

E11: Antiracist Parenting in the Context of Multiracial Families

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Guest: Dr. Kale Bantigue Fajardo

Intro (music by Mike Myth Productions):

SooJin: Welcome to the Antiracist Parenting Podcast, where we're working to create an antiracist world for ourselves, our children, and future generations to come.

Hannah: We are Hannah Carney and Soojin Pate. And we're coming to you not as experts but as parents who want to share our missteps and successes in raising antiracist children. Thank you for being on this journey with us, as we work together to build a community of antiracist parents who are raising a generation of antiracist kids.

SooJin: Welcome to Episode 11. Today, we continue our series on multiracial families, emphasizing the importance of raising our children to be both transpositive and LGBTQ+ positive with our very special guests for today. But before we get to that, it's time for our accountability check-in where Hannah and I check in with each other about the commitments we made from the last episode. So Hannah, do you want to start us off?

Hannah: Yeah, definitely. So I had made two commitments last time, the first was kind of engaging in an imagination process with my kids, and maybe beyond just my kids. And I'm actually not really sure if what I'm sharing right now it can be considered sort of imagining. But we read a new book called *Story Tells a Story About Organizing* by Renee Boney-Jett. And the book talks about different ways that organizing can look, for example, they talk about how barber shops sometimes give haircuts for free as a way to organize in the community. And it also talks about ways that kids can get involved. And so Tony and Teo brainstormed things that they could do and decided to host a story time later this month. And they invited kids from their class and other friends and family. And so the idea is to help kids to lead these conversations about race and racism.

SooJin: Wow.

Hannah: Yeah, so they'll be reading *Chocolate Me!* by Taye Diggs and then asking a few discussion questions to the group. And so we'll kind of see how it goes and adjust from there.

SooJin: Oh, my gosh, I can't wait to hear your report out.

Hannah: Yeah, like we have people signing up. It's so interesting, because, you know, it's just on Eventbrite. So people who kind of are tagged on certain topics are signing up. So it's going to be really interesting, but I definitely know for sure, it'll be a multiracial group. And so I'm excited. I really think that this could be powerful for kids to be talking to each other, especially in this like 5-8 year old group.

SooJin: And especially already giving them the opportunity to lead, to facilitate conversations around race like how amazing is that! Wow.

Hannah: So yeah, so maybe that will kind of lead to them imagining amongst themselves around like what world they want to see and live in. So then, my other commitment had been around reviewing and reflecting on the characteristics of white supremacy and how they show up in my life. And I did this using two resources. One is the Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture, which we have shared on our website previously. It's from a workbook called Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun. And then the other resource I used is from the Syracuse Cultural Workers, and it's a poster called Dismantle White Supremacy. And it explains that white supremacy is "a system of domination, which provides legal social and economic benefits to those defined and perceived as white." And then it lists a bunch of tools for action. So I basically like wrote down all the items and then reflected like on each one. And what it ended up becoming are these two enormous posters that I hand wrote like on my wall and they kind of give me - well, one is called "co-creating an equitable culture, an antiracist, multiracial, peaceful society." And the other one is called "dismantle white supremacy." And both posters are filled with peaceful actions that I can do everyday to help build the world I want to live in and one example is being thankful for feedback, and I'll share a little story about this. So I often tell people who are close to me and people in my accountability groups to just give me feedback, like however they want to. And, you know, it can be in the moment, it can be angry, it can be handwritten, whatever. So, um, we were getting ready for Mother's Day. And my mom sent this what I perceived to be kind of like an angry text to our family about her demands for Mother's Day. And normally, old me, would have called her right away, and you know, kind of see what's going on. And that may or may not have ended well. But this time, I did not do that. I first checked in with myself and realized that I didn't have the patience or capacity for empathy that would be needed for that conversation. And by the way, I had asked for feedback. And here it was. I took the night to settle my body and think about how I wanted to respond. And the next day, I called my mom and calmly acknowledged her text. And she apologized and also explain the traditions and celebrations that she had grown up with around Mother's Day. And by learning this, I was able to relate to the pain she must have felt because we never really asked her what she had wanted to do. And so we had just made plans to meet at a park. And so this exchange highlighted the importance for us to seek more input in the planning process around family get togethers. And we ultimately were able to enjoy Mother's Day together with no hard feelings lingering. And so I feel like I'm learning to address feedback that isn't nicely packaged, so to speak. And by truly accepting feedback, taking time to reflect and ultimately changing my behavior as a result, is really critical to antiracism. And in this case, I will be more intentional around seeking input before planning family gatherings.

SooJin: Awesome. And you like taking that moment. And kind of like taking that pause, it reminded me of what I did like with my friend, you know, the Slow Mo me.

Hannah: Yes, totally.

SooJin: You slowed yourself down. And like you realized in that moment that I can't, I'm not going to handle this situation, I'm not going to be able to respond to this feedback in a positive way. I don't have the capacity right now. So I'm going to take more than a breath, I'm actually going to sleep on it. So that is fantastic.

Hannah: Yeah, so that's where I'm at.

SooJin: I'm proud of you. Really proud of you. And your kids. And oh, like I said, I can't wait to hear the report back on how the story time goes.

Hannah: Yes, definitely.

SooJin: So regarding my updates, I made kind of a similar update around that imagining piece that you did. And I had made the commitment to reach out to Sxela about like how can we dream together. And then the second commitment I made was based on the conversation that Laura and Daren had about the elders in their life, and this cross generational, cross fertilization that's taking place between their children and grandparents. And so the second commitment I made was around cultivating relationships with elders. So I followed through on both those commitments in terms of reaching out to my daughter, to have these conversations around those two pieces, and neither conversation went the way I thought they would. So one of the things that has become glaringly obvious to me is that since Sxela has become a teenager, she's no longer who I think she is. I'm realizing that the assumptions that I make about her based on who I've known her to be, are totally wrong now, because she's not that person anymore. She's totally different. She really is. So like, I used to be able to pick out her clothes and come back home with her liking everything I got. And I can't do that anymore. Because I did this the other day, and we had to return everything I bought for her. She didn't like a single item I picked out. So I'm realizing that I got to relearn her all over again. Just like I had to learn her as a baby learning what all of her little sounds meant and the messages she was sending me through her body language. I now need to relearn her as a teenager. And the conversations we had around those two commitments confirmed that. So, when I asked her about us dreaming together, imagining together, I was not expecting her to say "no" to me – but the look on her face, her body language was like, "Yeah, not interested." And certainly not interested in doing this with you! I've got to tell you this stage in my child's life is really providing me with opportunities to hone my ability to not take things personally, if I wasn't as self-reflective as I am, and if I wasn't doing my own work, I know that I would have taken that personally and made it all about me, like her hurting my feelings, like how can you say no to me? Like, like, how can you reject me, but I didn't. And I'm really proud of myself for that. So instead, I honored her right to say no, and encouraged her to continue dreaming and imagining on her own. And I just told her that, you know, if you ever want to dream together, I'm here, let me know, because I'd love to do that with you. Um, and then the second conversation also went in a very unexpected direction. So I told her a little bit about the conversation we had with Laura and Darren, and how their kids have these great relationships with their grandparents. And I shared that based on hearing their stories, it made me think of how I, as a parent, haven't provided her with those relationships with those type of connections. And I apologized for that. Because as an only child, I've been super intentional and deliberate about fostering friendships that feel like sibling relationships for her. But I haven't done that kind of labor with regard to elder relationships. So I said, you know, I know that given our family

circumstances, you don't have grandparents in your life, but we can get creative and bringing other elders into our lives. So what ideas do you have to help bridge this gap? And her response? Can you guess?

Hannah: No!

SooJin: Exactly. She's like, I'm good. She's like, you know, I don't feel like anything is missing. So those of you listening may have predicted that response, but not me, I was not expecting that answer. And again, instead of pushing my own agenda, I just respected her choice and followed her lead on that. And then I, you know, I went a little bit further, just explaining that while we don't have elders physically in our lives, I'm in consultation and conversation with elders all the time, specifically, my ancestors and my spiritual moms. So I talked a little bit about that with her. And then I asked her if she wanted to learn more about connecting with our ancestors. And of course, she immediately shook her head, no, which I kind of expected. So I extended this invitation, that if she ever wanted to learn more about how to connect with her ancestors, and to get guidance from them, and to integrate them into her life, to just let me know, and I can teach her. And I also told her that she probably will be interested when she gets older, but that I totally understood why she's not interested at this point, because I wasn't interested either at her age. So I had two major takeaways from these conversations. The first was this, what I think may be an issue isn't necessarily an issue for her. So I can no longer assume anything about her. I need to see her with fresh eyes or with new eyes and be more of an observer at this point, relearning who she is, as she comes into her own as a teenager. And the second takeaway was this, that we can be simultaneously separate and together, that she can be doing her own thing be preoccupied by her own thoughts and concerns, and still be connected to me, even though we're no longer doing these things together. And, you know, this concept of being separate and together, it's typically talked about in the context of intimate partner relationships. But I'm realizing that it's really important for me to embrace this concept within the context of parenting, because it allows my daughter freedom and independence, all the things that I've been working to cultivate in her since she's been born, while at the same time honoring the connection that we've built over the years. And this all came to the fore during Mother's Day weekend. So I want to share with you the story, this awareness that that came to me so we went to Root Springs Farm over the weekend. This retreat that's devoted to healing and restoration of Black and Indigenous folks and People of Color. And we stayed in the Octavia E. Butler Dome. Yes, it's as cool as it sounds. So all weekend we're in this is dome, this womb really sharing the same space in this womb. But while I was reading in the massage chair, and she was doing her own thing on the bed, I paused and took a moment to like actually savor the goodness of this moment. You know, here we are, in this womb together, sharing space together. And, and also being separate, you know, we're doing our own things, but also being completely together. And that awareness has really helped me deal with both the physical and emotional disconnection I've been feeling with my daughter since she became a teen. And that image of us being separate, but also being together, that image crystallized the lesson that I received from these previous conversations with Sxela around my two commandments. And for that I'm just so very grateful to my ancestors and my spiritual mothers for locking in that lesson, through this very physical manifestation of the lesson. So that's all I got.

Hannah: Yeah, that's all. Only personal transformation. That's all you're getting here folks!

SooJin: You know, and we say this all the time, Hannah, don't we that I'm just so grateful of all the things that we are learning from our guests, because it's making us better human beings. It's making us better parents, better friends, better partners. And I love that we have instilled this practice of making commitments and then holding ourselves accountable. Because that's what makes it so powerful, right is the doing. Because once you do, there's more awareness that comes from whatever insights and learnings that come from the doing.

Hannah: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Thank you. That is a beautiful story, and also inspired our intention for today.

SooJin: Oh, great. What's our intention for today?

Hannah: So we are going to find old and new ways to connect with ourselves and each other. And I love what you said, learning how to be separate and together at the same time. So thank you for that.

SooJin: Great. Okay. So I get like the enormous pleasure and honor to be able to introduce our listeners to my friend and colleague Dr. Kale Fajardo, who is a professor in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. And I first met Kale when he came in as a candidate. Um for hire into the department, I was a grad student at the time and was part of the search committee, hiring a new assistant professor in the department. And I, you know, we had seen lots of candidates, but Kale was high on my list. And we were thrilled that Kale first accepted when we asked him to come in, and then also that he's still there at the University of Minnesota teaching in the department of American Studies. So Kale do you mind introducing our yourself to us and to our listeners, can you share a little bit more about who you are, where you're coming from, and what you do?

Kale: So thank you, SooJin, for that introduction, and also to the both of you for inviting me to your podcast. Just in the few minutes that I've been listening to the both of you I've already learned a lot. And SooJin's point about connection and separation really speaks to what I'm going through now, personally, and I imagine other folks are also - that may also resonate. So I really appreciate being on your podcast. I also want to set an intention too since you have that practice. And I wanted to say that I'm coming to your podcast with a lot of humility and openness to learning from the both of you. I don't see myself as like an expert parent. I'm still learning a lot about how to be a father and a parent. And so my intention is I hope that some of my stories or experiences are helpful to your listeners. And in terms of introducing myself a little bit more as SooJin said, I'm a professor of American Studies and Asian American Studies. I don't really see that as totally defining myself. But it is an honor and a privilege to have that position. I am the trans son of Concepcion (sp?) and Leandro Bantigue Fajardo. My parents are first generation college educated Filipino/Filipina immigrants. I was born in the Philippines in a town called Malolos Bulacan. I immigrated to Portland, Oregon, at the age of four in 1972. I'm 52 years old now. I feel like I've been trans since about age three. And I do identify as trans and as a trans dad. I am right now I am speaking to everybody from the island of Borinquen the largest island of the archipelago known as Puerto Rico. And so I wanted to also honor the Indigenous people of the Caribbean and they're very diverse. But certainly the Indigenous people of this island.

SooJin: Thank you so much for that, Kale. It's just so very lovely, your intention and just everything that you shared about like who you are. Really, thank you for all that. And also thank you for taking time during your sabbatical for this conversation, we really appreciate it. So as I thought, you know, maybe a way to get started, is if you wouldn't mind answering this first question. How are you raising your daughter, Nia, to be antiracist, especially in the context of being in a multiracial family, as well as raising her to be transpositive and LGBTQ+ positive?

Kale: Yeah, so I'll just tell you a little bit about Nia and my parenting situation before I answer that a little bit. So my daughter is Nia, she is 11 years old going, on 12 in September. She is a Black girl child. She and I have a long distance or what I call a "translocal" parenting relationship, she has not lived in the city where I usually live Minneapolis, since she was two. So we have been long distance or "translocal" from two to 11. My parenting time that I have with Nia kind of pre-pandemic is that I would see Nia about five times a year, so every several months, and I would get like anywhere from a week to 10 days, sometimes two weeks, depending on the particular month, like if it was summer or Christmas or winter break. And so that has been like a pretty challenging, but also there are some I think have been some benefits too to our relationship in having that sort of translocal situation. It's certainly not ideal, either. Like I would love to be able to be in her life in a physical embodied way, you know, on a daily or weekly, but that that's what I have, and I do the best with that particular situation. Um, and she's just a really, you know, smart, beautiful, funny, fun kid and I really love and enjoy spending time with her. So in terms of like the antiracist thing, I did bullet down some points. And I guess I wanted to say that because I personally came out of a dysfunctional family in some ways, like, because there were some conflicts and I think some intergenerational traumas that I have lived with and I think that my parents and I would probably say that my mother in particular has had some traumatic experiences that my family you know, was sort of a mixed bag like there were at like any family, I think it was a mixed bag. So a lot of positive things, but also some real struggles and challenges and some painful moments. So for me, the number one thing that I had on my list was because my daughter is Black, and because we live in a white supremacist and misogynist, you know, homophobic, transphobic, classist, anti-environment, anti-Black sort of society, generally speaking, it's so important for me to just love her unconditionally, because I think knowing that she herself is going to experience a lot of hostility, or microaggressions, or even violence, you know, and knock on wood that that doesn't happen in any way. Like, that was one thing, when she first came out of the womb is I was like, God, I just, I'm so scared for her to have like, some sort of awful experience as a Black girl. So I made, you know, that commitment really early on that I wasn't going to be a kind of parent that was shaming, or conditional, because I feel like, you know, my parents, as much as I respect them, in some ways, they really struggled with that, and I didn't really fully know that I was 100% lovable and that they were there for me unconditionally. And so I think that that's what guides me is like, trying to just know, like, instill in her that she knows that I, I just love her, you know, 1,000% and unconditionally, and I try not to do any sort of shaming on parenting practices. Number two on my list is, um, you know, so part of what I'm saying is that, for her to be antiracist as a Black girl, she needs to be really empowered and strong in who she is, in order for her to really do antiracist work, like she needs that support, first and foremost, as a child, and as a youth. And then secondly, um, because she's Black, and she's going to be bombarded by all of these sorts of things. Because I sort of came out of being like, I was a student

athlete, throughout school, I played volleyball for Cornell University, and athletics and physicality has been really important to me. So I wanted to empower Nia from an early age, like in terms of her physical abilities, so that she was not just like spiritually strong, but like, physically strong. And one of the books that I read when I became a new dad was this book called *Last Child in the Woods*. And it's sort of about how children really need time in nature, and to sort of have that kind of connection and time for physical activity and play. And I forget the author's name, but that is the title. And so, um, you know, during the times that I've had with Nia, we do a lot of things like I taught her how to swim. I was the one who taught her how to ride a bike, she moved to Austin, Texas, at age two. And a couple of years ago, she moved to Santa Barbara. So fortunately, those are also really beautiful places where you can be, you know, outside, you know, most of the year and so we did a lot of swimming, you know, just being in the pool, teaching her how to ride a bike, giving her that that actual freedom, like I really believe that biking was really great for Nia, you know, like when I saw her ride her two wheeler after she had been with her training wheels and her like smaller bike and then she was like zooming around on the trails in Austin. And, you know, and I would kind of let her go ahead of me and I just thought wow, that's true freedom, you know, like that is like letting your body, her Black body, her Black girl body like, you know, enable her to like literally transport herself at an early age, you know, and so trying to kind of teach her how to do that safely. And so we try to do those kind of activities. Around the biking thing, there's a really great group online called Black Girls Do Bike. And so I signed up with them. And they have like different events, Nia and I haven't actually gone to any of their rides, but that group is predominantly Black women or young women, perhaps girls, but as a Filipino trans Dad, I did send them a message and say, hey, I'm not Black and I'm not a woman or woman-identified, but I do have a Black girl, you know, can I be part of the group? And so they were really welcoming. And so I've tried to, you know, teach Nia about that group. And, you know, when we first learned about, I would send her like little photos that I would see or I also posted videos of my child, you know, biking so that other parents who were part of Black Girls Do Bike, and they have chapters all across the United States. And so I think that, you know, empowering our kids, especially kids of color, to be physically active and empowered, I think will help them be involved in social justice and antiracism, anti-oppression work. The other things that I'm sure other parents do, is just around, like having dolls of color and books of color. Or by authors of color with those themes. I know, Hannah was mentioning that. When I was a grad student at Santa Cruz, I was in an antique shop and I found this antique doll that was kind of like a stuffed sort of doll that looked like maybe an Asian or Pacific Islander girl, or it could have been a boy, it was sort of like, gender neutral. And so I bought, you know, I bought that, that doll. And I have since sort of collected different dolls of color when I go to thrift stores or flea markets. And so Nia has had those kinds of dolls. I mean, you know, like a Japanese girl and lots of little Black, you know, girl, and even a boy, a Black boy doll. I think, again, kind of validating her and empowering her so that so she feels strong in herself. Um, I've also been teaching her about Filipino and Asian American, you know, cultural things. I tried to tell her stories about my, my parents and what it was like to have them as parents and the funny stories and things that, you know, I said, I have experienced with my mom or my dad. And um, so she surprised me one time where she wanted me to watch like a YouTuber named - I think his name is Roy Wasabi or Roy Guava or Roy something. It was sort of a while ago, but he was actually like a YouTuber who was Filipino. He does sort zany things. And so there was like, a two-three year period where she was following this Filipino YouTuber. And I wasn't even the one who like told her about him. It was like, she just found it. And occasionally, even now, she will send me funny videos of like, comedic videos about how immigrant Filipino moms are, and like

how strict they are. Like she sent me one, you know, a couple of months ago. And so that also surprised me. And so I think that that has stayed with her to kind of just be like, she knows she's Black. But she's also aware that I'm not, you know, and that she finds her ways to kind of connect with me or like, let me know that she has been paying attention to some of that and, and so it was also really great to see that when she lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, also a couple of years ago for one academic year. Both her other parents are Black queer scholars, who do Black Queer Studies. And so her mother was at Harvard. And so Nia got to live in Cambridge, Massachusetts for that one year. And she had two best friends one was Black and one was Japanese American and both were little girls and so that was just really heartwarming to kind of see like who Nia was drawn to. And that classroom was particularly multiracial and Cambridge schools, really great. And lots of kids of color in that school and, and so I saw Nia kind of like reflecting back, like her what her family looks like. And so that was amazing to see her befriend, you know, this little Japanese American girl and her, her Black friend was, I believe, Jewish, and also Haitian. So that's great. Um, and then the last point I would make, that is about kind of empowering her as a Black child and, and that, hopefully, that will instill in her strength for her to also stand up for other kids of color. And, you know, basically try to prevent other kinds of racism or bullying that might happen. Because I was in a long-distance parenting and because in the beginning of my breakup and separation with Nia's mom, it was, it was pretty hostile. And but because I was with other parents who maybe experienced some of that, and I learned from them, um, I just, you know, that was also my commitment was that no matter how difficult the parenting situation or the breakup would be, I wasn't going to give up, I wasn't going to walk away from my kid, as hard as it could be as painful as it could be. Also seeing Nia's mom start a different family. That was a really tough first five years for me - really long five years I would say before, you know, things kind of smoothed out. But also shielding, you know, Nia from some of the from, you know, as much of that conflict, like 99.9% of that conflict, I really wanted her to shield that. But I persisted with the support of friends like SooJin. And just knowing that I was going to show up, and even if I didn't see my kid for two months, it would be like, I'm going to show up to my Skype parenting because I did ask for Skype parenting time, even before the pandemic, because I educated myself that other parents asked for that from the court, you know, and we didn't go through full blown proceeding, but we went through arbitration mediation, but I did have in my official you know, parenting - I don't know if it's the contract or whatever - but I had a designated like time once a week to Skype with my kid, but I didn't miss the Skype, I didn't miss, you know, parenting time going to Austin, I got into a little bit of some debt because it does get expensive to kind of have a translocal parenting, you know, situation, but these are kind of the things that I've really prioritized for my daughter and for myself, and to help her be strong in herself so that she can show up for other kids of color in her life. And that I think that's part of how kids can be antiracist. And also, we'll talk about the LGBT stuff after.

SooJin: Wow, Kale, thank you so much for that, that was so rich, um, my goodness. So much of what you shared, like reminds me of like our very first podcast, where our guest Daniel talked about this very thing about raising his two kids to know without a shadow of a doubt, like how loved they are and how lovable they are and how beautiful and gorgeous they are, to combat you know, the systems of oppression that don't love them. And I also loved how, you know, but like, how you took it a step further in the sense of you know, the reason why I am empowering Nia to be this way, you know, so that she can step up not only for herself, you know, protect and stand up for herself, but also for others. I love that additional kind of layer that you put to that. And I also want to say like how amazing

and incredible you sharing your story is on this podcast, because you are providing folks with a model of like, the different ways parenting and antiracist parenting happens and looks like, outside of the confines of this, you know, a traditional kind of nuclear family setting where everybody is living together in the same house, same city, same state, and I just want to thank you so much for kind of carving this path, you know, as you're living out your commitments to be a parent and to raise your child to have these kinds of values. So, oh, it's extraordinary to me. So thank you so much for that.

Kale: Thank you.

SooJin: Yeah, Hannah, did you want to say anything?

Hannah: Yeah, well, I was really focused on this idea around kind of physical activity, and how that is empowering. And at the U of M, I actually worked in the School of Kinesiology for a couple of years. And, you know, a lot of the work that's done there is around kind of understanding the benefits of sports and being on teams and just physical activity. And so I just really appreciate you thinking about that, and also kind of lifting that up as part of this work.

Kale: Thank you, too. Um, I wanted to add something, if you don't mind?

SooJin: Of course.

Kale: Um, you know, so kind of telling that the story and sort of the first, you know, five years or from age two to probably nine, so seven years, actually. The long distance parenting, I couldn't have done it without my friend, Chris, in Austin, who I met in the Philippines. He's actually a white guy, an Education professor at St. Edward's, and he opened up his home to Nia and to myself, did not charge me rent. I mean, I wish I could pay him for the time that I needed to have housing. But I just had these, you know, sort of memories of how I would store our stuff in his attic, like, so I'd have those big plastic tubs of like the art supplies and the different toys and like the pool stuff, and like her bike, Nia's little bike was up there and her helmet. And then so just going through the routine of like, that's what my parenting looked like is, you know, taking a flight to Austin, showing up the day before I was supposed to see my kid going up into the attic, bringing it down. And then like Nia, sort of just thinking like, oh, this is our house, you know. And Chris, basically like said, this is your house, you know, and so we were really fortunate to have a literal home base and a space that we had for like, you know, five-six years until Chris' housing situation changed. And then we started having to stay like at Airbnb's and Motel Sixes. But I think that was those first early years was so crucial to us having a sense of family and routine. So we did have some of the things that parents have, and families have who live together. And so I just really want to give a shout out to my friend, Chris Sloan in Austin for his generosity and brotherhood, and just and literally how, I mean, we had a home away from home and I hope that other parents have that too. Or, like, you know, and that that people in our situation like we really do need other people's generosity because it's so hard to maintain like two homes or more than one home in the kind of housing market awfulness that we have in the United States where there's like unaffordable housing.

SooJin: Yes, it really truly does take a village, doesn't it?

Kale: Yeah.

SooJin: I was wondering when we talk about antiracist parenting, like the work of antiracism is inherently intersectional. Because, you know, systems of oppression, they're interlocking, and they're interrelated. And so I was wondering if you would say a little bit more or maybe get to that second part of the question of, you know, how are you raising Nia to be transpositive and LGBTQ positive?

Kale: Okay, well, I think that trans genderism, or I mean, it's sort of more commonly called trans now in trans communities, because transgender the term often kind of focuses more on gender. And so some trans folks of color prefer trans, so that race gets kind of highlighted a bit more. So just wanted to say that for myself, when I became a trans dad, I wasn't medically transitioned. And I have personal and cultural reasons for that, like in Filipino cultures, there's a space for masculinity and trans-ness. And so and I didn't feel like when I was younger, I needed to do medical treatments, like take hormones or have surgeries. So, um, I mean, and I have now been on testosterone for over a year. So, um, my experience as a trans man has been shifting. So I say that because, you know, in not being not medically transitioning, there's times where I'm read as a man, there's times where I'm not read as a man, or I could be read as butch or as a woman. And so, you know, I've tried to instill in my daughter, like, the language and vocabulary of trans, right, like, because, early on, when you have an infant, it's like, you're constantly talking to them, because you want them to learn language. And, you know, like, you kind of want them to do like whole language learning, like things that are in a context. And so like, for example, when Nia was an infant, and we used to take baths together, like literally she was a newborn, or just several months old, and so would take a bath together. And also like at that time, she and her mom and I didn't ever live together. We both had houses on the same street that were a block apart, so we would kind of like go back and forth to the different houses. So anyways, we're at her mom's house, I'm taking a bath with Nia. And that's when she did have some language, and she would ask for breast milk by saying, you know "booby" that's kind of what she would say when she wanted it from her mom. So we were in the bathtub, and she would kind of look at my chest and ask for that. And then I would have to say, well I know it looks like booby, but I'm trans and I call that my chest. And only your mom has that, you know, and after the bath, I'll take you to your mom. And so, you know, it's like who knows what she understood at that time, but so it was important for me to just regularize, it non-stigmatize it and just be like, okay you think that my chest that's, you know, like trans men don't want to use feminine terms for it. Sometimes it's like, okay my chest is not what you think it is. And so let's just keep, you know, talking about that, or having to sort of tell her when we were going to Austin, I'd have to explain what like, at that time to, um, in some places, there aren't gender neutral changing facilities or gyms. So I have to say, okay, Nia, you know, I'm trans. And I have a female body. So I'm going to go into the women's locker room, and we're going to change, you know, heads up, it might be weird, or some lady might say something, but I'll take care of it. So kind of just like talking through to her and like trying to just, you know, it's like this is just what I have to deal with. It's going to be fine. And fortunately, no sort of unsafe things, dangerous things happened in locker rooms or bathrooms, but, and I think, you know, cis-men have to deal with this too. Like, if you're a single dad, it's like, how do you deal with the bathroom situation if there's no family bathroom, sort of things like that. I'm just another example too is like one time we were at her mom's yoga studio when we were sort of doing an exchange in Minneapolis. And there was a, I would say there was a woman who had a shaved head, perhaps because they were having like a treatment for cancer. And so Nia, I think was like four or five.

And she said to me, oh I think that person is transgender. Or she said, Tata (Tata is what she calls me), which means dad in Filipino – she’s like Tata, that person is transgender. And I looked at the person and I said, yeah, you know, I think they could be transgender, but they could also not be transgender. It's hard to tell 100% of the time, and sometimes you have to actually talk to people, and see if they identify that way. And then I said, um, you know, and they might also have a health issue. And so we talked about, you know, hair and how chemotherapy, like, makes people's hair come out. But I appreciated her, like her sharing her reality and her perception with me around, like, what people look like, because she did ask me when I was trying to tell her that I was, you know, female, but lived - I mean this is the language that I could, I couldn't really bust out my Judith Butler or Queer Theory - but how I explained it like I was, you know, I was born female, but I knew I was a boy. And so I started living as a boy. And as a man and then she said, well, how did you do that? And I said, well, you know, I cut my hair. I was wearing boys’ clothes. My parents let me wear boys’ clothes. Like, I wear men's clothing. And then at the time, her mom had short hair. And so she said, oh, mommy is transgender too. And I said, well actually no, mommy doesn't identify as transgender, you know this kind of gets complicated. It's like no, some women choose to have short hair. And so all of these conversations that have happened from when she was like a baby, toddler, you know, like older child, we've had these different experiences. Um, and just being honest about some of my everyday challenges, like whether it's about navigating the bathroom, or one other story that I find really kind of endearing is one time we were getting movie tickets. And the person said, you know, in Texas, they say “sir” and “ma'am” quite a lot, because they're sort of Southern and so they ma’amed me, and they said, thank you, ma’am. And I kind of made like a weird, I kind of crinkled my face. And Nia said, Tata, why did you make that face? And I said, well, you know, it's really hard as a trans guy, like they misgendered me, like, he called me ma'am. And you know, I really would have preferred sir. And Nia’s response was, well when people say that to you Tata - we can just hear it as them saying “man” instead of “ma'am.” And I just thought that was so dope. You know, I was like, that's amazing. And that made me feel so seen and also, like, validated. And I don't expect my child to do that for me, because I don't like those power dynamics, but like even just saying, like, you know, I crinkled my face because that was a microaggression for me and uncomfortable and awkward and it kind of hurt, you know. But that was her like little kid perspective is like ma’am is man now. Okay, yeah, that's great. Thank you. So yeah, those are some, some good stories that I have with my child about trans. Oh, and then one other tip too is around the doll thing that I talked about having girls of color. We also started using stuffed animals. Because one time I was at a thrift store in Minneapolis and I found this stuffed animal that was a moose I think a moose that was wearing a duck suit. So it could have been like a Halloween thing. But I used that and said you know this is moose ducky who was born a moose but I think that moose wants to be a duck, you know, and so for awhile, we called that toy “moose ducky.” And then later on, Nia was like, you know, I think we should just call him ducky. And I was just like, yeah, we don't need to be like, he's moose ducky, he's ducky, you know. And so we had like, another one that we found was like a rabbit, I think that also had, like a costume like another duck costume. And so, um, and then I had a Peppermint Patty doll, you know, and Peppermint Patty is sort of a tomboy from the Peanuts thing. And so those are the things that we used. And that also gave her the language of trans and for her to see that there are other species, you know, that are like, could be seen as trans. Or that people choose and express their identities in different ways. And so I just wanted to give that tip about using stuffed animals to talk about trans-ness, or transformation, or trans, in that case, kind of trans species, which was like a metaphor for like, transgender.

SooJin: Brilliant, brilliant. You know, I just love Kale, like how, in you kind of sharing your internal process of how you're taking in a particular situation, or you being able to answer Nia's questions not in "I'm the expert" and therefore this is the right thing. But instead, you kind of bringing her along, you know, in your thought process of how you're thinking about things. Or how, like, you would answer this question, you're not quite sure, but it could possibly be this, like, you're not only providing her with the language and the vocabulary to think about these things, but you're also providing her with nuance, right? It's hard to generalize, to make all these kinds of generalizations that, you know, if you see short hair, or if you see a bald head, it equals this, it's hard to make those generalizations when you're bringing in someone into your thought process. And because of your explanations that are so nuanced and makes room for complications. You're providing her with grounding in making it difficult to stereotype. And, and so I just, I love that so much. And I was wondering how, like, because you shared stories, like around when she was like younger, the early years, and I'm wondering, like, what has been the harvest? Or how do you see the seeds that you've planted in terms of language vocabulary lens, that you've helped her develop a trans lens, you know, that you've helped her develop an antiracist lens? Like, how do you see that playing out now that she is older?

Kale: Well, so I did mention that her other family in California, where she lives with her mom and other dad, both again are Black and identify as queer. You know, before going on the podcast, I did check in with my co-parent, her mom, to see what I could share with you all. And so I guess I can't really give a lot of details, but I would just say that my kid right now is working through her identity. And it seems like she is working through like both her gender and sexuality. And all I can say right now is it's not, you know, totally normative. And so I think that that's an indication that our parenting as this sort of trans-local team, that's Filipino and Black. She has agency and she's working it out right now. Um, so she has a preference that she doesn't want her parents to talk about it. So that's all I can say.

SooJin: Yeah, no.

Kale: So that's really that's awesome to me. That she knows she has choices.

SooJin: Yes.

Kale: She knows that there's not just one way to live. Um, you know, at one point to when Nia was younger, she really wanted me to get married, you know, and I think kids sometimes they do worry about, like their parents if they're single and they see like that their other parent is married or whatever. And so just even telling her, you know, she's like Tata, you know, why don't you marry so-and-so like, whoever I happen to be dating or whatever, I'd be like, you know, Nia, not everybody gets married or wants to get married. So it's even just around things like that. So she's known that there's different ways of expressing love and family and desire.

SooJin: And to me, that is the proof. That's the evidence, that is the harvest. Yeah, knowing that she has choices. And because of that, she is able to, to wrestle, you know, with the various choices that are in front of her. And also it goes back to, you know, another running theme in our podcast is like arming our children, equipping them with the skills to define themselves for themselves. And I feel like that is a thread that is running through all of the stories and all of your approach to parenting is equipping Nia with that ability.

Kale: Thank you.

SooJin: It's beautiful. It's really beautiful.

Kale: I'm really trying! Thank you, SooJin.

Hannah: I wanted to ask, is there anything that you would like to promote, like a project or organization or issue or anything that you would just like to share with our listeners and bring attention to right now?

Kale: Yeah, well, I said I was in San Juan on the island of Borinquen again. And I have this sort of project that I'm piloting it's called Kanoa-Karakoa. Kanoa is the indigenous word for canoe and the word canoe comes from Kanoa. And Karakoa is a kind of boat that's from the Philippines. So for me Kanoa-Karakoa is the solidarity project that I'm starting in Borinquen that was sort of birthed with Dr. Darshan Elena Campos, who is Boricua from the island. Although she was born and raised in California, she's a diasporic Boricua and also Jewish. And so the project is doing two things, it is trying to do ecological restoration. So we're working around mangroves and coral restoration, and also working with trans, queer, non-binary youth to help us do that work so that we heal the marine ecology while also helping youth to heal themselves. And the reason I say that it heals the youth is that there's this book called *The Blue Mind*, and it talks about how being at sea or even rivers water, how water heals us, and it's based on neuroscience and things that happen to our brain that help people heal trauma. And so, in addition to Dr. Darshan Elena Campos, I have another collaborator, Dr. Claudia Sofia Garriga-Lopez. She is a scholar who has worked with trans feminists in Ecuador, but she's from San Juan and her favorite reef in San Juan is at Playa El Escambron and she has seen over the years (since she's been snorkeling there since as a child) how the coral have been dying. So we are raising money to be able to buy snorkeling kits, so like the fins, the mask, and the tube so that we can then bring a group of these trans, queer, non-binary youth of color, who are Puerto Rican, to do underwater cleaning to teach them safe ocean snorkeling skills to help regenerate the coral. We're going to be learning about how to actually regenerate the coral there. There have been projects in different places like Indonesia, where it can actually come back. So even with climate change, we know that the coral is dying because of how the higher temperatures aren't good for the coral, which then also impacts the fish. Right. But there have been some people who have figured out how to regenerate it. We're still in the early stages. We haven't like totally learned that part. But right now we're raising money for the snorkeling kits. And we just got our first three donations this week. There's an Instagram, you know, account. And also a Facebook page for Kanoa-Karakoa. And you can always email me if you want information. So that's sort of the work that I've been thinking through while I'm living in San Juan, on my sabbatical.

Hannah: Wow, cool.

SooJin: So cool.

Hannah: It's amazing. Okay, yes, we will definitely be able to share that out and we will make donations as well.

SooJin: So, yeah, we'll make those links available in the show notes.

Kale: Thank you.

Hannah: Awesome. Okay, so are you ready for our lightning round of questions?

Kale: Yes.

Hannah: Okay. So it's basically just whatever comes to mind, your answers do not need to be short or fast or anything like just whatever comes to mind. Antiracist parenting or caretaking is...

Kale: Healing.

Hannah: Yeah. What's the last thing your kid did to make you smile?

Kale: Um, they sent me a funny video about how Filipino moms talk to their kids.

Hannah: What are you reading right now?

Kale: I am reading *The Blue Mind* that I mentioned. And this book called *Tentacle*, which is about a-- it is a dystopian book written by a Dominican author that has a trans sort of boy guy character that's set in the future after a tsunami and disaster on the D.R. where there are these drones that sort of do anti-Haitian immigration stuff. I'm not quite fully into the book, but the book is called *Tentacle*.

SooJin: Wow, that sounds so deep.

Hannah: Yeah. What are you doing to take care of yourself?

Kale: Um, wow, I'm kind of like going through a personal also crisis here on the island, to be honest. And I learned a couple of days ago about a Samoan dream practice. Because I reached out to a Samoan elder in my life, Caroline Sinavaiana, who is an emeritus professor from University of Hawaii, who retired and moved to back to Samoa because she's Samoan. And I was just having a really hard several days. And so I asked to talk with her. And one of her spiritual practices she taught me was praying to my ancestors and what I guess Samoans called their family gods, so praying to them before you go to sleep, and asking them to guide you in like your sleep world. And I just thought that was really beautiful. And I've been trying that out. And I'm doing some mindfulness practices that she's also reinforcing in me, because Sinavaiana (when I call her) was the one who brought me to Buddhism in 1994 when I met her in Honolulu. And so she's kind of like reminding me of the practices that she thinks will help me to manage some difficult emotions that I've been going through while I'm here on the island. And so thank you to her.

Hannah: And thanks for sharing that. What is one thing you're committed to doing in your antiracist parenting journey?

Kale: I don't know, what comes up for me is just how hard the pandemic has been. Like, I haven't physically seen my daughter since last July or June. So I am committed to seeing her, you know, again, and it's just been really hard not to have physical contact and for us to get out of our trans-local routine. So I'm committed to restarting the routine. As long as you know, the pandemic is safer, but I'm not always assured that we're heading in the right direction with you know what's going on with the pandemic.

Hannah: Yeah. Last question, what question would you like Antiracist Parenting Podcast to answer in a future episode?

Kale: Um, I guess, because I'm on a healing journey. And, in particular, a healing journey that has to do with healing some things around the ways that I participate in toxic masculinity. Um, I guess I would want you or I encourage you to ask, if you have fathers or masculine parents, how are they healing themselves from toxic masculinity so that they don't reproduce that with their children or in their families.

SooJin: Oh, thank you so much for that question. That is a fantastic question. We are definitely going to be answering that question in our podcast, for sure. We're going to do a whole series on it.

Kale: I say that really humbly because I feel like I've struggled with that. And some things kind of came to a head pretty recently. And that put me in a kind of personal, spiritual crisis. And I am trying to also break my silences around it. So I say that with total humility that I am just doing, I'm like beginner's mind when it comes to all of that. But with people like I mentioned, my friend Caroline Sinavaiana, like, I just also want to encourage the men and masculine people out there to try to break silences and get some healing help, because I have been truly amazed in just a short amount of time that once you do that, you just start going on a different path. That feels really, really good.

Hannah: Yeah, definitely, definitely something we will and need to address.

Kale: Thank you both for the opportunity to talk about it.

Hannah: Kale, I feel like you have just shared so much of yourself. Is there anything else that you would like to say or share before we say goodbye?

Kale: I just want to say Black Lives Matter!

Hannah and SooJin: Yes.

Hannah: I feel so fortunate to be now connected with you. And I view you as part of our community and please, like reach out. We know that, you know, it sounds like you're going through a hard time right now. Like, we're here. And we love you and we can be a resource too if that's needed.

Kale: Thank you so much. The same to the both of you. I appreciate it.

SooJin: Thanks, Kale. Take care.

SooJin: I am so inspired. From the stories that Kale shared I because I mean think about it, like the way that he parents like just logistically like how like how much more difficult parenting is just logistically given, like his context, and like that, in and of itself, is you're stretching yourself constantly, right? Because you are constantly thinking outside of the box when it comes to parenting. And not only is he able to do that, but he's also able to like, like, you know, educate his daughter around, you know, these very complex issues around what it means to be trans, what it means to be antiracist, you know, and so, like, if anything, like I hope our listeners are, are inspired and motivated, like to be able to, to do this work. Because I'm sure most of our listeners that isn't their context in the way that they are parenting their kids, you know, so, like most of us are not experiencing those obstacles, just in a logistical way of raising and parenting our children. So wow. Kind of how you were saying, after Karla's talk, how, like, you know, we were saying how, like, wow we've never had to think about what it would be like to raise a child who doesn't look like us, you know, I think you had said something like that. And to think about all of the ways she has to prepare herself, going out into a world as a Black woman, raising what other people might be perceiving as a white kid, you know, like all of the mental gymnastics, she has to go through thinking about all the ways in which that things can go sideways. And I'm kind of experiencing a similar moment here, like after listening to Kale, like all the things that I take for granted, because my child lives with me, we live in the same city. We like, you know, all the things that I take for granted, you know, her dad is like, literally a 10 minute drive away, you know, like, like, we're co-parenting but that physical, or the lack of physical distance, you know, makes our ability to co-parent 1000 times easier than what Kale is going through. Just kudos to him for navigating all that.

Hannah: Yeah. And being so determined. Like that was a commitment early on that just said, you know, basically, I'm going to be in Nia's life.

SooJin: Yes. Period dot.

Hannah: Yeah. Then follow through. And that's what is happening.

SooJin: Yep. So my commitment that I'm taking away is that we are going to answer that question that Kale posed. And we will do a series around it, not just a one-off episode. So I'm going to start planning that series. Obviously with you. But yeah, that's definitely a commitment I'm taking as well as I'm going to make the commitment to donate to Kanoa-Karakoa. Gosh, what a beautiful project. You're healing around identity around, you know, for these trans Puerto Rican kids through healing their water, their ecosystem. How amazing is that? What about you?

Hannah: I want to go in so many different directions. I'm thinking about just this idea of normalizing the vocab and language around trans it reminds me of this conversation I was having recently. And it was, you know, with adults, but like, the kids were kind of running around. And we were talking about like an actor, and one of the adults said, I think that actor is G-A-Y. And I'm like, gay? And like, I mean,

why are we spelling that word? Like, is that a bad word? And so that it made me think of that when he was talking about just normalizing vocabulary.

SooJin: Yes.

Hannah: And also just like, we are so trained to put people in categories. And, and we do that and you know, it's not, you know, necessarily good or bad. It just happens like our brain is wired to do that. But also like the importance of, you know, we need to talk to people like we need to see how they identify not what bucket our brain wants to like, put them into.

SooJin: Yeah, I love that story where Kale was saying that sure you can think these things about someone based on their hairstyle, but what you really need to do is talk to them.

Hannah: Yeah, yeah, totally. And also just this idea, kind of along those same lines of who like, who would we be, if we had been encouraged from the day we were born to explore who we actually are, instead of like being, you know...

SooJin: Told what we are?

Hannah: Yeah. And like herded into these buckets that are just totally arbitrary anyways?

SooJin: Yeah.

Hannah: So I think a lot about that. But one thing that I think maybe this will be more around my commitment is, um, I don't know, like, he was kind of alluding to this, you know, stance on like, having this "no shaming" kind of mentality around parenting. And what that kind of translates to for kids, is what I was hearing is like, kids are now wondering, you know, am I lovable? Like, that was like the quote that I had written down, "am I lovable?" And so now, I'm thinking about, like, when I interact with my kids, like, what am I saying to them? In that frame of mind of like, is this telling them like, I love them? Or is this like a shaming behavior that I need to figure out a different way to communicate whatever I'm trying to communicate? So I think I'm going to look into that around like, what am I doing around parenting and shaming? And then I will also make a donation to Kanoa-Karakoa. And I'm, yeah, I'm excited for us to share that out to our network because that work is so important.

SooJin: Good stuff.

Hannah: What else? We hit 2,000 downloads for our podcast.

SooJin: Thank you so much listeners. And we haven't even been a year in. That's amazing.

Hannah: Yeah.

SooJin: Wow. Thank you listeners for making that happen.

Hannah: Thank you. Thank you.

SooJin: We commit to bringing you more great conversations.

Hannah: Yeah, definitely. And we know that because we know who's lined up. It's guaranteed!

SooJin: Ha! Love it. Yes. Okay, on that note, take care, everybody.

Hannah: Yeah, we love you. Take care of yourselves and we're here for you.

SooJin: We just want to say thank you for joining us today. You can find more information about us and past episodes on our website antiracistparentingpodcast.com. A big shout out to Mike Myth Productions for the intro and outro music.

Hannah: This work requires us to challenge ourselves and take care of ourselves. Be well.

SooJin: Be antiracist.