

Layla: Hi everybody and welcome back to Good Ancestor podcast. Today, for episode 2 of Good Ancestor podcast, I'm speaking with No White Saviors specifically Olivia Alaso and Kelsey Nielsen from No White Saviors. Olivia and Kelsey are both trained social workers who have worked in the field for years. Olivia is born and raised in Uganda. Kelsey spent around 5 years in country working in various capacities. No White Saviors started as a joint outlet to see many of the harmful aspects of white saviorism in Uganda exposed. Coming from two very different experiences with the common goal, Olivia and Kelsey worked together to confront the issues surrounding global racism and white supremacy. I'm really excited to speak with both Olivia and Kelsey today. Welcome to the podcast first of all. I'm so happy to have you here.

Kelsey: We're excited. You've been an aspiration I know for our work from the beginning and you're actually one of the first I think people with bigger platform to really share our work so that has meant a lot to us.

Layla: Well, it's incredible to see the work that you are doing and how it is educating but also really activating like you're really taking action and we're gonna talk about what that looks like during this conversation but before we dive in, I wanna begin with our very first question and you can choose whoever is gonna go first. Our first question is who are the ancestors living or transitioned, familial or societal who have influenced you on your journey?

Olivia: I volunteer for this myself?

Layla: Yes, please Olivia. Go ahead. Yes.

Olivia: All right, I'm Olivia Alaso and I'm a co-founder of the No White Saviors and I'm based in Uganda and I'm a social worker by profession. I've worked in the NGO sector. I grew up in Jinja a town with very many white people. So, I always have so much to talk about when it comes to my hometown because I've seen so much. And what I would say about the ancestors, I think in Africa, we have so many people that we have looked up. There is Nelson Mandela, I always wanted to start with Nelson Mandela because he started it. He's one person on the African continent that started this movement. And to me as a black woman or Ugandan woman, it takes me back to history and I think so much on what Africa as a continent has been through. And how we've suffered through the white saviorism and how do white savior complex has incorporated itself in our way of life coming way back from South Africa and also colonization in Africa. So, Nelson Mandela is a father figure, that's one person that I really look up to. Now that he is dead but still his legacy lives on. And also I always want to give South Africa because in Africa it is where we saw a lot of discrimination with outside race and also the different areas. So, I always look up to people in South Africa like Nelson Mandela, Stephen Biko, because this is where it all started that it spread back to the African continent. It started from South Africa, and then the Wales. Now Africa, it started opening from Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, to Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, to Patrice Lumumba in Congo. So, the people that I look up to right now, most of them are gone but the legacy that they have left behind and when we go back to history

and what they have done and how they have resisted and to what extent and what is left for us now as the new generation. I'll go to the female side of people who have really inspired me, there's Winnie Mandela, and she's also gone right now but her fight as a woman and the struggle to see that there's equality of black people and white people in South Africa is phenomenal I think and there's no way I can really explain that how a woman would sacrifice everything, her life, her youthful age, her life to struggle to see that there's this equality between black people and white people. Though it is still continuing, still we are seeing this happen that the discrimination is not gone anyway. It is still happening in South Africa, so women like that have also inspired my journey, those are my ancestors. And also presidents, female presidents that we have like Johnson Sirleaf, she did a lot to us Africans; Joyce Banda. And I don't want to always look up to people who are not on the continent because I want to start with home. These are people we should inspire; I don't need to go far. Since I was a child I looked up to these big names. And I used to hear Nelson Mandela and I'm like, "Who is Nelson Mandela? What did he do?" So, like studying through academia and getting to know who they were and what they did and then how they moved our continent from the dark days to the light days that we see now. Though I can't say that we are done with all the dark days, they're still in here, they are still in here. They do exist. There's some bit of light they brought here for us to see, so such figures right now as we do this work, when I look up to them, I said there was much, they laid out, and they left a legacy. And wherever they are, one has to move on, to move from where they stopped so that we could continue from there. And in case, in case one day we leave, we leave the world, what we leave other people taking on this. So this is a struggle that will continue and continue for generations because we don't know if one day one time, Kelsey and I will be equal in the after set. I don't think.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: It's going to be a continuous process like, since way back. So such people, I always want to begin with home before I jump into the world.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: I want to begin with people on the African continent that I feel inspired and make me feel that I was designed to also stand and represent my people because if they did it then I can also do it.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: Yeah. I look up to the African people because I know Africa has come a long way and we are still here and we have so much to offer. And through our ancestors, we are able now to come up and stand up and speak. We didn't have this voice so many years ago, but because they showed us that we can also lead the black movement, we can stand and say, no bad guys, this is wrong. As black people, as African people we don't agree with what you say because they have laid that foundation for us. Because of that voice, if I hear it my ears, I'm like okay, I know I

can also do it. I can represent my people. I can speak for them and the world will listen to me. So yeah, those good memories that stick and what will happen with those, yes, that will be strong. They gave it their all so I can still do the same. And that's why I feel they inspired me every day. Yeah.

Layla: That's beautiful. I actually got chills when you said, I think it was something like, I was designed to stand. And if they could do it, I can do it. Thank you for saying that. Thank you.

Olivia: You're welcome.

Layla: That was beautiful. Thank you. Kelsey, your turn.

Kelsey: What an interesting question being white, right? Because our ancestors in terms of like if I will get my actual blood ancestors, right? There's an unlearning and reconciling that needs to happen when you start to unpack the realities of the bloodshed to get us to the level of the privilege that we experience and the benefit we experience under white supremacy. So, understanding that whether it was my direct grandfather or my direct relative that I benefited from people who look like me, my ancestors, in a very heinous way. And so, I look at that, you think, I don't celebrate the forefathers of America. I don't celebrate 4th of July. I don't celebrate holidays that were built on genocide, and colonization, and the [Inaudible] [10:14]. What I do celebrate is I celebrate the black revolutionaries that I learned from. The only reason I know what I know and I'm able to do what I do is because of the education that they provided from black people in my life whom I've grown up around and from black revolutionaries through lectures, through literatures, through constant learning. And so I think some of the ancestors fight for some inspiration of like the revolutionary work that they have done is women like Sister Souljah. She is someone I feel like she verbalized fiction but in terms of her work, especially as a young black woman, who was able to bridge work in the community and academia, and was able to do it in a way that was so unapologetic and so unrelenting in the sense that like, it didn't matter if she was in a room full of some of the most prestigious politicians and academics and even the president of United States. I remember the time where she had called out Bill Clinton and just the way that she was able to just say, I remember the clip where she talked about good white people and how she's like, to be a good white person means you have to be willing to give up some power. And that she had never met someone like that. And I remember watching that and listening to that and thinking that is exactly the kind of the straightforwardness, the truth and the like. There is no time, the level of harm and violence that white supremacy has caused, the way that we, and when I say we, me included having complacent in that. There's no time to miss work, there's no time to stay a delicate leader, there's no time to ease into it. I feel like we need the Sister Souljah. We need people who are willing to just lead or act. And so women like her, Assata Shakur, has been a huge inspiration. You look at the level of organization commitment that when you, not only like the organization before the FBI and the US government pins the murder of that New Jersey officer on her, but then they organized to bust her out of jail. They organized and kept her in

hiding before they got her to Cuba. And just even the way like she's still in Cuba, they have a 2 million dollar I think of a reward on her head. She's still on the FBI's most wanted list and she's, I think she's such an example of like, the revolutionary work and the risk involved. And like the fact that like, there was never a question it seemed in her writing and just the way she talks. But there was never a question in her mind that this was worth the risk. So yeah I think, for too long, we have expected and only relied on black revolutionaries to dismantle and confront white supremacy. And it's really about damn time for us to take responsibility and to put real risk out there. If you really understand the harm and violence white supremacy has caused; and like for me it's like there's no question because I'm like there are black people, Olivia and many people here in Uganda, but so people back home that I love dearly, that I'm like if I really understand the harm that white supremacy is causing, this is like the very minimum that should be expected is to really challenge it head on and to do the work internally but also externally regardless of what the risk is because there's so many people benefited from white supremacy. This is not gonna be like a comfortable thing. This is not gonna be anything that, you know, obviously threats of lawsuits or lawsuits in general that can happen in this work. There's a lot of people who don't like us and don't like the work that we do and that's okay. That comes with the territory. But to me, especially being a white person doing this work, there is no amount of like, oh, is this hard? No, this is the very minimum man, like we recognize the way we benefit from racism and white supremacy, this should be the minimum expected of us to actually challenge and conform it. I wanted it as direct as I wanted to be, but Sister Souljah and Assata were the two that came to mind when you asked about ancestors. They're two incredible women that have given me a ton of inspiration and motivation. Yeah.

Layla: Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. What really struck me is your speaking is in this work, it is often black women who are taking the biggest hits; who are leading who are able to leap but who are also taking the biggest hits, making the biggest sacrifices. But also it really struck me, how you see yourself as a white person then consider your ancestry, both your own personal one and collectively. And again it's black women who are the inspiration. Whether they're in hiding or have passed already, they're still the ones that we're looking to and that's the kind of like weird dichotomy for me, where it's like globally black women are at the bottom of the pile and yet are often the ones working the hardest and taking the most hits. I see you nodding your head Olivia, like, uh-huh.

Olivia: Yeah, the truth.

Layla: What comes up for you as you think about that?

Olivia: What I think about that I think that for so long the questions of black women have not been lifted. And we can see this in so many spaces when we come to the NGO. I want to give that example because no one happens there. Even if you have something to say to a black woman and join this structure that has a lot of whiteness, no one will listen to you.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: Much as you have the skill, the knowledge, and you are much much better than this white person, they'll not listen to you. They'll not listen to you because we've been positioned to be at the bottom in everything. So, I have seen that much as you have this idea that's going to debunk this organization, no one will listen to you. How can a black woman speak to a white woman on something that you have skill or knowledge on? They'll be like, no, I mean how did you learn that? Where did you get the expertise to tell me what to do? Who are you to even ask me that I shouldn't do this?

Layla: Right.

Olivia: I mean are you qualified, in the after sets you are. But because they have put us to this standard of being in the low standard all the time. So there's no way you can discuss this. But come to think of it, the best books have been written by black women and are really powerful. And we see them being rare, you have a book Layla, and I'll try to get that copy to read to you. And we've seen so many books, inspirational books which are teaching white women on what they should do. But who is acknowledging? Who is? They read these books like in the corridors or down their beds. But they're learning something but they'll never come out to say that this black woman has inspired me in this book.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: See, how many black women are in the New York's Best Seller. How many?

Layla: Right.

Olivia: Let's look at that.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: Now white women, even if they've written a book that is really, there's nothing really mattered in the book but will be New York's Best Seller. But if a black woman who has written a book with a lot of content on it can never be up there. Why? Because this is what they think that we should be at the bottom all the time. We shouldn't be on the top. I have seen this on so many occasions like we've been on court, our voices have been silenced.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: Our voices have been silenced. And every time I think I tell people that when I get the chance to shout someday, I want the world to hear. If I get the opportunity to let the world hear from a black woman or Ugandan woman or African woman, I want to scream so that people can hear my voice.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: Because for so long, our voices have been silenced, you know. You can never stand up and say something especially with given the work that we do, people feel that black women cannot challenge whiteness. Oh, you cannot. Who are you to say that? Who are you to tell me that I'm racist? Who are you? I mean where did you get the power? So, they have taken that power from us.

Kelsey: That even comes out in the way that people will say, this account is only run by a white person like literally, it is all black women and one white person, they'll say like it's not just even black people. [Inaudible] [19:16] how many videos, how many interviews, how many with Olivia and they are like, wait, that is white supremacy, right? The idea that the ability to articulate, the ability, the unapologetic way that we challenge it, I think is so different from what people expect or anticipate that they're just like, oh, this must be a white woman doing this.

Layla: Right.

Kelsey: It's just so, oh man. We know what it is though. We know what that is.

Layla: Right.

Kelsey: It happens often.

Layla: Right. So for people who have never heard of No White Saviors, what is the sort of birth story of No White Saviors? How did you come together? How was it born?

Kelsey: On a special day, out of a click. I was holding a black baby. This is real. Like when we talk about white saviorism, man, I was in it. And I thought I was different because I had talked about anti-race, I had taken an anti-racism course, an undergrad and I had, you know, had lot of friends. And like all the things that you're like, I grew up and I wasn't in just this like white bubble that a lot of other white people I knew where. I voted for Obama and I came to Uganda and I wasn't just there for a short time and taking selfies with random kids. So I was different, right? I went and got my undergrad degree. But like that is what we were so famous for. I went in an interview since the world is with them. It's like being able to say, well, that's not me. So Olivia met me in my peak white saviorism and you wanna take it from there?

Olivia: Yeah. So I have a son called LeBron James. And that time he was sick and we went to this clinic. And he was sitting, his blood sample was taken. So, I'm sitting holding him and carrying him. And then I see a white woman carrying this black child, and I'm like, uhmmm. I looked at them, then for a while I'm like, okay, let's greet and ask her. When I asked her, "What's wrong with the child?" "He is here to take a test as he is sick." Okay, what do you and how come you have this child? What do you do in Uganda? Because I was, I grew up seeing white people in Jinja moving with black children. So I said all right, this is an opportunity for me to ask this white woman. What are you doing with this child? So when I asked her she

was like, okay we have this organization that we are running. We are out of Jinja town and this is what we do, we keep children and families, I'm like okay, uh-huh. Then I told her, I actually want to see more of what you do, what is there? And she's like, "Oh, you're welcome." And she asked me, "What do you do?" I said I'm a social worker by profession but I just had my baby and I've been caring for him, but I'm available if things work. Because she told me, "Oh, we're hiring a social worker." I'm like, okay, fine. I will check on what you guys do and then this is how we started. So I went to see the organization, I saw it and I started working with Kelsey. And that time she was my boss. And as we worked together, there's so many things that I saw and I addressed them. I called them and I said, Kelsey, I think this is how we do this. In Uganda, we don't eat pork and beans the whole week. No. And they didn't know this because they know, oh this is food. I said, "No! We don't eat food like, for whole week I was not going to the kitchen to get food." And they asked me, "What is it Olivia?" I said, ah-ah, I don't eat pork and beans the whole week. They said, "Okay but this people didn't tell us." I said, okay. They said, "What should we do?" So we turned the menu and people started eating food that they wanted. So they changed because I talked to them and they listened. So as we worked together I had very complicated questions on my workloads and I worked with different families. And then, a turning point came around when I had to leave. And the reason, I had three reasons why I left because I used to leave my son with my maid at home. But then I found so many things messed up. I wanted to care for him. And also there was a one time the organization that was treating Ugandans poorly. And she want, she was like, "Oh they are paying you highly, she was all the time telling Ugandans, "Oh, you need to do this one, you need to do that one." But after sets she didn't have any qualification in any fields, you know, any fields. So I called her out, I addressed it with Kelsey. I said, "No, we don't like the way this woman addresses us. We don't like it because she comes to a meeting and she tells us from today, you're going to be doing this. And she asked us, "What do you think?" And I'm like, "What do we think? You've already decided, what we should do?""

Layla: Right.

Olivia: What was so difficult was that, the organization had two people, two founders of the organization. So the other side was in favor of this white girl. And me as Olivia I was not bigger than the organization. No, I was not bigger than the organization. So, I said, "Okay. I need to protect my conscience. I don't want to see this girl."

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: And then I had support from my husband. We really had support from him. So I sat down and discussed it with them. I said, "Now, I think this is the time to leave." And my husband supported me because even on the day I was going to put in my resignation letter, he put me on his car, he drove me and went with me. And then I had it there because he supports me and said, "Okay, if this is what you feel. If this is what you feel in your conscience then I'm supporting you a hundred percent." So, I left the organization and after some time, Kelsey also left.

Kelsey: I actually left only a few months after her.

Olivia: Yeah. So, she also left but then, we continued like talking. Talking and keeping the conversation and also...

Kelsey: This would have been 2015?

Olivia: Yeah, around that.

Kelsey: Yeah, 2015.

Olivia: And also, seeing that Kelsey was now opening up and discussed it openly about what she have seen. And she continued to say that she was part of the problem and she will still be part of the problem. So, by her addressing some of these things, got me thinking, I'm like, okay, she gets it. She understands it because even way back, when we had issues I would tell her, I say "Kelsey this is not supposed to be like that. This is not supposed to be like that." But then, this was an organization that was funded by a church. And one of the founders was a daughter of a pastor from the church where the funds are coming from. So there was nothing I could do. It was bigger than me and so some decisions were hard to make. Even though I had to make because--so I said I moved away and then I stayed in contact with Kelsey. She started posting about it. So we kept the relationship and we were talking. We're discussing things...

Kelsey: And Sharon too.

Olivia: And Sharon is a Ugandan. In Jinja, she also started up an organization. In Jinja, she went through so much. As a Ugandan woman opening up an organization, you're non-standard with the white people. So white people have to fight you on that. You're not going to face the right way, you're corrupt. That is one thing, you're corrupt. You know, that kind of thing. So...

Layla: This is such an African stereotype, right? Of the corrupt African, right?

Olivia: Yeah. So after such conversations, we say, we need space to begin talking about this. We need space to hold people accountable for things that they think they do in the dark. We actually think this darkness, we are there. So we should just open up discussions in the light house too for the world to see that these things are actually happening. So...

Kelsey: They were so normalized.

Olivia: Yeah. In Jinja it was so normalized.

Kelsey: It still is but it's getting less.

Olivia: Paying yourself a much more salary and also thinking that you can replace Ugandans such you're only who is someone can't even say, "Hey Layla, you're a

like this.” You’re like oh, if you don’t want the job then leave I can replace you. You’re not that kind of thing. So we all saw this and started discussing on Facebook. And then I said, okay. Then they gave us a hashtag No White Saviors. And this is all how we started. So started from there up to where we are right now.

Kelsey: We could never believe like if anyone told us a year ago this is where things would be and that like we would be sitting and talking to you or we would have an Instagram following of 211,000, we were like, oh like, a few hundred, were like wow! It’s so like, you just don’t, we did not know people would respond and care about what we are talking about in the way that we we’re seeing.

Olivia: We actually didn’t know that the world would take this as a serious issue. As something to learn from. We didn’t know that this platform would actually be a free platform where people would feel safe to express themselves. There’s so many people, we didn’t know there’s so many people who had so much to share. But they did not have one to share it from. Most of these things if I’ve seen them coming now, I would say, okay, this is what we started. But we actually didn’t know what we had started.

Layla: Yeah. So, I think that’s important what you’re saying though about like that you didn’t know what it would become, because I think, you see people who have a platform, who have a following, whatever it is that they have, right? And you think well, you know, that was just a clear line for them. They must have gone a-b-c-d to get to where they are. And the truth is, it started just as a conversation between you two because of stuff that happened at work. Well, even before that it started as, you saw a white woman holding a black baby and you were like, “What’s happening here?” Right? And this winding path to, you know, where you are now, and who knows where, you know, it’s going from here a year from now where No White Saviors is going to be. I think it’s an incredible story and I think for everyone listening, you know, if I was listening to the podcast and as I’m listening to you, I’m just thinking of how important it is to use our voices no matter where we are. Because you don’t know who it could be inspiring. You don’t know who you could be educating. You don’t know who you could be affecting or who’s mind you could be changing. And in the end whose life you could be saving. Really.

Kelsey: I mean there literally have been lives but people don’t realize the severity of what white saviorism is capable of.

Layla: So could you define for people who are not familiar with what is a white savior? Am I not allowed to go to Africa and go in volunteer? What is white saviorism?

Kelsey: I am white and I live in Uganda. So, I think it’s very late or we could go at the textbook definition or we could go with like Teju Cole’s works are really incredible piece for any one listening.

Layla: I’ll link to that piece in your show notes by Teju Cole.

Kelsey:

That's so good. He wrote about the Kony 2012 and that's something that we referenced a lot because that was such a clear example. It actually have dialogue with Jason Russell. It's about seeing like the potential someone has to be able to learn from their mistakes. And say you know what, what we are asking is not to have perfection because we're not perfect human beings, we're not perfect in this I say White Savior Recovery. 'Cause it is like recovering from a type of addiction because our egos are fed by it, right? And so there's the level of racism and white supremacy in the way that we are falsely educated about all the propagandas fed to us especially in Western countries. The lies that were fed about the continent of Africa, about predominantly black countries that have been over exploited and formerly colonized. I don't even like to say formerly colonized, it's like colonization that were ended, it just changed forms. Because in so many ways that's still going on. Through policy, through the big foreign aid that exist in relationship. The West has so much control over the majority of the continents. And so, when I look at white saviorism I know that was true, but to define white saviorism is so wrapped up in that indoctrination that propaganda that we're fed about this very slack narrative that Uganda or Africa as a whole is poor, corrupt, under-developed and in need of our saving and until a white person comes in and intervenes its this dark content, its hopeless that permeates not just the like UNICEF or USAID commercials, but it's in the literature, it's in the movies, it's in the books that get published. It's in our education system so it's in our churches, you know, the way people talk about going on missions and it's your glorify. And I grew up in the way of evangelical church in the US and I know the level of like glorification that I received and I wasn't even like, I wasn't even like a good missionary 'cause like I was liberal, I voted for Obama, like I was not good in terms of like being a white evangelical. But even like I was almost like I canceled it out 'cause I was the white girl going to Uganda. You could literally come here and do anything and if people back home in America know you're coming here they just assume you're saving people like they just assumed you're saving people that you inherently doing something good. And the truth is a lot of us are taking the real advantage of that. Because the assumption of our innocence, of our inherent morality, of us being inherently beneficial, is so dangerous. We can get hang up on the self feeds and the things like that which are important. It's important to talk about the fact that we even feel entitled and like we can just come into a community and take photos of children without asking or without consent. But that's like in terms of like the real severity of what white saviorism is capable of, it's rooted in the same place of Renee Bach, who will get into coming to Uganda and feeling like she could practice medicine on children without any form of medical trainings. I think it's more sinister because of the fact that it's disguised in charity and humanitarian work and doing good, but it really there's such a clear manifestation of racism and white supremacy. I think in some ways it can be harder to come back because people like myself can disguise and justify it by saying, "But I'm doing good and with our good intentions, right?" So we're able to bypass and say well and that's only a luxury given to white folks. I've never seen anyone else get that type of like get out of the jail. Oh, you're white man and you killed hundred plus children but you meant well and God called you. So, I guess it's not that, but yeah. Sorry that was not very concise.

Layla:

No, that was great. A big part of my heritage is coming from East African and the other part is Middle Eastern. But I grew up in the UK. And I wasn't born in Africa, I hadn't traveled to Africa like that I'm aware of to have memories of until I was a little bit older. When as a baby, but I don't have those memories but I know my first understanding of Africa was seeing comic relief ads, was seeing things you know on the TV like, we need to help the poor starving Africans. I grew up as a little black girl in a very white community and so, I know that a lot of my own process of coming to form my self-identification was very complicated. And so, I can remember a time even when I was like let's say 18 or 19 years old when I was like, maybe I wanna do a gap year, maybe I wanna travel to South America or Africa to go into volunteer work, like I wanna go do good in the world. I'm black and it's that same concept of because I'm from the western world that somehow I need to go to these countries to save these people, to help them. And so often the intention is not that in your mind, right? The intention is not that for a lot of people, but that's really what's behind this. It's the conditioning and the understanding of what do these black and brown countries look like. You know what is their economy like? Everyone is poor apparently. It's the Dark Continent apparently. And we're not shown the technology, the culture, the architecture, how so much of what we can consider modern civilization today is born from there. And so it's been interesting for me sort of reflecting on my past, you know, because as you said absolutely no one's perfect and nobody woke up woke. Right? Like nobody was born knowing everything. It's interesting though because white saviorism is this space where white supremacy and religion often meet. So you talked about your evangelical background; I know that a lot of white saviorism tends to stem from what we're talking about African missionary work coming from evangelical Christians who are wanting to serve Jesus and do good. And I wanna make very clear to anyone listening this is not a critic on anyone's religion or religious beliefs or anything like that. But I think it's very important for us to really take a critical look at how do religious beliefs that are steeped in white supremacy contribute and cause such terror. It's not just the dehumanization off going into countries like this and thinking that, you know, better than the people on the ground, right? Like, it's not just at that level. Children are actually dying. So you mentioned the case of Renee Bach and maybe you can talk a little bit about that for people who are not familiar with this case.

Olivia:

Yeah, she's a missionary, I think up to now. She came to Uganda at the age of 18. And what she writes she said she had a call from God to come to Uganda. So she started with them, I think she volunteered in some orphanage in Jinja. She started a feeding program to feed the children in the community. And at most cases I'm like, "Yeah, this was a good idea. Yes feeding children, yes. Children needs it. Yeah this is a good thing." And then with time she evolved the love of feeding children going beyond and she started treating Ugandan children with non-medical practice. And during all these like clinical experiments in children, cannulating them, transfusing blood and all sorts of medical activity. And let us look where she comes from, she comes from God's calling. This is why every time I ask myself I'm like, why don't God call black people or African people to go to American and you know, and that's the truth Layla.

Layla: I never thought about that. I never thought about that.

Olivia: Honestly, I'm like, God, the God of justice, the God of everyone, the God who loves everyone, this is everybody in their dreams. But I'm like when is this God coming to me and telling me, Olivia, it's time to pack your bags and go to the United States and begin this work, you know.

Kelsey: Maybe your [Inaudible] [40:31].

Olivia: Yeah still everybody comes to ask me that and most times in the name of God and after such time people start to think was she doing good. And okay, yes if things did go wrong with so many children I helped, but let's look at the children who died. If it was back in Virginia or anywhere in Europe, will they accept that? They would not.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: You will still be in prison. But because Africa is being seen as the playground where you can learn and like practice on black bodies and just go because our bodies are meant to be experimented on by white folks. Like they can look at the slave trade where people are paraded with their bodies checked and, is this real, is that kinda real? And women were undressed in London, to see Sarah Baartman, the way she looks, and you know, everything. So this all relates back to how we're being viewed. And people have, this mentality has not stopped. It's just growing, it's just growing within like, you have to go to Africa to test and see if these are really human beings.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: You know, but the calling of God that is a God of equality that sees us black people in the same picture as God. But it gives me so many questions that, in most times I ask myself is the God that white people serve is the same God that we serve. Because if it's the same God, then they wouldn't be doing some of the things that they do here. They will have that fear and say, oh, we serve the same God as the black people, as the Ugandans. But then I think that now, a lot of standards in the God we serve. The God of the white people is above everything, is above everyone. It's not an equal God because if it was, we would be the same in the face of God. Then people would not be using the Bible to oppress other people.

Layla: Right.

Kelsey: Religion is such a powerful tool in supremacy.

Olivia: Honestly, if we get down to the bible and people saying that, okay, you can have a little and be happy with the little that you have. In after sets people who are telling you this earning more than you and living in very nice houses, in very beautiful compounds, driving cars. But when it comes to you, as a black person,

you have to go by the Bible. Just live of the little that you have and be happy, you know.

Kelsey: Isn't that so creepy? To like say, be happy with what you have because I have the excess. And it's like your expense, so God is gonna bless you in the afterlife. Meanwhile, I'm blessed to your deficit here.

Olivia: Yeah, so it's such people like relate, look at where all these comes from. It all starts from God's call and then down it comes to Africa. And when they reach here, they get to our people in the villages like the most vulnerable people, the moms, you know. Because if it's my aunt in the village, they'll not question when they see girls walking in the village and pushing herself as a doctor, they'll be happy because this is what we've been made to believe that white people are always right.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: Which is so wrong, like that they're always right. Even if she tells you something, it is the right answer. So, people in our villages, our grandparents, when they see white people because this is what is in their minds, the white person has something good to offer. They're bringing something good to the community. And they don't see a reason why they should question it, because they know white people are always right. So such people like Renee Bach have taken advantage of these people in the villages. Because there's no way, you can't do this back in America. But in Africa you can do it because nobody's going to ask you, you know. Because people like, okay, why do they accept such donor? The community didn't send anything. But what do you expect those moms in the village to say?

Layla: Right.

Olivia: If you find my child really sick and I see this white woman pushing herself as a doctor, I'd just be happy to handle my child to you because I've seen a savior. So most people get to target the most vulnerable population to the Africa, and we should not forget that. Why don't people who open up organizations like that do it in the city centers? Why? Because they know here people will stand to them or ask things.

Kelsey: Like why don't we do this in our own country, right?

Olivia: Yes. That's what am I talking. Yes, in most times people who come here and say, okay, what do you say? But the people, white people who wants to do good, when they come to Uganda and my answer will always be the same, what you cannot do back in your country don't do it here. Don't, that is what they always think. You know it is wrong back home, why do you think it is right in this site?

Layla: Right.

Olivia: Why?

Kelsey: It is such a wild concept; it should not be what it is for so many.

Olivia: Yeah, so people like Renee Bach, let's look at that, where they come from. Every person that I think I've heard most of the people who set up NGOs, "I received a call from God. This is my vision. This is what I need to do. I need to save Africa. I need to change lives." This is what we all get.

Kelsey: Yeah.

Olivia: It's all connected to God. But then what? Let us like shout and see is this the real one walking in these organizations when you have your mom as the director in the US boards, you have your sisters, it's a family thing. And when it comes here you position Ugandan to positions that are just so for show. This is not the position they make.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: So I'm just looking when we get unto God, well like, is your God walking in everything that you're doing here? But you find out, that's why I always question I'm like, "Is this a different God for white people and black people?" At this point in time, because I have seen it here. I've seen it in Uganda how people want to make it known for white people more than black people. They want us to feel is it okay with the Bible to treat Ugandans the way they treat them.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: To hear them the way they, to speak to them the way they speak to them because Layla for sure in this country if you're working with a white person it is very hard to get a Ugandan who will talk back.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: It is hard.

Layla: Right. Yeah, so, thank you for saying that because you just reminded me of the thought I had earlier when you were talking about, when you were working in the same organization with Kelsey and that you were actually bringing these things to the table and saying, you know what, this isn't okay or this isn't right or this isn't the way that we do things. And as I was listening to you, I was like that probably took a lot of courage to say that. Because that could have been very negative consequences for you.

Olivia: Exactly, but it took me a little courage when I talked to them. But I think it's also one point gave them a challenge to see a black Ugandan woman talking. Yeah and say, "No, we don't want this food." So they also got to know the background that there are actually Ugandans who have grown up in the middle class like life where they see these things like they have eaten good food when it comes, they eat fish,

they eat that kind of thing. So this was also an eye opener to them, to show them that okay not just we thought that everyone, you know, need the saving and the help and that kind of thing. But there are still people here who are actually living a life that we didn't know about because they came knowing that whoever we meet in Uganda will definitely need the help on that kind of thing. And also it takes a lot of courage because so many Ugandans cannot speak out because they need their jobs.

Layla: Absolutely. And that's real.

Kelsey: Very real.

Olivia: It is real. You cannot tell that to your boss. But I think the way we understand I think maybe the world understood the passion that I put in the work that I do has always given me the courage, because I look at myself and say it takes a lot to make some decisions in life but then you have to make them. It's always for the best or for the worst. So, it took me time to actually think because when I told Kelsey and told them that I was resigning, they said, "No, you can think about it." I said, "Okay, I will think about it." And I don't always go to church, but I remember I told them that I'll go to church, this time around I'll go to church and see if this is the right decision that I'm making. So I remember it was not an easy one to make because this is what that I had always wanted to do. I want to be in the community. I wanted to be with people. I wanted to work with families and it was interesting. I love the job, I love the work. But much as I love it, I just said, "Okay, I love this but I think also for my conscience a hundred years from hell or heaven, I don't want to break with anything." So it was a high decision but I made it and I think also in this work the support of people that we have around us is very important. Because this was a decision that I made that I talked to my husband and I thought it will be going to be like, ohh, you know. But he said, "If this is what you've seen and if this will give you your freedom then I will support you." So also the support we have from people around us making this decision is very helpful because I don't regret now that I made that decision years ago.

Layla: No.

Olivia: I don't. I can speak proudly to that and say, yes I decided and left.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: Something I'm proud of even when I go to sleep I say, yes, I decided on what I felt was right and it made me stronger. It made me realize that there's a time in my life that I would stand and make a decision.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: That will be strong than this one.

Kelsey: And there have been harder decisions since I think with our work now. Would you say there have been harder?

Olivia: Yeah, because with this work obviously I have a family, I have my son, I have my husband and taking on this work is a lot. I know Layla you have a son you have your kids around, they need you. So standing in to do this work when I have a family, I have son, I have my husband who have supported me all the way and I decided to continue doing this work much as we travel a lot, we have meetings, is also a hard decision but I made it.

Layla: Yeah.

Olivia: I made it because this is something I'm passionate about. And even if it's too young, 3 years, I made a decision that I feel proud about. But it's not easy.

Layla: No.

Olivia: And remember, it's not easy for someone. I remember when I was talking to my dad years ago about it, I said that, "Did you know what that means when you leave work?" And my father told me something, he said, "That is a strong decision to make because you have catch yourself out when you needed work. But then at the same time this is a great decision." Even my dad still talks about it and he's like, "That was a hard decision but you made it." So people like Olivia are not meant in this country. You're not to get them because we need to feed our families; we need to feed our children. So you will stay in that system of oppression even when you feel that I want to leave but you cannot. I need to stay here because I need to feed my family. But then as we grow old in this work what I want people to know is that stop putting people in those systems of oppression because you know they don't have where to go.

Kelsey: Yeah.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: Stop. Stop threatening people when it comes to someone addressing our issue and you say, "Okay I am the boss so if you don't want to, leave." No one wants to leave work when they have a family to feed.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: So my message out there to people to leadership white always remember that every time that black voice doesn't speak, you're oppressing them. They feel it. They cannot speak.

Layla: Right.

Olivia: But you're oppressing them. There's too much pain when someone doesn't say anything. So, I think this has to stop. This is a message to the world, to people out

there. Listen to people. I don't think that it's hard to take especially if you're a boss, it is hard. But let's try to get different methods of engaging Ugandans or African people in sharing, in being free shapes, spaces, because for me I can stand for myself. But then what about that aid worker who cannot say anything?

Layla: Yeah.

Kelsey: Yeah, because most of us are not safe people to come to.

Olivia: Yeah. And the relationship Layla. The relationship between your boss who is white and you're a Ugandan. You don't have that relationship, come on.

Layla: No. And just because a black person or an African person isn't saying something doesn't mean that everything's all cool and all okay. And then you're talking about specifically in Uganda and across the African continent but this is globally, you know. Anti-blackness is global and then as you're talking I'm like, okay this is so important for white people to understand. When you're coming into any situation, we're talking about aid workers right now or missionary workers coming to the African continent to volunteer, to help, to do whatever the stuff they're there to do. You have to remember, you're not just coming in as the single individual person. You're coming with the whole entire weight of the history of what it means to be white, to have a colonial history and in the present day you still have that power dynamic that's at play. That's what's there. You're not dealing with, it's not Kelsey and Olivia, two people on an equal playing field. Right? It's Kelsey coming in with the weight of all of that and the threat and the risk of her white privilege, her white fragility, white ignorance...

Kelsey: Yeah.

Layla: In making her either, I'm using Kelsey as sample here but using, you know, being inadvertently or intentionally harmful to black and brown people. And that's true in so many different situations. The fact that so many white saviors are coming in to Africa, to use Africa as their playground essentially whether it's to discover themselves, or to discover whatever black people and can I try this out on them? Really, it's gross, it's disgusting, and it's violent. It is what it is, it's de-humanizing. The work that you're doing is so important. In terms of the organization No White Saviors, where do you wanna take this conversation next? You know, you're already really challenging a lot of people's ideas, a lot of people's thoughts. You're unapologetic in the way that you show up and use your voices and you educate so many people. Where is like another root that you wanna get at with this white saviorism?

Olivia: What we look up to now is that we want to see other chapters open up in different countries around the world. We want people to hold these discussions in their home countries. We want people to lead; we want them to lead these discussions because I think it's important in every community. The work doesn't have to stop here in Uganda. We wanted to go around the world. And if we address these issues here in Uganda, then someone listening to me from any part

of the world can also address these issues starting from their communities. And this is how we are going to challenge the white savior complex by getting back to our communities and creating this awareness. So we want to see many No White Saviors like chapters open up around the world because No White Saviors at this point in time is bigger than Kelsey, Olivia and the other team members. So we want this to be an example to even the white people that before you start doing something fast from your home and then spread the love and then the love will be felt around the world. So this is what we're trying to do. We started home here in Uganda and who want to see this, who want to see this spread in every part of the world. Because we're not going to be everywhere. We can't be everywhere. And so, all we can do is that people can check from our module on how we do things and start this back home. Because this is a continuous process; it's not going to end with me or Kelsey. It is something that we want to see grow for generations. It is a movement that we started not knowing what would go but now that we've seen the direction it is taking, we want it to be a global movement...

Layla: Yes.

Olivia: Around the world.

Kelsey: I love that and I think that's one of our biggest priorities right now is to see it grow not only globally but also within Uganda that it's more accessible to more people, right? Is that we can spend all these time on social media. And I think honestly this is something we talk about a lot within our work is that a lot of times any type of activism especially now within like the social media era, is there's still a level of privilege with all of us involved in it right? And it is different levels of privilege, different cross sections and intersections of privilege. But if we're on social media we're able to read and write and articulate and all that there is a lot of privilege involved in just being able to be in those spaces and be able to vocalize these things in the "right way". And I think that is one of the biggest deficits to any type of activism work right now. And I'm wanting to very self critical of ourselves too like, okay this is great but also how are we making sure that people who are the most affected, 'cause often I think the most affected population, the most affected people by any form of oppression are going to be the people that are the least able to access some of these conversations, right? It's not that their, 'cause we have this monopoly on what intellectualism looks like.

Layla: Yeah.

Kelsey: Yeah, I just think it can be really dangerous and we talked about that as a team 'cause we noticed it a lot and I think that a lot of it comes out in, if people don't have the right language to use 'cause even when you see people, it's not just here in Uganda, I think it's a global issue that a lot of times the people have the right language to use and the ability to articulate these ideas. It's a very different scenario when you have a white person or person of any level of privilege coming into his space and saying, "I don't wanna learn. I don't want to hear from you. I just wanna tell you what I believe." It's another when someone might say

something not politically correct or that could be seen as defensive 'cause their language might not be up to date. But that is the huge level of, just like idealism and yeah, pretentiousness within a lot of these spaces that I think we could all fall into this. Like okay, if you don't have the right language and you're not welcome to the conversation and there's a lot of really incredibly important voices that are being left out that we don't get to hear from because they don't even feel like they can talk about it or you know we're not even bringing these conversations in the places where they will be able to engage. And so that's one of I think, well growing it globally, I think also growing it in the sense that people from all different background regardless of where you are that it could be more accessible. So that looks like written and I think auditory like, whether it's in like local language is here on radio programs or different ways of sensitizing. And obviously that's not gonna be me and because of the rapid growth of our work it's not gonna be Olivia either but it's gonna be people that we bring in on the team. And that's gonna be one of like the two women that we just started working with recently and then we brought on to the team. One of the biggest piece to give to them was, like how can we see more Ugandan and East African people involved to the conversation. 'Cause right now it feels like we're very focused on Uganda but like, our following is very global. And so it's great and it's awesome that it has that reach but it's also important I think, to figure out, okay, but how many people in Uganda are not engaging or able to engage in this conversation?

Layla:

Yeah because, you know, think about how No White Saviors started and you have this very rapid growth. And I can really relate to that because I had that really fast trajectory and you kind of have to sit back and go hold on I thought I was just doing an Instagram challenge and now it's, you know a book. I'm sure very similar with No White Saviors where it just had this rapid trajectory. And sometimes you know, the journey kind of gets ahead of you, and you're like you have to stop and say hold on now. Now that I'm seeing, now that we are seeing what it's becoming, where do we intentionally wanna take it? What are our responsibilities here? What do we have the power to be able to do here and to be able to like really consciously choose the direction that you're going in? You're absolutely right. It's amazing to get that global public sort of awareness to your work. And I completely hear you about making sure that the most vulnerable and the most affected and the least able to access the kind of things that you are actually, you know, sharing are getting the help. Because that's really who it's for at the end of the day.

Kelsey:

I can imagine that it resonates a lot with your work too and I think you can really identify people who are very committed to the on-the-ground and the real change and in terms of community that's so important too is that we are not in a bubble. And I think that there's can often be this competition for who has the most followers and who's getting next book deal? But it's like if we're really about the work I wanna see ten more books from Layla. Like we didn't even read the first one but like, I wanna see ten more before we even get a book, you know. Like, because it's about the work, it is about seeing the stuff change. And in that case--

Layla:

And it takes all the different methods, at all different levels. Yeah.

Kelsey: Yes. We're all gonna respond to things differently and we're all build to address different avenues. And I think that's so important to understand; the different skills that's in the different people brought to the table. It's like a puzzle of how to actually fight this. White supremacy is complex, right? And it has a lot, it had over 400 years, it's had a hundreds of years to establish itself and become this very complex. And people don't like hearing that it's sophisticated but over time the more it has been exposed, the more sophisticated, and covert in different areas...

Layla: Yeah.

Kelsey: White supremacy had become. So we have to be sophisticated and strategic in the way we approach it.

Layla: I love what you were saying Olivia about wanting to see chapters pop up because I can imagine those chapters would be so helpful first for preventing white saviors from coming over. Right? Education first. Are you thinking about going to Africa to do volunteer work? Come on to this meet up; come and learn something. Right? Okay.

Olivia: You would get labeled as a cold real quick thing.

Layla: But I think that's so important doing that work there before they even come over and do harm. And then also, you said Kelsey earlier about, you know, white saviors in recovery so people who have realized like I went and I thought that this is my intention and I thought this was what's gonna happen and I realized I've actually caused all these harm. What do I do with this now? And No White Saviors is absolutely bigger than the two of you and bigger that your team. I know that there are team members in No White Saviors who are not public or not here in this interview but there are a number of you and it will continue to grow. And it's so much bigger than where it came from and it will continue to have this ripple effect across the world in so many different ways. So I'm very honored to be here, to be in this conversation with you, to have seen No White Saviors when it was in its earlier stages and to see where it's gonna go because this work is so important. So, thank you so much.

Kelsey: Thank you for having us here. It's an honor 'cause we were a fan and followers of you before we even created No White Saviors. So it's a beautiful thing to see this community grow and to have that kind of support, so thank you.

Layla: Absolutely. It's mutual, so, yeah. So my final question and you can choose who goes first. What does it mean to you to be a Good Ancestor?

Kelsey: When I think about being a good ancestor, it means taking ownership of past mistakes, both my own and inset my ancestors, taking real ownership, reconciling and committing to doing better. And not just committing to doing better but actually doing it. Yeah. That's short and sweet, to the point.

Olivia: So what it means to be a good ancestor? Wow! I think for me, what that means to be a good ancestor is that am I living to the legacy of those I believe in? Did I start from where they stopped? Am I going to end somewhere and someone will pick for me. Am I still connected to that lineage of these people? Have I live a life or half of what they lived? I mean these are all questions that I'll continue to ask myself and at that point in time I know it will come a time and I'll say, "Yes, I'm a good ancestor." Now I can go to rest.

Kelsey: Your ancestor answer is so much better than mine, I liked it.

Olivia: Yeah. So I can go to rest.

Layla: I liked them both and I just wanna say you already are a good ancestor but please don't go to rest. But I can tell you that the work that you are doing is you are creating an incredible legacy that you can really be proud of and be in your conscience to know that you are walking your path.

Olivia: Thank you.

Kelsey: Thank you.

Olivia: Thank you, Amen.

Layla: Thank you.

Olivia: I always want to give for people who are just looking forward to reading your book.

Kelsey: Yeah, we're gonna find a way to get it to Uganda.

Layla: I will get it to you. I will get it to you.

Kelsey: Even if it comes with you and your family.

Layla: I will hand deliver it to you.

Kelsey: Wow. We love Nairobi.

Olivia: We love Nairobi so much.

Layla: Well, thank you both so much for this conversation.

Olivia: Thank you.

Kelsey: Thank you.