

**Candice Schutter:** [00:00:00] Welcome to another episode of The Deeper Pulse and the continuation of the 'cult'ure series.

Before we dive back into the main feed content, just a quick heads up on what's streaming over on Patreon. Last week, I dropped a one-hour bonus episode called *Spirit Barbie: The Performance of Wellness*. A deconstruction of ways in which group affiliations come to shape and eventually dictate the way we talk, move, eat, and socially engage. Part of my cult recovery is working overtime to shake my Spirit Barbie persona, and Tracy and I have a lot of fun with this topic.

And later this week I'm dropping part one of a two part deep dive into the law of attraction and how our understandable yearning makes us vulnerable to magical thinking and [00:01:00] the high minded hope that good vibes will finally free us from systems that have us hamster wheel running in circles. I have a lot of repair work to do around this topic and loads of personal stories to share. Maria Skinner and Tracy Stamper both joined me to add their personal insights and experiences to the mix.

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Okay, I left you hanging last week, so let's move on to today's episode and the second half of a two part conversation that I've been both nervous and excited to share with you. Let's dive in.

So, if you're a regular listener, you may have noticed that I took last week off of the main feed. I hadn't planned to. It's actually the first time I've ever taken a break right in the middle of rolling out a two part conversation.

But, it was [00:02:00] necessary. Allow me to explain.

When I really dove into the research surrounding today's subject matter, let's just say I got in a little bit over my head.

Cultural Appropriation. It's a beast of a topic. And as a lead up to today's release, for weeks I've been taking an info from a variety of sources. Checking out books, listening to podcasts, reading through online discussion boards. Doing my best to get a feel for many different perspectives.

And right when I thought I had a pretty good handle on the subject, on the day, in fact, that I was all set to record this here intro, I ended up in an impromptu discussion with a long time friend, who, it just so happens, is also a professor of anthropology. And her doctoral take on the subject matter was so vast, it was humbling. Our conversation blew the subject wide open for me and I've spent the last week sort of [00:03:00] sorting through the shrapnel. Nothing she said really changed my mind so much as it led me to realize just how complex of a topic this really is. And really how ill equipped I am to speak about it.

And so I just want to say right out of the gate that this is not going to be a comprehensive deconstruction of cultural appropriation. So much as it is a general overview, and a personal commentary on how I've seen it show up in the industries of spirituality and wellness. And of course, a lead in to the second half of my conversation with Aleyah-Erin Lennon.

Now, if you missed episode 65, I highly recommend you circle back, as it lays the foundation for where we go in the second half of our talk.

To very briefly recap, in the last episode, Aleyah and I focused on decolonizing identity work, specifically as it relates to capital-c cult conditioning. Privilege was defined and explored, as well as how a history of colonialism shapes perceptions [00:04:00] and lived experience in a variety of critical ways, related in large part to our social location, or in other words, our culturally prescribed place in an intersectional web of social hierarchies.

Before I go into the lead into part two, however, I'd like to once again reiterate that Aleyah and I are speaking from our positionality as white women who are actively learning from BIPOC educators and activists. We're showing up here together to invite folks like us to step forward into the practice of relational accountability, specifically through Aleyah's threefold methodology of deep listening, critical self reflection, and embodied action.

In the second half, Aleyah will once again share about her personal experiences, academic research, and the decade and a half she's spent working for and with indigenous activists and leaders. Now one of the reasons I chose Aaliyah to have this conversation with is because of her approach. She brings a level of trauma informed compassion [00:05:00] and psychological nuance to this conversation that I really value. Especially because we're going to be hitting on some touchy subjects.

Now, most modern spirituality and wellness practices that are currently being bottled and sold, they're amalgamations, a blending of many different influences that typically center around an idealistic promise. For example, the Org, the mind body fitness practice that my guests and I have been sharing about on and off throughout the course of the 'cult'ure series, it's a brand that promises to be a delivery system for a holistic health and lifestyle transformation.

And it prides itself on being a veritable smorgasbord of all the things. The implication being that, well, more is more. And in Org circles, it's believed that this fusion of influences is precisely what makes it the best of the best, unlike and superior to any other fitness modality out [00:06:00] there. And this grandiosity is not at all an exaggeration. That's how folks in the fold genuinely feel about it.

Now, as practitioners, we were told that the practice was "inspired by" nine different movement forms. Then, we were given a one day crash course in "the energy of" each of these forms, theoretically weaving together a comprehensive body of work borrowing from dance, martial arts, and various healing modalities. Upon the completion of a seven day training, we were told that we'd earned the right to speak with authority, or at the very least to wax poetic, about modalities with long and involved histories. Yoga, aikido, and tai chi just to name a few. As if we had a clear and embodied understanding of the roots, cultural origins, and purpose of any of these modalities.

But this is not just a problem at the Org. "Inspired by" is a phrase very often used in [00:07:00] wellness circles. It's become a bit of a commercial loophole wherein we sorta kinda give credit, but keep the focus mostly on ourselves and the very real and burning desires that are ultimately driving us toward the cultural and spiritual appropriation that often occurs in wellness spaces.

And you see, Aleyah and I are very sensitive to this. This deep hunger for primordial relief. Disheartened by the capitalist grind, something other-than-this, has an immediate and exotic appeal. The more foreign the source, the greater the seduction. Especially when we encounter refreshing influences that run counter to our own cultural conditioning. Teachings that remind us to slow the hell down, tune into nature and our bodies, and to reach for a more communal approach to life.

Yes, please, more of that.

And I want to say right out of the gate, and this is very much [00:08:00] inspired by Aleyah's work, in this episode no one will be shamed for the soulular hunger that drives the desire to reach for anything that offers very real relief in a soul deadening world that is very often driven by productivity and profits.

But sadly, that same hunger, the one that inspires our next level devotion, it can also make us blind to the very real impact of our choices. The exotic allure of spiritual traditions inspired by indigenous histories or cultures all over the world. It's understandable. But when all good intentions aside, these teachings are co opted, it can be a careless reenactment of power over abuse.

If we are in any way reinforcing colonial patterns of entitlement, careless extraction, and systemic exploitation, I suppose the question I have is... our so called healing [00:09:00] practices, are they really living up to their promise?

Cultural appropriation is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, etc of one people or society by members of another and typically more dominant people or society."

Cultural appropriation shows up in a lot of different ways and the read on the particulars is at times highly controversial. Because when it comes to defining appropriation, where do we draw the line? What should cultural acknowledgment look like? And who decides what's appropriate and what isn't?

Some argue that culture is fluid and never static, and that human history has always been in flux, with cultures influencing one another in a disordered and chaotic dance of reciprocal sharing. Some insist that conversations around cultural appropriation are pretty unnecessary. That it's all just an [00:10:00] overreaction to a psychosocial inevitability.

And yet many in the social justice arena argue that this characterization of human culture is overly broad and simplistic. That it overlooks how patterns of colonial dominance have

influenced the sharing and suppression of culture. Appropriation is very often whitewashed as an excuse to justify cultural and spiritual genocide.

And yeah, of course I acknowledge that integration is part of human evolution and that it's a good thing that when cultures come into contact that they are continually influencing one another. When I zoom out and look at the long game, cultural lines will continue to blur more and more over time.

But that doesn't have to mean business as usual, fetishizing and commodifying the beliefs and practices of marginalized cultures. Exploitation shouldn't go unchecked. And, and I say this as a white woman, our collective ignorance, denial, and [00:11:00] arguments in favor of our own purity must be compassionately challenged. And I say compassionately, because as much as I'm a staunch advocate of truth telling, I'm really not all that into gatekeeping. Especially when it involves demonizing and or cancelling folks who are in fact willing to engage but just not quite there in their capacity to acknowledge their blind spots. I'm not interested in enforcing woke culture's rules of engagement, because finger wagging to me feels hypocritical, definitely counterproductive, and not at all a useful way for me to spend my time. So I'm not here to cast shade on anyone.

What I am passionate about is the mitigation of harm and the restoration of authorship where it belongs. And it is my hope that this episode in some way drives considerations around empathy, accountability, and hopefully greater equity.

But again, it's a huge [00:12:00] topic so I'm gonna do my very best to keep this culture series specific, focusing primarily on white led wellness spaces and the common practice of monetizing the ideas, customs, and rituals of a subordinate or marginalized culture without acknowledgement, permission, compensation, or reciprocity of some kind.

And given the conflicts of interest that are inherent, as with the topics we touched upon last week, once we begin deconstructing cultural appropriation, cognitive dissonance is very likely to emerge. And how I see this most often show up when it comes to this topic, wellness arenas that is, is that folks say things like:

But all spiritual truths are universal.

Or:

In the spiritual domain, everything belongs to all of us.

And sentiments of this sort certainly *feel* true when you're lying in savasana, in an air conditioned [00:13:00] room, sweat drenched and contact high on utopian visions, the sound of an Indian sitar playing in the background.

Been there, done that.

Idealism can be utterly intoxicating in wellness spaces. But out in the real world, we actually all know that that's not really how it works. That in actuality, this idea that this, that and the

other belongs to all of us, that it's spiritual bypassing and a blatant disregard for folks who don't have easy access to the privileges that we take for granted on the daily. In fact, the hard to stomach truth is that this *feels* true because how it generally operates is more like: what's mine is mine, and what's yours can be passed off as mine, should I desire, and so be it. It sounds terrible, I know, and we, we don't mean to act like entitled asshats. But once again, see the real deal history of all of this. [00:14:00] Implicit permission is wired into us through longstanding systems of white settler colonial entitlement.

And if you immediately think, but that's not me. I didn't do that.

Okay, great. And are you sure?

Let's take a closer look at that definition again. "The unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of customs practices and ideas from another culture.

Let's look at the first part. Unacknowledged. In other words, one aspect of cultural appropriation is not giving credit where credit is due. We appropriate when we pass something off as our own that isn't, or when we don't acknowledge where that which we are sharing first originated.

So when I circle all the way back to the Org example, many of us were giving credit to those that we were inspired by. We should be in the clear, right? Don't plagiarize. Give credit where [00:15:00] credit's due. And if you don't know, take time to find out.

Easy peasy.

And yet the definition of cultural appropriation goes much deeper than that. Because it mentions the fact that, all credit aside, appropriation can happen when the adoption of said ideas is inappropriate. And I think this might be where most of the harm happens in wellness spaces.

Now admittedly, I do have a strong bias when it comes to this subject, which is informed in part by my geographic location, living 20 minutes outside of Sedona, which is a city notorious for cultural and spiritual appropriation.

See episode 40 for my take on all that.

Even so, I won't pretend to have the answer to the question that lies at the center of this debate. One I hear often, which is, how and where do we draw a line between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation?

This is a damn good question. One that we should be asking. [00:16:00] Sorting through it all, though, can be very complex. But I think the simplest answer I've heard that I resonate most with is that appreciation is consensual.

Allow me to draw a parallel from my own social location as a woman in a patriarchal culture. Back when I was in college, it wasn't that uncommon that I would be walking down the street, minding my own damn business, when a male passerby would catcall, voice or gesture his appreciation of my body.

Some of these expressions would be lurid, and at other times, they were offered as well intended praise for my looks. But in every single instance, I would always feel objectified, personally violated, and at times, unsafe. So when I got older, I began protesting this behavior. I would shoot my supposed admirer a hard look or [00:17:00] shake my head in disdain. And inevitably he would respond with something like: Geez, sorry. I was just trying to give you a compliment.

Oh yeah? Well, not so much.

As disgusted as I was by the attention that I was getting, it was the gaslighting that made the transgression all the more infuriating.

Circling back to issues around race, in their book, *White Women: Everything You Already Know About Your Own Racism and How to Do Better*, co-authors Regina Jackson and Saira Rao, make a similar point. Speaking pointedly to white women, they write:

"White supremacy culture has you believing that you are doing us a favor by even caring about racism or anti racism. And this results in your incessant demands that we educate you on *your own racism*. On a system *you* created to harm us for *your* benefit. [00:18:00] We are asked to explain your violence against us to you, which is traumatizing."

This. This right here is so connected to conversations around cultural appropriation and why we as white women should be having them with each other. And why it's not up to us to decide what's hurtful. Me, you, he, she, they, whoever it is that's been conditioned to colonize, possess, and oppress others, those of us in positions of privilege, power, and influence have no right deciding what constitutes pain for a person in a marginalized culture. And when they are generous enough to take the time to tell us how they feel, we need to believe them.

Earlier this week, I had a chat with a former Org instructor who is South Asian American and the daughter of immigrants from India. Among many other things, we spoke a bit about her experiences with cultural appropriation at the Org and in [00:19:00] other wellness spaces.

When I asked her about this, before she shared about her personal experiences, she was very careful to remind me that her perspective cannot and should not be generalized. As a first generation Indian American, she spent much of her life assimilating into largely white spaces. And so she wanted me to know, in no uncertain terms, that she was not speaking for anyone other than herself.

She shared with me that Western yoga asana practice, namely the physical exercises that most of us think of when we conjure up images of yoga, that they actually have very little in common with ancient traditions of India. Modern asana practice was developed following the

British occupation, when in her words, "Indian teachers were trying to earn success and respect according to the Western standards that had been thrust upon them by colonization."

Just recently, I was reading about the birth of modern yoga in the book *Conspirituality*, and the authors make a very [00:20:00] strong case for how eugenics and the body fascism of European physical culture strongly influenced the development of yoga as we know it. That its emphasis on discipline, purification, and transcendence was really born out of colonial occupation. Specifically the idea that, "your physique and posture are signs of your moral character and spiritual development." The oppressive influence of white supremacy was (and still is) insidious when we examine wellness culture.

And so it's really no surprise that due to these colonial influences, a handful of Indian teachers attempted to capitalize on white folks' predictable obsession with having thin, fit bodies, and they were able to do so, until we predictably colonized their work and made it our own, but I digress.

My friend shared with me that having grown up in a Hindu household, that when it comes to the wellness world, it's really the appropriation of spiritual and religious rituals [00:21:00] that she finds deeply offensive and personally unsettling.

Offering me an example, she referenced the Gayatri Mantra, a sacred Hindu chant in Sanskrit, and one that it just so happens I am remotely familiar with, having recited it daily at a white led yoga retreat a few years back.

My friend explained that even though she doesn't currently prescribe to any religious practice, that the Hindu religion shaped her sense of family and her cultural identity in profound ways. The Gayatri Mantra was a sacred prayer in her home, one that she has a distinct and visceral connection to, specifically surrounding the death of her late grandmother.

And so, imagine if you would, being her, and walking into a yoga studio, only to hear a sacred prayer connected to your family's spiritual and cultural identity, streaming overhead and set to electronic music. It's playing on a loop while a group of white [00:22:00] folks gather to chat, casually oblivious. And perhaps some of them are even feigning connection to ritualistic prayer that they have no actual understanding of.

Now you might have an opinion on whether this is wrong, per se. But we know for sure based on this personal anecdote, that it can be hurtful.

And so if we circle back to this question, where exactly is the line between cultural appreciation and appropriation? I don't have an easy answer to this question, and nor should I. It's not really up to me or anyone else in this dominant culture to decide. If I want to know if something's hurtful, it's best I ask the person who's experiencing the harm. Ask them and then believe them when they tell me how they feel.

All of that to say that sometimes in our attempts to appreciate, we can end up re traumatizing. Especially when our [00:23:00] expressions of so called unity and solidarity are occurring in

the context of rampant systemic inequity. This performance of unity, care, and inclusion, when it's not a part of larger systemic changes, or when it's ultimately serving a personal egoic, or capitalistic enterprise, it lands like a violence all its own.

And if you're thinking, well, that doesn't happen all that often, I encourage you to circle back to episode 59 where I talk about the sorts of gaslighting and victim blaming behaviors that are so very often normalized in wellness spaces.

It's not easy to accept accountability around these types of harms, but in the end, it's worth it.

Many years ago, a student approached me after one of my Zumba classes. She shared that she had family members from Caribbean islands; and that however playfully I had intended it, my brief yet [00:24:00] flippant use of a Jamaican accent had been culturally insensitive and offensive. I still remember how intensely this feedback landed in my body. I'd always prided myself on creating a quote unquote inclusive space, and here I was committing a racial microaggression cluelessly without even realizing it.

I thanked her for the honest feedback, and feeling shaken, I watched as she walked away. For the next few hours, I experienced all the feels. Shame. Self righteous entitlement. How dare she irritation. And all sorts of mental justifications around how it was never my intention to offend or mock anyone from another culture. And yet, in my entitled carelessness, I had done just that.

Despite the fact that I hadn't meant to do it, to cause harm. [00:25:00] I had caused harm. And I had needed this woman, who was a white woman, by the way, to offer me honest reflection. As humbling as it was, her honesty was a gift.

But I didn't *mean* for it to be offensive. My *intention* was to celebrate and to honor. This is very often where the conversation begins and ends in white led wellness spaces.

I was recently talking with my friend Troy who described it this way. If while I'm playing soccer, I accidentally kick someone in the shin. Well, I kicked someone in the shin. Did I mean to kick them? No. But that's not really the point, is it? I apologize for the damage that I've done, and I do my best never to do it again. It's as simple as that.

Good intentions are never ever an excuse for poor behavior [00:26:00] or for unintended impact. Sure, in some instances, making our good intentions known may soften the blow a bit. But not so much when we use intention to shield ourselves from healthy shame and relational accountability.

So here we are doing this work, moving into part two of my conversation with Aleyah-Erin Lennon. I'm very much looking forward to sharing it with you.

If you're feeling at all anxious going into this conversation, I'd like to offer that Aleyah is full of heart. She brings a beautiful blend of intelligence and compassion to this topic. Her insights are like a warm hug with a healthy dose of real deal reality, and I'm here for it. I'm hoping you are too.



Here's part two of my conversation with Aleyah-Erin Lennon.

**Candice Schutter:** [00:27:00] So, as you know, I've done quite a bit of chatting with folks who've been a part of wellness communities.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And some of what we're gonna talk about today is connected to some issues inherent in the way that those communities operate.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And so, just so the listeners have a sense of, understanding around your experiences. You occupied some of those spaces, or perhaps still do. Do you wanna speak a little bit about, cuz we're gonna talk about cultural appropriation. We're gonna talk about some factors that relate to how we wanna do all of that differently.

Tell us about your experience in wellness culture.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Sure. yeah, I mean, I was raised Catholic. I'm from an Irish Catholic family. And so like, yeah, church on Sundays and prayers before bed and meals and all the things. And I slowly came to realize that I wasn't being fed by [00:28:00] those stories and those rituals. And a lot of the teachings really, conflicted with my inherent values. And some well-placed books on my path really opened the doors of my perception. One shout out I will give is to Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

**Candice Schutter:** Hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** That book changed my life. Shug Avery's words about like, if there's a, God, I, I'm paraphrasing, I think they just want you to notice the beauty of the color purple as you walk through a field. And I was like, Ooh, that spoke to my ancestral knowledge of the Earth.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Being our home and being our temple and being so sacred and so instructive and nourishing. Like, it's just like, that's it. And I didn't fe, I didn't feel I got any of that nourishment in the place I, I grew up spiritually.

So [00:29:00] then I was out there seeking for a community really. Because, and that's not wrong, right? Like that's.

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Very beautiful and important part of being human I think is to have spiritual community and to belong, in that realm. Like, you know, Anishinaabeg's thought with the medicine wheel, those four quadrants, like, mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. They're essential parts of being, you know.

I got into yoga. I took a yoga teacher training right off the hop. Um, and it was kind of before yoga was as big as it is now. It was like, um. And that I learned a lot for sure. And I also got into supporting, a very, very large yoga conference and show. And meeting a lot of the celebrity yogis and just all of that stuff.

And I guess another really big, [00:30:00] liminal point on my journey was, I'm embarrassed to talk about it.

**Candice Schutter:** Alright, this is gonna get good then.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Was, through my, um, through some of the, the guiding, like the canoe trips I was doing, I was put in touch with a circle practicing what they called shamanism. And I called it the S word. The S word. Um, and that at the time felt like a language I had been longing for. In terms of, like, Animal Speak was a book by somebody, I forget his name.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** You know, you could alphabetically look up raccoon medicine and such. Like, that book was like, oh my goodness, this is what I've been longing for. And I joined a two year, training group, community, whatever. And it was the whole deal. It was the whole [00:31:00] fricking, horrifying to me now deal. Drums and and feathers and the whole thing.

Halfway through that year I moved myself to Thunder Bay, which is Fort William First Nations territory. It's, it's quite north, although it's only halfway up in Ontario. And I, uh, started an undergraduate degree minoring in Indigenous studies. I went on to continue along that line in my education degree and my master's and on and on.

I started learning though about, freaking problematic that stuff is and, and where it comes from. And more about the new age. I, I really dove into .Studying the new age and what we know about it and, and going kind of like, oh my God, am I the drama? I'm the drama. Like this is, they're talking about me.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** You know? Um, it just through [00:32:00] lots of different things. My own critical self-reflection. My own willingness to deeply listen. To go and seek out more, very contrary to what I felt entitled to. And what had really helped me in a lot of ways that felt like such a cool drink of water, you know, spiritually, um, and socially.

And then to take embodied action. I tried to bring what I was learning to that circle and be like, uh, hey guys, we're doing all this stuff. And it's like completely ripped off from Indigenous cultures and no one's mentioning they even exist.

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And you can imagine that that was deeply unwelcome talk.

Um, and it was disillusion, it was disillusioning. I, yeah.

Yeah, it was, um, painful. It was painful. And I was angry. And I'm grateful [00:33:00] now looking back, that I had the sense to walk away and set it all down and be like, well, now what? And I didn't really know what now.

So what I ended up doing was just diving deeper into this learning. I found it so compelling and so very much relevant to me and my spiritual search and my sense of identity and belonging. I was like, damn, I better figure this out. Um, so that's what I've been doing. And, um, yeah. I have a lot to say on the topic.

Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. You know, one of the reasons that I felt so excited to talk with you about this is that you have experience being in those appropriated ceremonial spaces, as do I.

The question is, You have this experience and then you began doing this work and diving into your studies and working alongside and learning from Indigenous [00:34:00] folks. And then you were invited into their ceremonial spaces. Is that correct?

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Some, some of them. Where appropriate, yes. Yes.

**Candice Schutter:** So how did that evolve for you and what did that feel like? How was it different?

Um, because I think a lot of people, myself included for a long time, like there's a confusion around like, well, why can't we just do it? Or like.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Like there's a sort of a, a naivety and an innocence to those questions that are coming out of, of our ignorance and lack of understanding. It's like, well, why isn't that okay? And what if, if we just say where it came from, then is it okay?

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Like what makes it, okay. And we're gonna talk about that a little bit. But I think you have a specific vantage point on this that a lot of people don't have. Because it's

one thing to understand that academically. And it's a whole other thing to understand it in terms of having been invited to be a part of, however peripherally, communities where some of these practices are happening in their genuine [00:35:00] form.

So can you say a little bit about what that brings up for you?

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah.

I'm feeling, I'm feeling a lot of feelings.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. Take your time.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Um.

**Candice Schutter:** And if you wanna take it somewhere else, you can.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** No, I think it's a really important question. Um, I'm trying to, uh, perceive a where to come into an answer to that question.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And I think I'm hearing the words of one of the research participants, slash friends, slash co-conspirator, slash mentor, um, Marjolaine, who is part of the continuing spirals of conversation woven all throughout my thesis work, and will be in the book.

She talks about being takers versus leavers. And by and large, this western culture we're a part of are takers. You know, it's actually how the system is designed. Capitalism is like.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Taking on steroids.

**Candice Schutter:** Yes.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And making it the law.[00:36:00]

And she talks about the, we talk about the manoomin. Manoomin means the good grain. It's a sacred food for the Anishinaabeg and part of their prophecies and ceremonies. And, um, it's also a keystone species. It's, it's wild rice in our language. It's delicious, nutritious, and was all but destroyed by colonial development and is now coming back at least in, in these territories. Um, which is really exciting. But also causing a lot of like, craziness with cottagers who want pristine, who wants the weeds out of their swimming and boat roots, you know?

And so she was telling me how she wants to share with settlers how beautiful manoomin is, and like, invite them to participate and share and learn about it. But she's afraid they'll just take and take and take.

Which also reminds me of a story when I was working along the North Shore of Lake Superior, doing a lot of research [00:37:00] with and for, um, municipalities and First Nations there on like ecotourism development and cultural tourism development, trying to forge partnerships and learn about the vision and, and stuff.

There I was speaking with an Elder about what kinds of things he would like to see and share in, in this potential enterprise. And he said, yeah, I'd like to share some things, but not all because not many people have the spiritual capacity to not just take essentially. To not just take and take and take.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And I was like, Ooh, tell me more about spiritual capacity. That sounds like such a cool term. And I was like, really resonant with that term. And he told me a story as an example. Like, if he was walking through the forest with his young nephew or grandson, for example, and there was an eagle, an eagle's nest. He wouldn't necessarily point that out to his grandson until the grandson had the spiritual capacity to know Eagle. To learn about [00:38:00] her life ways and her food and what she needs to be well, and how she feeds her young. And that relational understanding is, a form of spiritual capacity. So then as an educator, I was like, oh, how do we foster spiritual capacity? Like, that's, that's basically my implicit curriculum in everything I do.

And so, answering your question, I just kind of am mindful of our collective spiritual capacity as white folks.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** To start talking about like Indigenous ceremonies and like, it's not nearly as simple as like, go out and get to know and befriend your, you know what I mean? Like.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And yet also it's like, yeah, we really have to get out of this, like, we only know fellow white people. And how do we do relationship building in ways that are non-intrusive and non tokenizing and, and doesn't take and take and take, you know?

[00:39:00] Which I guess would circle back to that whole praxis of doing your own work. Deep listening, critical self-reflection, and then finding ways that we are invited in and starting there. Stepping back not out, is also something I've heard, you know, like.

**Candice Schutter:** That's great.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Really the easiest way to say it is like, it's time for Indigenous and Black and People of Color to lead. And it's time for us to follow. And use our power and privilege within these systems to facilitate and amplify and support their work and their vision.

I guess it's, it's kind of a, a journey of relinquishing. Like letting go of what I thought I was entitled to. What I thought was like, such great stuff, such fun [00:40:00] things and important stuff, you know, like, and all the accoutrements, you know?

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** So being willing to relinquish some of what I thought I was entitled to. While reclaiming, remembering and reclaiming something that I might be more entitled to. Which for me has been my cultural ancestry.

And I kept showing up to spaces where it was appropriate and, and settlers or white folks were invited in Indigenous spaces and that looked like fall feasts where everyone's welcome to come and try bannock and watch manoomin be winnowed and, you know, eat some bannock and blueberries and go on a medicine walk and listen. And I just kept going to those things. And there was also like so generously Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, these cultures I've engaged with, it's profoundly humbling how generous [00:41:00] they are.

There was, up at Lakehead University where I did my undergrad and Bachelor of Ed, um, sweat lodges where students were welcome. And, and that can be controversial to some folks. But it was done in a good way to, to the best of my understanding. Like led by a lodge keeper, not a white person, which is a very key distinction.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And, uh, then it was like showing up to marches and walks and demonstrations. And coming out to vigils to grieve, you know, when ongoing horrible things were happening. And then when I came to Michi Saagiig territory, I really know and can barely express what a privilege, what a privilege place I'm in to have found such a welcoming and thriving Indigenous and non-Indigenous community of learners and activists and, um, Water [00:42:00] Walkers.

And so, being invited into those spaces. And then, um, like Auntie Shirley and Liz Osawamick, her niece, both teachers and friends, have the Full Moon Lodge, where everyone is welcome. And just, things like that.

And I won't go into any more of of things. Because it's not for me to share. But I think what's important there is like, it's not about getting some fun. I think that's the issue I think with us sometimes is we like a good dose of enchantment, you know. And we've been raised on, you know, entertainment on steroids. And it's just, it's about humility. I mean, in Anishnaabeg culture, like the seven grandfather teachings, humility is a sacred quality to embody, right?

It, it is what allows us to be in harmonious, [00:43:00] fulfilling, reciprocal relationship.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And it's vital that we, it's been vital for me as a white person learning a lot and being nourished a lot by Indigenous teachings and spaces to really, really remember my place as an outsider, as a listener, as a supporter, as a learner.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I think if we can learn how to not be takers, we would probably get a lot more that we need.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm. Beautifully said. Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

Well, speaking of that, taking to make this real and tangible for listeners who are a part of wellness spaces where some taking has led to some appropriating, has led to some habits in terms of practice, where these appropriating things are just the [00:44:00] norm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Um, I mean, I live 20 minutes outside of Sedona.

Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I first learned about Sedona in articles I was reading about AstroTurf, sundances, and plastic shamans [see show notes]. And I was like, whoa.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. You know, the, I really was excited to talk with you and have listeners hear from you and myself to hear from you about the S word. And this word shaman.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Because this word in Sedona is just tossed around, like, it's mind blowing to me.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Shamanism is very sexy and it sells.

**Candice Schutter:** That's exactly right. And it sells like crazy.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It sells the world over.

**Candice Schutter:** Around here.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah, for sure.

And I, I know people, friends that to be honest, I haven't broached this conversation yet with, who used the word to describe their work or the training that they've experienced.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And I'm still developing the language. To have that conversation and to offer.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It's a really loaded conversation. [00:45:00] Speaking, speaking as somebody who's been having those conversations for a number of years now. It is. Whoa. Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** So, how do we express this in a way. You know, I mean obviously because you're saying it's so loaded. Keeping in mind what the foundation, we've already laid around trauma. And I, and I also wanna reference, I just keep thinking, speaking of us learning from BIPOC activists and teachers, Resmaa Menakem and his work.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And his book, *My Grandmother's Hands*, where he talks about racialized trauma.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And he talks about racialized trauma, not just in terms of. Because like we've already established, you know, race being this system, being this cult sensibility that we've all been taught. That we have different degrees of racialized trauma, but we all have it. All of us. And he talks about it so beautifully. I wouldn't even pretend to try to do it justice. Like, read his book everybody.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah. It's like Black and Indigenous folks who are love lettering this awareness for us. They're going, [00:46:00] you are hurting, too.

**Candice Schutter:** That's right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Wake up. You know.

**Candice Schutter:** That's right. Yes.



**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It's hurting all of us.

**Candice Schutter:** That's right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And no, you don't get to center your trauma and appropriate our teaching, but it's time we all just go, wow, I think we're really sick.

**Candice Schutter:** That's right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** You know?

**Candice Schutter:** That's right.

And he talks about, um, you called it the hard heart work.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** That's Georgie's term, one of the participant, friends of mine.

Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And it makes me think of Resmaa talks about the difference between clean versus dirty pain.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Like we're, we're gonna experience pain either way. Like we might as well experience the clean kind. So. Mm-hmm. Again, that's a, a whole other rabbit hole, isn't it? It's all swirling.

Um, so when we speak about this, hey y'all, let's reflect on whether or not this whole shamanism thing is something we should be talking about and a word we should be throwing around in marketing. I've mentioned Resmaa's work, just to say it's natural to have a physiological reaction to this [00:47:00] conversation, like you say.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah. And I'm gonna speak to why compassionately.

Like I'm gonna validate why we can feel so much resistance and grief and anger and resistance welling up when we're broaching this topic. Because, and thank you, thank you for asking this question. And what I have learned and am learning, and where I'll start is I so appreciate the resistance to this conversation for those of us who are using the S word and identifying with shamanism as a lifestyle and as a practice.

Because like I was sharing earlier, and like you and many of your listeners will identify, when we find spiritual tools and spiritual community and a spiritual identity and belonging that seems to work and feel good, um, and empower us and to one extent or another be effective in [00:48:00] creating change in our lives. Obviously we wouldn't wanna give it up. That's good stuff.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And so what I wanna start by saying is that by critically reflecting on the industry of spiritual tourism, specifically the shamanic industry, cuz it very much is an industry. I am not saying, and nor is anyone saying that white people should have no spiritual practice and no spiritual tools and no spiritual community.

In fact, a lot of, Indigenous and Black and People Of Color, Elders, knowledge holders, authors, speakers who I've interacted with very rightly in my mind are like, it's vital that we have and remember and use spiritual tools. Because we are spiritually sick. Personally, culturally, [00:49:00] socially, ecologically, we are dying.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And so no wonder there's such a hunger and a search for what feeds us. You know, the new age. It's a dirty word and for good reason, but there's also like a beautiful and true germination to this manifestation. And it's these old structures of the capitalist patriarchy, you know, we've become disillusioned. And they're crumbling and we don't identify with, they're not feeding us. Even while they're also benefiting us, you know, it's all the same, but.

**Candice Schutter:** It's all true.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** We're going out and seeking. And I think what's really important to this conversation is a quick little history lesson about. Because, because one of the, the biggest things I hear when I engage in this conversation is you can't own spiritual truth. And shamanism is everywhere in every culture all over the globe. So it's not from one thing. [00:50:00]

And that's one of those kind of equivocal, like relative, it's not actually that true. It sounds true. But what is more true and maybe more relevant is that we as a culture, quote unquote only know the word shamanism and new shamanism and all these things because like a generation ago or what, and I'm, I'm fudging some of my exact facts. But like a white anthropologist got the trust, of certain Indigenous cultures. And then came back and stole and repackaged a lot of what he had been shown and learned.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And, and sold it. And it became extremely lucrative. And so it, like any, any capitalist enterprise exploded.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** That's the only reason we know that word. And a lot of the practices. And most, you know, there's always nuance, but [00:51:00] most of anything else you're experiencing or participating in, that's where it lands essentially. It is stolen.

And what I think is even more important is that if you fancy yourself a good person who, you know, has maybe heard about this stuff, called racism and colonialism and white supremacy, and you're like, well, that all sounds terrible and I don't wanna be a part of that, so what should I do?

And I mean, I've had these exact conversations with folks who hear about my work and you know, what I'm doing and sit down and are like, I just feel so sorry, I wanna apologize. Like I'm writing a song to Indigenous people and they want to be good and a part of the change. And yet in the same breath and conversation, I'm a shaman. And no, I'm not at all willing to consider giving that up or hearing all of these facts that you're telling me about it.

And it's like, okay, we're having some cognitive dissonance, [00:52:00] because every Indigenous person who I've heard from or read their books or sat by their fires, they are deeply offended by this thing called shamanism.

They don't call themselves shamans at all. And now I'll circle back to that earlier question about ceremonies. It looks nothing like what white ladies think they're a part of. It really doesn't. I kind of like, I don't know if anybody grew up in the eighties like me, but like Papa Chango from WWF. Like it's just a caricature.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It's an offensive silly, not that of what we're actually seeking, in my humble opinion and vehement opinion, um. It causes harm. Let's just leave the surface of all the other ways it really causes harm, cuz that's actually a whole conversation. But it causes harm in the, in the simple fact that it creates [00:53:00] further division across these colonial divides. It hurts people's feelings. The people whose land were occupying and whose cultures we stole this from in the first place.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** So if we want to heal the disconnections in our relationships, then maybe it's worth just taking a step back and going like, maybe there's something to this.

**Candice Schutter:** Well, this is that distinction that we were talking about before between accountability and punishment.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And accountability being about stopping the harm, like doing what we can to be a part of what mitigates harm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Versus, and I, and again, I think a lot of people think like, well, I don't wanna let go. I don't wanna be punished. I mean, you, you hear this argument.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** When, you know, I know anti-racism activists hear it all the time. Like, I shouldn't be punished for what my ancestors did. Like there's a real misunderstanding of like, that's not what this [00:54:00] is. That's not what we're talking about here.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It's quite infantile in a sweet way, but in a way that causes so much harm, you know?

**Candice Schutter:** Right, right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I think of like, toxic family dynamics where someone's being abusive. And you're like, hey, that hurts. It's abusive. Please stop doing it.

And because somewhere in their subconscious that they're not aware of, they equate doing wrong with being wrong.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** So they will never admit it.

**Candice Schutter:** Yep.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And so you will forever have that disconnect and damage in that relationship.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I think that's what we need to look at. And that's what I mean when I'm like, see this triple spiral. It's all the things. Like, you can come to this work from personal relational trauma healing. You can come to it by like, oh my god, guys, we're careening off a cliff ecologically. Or you can come to it of like, what were those riots about and why are police killing Black people everywhere? And like, [00:55:00] what the fuck is going on? Like uhhuh, it's all connected.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** So at the simplest of entry points for folks that may be listening who very much feel very connected and identify with shamanism. Let's just talk about language. Let's just start with no one's trying to take away your ability to dream and journey and connect with spirit. Like literally, no one's trying to do that.

And yes, it's true. Many, many cultures, and I will speak from my personal experience. My Celtic ancestors are wisdom tradition, very much, uh, was in co participation with every aspect of creation. We had all kinds of spiritual tools and alchemical practices.

And another trigger word is, spirit animal, right? That's a, that's a trigger word in Indigenous spaces, and it, it makes us white ladies look [00:56:00] pretty silly when we talk about it off the cuff. And yet also it's very true that I have a cultural lineage that co participated on a spiritual and practical level with animals and spirits. And they are my guides and helpers. Okay.

Um, how do we talk about spiritual tools and practices that nourish us and allow us to create change for good in our lives and the lives of those we love in a way that doesn't perpetuate colonial harm and division?

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And this is really where it gets hard for a lot of folks. And this is what I talk about being like, take the journey. Why remembering our original instructions is so transformative.

Those particular practices that you've been sold are not yours.

I think a lot of us avoid going and trying to [00:57:00] find our ancestral wisdom traditions because it's hard. It's hard.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And this is easy. This is right on a silver platter with a clickable button. It's like, you know, buy now. And it's also less instantaneous, you know?

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I longed for a long time. I'm still calling for more Celtic community in my life. I still want to, I, where are my Elders teaching me my language? I don't know. I mean, I do know cuz I've been looking for so long. But it's hard. It was not.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Like instantaneous. It took sorting through what Dr. Sharon Blackie, who's a big teacher of mine, calls a lot of new age tosh.

You know, there's a lot of like, Ooh, Druid. I'm like, I know people are like, I'm a druid. I'm like, are you? What does that even mean? Do you know what we can know and what we absolutely don't know? And what a bunch of like people and their 19th century dragons made up.

**Candice Schutter:** Right. You read *Mists of Avalon*, you think you've got it nailed.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** [00:58:00] Yeah. And Oh, I loved that book.

**Candice Schutter:** I did too.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** When it crossed my path.

**Candice Schutter:** I did too.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I freaking loved. I was like, me too. It spoke to the part of us that never forgot.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** What we've forgotten.

And yet it was also super problematic. And I've heard things about the author. And it's like, whoa. Um, but it was a key. It was a problematic key on my journey seeking, you know. Same with this experience I had with a shamanic community. It was deeply problematic. And yet it, I think it really informed the path I went down of learning and decolonizing.

**Candice Schutter:** I love this distinction that you just made just speaking to that. Cause I'm thinking of course, as you're saying on a parallel track of the different communities that I walked through and the ways that they really shaped me in really positive and beautiful [00:59:00] ways, and then the problems that were inherent, right?

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And we've talked about the difference between accountability and punishment. There's also the difference between accountability and shame.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And that shame, like for you to say, okay, you know, for us to both say we read *Mists of Avalon*, we're like, oh, this is amazing. And then also being able to say, oh wow. Like, now that I know what I know now, looking back, these are the problems. Like the door that was open for me through that was really beautiful. I needed to walk through it. And there's these problematic pieces. And there's no shame in having walked through it.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Like there's, there might be a sense of cringiness. There might be a sense of, like, I think about, um, not even that long ago, a sweat lodge that I participated in. That I was both really into and super uncomfortable in at the same time. And I look back on it and I cringe. And I feel unsettled in a way that I think is really healthy.

But some of the ways that me as a white woman, I center myself in the [01:00:00] narrative is by spinning out in the shame.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** It's like, it's not about me and my shame. Like I was recently in a situation where I was in a conversation with some folks who we were talking about anti-racism stuff. We were all white. And there was a real sense of white fragility in the room. Like it was palpable.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** As we were talking, and I even named it at one point. I was like, let's just name this. It's here.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And I had some feelings about some things that were said. And I felt like this sense of outrage, like, it was subtle but like moral outrage. And then I was like, you know, it is not my role in this conversation to be outraged in the way that it takes me offline from having this conversation.

I need to find a way to have this conversation. And that when I put my outrage, when I center my outrage, I'm actually not helping anyone.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yes. Yes. Yes.

And I love that and I think it's worth teasing [01:01:00] out. Cuz that's what I've learned about my roles and responsibilities as a white person in these spaces.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Is, one, don't dare tone police other people's outrage. Right?

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Specifically Indigenous, Black, People of Colors' outrage. Don't do that. Because that is valid and important.

**Candice Schutter:** Absolutely.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I've been told directly that it's actually a betrayal of my usefulness when I get so outraged. And I, I do, I have. Like, this whole journey I've been on for like 20 years has been very upsetting. Like, I'm fucking pissed. Excuse my French. You can edit that out.

**Candice Schutter:** No, I won't.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It's horrible what's happening?

It's not wrong to get outraged when you see harm that is literally killing people.

And yet where I can be more effective. Because my life, I mean, I argue that all of our lives are under threat ecologically, too. But immediately, it's not me and people in bodies like mine that are being like hit by trailer [01:02:00] hitches thrown outta pickup trucks. Or like, horrible I'm not even gonna. Trigger warning, you know, stuff.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Happening to BIPOC folks. Um, so it's kind of part of my strategic approach to stay calm and do a little bit of the, the sugar water, you know?

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** To kind of like pied piper some folks that are feeling, resistant, scared, attacked, deeply confused and lost, by all this stuff.

To try and call more people in.

**Candice Schutter:** Yes.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Than call them out.

Yes. I mean, just on like a.

**Candice Schutter:** Say that again.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Well, it's not my words. I've learned this from other people.

**Candice Schutter:** We're giving credit, too. Um, and it's important to be said again.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah. My approach is trying to call more people in rather than calling people out. Because I do really come from a trauma-informed lens. And it does not mean that I excuse behavior or I'm like, [01:03:00] you know, not outraged when I see really problematic stuff.

But yeah, it means that I try to stay calm and I try to stay in the conversation. I try to stay engaged. I do not always nail that.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah, me neither.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It's hard.



And even like you, you mentioned white fragility, which I think gets misunderstood by, by us white folks sometimes. And it also gets conflated. And I'll speak for myself. When, like, I started really learning on an embodied level when it started showing up in my relationships and my activism work. Like, the difference between white fragility and white women's tears.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And actually having your feelings hurt and being vulnerable and hurt when this work gets messy.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And when misunderstandings happen and when mistakes are made.

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And when I've been [01:04:00] made by someone to represent the generations and generations of white supremacy and colonial genocide, like my white skin has called somebody's intergenerational trauma and rage. And I've experienced it as like a personal commentary, which it kind of was. But like, feeling hurt and going off and crying. That's not white fragility and white women's tears. Where it becomes that is when like, "that's not what I meant. And it's not all white people. And how dare you say that to me?" Like that's where it gets different. Or like, anything you're trying to tell me that rocks my sense of identity and entitlement is an attack. That's white fragility.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** But being upset, hurt, scared, grief-stricken, outraged, confused. That's okay.

**Candice Schutter:** That's human.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** That's actually part of this.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It's called being human Right. And trying to fit in and figure it out.

**Candice Schutter:** [01:05:00] Yeah. Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And I think that's what some folks might find useful to hear.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Because yeah, we're human.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. And I think normalizing the, the discomfort of not just doing the work. That that discomfort is normal. It's a part of the healing process.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** It's a part of cult recovery, I would argue. And this is just capital C cult recovery we're talking about. That's a normal part of the process.

And also, the sense of isolation that's a part of cult recovery. I mean, I can't tell you how much it's helped me to have been studying anti-racism, and then to start studying cult recovery and to see like, oh my gosh, not only is there so much overlap, as we've talked about.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** But like a lot of the keys to cult recovery can help us within our anti-racism work. And I don't even think they came from the cult recovery world. I think they probably came from BIPOC books and.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And who understood how to dismantle [01:06:00] these systems internally and externally, so.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** You know, credit where credit's due there. And this piece around when we exit any cult, whether it's small C or capital C, there's a sense of isolation.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And the pressure we feel, which is very real and human to stick around. To just keep our mouth shut. To just not rock the boat. To just, just keep the, you know, the gauzy glow alive. Because as soon as we challenge it, there is a sense of othering that happens. And that devastation I think just needs to be spoken to. Like that those feelings are real, too.

Like when I go to to events in Sedona. And then I choose to go to less and less and less and less events in Sedona. And now I don't really go to events in Sedona. There's a real cost. I'm socially isolated. And I'm okay [01:07:00] with that. And it's difficult.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And I have to find my community in other ways and reach out through the screen and connect and. And so there's a cost to doing this work.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And what a, what a cheap cost in, um, comparison.

**Candice Schutter:** Exactly.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** To what other people are being costed in.

**Candice Schutter:** That's right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** With the status quo. Um, but that's not to lessen. Because I really love that you spoke to that because, Yeah, that's true.

Like, walking away and relinquishing what we come to realize is sick, unfair, whatever. And not having an immediate place. Like, like this is my experience in Indigenous communities. Like I am never an insider. I'm never gonna be an insider. That's hard.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** To sit with, you know, it doesn't get resolved. And all my ongoing relationships and all my work, doesn't give me an exceptionality [01:08:00] pass. It doesn't make me.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Not a part of these systems still.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** You know, like that's being hard to grapple with.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Like, cuz we kind of want a gold star. And we wanna pass. We wanna get to the promise place of like, now I'm good enough.

**Candice Schutter:** Yes.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** You know?

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Now I have permission to accept myself and be okay and belong.

Like I just wanna like put our hands on our hearts and our bellies and go, how tender is that need? You know?

**Candice Schutter:** For sure.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** That is not wrong. But when it's driving the bus. And the bus it's driving is white privilege. And unconsciousness. It's a bus. And it's dangerous.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** You know?

Um.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** So this is that like squishy, misted place of becoming. Like there's no, easy [01:09:00] answers. There's no like if this, then that, you know. It's a process of continually showing up and continually showing up.

And I can speak for myself. Like I am in active recovery from growing up in family systems that really did a lot of damage. And there was a lot of love and I love and grateful for my family so much. But there was a lot of harm. And a lot of lasting effects and trauma recovery, which is a big part of my life. And informs a lot of my work.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** It's, learning how to hold ourselves and be there with ourselves as we open up.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** To the grief. As we do the grief work. And, you know, I just recently lost my only brother. He died suddenly. Um, and that's a horrible.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Experience and.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah, it is.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** So grief [01:10:00] has really come back around with a whole new set of lessons for me. Um, I would just like to shout out anybody writing or creating art in these critical spaces. Like be careful what you're writing about. Cause life has a way of going, like, is this what you wanted to learn and talk about?

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Whoa.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Um, but allowing these truths to really break our hearts are the only way we're going to be able to feel enough to do better and differently. I think.

Like it's that whole grief is love and love is grief and like.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I don't know that we can have like satiation without hunger. I don't know. I mean like, let's not get too philosophical about all that stuff, but.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. It's like a crucible we have to walk through that's gonna burn off. I think this is a beautiful way to wrap, to really speak to so much of [01:11:00] what this whole series and all these conversations have been about is like burning through the facades of walking in the world as we've been conditioned to look, be, and act.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And really returning to who we are, like most elementally.

And it may seem like, I think in a lot of the spiritual spaces I've been, it's like, well, let's just, you know, create a book pulling from all these different cultures and create this appropriated encyclopedia of universal truths. And then this.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Pan. Yeah, pan wisdom.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. We'll, what is the common thread between all of these traditions? And if we can just find that and practice that, then we won't have to worry about any of this anymore. And I wish we're at that simple. And it's not as we know.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And this, this crucible of grief that we have to walk through of grappling with really difficult truths and the harm that [01:12:00] continually continues to happen.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Because we're not awake to these dynamics.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** And the process of waking up to them is painful and it's the sweetest kind of pain. It's you.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And it won't destroy us. What will destroy us is our continued ignorance and refusal. And yeah, sometimes I guess it, it can feel like dying cuz we are.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** We are dying. And in order to create a new world together, we are going to have to be willing to face what is dying and what is killing us.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Literally and figuratively.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** But, it's really worth it. I am finding.

This work is never done. But I guess like things that help are slowing down.[01:13:00]

I don't think we realize how incredibly fast everything about what we do and want and be is. Like I see this in in my consulting work. Like I'm a systems thinker and when you see what's really not working, but like the system can't slow down enough to actually address the problem. So it just keeps patching. And like, and it's like actually to, to really, you gotta stop to some extent.

Like, and that's why I really think re highlighting what you said about isolation. Like, it's like when one door closes, sometimes another one doesn't open right away.

**Candice Schutter:** That's right.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And you're in this space of not knowing and not belonging. And it's really uncomfortable and it's, it's painful. And we can use that discomfort and uncertainty as a really exciting [01:14:00] adventure point. Like an entry point into what I call the great work of our time.

**Candice Schutter:** Hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Healing the crisis of disconnection and abuses in the trilogy of our relationship to Self, Others, and Land. And what, you know, to kind of confront what I call the poverty of whiteness. And really start to explore what a critical spirituality means. What it could mean for us.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** There's not one way up this mountain or down this labyrinth. Like it's, it's gonna take all of us bringing our gifts. You know, our art, our prayers, our dreams, our bodies. But we really need, I think, need to slow down, give ourselves permission to slow down, to stop, to listen, to critically reflect, and to to show up to spaces calling for our support, you know?

I think that's the work. [01:15:00] And that is what I have found to be my embodied spiritual practice as decolonial praxis, you know? It does not have immediate, easy, sexy looking accoutrements. But it, it's become really lovely in a lot of ways.

I say that and I immediately go like, I'm so privileged. Like I'm living in, like, I have so many privileges, you know? And I, like, I, I do live with a pretty constant fear and outrage and grief. And I'm just a human. So I think our power is in working to collectively together with the earth, with, all of our different tools.

But I don't think we are going to be able to get where we want to go or envision where we could be going if we don't first understand and really grapple and sit with where we are and where we've come from.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

Beautiful.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** [01:16:00] I love talking with you. It's really, really wonderful to be in conversation with somebody who's so genuinely here for it, you know?

Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Thank you for saying that.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** You're, you're really lovely and wonderful. And we appreciate you a lot.

**Candice Schutter:** Thank you. I will, right back at you. I can't tell you how much it feeds me to be able to have this conversation. I feel myself getting emotional, cuz it's just something that I have just been feeling in my bones that I haven't been able to find language around and, have been so eager.

Especially if maybe it's cuz I'm living where I'm living. But like, just feeling such a vacuous yearning to be able to have conversations like this with people who are likewise passionate and interested. And, and then somebody who has so much language around it like you do is just really deeply to me.

And I'm just so grateful.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** You know what I would love to close with?

**Candice Schutter:** Please.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** I have a poem to share.

**Candice Schutter:** Oh, please.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And, [01:17:00] this is, from a book of poems by a dear friend, Ziysah. I think it's their third published compilation of poems. And I wanna shout them out because they are so instrumental in, in supporting me. They're kind of like my editor, my cheerleader. And their insight and their spirit and their activism in community is just I love them so much.

And that's, the work they're doing with me and the work that the Anishinaabeg Elders and knowledge holders and friends continue to do in collaboration. Like this is, I guess, by no means a solo project. It's very much a collaboration, um, with ongoing input and consent and, um, any profits or proceeds, if it ever sees the light of day, will be shared equitably among like certain BIPOC and ecological justice causes.

But that's what the, the current GoFundMe thing is about, is about like having some coinage to support [01:18:00] Ziysah in their supporting me. And to honor their [everyone involved] time and to not be extractive of how they do things.

So this is from Ziysah's third compilation, uh, consents and severances. And it's a poem entitled, *Untethered*.

"The Michi Saagiig carry responsibilities for this Territory.

The Colonizer for his atrocities.

The Migrant for proving her loyalty despite her longing.

But we, the grandchildren of refugees, with no memory of home nor conquest.

No ancestral dirt in our nails. No sea salt in our wounds.

Our ignorance of place leaves us to sail free.

Who bears the lightest burden is most likely to be lost."

**Candice Schutter:** Hmm.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** And it just so perfectly captures, I think the spirit of this [01:19:00] prayer that this work is. It's a prayer for us to locate ourselves within the Land, within the context of creation. And to untether and untangle ourselves from that big C cult stuff that we've been talking about, and to reconnect to something that can orient us within the places we call home.



**Candice Schutter:** Thank you so much for the work you're doing, for being willing to have this conversation. For unlearning out loud right here with me. For teaching me.

And I wanna thank most of all, all of the incredible teachers that you have learned from and that are you are learning from, that have helped you to find this language and that have shared this wisdom through you, with me, and with all the listeners on the podcast.

If there's any way that we can be of support to those communities, um, I want you to let me [01:20:00] know and I'll do whatever I can. And specifically, you know, when your book comes out and those people who wanna help and support making that happen, you know, to send them to your website. And if there's any other links you want to provide to me that I can share with listeners, I would love to.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Thank you so much. I'm having a lot of, like, I'm not worthy. But I'm fighting through that. Um, these, uh, these friends and teachers have yeah, tasked me with, you've earned your learning and go, go collect your people.

So that's what I'm trying to do, not as somebody who has it all figured out, but as somebody who wants to create more spaces for us to transform into. For us to have conversations and to learn and to hold each other's hands as we, you know, hold each other accountable.

I am standing, um, with so many people behind me. I've named most of them. But as I continue to build out the website, you'll be able to find more about them. And, and the work that they're doing. Yeah.

So, yes, I'm [01:21:00] willing to say yes now to being supported in this next phase of the, the work by audiences like yours. It's a deep honor and, um, hopefully it's really fun too.

Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Well, this has been really fun for me. Just being in this space of thinking critically with hearts wide open. Like that's what it's all about for me. And you embody that so beautifully, and I just appreciate you so much, Aleyah. Thank you for being willing to do this with me and for trusting me.

I mean, just thank you. Yeah.

**Aleyah-Erin Lennon:** Likewise. This has been effortless to, to chat with you, so thank you.

**Candice Schutter:** Thank you so much for listening to the end of this two part conversation, and special thanks to Aleyah for entrusting me with her work. She and I would also like to thank the following individuals for their invaluable contributions to today's content.[01:22:00]

Dr. Elder Shirley Williams, Wikwemekong First Nation. Elder Dorothy Taylor, Curve Lake First Nation. Georgie Horton Baptiste. Marjolaine Lapointe, Community Voices for Manoomin. Liz Osawamick. Dr. Dawn Laval Harvard, First People's House of Learning. Elder Doug Williams-ba, Michi Saagiig. Grandmother Josephine Mandamin-ba, Mother Earth Water Walks. And Grandfather William Commanda-ba, Kitigan Zibi.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but these are some of the Indigenous Elders and knowledge holders who have supported Aleyah and deeply influenced all that she's shared with us today. We are providing links where relevant and also to other resources referenced in this episode, including ways that you can support Aleyah's efforts to share the work of her [01:23:00] co-conspirators and teachers more broadly. Please visit the show notes for details and thanks so much for listening. I'll be back here next week with another episode of The Deeper Pulse.

Bye for now.