

# Getting Free Together Ep.4

## Compost, Conflict, & K-pop Demon Hunters

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:00:00,000 ] If people have to leave your movement to heal, that should be a giant red flag that there's work to do inside of our movement culture. Like, this is not okay.

**Beautiful Chorus (intro)**

[ 00:00:17,850 ] Can you feel us? Share our wisdom.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:00:24,580 ] Hi, listeners. This week, we're sitting down with friend and mentor Mia Mingus, who has taught us all so much about transformative justice, pod mapping, and disability justice. This week, we talk with Mia about composting, conflict, and K-pop demon hunters.

**shaïna (they/them)**

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**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:01:08,610 ] Awesome. Thank you so much for joining us, Mia. We wanna, yeah, just welcome you to Getting Free Together.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:01:14,410 ] Hi, thank you so much for having me. Happy to be here.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:01:17,520 ] Yeah, and let's get started by just reflecting on: How did we meet each other?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:01:25,500 ] That is an excellent, how did we meet each other? I mean, we met each other generally, I feel like through. kind of transformative justice community accountability work just in general. I know I met you at the.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:01:39,090 ] Building accountable communities gathering. But I really feel like though, the main thing that I remember was when we were at Santa Cruz at that. Please? I don't remember what it's called. And then I.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:01:54,100 ] I don't remember how I ended up giving you a ride to the airport, but

that's what I remember.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:01:58,560 ] Yes, I remember that so clearly. I think, okay, what was it? There was a gathering in California.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:02:05,190 ] That was for people who have done work around community accountability and transformative justice related to childhood sexual abuse.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:02:14,670 ] I remember freaking out when we got the email inviting us to speak because it was an email of the two of us. You and Mariam Kaba, I think as well. Mariam Kaba.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:02:27,340 ] Who said that she didn't want to fly.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:02:28,520 ] Mariam was like, 'I'm not going to fly there.' And then we were like, 'What? Why are we on the list with Mia and Mimi and Mariam to speak at this? This is wild.' And I think it's because I had connected with Sujatha Baliga, who was like one of the organizers for the event. But I remember being like, 'Oh my gosh, we're going to go to this. We're going to meet people that I look up to so much, who are so incredible. And they're going to attend our workshop on shame.'

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:02:54,750 ] I was like so nervous and excited about it.' And then I remember we got there and I was like, 'Oh my gosh,' you're a real person here, because I had followed some of the Bay Area transformative justice work as well as just like disability justice. Writing on your, your leaving evidence. Yes. I remember like reading so many different pieces on that and being like, 'I'm going to be in the room with Mia Mingus.' And then we met and you were just so like sweet and down to earth. I feel like it was so nice to just be like on that weirdly nice campus walking around. And then I agree that our real like bonding moment was when you gave us the ride to the airport because it was a weirdly long drive.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:03:36,000 ] It really was. But I can't even remember how it happened. I think it was because we were delayed in leaving, or something. And wasn't it that your ride didn't show up yet, or something? Yes, I think you're right.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:03:47,510 ] It's that we were there, and our ride had canceled, and the two of you had already left. And then I think you came back because you had forgotten something, and saw us like bewildered and stranded in the lobby. Like, how will we ever make it to our flight?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:04:02,930 ] And then I was like, do you guys need a ride to the airport? We're happy to take you. It was very fun. The whole convening was great. Your workshop was really good though, I remember.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:04:12,660 ] And I remember like getting to. like i mean because you gave a workshop i think sonia also with the ahimsa maybe it was actually the ahimsa collective not just sonia they oh right right because they did like a powerpoint and like Like they did like an activity with us and then Arjor was there doing the circle thing. And yeah, it was, that was, I had a great time and it was a weirdly nice campus. It was like.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:04:37,350 ] It was like very nice, but also I remember the view outside of my My room was like. like woods, but there were lights in the woods of like some kind of art installation or something. I was like, there were UFOs in the woods. Yeah. Well, honestly, it kind of looked like that a little bit and I.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:04:57,500 ] And I was like, 'Oh, because on the way drive down to Santa Cruz, I had started listening to Slow Burn for the first time. And so I was like racing back to my room at any moment I could to like listen, continue to listen to the podcast.'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:05:12,010 ] But yeah, that was fun.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:05:14,630 ] It was like a very hilly campus and they're really not wheelchair accessible. buildings and we kept kind of moving from building to building and it was like, 'How do we get there?'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:05:25,160 ] I was, didn't I, didn't I have a scooter and I was like zipping around in my scooter and stuff, but it was like, it was such a maze because so many of the roads or the little pathways weren't real.' Accessible so I'd have to like— I'd get to, I'd be like, 'This is the way to go.' To the, you know, library or dining hall, whatever, and then I'd encounter stairs and have to go all the way back around and try another path and go all the way back around. And I would see people like two and three times, like just continually wait as they were just like walking on their way.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:05:57,070 ] You're like going in one direction, then in the other direction, and you're like, 'No, I'll see you there, I'll see you there.' I'm like, 'Don't worry.'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:06:03,230 ] I'm going to get there eventually. Yeah.'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:06:05,350 ] No, that had it all. It had a mutual aid, community building. And yeah, you and hell being like. We can take you to the airport. I think just was such a like. Beautiful, like queer community moment too. Cause then we were able to meet your partner as well.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:06:19,920 ] And talk about worms. That's like such a, I still remember that so clearly every single time I have an egg carton, I'm like, if only I could get these to me as worms.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:06:30,210 ] If only you could.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:06:31,570 ] And I would happily accept them. Anybody who listens to this podcast, if you live in the Bay Area and you want to bring me a carton or a cardboard, I will take it.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:06:43,390 ] Although, Hell is kind of like, please stop collecting. It's getting to the point where it's a problem now.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:06:50,280 ] Well, and maybe some listeners in Denver can let us know if they have worms and if people can support them with their compost.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:06:59,740 ] Or just general composting in general. You can throw that stuff in. Could you tell us more about your worms?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:07:06,730 ] Yes, I can. Do you want to know that somebody interviewed me for?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:07:11,250 ] Maybe it was like eight years ago now. Honestly, everything since the pandemic began just feels like one long congealed year.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:07:20,400 ] It's wild to think that it's 2025 already.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:07:23,960 ] Somebody interviewed me for a TJ documentary that they were doing and they came to my house and I had. I don't know how worms can, it's probably because I'm always talking about worms. And then, then they were like, 'Can I film some of your worm bin thing for the documentary and have you talk about worms?' And I was like, 'Okay, that's great.' I would love to tell you about my worms. How long do you have? Is this a worm podcast?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:07:50,730 ] You can take it over. Let's say up to five minutes. Yeah. Tell us about worms.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:07:56,970 ] I love vermicomposting. I am so in love with my worms.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:08:02,650 ] I have to restart my warm bins actually now, so it's going to be very exciting to do that because it's actually kind of fun. And I just met somebody who works on a farm here, like an urban farm. And he was like, 'When you get to the point where you need worms, I can give you worms for your worm farm. And I was like, this is amazing.'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:08:21,980 ] I love them. They're like— I mean, you know, I love all the things about it, but in terms of like relating it to this podcast, I just love composting in general. And like the idea that. We can just renew things that other people would assume is waste or are throwing away or, you know, whatever. Like that, given just like a little bit of effort and time, you can. kind of make things new.' Things can you can complete the circle and things begin again and so, like, I love that part and I especially love the worm, like, the vermi composting in particular because they're like, actually, like, it's so cool because if I put an avocado in the worm farm, that's like, gone bad, then I like lift up the avocado shell and it's just all filled with worms. I'm so sorry for anybody listening who doesn't like worms, but it's like all filled with worms and it's like a ball of worms. It's so neat.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:09:18,440 ] Wow. That is very cool.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:09:21,270 ] Scary, but also incredible.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:09:25,190 ] It is a little scary, actually. Yeah, you're right.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:09:27,800 ] Well, and so I think that's a good segue because this is a good everyday practice of liberation is this composting and this kind of like. I don't know, I feel like there's some connection to conflict work there and like.

**Leander (he/they)**

[ 00:09:41,140 ] Yes.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:09:41,740 ] Do you dare look into the compost bin and see the ball of worms and I think I think the ball of worms is kind of often what the kind of group dynamics in a conflict feel like. But yeah, just the next question is what everyday practices of liberation are supportive to you personally?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:10:01,170 ] in this moment.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:10:01,930 ] Well— Okay, but wait, before I answer that, can I just also say, I think also related to conflict stuff and like just dealing you know addressing harm or conflict.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:10:12,760 ] You know, because in the beginning, it's kind of stinky. But then, and you're like, you know, as it's like working itself out, you have to trust the process. And then it becomes this like. I mean, when the compost is done, it just smells like rich earth. Like, you know, if you were like walking in a forest or something.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:10:30,749 ] Anyways, sorry, I could talk about this all day long.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:10:34,630 ] Everyday practices, everyday liberation practices. Well, definitely the worm composting. And I think in general, just any. Any kind of everyday acts or weekly or monthly acts that you're doing to sustain the planet in any way and help to sustain the life on the planet— the planet itself, etc. Like, um, not that those two things are mutually exclusive. To me, it's like a huge practice of liberation because.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:11:02,880 ] And. You know, I always joke, I'm just like, it really doesn't matter how good we are at accountability or what have you, if we don't have a planet.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:11:11,570 ] Like that's. I feel like that really is what— this moment in time, this historical moment— is like about. And then another one is meditation for sure. I would absolutely say, because I think it is.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:11:27,740 ] Meditation, mindfulness, like whatever words you're using for it, for some people, it's just like the act of being present. And, and again, like for a lot of people, nature really helps with that. And I definitely can attest to that. But I do think it's like a core kind of skill set that any kind of growth and transformation, any kind of like trying to be a better human, any kind of being— you know, in relate, trying to build healthy, loving, supportive, you know, transformative relationships. Um, you have to, again, includes the relationship with yourself, but you have to be able to self-reflect. You have to be able to be self-aware. And all of that, plus many, many other things, come out of. Honestly, it's a very, I know, like saying, like meditation, it sounds like this big thing. And certainly there are people who devote their entire lives to it. So it's not— I don't mean to also like water it down in any way, shape or form, or like undermine it. But I also think, at its core, similarly to transformative justice and like accountability work at its core, it's actually very simple.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:12:34,610 ] Like, it's not— we I think we've made it— or, you know, people talk about it like it's this more. You know, big, scary, complicated thing, and again, like meditation, it's not to say that there are there are people who dedicate their lives to it. It's not to say that there's not real skill involved and there's not real analysis. You know, there's a whole framework built around it. So it's not to undermine that either. But, at its core, I feel like so much of it is actually simple. But it's like— It's like these simple choices every day, these daily, minute by minute, hour by hour choices that you're making, whether it's to feel your feelings, whether it's to be vulnerable and be honest and take a risk and have some courage to share how you're actually feeling. About what happened or feeling towards. your friend, your roommate, whoever it is— and not like, suppress, down, you know, your vulnerability, and like, the your authenticity and the truth of who you are, for some, like, well, I'm just gonna do this because it's cooler, because I'm scared I won't be accepted, like, all of these things, plus

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:13:42,660 ] many, many other things, are. Part of what what I think of when I think about, like, how meditation and why meditation is so powerful. Um, I also feel like cooking for me is a huge practice that I do. As much as I can have. I love it. And it is a little bit unfortunate that I have a disability that sometimes gets in the way of, you know, and figure out accessible ways to cook a lot of times, which in and of itself, that process

is also enjoyable in its own way. But I do wish sometimes I could have, like. A bionic body and cook like you know 90 hours in a stretch, which I know nobody can do, but like it would be amazing. Um, But like I've been cooking a lot more, and like just like dropping off food to loved ones. People, you know, people who have kids, et cetera. And so I do think like. There is something beautiful about cooking and like being able to nourish yourself as well as like the people that you love. Um, And.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:14:50,940 ] I don't know if this is like a formal practice, but I also just think happiness is a liberatory practice. Uh, and like just doing things because they're fun and they will make you happy and they will bring joy to your life— not because they're like sophisticated or like you know they're they look cool, but just for fun, just for happiness and joy. I really think that we don't tend to value that. I think we value it like performatively in like a lot of this like subculture of weird movement subculture things that we've built. Um, but I think in general we're pretty mean to each other most of the times. Uh, so I'm also just like maybe having some fun and just doing things for fun. Like, it would really help. A lot.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:15:50,530 ] Yeah, I feel you. I think that I was in this cohort on shared leadership all year, and I think it's obviously important to acknowledge what's going on, but they would start every session with kind of like, you know, reading just a list of really terrible things that had happened. I'm like, 'That doesn't put me in a space to learn,' or 'That doesn't put me in a space to connect.' When you do like check-ins after that, it does kind of bias you towards saying, 'Well, here's how I feel impacted by that,' or 'Here's what's going on when.' Yeah, I think that acknowledging that, you know, there can be a lot of terrible things happening in the world. And also, it's those moments of joy and the things we care about and the love we have for each other and the fact that sometimes things are, yeah, really feel good, you know, and like sometimes, like, you have a great day and you feel really connected to people. And I think that, that's what gives us the capacity to make those small daily choices in alignment with our values.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:16:55,310 ] And when we're stuck in a cycle of being performative and burned out and everything is terrible, then it can feel burdensome or just performative to be like, 'Oh, let me try to like practice access intimacy here or let me try to like show up for someone.' But I think when we're practicing mutual aid from a position of actual joy and love, it doesn't feel like a burden. You know, it feels like, being able to, Yeah, like live into your values and show up for community. Yeah, I really appreciate that connection.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:17:27,770 ] Stas, what everyday practices of liberation are supportive to you this month?

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:17:33,000 ] Hmm. Well, first, I want to circle back to the worms and the conflict, because I think that's maybe going to be a theme here. But the way that you're talking about the worms makes me think about my relationship to mushrooms and fungi. And like the way that Fungi are part of that like decomposition.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:17:56,080 ] process to like rebuild something and I just feel like there's always more



lessons on fungi, like infinite lessons on fungi. I think like. Something that I've been reflecting on a lot, connected to fungi, is just queering the relationship to time. And the way that mushrooms can go through what seems like a very brief life cycle, like they can pop up and disappear within one day. Um, but then also that they like build ecosystems over like hundreds of years, like there are different openings and fields where it's like there's a whole forest and there's like a random what is it called— like a prairie, no. A prairie is too big; it's like a meadow.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:18:38,540 ] The old English word for that is actually 'lee

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:18:40,916 ] '—oh, there you are.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:18:42,370 ] My name is spelled, but like, a meadow.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:18:45,250 ] And oftentimes that meadow was like, being scaffolded by mushrooms in order to shift the ecological environment to create more space for certain types of animals. It's just like the fungi, I think of fungi almost as like we sometimes refer to like our mycelial mother, like we're actually more biologically related to mushrooms than a lot of other beings and they like shape the environment that we're in. In such a short time period and such a long time period. And I feel like recently I've been challenging myself to think more about time the way that a fungal entity would. Of the smallness of like a really tiny opportunity and also the like vastness of scaffolding for generations. I think sometimes in this moment, everything feels urgent and dire and, and so intense. And I think one of the ways that I alleviate that pressure is by asking, like, what's, what does it look like to think of this on the scale of a mushroom and on the scale of a multi-generational like fungal project?

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:19:59,180 ] And. That's been really supportive for me. And I think something that felt like a through line with what you were sharing, Mia, is.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:20:08,090 ] Things can be simple and complex. Like not complicated. It's actually a simple idea, but the deeper you go into something simple, the more nuance and complexity you're able to be present with. It's almost like the more we complicate things, the harder it is to be present with the nuance in it. You know what I mean? And that feels like something that I've learned from my nonna about cooking as well— like when you use so many ingredients and so many different steps, you're not necessarily giving each ingredient the space to shine. And I feel like she's really committed to having simple dishes that highlight the natural ingredients and, you know, if you have the right olive oil. It does wonders for what you're cooking. And, you know, don't cook it. Put it on at the end if it's extra virgin olive oil. And then that's going to be such a critical flavoring— or just salt and pepper. Like so much of the time, what's missing is just some salt and pepper.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:21:10,590 ] And I don't know. I think that. Um, I have a tendency to want a lot of ingredients in my food.



**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:21:18,580 ] Core tension in our household, I would say. I want. Very complicated meals with many different. textures and flavors and Lee wants something.

**Leander (he/they)**

[ 00:21:29,280 ] you know, Simple.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:21:31,080 ] And so how do we find the balance? I'm like, okay, it can be simple, but it needs at least two textures. That's like my go-to. And I do think that the more simple it is, the more you can really be present. With, you know, say the complexity of the flavor of a, you know, small zucchini. Or we were in Paonia with our friend, which is like a.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:21:55,720 ] What is it? It's like a.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:21:57,170 ] It's like an organic valley where a lot of the agriculture in Colorado is produced and a lot of the farmers there don't use pesticides. And it's also like a dark skies community. So there's very little like artificial streetlights.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:22:15,120 ] So our really good friend Zoe, who will hopefully be on the podcast sometime soon, moved there recently. And we went to visit them. And. Their friend and neighbor came over just with like a sweater full of fresh carrots that were still covered in soil that had just been pulled up and was like, 'Here, eat the carrot.' And I was like, 'Okay, yeah, we don't have to clean it. I'm sure it's good for our gut biomes. I'll just stick it in my mouth.' And it was delicious. It was so flavorful—I was like, 'Wow! I don't know when I've most recently really tasted carrot, you know? Yeah.'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:22:49,520 ] And eating things like fresh from the garden or the farm is, it is amazing how much better they taste than the grocery store, you know, and this is no shade to grocery store vegetables. They have kept me alive for a very long time in my, you know. Made basically the whole first half of my life like, but like, I it is amazing though, and one of other practices it's not even proud is like joy is growing food and like I love. Exactly. Like just like eating the carrot that I've just like pulled out or the, you know, kale or whatever it is, the radish, the beet, like. The herbs, whatever. It's so delicious. It doesn't. It doesn't, um, you know, it's interesting because like when you were talking about time it made me think about that I think it went viral. There was like this video that was going around about somebody on TikTok. I don't know. Somebody sent it to me. And I'm not on TikTok.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:23:49,510 ] So I think I would lose literally years, maybe decades of my life if I ever joined TikTok. And so it's like the one thing that's allowing me to still function in the world, but like, if I got it, I don't know that I would do anything else but just be sitting on my couch looking at TikTok because it's so entertaining. But in the video, the person was talking about time and how, um, how like cultures in Africa think about time in a nonlinear way and, and how. Instead of like versus like in the West in the US in particular, like we think about things very linearly. Linearly, that there's like the past, the

present, and the future versus like Other places, and this person was using the example of like cultures in Africa, but I think it's probably, I would assume, beyond, like I would assume it's all over the world that there are different cultures that think about time in different kinds of ways. But like. Fit. That. It's not like that, that it's actually.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:24:46,110 ] You know, to even, even to compare it to like, it's the past, present and future happening all at once still. Like you're understanding it through a Western context. So it's not even. They were like, it's hard to even like. Explain it because it sounds so different than what we have been, most of us who have been socialized in the US particularly, have been like socialized to understand. So, but I just love that. And like when mushrooms, when little mushies come up in my worm farm, I'm very excited. I love them. And I like. Don't always know how they come up, but it's just such a, it's such a like blessing. But then there's so many different types of kinds of mushrooms and like fungi in there. And I think it's probably.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:25:33,630 ] again just like relating leander what you're talking about with conflict that you brought up like I think like around the conflict and harm, like this is.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:25:41,980 ] You know, sometimes I would liken like what I do to like a janitor— like cleaning up messes. They're like, you know, people oftentimes they don't want to clean it up themselves; they want to just call you to like come and clean it up. You know, and then, when you show up, you're like, actually, no— we have to do this together. Like, actually, you're gonna have to. You're gonna have to do things. They're like, what? I don't want to do that. And, you know, I just want to keep making messes. And then I just want to keep calling in somebody else to clean it up, versus like learning how to be in different ways so that there's less mess, hopefully. But like. I was thinking about how it also is very akin to sometimes I refer to myself as a garbage collector that you know, but also a very akin to like composting because it's like, right— these things that are kind of what we would consider gross or undesirable or like, you know, quote unquote, dirty, like, like, stops when you were like, 'The person was just like, eat the carrot.'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:26:44,690 ] And you're like, 'It's probably good for my gut microbiome and stuff.' And it has like dirt on it that. Right. That there's like, I think different ways. If you're a farmer, if you're like an organic farmer, you're like. Yeah, why wouldn't you eat the carrot this way? But if you're not of that world, you're just like, 'What are you asking me to do? This is.'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:27:06,580 ] I'm going to get sick or, you know, whatever things that you're thinking. Also, this concept of time that I feel like.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:27:14,050 ] When you're doing these, for me, when I'm doing these liberatory practices, like whether it's gardening, whether it's cooking, whatever.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:27:22,860 ] What I notice about all of these kind of practices—is that the happiness, the joy, right, like are oftentimes things where you lose the sense of time. You lose your

orientation to time. Like, you know, in like work and artist kind of creative work, they call it like flow state where you like tap into this state where you're. You're not really existing in time in the ways that you normally would. You know, like, I don't know if either of you have ever done something creative—such as a painting or collage, whatever it is. Um, where you just... I know I have. I've just lost all track of time, and then I look up and it's like, two in the morning. And I'm just like, 'What have I been doing?' This is, but it's so amazing when you get in that zone. And I do think that a lot of the stuff— maybe not all of it, but like some of the things. Um, in TJ has I have experienced that you know like when I've experienced like for witnessing people forgive each other which you know like those moments that that oftentimes are like we're in something where we've been sitting for like hours and hours working this working this thing out but then like

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:28:42,690 ] lose all track of time. And I, I don't know. I was just, when you were talking about that, I was like thinking. That there's just something so powerful about that.

**shaina (they/them)**

[ 00:28:55,590 ] Is your team ready to get free together by implementing liberatory collaboration practices?

**shaina (they/them)**

[ 00:29:01,930 ] Our Getting Free Together cohort program runs two times a year. And brings together leaders and decision makers from different organizations to learn from Spring Up and each other about how to practice sharing power and tackling conflict generatively. All participants also get access to a print copy of the Getting Free Together book.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:29:23,200 ] Learn more about the program: Soil is your project to make the conditions for transformative justice.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:29:39,120 ] More irresistible.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:29:42,030 ] What are you celebrating from soil in 2025?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:29:45,190 ] Yes. So that is what we're trying to do. We're trying to. build the conditions to support transformative justice.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:29:55,480 ] not just like me soil, but like, you know, through education, through connecting people, like hopefully that everybody is, that they're doing it too.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:30:06,450 ] You know, and it's weird because I feel like sometimes people think, like, 'the only way to be involved in transformative justice is to run processes and I mean, that's certainly one way. But I'm always like no,' there's so many other, infinite, other ways that you can be practicing this and like helping to support it. Um, and shifting the conditions is one of them. The conditions which allow for harm, conflict, you

know, or maybe a better way to say it is toxic conflict, you know, to occur. Because I actually think, well, one, conflict is inevitable. It's very natural and organic. But two, I think it's actually a very good thing.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:30:45,290 ] It's an opportunity. And it is so much good information that is in conflict.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:30:52,030 ] I think it's a, yeah. I mean, you get two people in a room, eventually they're going to have some kind of conflict. So it's also just like.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:30:58,810 ] We have to stop. I think a lot of people think like, 'Oh, I want you to come teach me about conflict so I never have conflict again.' And I'm like, 'That's not how it works, babe.' Like you gotta. It's just, it's kind of a given— just being a person in the world.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:31:15,010 ] So, anyway, but yes, so soil is like, and the idea kind of behind it was that. You. We're trying to build the soil in which to be able to grow transformative justice. Like what kind of soil does transformative justice need to be able to take root, to thrive? To you, know I mean, to be something that can harvest bounty. Like, I think we have to stop planting plants in toxic and barren soil and expecting that they're going to thrive and then getting upset when it's like, you know, I. I planted all these plants in my raised bed and then I didn't do anything to it. I didn't water it, I didn't check on it, I didn't prep the soil beforehand. I just shoved the plants in and it they died. Or, I only got one pepper. So transformative justice doesn't work. I'm like, well, I.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:32:04,178 ] I think, if I can just jump in. We are the people that cannot keep a plant alive. It's just it's true. We have this lilac tree that we were like on a waiting list to get. We put it in the soil.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:32:16,950 ] We have to come out to you.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:32:18,130 ] It died in two days. It died like faster than I thought was possible.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:32:21,650 ] You're really good at mammals, at like fur babies. So maybe there's a parallel of that, but yeah.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:32:26,510 ] And we do have a great capacity to engage in conversation. Over a really long time. But the plant thing, we need like— we need a mentor for that. We need like a plant nanny to come over and like help us.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:32:41,160 ] I just want to be clear. It's just a metaphor. So in there.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:32:46,660 ] I'm sure there are a lot of people good at conflict, maybe not so good at keeping the plants alive.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:32:55,150 ] Oh, but I love that, though. But also, I'm happy that the mammal thing is working out. That's a good thing. Also, I saw one of the mammals. It was so cute at the beginning of this podcast. Yes.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:33:06,640 ] Um, yeah, so anyway, that's that's the idea. Because, uh, I believe my—I'm just speaking for myself here. I'm not even speaking for soil, but I really believe that there's so much that we can prevent or at least stop from escalating. And getting worse if we build better conditions. Conditions like, you know, people just to not make it so abstract, conditions like, you know, akin to building conditions in your soil, whether that's earthworms, whether that's more microbial, you know, life, et cetera.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:33:39,600 ] Conditions for TJ might be things like more honesty and vulnerability. Might be, you know, having more giving and receiving. Building skills to be able to give and receive more feedback.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:33:52,660 ] Often and early, right? And I'm not talking about in just in work—I mean, just like in our everyday lives, like Feedback from your kids, feedback to your kids, with your partner, with your pets. I don't even think anybody is in a real relationship with any of their pets unless they've actually had a fight with their pets. Like, come on. Like, there's just, it's hard to live together, like, no matter who you're talking about.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:34:17,509 ] Anyways, I-It doesn't have to be adversarial, but they do win a lot of the time, which really-They win every fight!

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:34:23,560 ] Every time!

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:34:25,090 ] Let's talk about it. And I mean, that really like unseats what you also perceive about the power dynamics, which obviously we have a lot of power, but. They very much have power too.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:34:34,190 ] Yeah, especially when they outnumber us as much as our babies do.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:34:38,400 ] Wait, how many do you have? Five.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:34:42,560 ] Wow, that's a lot. We need some cameos.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:34:44,620 ] But yeah, we've had them between the youngest is about to be six and the oldest are about to be.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:34:52,980 ] 10 and all of them we've had since they were babies.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:34:56,550 ] Yes, we learned somewhere that they're most likely to accept each other if you bring the next one in. Within two years. And we just took that really seriously and kept bringing in more animals. And we're like, 'Oh my gosh, we need to stop now.' But I think that this idea of conflict is inevitable.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:35:15,290 ] It's not inherently destructive.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:35:17,930 ] It is something that gives you really important information about yourself and the people around you and the animals around you. And your environment, it's a good assessment of how rich the soil is as well. Like you learn so much more about what foundations exist and don't exist as you're navigating conflict with one another. And I think also something that I'm that I've been reflecting on a lot. I think it was that first weekend in California. I think we were. For some reason, I remember us eating rice and having this conversation. And you mentioned something about How?

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:35:54,819 ] What did I ask? I think I asked you like so many questions that weekend. But I remember.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:36:01,350 ] I remember thinking about we were at the time leading transformative justice processes statewide in Florida. And with all abolitionist organizers and youth organizers as well. And just like really struggling with the scale. The lack of community that people felt, the way that people disappeared as soon as harm happened. And I remember you had done the pod mapping workshop that was kind of rethinking community as the actual people that you turned to.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:36:33,379 ] And I had used that worksheet a few times in different processes. And almost every time people were like, 'I don't have people' or 'I tried to turn to people and they all disappeared when this went wrong.' And I was asking you questions about that. And I remember so clearly you said something about how you found that it was—almost easier to do this work with people who were in real community with each other that wasn't predicated on organizing. And that trying to do the work with organizers whose primary relationship was oriented around doing this specific thing together. Made it often harder. And it was harder to almost construct the community around the conflict and harm instead of having a community that's ready to engage. And when I tell you that, moment and that conversation.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:37:33,700 ] Put my life on a completely new trajectory. Like. I'm gonna get emotional like seriously I remember at that moment I was feeling so almost like used in organizing relationships. Like I felt like my purpose, the reason why I existed in organizing, was to provide a specific service. And.

### Stas (they/them)

[ 00:37:55,640 ] And I realized that I had so few actual relationships with people, like so few people. Like I remember doing the pod mapping activity for myself and being like, 'Oh, there's all these organizers.' And I was like, 'Wait, they all turn to me.' It would be so hard for me to imagine, like, really meaningfully turning to these folks. And it would be easier to imagine turning to them when something went wrong. But what does. what does the foundation of our relationship even really look like? And since we moved to Colorado six years ago, that's been like.

### Stas (they/them)

[ 00:38:26,810 ] A cornerstone in the way that I've decided to design my life is like: I need to prioritize having like. real human relationships with people like those who we have shared values, but our primary ties to each other are not predicated on an organization we're a part of or a specific interpretation of a movement that we met each other through. It's people who know me as a playful human who loves makeup, media, memes, eating, cocktails, and And we have shared values and we talk about those values in our lives. And we'll do organizing stuff together, but that's not the foundation of our relationship. And it's been truly transformative. I use that word intentionally. It's been transformative to see the way that my community has been able to navigate conflict and harm with one another.

### Stas (they/them)

[ 00:39:27,280 ] So organically, like I feel like there was like an organic way of responding, and then it became really structured. And now we're doing TJ, and we're bringing these groups together, and we're doing this process. It's not working, you know, quote unquote. And people are having unreasonable expectations of each other, and perfectionism is driving it. And does it even work? And people are weaponizing this language. And then I was like, 'Ah!' And I reformed my life around actual friendships and relationships. And it feels so real and natural again— of like, just how we, how we stay in relationship with one another, how we show up for one another, how we. get to know ourselves and each other. And I just, like, I wanted to take this opportunity to say, like, deeply thank you so much for saying that to me at that time, because I think I would have lost so much hope continuing in the path that I was in.

### Stas (they/them)

[ 00:40:19,840 ] And I feel so much more grounded in joy. and playfulness, and like real relationships that has that has rekindled this sense of belief that like we really can move through this together and it's so clear to me that the biggest difference was the condition of the soil. was The— the kind of foundations that I was trying to do TJ work in, in an organizing setting, compared to trying to practice. in real relationships is just It's been like a complete 180 for me.

### Mia (she/her)

[ 00:40:56,290 ] Oh my gosh, I love that stass. Also I don't remember saying that to you.

### Mia (she/her)

[ 00:41:05,160 ] Like sometimes when you go back and like you reread something you've written, like in a journal or like on the internet, and you're like. Wow, this person sounds really smart. I don't remember like but thank you though I think that there's so many really important things in terms of what you're sharing and like, why I, I mean, I definitely. That has been something that I have learned about. I learned about TJ early on and that I, I mean, I wrote about it in the pods thing, essentially, of just like the



oftentimes.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:41:38,960 ] Even seasoned activists and organizers, when they're doing their pod maps, they're just like.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:41:44,330 ] I don't even know who I would call because everybody's at 10,000 meetings all the time or they're organizing a protest or they're overworking themselves or they don't have any time. Because that's the one half day in the week that they allow themselves to pick up their prescriptions and cook their food and get their laundry done or clean their apartment.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:42:06,250 ] What I want to say about what you're saying. There's a couple things. So one is that, when you're talking about play, I just feel like it's so, play.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:42:15,780 ] We talked about joy and happiness, silliness. So all of these things are so important and they seem so small and insignificant. And especially in the weird, again, movement subcultures that we've built and like. created collectively.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:42:33,759 ] They don't seem as important. And, you know, Lee, when you were saying earlier, like when you were at that gathering and they started off by just like reading off all the terrible things that are happening. It's like. When we're trying to navigate through conflict or harm or some kind of rupture, like whatever it is that happened.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:42:53,970 ] It is so much easier to do that when you have a kind of well-filled that you've banked up of like joy and silliness and play. And when you get to know somebody in that way and that your relationship with them has. That gives because all of those things create more spaciousness. They are anti-inflammatory, like literally, you know, contracting is inflammatory. And I'm not saying that inflammatory is always bad. If you sprain your ankle and your ankle swells up, that's an inflammatory response and it's important. And that means that it's sending more blood to help to heal your ankle, essentially. And so it's not that it's always bad, but it's when it's chronic and constant, and when we don't have any other way to exist in the world other than inflammation.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:43:51,110 ] I'm talking metaphorically, but also literally. And I just, it's not even like, oh, silliness and joy and play are fun and enjoyable. And so they're, you know, they feel good. It's that they're absolutely necessary. And especially when we talk about ruptures that happen and being able to navigate them in generative ways. If the three of us are comrades and friends and deep friends, right? And we have a lot of play, silliness, and joyfulness.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:44:20,270 ] You know, like us. Do things together that make us all happy. And like, you know, whether it's like putting on makeup together, like you were saying, or like watching a silly movie or something like. Playing a silly game, like all I am more likely you

are more likely to extend the benefit of doubt to me to to have more curiosity. Also, curiosity is another thing that invites um— it creates more spaciousness. It is it is anti-inflammatory like these. These are all things that we're more likely to do. But if we're— if all of what our relationship is about is like this hard kind of like, you know. What have you done today to help, like, whatever group that's currently? And if you haven't, then you're a bad human being. Like if it's built on guilt and shame, if it's built on contraction and force and kind of a 'Hey.' Um, What is the word? Judgment. You know, oh my gosh, we dole out judgment like it's candy.

#### **Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:45:20,920 ] Like we just, that's like all we know how to do sometimes. And it's so terrible for our mental health, our physical health, our emotional and spiritual health, everything. It's so terrible for our relationships. And so then, of course, you're in movement culture that's. That's so it's, you know, it's rife with judgment, shame, anger, like all of these things that, and again, none of these things are like. They all have— they're not. I'm not saying that they're terrible all the time and like, inherently, they have. They have good information that they are bringing to us, you know.

#### **Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:45:58,870 ] Anger is anger. Anger is a useful emotion. It's an important emotion. Like, it's not to downplay any of that, but it is to say that over and over again, chronically, where that's all that you're doing every day, you're taking in trauma every day. And listen, the fact that we met each other at a convening around childhood sexual abuse, like. I— I am no stranger to doing work that is really emotionally draining and that is hard, where you are taking in trauma every day, where you do get angry about what you're hearing and like the injustice that's happening. How nobody cares— all the things but, like. If that's the only primary way that we know each other, it's going to be so much harder for us to navigate.

#### **Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:46:48,700 ] Navigating the nuances and to get to softness. Because if we are constantly having to be hard all the time, it's like, you know, how they always say, like, whatever you practice is what you will get better at. If you practice vulnerability more, you will get better at vulnerability. But if we practice being hard all the time and like kind of closed off and judgmental and we have practiced judgment to the point where we are all experts in it. We don't— We don't have any problem with that, but we haven't practiced things like, you know, being able to say the hard and vulnerable soft thing, you know, in a room. Like, yeah, a lot more of us have practiced like the more righteous kind of. Like I said, the angry thing in the room. And sometimes that is needed. That is medicine that is absolutely needed sometimes. No shade to that. Like, um, I just feel like there's, it's, um, in organizing culture, so often, not all the time. But oftentimes we just don't have enough.

#### **Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:47:49,980 ] Of the spaciousness we don't have enough of the levity that's why I love all the protests that are like, people singing and dancing outside, or like, throwing flowers at that side, or you know, like, bringing kids, dressing up in costumes. I saw the thing in Portland where they were like, all wearing like workout gear and like, doing like an aerobics routine or something. I was like, this is amazing. Or like the nude bike rides that they were doing to protest. And, you know, and I'm not saying that there's not a place for some of the harder protests, like absolutely. But I just think that. Um, it's not a coincidence to me. That given those kind of cultures that we've created, that we have a

revolving door of so many people leaving. Movement work and or burning out or needing to to go heal, but and but if you have to leave, if people have to leave your movement to heal, that should be a giant red flag that that there's work to do inside of our movement culture. Like this is not okay.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:48:50,830 ] So I was thinking about that. And then I was also thinking about when you were talking, Stas, about like how.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:48:58,200 ] Shared purpose can also be like hugely connecting and like it can be a power in and of itself. But if it's the only thing, and if it's like— If there's no like, affection that goes with that, there's no true connection and like authenticity that, you know, like. It's like when you work on a project together, like maybe you are, I don't know, building a ladder together or something, or you're building a deck and I don't know how to do either of those things. So I just, I don't want to pretend like I don't be able to hear this and be like, 'Oh my God, Mia is such a badass.' No, I don't know how to do any of that. But like, let's say that you have to do that. You know, the whole time you're going to be talking. Ideally, you're going to be getting to know each other. But I don't feel like that's all the time. What happens, you know? When we're having shared purpose and we are utilizing that as though it's the only thing. But shared purpose is like one of what I think it's like five things that they said or maybe six things that are like key ways of.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:49:59,090 ] of of connecting and like having building real relationships and so I don't know. I was thinking about that and like when you were saying like building real human relationships like that that's what I'm trying to do. I love it and I was just thinking that is so sad. That you were an organizer.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:50:20,700 ] and then here you are telling me, and so now, then I was able to build real human relationships, and like my life is totally different now. And I'm like, it's so unfortunate that.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:50:33,790 ] Why can't we do that in the work that we're doing? What is the disconnect and where is the gap? Because in my head, there's nothing stopping us from being able to do that.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:50:48,280 ] Yeah, absolutely. And in, I think one thing I wanted to add is I think part of the you know, dynamic around conflict avoidance is that people sometimes only use the word conflict when the conversation doesn't go well. Like I see a lot of people having good check-ins, good feedback conversations, good reflections, and then they don't see that as 'That was a conflict we navigated.' That was tension we moved through. That was like, you know, a time when we address something and move closer together. We only use the word 'conflict' when it's

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:51:28,930 ] 'Something went wrong.'

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:51:30,530 ] Or there was a blow-up, or there was a fallout, or there's something that there needs to be repaired from. and so I think that's another way that we don't create, like, I like to say, like, let's start with what is working, like, what communication or feedback structure like do you have that feels good and then how can you build from that.

**shaïna (they/them)**

[ 00:51:55,320 ] We offer retreats, webinars, and courses on topics like conflict and shared decision-making throughout the year on our learning platform, Blue Light Academy of the Liberatory Arts. Learn more at [bluelight.academy](https://bluelight.academy) and get discounted access to all our upcoming and past webinars by becoming a Patreon supporter at [patreon.com/slash/cultivate-consent](https://patreon.com/slash/cultivate-consent).

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:52:19,910 ] I'd love to switch into our media focus. And I was wondering if we could talk about K-pop demon hunters.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:52:29,210 ] Yes!

**shaïna (they/them)**

[ 00:52:30,540 ] Did you watch it?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:52:31,840 ] I did!

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:52:33,560 ] Oh my gosh. Is this the first time you're talking about it on the podcast? Yes, it is.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:52:38,240 ] And I just want to, I want to cede most of the rest of our time to you. But what I want to say is that. Thank you.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:52:44,730 ] I debuted my drag house with my Drag Sun's first performance was we were the Saja Boys in demon form on Halloween.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:52:55,670 ] Not doing soda pop. No.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:52:57,650 ] Doing your idol. And it was such a beautiful bonding moment for us and for their first drag performance.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:53:06,220 ] Anyway, it's a very special place in my heart because of that. And also I love K-pop Demon Hunters in general. But yeah, I'll share that that's a little bit of my connection. To it is that my drag sons Bayard Thruston and Raw Man Nudes performed alongside me as the Satya Boys.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:53:27,800 ] That is amazing!

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:53:29,820 ] I love that.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:53:32,190 ] Oh my gosh, yes, I watched it, but you know, I watched it. Um, I watched it reluctantly. My friend, I've— I was going to say I have two friends. I mean, I have more than two friends, but like these two friends.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:53:47,790 ] recommended it to me. And I was kind of like. I don't know. Like, cause you know, you just never, I feel like Netflix has also become just like a weird place.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:53:59,320 ] Like it used to be so, it was like a weird kind of like.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:54:04,540 ] B-movie rental kind of place for a while. And then it was good, I felt like. And then it veered off into strange territory where now I'm just like, what are these things now that are on Netflix? So, anyway, so I didn't know if it was going to be something. Really, just not great or whatever, but they were like, 'It's so good, it's so good. You have to watch it. You know, one of the people is queer Korean. So I was like, 'Okay, okay, all right.' And then my partner and I, you know, both of us are queer Korean. So I was like, 'Hell, do you want to watch this movie with me? I'm going to watch it if you want to watch it.' She was like, 'Okay, okay, we'll watch it.' and we couldn't stop it was so we thought we were gonna just watch like half of it one night and then like no actually no to be honest we thought we'd watch like 15 minutes and realize yeah this isn't really for us But it was so good. um I mean, I love K-pop just in general. So it was also really fun to listen to the music. Some of the notes. that these singers hit in golden i was just like Amazing.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:55:05,720 ] This is amazing. How are you doing this?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:55:09,420 ] Anyways, I mean, I know like They're singing for cartoons, but also I'm like you should be like your own famous singer.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:55:17,810 ] And the three of them have been performing more together. So very exciting, wonderful developments. I'm so happy for them.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:55:25,750 ] But I think that I also was like, okay, it's a kid's movie. We'll see. You know, I love watching animated films, so I'll get into it. And I was like, wait, this is incredible. The commentary on shame.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:55:35,819 ] Yes, a thousand percent. And of course, I was joking with my partner. I was like, 'Of course, a Korean movie is going to talk about shame, which makes so much sense, like from.' Anyways, but yes, yes, the commentary on shame—the— I

mean, I think also just I love the friendship that's at the center of the movie. There's so many pieces about.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:55:57,970 ] And again, I don't know. I probably haven't said this to you, but I say this all the time: that the ways in which Hollywood is obsessed with adoptees and orphans, like they're— obsessed all of the biggest franchises— like anytime there's a nine times out of ten, I if I can bet money that the person at the center they're not going to know who their parents were or their their parents left them somewhere or they were adopted by a different family, like just they're obsessed with us. I'm not in real life— like in real life, they're like, 'We don't give a about you.' But like in In these fantasy movies. Yes, yes.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:56:34,190 ] No matter what it's from.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:56:36,980 ] Anyways, I know you're going to talk about. We can all think of examples in our heads without having to bring them up. Um, But yes, K-pop Demon Hunter is so good. And the stuff around shame, the stuff around accepting yourself.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:56:53,610 ] From who you are breaking your patterns and like your ancestral patterns, whether that's like your own patterns, intergenerational patterns. It just there was so many powerful messages that I do wish that there had been queer love at the center. But other than that, there was so many, I mean. But yeah, it was so good.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:57:14,230 ] I really, really like it.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:57:15,560 ] Maybe in the sequel, which they're going to make. And then I think also the Genu Can you be redeemed? And like the way that he lied about what had happened too, because even in his like kind of condemned form, he couldn't really.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:57:30,580 ] Acknowledge, like, what he had done, and yeah, I think just like kind of being trapped, like he was also very trapped in his shame, and ultimately, I think, kind of, like, couldn't really move on.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 00:57:41,260 ] Also, just like the drive to have your memory erased of the worst thing that you did too, is like such an interesting kind of. Point about what is and isn't possible from a repair process, and like, what do people often hope can happen? What's the underlying need there? And like, just how much the lack of self-acceptance exposes you to, like, vulnerability around manipulation as well.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:58:06,200 ] Yeah, and I see that from people who are being asked to be accountable for harm and are in kind of a shame-based place or feel shamed where they say, like, 'What, do you just want me to, like, not exist anymore or to not, like, you know?' And I think that's what Genu— the demon— kind of represents. Yeah, let's just close this by

saying I'm so glad the golden honeymoon has been achieved. Thank goodness. And that we're all safe now.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:58:28,710 ] Wait, can I just also say one other thing which is one thing that was really interesting about Both. Right, Gnu and like both of the leads that they both had a ton of shame. They both thought that they had, like, done something bad or that they were about, like, that they are bad. So I think it's shame and guilt, right? Like, but that they. But that, because one of them was like, the main protagonist of the story. We and kind of were already framed as like good. We already were kind of on like her side. You know.

**Leander (he/they)**

[ 00:59:01,030 ] Um.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:59:02,580 ] And I do think. I. I don't know. I just, I think that there's something around like.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:59:09,990 ] It's like redemption, but it's also Uh, this like deep deep belonging. You know, like how, when you, because even like The three friendships, right, that are a part, oh my gosh, by the way, the eating scenes were so fun. Those are some of my favorite scenes in the whole. In the whole movie. But, like, that even with that. Um, that there wasn't like Thank you. There was still such deep shame and that, that even, and as well as like the kind of.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:59:42,150 ] The ways that. Other people will participate in that shame right in creating that shame, like like I don't know what would we call her— like an adoptive mother or we call her like a mentor.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:59:55,010 ] Yeah, or was it her actual aunt, though? I think she was her actual aunt.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 00:59:59,050 ] No, it was the person who was in the mother's singing group.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:00:04,480 ] Um. Okay, I think she was like a godmother or like a adoptive parent or a guardian.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:00:10,470 ] A guardian. I think, yeah. But that even she was like no, no you have to hide it like you can't if you can't show it yeah especially exactly and so it's like But when I say even her, I mean like even somebody who is supposed to, who is like caring for you and raising you, you know? that is and that that's so common as well like in just in the ways that intergenerational Yeah. harm happens.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:00:36,070 ] Yeah, and I think that it's also interesting the way that like the more she tries to suppress it, the more it comes up in her. And like even just the peeking in the



neck and then wearing the turtleneck. And like, there's like a lot of interesting kind of even physical capturing of like how shame shows up. And I know we're towards the end of our time. I'll see one other idea. I don't know that you've seen it, but there's a new show called All Her Fault that came out on Peacock. I believe and a lot of interesting connection points around shame and secrets and it's called All Her Fault, but almost every episode There's a different sense of who the 'her' is, like who's the one whose fault it is. But it's generally about a family whose son is kidnapped.

#### **Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:01:22,930 ] Kind of uncovering who took the son and how do they get the son back? And it's like a mystery. And they kind of all have secrets and are complicit to some degree in what happened to the son. And like, as you get towards the end, there's deeper and deeper family histories that have been hidden by shame and come out in these big moments of rupture. And disclosure at like the worst possible time and you see how they kind of navigate that and the people who you first thought were bad are actually maybe not as bad as you thought and the people who you saw as heroic actually have these deep, dark secrets. And people who are positioned as caregivers are actually manipulative through the caring. It's a very interesting dynamic, particularly commenting on like gender norms and how that relates to blame in family systems. But I think specifically that idea of, like, the shame and the secrets and the way that they build over time, is a really interesting connection point to all her fault.

#### **Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:02:17,720 ] Yes. Well, I've heard about it and now I really want to see it. I want, I was like interested in it, but now here you should like do trailers for movies and shows.

#### **Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:02:27,220 ] Yeah, well, I mean, I think, yeah, that's our real aim with this podcast is just getting people to watch shows and play games that we like. Yeah.

#### **Beautiful Chorus**

[ 01:02:35,440 ] Yeah. Bring out the silliness.

#### **Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:02:37,260 ] What are the games that you like to play? Oh my gosh, don't get us started. We play a lot of games. Board games. We're designing a role-playing game that's called Righteous Consequences. Very fun. And just all sorts of games. Lots of games.

#### **Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:02:51,200 ] We play a lot of Switch games too. But like—on the Nintendo Switch. Lots of different versions there. But we have several different gaming meetups. I think this year we've been doing the role-playing game for a few years now. And then we've met several other people who are into video and board games. So we have a 12-hour game-a-thon. coming up in a couple weeks.

#### **Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:03:13,410 ] Yeah, one of my friends is having a treatment in Germany. And so we're playing Ticket to Ride on our phones with each other while she's in Germany in treatment, which is great.

#### **Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:03:24,010 ] and um i will say are you familiar with wingspan or like the extended games oh my god i have not played it yet, but several people have recommended it to me and i really want to learn it.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:03:36,230 ] yes.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:03:36,470 ] well, have you heard of wormspan?

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:03:39,470 ] yeah, wormspan. yes, it's the dragon version of wingspan. so it's all different dragons. and then there's also finspan, which is all fish.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:03:53,510 ] we play those a lot. they're kind of crunchy and detailed, and you've got to set aside a few hours to play it, especially the first time, but it's worth it. it's an amazing game, and on every card you get to learn. facts about real fish or birds or real dragons, of course. fantastic games. and talk about something that builds a pod. Is a board gaming group, a fantastic group of four or five that meets regularly and has each other's information. So just putting a plug for board gaming groups or RPG groups is a fantastic foundation for pod building.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:04:28,760 ] Are you saying that you have a pod that is just playing board games? Is that what you're telling me?

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:04:33,580 ] Yes, I'm saying we have an RPG pod and we have a board game pod.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:04:37,300 ] I love it.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:04:38,310 ] Yeah.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:04:39,830 ] Have you all played Hanabi?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:04:43,120 ] I think you would really like it. It's not a board game. It's cards, but it's a collective game. And I learned it when we had two of our friends come to visit and their partners and they brought. how to be with them. and I fully fully I highly recommend it. It is very fun. Because I'm trying to learn more collective games because I really like the I mean course i like the concept of it, but but you know, I just feel like in the US, especially, like, there's not people are like, why would you play a collective game? Like, who's the winner? And it's like, yeah, that's exactly, that's exactly why. But Hanabi is actually really good. Like, so I, it's, I don't even know how to explain it. It's like, it deals with like numbers and colors and. But it is very addictive as well. And then, have you played Hive?

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:05:34,690 ] I call it the bug game, but it's actually called Hive. It is really good too. And it's not a collective game. It's like you just get these little, like tiles— they kind of look like dominoes, but they're in a hot, like a beehive, um, hexagon shapes and they're bugs, and they have different little, like powers or moves they can do, and so and you can play it anywhere— you don't even need a board— so you. That's what's so great about it. And you create your own board, kind of like dominoes. It's so good. And it's won, like, all kinds of awards. It's a very addictive game. And then there's like an expansion set where you can buy other extra bugs that also have different powers.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:06:13,910 ] It's very fun. Incredible. Well, I love a hive concept for a board game. And actually, someone recommended Hanabi to me last week, and that was the first time I heard of it. So clearly, it's meant to be. I gotta get this deck like immediately and start playing it. And we can bring it to our game-a-thon that's happening in a couple weeks. So the premise is: whoever wins the previous game gets to decide the next game or activity. If we all win, then we'll collectively decide by consensus. So I'm very excited for this, and I'll get this game.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:06:46,170 ] Well, and then, if you bring the game, then you will all win because it's a collective game, which is.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:06:52,029 ] Oh my gosh.

**Beautiful Chorus**

[ 01:06:52,690 ] And then, if I ever see you again, we could play. If you ever see me again, hopefully we'll see each other. Yeah, I hope so, but you know, with the pandemic, no— it's fair. It's fair.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:07:05,120 ] And we can always see each other.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:07:07,720 ] On Zoom, yeah, and if we both—well, we can play.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:07:10,486 ] I know, because I like you all so much.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:07:14,000 ] This was so fun.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:07:15,020 ] I know the podcast is really just like good excuse to hang out with people. Yes. And yeah, I enjoyed this conversation so much. Thank you so much for making time for this. And yeah, I really, yeah. All your insights about the work you've been doing with soil. And I think that, yeah, that's such a powerful journey to step out of being like. I'm gonna be all involved in everyone's conflicts to be like, what's going on? That we collectively are not doing amazingly at this.

**Stas (they/them)**

[ 01:07:43,630 ] It's a very fungal mindset to pull back and do that deeper underlying

work, which we're also very passionate about. Yes.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:07:51,120 ] And yeah, I know the way that you've shaped the ecosystem when it comes to disability justice just means so much to us and so many of our friends. And yeah, it's such an honor to be a peer in this transformative justice work with you.

**Mia (she/her)**

[ 01:08:04,759 ] Thank you so much for having me. It was such a joy to talk to you.

**Beautiful Chorus**

[ 01:08:15,260 ] Universes, thriving, fully alive. Sensitive, resilient, we're everywhere, we're brilliant. Mycelium wing: Dive, go deeper, branch out, sustain life, feel your. Every step we carry nutrients, suction to nourishing, we're elegant and flourishing.