

Candice Schutter: [00:00:00] Welcome to another episode of the Deeper Pulse and the continuation of the Culture Series. This work is made possible by the support of loyal listeners and monthly patrons of the pod. It means more than I can express that many of you are reaching out to make one time donations, or that you've decided to join me over on Patreon where we are taking this work even deeper.

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Okay. This week's episode is like no other.

I can't wait to share it with you. So let's get to it. with

As always, the stories and opinions shared here are based on personal experience and are not intended to malign any individual, group, or organization.

Today you're in for a very special treat. This is a conversation that I had a few months back, but I've been saving it. Why? Because this conversation weaves together many of the threads we've been untangling in more recent episodes in this series.

I initially [00:02:00] sat down with this week's guests to learn about their one of a kind approach to cult recovery through art, music, and theater.

And I did learn about it. You will too. And yet even more so, I was moved by the way that these two individuals seem to have their finger on the very pulse of this podcast series, pun intended. Not only do Teruyo and Lennox share their personal stories, not only do they reveal why and how music has been such a powerful part of healing from early in life traumas and cultic abuse. They also help me to deepen and carry forward an ongoing discussion around the systemic forces, both internally and externally, that have long put the cult in culture.

And I'm really excited for you to meet them.

Teruyo is a racialized, queer, neurodiverse, non binary theater artist, anti oppression [00:03:00] advocate, and academic. Teruyo's encounter with cults and the aftermath of manipulative mind games have fueled their drive to delve into healing and reclaiming identity through anti colonial and anti racist cult recovery. Through their academic research and the creation and production of original plays in musical theater, they aspire to amplify the marginalized voices of the global majority, foster sociopolitical change, and cultivate trauma informed artistry.

Lennox is a neurodiverse, non binary, queer theater artist. They've endured the clutches of multiple cults, ranging from religious and spiritual to white supremacy. Ditching society's

expectations and cultural boundaries, they've fully embraced their love for writing musicals, giving toxic masculinity the finger. Their creative outlet? Crafting badass, sociopolitical musical stories that resonate with their true calling. They're rewriting the rules [00:04:00] and reclaiming their rightful place behind the instruments.

Inspired by their own lived experiences, together, Teruyo and Lennox have been creating a musical that centers around cult recovery. The musical follows Jess, Clara, and Jake as they navigate the aftermath of their time in a shamanic cult. With flashbacks intertwined with their attempts to reconnect in the present. The narrative delves into the challenges of PTSD and the repercussions of cultural appropriation. The story calls out spiritual avoidance and the dangers of diluting genuine accountability with empty optimism. Emphasizing the significance of hearing the voices of the global majority, it champions allyship rooted in the true experiences of marginalized groups over the elite's uninformed biases.

Central to the narrative is the question: can we truly escape the cult like grip of colonialism and prioritize justice in our collective journey toward healing?[00:05:00]

Peppered throughout this conversation, you're going to hear smatterings of their music. It's just a small taste of how their artistry is giving shape and texture to the hard to articulate experiences of coming out of a high demand group or coercive relationship.

Talking with Teruyo and Lennox is a pure delight. And listening to their music, an affecting experience. Which is why I'm doing things a little differently this week.

Rather than offering up a lengthy lead in to this conversation, I'm going to allow their music to weave the thread that carries us through.

I really love these two humans and I have a feeling you will too. So without further ado, here's my conversation with Teruyo and Lennox.

Well, it's great to see you both again. I'm so excited to have this conversation. I've been really, really looking forward to it, so thank you.[00:06:00]

Teruyo: Us as well. Thank you so much. We really dig listening to your podcast and we think you're a very cool person. So we're so very excited to be here. Thank you.

Candice Schutter: Oh, thank you. Well, the feelings are very mutual, I assure you. So I'm really excited to share you with listeners.

[00:06:17] **Music Sample: "Loved You"**

Teruyo: Our musical is semi autobiographical. So this is a story of what happens [00:07:00] after you leave a cult. What does that recovery look like and look like for different people?

And the main character, the lead character's coming from me, inspired by my experience and coming as a voice of the playwright, being the last one to leave the cult embarks on this journey to reconnect with these two people who are very close and special to them inside the

cult. And learning about what their relationship was. What was their unraveling of that relationship? And is it possible to, to mend that and come back together and really get to know each other for the first time outside of the context of the cult?

It's a lot of mess. It's a lot of messiness and just the daily struggles, the realities of, you know, how do I function with C-PTSD? How do I apply for a job now that I have a big blank space on my resume? [00:08:00] You know, all those little things that often are not addressed because I believe we're living in, you know, a silenced cult epidemic. Things that are too uncomfortable for a lot of people to look at closely, cuz they'll see how much it's part of their lives as well.

Hmm.

Lennox: Yeah, and in trying to heal through that, there are a lot of supports and therapies that are so helpful. But when you come outta cults, you're most likely victim of the financial abuses that occurred during cults. So you don't have the access to the healing modalities, to the techniques, to the professionals, to the supports, to the space, to the rest, to the, the, the foundation of a a, a clean, warm shelter, whatever it is. There's so much that's just not there and you're just, you know, trying to figure out how to breathe air again, in essence. As you're trying to get a job and trying to, you know, eat healthy and, you know, reconnect with [00:09:00] friends if you can. Or how do you do that and dating and, you know, whole structure of conversations that are challenging to have.

That in our musical, we wanted to have those conversations. We wanted to start singing and talking and, and having the character go through those experiences and not avoid them, as, you know, something that is, you know, done later. We'll talk, we'll figure that out later here.

Teruyo: Yeah, it's, it's an interesting thing to have this musical coming from a healing place and a place of recovering. Because even every time we listen to it or we sing it together, or sing along in the car when we're listening to it, you know, it has a different effect each time. Um, you know, sometimes it leads us to tears. Sometimes we're belting it out. Um, Sometimes it's a quiet response. Um, but it, it's really an, a testament to how it continues to support us in our recovery somehow, in a way beyond our understanding and our words, [00:10:00] beyond the, time that it was written. You know, it just has its own life.

Candice Schutter: Right.

That's what music does though, right? It's like it's, it has a power that You know, uh, to to transcend and to root at the same time, in the way that I think just spoken language can't do.

Teruyo: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And it's so personal. That's what I love about what you've created and you are creating with this this musical.

And it'll be so fascinating to see where it goes because music has a life of its own and a purpose of its own. And it's so individually interpreted and experienced. And so you're giving

such a gift in that people can have those experiences like you just described for themselves individually. Yeah.

[00:10:41] Music Sample: "Loved You"

Teruyo: [00:11:00] Yeah, it's, it's amazing how much easier it is for us to sing about it than it is to talk about it.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. I wondered about that. Say more about that.

Teruyo: I just, I'm remembering when I started my therapy specifically addressing cult recovery, um, you know, feeling like there was this ball in my throat or it was hard to get the words out and all the feeling that comes with it, the shame, the guilt, the grief. All of these feelings coming forward. And, and learning how to name it was very hard.

So it was almost like choking a bit when I'm trying to speak about it and process it. But it was really after those therapy sessions, after something got a little shifted in me that these songs needed to come out and land somewhere.

And that's what this musical provided for us. A place to process it. To make it beautiful, you know. And really part of [00:12:00] our reclaiming of our voices and who we authentically are.

Lennox: Yeah.

For me it was, you know, I always think emotions to me aren't something that I, can use words to gather. You know, some people can smell colors. I think I, I hear emotions. You know, I hear my trauma. And I hear what's coming up through me. But then I have to sort of filter it through my limitation of language.

And, and also in all of the cults I've been part of, they've transformed the language. It's sort of very consistent part of cultism is that, you know, taking a language and words and turning them into something.

So I have all these mixes of words, and I don't even trust the words that I do know. I still don't trust that. There still is a filter of uncertainty. But when it comes to the music, when it comes to the sounds, it, it just reaches a more genuine place.

Not to say that the cults haven't taken music and manipulated to their own thing. But [00:13:00] there was just something like a bridge that was easier to rebuild in that aspect for myself. And to express my emotions. The sounds that would come out and the choices that we'd make in the sounds in where we'd go. It was instantly like, oh, finally I can get it out, you know? It was.

And then it flooded out. We've written 11 songs for this musical, you know, and it comes from so much material that's been deep down inside of us for so long.

Candice Schutter: I love that you spoke to the way that music gives us an opportunity to express beyond and outside of language, given especially what happens with language in cultic environments. And how, gosh, like that's been such a process for me. And I think this is gonna lead perfectly into your stories, especially coming out of new age culture. How many words and how much language has been either watered down or appropriated or misused. It's like so many words that for [00:14:00] some probably seem benign for me are supercharged.

And so how do I find words when many of the words are contaminated by these experiences. There's a purity that music offers. And any form of artistic expression. So yeah, that was just gorgeously articulated. Thank you for that.

Lennox: And then you add in the element, this is not just music, this is a musical. So this is where my conscious brain can project a narrative that I see on stage that helps it heal in a safe place. You know, it's, it's like a, a reliving of the trauma in a very safe environment with music that I've created and constructed where we can, you know, actually, process something.

And the concept of having the musical creates another layer of expression that, that I've never experienced before that just seems so natural in my healing.

Teruyo: It's been a part of different studies that I've looked in my [00:15:00] research, you know, the forms of expressive arts therapy, like drama and music, there's this, opportunity to, to rewrite the story.

And say, you know, now knowing what I know, can I weave into that narrative of who I am? And you know, even blocking it out so that I know what to do should I come across it? Or more like, when I come across it again? Cause the cult culture is, is rampant. It's everywhere.

So there's something really empowering about yeah, being in that safe, contained world of possibilities where you can be curious and fly with all the possibilities like you, like a child's mind.

Just having that open imagination.

Candice Schutter: Which is really a reclaiming that we're in. Like that's a big part of what's, we're reclaiming. You know, depending on how far back for each individual that cultic influence goes, you know. Some of us had a lot of those dynamics present in our, in our families of origin, for reasons that we'll get into later in terms of, [00:16:00] of the water we're all swimming in, Right? So the ability to take back that sense of innocence and to learn to trust our instincts again, is such a huge part of the healing.

So let's talk about how you got there, that led to this whole endeavor and this healing out loud process for you.

Would you be willing to give us just an overview? I know there's a lot that we could go into, but each of you an overview of your story in terms of why you're doing this work.

Teruyo: So for me, I've been a cult hopper. I was born into Buddhism. My parents were both practicing Buddhists. My father from Japan. And they were invested in the alternative medicine, new age industry from the get go. My father had training as a Shiatsu therapist from Japan. And he came over here with, you know, the mission to spread Shiatsu into [00:17:00] Canada, and to be a leader in that field which he was.

Um, and so they, my parents founded a, a massage school, a Shiatsu school for training. And that connects to all the other kind of modalities, right? I was right, you know, that was the normal I knew. So it felt like a very safe imprint on me to, to explore these avenues of spirituality, of energy, of aromatherapy, all of these things that are not directly recognized in western medicine.

So that's what really ripened me to fall deeper into this last new age shamanic cult. For those that are unfamiliar with shamanism, you know, it's, it's based on a, many different indigenous cultures and their beliefs and practices and spiritual healing traditions and practices, um, from different parts of the world, different indigenous cultures, kind of conglomerated together, brought together from this western point of view.[00:18:00]

And, um, and giving these ways of accessing spirit or the unseen. And that the term shaman is a Siberian term that means 'the one who sees in the dark.' And often the the shamans of these communities, they, they act on behalf of their community to receive, you know, guidance, healing for their community and other members. But in its translation to the western new age cult, it becomes the dangerous part of cultural appropriation.

So that was the last cult I was a part of for 16 years.

And the final thread of really leaving the cult came in February 2022 when the truckers convoy came to Ottawa. And this was a huge group, hundreds of truckers from different parts of Ontario and even the states that came to protest against the Covid 19 mandates.

And it [00:19:00] quickly turned into a mishmash of things. It was like a, a hate group party happening downtown, taking over our capitol. And there were also, you know, thousands of people flooding in to support this as well. So they really took over our city for a couple of weeks. And the police, you know, and people in power, they really did not do much. Did not do much. They actually, you know, a lot of them were even helping and supporting in some ways what was happening.

So it was a little scary, so much happening outside our door. And what was happening was the revealing, there was leaking information coming out about the key organizers of this movement, uh, were white supremacists and far right wing people, part of hate groups. We started seeing confederation flags on the trucks. People saying, fuck Trudeau, our Prime Minister. All these kind of things happening. And hate crime started escalating and happening here. Uh, so [00:20:00] people, you know, that don't stand in that typical mold of the white, cis gender, you know, heterosexual person or male presenting, you know, everyone else was at risk leaving their houses.

So during that movement that was happening, I witnessed many of our cult members very vocally supporting this movement. You know, regardless of all of this information of its association with these groups. And it really just, it just struck me. And it, it was the final hit that woke me up. And the recognition that I was really in a, in a cult of white supremacy. And I could, you know, if I could say one cult I came out of, it was the cult of white supremacy. And that's been a thread of all the mini cults that I've been a part of, this one including.

When I left, I was starting to see a divide inside of myself, a voice [00:21:00] of oppression versus a voice of victimization. And the different kinds of oppression that happened, because I am part white European and also part Japanese. And it was the white European part of me that had really been taking the stage my whole life. And it got amplified in this last new age cult that we were part of, which we'll get into more later.

Um, so it was this Japanese part of me that stood up and said, you know what? It's, it's your turn to listen. So I need you to sit down and listen. And it's gonna be hard for me to speak. I don't really know what to say and how to say it. Um, I'm gonna shake. I'm gonna cry. Maybe I'm gonna fumble. But it's still your turn to listen and, and, and be there for me as I've been for you.

And this is going to be a two-way conversation now.

Candice Schutter: Wow.

Teruyo: So that's what got me out. And it was soon after that we [00:22:00] started writing.

[00:22:32] Music Sample: "The Calling"

Lennox: I grew up in a, a very conservative town. Everybody went to church. There weren't people of color. We didn't talk about indigenous practices or, you know. Um, there was no queerness in this community at all, in any way, shape, or form. This is how I grew up. A very, Baptist, world. Uh, very Christian, you know. Don't dance, you know. Even though we did, but not around the church people. We did it off to the side.

That sort of thing, you know, that sort of reality of it.

Teruyo: [00:23:00] Footloose.

Candice Schutter: I was just thinking the same thing. Somebody had to say it.

Lennox: A hundred percent, the footloose was it, you know. And that, that story was very much like, yeah, you know, like a slight exaggeration, but really not that far. Like my world could have been that with a couple of, you know, steps in one direction or another. uh, a summer camps, Baptist summer camps, which were much, much stricter as time went on and, uh, became much more cult focused in, in their aspects.

And when I got out of that, I, you know, decided I'd travel around a little bit and see the world cuz that wasn't right. And I ended up in a yoga cult, you know, a, a very strong yoga cult and, you know, followed that for awhile. And I also ended up in a coercive, controlling relationship, where I was slowly cut off from every connection of everything. Um, And then I got out of that.

And I was talking to my therapist recently and they're like, well, how'd you get outta the coercive [00:24:00] controlling relationship?

And I said, oh, easy. I just joined a cult.

So I, I literally went from that relationship where, you know, I needed to get out, and I found this, this cult. You know, I took their weekend intro course and then they had a two year program, and I jumped right in. And not even halfway through their two year program, I'd given away everything I had. I had moved myself up there. I started working for, like, I jumped right in, you know, like there was no toes dipping in the water. It was jumping in with tons and tons of weights tied to me, you know, as deep as I could go, as quickly as I could go. And I ended up living there and working for the cult.

And after that, I think it was about a year and a half after moving up there, they kicked me out or they fired me or something of that nature. It's really tricky with cults to say that, but if essentially I got asked to leave.

you know, And [00:25:00] so that wasn't necessarily my leaving the cult. I compartmentalized my experience at that point in time. I didn't have the language, the understanding of what had happened, what I'd been in, and what I went through.

I didn't ,have the community, the resources, you know. There were some books out there, but there were very high level, very intellectual. It wasn't, you know, anything that was reaching to me at that point in time. And I don't know if I'd be ready for that. I had to, you know, go get a job and go connect back into the world. And, you know, put food on the table and, you know, reconnect my own self and then find my own value and all these things.

So I compartmentalized my traumas and my pains and my challenges.

And you know, interestingly enough also, I was in that time that void between the cults, I was searching for other cults. There was like, I really was just prime meat. It was just, you know, fortune that I didn't fall into another one. But there was certainly the need and the want. And it wasn't until I started to, [00:26:00] you know, go down that rabbit hole and read some books and get some therapies, some supports that I started to recognize the patterns, the needs, the, the the unquenchable thirsts that, you know, these people were, you know, putting droppers of water on my tongue, you know, and I was, you know, oh, that's great. I'm no longer thirsty. But you know, I needed to find ways to quench my thirsts that were not, you know, led by these organizations and these people and these and coercive controlling realities.

But once I start to peel the layers off, I start to realize how early my cult training had begun.

Candice Schutter: Mm.

Lennox: You know, I, to the, the fact was it was, certainly before I was born. You know, it's just primed for it in every aspect of it.

So now it's really a challenge to sort of pull it apart, which is really the narrative of our musical in a lot of ways, of how do you pull that cult trauma apart in a world [00:27:00] that supports preps, organizes, and probably is a cult in its own structure. You know, like how, how do you leave the fishbowl, you know, when you're in the fishbowl sort of situation.

Candice Schutter: I think that's one of the reasons I was and am so excited to speak with the two of you, is that I noticed in our first conversation, both of you seem to really have a grasp on the systemic nature of this conditioning having the experiences that you've had in multiple environments. And being able to say, this is the water that we're swimming in. This isn't.

Cuz this is something that I've, I've struggled to articulate throughout the series. And I think I'm struggling not only because language is limited, but because we don't have yet the language for all of this. We're inventing it as we go of like, it's not about, that's a cult. That's a cult. That's a cult. That's a cult. That isn't. That isn't. You know. It's that this framework exists everywhere. And when we spoke initially, that's like your [00:28:00] foundation in terms of your recovery and how you're approaching this.

It's like we're all in cult recovery. We're all under the influence of these dynamics. And I'm getting really fired up. It just, it's just.

There's,

Teruyo: Yeah get fired up.

Candice Schutter: I just feel so passionately about it and like yeah, we could spend a bunch of time talking about new age cults and how they function and that's interesting, only if it's revealing this larger context. Right?

And like that's what I feel when I hear both of you share your experiences that you really have a grasp on that. And I know that's kind of where we wanted to go today is like, how do we have that conversation that doesn't get had very often around this?

Like how do we begin that conversation, I should, should say, cuz we're just scratching the surface of it.

Um, I'll, I'll just say this, this one piece cuz it's like a thread that's kind of lingering and I think it's, it'll lead us into this larger conversation a little bit. When you were speaking about this word shamanic. I just feel like it's one example of this [00:29:00] much larger conversation that we're wanting to have. I'm gonna stop here cuz I'll just rant. What's coming up for you is, I say this as we move into at your experiences and how it's opened your eyes to this larger need to have this larger conversation.

Teruyo: Well, I just wanna say that I'm, I'm glad you're fired up. That fire is a part of our recovery. And it's part of our, our work.

Yeah, shamanism, it's reflecting something of a bigger picture for sure. It's our settler colonialism foundation. It's what these offshoots of mini cult are, are stemming off from. And we've been given the blueprint of oppression and violence and ownership of indigenous peoples and the land, and brought that into our everyday ways of living now. It's just what we've normalized, and what we've overlooked.

And for us, we're [00:30:00] really interested in getting to the root of things, the root cause analysis. You know, let's get those weeds at the roots of they don't come back. You know, it's often people question, you know, how did I get into that cult?

Well, you know, that expanding that question. Let's go back to the root of that. Let's follow that thread. And say, you know what really ripened me and readied me to go into this cult? Because it wasn't just a singular event. And it's the systems of trauma such as colonialism, such as racism. They traumatize us. They're built for trauma. And they ripen us for these cults, and to continue these cult culture.

So it is absolutely pivotal in the education part and reclaiming our critical thinking.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Teruyo: To bring our personal experiences out to the bigger picture. And to start to [00:31:00] see everything through that cult lens, or the anti-colonial lens or anti-racism lens, and start to see what the world tells us through those lenses. Where we can see the red flags and where we can see the interconnectedness between all these micro groups. And see the roots where they all lead to.

You know, we're, we're interested in that. We wanna get to that source. And we don't want this to happen again. We don't want to become new leaders that are just replicating the cult leader model. So how do we do that?

Well, we do the thing that has not been done, which is centering the anti-colonial, anti-racism ways and practices in everything we do. Like you said, it's not just about the cults and this cult recovery community, it's applying that to all aspects of our lives.

Candice Schutter: I wanna say amen to all of that, but that's one of those words that's been ruined for me. [00:32:00] So, right. so, I'll just raise my hands up.

Lennox: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Anything you wanna chime in around this topic?

Lennox: The one thing that came up in my mind was, you know, we, we think of the cult leaders, the narcissists, the gurus, whatever you wanna say, as you know, highly skilled,

super intelligent people. But they're really not. Everyone that I've, you know, Now that I have some critical thinking, and I think back on it, they haven't brought anything forth. They haven't created anything new. They haven't done anything. All they found is they found a programming in the system that they could hijack, and they manipulate it for their own advantage.

And it's not because they're so genius that they can do it. It's because it's ripe and there ready for the taking. And the narcissism within themselves, the, the, the issues within themselves or whatever it is, allows 'em to go, huh, well, if you know you're gonna leave your wallet open, I'm gonna take all your money. Thank you. You [00:33:00] know, like, it's, it's so right there.

And I think, you know, a lot of times people talk about how'd you get into the cult? And tell me about the guru and the leader and all that sort of thing, we focus on this. And all the, the sort of, you know, the popular media right now is talking a lot about the leaders, leaders, leaders.

To me it's not about the leaders. They were just, you know, taking what they wanted in a way that they could, the easiest possible without thinking of consequence. But really it is well, how come they could do that so easily? And how come so many of them can do it so easily? And so many who are not very skilled or intelligent or trained or knowledgeable or anything, just, you know, just very, very general middle of the road do this?

That to me tells you that there is a serious flaw in this system. And if that's not enough to start to go, okay, wait a minute, we need to look at that flaw. And that crack in the system opens to a much wider conversation of identity. Who I am. Critical thinking, of logic, of, of [00:34:00] thinking of how to genuinely be present and to heal and to connect. Not just the way that we're trained should and shouldn't be, and the rules that are for the only, we must hold our fork this way at dinner.

Why? I don't know, but we must do it.

You know, like these types of things where we start to go, wait, why? No, let's seriously go, why? Like, let's go into the way and there might be a good reason for it. Because it's better for us. But there might be absolutely no reason for it. And let's start to break these down.

Once you start to go into the why's and break it down, you start to see that there really is a lot of this training that comes from our structure, our culture, our economy. You know, it's the same system that they're using ultimately.

Teruyo: Our musical reveals the magic tricks.

Lennox: Mm-hmm.

Teruyo: That's another way of saying what he's been saying. Yeah.

[00:34:47] Music Sample: "The Calling"

Lennox: [00:35:00] We have, we have a dynamic which, which was challenging cuz our musical is about what it's like to get out of a cult. It isn't what it's like to be in a cult. But we knew we had to talk a little bit about the cult experience. But when we were writing songs about the cult experience, actually being in the cult, it was always like creepy. Like it felt gross, you know? Like it just didn't feel like I wanted to sing the song. And I didn't want anyone to sing the song, until we came to the understanding that what if we don't talk about the magic tricks, what if we show the magic tricks?

So if you think of those YouTube videos where, you know, they change the camera a little bit so you can see what they're doing with their sleight of hand, and you can see how they do that trick and you're like, oh, okay, I get it. Well done. So simple. Take a bit of [00:36:00] practice. But I could do that too.

So our songs about being in the cult are that. Here is the angle of the magic tricks. But we're gonna sing it to you like we are going to manipulate you. But we're gonna tell you exactly how we're manipulating, very common language.

So then when we talk about healing and our healing and our experience of coming out of the cults, we have more space and breath to explore our discovery of language, of our poetic expression, of our emotional expression in those aspects.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Lennox: And then you have a dichotomy, a clear separation between the two.

Candice Schutter: I love that in you're describing the musical and in you're just describing like your approach to cult recovery. Because of this tendency to center the leaders, which is part of the conditioning. It's like a muscle that's so developed, right? It's like just what I find myself doing it. Something will happen and I'm like, what are the, and it's like we have to pull away from [00:37:00] that positioning of the leader is the source of the solutions and also all the problems.

And seeing like, like zooming out and seeing how these larger structures are functioning. Like this is something that I think is so critical in us actually recovering ourselves individually and creating a new culture is to really examine, like, if I look at the most recent new age cult, the last, let's call it the last, God willing, cult that you were involved in you know, they were overtly, expressing their white supremacy by supporting these actions. It's so fascinating to me because I've been involved in so many, and, and when I say involved, I mean complicit in, many cultures in new age wellness where there's so much performative activism going on. So it's like we put black people on our brochures.

Like there's this virtue signaling and just all this stuff going on that's whitewashing the situation isn't really dealing with the dynamics themselves. And so [00:38:00] I just feel like it's important to name that. Because I think it's really easy just as when we focus on the leader so much and we're like, well, if we get the narcissist out of power, then everything will be okay.

Nope, not true.

Um, Also when we're like, oh, if we have a conversation, you know, a few times about anti-racism, we're not operating under supremacist culture any longer. And it's like, it's so shortsighted. And I've been in those conversations and I've patted myself on the back for, for doing certain things that I thought was helping, but in fact it was actually enabling the systems.

So I speak to that cuz I think a lot of folks who are listening, at least I know my listenership have made efforts around educating themselves in terms of white supremacy and anti-racism. But maybe haven't fully made the connection to how deep the rabbit hole goes in terms of how it's informing the way that we're showing up with each other in community and in leadership, and the ways that [00:39:00] we unconsciously reinforce these hierarchies over and over and over again. And how we have to catch ourselves every single day.

So the question I guess is really, when you look at re-imagining how we, not even re-imagining, I don't even think we're there yet, dismantling this construct. What what arises for you when it comes to, to mitigating these dynamics. Let's just look at wellness culture for example. What are your thoughts on how to do this differently?

Teruyo: I think that if we tear it all down, you know, we'd be left in shambles.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, exactly.

Teruyo: Um, you know, it's a very intricate weaving for hundreds of years, and we're starting to pull apart those threads. But in a way that doesn't destroy us along the way.

It's deprogramming and reprogramming at the same time. And to keep coming back to putting on that [00:40:00] lens that we have of critical thinking that we've learned in our cult education, learned in all of these anti-racist, anti-colonial education models. To keep coming back to that lens and that focus and checking in every step, and every thought of the way, cuz the programming's deep it is deep into our subconscious.

And to just check ourselves, and go out to the bigger picture. You know, is my belief right now of someone walking down the street. How is that reinforcing some form of systemic oppression? You know, trace that threat out and get curious. Just get curious. Question everything. You'll find the answers of why things are the way they are and not to be satisfied that's just the way things have been.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Teruyo: So.

I was thinking also you've, had Dr. Janja Lalich on here. She's wonderful, wonderful.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Teruyo: Um, but she defines the new age cult, as the [00:41:00] part of the, the God is within, the everything is within viewpoint and belief system. And there is some truth to that. But when we turn our gaze completely inward and get trapped in that pigeon hole of our wellness and only our healing, we lose sight of everything around us.

And the danger of that is no one, systemically especially, is held accountable for what happens, the traumas that happen repetitively, daily, over and over again.

And it's not enough to just say, I'm gonna pray this away. Yeah, there's, there is prayer. There's place for spirituality, all of that. But it's not the answer. It's a, it's a part of an answer. And we need to do our inner work as much as we need to hold others around us accountable to their work.

[00:41:51] Music Sample: "What Right Feels Like"

Candice Schutter: Yes. [00:42:00] It is uncomfortable. That's the guarantee.

Yeah.

Teruyo: We're healing and the realities of post cult trauma and the, the effects and the damage it has on parts of our brains, like short term memory or having dissociative patterns. Like that's all very real when, you know, I come into these, these interviews and any kind of high nervous situation.

So,

Candice Schutter: That sort of performative self, my cult persona. I can nail the, I can stick the landing. And so it's like I, I have to notice when I go into that sort of dissociation where then I start to become someone else. And I'm not even really present anymore. So I, I really appreciate you speaking to that cuz it, it happens more often than [00:43:00] I would like to this day.

Yeah.

Lennox: It also is, you know, a comfort of our, our neuro pathways. You go into your performative self, and then the other people know how to respond. It's like a call and answer song where everybody knows the words. But when you go out of your performative self, then people are like, wait a minute, you're not playing the game.

You know, like, uh, what do I do? You know? And it becomes discomfort upon discomfort. And it creates almost like a disconnect from social structures, you know. So there's not the reward, the instant reward that we're used to of, oh, you know that song too? Come on in, you're my friend. It's more like, wait a minute, you're weird. And I'm not going to trust you instantly.

And then you're like, oh, wait a minute. Now I'm getting this cold feeling. And it's a disconnect. I get a warm feeling if I do this song, cold feeling if I'm genuine, I'm gonna do the warm feeling.

You have to lean into the discomfort. It's a [00:44:00] requirement in order to find that reconnection with self. It is discomfoting. That's almost a beacon of you're on the right path.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Lennox: If it's a little too comfortable, I think it's, it's similar to the cultural appropriation. You know, instead of having the whole culture in ceremonies that are part of that whole culture, they just take that ceremony and then they take apart the things they want, and then they redistribute it. It's very much like sugar. You know, this sugar came from a fruit, benefit to me.

Well, no, it's just sugar at that point. There's no fiber. There's no vitamins. There's nothing. You've taken everything out of it. You know, you have to have absolutely everything entwined in it. And we're so used to these sugary responses. We're so used to these easy things.

The privilege is designed in the structure. If you, then you, sort of. That's what's programmed us in a lot of ways. And sometimes we need to be, wait a minute, wait a minute. I'm not gonna 'if you then you.' I'm going to [00:45:00] sit back a little bit, reflect. Try and look at a bigger picture. Try and look at my genuine self. Try and look at who is actually benefiting from all of this? Including myself, but everybody else. Start to ask the bigger questions of the situation.

And it become, to me, it becomes very apparent, in being male presenting for so many years in a system that gives me so many privileges because I'm white and male presenting. That all of these things that have been sort of the if thens that have been bestowed upon me. All of these simplicities, all the sugar that has been pushed into my system, has disconnected me so deeply from myself. And disconnected me so deeply from other people around. I never even learned how to listen to other people.

Because what do you learn in school? The important people are white men. You must listen to them. And so as a white man, people would listen to me innately, they [00:46:00] would. And it would be this program of, I'd have more ability to talk. But then I had more experience to talk, and so I got better at talking. I've had years of experience where people let me do this.

And the people who no one listened to for whatever reason, and the number of reasons. All the oppressions that just kept layering upon layering, who didn't have the experience, the opportunity, didn't have the venues to fail at a young age.

I've learned that I need to learn how to listen. Go back to the very root. And not just listen to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. And not just listen to queer, transgendered, disabled people. Listen to everybody and reconstruct my construct of what listening actually is. And

go back to the very root and say, I never was given [00:47:00] the tools to actually listen. And from there I can start to even imagine.

And I'm not there yet at all. I'm still pulling off those layers cuz the brain is a very programmed and powerful machine and it takes over. As I'm learning how to listen more and more and more, and catching myself and catching myself. I know this will be a lifelong process of continually deprogramming my soapbox skills and going back to to listen and really sitting in the listening zone for, for a long time.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Teruyo: And we are gonna feel uncomfortable. That's, that is the guarantee. You know, the sooner we can accept that and and welcome that as a part of our recovery and, and this important work, the sooner we can get to the crux of it.

Because there's, as you said earlier, we're [00:48:00] all swimming in the same water. There's something all of us have to be accountable for. We all have certain privileges and oppressions. Different intersectionalities. But we all have a role to play.

And it's a another guarantee that, you know, we're gonna fuck up. I'm sure I'm gonna look back and listen to this episode and say, damnit, why did I say that? Or I didn't say that, you know. But it's the willingness to, to fuck up, to stumble, to learn how to use those authentic voices. To learn how to, how to listen fully in a new way to each other.

That's the work.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Perfectionism itself is such a big part of this. I'm really, I mean, I had a conceptual understanding of that, but it's starting to really land in my bones a little bit. Like just how ingrained this unwillingness to to be authentic and take risks in communication and in connection and have [00:49:00] uncomfortable conversations is because I've been ingrained with this idea that like, I am fucking it up if I don't do it perfectly.

Right. Like that, that is so deep inside of me. And it's the thing that I have to push through the most to be courageous, to put out a podcast, to sit down and have a conversation like this. You know, even that idea that that exists, that there is such a thing as doing it perfectly is a function of white supremacy.

So it's like, that's why this is all just like a big tangled mess, and it's gonna be messy. And that's the point is that we haven't been willing to be messy.

If there's listeners out there still struggling, like with this connection between, I still don't fully understand what white supremacy has to do with the Org, for example.

It's like, think about being in an Org training and how doing it right was like so critical. Expressing ourselves a certain way. Moving a certain way. All the things. And you can draw a direct connection [00:50:00] between that and supremacist culture. It's functioning there. Whether there's a person of color in the room or not. It's present.

And it's, it's that sense of oppression and the way that we've internalized it. And whew. I have such a long way to go when it comes to that. That's why I say like the cult leader lives inside. It's like, that is an ongoing thing for me.

To be so critical of my own expression. Instead of really just listening for what's the meaning that's being created in this conversation? And where is it taking us? Who cares if we said it perfectly? Like, does that really matter? Like it goes so deep for me. I don't know about y'all, but for me it's.

Teruyo: Very deep. And what a wonderful control tactic. Keep the people silent. You know, it's trauma-based too. It's, yeah. And anti-capitalism. Let's talk about, you know, it's all these connected threads of that And being, you know, being punished for that. Being humiliated for not being this idea of what is defined as perfect, you know, that stuff is really [00:51:00] real. Um, we have trauma, we have memories of that.

So, so it is a completely different relearning of how to be vulnerable and authentic and speak from our hearts and be fully honest and be okay with that.

Lennox: The concept of perfectionism in white supremacy is, you know, it reminds me of how to create a new community without bringing the old training into it. And it's that same thing of perfection, of, you know, I need to be perfect, so now I'm gonna be the perfect, you know, ally. I'm going to be the perfect anti-racist. I'm going, I am going to solve the white supremacy problem. I'm gonna be so good that I'm gonna get down. That concept eliminates the possibility of actually doing the work necessary by itself. It is so insidious, the processing that goes on inside of us. It's like, [00:52:00] yes, I can do it and I'm gonna be the best ever. It's like, whoa.

And that's the catching that I always catch myself, how programmed it is.

And I cannot listen honestly and integrally, if I'm listening with the lens of trying to be the best. Or trying to be perfect and not giving myself the space to learn how to be really messy. And how to work and exist and live in messiness. And be okay with that.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Teruyo: And the, the the, gift about being creative and why musical making has been so pivotal for our recovery and our growth as who we are, is because it's, it asks for a messy process. It gives permission to that. You know, like a child playing in a mud puddle. It's, it can be fun. That's where you get to discover things that you couldn't have conjured up or imagined.

So that's the gift of being [00:53:00] creative. Whether that means hosting a podcast, or writing poetry and journaling, you know, or cooking, you know, whatever it is that allows you to be messy and bypass that perfectionist narrative and that voice that really is not ours. That's so central to recovery.

Candice Schutter: It's really a return to our humanity. You know, there's lots of lip service around being human and authe, like, I feel like authenticity's one of those words that's starting to get the life beat out of it. Because it's just what we do with humans, right? We just kill all the words. Vulnerability's is another one. It's like they become buzzwords, and then they start to become meaningless over time.

But what they're pointing to, I feel like, is this return to humanity and what connects us, like outside of these constructs of who we think we are. Which is really what cult indoctrination is about. Let me tell you who you are. Let me tell you who you are. Let me put a [00:54:00] label on you, and then you conform to that. You comply. And you fall into that category, and everything operates in this systemic way that benefits people in power, by the way.

Lennox: Hmm.

Candice Schutter: Instead of just being like, we're human. We're messy. We, you know, not everybody.

I mean, that's a big, been a big thing for me and two in my recovery is like, expressing myself, I just released a, an episode on Patreon and there was like something I said in it. And I was walking on the trail and like the little voice came in and was like, I can't believe that you said that. Do you know how many people that's gonna piss off?

And it was just, that's authentically what I was feeling. And like, that's a muscle for me to just be like, I'm leaving that in there. That's authentic. It's gonna, you know. And, And like for us to just be able to be authentic. But we can't be a authentic if the world around us won't allow us to be. So that's why it's like we all have to do it together, right?

Like you just described so beautifully, the warm feeling and the cold feeling, right? How do we exist in a world unless we are all [00:55:00] deprogramming? Like how do we exist authentically in a world? We have to all deprogram. We have to all be willing, or I should say, critical mass, be willing to, to do this work.

And I just cannot thank you enough for being brave enough to have this conversation with me, for all of us, that we can be unlearning out loud together and practicing this together just means such a tremendous amount to me.

Teruyo: Yeah. This musical is for people who've experienced cults and high controlling environments or relationships. This is our that we've received, first and foremost for our own healing and recovery, and we want to share that and bring the spotlight, so to speak, to the voices that are getting louder and that are coming together to amplify what we have to say and the needs we're addressing.

Because it's a new kind of leader. You know, there's an opportunity having been through what we've been through [00:56:00] in relationship to cults, to have a level of empathy and passion and that fire that was in you earlier on. You know, to be advocates. To be activists for unraveling these programs of oppression and violence and helping to rebuild a world of equity, of actual love, and actual community, as opposed to cults.

[00:56:29] Music Sample: "What Right Feels Like"

Candice Schutter: Coming out of these communities can be really lonely.[00:57:00] And, I've been fortunate in doing this podcast that I've been able to create a recovery space for folks coming out of, of the organization that I was the last cult that I was involved. Well, and that's not true. Let's just say one of them.

Um, and it's been incredibly healing, where we've all had such unique and different experiences and then we see how much they overlap and are able to feel that like, the part of me that was taught to gaslight myself around every little thing. The more conversations like this I have, the more free I become from that.

And especially a conversation like this where you're really willing to go to that. The Deeper Pulse is the name of the podcast, and that's really where I felt like feel like we went today.

And just to say, there's so much more depth to explore when it comes to this. We just scratched the surface and we knew we would. That's all we, we knew we could do [00:58:00] today.

And I hope that it inspires more folks to, to ask these questions, too. And I just can't thank you enough for your, your courage and your willingness to wrap language around all of this for us. It means the world to me that you're here today.

Teruyo: You're welcome. Thank you so much for your work and for paving the way and providing this safe space for us and so many others. It really is such a difference to relearn what community is and how that impacts the healing process and the recovery process.

It can be very lonely, as you said. And that is a lot to process on one's own. So having these, these platforms like you've created where we can come together, it makes all the difference. And, and I hope to spread the word and the news about your work and what you do to more and more people. Cuz you're such a, a great person. We hope to keep the conversation [00:59:00] going with you much longer in, in other ways.

Yeah.

[00:59:05] Music Sample: "What Right Feels Like"

Candice Schutter: I'd like to offer my deepest thanks to Teruyo and Lennox for their courage, creativity, and friendship.

They've promised to circle back to the pod post musical production to share about their completed work with [01:00:00] all of us. And you can visit the show notes to find information about the vocalists featured in this episode.

I'm taking another short production break, but I'll be back here on the main feed in a couple of weeks. In the meantime, I'll keep dropping those bonus episodes over on Patreon. Until we meet again, I hope that you keep remembering what right feels like for you.

Thanks for listening.

[01:00:23] End w/ "What Right Feels Like"

[01:01:00]