirus pandemic together and so much more. And it's... yeah, it's intimacy, and it's not like... I mean, not to make it sound like social media relating and learning is inherently bad, but it's not the same kind of intimacy as sharing sound and meals and vibrations with people.

Kerri:

Yeah. Energy.

Shannon:

Energy, choices, holidays, it's-

Kerri:

Events, right. Threats, celebrations. I mean, you wrote a book in this house.

Shannon:

Yeah. Well, and that's what... That's another reason I'm so grateful for you is when I... You found this house and I was looking to move to Topanga because I needed to ground myself to write the book. I was floating around, I was trying to be nomadic and I didn't know where I was going to write the book. The place I was thinking of writing the book in Hudson, New York fell through.

Kerri:

Right.

Shannon:

Then I was like, "Okay, I've got to go back to LA." You were just looking for places in LA. And so I was like, "Where," can I cuss on this podcast?

Kerri:

Abso-fucking-lutely.

Shannon:

"Where the fuck am I going to write this book?" And my nervous system needs to be grounded in order for me to do it. I knew that. And you said, "We're looking for places in Topanga. There might be an extra room. There might be an extra guest house. There might be an extra something." And I remember looking at you, I think we were on the beach for your birthday, and I was like, "If you find something, I'm in." And I just felt such a... I knew it would be good with you. I knew that I could trust you. And so for both of us to come here with this intention to complete this commitment to our books has also been-

Kerri:

It's been so special. And what's so funny is that I was looking at another place at the time when I was like, "Would you consider living with us in this suite?" in a house that we were going to get. And that fell through. And so then we got this place, not knowing... We got this place, and the unit next door was already inhabited. And the first day we got here, we were moving in and she said, "Michelle next door is moving out." It was just so-

Shannon:

Wow.

Kerri:

It was so magical, and I texted you right away and I said, "I have the perfect person for that place." And I think you had it a week later.

Shannon:  
Yeah.

Kerri:  
It was fucking perfect. So anyway, so I just want to also speak to the... I don't think you can do this with just anyone, right. And it's a practice, right, learning how to hold one another in intimacy, learning how to hold one another in the full spectrum of emotion and response and life and life's experiences, and...

Shannon:  
It's a privilege to know people. I think that that's what I'm so grateful for is I feel like you really know me, and I really know you on a level that you could really only experience if you enter a family with someone.

Kerri:  
Totally. Totally.

Shannon:  
And it's not always easy, but it is a privilege. And I mean, I love it. I think that's what I want to live for, is real relationships where I see and feel and know who people actually are.

Kerri:  
And when you were speaking about social media, you're right. So much of our interaction now is performed. We're performing or we're demonstrating who we want to be, the most perfect, aesthetic, woke-sounding version of ourselves on social media, usually to get a response or to get a rise out of people or to be validated like all of the social media research is showing that that's sort of a lot of the motivation for many of us and how we get hooked by that drug. And this is so different than that. I didn't get to perform... it was like, "Here I am. Here's me and my messiest self. Here's me in my pajamas. Here's me..." Sometimes I would go outside and water the plants in my underwear, "Hey, Shannon. What's up?"

Shannon:  
"Just watering the basil, dear."

Kerri:  
"Just getting some limes from the lime tree in my underwear."

Shannon:  
I'm like, "Oh, there's Kerri grabbing a lime. Okay. I guess she's making a salad."

Kerri:  
So anyway, so what you're speaking about, it's just making me really reflect on intimacy, not like in the way that we think about it romantically, but intimacy of relationship, intimacy of truth, right, intimacy of letting ourselves be fully, fully, fully seen and received. And I just want to say this

feels like such a good segue to your book because you write so much about that, about living your truth, your book is called Trust Your Truth. And I feel like this book is an invitation for us to not just trust our knowing, but to allow ourselves to be seen and to be felt.

Shannon:

Yeah. Yeah. And what does it look like to... like you were just talking about the projection that we put on social media of what we want people to know about who we are, what we want to present to the world, and I mean, that can be beautiful because it's what we're aspiring towards. I mean, it can also not be beautiful, it can be [crosstalk 00:19:29].

Kerri:

Well, especially during a pandemic where there's social distancing, that was a lifeline for so many people.

Shannon:

Of connection, of conversation, of learning, of education, of seeing what's happening globally, of all types of resonance that would be shielded from people if there weren't social media. But, I'm sure we'll maybe talk about this, but I'm studying depth psychology, which is Carl Jung. And it's like, the persona is the stuff we want to see and we want other people to see. And then the shadow is everything that we want to hide, ignore, disown, disconnect from.

Shannon:

And so, when you're in real relationship with someone and when you're exploring your relationship with truth, you're actually saying like, "I want to see the shadow." And yeah, everyone has a persona, you can't not have a persona. That's what it is to put yourself out into the world. But what is it like to... Yeah. I mean, it's shadow work, essentially. Truth work is shadow work because it's a commitment to saying, "I'm willing to see-"

Kerri:

All of you.

Shannon:

"... all of you, all of me." And it's a commitment to the whole, W-H-O-L-E, instead of just the pieces, the fractions, the fragments of who we are. And I think that's what healing is, it is becoming whole. So yeah, truth is like this... I think it's a commitment and a willingness to see more clearly, even as we can never quite see fully.

Kerri:

Well, and I feel like also to reveal. I'm just thinking about love too, right, when you're in relationship. And this kind of goes back to what we were saying about intimacy and being neighbors around how real love is being willing to reveal your shadow and trust that the other person will love you anyway. It's like, "Will you love me, even in my shadow? Will you love me, even in my darkest places?" and how hard that can be in a relationship. And the other way

around, "Can I love you? Can I love you at your messiest? Can I love you at your most fucked up?" And how to me that's such deep... that is deep work.

Shannon:

Yeah, and deep repair because behind that persona, I just keep thinking of the social media and the photos we want people to see and the words we want people to read, but underneath that fear of, "Oh, I don't want to present my shadow because then I won't be loved," there's a real injury there. And so to have the luxury, the privilege, the honor of having relationships where there can be repairs and say like, "You can see all of me. You can see the shitty parts of myself." And when I say shitty, I mean the shadow, the stuff that I'm working on, the stuff that I don't like, the mess. And to have the experience of someone loving you anyway, I mean, we all come from these families where we have our own concoction of rupture.

Kerri:

Totally.

Shannon:

And so-

Kerri:

And conditional love.

Shannon:

Conditional love. So how do we have new experiences when we're afraid, for good reason... I'm saying we, this is my experience, is like, "I'm afraid to show you a certain part of myself because I'm afraid if I show you that you won't love me." And so then I create these defenses of like, "No, no, no, no, no. Don't show that part." And then I'm being inauthentic.

Kerri:

And you're making me think about self love too now because I'm just thinking back to my ex-marriage, what is it called? My divorce, the person I was married to and am no longer married to.

Shannon:

All of those things. Every single one of those.

Kerri:

And I rarely talk about this on the podcast. So I'm like, "What are my words? Use your words, Kerri." But I'm just thinking about how so much of what I brought to why it didn't work out for us was my inability to love his shadow. And I can see now how that was directly related to my inability to love mine. And how perfectionism, and even the self-help, fix-yourself culture had really swept me off my feet so much so that I couldn't meet him where he was. I couldn't accept him for who he was. All I wanted to do was change him in the way that I've been obsessively

trying to change myself my whole life, right. So I'm just thinking about that too, how you have to get right with yourself too, right, if you want to be the kind of person who can love fully.

Shannon:

Yeah. Yeah. And that's what's so challenging, I think about relationship, is you don't get to do one and then the other. We exist in relationship. And that's the lie of individualism, is like, "Let me go get perfect. Let me post my perfect self on social media. Let me have everyone want to like fucking bang me because I'm so hot online." And like-

Kerri:

You are very cute online, Shannon.

Shannon:

But like-

Kerri:

Everyone follow @shannonalgeo on Instagram, he's amazing.

Shannon:

But then it's like... I don't know. I just lost my train of thought because now I can only think about-

Kerri:

How good your feed is.

Shannon:

... me twerking online and...

Kerri:

Your leaf dance. We won't talk about that.

Shannon:

Oh my, I have to send you the updated leaf dance. We won't talk about that. I injured my eye at a wedding because it was at a conservatory, so there was a lot of plants, and I got down with a plant. The plant was my dance partner, and we got a little nasty, and it turns out you can't be reckless without consequences.

Kerri:

Turns out the plant poked you in the eye.

Shannon:

The plant poked me in the eye, but I'm okay.

Kerri:

And that's not a metaphor.

Shannon:

No. No. It's the most action I've gotten since I moved in with Kerri Kelly. Living with Kerri Kelly is great, but it may also come with celibacy.

Kerri:

Because you love me so much you're like, "I can't have sex with anyone else."

Shannon:

No, that's a personal problem, it's not your fault.

Kerri:

I want to be the kind of person that inspires everyone to make mad love all the time with all the things. But I'm glad you made mad love with a plant.

Shannon:

I did. It was beautiful.

Kerri:

How very organic of you?

Shannon:

Oh my gosh. Okay. So to share this podcast, I will post a reel of the video of me dancing with the plant, which I have avoided posting [crosstalk 00:26:28].

Kerri:

As heard on CTZN Podcast. I mean, Shannon's dancing is just... Yeah, it's infamous.

Shannon:

We had a dance party in your living room. [crosstalk 00:26:39].

Kerri:

Many. Many.

Shannon:

Well, yes, many. But there's this one particular one where it was literally just you and me for like three hours for kind of a weird amount of time, it was like a very long time [crosstalk 00:26:49].

Kerri:

Because nobody else wanted to have dance party, except Shannon and I.

Shannon:

And it was like-



Kerri:

Nothing was going on either. It wasn't like we were at a party, it was like Sunday afternoon.

Shannon:

Yep. And we were like, "We're having a dance party [crosstalk 00:27:00]."

Kerri:

Oh my god. I remember we were sweating. We danced... This is during the pandemic, so I think we were cooped up. We were feeling probably really static. We danced so hard, we were soaked in sweat. Yeah.

Shannon:

Drenched. I've never danced with another person. It was like I was at a wedding.

Kerri:

It was like a marathon.

Shannon:

I was soaked.

Kerri:

It was bootcamp.

Shannon:

It was a whole situation. Oh my... I love dancing with you. I love your playlists. You're good for a get down.

Kerri:

I love a get down. Yeah. I love dancing and I love play. And I love also that as much as we've shared hard stuff, we've shared so much joy in this house. I'm going to cry because what people don't know is I'm moving out of the house now. And so Shannon and I are also live on this podcast, processing.

Shannon:

Yes.

Kerri:

We're going to be consciously uncoupling in the next couple of months. And so yeah, this is our tribute podcast to our time here.

Shannon:

A ritual holding this in space and time forever.

Kerri:

Yes. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. All right. I want to talk more about... I don't want to talk about sex and relationship... But no, I do. Actually, I want to talk more about sex and relationship because I think your book.... so I want to say your book talks a lot about relationship and your book was kind of inspired by a relationship that you had and you write about that in your book and the role of navigating one's truth in relationship when often truths are in conflict. And you called it the inconvenient truth. Tell us about that.

Shannon:

Yeah. Well, dating sucks because it's a minefield of past wounding coupled with no foundation of trust.

Kerri:

Coupled with performance.

Shannon:

Performance. And there's no trust yet. When you're first dating someone, "Why should they trust me? And why should I trust them?" And there's so much ghosting that happens in online dating, like the person will just disappear. One person will just fall off.

Kerri:

That's a norm now.

Shannon:

It's so normal. It's so normal to just... you just fall off, you just disappear or someone will reach out and be like, "Hey, I'd love to hang out with you again." And there's just no response. And so the attachment wound gets perpetuated and perpetuated and it's this cycle of people hurting each other. And I-

Kerri:

It's precarious in that way.

Shannon:

And I'm tempted to say, especially in the gay community, but I don't know if that's just my experience, I think it happens across communities. And I just didn't feel good about being a dick, like being an asshole to people that I genuinely liked, but I didn't feel a romantic future with them. Maybe we go on one or two dates, and my truth is that, "This is a no for me." And then it's like, "Okay. I'm in a position now where this person is kind of into me. I can feel that they want more and I can feel myself being like, 'No.' So how do I reject this person's bid for more connection kindly, lovingly, and honestly? How do I honor my truth and communicate it to them, honoring their humanity also, but also just be really real with them?"

Shannon:

And I just have reframed, I think, telling people your truth is a gift. They might be pissed about it. They might be angry. They might be disappointed. They might be rejected. It might trigger their attachment wounds or their past relationship stuff. It might do all of that stuff. But to keep people hanging and lingering and wondering and hoping, I think that that's violent, I think that that's mean, I think it's cruel, and yet we all do it.

Shannon:

Even as I sit here on my pulpit of like, "We should do better," I still have done this from time to time, it ends up happening. But my commitment is to try and communicate to people when it's a no for me, and to do it honestly, and lovingly, and kindly, and clearly that, "This is over."

Kerri:

You are so good at this. And I'm going to plug your social media feed again because sometimes you share your breakup texts with people or your breakup conversations with people, which I think is really helpful, right, that people have some modeling and some words around like, "Here's a way to be in integrity with your truth." That's really what you're saying, it's like, "I have to honor my truth."

Kerri:

And it's also making me think about how often when we withhold our truth, how there's often codependency in there or you want to not cause that person discomfort or cause them pain... it's like caretaking. It's like a really toxic form of caretaking, when in fact you actually just don't even let them have an experience. You actually withhold an experience from someone by not engaging them in the conversation.

Shannon:

Yes. And I see it as selfish because if I have clarity, why should I withhold my clarity from them? They deserve to know my clarity. Because they could spend another week, two weeks, thinking about me, wondering if we're going to meet again, wondering if I'm just busy. If I have clarity, it's generous, but it's also, I think, appropriate and just in integrity to communicate the clarity. And like you're saying, let people have their response, don't caretake. And what's wild is, the reason I share them on social media is because I find for me to send some of these texts that I've sent to people takes so much work for me. I don't want to, I don't want to have to. It's like, "What do I owe this person? We went on one fucking date."

Kerri:

You have to deal with your own discomfort.

Shannon:

Yeah. I'm still maybe in the process of getting clear. "Do I want to explore it more? Do I not want?" So I've experienced the days, three or four days it'll take me to write one of those texts. And so I understand why people don't do that work because it kind of just sucks. So I thought if I share this, maybe people will resonate with it. And then it turns out that I think a lot of people are

like, "Oh my god," because it's kind of radical. Which is so weird, why is this radical to just be honest with someone about where you stand?

Kerri:

Yes. It shouldn't be radical and yet it's... I'm just thinking about how we live in a culture of conflict avoidance, right. And what you're describing is a really healthy approach to conflict and to confrontation. And I'm just thinking about how the kind of truth-telling that you're talking about, and you write a ton about this in the book, also translates to conversations about oppression and difference and inequality, and how often we withhold our truth either because it's riskier for some of us or because we're taking care of someone else's fragile feelings, and how much of a disservice that does to the larger conversation and the possibility of progress and transformation.

Shannon:

And I also just want to say that for anyone who's listening to this and doesn't feel safe, for whatever reason, speaking their truth to someone and closing something out, that that's okay too. Because I do get if you have had someone get aggressive or violent with you in response to... I mean, it's scary. It's like, "I'm going to reject them. I don't know how this person who I don't have a foundation of trust with is going to respond to that."

Kerri:

That's right. So there's risk.

Shannon:

There's risk. But I will say, and this could just be luck of the draw or maybe, I don't know, but people have said, "Thank you." Pretty much everyone is like, "Thank you so much for letting me know."

Kerri:

Well, it's a very human thing to do to be like, "I acknowledge that you're human that deserves a response from me. And I respect you enough to give it to you." It makes me think also about accountability as the way in which we include each other and take care of each other. When we hold one another accountable, what we're really doing is saying that like, "You matter." Because there are a lot of people that I don't hold accountable and it's usually because I just don't care. Do you know what I mean? So it's like when you actually go out of your way to intervene or to engage, or to pull someone aside and be like, "I want to give you this feedback."

Shannon:

It's an act of love.

Kerri:

It's total act of radical love. And yet, because of dominant culture, because of how we understand accountability as punitive, right, we don't have that relationship with accountability, that's why people avoid it. But I just feel like what you're modeling in your book and in your

social media feeds and with dating, among other things, is really, really, really important because that's the culture shift we need, right.

Shannon:

Well, and there's just one more thing I want to say about this is there's also a selfish component too, which I think can be motivating also is like, I don't want there to be... If I can minimize people.... Well, first of all, I want to minimize hurting people.

Kerri:

Of course.

Shannon:

First and foremost. But I also just don't want there to be like a bunch of people who are like, "Fuck that guy," or who hold this incompleteness with me because I see it as a karmic, it feels like a karmic hook to something that's incomplete. And then there's just kind of a cloudy bit of messiness around my field. And so there's also a self-motivating like, "I just want to be clear and let people go because it's like..." not let people go, but let those experiences go.

Kerri:

Yeah. It almost feels... I love what you were just saying around the muddiness and the messiness of not honoring your truth, and how honoring your truth and working with your truth, especially in a relationship where it's more precarious, it's almost like clean up, right. You just have to maintain, do you know what I mean? It's like maintenance.

Shannon:

[crosstalk 00:38:25]. It's practice. Yeah. It's practice. It's maintenance. What do they say? "You can't get clean off of yesterday's shower." Although maybe a couple of days, pandemic style, or like you don't just do yoga once or you don't just meditate once. It is a practice. And I mean, your work is so brilliant, the way that you model this and practice this is, how do we take these practices into relationship? I mean, that's where the... I don't want to minimize self-practice because it's so important and it is foundational.

Kerri:

But it's never just self, to your point.

Shannon:

Right. It's relational.

Kerri:

We're not independent, isolated, separate beings, right. We're interconnected with everyone and everything around us, and so it's never not relational.

Shannon:

Yeah. When I do yoga, I'm like, "There's my dad. And there's my mom. And I'm dealing with this and emotions are..." So even a quote-unquote "solo practice" is still relating to all of this unfinished business that we sometimes have with people and ourselves.

Kerri:

And I feel like it's funny because you talk a lot about integrity in the book, also one of my favorite words. Also one of my favorite words and I saw that you defined it. Integer is the root of the word integrity, which means to become whole, it's my favorite, favorite thing. And that when you honor your truth, when you're living in integrity, it's a process of returning to wholeness. And I love that so much. And it's just making me think about how, often when a truth is being revealed to me, or if I'm reckoning with a truth or maybe realizing a truth that I've buried, that I've shut down and locked in a lock box somewhere in my body, that what accompanies it is discomfort. There's a physical recoiling like, "Ah." Panic, anxiety, discomfort.

Kerri:

Even sometimes, for me, pain can manifest. There's a visceral component to it. And as I was reading about that, I was just thinking about how, wouldn't it be amazing if we changed our relationship with discomfort, and when we felt discomfort rise up because a truth is being revealed, instead of denying it and avoiding it, we got curious about it? Like, "What is this? What is this thing? Wait, something's happening in me and I need to pay attention to that because something needs resolution or something needs to be revealed or something needs to come to this." I just feel like there's an invitation inside of that, that feels so essential to how we heal.

Shannon:

Yes. Yeah. And it's, again, the conflict avoidance, is the pain avoidance, it's the shame avoidance. "That's broken, bad and wrong about me." Or, "That sensation is too scary. So I don't want to look at it." Which R-E-S-P-E-C-T, in some moments that might be the right thing to do, but if we never... also integrity is integration, and we can't go through this human experience without becoming disintegrated. When we're in the womb, we're experiencing an experience of oneness, our needs are immediately met, we're connected to the umbilical cord of the mother.

Shannon:

And then that gets broken at birth, and there's an experience of trauma at birth. There's a breaking, there's a disconnection, and all of a sudden we need to have relationship to have our needs met. And then life happens and shit happens and trauma happens and family dynamic happens, and systemic-

Kerri:

And the shields go up.

Shannon:

Yeah. And we become disintegrated-

Kerri:

And hardened.

Shannon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Hardened around our disintegration. And integrity, integer, integrare is to become whole. And so I feel like there are threads that we pull back into our woven basket, there's these just disintegrated threads. And it's like, "How do I reintegrate this part of me that got really hurt, injured, wounded, scared, fucked by that experience?" And then through new relationships and new moments, I mean, hopefully we get to experience something new that's reparative, but we will also experience more ruptures too.

Shannon:

And so it's just that integration process of that willingness, to your point, look at those uncomfortable, scary things. Who can we look at those things with? Is it a therapist? Is it a minister? Is it a trusted loved one? Is it a friend? Is it a family member? Who are the people who we can sit with and be real with and practice being loved with?

Kerri:

I feel like you're so, so good at this. And I know you're in the process of becoming a therapist right now. And this is one of the things I also just want to love about you is that everything you write about in this book, you walk. You are living this book. It is clearly your life's work and you're not just living it in theory, I see you practicing and applying and deepening the work all the time. And it's not just in your dating life, it's also in your friendships and it's in your professional work. It's with your clients.

Kerri:

And I'm always amazed when you tell me stories of how you've confronted someone that's hurt you or how you've given someone critical feedback. I just think that that skill that I see you refining, right, over and over and over and over again, it's a muscle that we all need to build. And I'm just like, it makes me wonder, imagine if we all had that skill. I'm just thinking about it even politically, imagine if we all had a skill around confrontation and conflict that was superhuman, that respected the humanity of the other person, but also honored the truth and the knowing that we each have, like how our conversations would sound different and maybe our political landscape would feel really different.

Shannon:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, and I so appreciate that reflection. And I also, as I hear that, I hold the years of injury and toxic processing of feedback that has forced me-

Kerri:

That you had to go through.

Shannon:

... to finesse this skill. Because when I had conflict in me that I needed to communicate growing up, it was not handled, it could not be... I was too intense, I was too much. So if I had a problem

that was connected to the family dynamic, I was the problem because I was naming it, because I was affected by it, because I was pissed by it, because I had an issue about it. And so I had so much learned experience that when I communicate something important to me, my world explodes. And it's only been, I mean, this is an ongoing practice because I continue to have inner explosions where I fear that no one is going to be able to hear me or understand me. And yet at the same time, there is a fire in me that is communicating that this is so important that I must communicate this.

Kerri:

And that's the thing your book is pointing people to, right, you're like, "Listen to that voice."

Shannon:

Yes. Listen to that voice, that urgent need within yourself, and then cultivate a way to bring that out into the world, in a way that is healthy to self and others. And so just like that finessing and that relearning of every time I bring up something that's uncomfortable to someone, I am in the practice of being totally scared that I'm going to explode the relationship and mostly, thankfully, having a reparative experience of realizing that conflict can happen and people can be okay.

Kerri:

That reminds me of a quote that I saw the other day that totally made me think of you. It said, "Critical feedback given with grace is one of the highest forms of care." I was like, "Can we all do that, please?"

Shannon:

Right? Right?

Kerri:

I feel like this is your next book, by the way.

Shannon:

Oh, wow.

Kerri:

How to break up with people and how to give really good feedback. I really do, I think that your skill around this is epic.

Shannon:

Critical feedback given with care... Oh, no.

Kerri:

Given with grace.

Kerri:

Given with grace.



Shannon:  
Is one of the highest forms of care.

Kerri:  
I don't remember where I saw it, I saw it on Instagram. So I just want to like name that there's someone brilliant that said that, and I don't remember. But-

Shannon:  
Yeah. Well, whenever you tell me that I'm good at this, I'm like, "Oh my god."

Kerri:  
You are so good.

Shannon:  
I'm like, "Wow. You're like the queen of the thing."

Kerri:  
I don't think I'm good at feedback, actually. I think I'm actually quite shit at it. I think I'm quite shit, I sugarcoat a lot. I try to overcompensate. I really cloud the truth of what I'm saying with lots of flowery words and re-encouragement that I think it can be very confusing for people to get feedback from me. And some of that is I'm taking care of them, which is about control. And some of that is I don't want to hurt people's feelings. But anyway, I watch you do it, and I'm like, "Oh, that's how you do it." I want to write notes down and-

Shannon:  
Well, yeah. And it comes from a place for me that there is no other option because the amount of toxic resentment that I'm capable of holding otherwise, is harmful to myself, my body and the relationship. So that's the way that it occurs to me, that sees it as a need, that this must be done. And back to what you were saying earlier, especially to the people who I care most about, it is the greatest form of care like, "I love you so much that I have to talk to you about this." Now this doesn't make it any easier, I don't think it gets easier, but I think what can happen is you can get more confident that the results can be healthy.

Kerri:  
Less afraid, maybe. More courageous. The other thing I think that your book does that feels really radical is that, and I'm just thinking about how you wrote this book during a time when so many systemic truths were being revealed, and many had been revealed for a very long time and were just becoming visible to many people, right. But I'm just thinking about that too, how there's the truth of our inner knowing and then there's what we were taught. There's how we were conditioned. There's who we were socialized and trained to be.

Kerri:

And I feel like your book also inspired me to be really discerning about teasing those things apart like, "What is my actual truth and what is the should truth, the path I was told I should take, or the education I was told is the absolute truth about how we got here and who we are?" And I feel like your book is an invitation to ask hard questions about, "Is that really fucking true?"

Shannon:

Yeah. And that's the inquiry is, like you said, teasing apart, pulling apart, what is mine? What do I want to choose for this life? Like Mary Oliver says, "There's one wild and precious life." And deconditioning from the oppressive systems that cause us harm and then cause us to cause harm to others.

Kerri:

Totally.

Shannon:

And it's ongoing work. And I think... but if we just develop that awareness of, "I actually don't have to attach my identity to the conditioning." Because I remember when I was having my whole, well, it's ongoing, of course, but when I was having an intensive experience around really waking up to racism and privilege and the privilege of my whiteness and able-bodied, cisgender male, and all the things, it was so disorienting to my mental construct of the world that I thought I lived in.

Kerri:

It's like, hella cognitive dissonance, right?

Shannon:

Yeah. And-

Kerri:

It's like, "What the fuck?"

Shannon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, and I remember learning the concept of being right-sized and a lot of white people taking up physical space more than they are even aware. And so I remember I was doing a yoga nidra training with Tracee Stanley.

Kerri:

Love her.

Shannon:

And it was mostly women of color, and this was right around that time. And so I was just shrinking in that space because I was walking on eggshells, afraid to offend or do something wrong or make a mistake or unconsciously just be too big.

Kerri:  
Become invisible, right.

Shannon:  
Yeah.

Kerri:  
Fade into the wallpaper type of thing.

Shannon:  
Yeah. And on one hand, I'm grateful that I have that awareness because I think that's the awareness we need to have is like, "Am I?" That's the type of questioning that we need to do, or I need to do as a white person is, "Am I taking up too much space? What am I unconscious of that I'm doing in this space?" And then what was so healing about that experience for me was I was getting too paranoid with it. And the feedback I got from Tracee and some of the other participants in that training was... I remember Tracy saying to me, "Shannon, do you think that I'm so small that you need to adjust your size for me?"

Kerri:  
Whoa.

Shannon:  
"We feel you recoiling. And we actually like need you to show up here."

Kerri:  
And take up space.

Shannon:  
Yeah. And so-

Kerri:  
Authentic space. It's not like [crosstalk 00:54:24].

Shannon:  
Authentic space. Be myself. And so I share that example because I was really struggling with like, "What's true? What is truth? Am I too big? Am I too small? Am I..." And it was really uncomfortable and very disorienting. And I think that that's the work is questioning our conditioning and finding how we can integrate it into who we are so that we can show up with awareness, especially around marginalized communities, depending on our positionality. But for me, that's the ongoing practice. That was a pivotal moment in an ongoing practice of discernment.

Kerri:

And I love that story because, and I've had people say that to me too, that people of color, when I'm trying to be like a good white person, I'm putting that in air quotes, can energetically feel me not bringing my whole self and how that's a disservice to everyone. And so some of what I'm learning from you is that asking hard questions about "How was I conditioned and socialized? Is this true?" I'm even thinking of how like, "Is this true that inquiry is related to trauma?" And how trauma enables us to create stories and patterns and types of behaviors that often become a thing other than what it was, right.

Kerri:

So being in this radical inquiry, and this is what your book is inviting, being in this radical inquiry around, "Is that true?" is not the same as smalling down. You can be critical, you can ask hard questions. You can decide that everything I have learned is untrue, and that doesn't mean that you, as a human being, are in truth and wholeness still. It's just like, "How do we shed and still stay our whole self, still participate fully in the human experience, still give everything we've got in relationship?" And I really love that nuance that you're bringing to the conversation.

Shannon:

Yeah. And it's in relationship. I was called to that training, and I needed to hear that from Tracee. And I love Tracee, and I respect Tracee, and she and I have mentorship and friendship. And so, and this is something I've learned from you, is that the healing is in relationship, we heal together. And you're so good at this, is being in relationship with people, being in real intimate relationship contact, checking in on people, not just me on the other side of your wall, but like-

Kerri:

"Knock, knock."

Shannon:

So thank you for modeling that-

Kerri:

I love that.

Shannon:

... to so many people because it's a practice and it's new. It's new patterning for so many of us.

Kerri:

[crosstalk 00:57:22] Totally. It's so divergent from how we've been trained to be individualized and to assume we are isolated and to become self-sufficient and independent. And you're right, and I will go after self-help all the way, I actually think this illusion that we can connect to our whole truth, independent, out of relationship is bullshit.

Kerri:

I think we can meditate and we can listen and we can learn to trust our truth, as is the name of your book. We can learn to work more effectively with our intuition and with our... And we are

not independent beings, and actually, in my experience, it's been relationship that has been the mirror that has invited me to see so much more clearly into both who I am and what's possible.

Shannon:

Yeah. And it's the individual, "Let me not need anyone."

Kerri:

Yeah.

Shannon:

What a coping strategy that is because-

Kerri:

What a toxic coping strategy that is.

Shannon:

Yeah. But it's like, "If I just don't need anyone, then I'll always be able to control and figure this out." And it's not possible.

Kerri:

Well, and we have an epidemic of loneliness, right. There's all this research around the cost of loneliness and social isolation that is a product of the myth of individualism. And I actually feel like, in some ways, we're bringing this conversation completely full circle because it's like-

Shannon:

And also preparing for something coming in the works, aka Kerri's book.

Kerri:

Oh, shut up. I was like, "Where are you going with this?" I was like, "I'm not pregnant, Shannon."

Shannon:

Yes, you are.

Kerri:

Yeah. I'm going to birth a damn book at some point, after your book. But I was actually bringing it back to how grateful I am for the experience I've had here with you, and how living in this configuration with you, and with Trevor and learning how to be a family during really challenging and uncertain times taught me so much about how essential relationship is to healing and to survival. And to survival, and... Fuck, I'm going to miss you.

Shannon:

I'm going to miss you. And no, I have a radius that is the distance you are allowed to move your body from me.

Kerri:

Okay. Let me know what that is so I can find a new place to live, Shannon. Shannon, I'm so... I don't have enough time to tell you all the things I love about you. But I'm grateful for what I've learned from you, and I'm also grateful for the way in which you've held me in this really intimate environment with my whole humanity and with respect and with dignity and with kindness and with joy and with real talk and with truth. I mean, I've learned so much over the last couple of years and I'm always, always, always going to take that with me.

Shannon:

I love you so much.

Kerri:

Oh my gosh, so fucking much. [crosstalk 01:00:39].

Shannon:

You are forever family. Try and get rid of me, you can't.

Kerri:

I am never going to... Are you kidding me? We're going to adopt you and you can come with us to wherever we're going. We're just going to take you everywhere with us. Although in the future, I hope that you're not celibate when you live with us.

Shannon:

Oh yes, the celibacy needs to end. Could it be you, listener?

Kerri:

Listener, could you be the one to break this spell?

Shannon:

Oh my gosh. Did I just hit on your entire... all of CTZN Podcast? Wow. I'm so desperate.

Kerri:

[crosstalk 01:01:10]. I think you just told the entire world that you are available for love.

Shannon:

Yes.

Kerri:

And that is what this podcast is. Maybe that's what I'm going to name the podcast, Available For Love.

Shannon:

Oh my gosh. Okay, Tina Turner What's Love Got to Do with It, has to take us out here. Trevor.

Kerri:  
That's right, Trevor.

Kerri:  
Thank you, Shannon.

Shannon:  
Thank you. I love you. Thank you.

Kerri:  
I love you. Okay.