

LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.
JACQUI LEWIS

**Travel Lightly, Downsize the Burdens You Carry
with Valarie Kaur**

Jacqui Lewis: Hey everybody, Jacqui Lewis here. Welcome to this second season of Love. Period. This season, we're focusing our conversations on my new book, *Fierce Love: A Bold Path to Ferocious Courage and Rule-Breaking Kindness That Can Heal the World*. Each of my friends will be helping you to think about the themes in each chapter, nine practical practices that can help us love ourselves, love our posse, and then love the world and the healing. It all starts with you, and we're going to give you practical tips to make these practices a part of your life. Today's episode is inspired by chapter three of my book, *Fierce Love: Travel Lightly. Downsize the Burdens You Carry*. I invited my friend, Valerie Kaur to come by today to talk with me about traveling lightly. She's the author of *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*. She's an activist, an artist, a filmmaker, a mom, and she knows as well as anybody what it's like to downsize what we're carrying around with us, so we can be revolutionary in our love. I hope you enjoy this conversation.

Jacqui Lewis: Hello, my wonderful Valerie Kaur, my beautiful Jubilee friend. How are you?

Valarie Kaur: Hello, Storm. It's such a joy to be with you in this moment.

Jacqui Lewis: I think Jubilee really fits you, right?

Valarie Kaur: And just as Storm really fits you.

Jacqui Lewis: Fits you too. I've had the pleasure to be having conversations in these times with some of our other X-fellows. And each time I've been just sort of rehearsing the story of how we got to these names. How would you tell it from your point of view, hon?

Valarie Kaur: Oh, it was Otis who named us, didn't he?

Jacqui Lewis: Yes.

Valarie Kaur: The ship named us.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, he did. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Valarie Kaur: That very first gathering of senior fellows in the desert, it felt like we were gathering in a clearing. And Auburn Seminary, the organizers asked us to stand up and name our superpowers. And we all noticed how uncomfortable it was at the beginning to name them in ourselves, and that itself was a barrier, that actually to own your own greatness, and that there's greatness in each of us, is the obstacle that often needs to be removed in order to access our full power, potential, impact in the world. And so for Otis then to watch each of us and say, "Okay, Okay. I think I know it needs to be done. We all need to be named after superheroes."

Jacqui Lewis: That's right.

Valarie Kaur: And he gave us all names. And oh my gosh, in the darkest moments, Jubilee fights with light. That's what she does.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right, matter of fact.

Valarie Kaur: Yeah.

Jacqui Lewis: I'm always giggling thinking the power of naming. Right?

Valarie Kaur: Yeah.

Jacqui Lewis: Did we become what we were named? Or what's the order of that? And is there some dynamic in it where I become more like Storm, because I was named Storm?

Valarie Kaur: Right, right, right, right.

Jacqui Lewis: And you become more of a light warrior.

Valarie Kaur: You were always Storm to us, right? I mean, you would change the weather. I mean, we saw you on the ground, in the streets. I mean, in the wake of Charleston, you walk into a place where people are in trauma and grief and then read the winds and move the winds until everyone starts to sing together. I mean, you always were that to us. And I think there's something about naming it and being witnessed and for all of us to hold up a mirror to say, "No, this, this is who you are. This is who you are." I have just have seen us, you, me, own it even more.

Jacqui Lewis: Right. That's right. Just stretch out.

Valarie Kaur: Become more Jubilee, become more Storm. I love it. Gosh, if we could do that for all of our babies, to name them into their greatness, hmm.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my gosh, right? You say that, and I think (singing) I think. I think Lion King, right? And the name of Simba and all those traditions of our ancestors of sort of looking at a baby and lifting up a baby and naming the baby. Of course, every time I do that little thing I did with you there, my niece, Rio, "That not how it goes. These are the words." She knows... "Like, "OK, I don't know what the... I can't say them yet. But I believe you, my love."

Valarie Kaur: Oh, I love it.

Jacqui Lewis: So your babies have beautiful names. Do they have significance in your tradition? Tell us about picking those names of Ananda and Kavi? Tell us about that.

Valarie Kaur: Yeah, so Kavi means poet, but it has a deeper meaning in South Asian tradition. Kavi is to be at like a sage poet. It's to see the world through the eyes of wonder. And my grandfather was a poet, a poet warrior I would call him. And my husband's grandfather was also a really renowned poet in Kannada language. So we thought, "How do we honor our grandfathers and honor that ancestry inside of him? Let's name him Kavi." It's not a common name, but he's really lived into it. I mean the questions he asks me at night, oh my gosh, Storm. I'll just say, "Kavi, you can ask me anything, anything." He says, "Okay, Mommy, why does life give birth to itself?"

Jacqui Lewis: Why does life... Okay, mister.

Valarie Kaur: I'm like, "Ask me another question." He's like, "Okay, what is beyond the future?" I know.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my God.

Valarie Kaur: This is Kavi at six.

Jacqui Lewis: Who is the sweetest boy. I remember being on tour with you on that together tour, and your parents and Kavi and Sharat and you, and just like the whole family of just light warriors. Yes, all of you, all of you, all of you.

Valarie Kaur: Oh, then now you have to be introduced to Ananda, because Ananda, I mean, I literally wrote my book. I wrote *See No Stranger* while pregnant with her, and it was such a painful pregnancy, Storm. It was just...

Jacqui Lewis: I remember.

Valarie Kaur: There was a part of me that didn't... I didn't know if I was going to make it. And so writing the book almost became, just in case, what are the stories that I need her to know. And there's no deadline like a due date, so I couldn't extend it. She was going to come out. So I wrote and wrote finally this book that had been in for almost two decades. It finally came out. I was sitting at this desk, at which I'm speaking to you, and I wrote the last words, "May joy be your lifeblood," just my letter to her, and got up immediately went into active labor. And she was born four hours later.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my God. And so she was like, "Let's go, Mommy."

Valarie Kaur: So we named her Ananda, which means joy, but just like Kavi, it's not just joy. It's divine, ecstatic joy. It's the thing that resounds inside of when you feel the oneness with everything around you, the divine outside, the divine, within. That kind of joy, that's her name.

Jacqui Lewis: And let's see if I can do this right. Is it Ik Onkar? No. What is that? Did I do it okay?

Valarie Kaur: Yeah. Ik Onkar.

Jacqui Lewis: Ik Onkar.

Valarie Kaur: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's so beautiful, Storm. Yeah. Ik Onkar is the root of the root of the Sikh faith. It is the first utterance in our scriptures. And it translates as, "The oneness of the world and the oneness of humanity." I take it to mean, "You can look up on the face of anyone or anything around you and say, 'You are a part of me I do not yet know.'"

Jacqui Lewis: I love that. Ik Onkar. I remember when we were on the tour, you had a necklace that Sharat gave you with the symbol.

Valarie Kaur: It's right here.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah. You've taught me a lot about your tradition over the years.

Valarie Kaur: I think that's what I've so loved about our friendship is that... It's one thing kind of rattling off facts to people who want to know more about the Sikh faith. Okay, there are 23 million worldwide. They're half a million in the US. This is why we wear our articles of faith. We believe in equality, service, one God. And there's another. It's an

entirely different thing to be in a sisterhood with someone, who sees how the faith is living and breathing through you, in the brave moments, in the dark moments, in the hard moments like. And when those concepts, Ik Onkar or chardi kala, ever rising, these things that are breathing through me, you come to know them, not as something you read in a book, but it becomes an experience that lives in your body, because you're seeing your sister.

Valarie Kaur: And that's what you've done for me. At Middle, every time I talk about Middle, I say, "I have never felt at home at a Christian Church the way that I feel at home at Middle church." I mean, it's the physical space. And now even if the physical space is not available to us, the virtual sacred space that you've created, that is multiracial, multicultural, a place where I can feel fully seen and beloved. And for you to invoke the divine and to tell stories of Jesus in that kind of space, really reanimated all of these Christian concepts that had been so oppressive to me for so much of my life. You gave them to me and you as medicine instead of bludgeon overhead. And that is quite the work of alchemy, my love. Let me tell you. Talk about Storm, like you...

Jacqui Lewis: That is changing the weather, right there.

Valarie Kaur: Yes, that's right.

Jacqui Lewis: And I think it's just so important, Valerie Jubilee. It's so important, Jubilee, that your testimony... I mean, I do carry in my soul, I carry the stories you've shared with me in my soul. And I carry your mama taking care of you while you have the baby, you know?

Valarie Kaur: Yeah.

Jacqui Lewis: Some of the stories that you tell so beautifully in your book, *See No Stranger*, but also that I got to watch your mother be the mother, who mothers you the way she mothers you. Right?

Valarie Kaur: Hmm.

Jacqui Lewis: And the way you mother Kavi. And the way your dad is kind of holding all of that, "But I'm not in that birthing room, but I'm out here holding [inaudible 00:10:58]. I'm holding all of that," right? And there's something about also then love owning, holding, that the Christian faith hurt you as a young person. I hold that too. I hold the stories you've told of feeling like you were treated like an outsider or called an outsider or called a dog. I'd never forget that. People, who claimed to love God, hurt my friend. And I feel like that's our job also. If we're going to see each other superpowers and affirm our superpowers, we have to be able to also see each other's wounded places, even healing places, even the faint scar of the healed place, to remember that we've been a part of it. We have been a part of hurting each other. And perhaps the memories of the stories, making your story my story, cherishing it, makes me responsible for your heart. And I think that's so important to heal ourselves that we'd be responsible for each other's hearts. What do you think about that?

Valarie Kaur: That's so beautiful. It makes me think about what the true meaning of solidarity is.

Shallow solidarity is rooted in the logic of exchange. I show up for you, so you show up for me. I post your hashtag; you post mine. And too many of our movements are operated on that logic. But deep solidarity is rooted in love and fierce love, in revolutionary love.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes. Yes.

Valarie Kaur: It's the recognition that we belong to one another as sisters, brothers, siblings, that our movements are only as strong as our ability to one another. And loving one another, that's only as deep as our ability to grieve with each other, to weep with each other, so I have wept with you, Storm. And I have struggled with you, Storm. And I have raised my voice and song with you, Storm. I've marched with you, Storm. The longevity of that kind of deep solidarity is the embodiment of beloved community. And I keep thinking, it's been 20 years since I became an activist after 9/11. And I keep thinking about how much farther we have to go.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my goodness. Yeah.

Valarie Kaur: The labor is not just a means to an end. The labor for justice has to be an end in itself. And if we show up with love and in relationship with sisters and brothers, like the relationship that we have, that makes it so that we are embodying the beloved community, even as we're trying to birth it out in the world. And that makes it enough.

Jacqui Lewis: Hmm, that makes it enough. Yeah. I am so delighted to have cooked a book in my body for nine years. I mean you know. You were there reading drafts of this thing a long time ago. And then it took nine months to sort of push it out, let's say the final labor pains, nine months. One of the things that's just keeps ringing around and around in my head, Valerie, as we look at the world as it is, is how delighted I am to be in the world with other people, who are clear that love is a powerful force of healing, change, transformation, revolution. That your work on Revolutionary Love and my work on Revolutionary Love, Love. Period, Just Love, all the love ways we talk about it together, it's fierce. It's fierce. It's frankly it's fierce that we found a way to work together on kind of a shared learning, shared path to share the concept to be different and to be the same pointing, if you understand what I'm trying to say.

Valarie Kaur: Yes.

Jacqui Lewis: I think we modeled something really beautiful in the world about a Sikh love warrior and an African American semi-Christian love warrior. Did you like the semi-Christian?

Valarie Kaur: Says the minister.

Jacqui Lewis: Says the minister. But working together, and all the ways that we've tried to amplify the voices of our fellows where we can. I just think it's been a really beautiful experience, Valerie, to find ways to do that in a world that's absolutely a hot mess.

Valarie Kaur: I agree. It's almost as if we are lifting all of our voices, our very different voices, to sing the same song.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes.

Valarie Kaur: Or to participate in the same great symphony, and our voices are harmonizing. They're different. They're different pitches or different even languages, but they're harmonizing to invite people into a new way of being. And of course, the song has gone on for thousands of years before us.

Jacqui Lewis: Exactly. It's not a new song. And it's not even a new behavior to partner, it just feels to me like there are systems and structures and vibrations that work against the love that we know we can do.

Valarie Kaur: Yeah. Yeah.

Jacqui Lewis: I hope that doesn't sound too simplistic, listeners, but, right?

Valarie Kaur: I do think, though, there's a newness in how we are lifting up the song now. I mean, I don't know if this kind of partnership that we lived into the last decade, if that was as so common a generation ago.

Jacqui Lewis: That's true. That's right. That's right.

Valarie Kaur: I feel like there are more of us now, who are hearing ourselves in each other's stories and finding ways to build a deep solidarity that we've been talking about living into. And then, that feels different. So many of the crises that we're facing now feel like previous traumas. I know, after George Floyd's murder last summer, how so many felt like this felt like 1992. It felt like 1968. And yet, what happened is we saw images we never saw before. Black people kneeling in the streets surrounded by White people in front of an army of police officers. Those images are new. The rise of a multiracial, multi-faith, global uprising for Black lives.

Valarie Kaur: And I felt similarly after the shooting in Indianapolis this year on Sikh Americans, that it felt like Oak Creek in 2012. It felt like post-9/11. It felt like when my grandfather came a century ago. Nothing is new. It's the same trauma. It's the same White supremacist violence. And yet when we held a solidarity vigil in the wake of that, oh, there were 10,000 who showed up online from all different faiths and backgrounds and movements to say, "No, no, no. We are standing together." This is where I feel like birthing labor offers a really useful metaphor for change, because as long as we're thinking about progress as linear in America, then it we're sliding back into darkness. But if we think about America as a nation, still waiting to be born, and that the story of this nation is one long labor, then progress and birthing labor is cyclical. It's not linear. It's cyclical. It's expansions and contractions. And every turn through the cycle feels like the previous trauma. But if enough of us show up, if more of us than ever before showing up in the labor, the way that you show up for me and I show up for you, then we're creating a little bit more space than there was before for dignity, for equality.

Valarie Kaur: And here's the thing, Storm, I don't know how many more turns for the cycle it's going to take before we birth an America where we are all safe and free. But I know I want to show up to do my part in the labor. And the way that I have found the ability to do that is if I'm doing it with this ethic of love.

Jacqui Lewis: I just feel like there's just absolutely so much truth in that, so much truth in that. (silence)

Jacqui Lewis: How many more cycles will it take is the boundary, the barrier, the we-don't-knowness. But the truth that we do know is the love is the way. I love is the way and the truth and the life. That's why say I'm kind of Christian, because I think love is the way and the truth and the life. Right? So you remember, Valerie, when we were working on a draft of this book, long ago when you came and were in residence at Middle Church, which just is wild, I was always thinking this way we do life, the way we do faith, is just so childish, churlish, mean, stingy, small. Wonder if we could get a grown-up god? Remember that language, "Wonder if we could get a grown-up god?" I believe you asked me a question one time that helped me to rethink that, "Is that really a grown-up god? Or is it a simpler, more..." "I'm going to say, is it a simpler God? That's the language I adapted in my brain when you said that.

Jacqui Lewis: And it made me think I wasn't really talking about God at all. Not that I'm not talking about God, but that this insight I was having, wasn't about God so much as it was about us, that it was about how when we love each other, whether we're doing God language or we're atheist, whether we're Sikh or Christian, whether we're gendered. "How are we going to do human?" is really what it turned out that I was wrestling with. And I'm saying that to get to something I've been letting go of to be ready, to be more in this movement the way I want to be in the movement meant. I'm writing about three levels of love: love of self, love of posse, love of world. Right? You read the book and blurbed it, thank God.

Jacqui Lewis: But in the space of, "What do I need to stop dragging around with me, so that I can be the love warrior I want to be, our friend Glennon. What do I need to not carry around with me so I can show up, Valerie, loving myself so I can love my neighbor? What's anything that constricts me, impinges me, that I need to kind of let go of, so I can actually really be the me I think I need to be, to do the love I need to do? That's been an interesting personal query. And I gained 13 pounds during COVID and lost them, but there was something about the expansion and contraction that felt like labor.

Valarie Kaur: Hmm, mm.

Jacqui Lewis: Feel me? I did all the things that we all did during COVID. I sat still too long. I worried too much. I sat on my butt and wrote this book. I didn't exercise enough, all the kinds of things. But even though... So I gained some weight with this pregnancy, right? I gained some weight with this pregnancy. And what I was pregnant with was, "This is beyond religion. This is beyond religion. This is a call, a calling in of all the souls who know we have the ability to heal the world, and how do you not have barriers in yourself so you can make no barriers for them to all come." Does that make sense?

Valarie Kaur: Yes. Yes. I came to this place, to that love is a wellspring from which we all can drink. But we may be coming from the wellspring from different paths. So you may be coming over the mountain, and you may be coming through the desert, and you through the valley. So you're coming; you're inspired by your Christian faith. I'm inspired by my Sikh faith. There's humanist traditions. And others are coming from so in love with science and placing our faith in science, and the fact that it's a cosmological and biological fact that we are part of everyone and everything around us. You can come to it from different sources of inspiration, but the love ethic itself is what is available for all of us, no matter who we are. I feel this when I read about you describing, and I hear you calling for fierce love, that this is not a rush of good feeling, right? This is love as a muscular ethic.

Valarie Kaur: And I describe it as like, love is sweet labor, fierce and bloody and imperfect, life-giving choice that we make. And if love is labor, then love can be taught. Love can be modeled. Love can be practiced. And what I find so invigorating is that more and more of us now are naming the practices, how

to be brave with your grief, how to honor your rage, how to let go of things that are dragging you down, and the little critic in your mind or in your consciousness that's keeping you from realizing your full self or following the path that is calling you. I feel like the more we can share the good news around these practices, the more that we can say, "Well, all of us can have access to building beloved community where we are, right where we are."

Jacqui Lewis: That's right. And be, what, the midwife... I'm going to mess up some metaphors now. Be the midwife of your own best self, your own lighter self, your own unburdened self. Not again, fake, pretend behaviors that look like you've overcome, I mean really looking at your stuff and owning your stuff and thinking, "Well, that no longer serves me. And here I am moving into the world with lighter baggage."

Valarie Kaur: Well, that is what has been so... I don't know. It was just such an honor, Jacqui, to read those early drafts of *Fierce Love*, because it was like I got to witness you getting so brave and putting stories on the page that were hard to name into the world, hard to grapple with. You had to reckon with your own trauma, your own healing, the messiness of it all. And to put it on the page and then to see you in the process of editing over the years, discern, it was almost like you're just discerning the consolidated wisdom of what you wanted to... So how perfect then that the chapter headings of the book are all about the lessons, the shared practices, like, "Let go of the baggage. Travel lightly." It's really been profound to see you do that, even as a minister of your standing, to be brave enough to continue to go on a process of your own evolution and your own rebirthing.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh, sweetie, that's so good to hear.

Valarie Kaur: May we all be so brave.

Jacqui Lewis: (singing).

Valarie Kaur: That's right.

Jacqui Lewis: I wouldn't keep that in there. Yeah. It's really beautiful, little sister, to have that affirmation from you, that you watched me wrestle it out., because I did, right? I had to really wrestle it out. I, who have not given birth, actually really gave birth-

Valarie Kaur: Yes, you did.

Jacqui Lewis: ... [crosstalk 00:27:25] through this process, a ripping, a tearing, a sorrow, a joy, taking breaths in between. John, being my birth coach, "You can do it today!" "Come on, girl. Push it out. Breathe. Push," my friend, Vali, would say. And I just am thinking to myself, Valerie, the resonance I have always found in your, "Is this the darkness of the tomb or the darkness of the womb?" and the ways that people gravitate to that, because there's something that we know is really true about it, right?

Jacqui Lewis: That there is some truth about sometimes you need the dark, lonely place to grow the new thing, or you need the dark, lonely place to give birth to the new thing, and that our nation is in a time of transition, and that all of us who have suffered this last year need to feel the hope that these conversations bring, that your words bring, that I hope my words bring, that not only will we get through this, this is in itself, again mixing metaphors, an episode or an in between time, that if you were on a birthing table, that's that time where you'd catch your breath and get the ice chips or get your head bathed, that we are squeezing, contracting, as a society to give room, birth, space in the cervix for the new thing to come out, not to be too graphic. But I think that resonates because we kind of know it. In a primordial place, we feel it.

Valarie Kaur: We are being stretched. We are being torn. We are [crosstalk 00:29:12].

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, that's right.

Valarie Kaur: That question, Jacqui, "Is this the darkness of the tomb or the darkness of the womb?" I've asked myself every day. And it is both. We have lost so much. We are losing so much, between the pandemic and the racial violence and the racial reckonings, the climate catastrophes. I mean, as we speak, there are fires in California that are threatening my beautiful Sequoia, thousands of years old these trees, and we can't get them back. We are losing so much. It's the darkness of the tomb. And then to have the audacity to sit with that loss and that grief and that trauma and to lift our gaze and to insist on seeing the darkness of the womb... What is emerging here that has not emerged before? What is wanting to be birthed?

Valarie Kaur: And I do feel like I am seeing. I mean, our relationship is a testament to this. I'm seeing people waking up, being in relationship, grieving together, raging together, reimagining together, marching together, reimagining their own area of public life, their own sphere of influence in ways that I never imagined possible before. In those acts, in those moments and those gatherings around fierce love that I feel like I see glimpses of the nation, the world, that is wanting to be born, if I train my eye to see.

Jacqui Lewis: Yep, to recognize it, to see it, to celebrate it. It's so important, Jubilee. One of my staff and I were talking yesterday, and it was just one of those moments where you are doing work, but then you're actually having a real conversation about love and life at the same time. And I said, "Middle Church testifies to me that what I write is true." I mean, you do too, right? Your work does too. But I wish I could... I wish there's just a way. I wish everyone in my congregation, all the people who've come and gone, all the ones who are there doing in this movement, the brave people, the brave White people who sit around while I tell them about White supremacy, the brave African American people who are wounded and traumatized and still come to church and sit next to the White people, right? Its just really true, like, "Snaps to you all." And the Asians and the indigenous people on the Latinx people, just the way that the community dares to breathe together, dares to stand together, to sing together in a time, Valerie, in a place we're just so wounded by the politic that is America, the politic that is global of just bias and hatred and race-based violence and xenophobia.

Jacqui Lewis: I mean our love doesn't make those things less real. And so it is so brave to bring your light sword or your ability to change the weather or your fear and your vulnerability to these spaces where the work is being done and stand there and just kind of grieve and love at the same time. There's no luxury called, "It's not hard." It's hard. It's sweet labor, but it's hard. It's tough to show yourself to yourself and love yourself. I'm so proud of my congregations bravery. I just hope if anyone of them is listening, they'll hear me say, "I love you, you brave person you, for being in the movement with us," right?

Valarie Kaur: I have been sitting at the feet of Grace Lee Bogs lately, her writings. And I keep thinking, "Okay, she lived till a hundred," right?

Jacqui Lewis: Right, yeah.

Valarie Kaur: So what does it mean to find longevity in the labor for justice? And she writes that true

movements will rise when those who have survived depression stop seeing themselves as victims, but start seeing themselves as new human beings, as pioneers of a new way of doing human relations. And that's it. That's it, Jacqui. I keep thinking that what you're naming, what you're seeing in testimonies of your Middle Church congregants of showing up with the fear and the vulnerability and the discomfort and the grief, and then choosing to love, and the messy work of that fierce love, that revolutionary love, that is the living into what we want for the country as a whole.

Jacqui Lewis: Yep. That's right.

Valarie Kaur: And that if we can equip... I keep thinking anti-racism is the bridge, but beloved community is the destination.

Jacqui Lewis: Destination. That's right. I totally agree with that.

Valarie Kaur: And if we can create those containers, that Middle Church is a container for that, if we can create and nurture and inspire more and more of those containers, like every school, every home, every workplace, every church, every house of worship, every neighborhood can become a pocket of that kind of beloved community, because this love stuff is not saintly. It's not mystical. It's practical. It's pragmatic.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right. That's exactly right.

Valarie Kaur: There's a way to do it. And that's what your work does. That's what I hope like our work does, and so many others, certainly among the X-fellows, equipping people with those tools. If we can equip a critical mass of us to practice in this way, then I see us in transition as a nation, as a world, over the next 20, 25 years. And so could we be the ones in this invisible way, in this quiet way? Revolutions don't just happen in those big grand public moments, but in the spaces where people are coming together to inhabit a new way of being. Perhaps that's how we shift culture and consciousness over the long haul to deliver a little bit, get a little bit closer to what is wanting to be born.

Jacqui Lewis: I love that. I love you. I love the way you said that. Little spaces and tiny steps also, right? Classrooms. I was talking to some parents yesterday about creating a container for their kids at home, that they are the teachers the kids are watching. And something you said just then just caught my... This is a fully unformed thought, but there is a shedding that happens when we're all together in the messiness, in the love, I think. And I don't want to get too graphic about what's going on inside a woman's body, but you know. There's a change. There's a transformation. Maybe the reason that the powers that be want to separate us with hatred and fear and competition is because they know, if we'll get together, we'll change, like you changed me, Valerie. Hmm.

Jacqui Lewis: My congregants changed me. My grandkids changed me. You can't come together in solidarity with another, who's different from you, and also not become a little bit like them, a little changed by them, impacted by their narrative, by their story. So you are letting go of something. You have to. It just must happen, and it will happen. Something rinses off you, sloughs off you. You scrape yourself in their story, and it takes off something. My dad, oh my God, right? I'm thinking he's going to read this book and things are going to happen. I'll call you and come to this shore and be with you.

Valarie Kaur: I'll be here for you.

Jacqui Lewis: My dad is so changed, because of his relationship with John, or Rodney's wife, Deedee, who's Filipino. I mean, he just is different, because there's a sloughing off, a shaping. John's different in his relationship with me. So we are becoming, Valerie, in the close proximity of each other's stuff and stories and dreams and hopes. And we won't be the same when we get through this birth canal.

Valarie Kaur: Yeah. I feel like so much of White nationalist aggression in this country is a symptom of unresolved grief. They're grieving the notion this nation never belonged just them in the first place, and that the nation is changing. And the truth is yes. I want to say, "Yes, my love it is changing."

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, it is.

Valarie Kaur: We're becoming a multifaith, multiracial, multicultural democracy, if we get this right, if we stay in the labor. That's the nation we will birth. And that nation has never been in the history of the world. Yes, it means transforming around you and within you, and that can be scary. That is scary. We are seeing how scary it is for so many people. And we're seeing out of those wounds, out of the limitations inside of them, how that manifests in force and violence. And I keep thinking if there are enough people who can midwife them along the way, then they can see that they don't have to be afraid of what we are becoming. So what you're naming and the witness of how we are transformed by each other in our personal relationships, I feel magnify that to what's happening in the country as a whole. And that takes a kind of bravery. It takes a kind of surrender and a kind of trust that where we'll come out on the other side as individuals and as a nation is richer and stronger and more beautiful than whatever was before.

Jacqui Lewis: That's really true. So, Valerie Jubilee...

Valarie Kaur: Yes, Storm.

Jacqui Lewis: Light [inaudible 00:40:14]. What do you know for sure about love?

Valarie Kaur: Hmm... It's always here. In the moments when I feel alone or afraid or that it's absent, I just have to open my eyes, feel the earth beneath my feet, remember my grandfather's love in my body, know that separateness is an illusion. And if I just sink into the present moment here and now, I can access the love that has been poured into me, the love that I am capable of, the love that surrounds me on all sides. And that can give me enough energy to take the next breath and then push.

Jacqui Lewis: That's beautiful. That's so beautiful. And when I say fierce love, what comes up for you?

Valarie Kaur: Hmm... Of course, I have the image of the birthing table and the blood and the ferocity and the messy and the labor of it all, right? It's to love like that when the world's on fire, to love like that in the face of crises and oppressions on all sides, to love like that, to insist on that, that is fierce.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, it is.

Valarie Kaur: That is fierce. And that is what I think we're inviting everyone into, to say, "No, it's actually delicious too." It's the most vibrant way to be alive is to live inside of this fierce love, like it's like this heartbeat that's pulsating through you. It's a universe breathing through you. When you surrender yourself to it, when you give yourself to it, it carries you, because you're never alone.

Jacqui Lewis: You're never alone in it. That's beautiful, my friend.

Valarie Kaur: I love you so much.

Jacqui Lewis: I love you too.

Valarie Kaur: I fiercely love you.

Jacqui Lewis: I fiercely love you too.

Jacqui Lewis: Thanks for listening to this conversation today. Valerie. And I both think a lot about the metaphor of giving birth, of midwifing our best selves, our most loving selves. And so I'm going to leave you with this thought today. Is there any part of you that is yearning to be reborn? Any part of you that wants to push through burdens and problems and be lighter in the world? I'd like you to think of me and Valerie as your midwives, encouraging you to take a deep breath and to push, push forward to the new you of tomorrow. And remember along this journey, things might feel heavy and you not even feel light enough to lift up your love in the world. Remember that even the unforgiven hurts, the bitter resentments, and hard feelings that weigh you down have stories for you, wisdom for you, insight for you. Your job is to feel the feelings, to learn the lessons, and then let the heaviness go. (silence)