

Shameless Theology

S2:01 - Spiritual Violence and the Fight for Liberated Faith

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 00:00

Welcome to Shameless Theology, a space for honest, courageous conversations with queer, trans, and feminist people of faith and our allies. This podcast is brought to you by Soulforce, who is an international organization working to end the religious and political oppression of LGBTQIA plus people and all marginalized people by breaking open the ideologies of white Christian supremacy. I'm Reverend Alba Onofrio, also known as Reverend Sex. I'm the executive director at Soulforce, and I am honored and delighted to be your host as we dive into the thick of it.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 00:52

This season is exciting because it goes deep on the ideas of our brand new book called Spiritual Violence, religious phenomena that defile the faith. Together we'll learn new concepts like spiritual trauma, religious abuse, spiritual terrorism, white Christian supremacy, and spiritual violence. Together we name the harm, not as abstract theories but as lived realities. But we don't stop there because theory work is only as good as the path it leads to healing, and we'll be doing plenty of that too. These conversations are part idea session, part theological reflection, and part testimony.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 01:28

You'll hear stories of resilience, liminality, code switching, theological imagination, and a kind of dogged, persevering hope that refuses to let go of the sacred even when our institutions fail us. Whether you're here because you have questions or because you are healing, teaching, leading, or simply trying to make sense of your own experience, you are so very welcome here. You are not alone on this journey. Now let's get down to business and pleasure with Shameless Theology.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 02:00

Hey y'all, welcome back to a new season of Shameless Theology, known to many of you as Teología Sin Vergüenza, or TSV, because our first eight seasons were in Spanish. So for anyone who is new to our community of La Sinvergüenza, you might want to go back and check out English Season 1, where we explain some of the cultural meaning and nuance behind the term Sinvergüenza and its significance to our work. Basically though, a Sinvergüenza is someone who sheds the expectations and judgment from the world around us and dares to live into the truest, most self-possessed version of ourselves, shamelessly.

This season, we're going to have more scandalous conversations with incredible guests about the ideas presented in our new book called Spiritual Violence, Religious Phenomena that defile the faith.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 02:52

The work of the book is to introduce our communities to some new concepts like spiritual terrorism and religious abuse and white Christian supremacy. While the work of this season of Shameless Theology is to take those ideas and contextualize them through the brilliance and lived experience of this season's guests. It's going to be amazing. So many people have had a hand on working on this book project, and I am very excited to introduce it and share these conversations with you. Today's episode is going to be a little bit different than the rest of the season, because today we want to ground everything we're talking about in shared language and start by telling you a bit more about the content of the book.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 03:33

Nadia and I will introduce concepts, talk about the work that went into creating the book content, and close out with our hopes for how it might help us live into this current moment. Now more than ever, it's important to name violence clearly, to understand the power dynamics behind that violence, and to encourage conversations about how we respond and heal. Now the rest of the season's episodes will share longer, more nuanced conversations with expert scholars and activists about their lived work connected to the themes in the book.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 04:07

These are amazing, in-depth conversations that we hope will encourage you to continue understanding and combating spiritual violence in your own community and in your own spirit. Okay, now let's get into today's episode with an intro to spiritual violence and religious phenomena that defile the faith.

Nadia Arellano | 04:27

Hi friends, we are very happy to be in another season. Thank you for joining us. This new season of the podcast is going to be very exciting for us, and I hope that it is exciting to you as well, because it will be centered on a book that we are recently launching, and that we are super, super excited about, and that we hope can ignite conversations between many different people. So first, my name is Nadia, and I am here today with the main writer of the book, Rev.

Alba Onofrio, Reverend Sex.

Nadia Arellano | 05:09

Welcome, Alba!

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 05:10

Thank you!

Nadia Arellano | 05:12

Would you like to share some more about the book?

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 05:14

Yes, I would love to. This is a book that has been adapted and interpreted. It was originally created as an idea, a transnational collaboration between queer and feminist Latines in three different countries and edited by a couple of people in a couple more countries. And we created this beautiful project a few years ago in Spanish, and it was for a general population audience. Now we have the same conceptual content, but adapted and fully rewritten for a U.S. context. So it's a way of introducing the concepts that Soulforce has been working on for decades in a book format that gives you really cool conceptual ideas, rigorous thinking through of those ideas of white Christian supremacy, spiritual violence, spiritual terrorism, religious abuse, and spiritual trauma.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 06:06

And then we also have other ways of learning in there, like, for example, each concept has at least one case study of somebody's real lived experience, including yours that's in the book that folks can understand. How do we apply this idea in real life? How has this affected real people and real humans in our in our generation, in our time period? And then it also has somatic body practices, which was done. Those were all created by Dr. Judith Fajardo, and she is in Colombia.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 06:36

And those are done to help us move through the emotions that may come up as we talk about these really hard things in the book.

Nadia Arellano | 06:43

Yes. And as you were saying, this book is an adaptation. And it was, to me, it was amazing to see people's response to the book in Spanish. I don't think we were expecting so many diverse people to feel excited and interested in the book.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 07:05

Yeah, I think there's a thing about naming something. So so many people, we have this experience a time and time again. And I know you have had this experience with our people also where it's these lived experiences that we have, but we don't necessarily have a name to talk about those things. So one of the main things of this book is just helping us all have a dialogue around the same vocabulary words. And so we see that all the time, right?

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 07:30

Like people are like, oh, that's spiritual violence that I experienced. Or that's religious abuse that I experienced. It was like, I know something isn't right and it feels bad in my body, but I don't have any way to talk about it because I don't know how to name it other than it didn't feel good.

Nadia Arellano | 07:48

And that feels very, very, very important. Well, first of all, we haven't said the name of the title. Yes. So the title of the book is spiritual violence, religious phenomena that defile the faith. Yes. And as you were saying, a big part of the book is conceptualizing, like systematizing things, putting words into concepts that we have experienced in our bodies and especially with something like spirituality. Sometimes people associate spirituality with something that is abstract, that is like untouchable and undefinable. Yes.

Like something that is blurry and that cannot be described.

Nadia Arellano | 08:42

Yeah. And in a sense, it is, but that is also a trap. Yes. That is also a way to to make it even less reachable, like accessible and it is less accountable. Right. Right. Because you, how would you start creating laws or creating protocols? Yep. I guess something that is so blurry, so confusing. And so, yeah, like, unreachable.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 09:11

Yes. Or diverse. And so everybody's is so different and unique that we can't possibly put any boundaries around what is unacceptable forms of handling spirituality. But there's a piece that happens around power that is always identifiable. And that is what we're talking about so much in this book is how people misuse and abuse both religion and particularly Christianity and how power gets abused and how that power is the thing that we can look at, name and call out when it's not OK.

Nadia Arellano | 09:48

And that is something that I deeply value about this book, that the concepts are both very broad in terms of allowing us to name different experiences of different religious traditions, different contexts, different backgrounds, but they are also very specific and they are also very like, I know there was a lot of work into crafting definitions that could actually help spiritual violence in particular is a concept that so many people once we name it, yes, many people have experienced it. And so many people can point it out in their life stories, in their bodies.

Nadia Arellano | 10:33

And it's so interesting to me, maybe because I talk about this every day and we we do a lot of work relating to this. It's so surprising to me how often people will hear spiritual violence and that sounds like they get they're surprised like they are like, what is that? I didn't know that existed. What do you mean, spiritual? Like those two concepts, spirituality and violence are not usually put together, even though what it's naming is everywhere. It's basically the water that we swim in.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 11:09

Yeah, and maybe we should say a little bit about what spiritual violence is. And the book goes into it more, but we're talking about this. Reality that happens at all levels of society from your random cat call on the street all the way up to entire governments and global systems to intimate relationships like with your parents, for example. And it's any time that the human dignity and sacred worth of a person is harmed, basically, in many different ways. Emotional harm, physical harm, psychological harm.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 11:47

But it's done in the name of God or in the name of the Bible says, etc., etc. But it's a way of weaponizing God and weaponizing Christianity in this context to degrade someone else or to cause them harm or hurt that comes with this authority of God behind it. And so I think that's the thing that feels so hard is because we're taught that God is always good and churches are always good and pastors are always good and faith leaders are always good.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 12:15

And what this book, I feel like bravely does is name that that can't be taken as a given because just like anything else, the Bible can be used to affirm and it can be used to tear down. It can be used to heal and it can be used to violate and to harm.

Nadia Arellano | 12:31

Right. And I love that concept specifically because it is helpful even if you do not believe in anything spiritual. Whatever you believe, I think the concept makes a really good job. Like trying to define spirituality. But it's something that you cannot deny. Like this when we talk about sacred dignity or apparent worth of a person. Yes. And how that is connected to something that is it's not fully psychological. It's not fully emotional. It's not fully physical, but it's all of those combined.

Nadia Arellano | 13:11

Yeah, I think the spiritual violence as a concept feels very undeniable. Yes. And if you are not a believer. Yes. And for those of us who might not be familiar with the work of so forth. We talk a lot about spiritual violence. We also talk about white Christian supremacy as a system of power. And those are two of the biggest concepts in this concept in this book. Yes. And after that, the book tries to untangle different ways to look in real life in every in cultures, in interpersonal and institutional relationships.

Nadia Arellano | 13:57

So would you tell us a little bit more about the other concepts and how they fit into this narrative?

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 14:03

Yeah, I feel like if you're a person of faith, this book is really important because this is our God, especially Christians. This is our God that's been stolen and co-opted. If you're somebody who comes out of a religious upbringing, particularly Christian upbringing of any denomination because nobody gets off the hook in this book. So if you come out of that and you feel like you were ever labeled an outsider or the black sheep, or you felt like you had to leave because it didn't feel good and it didn't feel right or something changed in your identity.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 14:34

You didn't feel like you belong like all of those. This book is would be a healing resource for you. And if you are not a person of faith, or even if you don't have any faith background, I feel like you could come to this book to be like, this is a thing that is at play in our society, in our laws, in our systems, in our culture, in our pop culture, in our beauty standards. And then it gives you insight into what's going on in this world of religion talk that I can't quite name, but it feels icky.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 15:03

So I feel like it's a book really for almost anybody who's interested and alive today in our hemisphere. And part of the thing that goes along that so clearly for me is this concept of spiritual terrorism. So when we started using this concept way back in the first Trump administration, we got a lot of pushback around. This is a very incendiary language.

Nadia Arellano | 15:28

And it's true that you're exaggerating.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 15:30

Yeah. And and we understand that terrorists and terrorism is very racialized in our country. And we understand that that has been used as a weapon against particularly people of color and immigrants. And that is part of why we use it, because we are saying that concept, that terrorizing concept of putting entire communities in fear for their lives and their safeties constantly and without fail. That's actually something that's done way more often by system and a government. And right now at this moment, it feels like a concept like spiritual terrorism, which is the full on assault against a group of people because they share a particular identity.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 16:09

That is so relevant in the United States right now, because we have trans people who are under attack, queer people who are under attack, immigrants, people of color who have always been under attack. But now it's really coming through even the courts to give just unquestioned power to vigilantes with guns in the name of, quote unquote, the police. So I think that's a concept that has never been more relative. And recently we've gotten no pushback on using that kind of language.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 16:38

And it feels like the lived experience we use in that chapter is around family separation at the border. And that felt extreme at the moment when we were writing this book several years ago. And now in this moment in this year, seeing what's happening with ICE and immigrants all around, it feels like that was just the tip of the iceberg. And so it feels undeniable at this point that spiritual terrorism is a thing, not only the physical terror of always feeling unsafe, but what happens in our spirits when people are not only labeled bad, but labeled evil that should be taken out and silenced completely.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 17:15

So that's one of the main concepts of spiritual terrorism.

Nadia Arellano | 17:19

Yeah. And something that I also love about this book and about this content is that it is always very, very, very systemic understanding, the broader picture, the power behind it, like talking about structural systems of oppression. And at the same time, it's deeply intimate, deeply personal, deeply embodied. So you can see it as something that is historical, that is centuries old, that has traveled through generations and at the same time lives in your body. And yeah, that's when other concepts in the book appear such as spiritual trauma, which is I think a very important way of describing how our nervous system reacts to that to that trauma, to that spiritual violence and also religious abuse, which is a very interpersonal way of relating to power in specifically religious institutions.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 18:38

Yeah, I wanted to talk to you about that because for the spiritual not for spiritual trauma, but for that one, but connected to religious abuse, you wrote about your own story. So the narrative in those chapters is very connected to your own personal story. How was it for you writing about that very real lived experience in your body of spiritual trauma connected with religious abuse?

Nadia Arellano | 19:02

It was actually way less scary than I thought it would be for everyone that hasn't read the book yet.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 19:11

Go read it. Go read it.

Nadia Arellano | 19:13

But I talk about my experience of sexual abuse by a prophet and a pastor, Pentecostal prophet, 10 years ago. And it's something that I've worked enough in therapy and through Soulforce's content and my own lived experience. I think I feel safe enough to talk about it and to analyze it. And I've done so in like through other, like through sociology or anthropology, I've I've done this work of connecting the dots on what happened to me to the broader system. But this book in particular was very important to me.

Nadia Arellano | 20:02

And it meant a lot to me to be able to write down what happened with this perspective and trying to, yeah, like do more of this connecting work of sharing what happened to me in a way that can also shed light on the structures that allowed it and the way that it affects your life after the fact. So we tried to, well, you and I and the team and everyone that has been involved in this book really helped putting that together in a way that feels like it is about my story, but it is not just about my story.

Nadia Arellano | 20:44

And it is about something that is bigger than my story. So, yeah, it was really it was really beautiful and exciting to be able to write about it. And I do believe that it feels helpful when I read it. It feels helpful. Even if it wasn't my if it even if it wasn't my story, it feels like illuminating in a sense that we're not talking about like abstract things that happen somewhere far away, but things that happen very, very frequently to a lot of people that we know and love.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 21:24

Yeah. And I we have probably six case studies of people's experiences that have happened, and that is the whole point is to be like, we do this rigorous intellectual work of defining a concept and telling its history and how it shows up and what the even we talk about some of the healing strategies of how you begin the journey of healing. But all of that is still conceptual work until you were located in the body. So even how we start the book with talking about the consequence of spiritual violence and white Christian supremacy feels like it's important because we are saying we're starting with the body and we're situating this crisis of our generation and generations prior in the body and what happens to our bodies.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 22:12

And then from there, we do the historical deep dive around where did this come from, the possibility of this kind of violence. And it comes from these ideologies of white Christian supremacy. And then what are the so the ideas are white Christian supremacy and then the behaviors are spiritual violence. And then within this big umbrella of spiritual violence, there are few extreme versions of spiritual violence, which are spiritual terrorism and religious abuse. And then the consequence of spiritual violence is spiritual trauma.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 22:45

Right. So we kind of try to bring it full circle. And that feels really important because it feels irresponsible to just focus on saying this is terrible, this is the problem, but not get to how we got here or what we should do going forward. And both of those feel like a very delicate balance between here is the problem and identifying it and going deep in that. And also now what?

Nadia Arellano | 23:12

Right. And something that usually happens when we share these concepts at workshops or conferences is that people. Because it is a diverse book, like internally diverse book in the approaches and the topics and the concepts. People really resonate with different parts of it. Yeah. So there's people that really, really, really needed to hear something about religious abuse and then there's people that really, really needed to hear something about spiritual trauma. And there are people whose lives, whose life experience is very similar to one of the study, the case study.

Nadia Arellano | 23:54

So they feel very like they go back to it and quote it often. And that happens all the time when we share this content. And that is intentional in a way that I think the book is crafted to be a catalyst for other conversations. And that differentiates it from other academic pieces of work that are like thought of as the means to an end. This is like the full completion of a research project or whatever. And this book is very intentionally not that we are not wanting to be the ultimate guidelines for what to do about spiritual violence.

Nadia Arellano | 24:39

We are putting together 30 years of work, hoping it can start other conversations. And that's why we are here. We are wanting to do this De Oloquia Asimberg-Huenza season with people that have read the book and that have things to say about how it relates to their lives as sinvergüenzas.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 25:00

Yes.

Nadia Arellano | 25:00

And we are planning to do a bunch of workshops and a bunch of presentations and we are just like eager to see people interacting with this content. Yeah. I was also going to ask you about the tools that the book provides.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 25:22

Yeah.

Nadia Arellano | 25:22

Because that is, I think it goes in line with what I was saying. This book is supposed to be a gift for people to keep talking about this. So it's a very interactive book. Yes. And it's filled with gifts that I would say are very, very valuable and helpful. So there's a bunch of little pieces that people can like actually like take and just share in a book club or in like a gathering with their friends and themselves are exercises for healing.

Nadia Arellano | 25:55

Would you like to share more about those?

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 25:57

Yes. Thank you for saying that. The appendices of this book are bulky and helpful. We hope there is notes where I give more context about things or other books that people can read if you're really interested in, like, tell me more about complex PTSD. This isn't a book about mental health specifically. So we don't go deep in there. Here's three paragraphs. If you want more, here's three or four more books that you can read. So I would say the notes section slash bibliography is a really helpful further reading kind of place or understanding if we're using words, for example, that are like Spanglish, that might be helpful there.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 26:38

And then we have the things, I think, that get most often used in all of Soul Force work and in all of the work we do in the world, which we're finally putting pen to paper and giving out in the book, which are self assessment tools. So when we talk about spiritual violence, we're talking about them for 15 pages, whatever, and then you can turn to the back and there's like a checklist of like, have you ever experienced this? Were you ever taught that men were the head of household and therefore women's roles were to be submissive to them?

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 27:10

Were you ever told that God hated you because of your sexuality? Were you ever made to feel unwelcome because of how you dressed, etc., etc. So we have dozens of examples where folks can read these and be like, oh, that is an attack on my integrity as a human being, my human dignity in the name of God, because I was told the Bible said so without any more context than that. So a lot of times, our folks who have been identified as the black sheep of the group or the family, they're the rebels, they're the ones that are brave enough to ask questions or to not be satisfied with because God said so.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 27:53

Kind of answer. So that we have that kind of checklist or self assessment for both spiritual violence and religious abuse. And I feel like that's really helpful. And then we have more appendices for each of those concepts that's like, OK, now I am having language that I can use to talk about these things that happen to me and I can name myself as a survivor of spiritual violence. Or I think I might have been and then what? And that feels like the last appendices that we do, which is healing strategies of where to start.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 28:25

They're not that be all end all. It's not here is your personal mental health plan. It's here strategies that have worked for us, us being same vergüenzas that come from many different cultures, many different generations. And this is where you start. It's the beginning of the journey. It's the first step of, well, maybe you could do this, maybe you could do that and that's an entry point. And then the other appendices that we should mention is the visual analogy, which is very intense for some people, but it's also very helpful for those of us who are visual learners and need an analogy to understand the denser conceptual work.

Nadia Arellano | 29:01

Yes. Do you want to share more about that?

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 29:04

Yeah, I think it's better if you look at the pictures. But basically we create this visual analogy with diagrams, making this comparison of white Christian supremacy to a weapons factory. So what does a weapons factory produce? It produces weapons. So what does white Christian supremacy produce? It produces spiritual violence and spiritual violence looks different in different forms and shapes. So we have different kinds of weapons and different kinds of ammunition that represent different kinds of spiritual violences to help us understand that there's spiritual violence that maybe feels like a BB gun pellet from across the backyard that's painful, it hurts, it's not lethal, it's not intended to be lethal, and maybe that's like what it feels like when you walk down the street holding, like when I walk down the street holding my partner's hand and

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 30:00

someone yells a slur at us because they think that we're not as good as them based in religious ideologies. All the way up to nuclear bomb, which is compared to genocide and colonization and enslavement, things like that. So it has it's a very short little diagram, but for many of us, it's helpful to have this analogy to be able to put the other concepts and its expressions in a concrete form. And we often get asked, like, why that violent metaphor? And I think part of it is because this is the only metaphor I could think of that talks about the thing that we're talking about with the seriousness that it deserves, because spiritual violence is one of those things that kills us, whether we kill ourselves by our own hand, whether the world kills us through

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 30:51

laws or just through exclusion in places like church or families or communities, this is a life or death conversation and the weapons factory, this intentional construction of things that cause harm through ideologies that are existing just to create these hierarchies and these binaries of good and bad. It feels like an appropriate analogy, even though it can be intense for some readers.

Nadia Arellano | 31:17

And right now, it's not the time to try to soften something that is just killing a lot of people. And I do believe that that visual analogy is so powerful, so helpful. I think it can spark a lot of conversations with people that might not be super interested in reading the concepts. We are very thankful for Bryony, the illustrator.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 31:47

Yeah, amazing, Bryony.

Nadia Arellano | 31:50

And yes, I think that the whole book is usually with books that talk about so such complex topics, there's a bunch of work that you have to do to get into, to finally understand, like there's a bunch of layers that you have to dig through, which is also, which is exciting and fun. But what I love about this book is that you can take a chapter and read it to someone, and that chapter is enough to shed light on something and create a conversation that is meaningful, that is transformative.

Nadia Arellano | 32:28

And then someone else will read a couple of pages, will read a story out of the case studies, like whatever it is, like every part of the book is created as a gift that in itself can spark a lot of conversations. So it is, yeah, I like thinking of it like that, like gifts for many different people in many different parts of life.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 32:53

Yeah, I could imagine it being really helpful for a book club to talk about these really tough issues that are happening in our communities, in our societies. If you are a social justice organization or group, I can imagine this being something that you study and read to be able to sharpen your language around what you do when the opposition is using religious and particularly Christian language to harm our people. I could imagine this being used in a classroom, whether it's a psychology classroom, whether it's a seminary, whether it's a social issues 101.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 33:27

I actually can't think of a single social justice issue in our country right now that this book wouldn't benefit. Like if you're doing environmental justice or climate change work, then understanding how dominion is used in the Bible or in Christianity to say that humans get to just rape and exploit the earth, understanding how that works theologically or understanding how that works in our popular culture helps understand how we create a different narrative around that, like being caregivers for the world or being responsible for the world all the way through from reproductive justice to LGBT issues to gender justice to class and economy.

I mean, really, I can't think of a single area of work in this political moment all the way through fascism that isn't directly relevant to what we're talking about in this book.

Nadia Arellano | 34:18

Right. And it can and it can and should be also read by believers and churches. Yes. And that's the other thing that I want to highlight and thank you for because it is a book that talks about awful, complex topics and it does it through love and understanding and it doesn't feel like it's not debating believers is not trying to convert the believers into whatever. It's not trying to like it's not. I don't know how to explain this, but it's it doesn't feel like confrontational.

Nadia Arellano | 35:05

It feels it I think it's very clear as you read the book that it was written by people that care, yes, and that really love theology and love spiritual spirituality and love faith spaces and have experience inhabiting those spaces. And that is something that can be so, so helpful. I can see I can imagine people bringing one of the case studies to brunch with their family, their Christian family. I mean, like just sharing. And would you like to talk to me about how can we make this stop?

Nadia Arellano | 35:49

How how how why does this happen? Yes, why is this not biblical?

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 35:55

Yes, and I think it's so important to name that it's written by a Christian pastor. And we say this is a deeply faithful project. And for example, in the chapter about religious abuse, which is super difficult because we are talking about violation of of relationships, of intimate relationships and power dynamics between a faith leader and a congregant or a follower, it is some of the most icky and it includes child sexual abuse and grooming. I mean, it is really just some of the most icky, disgusting, morbid kind of conversations that we could have.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 36:31

And we're not doing it as a finger pointing shame on you, church. We literally start the chapter by saying, because these are our sacred and precious spaces, we should be working over time to make sure that all the enter there are safe and protected.

Nadia Arellano | 36:46

Yes, yes. And I think you can feel that throughout the book. And I hope that through this conversation and through the rest of the episodes of this season, you can hear other perspectives and how it has impacted other people.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 37:06

I'm so excited that we have episodes talking about voodoo culture and Brazilian Afro-Latine kinds of spiritual expressions that come out of African context and religions, many, many, many generations back. We have folks talking about what it feels like to live in a mixed status household around immigrants and really right now kind of lived experience and what that spiritually feels like. We have folks talking about what it's like to be part of a colony of Puerto Rico and connected to the US, which is another relevant conversation right now.

So we have the book and it is beautiful and so much love poured into that book.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 37:49

And then hopefully the rest of the episodes from this season of The Teología Sin vergüenza are connected, not in that all of the season's episodes are going to be talking about the book. We're the only one that's going to be doing that. But we're talking about the same thing that's in the book. We're using those concepts to be like, OK, what is spiritual terrorism look like right now as an undocumented person or part of a family that has undocumented people in it right now?

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 38:12

How does that look feel in this moment? And that lived experience and the same thing. We do that through multiple lenses and hopefully for folks who are wanting more after they read the book, the podcast will give you more depth or a different insight and vice versa. Maybe you'll listen to an episode and be like, wow, that was so brilliant. What that person was talking about because my goodness, we have brilliant people who are guests appearing this season and that will make you want to understand more about what's going on in the book so that you can talk about it even more fluidly.

Nadia Arellano | 38:42

Yes. So thank you. Thank you. Thank you for staying. Thank you for joining us again on this new season. We hope you stay. As we were saying this season, we'll talk about the concepts in the book, but you don't have to read, have read the book to listen to this. It's not just us promoting the book. Although we should because it's amazing, but it's not just that it's more like expanding our understanding of spiritual violence through the lived experience of amazing humans, brilliant humans who have a lot of things to say.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 39:24

Yes.

Nadia Arellano | 39:25

If you want to share more about your thoughts, if you want to maybe share your opinion on the book, we would love to hear your review. We would love to chat so you can email us at hello at soulforce.org or through our social media, Facebook or Instagram.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 39:47

And you can look on the website, soulforce.org forward slash resources. And there's a preview so you can read the prologue, the intro, see the breakdown of the chapters, what we're doing there to see if this book is right for you.

Nadia Arellano | 39:59

Yes, there's all the information about the book will be listed in the description of this episode, wherever you are listening to it. And we will always be super excited to hear more about you. So make sure to reach out. We are all humans behind the social media ready to read your comments and engage in conversation with you.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 40:26

Thank you so much.

Nadia Arellano | 40:27

Thank you. Bye. Bye.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 40:32

Thank you for spending time with us today on this episode of Shameless Theology. I hope you found it both provocative and helpful on your own journey toward healing. These conversations are part of Soulforce's ongoing effort to name harm, honor our lived experiences and imagine faith beyond violence. If you want to go deeper, you can find a link to our new book called *Spiritual Violence, Religious Phenomena that Defile the Faith* here in the show notes. You can also find more information on our website at soulforce.org, where you can download free theological resources designed to support individuals, faith leaders and communities who are navigating religious harm and spiritual reconstruction.

If something in today's dialogue resonated with you, maybe it stirred something and settled something or helped you find language for your own story, then you have found yourself in the right place.

Reverend Sex (Rev. Alba Onofrio) | 41:25

Consider sharing this episode with someone who might need it and follow along for future conversations and supplemental content. Whoever you are and wherever you find yourself in this time, questioning, grieving, rebuilding or reclaiming, I am so grateful that you are here. May your theological imagination remain ever alive and may you find spaces that honor your full blessed humanity with hearts ablaze and spirits unyielding. Until next time, I'm Reverend Sex, and this is Shameless Theology.