

E4: Talking to Children about Defunding the Police and ICE

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Guest: Emilia Gonzalez Avalos

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 on 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 4. We finished our 3-part series on how to talk to your children - from elementary to middle school to high school-aged about the uprising and the racial reckoning that's taking place that was fueled by George Floyd's murder. So today, we'll be talking about how to talk to your children about the prison industrial complex, about ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), and what "defund the police" means with our very special guest Emilia Gonzalez Avalos. So before we bring her in, though, it is time for us to do our "Accountability Check-In." Hannah, can you remind our listeners what your commitments were and update us on how that's going?

Hannah: Yeah, so I had made a commitment around listening to young people, primarily my children, as well as making a list of high school-aged leaders that I will start following and listening to, as well. So in terms of my making up a list and following high school-aged students, it is more difficult than I had thought originally. However, I will be participating in a session this upcoming week that features the voices of the elders and the youth. And it's part of a collaboration between the Minnesota Humanities Center and Sweet Potato Comfort Pie. The series is called "How Can We Breathe," and the sessions are free. And the recordings are also posted online afterwards. So during this session, I will be paying attention to who the youth leaders are. And then I will follow up on making sure that I follow them on social media and figuring out ways to continue to listen and learn from them. So I'm working on it. I also started participating in a district-wide council in my kids' school district that focuses on equity.

SooJin: Oh, that's fabulous!

Hannah: Yeah, so I attended the first meeting of the school year this past week. So I think it will be a good place for me to help in equity efforts in a more district-wide arena, which is important for me. And so I had reached out to the chair of the council after following that meeting to make the suggestion of bringing in 1 or 2 high school students from our district to talk about social justice initiatives. And so hopefully then having that engagement to continue to learn, especially from students within our district. So I've been making some progress, but I'd also like to share a story that is more personal, I guess. So since our last episode, the school year started. As we know, this is an

unprecedented year due to COVID-19, and we are engaged in distance learning. In addition to helping my kids with their schoolwork, I have also made a commitment to administer an antiracism curriculum. So every day we talk about social justice in some way. Often it has to do with books but not always. There are a variety of different ways to learn about social justice. My kids are ages five and seven. And so kindergarten and first grade. So the book, *Something Happened In Our Town*, which Karla in Episode 2 had recommended, arrived. And so my kids and I were reading that together and they had a lot of questions, which I think are relevant to our conversation that we will be having today. So I've been listening to my kids and just figuring out what their questions are and kind of where they're coming from. And we also had a chance to kind of turn what we've been talking about in our daily discussions into action this past week. So just to give some background last weekend, we took kind of a mini trip to a cabin to do some fishing and just to kind of be in nature and have a change of scenery. And while we were there, we ended up visiting this fishing museum. And while we were at the museum, we noticed that on the walls there were photos, probably over 100 photos of people who have won awards for best fishing. Almost all of whom appear to be white men. We did see a couple of winners who appeared to be white women. We did not see any Black people on this "wall of fame." However, the only depiction of Black people that were represented in the museum were these two statues that were labeled "primitive fisher sons" that essentially reproduced the stereotype of Black people as animal-like. So I asked my kids after our visit to the museum about what they saw and we talked about the winners of the fishing competitions having white skin. And I asked them how a Black person might feel going into the museum. And my seven-year-old who identifies as a white boy answered, and I quote, "A Black person would probably feel sad because it's not fair that the Black people in the museum look like gorillas and the white people are the best fisher people in the world." And we all agreed that these statues perpetuate a harmful image of Black people in our country, which needs to stop because these images are what fuels the dehumanization and killing of Black people in our country right now. So a few days later, I really could not shake the images of these statues. And I talked to my kids about writing a letter to the museum. And so we sat down at our kitchen table and talked about why the statues are a problem and what we'd like to see the museum do about it. And we also asked the museum to look at the fishing competitions to see how they could be more inclusive. And we mailed the letter a few days ago.

SooJin: Wow, Hannah. That's heavy, hard stuff, especially given everything that's going on right now. This is why we're doing the work, right? Because you writing that letter with your kids and also providing them with that analysis - that these images [are the reasons behind] what's happening to Black people and Black communities right now. Like, there is a direct link. So that's so great that at their age, they're already getting that kind of analysis and already getting the training on what can you do about that instead of just being aware, right? So wow, that's great. Thank you for sharing. So as a reminder to our listeners, my commitment after listening to Lena speak about all the layers of generational trauma that we hold in our bodies, my commitment from last week was to further excavate generational trauma in my own life. And I had envisioned that I would share this big list of all the various traumas I've had yet to process. Being all proud of myself, like, "Oh look, look at all these things that I identified," but processing

trauma doesn't work like that. It's one trauma at a time, I'm realizing. Well, for me anyway. Because the traumas are deep and require a lot more time to process. So after I unearth this one trauma, I ended up like staying with it for weeks because it's deep. So rather than a list to share, I'll just share this one story of my reflection. So the core trauma of my life is rooted in my adoption: literally being stripped from the arms of my umma - my Korean mom - when I was nearly 6 years old. And in my 20s and 30s, I did a lot of work to heal that trauma so that I wouldn't pass that on to my children when I became a mother. And I thought I had excavated all the trauma related to that, but I was wrong. As I meditated and reflected and asked my spiritual mothers and ancestral guides to bring to awareness any trauma that I haven't yet processed, my daughter's face immediately emerged in my mind's eye. And my response to her image, when I saw her face was sadness, grief, and mourning because she's about to turn 13. And I think I have shared with you that I've been struggling with this milestone birthday because she's been detaching from me - even though it is perfectly healthy for her to do so at this age. And I've been raising her to be independent and to be able to think for herself and to define her own self and all that good stuff. Now that I'm seeing it play out, it's been really sad and difficult for me to deal with that. And I remember specifically when that process of detachment started to happen. So we used to sit and cuddle together on the couch. And one day last month, she sat like 4-feet away from me on the couch, like she's never done that before. And we haven't cuddled since then. And this triggered in me sadness, but when I took the time to examine deeper the feeling behind that sadness, I realized that that sadness was actually a cover for fear. So let me back up a bit. Much of my healing around motherloss, which is my core trauma, was ushered through my own process of becoming a mother. So through my parenting and mothering of my daughter, I have worked to undo the damage done to me by "rewriting" the past, by writing a new mother-daughter story with my daughter Sxela. Becoming a mom literally healed me in many ways, but what I realized was that I had developed an unhealthy attachment to my daughter: she became the evidence, the proof that I was healed. So when I felt more distance and separation from her, it led me to question and doubt my own healing. And so I realized that I've been using our closeness as a sign, or an indicator of whether or not I'm healed. So when things are good between us, I feel healed. When things are off between us, I feel insecure and doubtful of my own healing. So this was the awareness I uncovered: that she can no longer be my indicator of healing. It's not fair to her, and it's not fair to me because it sets both of us up for disappointment because our relationship is going to have its ups and downs. It's going to change and evolve over the years. And in no way should those ups and downs be an indicator of my healing. So coming to the realization of how I've created this unhealthy attachment to my daughter in my process of healing this core trauma was really eye opening for me and taught me that we need to be careful of reproducing unhealthy patterns of relating to ourselves and to each other when doing the work of processing and healing generational trauma. And this exercise made me realize that I need to stop depending on my daughter to validate or affirm my own sense of healing because I can do that for myself. I can see evidence of my healing outside of Sxela that proves that I've done the work. Sxela is not the source of my healing. / am! I'm the indicator, the gauge that proves whether or not I'm healed - not Sxela. So I don't need her to validate my healing anymore. I don't need to feel secure in our relationship for me to feel like I've

healed. And once I realized that, Hannah, like I literally felt free. I felt this complete shift in energy. And for the first time in a while, this lightness of spirit. And I also felt joy and happiness for Sxela - like I could finally celebrate this milestone time in her life. And because I did this work weeks before her birthday, I genuinely could celebrate her on her 13th birthday, which was on the 25th. It was a lovely day - no sadness, no grieving on my part because it was no longer about me but *her*. And if I hadn't done that work prior to her birthday, that day would have been all about me and my misdirected sadness. But because I did that work, we ended up having this lovely celebration. Yeah, so I realized that was some heavy stuff, but that's what this podcast is about, right? To go there. To go to the places that scare us, because this is where the healing lies, right?

Hannah: Yeah, SooJin. Thank you. It's exactly what this podcast is about, and I'm just reminded that we had invited a young person onto the show last time. And from that conversation to today, is *amazing*. I mean, what has transpired is absolutely amazing.

SooJin: Well, and that's the transformative power of accountability, right? Like, if we don't hold ourselves accountable in this work, transformation can't happen. Change can't happen. And that's why so much of all the problems and issues that we're facing right now is because of a lack of accountability in leadership, in power, and also like in our families, and in our own personal relationships, right? This is the power of accountability is what I'm trying to say and what it sounds like you're also saying.

Hannah: Yeah and our intention kind of builds right on that. So I will kind of just share our intention for this episode. So we're building off of what we've shared to be our intention: to go to the places that scare us. To dig into our fears - which are most often irrational and not rooted in reality - in order to get to the truth of our pain and trauma.

SooJin: I like it. Okay, so I get the pleasure of introducing you all to my dear friend, Emilia. And before I ask her to introduce herself, I just wanted to share with our listeners how Emilia and I met. So Emilia and I met when I was teaching at Macalester College, and I was working with the students there to organize around the DREAM Act. And one of the things that we did was create this conference where we invited high schoolers to come and kind of spend the day on campus to see what it's like to be a college student. And so I did this mini-lecture on immigration, and Emilia came to that mini-lecture and that's how we met. And throughout the conference, we connected, and we've been friends ever since then. And I feel so lucky and honored to even be able to call her a friend because, as you listeners will soon find out, she is *amazing*. She is an amazing human being, an amazing spirit, and our world is better because she exists. Okay, so on that note, Emilia, can you tell us a little bit about yourself: who you are, where you come from, and what you do?

Emilia: Well, thank you so much for that wonderful introduction. And I feel the same way about you in that opportunity to learn together at Macalester and sort of validating what our bodies tell us about our history, but we don't have access to the actual formal knowledge in our schools and universities. And I feel that when we have professors and community members that share that knowledge, it gives us some sort of validation. Allows us to be whole and understand that the pain that we have built resilience on is

not coming from a place of paranoia, but it's valid and it's generational. So thank you for that, too. So, thank you. My name is Emilia Gonzalez Avalos. I am an organizer. I am currently Executive Director of Unidos Minnesota that is a Latino-based organization that builds power for gender, race, and economic justice in the state of Minnesota. And I am an immigrant from Mexico. I was born in Mexico City, and I migrated to Minnesota when I was a teenager. And I've been here ever since. This is the state I know. And I came here following my dad. So my dad had been working in the U.S. since I can remember, and he pretty much raised me and my siblings over the phone. Like we knew we had a dad that sent money and sometimes we saw him on holidays some things like that, but he always had to be away finding work. But when I was a teenager, I decided that I needed something different. I think safety comes a lot in the way that I parent. Safety is very important, and I love my parents. And the political education that community organizing provides, like having those spaces where you can deconstruct or unfold the different complexities of why we live in the conditions that we live, how structural racism plays out in intimate places in our family structures. And knowing that my parents had to endure so much allowed me to release a lot of the grief and a lot of the guilt that I had as a child. So I was a child that grew up in Mexico. Sort of like the post-Mexico City earthquake in a working-class family. My dad is a construction worker. My grandparents, my uncles, everyone on my dad's side is a construction worker. And my mom was a student. She was a brilliant student that couldn't afford to go to college or continue her education because in her family's eyes, she was already smart enough; she didn't need to be smarter than that. So my parents were very poor and they had to endure so much. So I grew up with parents that were very clear about survival and education and things like that and I love them for that, but they are also emotionally withdrawn. The main thing for them was to provide food, shelter, access to education, but they could not relate to us in deep ways because I felt that if they open themselves, they will feel like they will crumble, right? So these are very complex coping mechanisms that I didn't understand until I was a mother myself.

SooJin: So it sounds like it was all about survival, right? Because that was like the most immediate pressing need...like, we just need to *survive*.

Emilia: We just need to survive right now, and we have these kids. So their narrative growing up was, I just need to do things because that's sort of the way that my parents see that I'm here. So I need to do this education thing really well, and I need to do this other thing really well. And I don't know, like there's many theories about learning and opportunity, but I had the privilege that my grandparents pretty much did a lot of the caring. And my grandpa had all this time because he was disabled: he lost his fingers in the factory. And so he was at home all the time with my grandmother, who was the woman that really fed me. And she taught me how to cook and do all kinds of things. And my grandpa had time and he taught me how to read and write at the age of 3. For my parents, I was really smart. Therefore, I didn't have emotional needs. They're like, "You're smart, you can figure it out, you know, because you're smart." And they will give me books. Whenever I had questions about whatever thing and they're like, "Oh, yeah, you can go to the library," or "Here's a book." So that sense of figuring out things myself was sort of trauma induced. And I had to unfold that as I grew older, and I became a mother. So, long story short, I come to Minnesota. My mother and my siblings are

staying in Mexico. I was pretty much leaving because I had a very hard time as a teenager. I mean, of course, because we were working class and poor, but the main reason was because I felt that my mother didn't love me. I felt that I didn't know who I was. And because her mental health was so deteriorated, I became a bucket for her. I became the emotionally available space that she could just throw all these things that will happen through her day or her week. And that was really hard for me as a teenager. So when I had the opportunity to leave, I left. And then I come to Minnesota to find out that the dad that raised me over the phone - I didn't really know him that much. So that was another challenge by itself, but I think living in the reality as an undocumented person to the moment I arrived, and then knowing my dad was undocumented and understanding that he did the things that he did out of love also allowed me to sort of find the space to work and understand where they were coming from. And this is something that I'm very grateful about movement building. There's a sort of people that tell you this is public life in this, and you have to split public and personal. But then as we talk about becoming whole human beings and movement, the public becomes super personal. And it is because of all these different learnings, this education that was taken away from us, that I understand that it's not my parents' fault. Otherwise, I will be carrying that burden and that grief for - I don't know how long. So I understand that because of poverty and because like man made poverty, right? Man made oppression. For systems that are designed by people, few people that use all these different tactics and tools like race and class and gender to divide us from each other, I understood that my parents were doing the best they could. And that allowed me to be a better parent myself. And then also working my pathway of forgiveness. It is very interesting for me to figure out that a lot of what I do has everything to do with parenting. I was involved. So I come to Minnesota and long story short, I go to high school. I try to go to college and I forgot, "Oh, I'm undocumented, I cannot really do that the same way every other person can." This was before the DREAM Act. This is around, I will say 2001-2002. The first DREAM Act at the federal level was introduced in 2001. Before that, there were people like me - young people like me - but there wasn't really a conversation about equitable policies, right? This was a time where we thought the racial gaps in education were because parents were not involved. And like these other different narratives and now we can say they're flawed and they don't have no basis. So when I was trying to go to college, and I actually enrolled in Minneapolis Community and Technical College, I learned about the General College and there was a strike. And then from there was a set of people from the General College movement in the University of Minnesota that were also doing work with the DREAM Act. And I'm like, "Oh, I think that thing benefits me." And that's how I became involved. And I had my son, and I sometimes showed up. And I went to the rallies and some meetings and things like that, but it wasn't really until I became pregnant with my daughter that I decided to step in and be more intentional about having a role in the work. And my daughter was born in 2009, and there was Al Jazeera still in the news, it was like a channel with independent news about the world. She was tiny, and I was breastfeeding her at night. And I remember watching the news, and they were interviewing this mother from the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring was unfolding. Things were happening in the Middle East. And I did not know exactly what were the historical consequences; I knew nothing. I just knew that there was a mother that was talking to this journalist about looking for her kids. She was looking for her

teen-aged sons. They were perhaps high school or early college, and she could not find them. She said that she was looking for them in jails. She had been looking for them in hospitals. And then I can't remember exactly what the journalist's question was, but it was a very profound question about the state of affairs. And I heard something like "What would you have done differently if you were young again?" Something like that. And she said that she regretted that her generation knew that there was something that they needed to do to change the conditions. And because of that inaction, now her kids were paying. And she talked about sort of generational responsibilities about humanity in a way that when you just had a baby and you're hormonal and you're breastfeeding, and it's at night, it was like, you're talking to my soul. I don't know your name, but it's really deep. And I had this little baby that was breastfeeding from my body. And I started realizing that there might be a day where I couldn't take care of her because of my immigration status. And that I wasn't raised with my dad because he was here. And that my grandfather was an immigrant himself that worked in the Bracero program and had to be away from his son and his daughter. So this is three generations of people that had to compromise the caring of their kids. And that was a very high price to pay that should not be a reality. I was an undocumented woman back then and so is my husband. I recently became a permanent resident like a few months ago, after many years - after 20 some years. And Miranda was born in 2009. This was way before we knew this moment in time that we were facing right now. And in that moment, I realized that it was part of my healing to do everything I could to change the conditions for my family and therefore other people, too - but it started with my family. So that if any case something happened, and they come and get me, Miranda will always know that her mom did everything she could to raise her. So basically, my inner-strength is *entirely* grounded in the love for my child. And I love my child so much that I'm willing to take these risks because she's worth it. I had a baby later. I have a four-year-old. My experience with Miranda was very different. It was a different moment in history. She was born in this new era of having a Black president and we had so much hope. And then DACA happened after that. And Miranda was a little toddler involved and she was able to see the first huge DACA clinic in the state. And she was able to witness the passage of the DREAM Act in 2013. And the day that the DREAM Act was signed was her birthday. And I remember the governor back then, Governor Dayton, sang Happy Birthday to her, and she's been able to create all these memories as a child that - You know, I wasn't intentionally thinking that she had to be politicized; I just couldn't afford daycare because this work is not really that well paid. And we have to change that. But back then, you know, Navigate, that was the organization then, didn't have the infrastructure to give me a good salary or give anybody a great salary. Therefore, forget about benefits, forget about daycare. So my child was there because of lack of access. But also her dad and I, because of the way we've faced challenges in childhood, we have our kids with us all the time. We are both survivors of abuse: physical and sexual abuse. So it's hard for us to just leave our kids in places. So she was with us, for better or worse. So yeah, let's take a deep breath because I don't have the opportunity to talk about this all the time, but this is really why I am invested in this work. So yeah, it has a lot to do with my children.

SooJin: Thank you so much for sharing that. Yeah, let's just take a moment. This is what the work is about. We're in it because of our children and we're in it because of the

future generations. And we're in it because we don't want to re-live another moment like that mother and child on Al Jazeera saying that we had an opportunity to make a change, and we didn't. We didn't follow through. Thank you so much for sharing that story because I hope it will inspire our listeners to *act*. To actually take action to make our world a better place because we are on the precipice of either major devastation and destruction and the undoing of all the progress that we have been able to make the past few decades. Or we're on the precipice of forwarding progress and really working to live up to that ideal of living in a country that truly is where everyone is created equal and, therefore, are treated equally and where every human being matters, right? Not just white folks, not just the powerful, not just the rich, but every human being that makes up this nation. So thank you so much for sharing that, Emilia.

Emilia: Thank you, guys. I think it is important. So like this, what I'm sharing with you has a very personal and intimate notation. It is important to mention that one of the most important or the most crucial, in my opinion, the most crucial and serious theft of a culture of white supremacy, is to believe or take for granted a shared caring of one another. And that includes the way we parent. That includes the way we support each other. You know, there's always stories of creation, right? Every country has this creation myth. And this myth begins with erasing, right? The dehumanization and destruction of indigenous people, Black people, and the intentions of Manifest Destiny. So how do we have an opportunity to set up a new birth myth where the caring for each other is at the center? Just because we're worth it. We are so used to hearing that business as usual is that lunches are not free. Who's gonna pay for that? Like just to have this very dehumanizing separation of what is business and what is pragmatic and functional. And then these other things that are related to emotions and ineffectiveness and things that this culture doesn't think as valid. And that is a very dangerous separation because people have been paying for this country's privilege since inception. It has been paid with people's bodies. And it continues to charge that receipt with people's bodies, and it's time to make it stop. I can tell you I am - when this relates to motherhood - I am unwilling to have my child pay for it. I am unwilling to have our children pay for it. And it's time to reimagine what those structures can look like. So these things are informing me in different ways. I had my daughter in a very different moment. And then 2015 came, right? And we had this re-birth, this whiplash of generational racism, too. And I was pregnant with my second child when that happened. So I oftentimes wonder, what are the generational implications for my son because he was cooking in a moment where he was being told that he wasn't worthy of even existing because he was what people call an "anchor baby," right? So a lot of the attacks that he endured happened in the womb, or happened even before he was born. And it was also through breastfeeding at night, when we were watching deployment of measures pushing back on DACA, the crisis with children being separated from their parents at the border, children in prisons, rampant family separation - that is not new. Yet, the numbers and the aggressiveness on the ground for enforcement was something we didn't see before. And it was now open - like in the open - there were notes about it and they were just unapologetic about this administration's goals. And I have this very complicated take on Stephen Miller. As somebody who also comes from generations of people that have been hurt, I think Miller is the result of trauma that we didn't deal with. As a person that belongs to a community that has been persecuted as a

Jew, that understood really well how global prosecution of Jews happened, that is now using the same techniques to prosecute brown people and Black people because of immigration status - I think it is important for us to analyze how-- What are the consequences of not having caring at the center, right? And believe that we are redeemable. I think that is my work. My work right now is to *believe* that these human beings that blame people like me for all the failures of this economy, are also redeemable. The hardest work that I can think of right now. And sometimes I'm successful, and sometimes I'm not. But I know that's also part of the work. We're serious about accountability. We are serious about accountability being at the center of restorative justice. And what does restoration look like for the worst evils we're seeing? And then if there's no such thing, then how do we reckon with that? Like, those are the questions that I have in my head when I'm raising a daughter that can see forgiveness as a natural thing. That also asks, be very articulate about the things that she has, the things that she needs, whether you need from people, how do you want to be treated? And having conversations with her about, "You know, honey, people don't need to like you, but people need to *respect* you." Those are two different things. And to tell that to a little girl can be heartbreaking.

SooJin: So as it relates to putting care at the center, having that foundation of this new "birth of a nation story," right? That you're talking about and that we have the opportunity to create and shape in this moment. What conversations have you been having with your kids about ICE, about the prison industrial complex, about defunding the police? Yeah, what kinds of conversations have you been having around those topics?

Emilia: So my son is 4, and I haven't had any conversations with him. I was worried that he would be traumatized out of the womb, but he was born with so much resilience. And he's a joyous baby that loves to run outside and like when I say run, he literally runs everywhere. If he needs to pick up a ball from the other side of the room, he runs to get that ball. And he laughs hard, and he lives life with so much joy. When we think about these times - Trump times - I think, yes, this happened, but I also had this little person that makes my life amazing. He gives me so much joy. So Miranda is now 11. And when Trump became elected, I mean she knew that there was a movement and there were Dreamers and her friends had DACA. And I guess very ambiguous things about the problem, but when Trump came to office, it was time for us to build a family plan. So I had to get Powers of Attorney for my kids. I had to decide if me or the dad or both of us are taken, then who's going to take care of my kids? And what are my wishes and what are the things that I have to do in line up for them? And it was a terrible thing that we had to do. And that was when basically one day I invited people, the people that I had talked to and I had selected. And they came home to have dinner, and we talked to Miranda and said if for some reason these people, any of these guys, or people come to school to pick you up, it means that maybe mom or dad was picked up and just know that we're gonna fight. And I still don't know the emotional implications of what an 8 or 9-year-old can have on that. She goes to therapy, and I might be doing things that are not therapy-approved or she was not ready, but I think my daughter deserves to know the truth. Instead of making up things or even doubting that we're not there because we don't love her. That's my fear. As a child, I grew up thinking that my parents didn't love

me. I fear for one second my daughter thinks I don't love her. So that's why I told her. And it was hard for her, but she also knows that we *fight*. I was hoping that in her head, she didn't have the memory of the moment that I didn't come back home. But all the other memories where we were fighting with people. It was really important for her to witness that around those times, we met Jenny Srey and Montha Chum from ReleaseMN8, and they were fighting for their husbands and all that. And Miranda saw that, and she was able to understand that there are possibilities, too. And I said, "And even if I'm taken, I'm just going to Mexico. We'll figure it out, but I'll be fine." And I think that was one of the hardest things that I had to do. And we had to do it as a family. That we had to do with the school because we had to deliver this plan with the school. And I know many families across the country had to do that, especially those that had a previous deportation, or they had encounters with law enforcement in the past. This is traumatic by itself, but then we started watching in the news, or in social media, kids, young people recording how their parents were being picked up. We were witnessing how many kids were separated from their parents, or even children being born in detention facilities being taken away from their mothers. And as hard as it is, we need to talk about that because in this new birth that we are fighting for, that cannot ever happen. And we need to be really clear that we have, as a country, as peoples, an *immense* debt with these children that are right now in Adelanto, in Tornillo, in all these different detention facilities at the border. And I don't know what are going to be the emotional implications of all the young people or children that are right now in a mixed-status family thinking that when Trump says these things in public, he's talking about their families. He's talking about my dad and my mom. I think as somebody who believes that the most important work as a parent is to not screw my children up, I choose to parent with truth. And like I said, she does not know many details, and she goes to a Waldorf school so she doesn't watch media. She doesn't have access to things. Still she knows about pop culture. And it's like how does she find out? I don't know, it's so prevalent, I guess. I don't know, but she knows things. But she doesn't watch TV. She doesn't watch the news. We don't have a lot of screen time. She doesn't know how to write emails. So this online hybrid sort of thing is hard for us because she doesn't have access to a computer. We decided to enroll her in a Waldorf program because I wasn't focused in my child being an academic, being competitive, just as my parents were with me, so that she could survive. I was more interested about her emotional well-being with the arts program and like going with the pace of centering the humanity of the child. That was very important for me and for her dad. I do have immense gratitude, beyond words gratitude, to the community of City of Lakes Waldorf school. They love my child, and they are great teachers. They have held my daughter through some of the worst times in history. When a lot of kids didn't want to go to school when Trump became elected, my daughter was making her backpack and getting her lunch ready. And she's like, "I'm going to school because I love my teacher, and I love my school. And I'm gonna make art, and I'm gonna be happy today. And I'm just gonna do it." So I really love teachers. I have so much respect for teachers. And Mr. Roth, who is my daughter's teacher right now, is so amazing. And because they are doing very good work at aligning some of this antiracist curriculum and now that Miranda's older, they're reading books about things that Miranda can relate to. I can't remember what's the name of this book, but there's many short stories and one of them is about a

Dominican boy whose dad suddenly is not at home, he was picked up. And in the book they don't give details, but Miranda when I picked her up from school, Miranda was like, "I'm reading this book and like all these things make sense to me, and I think it wasn't the police. I think it was ICE." And we need to be very clear that these two things are very damaging, but ICE is different. And la migra does this and she was talking about what she knows, and I was just listening to her. So that's sort of how she knows about that. It wasn't really that I wanted to raise a child with that consciousness. I was just trying to raise a child that understood that I loved her. And about police: my cousin is Black and Miranda's little cousins, her kids are Black. And one of the men that was killed in North Minneapolis was their dad. So Miranda's cousins - that was one of the people that was killed due to police brutality and violence. And you know, she feels for her cousin. She loves her cousins, and it is very personal for our family. So the way that she knew about that was because we got the news that Junior was killed. And in that Miranda's cousins didn't have a parent.

SooJin: I am so sorry. Oh my gosh, Emilia.

Emilia: I mean, it's just like living the life. I feel that naturally, you can choose not to tell your kids about the realities of the world, and then somebody else will tell them. But they have everything around them to be critical and make judgments and process stuff. It's already there. They have it everywhere. Now it is important for parents. I truly believe in political education. I truly believe in political, I don't mean partisan, but I mean like education support knowledge, in which we make sense about oppression and structural racism and gender discrimination and class discrimination, in a way that relates to our experiences. And therefore, when our kids are facing all these different realities because they see this stuff - they see Islamophobia at schools. They see discrimination and homophobia in the community. They see racism upon their bodies. They experience all these things. And if we don't give them that information that that language to help make connections with what their little tummies and like their adrenal glands and everything else is feeling at the moment, they will blame themselves. And I will not give that gift to fucking white supremacy. My daughter is not going to blame herself for being brown. And I'm not gonna let that happen. Yeah, sorry about that.

SooJin: No, no, it's all good. Yeah, I mean, fuck white supremacy.

Emilia: Like fuck you! You're not taking my child with you.

SooJin: Exactly, exactly. I can't think of a better time to be profane than, to say, when it comes to white supremacy.

Emilia: And my daughter doesn't swear, but sometimes people swear out of like this way of articulating our frustration and this crucial moment. And when she was little, we were in all these movement spaces. So people swear; people are themselves. So that's one thing that I had to tell her. You are not allowed to use those words. But you also need to choose not to be offended because these people are offended by poverty. That should offend you. Discrimination should offend you. Racism should offend you. If people are disrespectful to you or somebody else, that should be offending. You know,

cuss words - we have an ample room of discretion for cuss words. Just don't repeat them because you're little and she's like, "Okay." And then she doesn't say them, but she does sometimes say, "Oh, no, that's fine. I am offended by...," and she names what she's offended by. So yeah, she also has a good sense of humor. She likes to read. I'm telling you, I think my child - and I will say generally our children are so much better than us in many ways, when they're loved. So yeah, as you were saying about what you're processing and going through with your healing, I think that is a job I have to commit: my healing needs to be independent and in partnership with the raising of her. And that is a very important commitment that I think that I need to relate to.

SooJin: But you know, the beauty of our children is that they are the inspiration for our healing, right? The whole purpose of why you're on this journey is because of her. Same thing for me: because of my daughter. Same thing for Hannah: because of her two boys. And yeah, so that is the gift. It becomes less healthy when we start attaching and becoming dependent on our own children for that. Which is what I found that I was doing with Sxela. Emilia I feel like - I don't know about you Hannah - but I feel like I just witnessed and sat through one of the most powerful, spiritual experiences of my life in the sense of getting a...not lecture but like I'm sitting at the feet of deep ancestral wisdom. And centuries and generations of wisdom that has been encapsulated in your body has been delivered through your *voice*. Like, just now. I'm so full in so many ways: intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, physically. I'm so full. I can't quite articulate. I don't have the words because I've never felt so full, so overwhelmed by such wisdom in my life on so many levels. This must be what the disciples must have felt like when they sat at the feet of Jesus. Or, you know, when the followers of Buddha-- Or what it must feel like to be sitting at the feet of Thich Nhat Hanh or all these amazing spiritual warriors. Thank you. Thank you for just opening yourself and taking us to those places that scare us because that's where the healing is.

Emilia: Thank you. So it's interesting you mentioned that. I went back to school recently and my major is actually theology. So I'm a theology major. And like data science, I think that's important, but I like data science. Let's just say I am a reformatist. I believe that it's within all of us that the divine is within all of us. And that our journey is to be in relationship and connection with that divinity within ourselves. That is, you can call it healing. I don't know the Buddhist points and like when they're aligned, and they have a meaning. I don't know enough about Buddhism.

SooJin: Oh sure. I'm sorry, are you talking about like the alignment of the chakras, and they're leading to Nirvana and all that?

Emilia: Yes, the alignment of the chakras. Like all this, I think all of us are capable to be in that divine connection with ourselves and our ancestors. One of the highest prices of colonialism was to disconnect indigenous people from our divinity. And think that we have an intermediary to reach for humanity in a way that only we could seek through a priest or this or that, or like the Vatican and things like that. And like I was raised Catholic, and I have very good memories and I also can be critical as a Catholic. I believe that we are facing a moment in which all these stories are prophecies, right? The story about your adoption. The story about the survival of Jewish people. The

stories about Black immigrants, Asian survivors, the Cambodian refugees. All those things, if you will pay close attention, that's part of the journey of liberation. And we can unfold how problematic some things about the Bible are, like the interpretation of it and how damaging it is right now. Especially with the announcement of this very conservative Supreme Court Justice that is being nominated by President Trump. I think we also have a responsibility to risk our faith and risk our spirituality because the more grounded and clear we are with that, the less it will become weaponized against us. It's ours. It's not the state. It's not the 1%. It's not the racists and white supremacists. And we have to be aware that everything like faith and religiosity takes the shape of the bucket. If you put that in a bucket that is racist, classist, and gender oppressive, it's going to be that. But if you put that in a place of wholesomeness, in a place of full humanity sharing and caring for one another, then it becomes that, too. And we have to be open to those possibilities. Looking at history and really interested in figuring out the separation - when nations and states were created, the whole Roman Empire was not holy, was not Roman, it was not an empire. But how those tools that were used to build influence, power and control, are still refurbished today in this administration. Pogroms were born under Constantine, right? This is the important part of antiracist education. We will be better supporters of our kids' journey for their whole selves when we take the responsibility to understand what are the origins of this unfair distribution of suffering and pain? So just being curious about life and being curious about the world. Going and answering these questions helps me be a better parent.

SooJin: Yes. That's it. That's it. Answering that question: what are the origins of the unfair distribution of suffering and pain? And answering that question, creating alternative conditions that don't lead to that.

Emilia: Right. We're not telling them that...I don't want them to think that this parent is about isolation and like being helicopter parents and ICE taking away from all the things that they have to learn. Pain is natural. But the systematic infliction of pain and suffering to make money: *that* is unnatural.

SooJin: *That* is unnatural! Yes!

Emilia: Thank you so much, you guys, for this conversation. My brain is going to overheat. You're making me think things that I don't think all the time and just making the connections right now.

SooJin: Oh, well okay. So yeah, you just validated what I was saying about how I'm so overwhelmed on all these levels. That my mind's being blown on all these levels. You're overheating!

Emilia: It's a process. We are processing these together. Yeah, I had some questions from you. So talking about parenting and talking about my kids is a very vulnerable thing for me. So when I'm working, I try not to just talk about that all the time because I know I'm going to be weepy.. Like it is not as relevant in a policy conversation, right? Or an administrative conversation about things at the Capitol than this. And this is fundamentally important right now. So it's like I've been having all these different things

in my gut and my heart, and finally there's a space for me to just process things because I don't know shit. I'm just processing out loud with y'all. So I don't know, man.

SooJin: If we could all process like you, Emilia. *Wow!* This is what the processing looks like for you? Amazing! Amazing. Okay, Hannah, do you want to move on to the other part? Are you okay with that, Emilia?

Emilia: Yeah.

Hannah: Well, I definitely don't have words. And I also know that our listeners, our community of antiracist parents *need* this episode. So thank you. So building on our conversation, Emilia, would you like to bring our listeners attention to a specific organization or any other initiatives you're working on?

Emilia: Yes. So Navigate Unidos, the organization was founded in 2006 as Navigate. And we rebranded that as Unidos. You're gonna see both brands out there, but we have the largest Latino electoral operation in the state. And we recently opened our super PAC. And I want to be very clear that the reason that we have decided to open a super PAC is because our stories, our humanities, are at the center of polarizing the electorate this election. And we need a vehicle to defend ourselves. And within the contours of nonprofit, you cannot do that from a (c)(3); it's harder to do that from a (c)(4). And the way that we can do it legitimately and providing people with accountability is to do it in a super PAC. So this is one of those things like the tools of the master and, I know, it's complicated. But we want to be super clear about our stories - what we want to say to the people that are voting. Let's not get confused. There is damage being done upon people every single day in this administration. It is why we opened a super PAC. So if folks want to donate to a charitable organization, they can go to www.navigatemn.org. And it will be easy. If you guys are interested in a political operation in alignment with many organizations for people and planet, we invite you to donate and share our super PAC PayPal. The super PAC's name is Unidos We Win, or United We Win. And it's a federal PAC, and we will be deploying conversations and information and ads and things like that. So I just want to be very frank with the audience. We wouldn't do this if we were not at the center of the attacks.

SooJin: Great. And thanks for that. And we'll have all those links up as part of the description with this podcast episode. So thank you for sharing all that.

Emilia: Thank you, guys.

Hannah: Okay, so our last bit is our lightning round. And basically the answers are just whatever pops into your mind first. So antiracist parenting is?

Emilia: Love.

Hannah: What's the last thing your children did to make you smile?

Emilia: Wake up.

Hannah: What are you reading right now?

Emilia: I have a theology class. It's called God and Happiness. And I'm reading this book called *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by a rabbi. And the audiobook is read by the rabbi, and it's a wonderful book that I recommend to everybody that is going through grief and loss. So it's not just human grief. I've been grieving the parents that I wish I had, but I don't. But I still love them and then some sort of grieving in my heart. We're grieving the world that we know. We're grieving our communities. We're grieving the loss of Black people in the hands of police. There's a lot of grieving going on. And he unfolds many things. If you are a spiritual person or not, he has some really good insights for people.

SooJin: Thank you.

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

Emilia: Right now, I'm fighting like hell to take care of myself. I think that the destiny of my family and my community are really tied to this moment. We made a commitment to work as hard as we could for the election. And that to me is the self caring of changing our conditions or getting ourselves clear in a shared public mandate of what we need to do for anybody who is elected. So that is my self caring. And I also need to rest. So after the election, I will probably take a good amount of time off and just be with my kids. I might go to the motherland that I haven't been in over 20 years. And now I can, and my kids have never been there. So I might go and visit my family and sort of see Mexico City. It's not the one that I left, but I want to be reintroduced to my hometown.

Hannah: You spoke to this next one earlier, but what is one thing you're committed to doing in your antiracist parenting journey?

Emilia: My journey is leading me to learning how to *live*. I learned how to survive really well. I've been fighting. I have a commitment in relationship with other people in the organization I work for, that has been a vehicle of survival and fighting back, but I also need to be in work on my journey to live. To just live. Not just survive, but live. And I have to learn how to do that. And I think that is particularly important for my kids.

Hannah: What question would you like Antiracist Parenting Podcast to answer in a future episode?

Emilia: This is heavy, but I think there is a reason why. So in all the different oppressions that we talked about - we talked about anti-semitism, anti-Blackness, colonization, oppression on environment, commodification of the people and planet, all these different things. And one thing that we haven't really unfolded, and I'm curious myself, is infantilization and the oppression of people that are younger. Where do we learn this discipline-oriented parenting that does not hear and see kids because we think they don't have a voice. That is particular like a survival of sexual violence. That is particularly something that I wish I had the bravery to explore as I build more resilience in my own journey because I don't have it right now. It's very hard for me. But I think that

is the sort of like the ultimate intra-familial oppression within our family structure: abuse, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and things like that.

Hannah: Thank you. Is there anything that you wanted to talk about that we didn't ask about or didn't come up?

Emilia: Well, I feel like I showed you my naked heart. And thank you for providing that space. I came in fully trusting you guys. I love and have so much respect for SooJin. So thank you for doing that. I don't know. I try to be as open for this conversation as I could.

Hannah: I felt that.

SooJin: Yeah, you not only delivered, but you exceeded our wildest expectations. Yeah, I mean, Hannah and I, we knew that this was going to be a heavy conversation. We didn't realize just how heavy and important and significant and transformative this conversation would be because of *you* - because you came in with such openness and vulnerability, and we can't thank you enough, Emilia. As I said, prior to introducing you, our world is better because you're in it, because of you.

Emilia: Thank you. I feel the same about you guys. This work is very important. And some of us have a more visible role than others. And all these pieces are crucial. I know that I don't do this by myself. I have a lot of support. And even if, when I'm pondering these questions, I have a whole faculty at St. Thomas that is available when I ask questions. So I took a class about white supremacy and fascism last January with Professor Hollerich. And I was like, "I have all these questions." And he was helping me, and I had also another faculty member that was an Anglican Black pastor from South Africa that did work during the apartheid. So I am just very grateful that while, sometimes, I could feel that life was really unfair for me, I had access to a wealth of people that have shared with me things - like you - precisely. And I learned. That's the thing: my grandpa knew that this little kid that spoke too early could learn really fast. So I still have that. I think that was a gift from my mom and my grandma and my great grandma, and all the things that they endured, and they're like, "I think this child needs to learn fast because she's gonna need it." So I'm just beyond grateful for this space and just a lot of gratitude. We have community, and we have caring community around us. And it is important to name that explicitly.

SooJin: Thank you for sharing yourself. For revealing your heart to us.

Emilia: Thank you so much for doing this. It was my pleasure and my honor. And work like this is always at the right time. Thank you guys so much.

SooJin: Thank you.

Emilia: I'll see you soon.

Hannah: Thank you. Thank you.

Emilia: Bye, bye.

SooJin: Where do we begin?

Hannah: I know that I needed this. That's how I feel. And it's really hard and I just want to cry, but I need it.

SooJin: What makes you say that you needed it? That you needed this?

Hannah: Just hearing Emilia's story just highlights how critical it is to have antiracist parenting at the top of the agenda every minute of every day. And what am I doing about it? How am I incorporating this into my daily practice? And knowing that this work can impact people who are suffering. And so it's just a call to action for me. So the thing that's sticking out is rescuing my faith and putting it into the bucket of full humanity. And just thinking through what that means and just being in the work constantly. So I don't know...that's where I'm at right now. And I'm also like, I know that I need to process more.

SooJin: Yeah, I know I need to process more, too, but I feel like one thing that I can do in terms of like action is be more active in the fight that she was talking about. Working to mobilize people to help offset the narrative that Trump is creating around that "these people" are to blame for all the things that are wrong with our country. And you got the president who's saying this, and you have this little super PAC that's trying to fight against that narrative, right? And the more people we can have on that side of the fight, the better chance that we can to destroy that extremely evil and divisive and harmful narrative. So yeah, I'm gonna go right to those websites, donate, and also reach out to her directly on how I can volunteer because, yeah, we got five weeks.

Hannah: Yeah, I'm gonna make the same commitment.

SooJin: Okay, so let's do that. Let's do that.

Hannah: So in closing, we want to tell you, our listeners, to really engage and listen deeply to Emilia's story. And understand how critical, urgent, important it is for us to take that information and do whatever we can to ensure that we're not perpetuating all of these experiences that are happening right now.

SooJin: Yeah, because what's at stake is the separation of families. What's at stake is Emilia and her husband being separated from her children. That is what's at stake. So if that won't mobilize you, I don't know what will. But we hope, we have faith that you, our listeners, that *that* is something that will mobilize you and spur you to action. And do everything you can to make sure that the outcome of this election is such where Emilia and her partner don't have to have an exit strategy, an emergency plan. Having to have these conversations with their children of "If this happens, this is what it means: that mommy and daddy - we were taken away, but that we're going to do everything in our power to fight and to be reunited with you all." *Please* don't let that be their story. We can do something. We can do something to make sure that that is not their story. So go out and do everything you can to make sure that that doesn't happen. Thank you.

Hannah: Thank you.

Outro (music by Mike Myth Productions):

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.