

Layla: I'm Layla Saad, and my life is driven by one burning question: How can I become a good ancestor? How can I create a legacy of healing and liberation for those who are here in this lifetime and those who will come after I'm gone? In my pursuit to answer this question, I'm interviewing change-makers and culture-shapers who are also exploring that question themselves in the way that they live and lead their life. It's my intention that these conversations will help you find your own answers to that question too. Welcome to Good Ancestor Podcast.

Dr. Jaiya John is an internationally recognized freedom worker, author, speaker, poet, and youth mentor. Born into foster care in New Mexico, he is the founder of Soul Water Rising, a global rehumanizing mission serving communities and lives through compassionate healing work. Through Soul Water Rising, Jaiya has donated thousands of his books in support of social healing and offers scholarships to displaced and vulnerable youth. Jaiya writes, narrates, and produces the I Will Read for You podcast, and is the founder of Freedom Project, a global initiative reviving traditional gathering and storytelling practices to fertilize social healing and liberation. He is a former professor of social psychology at Howard University, has authored numerous books including his latest, *Freedom: Medicine Words for Your Brave Revolution*, and has spoken to over a million people worldwide with audiences as large as several thousands. He's spoken at international and national conferences, schools, Indigenous reservations and communities, prisons and detention centers, shelters, and colleges. Jaiya is a National Science Foundation fellow, and holds a doctorate and master's degree in social psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, with a focus on intergroup relations and identity development. As an undergraduate, he attended Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and lived in Kathmandu, Nepal, where he studied Tibetan Holistic Medicine through independent research with Tibetan doctors.

Hi, everybody, and welcome back to Good Ancestor podcast. I am here today with Dr. Jaiya John, author of one of the books that has now become one of my absolute favorite books. It's called *Freedom: Medicine for Your Brave Revolution*. Welcome to Good Ancestor podcast, Jaiya.

Jaiya: Layla, thank you so much. It's a blessing.

Layla: It's such an honor to be in conversation with you. I've been following your work for a while. I was telling my husband about how did I find out about Jaiya's work and, you know, your Instagram quotes kept popping up everywhere and every time I saw them, they were being reposted by other people. Every time I saw them, I would save all of them and I was like, let me just go follow this guy so I can just get them from the source directly and we connected and you have this amazing beautiful spirit and this way of using very few words to say a lot and I have been making my way through your book, *Freedom*, and like I said in the introduction, it is hands down one of my absolute favorite books. As I was going through it, I recognized that it's alongside one of my other favorite books which is *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde. That's a book that I return to again and again and again and I can tell this is gonna be one for me as well. So, I'm very excited for this conversation.

Jaiya: Thank you, thank you, Layla, thank you. That was kind for you to say that I used a few words to say a lot. My daughter would say that I use a lot of words to say very little. That's parenting, right?

Layla: That's right. Alright, so let's start with our opening question. Who are some of the ancestors, living or transitioned, familial or societal, who influenced you on your journey?

Jaiya: Thank you. I've been looking forward to this question. Because I keep them close with me at all times. The tapestry, the weaving, the quilt is so long for me from the very beginning so I'll probably leave a lot of them out but you mentioned Audre Lorde, she has been one. Many of the ancestors for me, living and passed, who changed the light have arrived to me through literature, through books, and so —

Layla: Hey, mine are here.

Jaiya: Yeah, I see all four of them, right?

Layla: My four grandmothers, sister, friend, aunties.

Jaiya: Pantheon, yes. So I share a couple with you. Audre Lorde, certainly. Nikki Giovanni with us. She really birthed me as a poet in many ways from a personal encounter with her back when I was in college and so she has been a big presence, a big spirit in my life. We can go on through Angela Davis, Ntozake Shange —

Layla: Yes.

Jaiya: — June Jordan —

Layla: Yes.

Jaiya: — Steve Biko. This book right here really blessed me, *I Write What I Like* by Steve Biko, revolutionary South Africa. He gave his life and I just — being able to read about the personal lives of so many of these souls has fed me throughout, you know, especially in times of isolation which have occurred often. For me, Elhaj Malik

Layla: Yes.

Jaiya: Muhammad Ali. There are so many that they're all swimming in my head right now.
Jalaluddin Rumi, the poet

from Persia. Layla: Yes,

yes.

Jaiya: It feels like my soul.

Layla: That feels

accurate to me. Jaiya:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Layla: 'Cause I've got a book of his collected poems translated into English and definitely I feel that spirit as I'm reading your words. There's layers to what he says, right? There's the top and there's then the layers, yeah, and the more you read it, you read that one sentence again and again, and more layers reveal themselves to you.

Jaiya: Yeah, and so for that reason, like you, I keep going back and back to his words because, you know, it's never the same experience or encounter. There's so much unraveling there and I'm always in awe of that. I feel like when we come from a place of spirit and truth when we articulate ourselves in expression, whether it's painting or writing

or what have you, the layers emerge. We're not even conscious of them necessarily, so many of the revolutionary figures have really given me affirmation and encouragement. Cesar Chavez, in this country, Che Guevara and his land, **[inaudible 00:07:34]** you know, where she is, a lot of the indigenous warrior women have been very preeminent and prominent and pervasive and my soul inspiration for whatever reason.

Layla: I was gonna ask about that because I sense that in your words and in your energy as well and it translates through the internet and I wanted to ask about that actually but you've just said you don't really know where it comes from but how do you experience it?

Jaiya: So, it's been this way my entire life from the very beginning. A certain resonance, I don't know how to label it especially in English which for me is a very limiting language but this presence within me, this voice within me that is very much maternal, feminine, if you will, and — I don't know. I mean, I grew up, it's not as though I grew up in an all women household or anything like that but I did find myself gravitating in terms of friendship toward women often. The way that I express it to others is it's a big part of my heart. It always has been. I've always thought about it and reflected on it and chewed on it and my heart is broken for it and for just the existence of girls and women in the world. Some people look at my physical form and they assume race must be overwhelmingly his concern in terms of freedom and liberation, but I don't know about that. I think freedom and liberation of women in the world has very much been like a sunrise and a sunset for every one of my days so in the book prior to the new one, *Daughter Drink This Water*, there's a figure which I described as an ancient one and he comes to speak to the girls and the women in this great valley and he's an eternal spirit, he's an old oracle and he's not really even a he, but for me that was a very natural voice to articulate the book through just because, for me, I have these feelings within

me every day that are — maybe they are fatherly, but there's a great deal of care and love and affection that's in me constantly so I'm always attuned to what are women experiencing? What are people who identify as women experiencing? What is the journey and how can I serve that journey? So, I mean, even if you ask me, okay going forward in your life, Jaiya, who would you like to sit in sacred circle with most regularly going forward as in doing healing work, who would you like to sit with. It's a very quick and clear answer for me what I see is being in circle with women. You know, in different villages and communities around the world. The ancestresses, Mia, Simone, if you go into the music, you know, Cesária Évora, I mean they're just always with me and I care to be with them. I care to be with them.

Layla: Yeah, that's beautiful.

Jaiya: Thank you.

Layla: I wonder if as well — I mean, I don't think that poetry has a gender but I wonder if there's something in somebody who is, you know, you have a spirit of a poet. Poet isn't your job, it's your spirit, right, and so I wonder if there is something in there that perhaps leans towards that kind of energy?

Jaiya: I love that because, Layla, we know that poetry is number one, the soul of a poet is taking in, is receiving, that's what that is, open and receiving, yes?

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: And then if you behold the poetry, whether it's an Octavio Paz from Mexico or wherever you find a poet, whether it is perceived as a man or a woman, what they are doing in their toiling, in their laboring, in their craft is they are birthing. First, in reception and then there's birthing. Poetry is like that to me more than any other form of writing because it's not an intellectual vocation, right?

Layla: That's right, yeah.

Jaiya: It's heart and soul. It's heart and soul.

Layla: And that's why, as I was reading *Freedom* over the last couple of days, I mean I'm reading multiple books at the same time right now and that's me all the time anyway and a lot of the books that I read are non-fiction and are very much, you know, my own education and I think this is something that the people who I write *Me and White Supremacy* for, I think something — a misconception that they have is that anti-racism educators just know this information. Like, we're constantly educating ourselves because history has been hidden from us too. Facts have been hidden from us too and so I'm constantly reading non-fiction. It's been a really long time since I read poetic words and I did not realize how thirsty I was for them but what was so amazing about your words was that they were taking my lived experiences right now as an anti-racism educator, a speaker, a teacher, doing global change work and you're speaking about them in a poetic way and I was like, mind blown.

Jaiya: Well, Layla, this is so nutritious for me just listening to you because you're manifesting and expressing exactly what my prayer was in birthing this book. We were birthing at about the same time.

Layla: I believe so, yeah.

Jaiya: Yeah. You would share and post things on Instagram and

what that would do for me is, you know, I'm highly — they use the word "empathic." I feel things not just deeply but from broadly. Everything's transmitted through me and so it is very natural for me and not even a thing of effort to somehow inhabit the life space of others and so when you're sharing about your journey and your work and I'm wide open to that and receiving so then you became in that open for me, if I'm working on a particular passage for the book, and this goes back to last summer, you're living in my creative vessel in that moment and so, in a way, and many souls pass through during this process, so in a way I was speaking to your lived experience.

Not because I intellectually understood it but because I soulfully felt it. It was vibrating in me and then the gift that I believe I have a duty to abide by is that gift of being able to articulate your energy, your vibration, your experience in that moment, your emotion, your interactions, being able to articulate that in a poetic way, meaning in a way that is stripped of pretense, stripped of academia, stripped of trend. It's just naked, poetry is naked, poetry is a nudist that's just running around the world and just doesn't care who sees it and how it is seen. Poetry is true fire and, you know, it's always just been my voice.

Layla: I will say about that though and I want us to dive deeper into this book so people can get a real understanding of what it is about but something that I will say about poetry is I didn't like poetry up until a few years ago when I discovered the poems of black poets and that was for the first time that I read poetry and it was like, oh, I understand what they're saying. This isn't flowery language that's hidden to mean something else that I have to have some sort of other degree to understand what this means. Black poetry to me was clear as day.

Jaiya: Oh, my goodness. You just testified as to the implications of our educational systems because you probably —.

Layla: Yeah, British system, right. So, I have a deep history of poets, right?

Jaiya: Yeah, and yet when we grow up in a particularly public school, we could say the same for private schooling as well, the kind of poetry to which we are exposed and who those voices are and then how do the teachers in the classroom —

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: — how do they bring that poetry to us, in what manner? What is their cultural mode of sharing with us the poetry? And this is true of education in general. If you think about black children, children of color everywhere growing up in school systems, are they being immersed in their own stories? Because if they are, they won't see something like poetry or geography or history as something that's irrelevant to them. They will feel like, somebody knows my soul. That's healing, that's healing. And I'm like you. Poetry did not appeal to me in school. It was Nikki Giovanni that really birthed my love for poetry.

Layla: Yeah. Now that you say that, I remember actually 'cause in school, you know, we're reading things like heat which has no relevance. I don't understand, it's not culturally relevant but I think the first time I realized that poetry could be something that moves and is living and is breathing and is connected to me was *Def Poetry Jam*. That was the first time and that was the first time I ever saw Nikki Giovanni actually was on *Def Poetry Jam*.

Jaiya: Yes, I saw the same, yeah, I saw that. Well, I mean, you're a poet, Layla, and even if you haven't identified as such, your ability to express not only your own reality but the

world's reality in a way that other people can get it, can feel it.

Layla: Yes, yes, 'cause I want them to — here and here, both, at the same time, yes.

Jaiya: Yes, yes, and that's what's been missing I think in the world and in education and in culture is, you know, if you talk about white supremacy, you're really talking about white male supremacy essentially and there is many blessings to be had in our human brain but it's been so **[inaudible 00:18:41]** for centuries that we've lived the brain and not here —

Layla: Yeah, in the heart.

Jaiya — that we are all reeling from that imbalance.

Layla: That's right. This leads us really beautifully into your book because I opened the first page and I'm like, what is this book going to be about? And I mean, let me pull it up so I can exactly quote from it. So the first chapter is called Origin Story: A Tale of the Supremacy Inferiority Virus, and my eye is like open wide. As soon as I saw it, I was like, what's happening here, what is this going to be about because I hadn't actually realized that your work was directly naming supremacy culture and inferiority culture and so that got me perked up but you spoke about it in such a way as you link these two things, supremacy and inferiority as being connected to each other and talked about it as a virus. I guess before we dive in, can you give us a very, just a very brief overview 'cause we've been talking about the

book and getting excited. For people who don't know, very briefly, what is the book about and then we'll go into this opening chapter.

Jaiya: Thank you. The book is about what we are all living right now in these times with all the conflict creation, the protests, the pain, the murder, the things that are revealed because we have video technology, but it's interesting because it's all happening in a time of an actual viral pandemic, an actual virus has spread through the world and is spreading through the world so it was interesting for me to birth a book during this time because it is a book about a viral pandemic, it's a book about a viral pandemic that has been occurring for centuries and millennia that we haven't named as a viral pandemic. One of the things that I love and honor and celebrate about your work is that you are naming the illness which to me, a big part of why we haven't contended effectively with supremacy in the world is because we have failed to name it —

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: — and we have failed to understand it as an illness, as a contagious disease and so, for me, the book is a story about how contagion spreads. The metaphorical allusion to a virus for me is very real. I feel that supremacy lives in us as a virus and, you know, what a virus does is it recreates. A virus is a genius because it recreates the atmosphere of its host to soothe its propagation. The virus wants to live. The virus wants to —

Layla: I got chills when I read that in the book. I got chills when I read that. Because it changes the host.

Jaiya: It does. It changes the host, intellectually, cognitively, spiritually, soulfully, emotionally, behaviorally, relationally, it changes the host, and for me, an organism, an individual or a collective, a society, a culture, cannot become a good host for a virus of supremacy without at the same time if you are subject to the supremacy as what I called the unfavored kind. In other

words, if in the supremacy pandemic, there are favored people and there are unfavored people within the society. If you are unfavored, you are then subject to the supremacy, you are the target of that terrorism, but for you to internalize the supremacy, you must at the same time develop a sense of inferiority so that's why to me they are intimately linked. If you do not have inferiority growing in you deeply, you're not gonna be susceptible to that virus so really it's a story about our immune system, our spiritual immune system, our social immune system. How do we keep ourselves well and strong? And, again, that's why this has been so interesting during a pandemic with all this conversation and consciousness about strengthening your immune system and washing your hands and social distancing. If we apply the same tactics perhaps to addressing supremacy, white supremacy, male supremacy, economic supremacy, religious supremacy, if we apply the same tactics, it will be interesting to see if we would make more progress and headway in terms of our spiritual hygiene as a component of strengthening ourselves against the viral pandemic of supremacy because it's been around a long time. It's been around always really. We are just beginning to become conscious as human beings of its presence in our existence and you are, you know, you are one of those souls, I've really just been loving your work because you are one of those, in a hundred years, 500 years, people will look back at this time, 2020, and recognize, well, this is when we as human beings began to understand how sick we are. So, I say that not as a judgment but like almost as a physician would just, you know how physicians, they're just so, this is the work that they dwell and so, you know, you have a pathology in you, they're not judgmental about it, you got pathology in you, let's get to work and so what you're doing through your work is you are naming the pathology. For

me, in the book *Freedom*, it was important for me to focus on the root level dynamics of supremacy and inferiority, how they play out. I used the metaphor of the slave, owner and the slave

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Layla: So powerful. It was really powerful and there's so many things that came up for me just even now as you were speaking and I remember a post that I did maybe it was a week, two weeks ago, and I said, it was basically saying, you know, I'm not here to prove the humanity of blackness, I'm here to show the inhumanity of whiteness, asterisks, not white people, whiteness, right? Because whiteness is the virus. White people are people, we are all people, and my desire is for us to live in a world where people of all races can live in the fullness of their humanity and so one of the comments that I get from people who are not in anti-racism work, find this work to be divisive or racist or whatever it is think, you know, people such as myself hate white people and I'm like, no, I love people, all of humanity, but there is, like you said, there is this thing inside of you that you have been conditioned into and this work is about naming it so that you can see, as you said, you're sick, you're not well, because the way that you're acting does not align with the truth of your humanity.

Jaiya: Amen. And to carry and exhibit white supremacy or supremacy of any kind is actually to be anti-life so this is how we know that a soul is not well. How do we know you are not well? If you are a carrier of something that positions you as anti-life, as oppositional to life in yourself and others, because supremacy is an oppressive pathogen. It oppresses which means it snuffs the life out of in order to position ourselves in a caste system as being privileged and entitled above others, you know, we intrinsically are killing the life in them. What we don't understand though is we are also killing

the life in ourselves — Layla: That's it.

Jaiya: — and this is what I love about your approach to the

work and, you know, with the book is that I think that you're of these early voices that are helping people understand that the supremacy in them is ailing them, it is harming them and their loved ones and their people and their generations. It's not just those who are victimized by the supremacy. To me, to be a carrier of supremacy is to be a tortured soul because you are isolating yourself from humanity and from all living things. You're not acting according to the laws of living things and this is my indigenous heritage speaking. The law of living things is that you exist and act and think and feel and relate in favor of life —

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: — in favor of life which means to honor and treat as sacred the life that is within another living thing, to uphold that. And so to be a person benefiting in many ways from supremacy, we must say that it's understandable because it is seductive. It is seductive to have the opportunity to have a life tilted in your favor. It is seductive, but you must have a fortitude within you that has to do with your valuing of life as a whole that prevents you not just morally but it should, you know, emotionally prevent you from acting against life in the world and life in others. And I feel that that particular muscle is very weak in the world right now. That muscle that keeps us from being seduced by the opportunity to be favored to the harm of others and, you know, from birth, this has been my fixation, obsession. It's been my I think the candlelight, you know, that illuminates my way is just this desire and I hear it in you as well. You are probably that little girl who just — your heart was bursting with love but also heartbreak for the way that we treat each other in the world, yeah? And I think that that heartbreak can be a great instigator of devotion to a life of working against anything

that is anti-life and racism is anti-life. Sexism is anti-life. People have been privileged and have benefited for so long from these things that they assume this is the way the world is supposed to be.

Layla: Supposed to be, right.

Jaiya: Supposed to be and so when you try to do this, when you try to articulate a message that is for life and against this insidious illness to someone who believes, but this is the way life is supposed to be, now you're talking about deeply rooted entitlement and this is why you get the vicious, angry, murderous reactions from people. "How dare you come along and threaten my way of life." Yes. So, this is what we're really are working, I guess, is people's grip on their way of life.

Layla: And that understanding, shifting into that understanding helped me tremendously because when I first started out in this work, I couldn't get it. Why don't they get it? Why don't they care? Why don't they get it? And it was the teaching of my former mentor who helped me to understand many things including that, exactly as you've said, that white supremacy infects all of us. It hasn't just infected them, it's also infected me and some of the most painful but important work I've done is on my own internalized inferiority, my own internalized white supremacy that says, I may be asking you all to do this work on your supremacy but deep down inside, I do believe I'm inferior and coming face to face with that was like, you know, it was like, yes, you know.

Jaiya: Yeah, yeah. Layla, so this is why I love your journey because for you to do the work the way you do it, I knew you had to come through that reckoning.

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: We all do. The way that I was blessed in terms of my life circumstance is that I was born orphaned in the desert of New

Mexico and so here I was a little black boy, indigenous boy with nothing that looks like me so that was my beginning, it was my childhood and my painful encounter with the mirror occurred in my 20s probably. I think that much of that occurred in the 20s because I was in so much pain, I brought so much pain into my adulthood. It was ancestral. It was ancestral pain that I empathically inherited. It was personal pain from personal experiences and encounters. It was global and worldly pain from my sensitivity to what was occurring around me. It was historical pain from what I was reading and learning about. It was a lot of pain and, as a child, I didn't understand the purpose of that pain and so I let it destroy me. I became a destroyer instead of a creator. I became the greed at self-destruction which is to include self-hatred. You know, I earned that bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and doctor degree and I earned medical degree and law degree — I learned all the degrees —

Layla: You did all the things, right.

Jaiya: Yeah. In self-hatred, like before I was even 17. Before I was even 17. So I was good at self-hatred. I was an expert at self-hatred and many black folk throughout the diaspora are.

Layla: Yes.

Jaiya: And a lot of others who are not black don't understand that about our journey, that we are struggling with self-hatred and self-rejection in a profound way, in a profound way. A

sense of inferiority. We deep down — some of the black folk that you would think have the most solid sense of sacredness about themselves, you know, are privately struggling with that sense of inferiority, right?

Layla: Because how could we not? This is what really helped me was understand — 'cause when I first came face to face with it, I felt a great deal of shame over it. I felt shame and I felt confusion because I felt, well, I — but I do love myself, I don't hate myself, but looking at the evidence that everything is telling me, the way you are relating to yourself and the way that you have related to yourselves throughout your life has been you have been the loudest voice of criticism. You have been the one to judge you the most harshly. You have been the one to keep you as small as possible. You have been the one to assume x, y, z about other people. Whatever things that you're worried about other people thinking or doing to you, you're already doing them to you, and you're doing it worse than they could do it.

Jaiya: Yes.

Layla:

Right?

Jaiya: This is the profundity of self-rejection, and if anyone doubts that they are carrying this, all they have to do is take a deep breath and honestly examine their lives. How do they relate to their body? Their black body. How do they relate to their black skin? How do they relate to their black features, their black hair? I gathered all the evidence because I wanted the pain to end, Layla. I wanted to not be in pain any longer, so I gathered all the evidence from my journey, those first couple of decades, and I examined how do I feel about these different aspects of myself that represent Africa? That represent blackness in me? How do I feel and how have I treated them? I took sandpaper to my skin as a child trying to erase the

evidence of the sin of my skin. I self-mutilated to try to remove the evidence of Africa from my face, from my hair.

Layla: Yeah. I think it's so important to name here what we're talking about is, again, that virus, this culture, this dominant culture, this dominant virus which is bombarding us from every direction with messages that this is what we are. We are inferior. So at some point —

Jaiya: Yes.

Layla: — at some point, if you're ingesting it from birth, from before birth, if we think about even just the black maternal health crisis in the US and the UK where black mothers are five times more likely to die from childbirth or childbirth-related cases than their white counterparts, from in the womb, the world is coming up against black people.

Jaiya: Yeah, so we are

born infected. Layla:

That's right.

Jaiya: And so, I mean, the maternal experience, how black mothers are being treated and how they are treating themselves.

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: Because a woman who becomes pregnant, becomes with child, does not suddenly magically release all of her generational trauma, her negative, harmful ideas about herself. They don't go away, and in many cases they are amplified.

Layla: And the culture keeps —

Jaiya: And then —

Layla: — keeps

reaffirming it. Jaiya:

Absolutely.

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: Absolutely. So, in many ways, you know, you can look at that journey of the maternal circle and you see that we began in a womb literally about mother and in that womb, in addition to being fed nutrition and sheltered, we are also then being left a legacy and inheritance of this dehumanizing human experience and — so we come out of the womb and we're already traumatized and it's a trauma that other people who are not black have a hard time really believing that that could be true. They have a hard time believing that that could be true. Many black folk have a hard time believing that they could be traumatized and denial's a powerful thing.

Layla: And you talk about — so you talked about one of the metaphors that you use in the book is about the slave and the slave owner and you talk about how those of us who are striving towards freedom, those of — the unfavored who are striving towards freedom can — oftentimes, our biggest opponents in getting that freedom is our fellow people and —

Jaiya: Yeah.

Layla: — I have seen that to be true and I also understand it. I had to come to understand it, that it goes so deep. It's like we haven't seen a world where we're free of the virus, so when somebody is saying I'm gonna go live in this way, that is virus free, I'm not gonna allow it to infect me, everyone else around you is saying, but that world doesn't exist, so what are you talking about first of all and, secondly, you're gonna put us in great danger if you keep acting this way.

Jaiya: Oh, yeah. You touched on one of the — I feel the raw nerves of this journey to be free. I'm thinking of Harriet Tubman who —

Layla: Yeah, I was too. Yes.

Jaiya: So she has loomed so large in my life and, again, a woman and, in her time, you know, like you, she was contending with resistance from her people.

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: Maybe more than anyone else. Maybe more than she was receiving resistance from others, from white society, from the plantation —

Layla: I'm also thinking of Audre Lorde who also similarly faced — some of her biggest resistance was from her fellow black people.

Jaiya: Absolutely. Absolutely, and many of the ancestors who are applauded and celebrated now were actually hated in their time. Dr. King's daughter, Bernice King, she posted something recently about this —

Layla: Yes.

Jaiya: — she said, you all are posting quotes from my father, but many of you hated my father. He was one of the most hated men in the world in 1967, months prior to his death in '68, and so, you know, we see this is also a part of the journey of being a revolutionary is to be despised in your time —

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: — because human beings, we tend to have a stronger attachment to what is familiar to us than we have an attachment to our own wellness and peace, especially if, as you say, we haven't seen what wellness looks like. What does it mean to be free of this virus of supremacy and inferiority? At least with the coronavirus, we all know globally what the world looks like and feels like without coronavirus —

Layla: Right.

Jaiya: — because we recently

experienced it, right? Layla: Right.

Jaiya: But no one alive today has a lived experience with a world that is — and a self that is free from supremacy and inferiority. This is why the work is in many ways a work of faith, that we are working, you know, and Harriet Tubman, she had that — a lot of her effort was to try to open her

people up into a spirit of faith, to say I know you have a lot of fear and it was men who resisted her. A lot of the black men in bondage, in slavery, were her greatest hurdles and barriers. She had a fierce fire in her that allowed her to stand up to those men. At some point, even she picked up a shotgun and had to —

Layla: Right.

Jaiya: — she had to utilize, you know, the threat of taking 'em that way 'cause she said, listen, I'm gonna be free. I'm determined to be free and so your fear is not my priority at this time.

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: And if you live in 2020 and you are working to get black folks to understand, indigenous folk, folk from around the world who've just been oppressed for generations and you're trying to get them to act on behalf of their own freedom, so much of the work I feel is a psychological one. How do you engage a person to overcome their own fears? To step into what is unfamiliar which is freedom, to stand at their full height. And then so much of the work is a spiritual work because you have to nurture them. It's gardening work. You're trying to help them be in touch with their own soul because by virtue of that, this allows them to

then siphon the spiritual nutrition necessary to have faith. Have faith that what has always existed in my life can change and when it changes, the sky will not fall. I will not only be okay, I will be better. That's a big leap for people to take. Like we are trying to dismantle all the structures that have become the swaddling blanket, the security blanket for all these souls and they're saying, "Don't take my security blanket away, I'm scared, I'm, you know, don't take my blanket away," and what we're saying is what you believe has been your blanket has been infested with a disease, like smallpox, delivering those blankets to the indigenous people of the Americas. That's literally what happened historically. They were given blankets by the US Army that were infected with smallpox and it killed entire communities —

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: — and so what we're saying now is these security blankets of yours are poisoning you. They are not keeping you safe or well. Drop your blanket, be daring to go naked, and understand that, at first, getting into those freedom waters, it's a shock to the system because you haven't been in those waters before, but just like getting in the ocean, eventually, your body acclimatizes and you're like, you know what, this feels good. I should have done this a long time ago.

Layla: That's right. I love the part in your book where you're speaking directly towards people who are feeling that revolutionary fire inside of them. They're feeling that calling rising up and you're being really real with us about these are the things that you're going to encounter. This is what's going to happen. Both from the outside and from the inside. This is what you're gonna be coming up against and I read so many of your words and was like, oh, thank you so much for confirming this, you know, because we are trying to make our way through the jungle, right? We're trying to like walk the path but there is no path, the signposts from those who have come before us, the good ancestors who have come before us, but

we are really like just testing, you know, “Shall I go this way? Shall I go that way?” And, for myself, there’s sort of two ways that I show up in my work. One is as an educator for people who have white privilege to name this thing called whiteness and to walk them through, you know, this *Me and White Supremacy* work. But the other work is in my being and my being is a teaching to people of all races. I think for people with white privilege, the teaching is because you in your mind an idea of how I’m supposed to be, I’m going to show you what it looks like for me and people who look like me to define ourselves for ourselves and to live in our own self-definition and not your self-definition of us and similarly, for people who look like me, it’s that same message, to say you can show up like this. You can show up free. You can say, “That’s not okay with me. That doesn’t work for me. These are my boundaries. This is what I want. This is what I desire. This is what makes me happy. This is what makes me sad. This is all of my humanity being shown, not just the stereotypes of my identity but the full breadth and depth of my humanity,” and we get to show up in those ways too because part of the inferiority part for us is we get stuck in those stereotypes because we’re fighting so much all of the time. We’re not able and we don’t always know that we have permission to prioritize our joy and our ease and beauty and poetry and happiness and all of these things and so the words that I write are important but the being I think is it goes deeper for me.

Jaiya: I am immediately nourished by your words just now. You know, that felt good to receive, thank you. Because where we are now, we are in uncharted territory —

Layla: That’s right.

Jaiya: — and people, yeah, they're battling their own fears and so one of the things that helps people with their fear is to be shown, okay, what

does it look like to be free. Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: This is reminding me of Nina Simone singing what does that look to be free. I mean, show me what does it feel like, how does it behave? Are we really gonna be alright if we're free? Am I gonna be alright if I'm free? Because if you have an animal in a cage, for even a short period of time, and you take that animal out to the woods and you open the cage door and you expect, oh, this is an animal, it's a wild animal —

Layla: It's gonna just run out, go run around, right. Yeah.

Jaiya: It's already been infected by that sense of inferiority that, "Oh, what is this? I don't belong here. I'm not gonna be safe here. I'm not gonna be okay here." Even though that's its natural territory and range. Our natural territory and range is freedom, but we don't deeply believe in that. We do not, and so we need compassionate, loving exemplars, examples. We need people to say, listen, I'm gonna go ahead and show you what it looks like and feels like and a lot of that is not gonna be pleasant or comfortable for me. I'm gonna take this leap —

Layla: That part. That part.

Jaiya: Yeah, that part. That part. I am choosing consciously to put myself in the line of fire, I'm gonna basically make myself available for conviction and crucifixion —

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: — because I love you so much —

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: — I need to show you because I have been given this vision within me, even though I have to do my own daily work to heal and purify and purge and cleanse the inferiority and the shackles of supremacy. I know enough about freedom. I've summoned enough freedom within me that I am going to show you —

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: — this is what it looks like and this is how it stands. This is how it speaks. This is how it behaves. This is how it responds. And people, although they may be adults chronologically, still carry the same childhood fears and insecurities and so that's really what the resistance is about. It's like I've always done it this way. I've always done life this way and I've been okay, but, brother and sister, you have not been okay. You are not alright. You are hurting profoundly and immeasurably and so I'm simply determined at this point to be free and I wanna show you what that journey can be and I think that day by day, example by example, we are already beginning to have the artifact of freedom, the artifacts aligned before us so that people are — and children right now, 6, 8, 10 years of age, are starting to be able to see these things where just months ago, just months ago —

Layla: Past months ago, that's right.

Jaiya: — it wasn't available in the world, right?

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: Layla, when I birthed my first book, *Black Baby, White Hands: A View from the Crib*, 2002, this world was not as ready. Particularly white people, people who are identified as white, whether they see themselves as white or not, were not at all ready for the truth that I testified to, and I was testifying about my own life —

Layla: Own life, right, right.

Jaiya: You know, my own life. I'm saying this is what I experienced and so there was that response and assault and the toxic silence that was coming from my own family, friends, community in which I grew up in New Mexico and beyond and so I thought recently about, you know, the timing of your book coming into the world and the work you're doing and I say to myself, you know, this is Layla's time because what you are doing would have been violently rejected 18 years ago —

Layla: It was violently rejected — if it was like 2015, it would have violent — do you know what I mean? Like it's been this many minutes since it's okay, right, for us to talk about it in this way.

Jaiya: Especially on the full time scale of, you know, let's go back to the beginning of trans- Atlantic slave trade —

Layla: Right

Jaiya: — a few

centuries, right? Layla:

Yeah.

Jaiya: Just one grain of sand on that time scale is what we're in, where people are, you know, when we say people, we're not saying black folk because we've had to talk about it —

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: — amongst ourselves all along as a point of survival, but what we're saying, we're seeing for the first time, I sense for the first time, that people benefitting from white supremacy and male supremacy are actually being forced to — there's a humbling that's happening, whether they want it to occur or not, which is causing them to begrudgingly open themselves at least just a crack, just a crack, to say, well, maybe there's some truth to what this person is expressing —

Layla: Right.

Jaiya: When you're on the pavement with your face pressed hard against that surface of rubble and someone's knee and full body weight is on your neck and you are testifying, you are saying, "I can't breathe," whether you are believed or not has everything to do with the conditions of the culture of society at that moment —

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: At that moment, because we have been saying, "I cannot breathe." We've been saying it for hundreds and hundreds of years. Only now. Only now. This is why I know this is divinely directed. The souls that are doing this work at this time were born when they were supposed to be born and they came of age in the ways and at the rates they were supposed to and here we are. We're converging in this great meadow and valley of possibility to actually nudge things forward to where when we say your privilege, your entitlement, your pathological illness of supremacy, your sense of centrality, that you always have to be in the center and at the front and your need to be the hero of every story, to be the savior of every fable, is killing me, has killed me, has killed my children, has killed my grandparents —

Layla: Right, because it's —

Jaiya: Only now —

Layla: — it's not just the knee on the neck. It's every single thing. You have this — Can I read this? It's something similar to what you just said but it's on just the second page of your book and you said, "Supremacy says to itself, 'I am supreme. My kind are supreme. We belong at the center of the world. If we're not at the center, on top, in front, first, and in control, the world will fall apart. We are innately superior and qualified. The others are innately inferior and unqualified. If we let them through our doors, we will sacrifice quality.'" That made me laugh, by

the way. Jaiya: Yeah,

that's real.

Layla: I was like, tell it.

Jaiya, tell it. Jaiya: Yeah,

yeah.

Layla: “My kind has the right to go anywhere in the world and make it in our image. Everyone will be better off then because we are supreme. God made us supreme. We are following natural order by upholding our supremacy. We will change laws and outward customs to keep the others docile, but we will not change our hearts. We will always believe our way is the best way. We will create tests in our image that prove our superior intelligence. We will build systems in our image that appear to serve lives that exist to control lives to preserve our supremacy. We must locate ourselves at the center of every story. We must be the savior of every story. We will take the saviors and prophets of every story and cast them in our image. Daily, we must affirm in every mind our supremacy. Anyone and anything that challenges our supremacy

must be destroyed.” Jaiya: Must be destroyed.

Layla: Must be destroyed, whether it’s George Floyd or somebody just on the internet saying, “Can you just give me some peace right now?”

Jaiya: Exactly, exactly. What happens is to maintain supremacy requires such an immense desperation —

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: — that any threat to that status quo, to that structure and arrangement, you respond to that threat murderously.

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: You don't respond with logic or reason. You don't respond with education or information. You respond murderously because you are so desperate to uphold that which on a soul level you know is not real. You know is a lie. You know is not sustainable.

Layla: It's not conscious, and realizing that helped me so much. It got me out of the anger because anger is a great catalyst, it's not great for sustaining the work, and it will kill you from the inside out and I had to know what I was actually up against. When I made the understanding that, like you said, it's a virus, it's not conscious, it will seek to mutate itself. One of the things that I say with *Me and White Supremacy* is some of you are gonna read this book and all you've gotten from it are new words and new jargon to prove that you're one of the good ones and nothing else has changed. You have mutated, right, to be able to say the right things but the virus is still there.

Jaiya: And so when we go back and look at the civil rights movement in the United States in the 50s and 60s, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and look at any revolution movement, we see that broader society takes certain steps and those steps really are all about let me pick up the language so that I can appear to be a good person. See, people infected with supremacy are obsessed with being seen as good people —

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: They are obsessed with thinking of themselves as good people —

Layla: Right.

Jaiya: — and so what humans are willing to do infected like that, overrun like that and contagious like that, what they are willing to do in many cases is to learn the language and then the actions that make it appear as though they're down for this. So, in 2020 in social media, people will learn to use the word "amplify." I'm gonna amplify so and so over here by tagging, you know, her account, but if you look at the person's personal lives, what they are not willing to do is a painful reckoning with the self and with the soul to acknowledge, I am not well, I am infected, my infection is spreading to my children, to my loved ones, to my community. Many people are not willing to be discomforted, so supremacy, one of the things that it feels it is entitled to is comfort.

Layla: Yes.

Jaiya: Supremacy believes my life is supposed to be comfortable. God said so. This is imminent domain, man. I am rightly given a comfortable life and you're making me feel uncomfortable so you must go —

Layla: You must go, right.

Jaiya: Yeah, you must go. I'm going to assassinate your character or I'm going to assassinate your body or I'm going to assassinate your relationships with those you love and isolate you

from the herd. I'm going to invalidate you. It's an amazing psychology involved with oppression.

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: I studied it in graduate school because my field was social psychology and I was focusing on raising inter-group relations and it was really amazing just to see historically how these psychological tactics are used over and over. In the book, I write about oppression ways. Oppression has predictable ways —

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: — and if we can help people become familiar with those ways, they can look out for it, you know what I mean? A girl who is guided and taught by her mom, by her aunties, by her abuelas, by other women in her life, "Okay, these are the things you need to look out for as a woman in the world." That girl has so much more of an opportunity —

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: — to protect herself —

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: — to advocate for herself, to really strengthen herself and position herself in ways that prevent harm. The same thing needs to occur with our children in terms of preparing them to recognize the tactics of oppression and supremacy, because they are myriad, they are multiple, they are very predictable.

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: If you look at the leadership of various countries currently, these — and they tend to be men, are using the

same tactics over and over in the comments that they make and in many cases, it is conscious and intentional because they've read the playbook.

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: They've read the supremacy playbook. This is how we keep people in line —

Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: — and in order so that our

comfort may persist. Layla: Yeah.

Jaiya: And I'm saying let's open up the

playbook to everyone. Layla: That's what

we're doing. That's it. That's what we're

doing. Jaiya: Yeah, that's it.

Layla: You know, I have these conversations with my daughter, especially if something shows up for me like a tactic has been played on me and I'm like, oh, there's that thing again, and if my daughter's around when it's happened, I'll tell her so, Maya, if this and this and this happens, first of all, I'll just explain to her this happened to me, and then I'll say to her I want you to know that if someone tries to do this to you, this is what they're to get from you. This is what they want from you and this is what you can say so that they don't use you in that way. And it's so important because I'm like don't be asleep. They will — these tactics are the same and they will happen even from people that you think are your closest, bestest friends. Your family members, your — it can come from anywhere because I keep saying, right, it's in the air. It's the contagion.

Jaiya: Yes, and I think right now, one of the things we can think about as an opportunity collectively is how do we prepare our children and let's collectively arrive at an approach because we collectively have the wisdom within us and the understanding of what these tactics are, right? But we're not talking with our children about them. They grow up unconscious of them and makes them very, very vulnerable. What we're seeing right now play out around the world is nothing new, it's been happening. It hasn't been video recorded until recently but these things are available to us as a curriculum. If we take, you know, Malcolm El-Hajj said, out of all of our studies, history is most qualified to reward our research and for a while I wasn't sure exactly what he meant by that. I had the big poster on my office at Howard University when I was a professor and I just would ponder that, I would ponder those words over and over again and as I lived longer in this world, the light really came on for me and I really understood what he was trying to get at. History is our curriculum and it's available to us to simply say to children, son, daughter, child, this is not just theoretical that I'm saying to you as your parent, this is not just theoretical, it's historical. This is what oppression does, this is how it tries to perpetuate itself. It is a virus. It wants to live. It will do by any means necessary, it will do what it can to change the

atmosphere, to change that petri dish so that its culture can grow, so that its molecules —

Layla: **[inaudible 01:02:43]** for itself.

Jaiya: Yes, and the fertility really occurs in the minds of the subjugated and the oppressed. You know, if you want to infect the mind, then people become their own overseer, their own slave master. You don't even have to spend much time with them. They're gonna hold themselves there. We know this historically and we know it personally you and I. I grew up doing that to myself and so it's why I'm very sensitive to the ways. When I recognize people doing it to themselves and it breaks my heart but that heartbreak I must then consciously choose to use that as fuel, sustainable fuel. You've mentioned anger and, yes, anger is so powerful. It has been killing us as a people for a long time. So many diseases that manifest, the violence that we do to ourselves, and so, for me, when my heart gets broken, that evidence of somebody else as a lack of self-love, I consciously, I take that and I hold that and I work with that to transform it into motive for myself in propulsion. How do I go forward because it is exhausting to be on this journey? It isn't exhausting to free oneself, it's exhausting to be a part of collective freeing and so we need —

Layla: On that note, the point I'm up to in your book, let me pull up the page, is I think you say your name is not exhaustion.

Jaiya: Yeah.

Layla: I've got the e-book here, I'm waiting for my hard copy. Here it is, I found it. Rest feeds her revolution. This is what this chapter is called and you say your name is not exhaustion. You do not have to answer when called that way. Maybe exhaustion raised you at home and exhaustion taught you at school and exhaustion supervised you at work and exhaustion was your lover in relationships. Maybe you believe you are exhaustion but to your soul you are not. You are life. A thing that breathes and releases and rests and sleeps and cries and crafts medallions from precious beads of moments. Even if all the people you have known have modeled exhaustion, you are not that species. You are a vibrant thing, a life like spring meadows and fresh water sing, washing lotus, time to burn your false identity, you are not exhaustion. You're a winged thing shedding that unnatural chrysalis, a love toward bliss. You are diaphanous in sunlight. A bravery of spices, pioneering stillness inside flocks of nervous geese, powder blue Flamingo, a drop in silver water, reunion with the code of grace, you are not exhaustion. You reject that tragic race, no, priceless soul, you are not exhaustion, you are life, in love with renewing your life with a kiss like this.

I love it. I was like — 'cause I read it and I was feeling exhausted, I was like, see this is why I love this book because this is the reminder I needed right now, to sit my butt down, drink some water, take a breath. And that is what we are used to, it's the running and the running and the running especially in this time right now and this is what I'm seeing from many of my peers who are black women, who are black indigenous people of color, but especially black people, we are so exhausted and at the same time we're afraid to disconnect and tend to ourselves. Even though we know what's happening right now happened 2 weeks ago, will happen next week again, and so it's constant.

Jaiya: Yes, and, Layla, it's difficult for us to disengage. We must be compassionate about that difficulty because it's as though we're in a home and all of the people that we love are in the

home and the house is on fire and so when the house is on fire and people say to you, well, you need to take time to rest and care for yourself. It's hard for us to reconcile those two realities. How can I? I mean, my house is burning, my people are about to burn but nonetheless it is critical. I see us and our persona as a people is an exhausted persona. It's a depressed one, it's a traumatized one. We have a hard time being soft and gentle with each other. We're hard, we're harsh, and all of that is a sign and symptomatology of the etiology which is the original illness of the supremacy. You know, we are a reflection of what supremacy does and so, in some kind of way, we must help each other release the rope of just ceaseless toiling and give ourselves permission to rest. We need to help each other with that because it's not gonna be an easy piece to the puzzle learning how to be restful and in balance with life again.

Layla: Right. It's very hard to rest when you're psychologically in survival mode and actually in survival mode.

Jaiya: Yes, and for women who are black, who therefore were raised and conditioned as girls, as children, that you must be continuously in a mode of service to others, it's even more deeply embedded this persona that I can't stop, I can't take care of myself because so and so needs me and so whether that has to do with your children or your partner —

Layla: Your friends, your family.

Jaiya: Your friends, your community. You feel like — and so it's heartbreaking to witness this because so many women, they lose their lives, they lose their health to this, to this inability to stop and breathe and, as you said, understand that this terrible thing we are working

against, unfortunately, it will be here tomorrow, it will be here next week and so it's not as though you're going to miss it actually —

Layla: Unfortunately.

Jaiya: — if you care for yourself, yeah. And if you nurture yourself, you will be able to return to it even stronger and I don't just mean stronger in terms your energy but your spiritual discernment will be clearer.

Layla: Yeah. Definitely for me in the way that I desire to do my work is I desire to do it from a place of love and love — I noticed in your book you used capital L every time you use the word “love” and I love that so much. I love for you to explain that but for me personally I loved it so much because love isn't this fluffy thing, it's so big, it's everything and I desire to come from that place and in order for me to come from that place, I have to realign with my own energy and not stay in the collective energy.

Jaiya: Yes, and so each of us exist along this continuum of, if you wanna call it introversion and extroversion, we all have a different point of need in terms of time with ourselves and solitude and replenishment and I'm on that end of the spectrum where people call me a monk. I need a lot of solitude, I require that. I was exhausted as a child from feeling all of this. I just was and so, you know, we have to learn for ourselves what our requirement is in order to be well in this reality and sometimes the collective, in all of its grieving and pain, in all of its prayer and promise, it is swirling with such an intensity and immensity that as an individual if you just stay hooked into that, plugged into that, it can become the thing that is draining you and exhausting you and so those balance points must be there. I appreciate what you said about the word “love.” I don't know when I began to capitalize that word in writing but, you know, one thing that I observed in life is that people feel and show a reverence often for what they call

God or creator or the divine or —

Layla: Source, the universe.

Jaiya: Source, the universe, they show this reverence. They don't tend to treat it as a triviality that you would put on a Hallmark card and so, for me, I'm very conscious that, for me, love is God, love is creator, love is the universe, love is a sacred thing. It's not, in the United States in this culture, love is conveyed as a triviality, as a fluffy thing, as flowers and cards and holidays, and, for me, love is actually the strictest law of all, and yeah, it is uncompromising. It is not fluffy in any way. For me, love is a sacredness, a sanctity. It is divinity and so, for me, I can't help but capitalize that word, partially because of what it means for me but also because of what I intend to convey to others that we're speaking of a sacredness when we speak of love and when you are healing yourself and love, that's not a superficial thing. When you do freedom work, revolutionary, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-human work in love, we're not saying that you're sitting around a campfire singing kumbaya. We're not saying that you are permitting and excusing and empowering toxicity and poison and hate. We're not saying that. We're saying that by you choosing to be in that spirit of love, you're actually making a difficult choice to devote yourself to a difficult vocation that is a sacred thing that requires daily work and that ought to be capitalized in our lives.

Layla: That's right. That's beautiful. And it's a beautiful place for us to close because that is the energy that wraps everything that is this book and everything that is the work that you put out into the world and everything that guides me and my work and everything that I hope everyone who's listening to, that it will guide their lives and their work too because I

have been, you know, this year working on — after the dismantling of the white supremacy, what is the world that we want to see, that I want to see and for me it starts up with, I'm here to help co-create a more loving world and it was really important that I had the word "loving" in there, that love is the energy of that world and therefore in order to get to that world, love must be the energy we embody now as we march towards it. And so that capital L, yes, that capital L just really — thank you for that because I hadn't thought about it in the ways that you just described it and when you said it's the strictest discipline, like, it's a universal law, it's like gravity. It is and it's unbending.

Jaiya: It is. I feel like for many of us, particularly if we've lived in these cultures that are — that are just macho cultures and we've been traumatized and oppressed. Many of us, we tend to actually snub our noses at the concept of love. We really treat it as though it's this weak wimpy thing. It's not hard enough, it's not strong enough for me, I'm a warrior, I'm a warrior and, you know, my people are hurting so I can be dealing with all that love thing. You know, this is a time for something fiercer and what I'm saying is there is nothing more fierce than love.

Layla: That's it.

Jaiya: There's nothing fiercer than love and we must repeat that drum beat 'til it soaks into the soil of souls and we remember. My work, I call it Soul Water Rising, you know, we're calling it, it's always been about stirring the soul to remember itself and I have a faith that if we remember who we really are, we will recognize that we are love's creation. We are here for that. We as a people do not have to be hard and harsh, that should not be our prideful banner that we live our lives under. We are allowed to be loving, particularly to ourselves and one another. So I'm with you on that new world being a world in which we restore those qualities of a true human being. The Persian poet, Saadi, said if you do not care for the well-being of other

people, we will not call you human. We shall not call you human, and I'm down with that, I'm down with it. We're ready to graduate back along the sacred hoop of life to what we used to be and that was very loving. Not to say that we didn't have expectations and firmness with one another and discipline and standard. It's exactly the opposite. Love brings all of those things. You know, as a mother loving to your daughter, that doesn't mean that you are just permissive of everything. It's the exact opposite, it's that you care for her in such a way that you are intimately involved with her life experiences, so there are standards, there is discipline, there are expectations. And that's why I say love is really uncompromising and love needs a new PR campaign.

Layla: That's right.

Jaiya: You know what I mean? It just needs to be remembered for what it is so that we can remember who we are. I love you.

Layla: I love you too, Jaiya.

Jaiya: Yeah, thank you. I appreciate you and I cherish you. What you are doing does require bravery and courage and you may not say that but those in the world who are doing what you're doing do really require that summoning of bravery and courage because a lot of people won't go into that fire. There's this quote, I think it might have been Gandhi, I'm not sure but just about how these things play out. At the beginning of change, the pioneer is always ignored and then laughed at and then scorned and resented as freedom becomes popular. You won't have to work so hard to summon bravery and courage in order to live

this life in this way and serve in this way. That's what I see coming and because it's gonna become more normative that we disallow supremacy and inferiority is gonna become shamed in very functional and practical ways so that people are disincentivized from existing in that way and then I pray that you and others will be able to rest even more beautifully and deeply. This is what I pray.

Layla: Thank you so much. I take that in and I truly appreciate that and I truly appreciate you and I just wanna say because I know that there are so many people who listen to this podcast who are walking through their own fires and who have their own revolutions that are stirring within them and that they are stepping into and that they are walking through and leading others through and I really wanna encourage everyone to get this book, *Freedom*, from Jaiya John because it will nourish you and it will stir you and it will reaffirm especially in the hard times. You know, I'm often speaking to two different audiences, people who have white privilege and people who don't, everyone I think benefits from this book. Those who have white privilege can really understand what white supremacy is in a way that I just haven't seen explained before and in a way that very much matches up with — like I'm thinking about when I did the *Me and White Supremacy* challenge, some of the resistance that we were seeing at that time and it felt like this mass exorcism because white supremacy, it has an energy. It's not an intellectual thing, it actually has a living, breathing energy and so as you talk about it as this virus, I think it's so helpful, well, for all people to understand that but particularly for people with white privilege to understand what's living within them and then for those who don't have white privilege, yes, to understand that but also to get those freedom words, to get that nourishment, to get that reminder, right, just these words help you to soften, they fortify you, they bring you back to yourself and I will also say I've been listening to your podcast as well because I love — you have a poet's voice so I love the actual timbre and sound of your voice so I've been listening to

your podcast which is called, I Will Read For You, and you have readings that you do of your works, of your poems and your works and I found that very nourishing over the weekend and I was just doing things around the house and I just had it playing and it was, yeah, I loved listening to it so, please, everyone, go find Jaiya's work because it is super, super nourishing and very, very important.

Jaiya: Thank you, Layla.

Layla: You're welcome. So our final question, Jaiya, what does it mean to you to be a good ancestor?

Jaiya: For me, I think about this often, you know, daily, what it means to be a good ancestor. For me is to be a good host for my ancestors. In other words, they are always with us and always speaking to us but many of us block them out because of the way we've been conditioned and so I work daily to be a host, that they come to me, they visit me, they stay in my home, they stay in me and they are trying to express something about what they have seen and come to understand and to be a good ancestor, I cannot reject them, I cannot say, you know, it's not a good time right now. I don't know where you gonna go but you gotta leave here. I need to host them. I need to make them feel comfortable in my life. I need to be ancestrally infused, you know, like incense. I need to smell the fragrance of the love that they have for me, that they have for my daughter, that they have for people whom I love. I need that fragrance to be wafting and drifting through my life. To be a good ancestor means to embrace my fears and move through them. To name them, identify them, have conversation with them, break bread with them and befriend them so that there's less hostility in the relationship between my fears and myself and I can move through fear in

order to fulfill my calling and my duty in this world as a living thing. To be a good ancestor for me means to be a living thing and to not just be a dead thing that appears to be alive but to be a living thing, right? Because we have a lot of walking dead right now in the world and that's not a judgment, it's a loving testimony of our condition and to be a good ancestor is **[inaudible 01:23:06]** foundation and, you know, just to fulfill everything that I feel I was brought here to be. I feel for each of us, we can be a good ancestor by doing the work within our souls. Each of us knows on some level the work that we have to do to repair ourselves and, therefore, to repair the world and I feel that all of that is a part of being a good ancestor. You said earlier, you know, we need to permit joy in our lives and laughter and levity, that's being a good ancestor. We aren't supposed to be walking grim through this world and dim, right? We have a light and we are meant to be at our full illumination. All of our lumens should be activated. That's a good ancestor, being kind and loving and gentle and patient with the soil of our garden, our heart and our soul and our being, that's a good ancestor, and just to be in relation with one another and with every breath of air we are blessed with and bite of food and drink of water to remember who this is really for, it's not for us, it's feeding us so that we may feed others and so I like to say to myself all of this is grace and in an indigenous way, you know, everything that I partake of is for all of my relations, is for all my relations. It's supposed to pass through me. I'm not supposed to hoard things. We need to unlearn possessiveness and hoarding and that's a good ancestor. This is my truth.

Layla: Thank you for your truth, Jaiya. I

appreciate you. Jaiya: And I as well.

Thank you, Layla. Thank you so much.

Layla: Thank you.

This is Layla Saad and you've been listening to Good Ancestor

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