



Accepting Messiness in Relationships

Guest: Akilah Riley-Richardson

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[00:00:09] Jaï Bristow

Hello and welcome to this conference. My name is Jaï Bristow and I'm one of your hosts. Today I am very, very pleased to be welcoming the wonderful Akilah Riley-Richardson. Welcome.

Akilah Riley-Richardson

Hi.

Jaï Bristow

I'm so glad to have you on board. Akilah is a relational healing facilitator, a couple's therapist, and a certified clinical trauma professional. You're also the founder of the Relational Healing Institute, and creator of the Pride model. We'll be talking about all of that today.

Do you want to start by telling us what the term toxic relationship evokes for you?

Akilah Riley-Richardson

As you said it, my face said eek, it's a term that's uncomfortable for me. I think the term itself gives us a lot of information about how the field itself, the field of psychotherapy, or mental health, or couples counseling, how the field itself conceptualizes relationality. How the field itself conceptualizes healthy relational living. And it gives us more information, it gives us a lot of information, I should say, about those of us, therapists and trainers, et cetera, who give ourselves the power to name. It gives us a lot of information about us, and I'm concerned that it takes away from the context and lived realities of those who exist in alleged toxic relationships.

I think toxic relationships, the term, I'm not saying that we have to abandon it totally. I don't think it's either or, I think we can have many things that can be true at the same time. I think we can sit with it as a portal to walk in to discover something, and realize we may have to abandon, or reclaim, or whatever. I say that because a lot of my work is with couples who have been historically, and systemically, and systematically marginalized. So working with BIPOC, working with LGBTQI folk, and just looking at the ways in which systemic and historical trauma affect their dynamics, and quite frankly to have a clinician or trainer step into those dynamics and say, this is toxic, there's a discomfort in my chest.

[00:02:58]

Right before I came on this call, I was doing a recording for social media where I talk about this thing I call it clinical colonialism, or therapeutic colonialism. Where we give ourselves this power to name, and we step in, we see spaces, the space being our clients' lived reality, and we decide we will call it this. And because our clients participate in this authority theme, where they lean on us to name and diagnose, they begin to lean into that reality as well. And I think one of the things that I encourage my clients to do is to, and therapists who I support, is lean into more curiosity, lean into relational curiosity with the work.

Co-create an understanding, especially when working with people who are marginalized, because people who are marginalized are already day by day disempowered. And they have to step into another disempowering experience with a therapist, who looks at the relationship and diagnoses it as being toxic, whether overtly or otherwise. So that's a very long answer. But toxic relationships, I don't want to scoff at it, but I want to acknowledge the discomfort I have when I hear somebody talk about toxic relationships.

Jai Bristow

Thank you for that answer. I really appreciate how you're talking about this colonial approach to therapy, to diagnose and name and label relationships, people, conditions, and put so much emphasis on that, and what that looks like, and what that means. And often there's a judgment that comes with that. So what you're saying is that often in marginalized communities, or marginalized relationships, there's a lot of trauma there, there's a lot of disempowerment there. And so adding this judgmental label of toxicity can maybe do more harm than help. Is that what you would say?

Akilah Riley-Richardson

Yeah, most definitely. I think when I think about our field right now, I think we assume this thing that I call relational privilege. So relational privilege are the conditions that we have that allow us to fit into these traditional, conventional definitions of what it means to be relational. So when I was learning how to be a couple of therapists in various phases, I was taught that to be relational, you must be empathetic and vulnerable and all of these different things, with your partner or partners.

And we're seeing that these conditions that allow people to be able to be those things don't always exist for marginalized people. So when I think about relational privilege, I think about four primary facets, being able to live your own truth, being able to feel physically safe, being able to feel psychologically safe, physical and psychological safety, two in one, self-acceptance, and social acceptance.

I just want to talk about the fact that for persons who are marginalized, first of all, living in your own truth is difficult. I always use this quote from a client of mine, a black woman who said to me once in therapy, I feel like I'm often being pulled out of the reality, the truth of my experiences. And being black means that I have to walk with this compartmentalized self, this bifurcated self.

As Ken Hardy talks about, there's no false self, there are just many facets of this self, this double consciousness, being aware of who I am and how you're seeing me, and having to perform to survive, and understanding that invalidation sometimes keeps me safe. So I don't have that, and so

you ask me now to want to bring that into my relationship, when the system that I exist in does not allow me to do that.

[00:07:18]

The other piece is being able to feel safe. The research is showing us that persons, like black people who experience, that women in particular, who experience racism, the parts of the brain that are wired for threat are more active for them. But then we want black women to come and show up with their partners and be relational when they're experiencing these things systemically. If your bodies are not safe, how can you show up for your partner in this way? Being able to walk into a relationship, and not walk in with shame, and be confident. But that's the third part.

The first was living one's truth, psychological safety and physical safety. Third part being self-acceptance. Being on the margins means that shame is an emotional ritual for the marginalized. Learning how to live with shame, learning sometimes how shame keeps you safe, learning your daily relationship with shame, and being shamed is part of what it means to exist on the margins. But yet still we ask people to show up in relationships and be big and brave and bold, when the context that they live in doesn't teach them that.

And then the last part is social acceptance, tied a lot to self-acceptance, that within many of us as marginalized people, we have a repertoire of themes in our bodies that shape the floor, as my colleague Jules Taylor Shaw would say, the psychological floor, that we walk on. And that psychological floor has stories from our ancestors, and stories that we live daily where we do, where we are not accepted as we are in the world. Whether it be covertly or overtly.

My mind right now is heavily on the most recent shooting in Jacksonville in Florida. And while I do not live there, it is a startling reality, a startling reminder, I should say, of the fact that black people in the world right now can be targeted just for being black. Just for being black.

And imagine what you have to live in, what your body has to do and appreciate, in order to survive this kind of world. And then tell me, how am I supposed to then take the same body and have it abide by conventional notions of healthy relationship and healthy relational living? It's difficult. So we, as therapists, sometimes want to come in and tell people how to be, and we want to fix their relationships. But I think those of us who exist in privileged bodies, and we all have elements of privilege and marginalization.

Those of us who live in privileged bodies need to understand when our own relational privilege is showing up. When I, for example, I am black, but I am CIS het, when I sit with a same sex loving couple, I have to understand how my relational privilege as being a CIS het woman, how that is informing what I am shaping in the moment. I have to acknowledge a differential relational privilege in the room. So what we're summoning people to, has to be more aligned with their day to day and lived experiences.

There was a stage in the work where I thought I knew exactly what should happen in terms of how we should work with people, and my work is shifting and changing all the time. What I thought about the work five months ago, two months ago, last week, isn't what I'm thinking about today. Right now in this moment, talking to you Jaī, I am saying that this is a moment by moment conversation, and interrogation, and curiosity, and working with people who are couples who are marginalized, and who show up with alleged toxic relationships.

[00:11:19] Jaï Bristow

Amazing. Thank you so much for bringing all of that in. I think it's really important to contextualize these kinds of things. That more and more today people are hearing about these terms of privilege, and lack of privilege, and systemic oppression, and systemic marginalization. And sometimes, and especially it was really important what you added, that we all have areas where we have privilege and lack thereof. It's one of the things I talk about in the courses I lead on power, privilege, and prejudice.

At the same time, this idea that we need to contextualize it, that it's not a separate thing to the life we live. We can't just be, okay, I'm going to read a book about antiracism, and I'm going to post some hashtags on social media. But then when I'm in conversation, or in relationship rather, with someone who experiences that on a daily basis, then I'm going to forget everything I've learned.

Or again, it's not just about racism. There's oppression around race, around gender, and gender is the patriarchy and male female dynamics, or men and women dynamics. But it's also trans people. I myself am non-binary. And then there's all the stuff around sexual orientation. There's all the stuff around class, around disability, around neurodivergence.

There's so much, and it's all so interconnected. And of course, it's going to impact our relationships, it's insane to think otherwise. Sorry, that's probably not an appropriate word to use in this context of therapy. But I really appreciate what you're bringing in, that we have to be aware of the trauma that someone might be experiencing when we're in relationship with someone.

And that maybe especially when you live in a body that is being oppressed, marginalized in lots of different ways, with lots of intersections, there might not be so much room to have worked on it all, to be able to show up in a relationship in the ways that is often asked in the mainstream. I think it's so important to name this, to make this explicit, that often what's talked about in the mainstream, in the Americas, Europe, and the Western global north countries, is a very white colonial perspective of therapy.

And that what you're talking about is remembering the context, remembering people's individual journeys. And we talk a lot on this conference about the relationship between trauma and toxicity. And I think that you're bringing in an extra piece that's so vitally important. So thank you.

I'm curious, you said how this word toxic makes you feel uncomfortable, and you explained why. And we're also talking a lot about trauma, so I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit more, you've given some fantastic examples already, but if you could speak a bit more to what it looks like when trauma, especially from being marginalized, can show up in relationships. And what's needed to be able, once we've contextualized and had awareness, what's needed to be able to work with that, to be able to offer healing to each other in relationship, rather than just retraumatize each other in relationship.

Akilah Riley-Richardson

Yeah, definitely, I'll say that whenever I work with persons who are examining the ways in which systemic trauma is seeping into their relationship. I call this process relational interrogation, it's an invitation. I'm answering the question with caution because I'm acknowledging I don't want to run the risk of labeling and diagnosing and saying, this is the thing when I see this. I also want to stay very close to the experiences of those who've allowed me to work with them.

[00:15:22]

I'll talk first about what we see as habits of survival, and I lean heavily on the work of Ken Hardy when I talk about that. That sometimes the habits of survival, like aggression, or withdrawal, or blaming, these things that help people to survive outside, you may see it manifesting in the relationship. So that aggression you may deem, or that grandiosity that you may deem, to be extreme or toxic, is actually an adaptive response coming into the relationship. I think it's important for us to name it as that this is a habit of survival, this is important.

Resmaa Menakem, who I'm sure you're familiar with, Resmaa says trauma decontextualized can look like personality. Trauma decontextualized in a relationship can look like toxicity. And we see these things, and that's one of the ways in which we think it can manifest. Sometimes couples have issues with poor boundaries, sometimes they're too rigid with each other, or they're too lax with each other. And all of those things are adaptations that have come into the relationship.

I ask people often to think about just their own journeys with their identity. What does it mean, for example, if you are same sex loving, if you're trans, what was your coming out story, and how is your coming out story right now showing up in your relationship? Did you feel safe? Did you feel held? Did you feel seen? And how are these things right now showing up in your relationship? So there's no set way, I'll say this, moment by moment clinicians are called to invite people to think about how certain things, you have to do some teaching and think and help them to figure out, is this connected to what I'm experiencing outside?

It's a thing I do call the theater of oppression, a technique I use, I invite people to see all wider society as this theater. And the theater has a theme, and theater has roles, and cast. And marginalized people are often cast in roles that we didn't ask for. I ask people to think about how have you been cast? How have you had to survive in this particular role? And how is the role that you've been cast in now, how is that now showing up in your relationship? That technique often helps people to be able to see, oh, my God, yeah, I've been cast in this role, and I'm seeing how I'm seeing it showing up directly. And that will look different for each and every person.

There's a second question you asked me, completely slipped me, you asked me two questions in there.

Jaï Bristow

I can't remember anymore, I'm so enthralled by everything you're saying. I'm taking notes as you're talking, which I never normally do. I think it's so important, everything that you're bringing in. What you were talking about just then, about the way people are cast. I interviewed Rafaella Fiallo on this conference, and we were talking about the harmful stories we tell ourselves, and the self-fulfilling prophecies that you can get caught up in, and how we'll often cast people in our stories that fit the roles.

So if one of our stories we tell ourselves is we're unlovable, then we'll often draw in people who have an avoidant attachment style, and then in so doing, it creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. And we've cast someone who themselves have the story that people are too needy, for example, and that they need to keep people at arm's length. I'm simplifying people. Go check out that interview if you want to know more about what we talked about.

[00:19:18]

But what you're saying is taking this step even one step further. This fact that so many people who are marginalized are cast in roles that they don't get to choose at all, and that from the very moment of their birth, there's a bunch of projections, there's a bunch of labeling, there's a bunch of very narrow frameworks and shutting down their potential to be different, to what's expected of them. And often those expectations can be quite harmful.

Now, of course, there are exceptions, of course, like everything, and that's important to name as well. I love the way that you described Resmaa Menakem's words of trauma decontextualized can look like personality. Now, for me, I often talk about how systemic oppression, or systemic suffering will always feel personal. But personal suffering isn't always systemic, and differentiating those two. I think that that really highlights that.

And so in what you're saying, there's this idea that all our relationships, our intimate relationships, whether it's with partners, with family, with friends, there is a microscope in some ways, or a zooming in to the ways that we've been treated in the world. That we're constantly repeating the same patterns that we had from childhood, or from with our primary caregivers, or our teachers, or the people that were in our lives.

And that's often how trauma is created, is by harmful things happening, or hurtful events, whether emotionally or physically hurtful, and then not having the love, and support, and holding. And then we're often repeating that by casting people who will reinforce that pattern, and will help repeat that pattern. And so I think it's really important to recognize all of this and contextualize all of this.

So with that in mind, I think this was the other question I asked was, what do we do once we've contextualized, we recognize, we see that we're playing out those patterns, how do we create trauma healing rather than just continually retraumatizing and perpetuating these patterns more and more?

Akilah Riley-Richardson

You said something so beautiful, they didn't have the proper holding. I think the proper holding is important, as you said it, I wrote it down immediately. The proper holding. There's this thing that I do, I call it the therapeutic biome. And it's leaning on social baseline theory, and the understanding that we are each other's biome. But persons who are marginalized often don't have safe biomes, they don't have safe relationships. When we're in a relationship that feels like a safe biome, we're naturally regulated. And when we're not, we can feel very unsafe.

Jaï Bristow

Could you explain what you mean by biome? What does biome mean?

Akilah Riley-Richardson

The biome is the holding space. We are each other's biome, which means we are each other's safe space. This is a space in which when I'm with you, I can be in an integrated, regulated space. When I'm not in my biome, when I'm not in my safe space, and when I'm not in my natural habitat, I will feel anxious, I'll feel frustrated. That's my definition of it, others may disagree.

[00:22:51]

Going back to the therapeutic biome. What I've done is that I've taken biome and turned it into an acronym. So B for brave, I for intimate, O for openness, M for microliberatory movement, and E for epistemological hybridism.

Before we talk about any techniques that we have to use with couples to help them, let's just talk about, as you beautifully said, the proper holding. For me, the proper holding is the biome, I'm going to write that down. So what is B brave?

As a clinician, it is my responsibility to name the ways in which oppression sits in people's relationships, to help them to engage in what I call responsible externalizing. When I see this show up, and I've had to do it, when I see people fighting with each other, I help them say, is this your partner? Or is this a system? And I can say to you, I've seen the relief sometimes in some couples when we externalize and we say, oh, it's outside, it's outside, seeping inside. So I'm no longer attacking my partner. We're now head to head, or head to heads in wider engagement arrangements. And we're working together to understand the wider system that is impacting us.

Ken, sorry I'm saying it and I'm feeling tearful, and I want to say it, Ken says we have to unlock the gag order. Remove the gag order when it comes to racism. And I would say we need to remove the gag order when it comes to ableism, sexism, xenophobia, all of these things. We have to begin to name it as therapists. Name it for our people. It's the first step, so be brave and name it.

I is intimate. Intimate, like Ken talks about relational risk taking. And I've realized that as a therapist, when I'm working with people who experience systemic harm, my entire body has to be in this work. Now, truth be told, my body should be in all of my work. And I think I have to be even more vulnerable, and dive in further when working with persons who are experiencing systemic harm.

Why? Because of the invisibility. Just want to hold that. Because of the fact that when you experience xenophobia, or racism, or ableism, or all the other isms, you have to suck that stuff up and keep moving. And the world doesn't often stop for you to be able to grieve and be in pain, the way you need to grieve and be in pain. So it's my responsibility to make the invisible visible, to lean in there, to become intimate, to show emotions, and if it's naturally coming out, to cry with you because it's painful stuff.

O is for openness. I would say that the openness piece is about the curiosity and hearing how people are making sense of what is happening for them. It's tied very much to the last E, but that's the O, just being open, moving away from the clinical colonialism, the preoccupation with, oh, this means that you all are avoidant, and this means that you all are this, and all the lovely terms you like to pull out to diagnose people.

The M is for microliberatory movements. Everything I do in therapy must not only address the interpersonal dynamics between the partners, between or among the partners, but I must be thinking about how does this in some way empower this person, or disentangle them of the shackles of systemic harm.

Yeah, everything I do, everything I see, I'm thinking about the masses. So when I work with this couple, I can't only be thinking about them working together. I have to be thinking about how does this address racism, queer, phobia, all of these different things. What is the microliberatory movement?

[00:27:04]

And then the last one, which is E epistemological hybridism, wordy mouthful. It's about centering the knowings, centering the knowledge and ways of knowing for marginalized couples. I want to give them the power to name this dynamic that they see, this thing that I want to call toxic, this fighting, or this disengagement, or whatever I want to call it. I want to be able to give them the space to name this.

A huge part of liberation for marginalized people is resistance. I remember years ago, a phenomenal social worker here in Trinidad and Tobago called Luke Sinnette, talked about the fact that for queer persons in Trinidad and Tobago, resistance is important, aggression is important. We like to pathologize aggression and turn it into people. We have to teach people how to be assertive and be calm. Live in homophobic spaces and tell me if assertiveness, calmness, and being integrated will serve you.

Understanding the power of resistance. I mean, I am black. I am from a part of the world, and once you're black, you have a history. There is some part of your ancestry where there's rebellion and slave revolt. We understand the role of aggression, we cannot pathologize it. So when I see aggression showing up, it is not my business, it is colonialism, it is boundaryless and invasive to take that and decide, this is toxic.

What I am seeing is people's healing and force showing up, and I have to sit with them. We have to figure out together if this thing is helping them to cultivate the relationship that they want to. And here's the thing, Jaï. I may not like the answer I get, but I have to stay with it and hold it because I can't further practice colonialism and disempowerment in a therapeutic room. I think with this work, there's some grieving as a therapist because all of your ideas of what it's supposed to look like, you have to abandon it. Otherwise you become the oppressor in the room, with the therapeutic oppression and the labeling, and the diagnosing, and the fixing.

A lot of times, I'll be honest, when people come to you, they do want to stop. When people come to us with fighting and aggression, and they do want to stop. But the starting point cannot be me labeling this as dysfunctional. This aggression is how you survive the boundarylessness, as we call it, and I need to find another word because I'm diagnosing, which is the same thing I said I should not be doing. Physician, heal thyself.

But walking people into just the biome, the proper holding is the first step. I have other things that I do, which is to invite people into things like relational declarations, making declarations for their relationship, naming their relationships, and other strategies I can talk about. I want to pause just to see if there are any questions for this before I even think about going into that.

But for me, the first step before all the other strategies that I do and I teach about, first of all, I wanted to just to be with, is just being the therapeutic biome. That itself is a huge part of the work.

Jaï Bristow

Wow, thank you so much. I'm really taking in everything you're saying because it's really important. It's important to step it away for a minute from the pathologizing, from the naming, from the following rules and guidelines of what to do, and what not to do, to just being someone safe.

Creating that home, that holding, that biome for people. And that's how you begin the healing process.

[00:31:09]

I think it's probably easier said than done a lot of the time. And you need to have done a lot of your own healing work to be able to really do that for people. But it's also extremely powerful. So thank you. Keep going. I have no questions. I felt like you were on a roll.

Akilah Riley-Richardson

You said that we have to do our own healing work in order to do that. Can I add to that? I don't want to dispute. I want to add.

Jaï Bristow

You can dispute. You can feel free to challenge me. I like it.

Akilah Riley-Richardson

The other day, I was having a really rough time and I know when I'm having a rough time because I'm less engaging on my socials and whatever. I was saying to the community that when I'm having a rough time, I'm in therapy school, that I'm sitting in my own pain and it's reminding me of what my clients experience, and it's reminding me of the need for the patience and the holy.

How is that related to what you were saying? I think my rough edges, when I learn to be with them differently, allow me to really be the biome. I have not been able, and I will never be able to tidy myself enough to do the work. Yeah, I am messy, I am complicated, I am a walking contradiction. I have moments when you're like, oh my God, I am so proud of myself, I'm so regulated. Moments that I am so all over the place and I can't concentrate. And some of that is tied to personal history. Some of that is tied to being a black clinician that reads in other international spaces, and managing racism and xenophobia, just neocolonialism, right?

And when I sit with persons who experience different kinds of harm, I sit in my messiness, too. And my messiness sometimes is a portal to help me to hold. I'm not over it, I will never be over it, and I am no longer glorifying being over it. And I'm not going to glorify that, or set that as goals for people who have to live in systemic harm.

Therapy it's amazing how the nexus points between capitalism and therapy. Like, you sell us this product, this thing where we have to fix you. You come to me and I fix your relationships, you're no longer toxic, right? What would it be like to sit in the mess and let the mess take us somewhere? Do you know Bayo Akomolafe?

Jaï Bristow

Yes.

[00:34:23] Akilah Riley-Richardson

Amazing work. And when you sit with, sitting with Bayo's work has made me more comfortable sitting in the mess with people. I am better now at not getting, not panicking, when it's not fixed, there's a message there. When it's not fixed, there's information there. And instead of figuring out how I have to fix it some more, maybe there's information about what needs to, there's some information. And I don't have an answer now because I think trying to fight for an answer is trying to fall into the fact that thinking I must always have an answer.

There's this model that I have called Pride. I use the word model cautiously because I don't want to even package it as a model for people to want to follow a model. It's just a way of thinking and P-R-I-D-E Pivot, Rumble, Imagine, Develop, Evolve.

And when working with couples, I invite them to Pivot, take a look at their relationship. Rumble with it, rumble with the dynamics, why is it the way it is? What's happening internally, externally? Imagine new possibilities, I can't imagine the possibilities, you have to imagine the possibilities. Develop those possibilities. And ask yourself at the end, which is Evolve? Who am I now? Because everything I do shapes me. So this conversation right here, when I'm done, I'm going to sit and write down some new things that came to me just by sitting with you Jaï.

There are new ideas that have come to me because I've had to rumble with you. And I think that it's really important to invite our clients into the process. So the healing work for me, I think we have to be mindful of not letting ourselves spill and that kind of thing. But the tidiness leaning here on some of my Bayo's work here, the tidiness and neatness that we like to have, that model we have to fix it, and we have to get more comfortable with the messiness. Mess is a concept and a very oppressive one. Sometimes there's a lot of order in what we're seeing. We just refuse to because it doesn't fit the notions.

Jaï Bristow

I really appreciate what you're saying and that clarity that you made, that clarifying from the sentence I said, and bringing in how, and when I really reflect I see how that idea of fixing, and neatening up, and categorizing, and getting rid of the messy, how that is a colonial idea. And not just that, I see how in my own work, it's not being trauma free that allows me to have these conversations with people. It's not being trauma free that allows me to connect and have empathy with people who are suffering and struggling.

What it is, is my own suffering, my own struggling, my own trauma, and having navigated it and experienced it, having experienced discrimination and oppression myself, and also having tools, having the ability to be with it. And I think we're going back to what we were saying earlier about that biome, that ability to actually have a safe holding, or have I think we use the word proper holding. Have that safe holding to be, and welcome all the messiness, all the different emotions, to explicitly name that, name the systems because you can't begin the healing what's not made explicit.

I really appreciate you pointing that out. I really appreciate you saying, actually no, this is how I feel. And listening to you, I can really feel and recognize that shift in myself.

[00:38:27] Akilah Riley-Richardson

There's something you said that landed for me, I'm so grateful for this conversation, by the way. As soon as you said it, I said, oh my God, therapy equals getting rid of the messy. And I had all these images of European colonizers coming into parts of the world, stripping people of their homes, baptizing them, changing their religions and their language, because they assume that they have better ways of knowing and being.

I am concerned, and cautious, and grieving the ways in which I, as a therapist, have been trained to do the same thing with people. It's just to walk in, especially as a social worker, I think as a counselor or therapist, usually you're invited into spaces, but social work is sometimes the arm of the state. We have to walk in and fix people's lives. And I'm not saying it's not either or, it's not all or nothing, right? Both things can be true at the same time, but we can't ignore that one it's justifiable and understandable in some ways, and in some ways it's just that colonized kind of thing, way of being in the world. Bayo talks about whiteness, and whiteness not necessarily being about white people, but a way of thinking where you have to fix and structure.

What I think is even more concerning is we've sold, everybody's bought into this. So even the couples come in starting to not pay homage to their mess, and how their mess is a habit of survival, not all of it, not all of it, but much of it. As I say, it's responsible, externalizing. When we have people to see outside, we know some things cannot be attributed to the system, the things that are, we have to have people pay homage to their survival before we try to root out the aggression. That doesn't happen in clinical colonialism.

Jaï Bristow

Akilah, thank you so much. I wish we weren't out of time because I have a lot more questions to ask you. Thankfully, you will be returning for our next edition of the Trauma Super Conference. I recommend people keep an eye out for that because I feel like we could talk for hours, and there's so much more I want to know. That said, how can people find out more about you and your work?

Akilah Riley-Richardson

You can look up my website akilahrileyrichardson.com. If you do that and then you see what's on there, sometimes I'm too tired to update it. But you could also email me info@akilahrileyrichardson.com.

It's not just about coming to learn about my work, like I tell people, I'm not interested in being a guru, I'm not interested in having a fan club, this is liberation work. So if you encounter me, my hope is that you would find yourself, not find my work, you'd find yourself and you would find your stamp on the world. That's what I hope my encounter with me would do.

Jaï Bristow

Beautiful, that's so beautiful. I think that's such a beautiful message to end on. Check out Akilah's work, not to find a guru, but to find yourself. Thank you so much for your time today. This has been a really precious conversation.

[00:42:32] Akilah Riley-Richardson

Happy to be here. Thanks for having me.