

Shameless Theology

S2:03 - Their Calling, My Body: A Pastor's Kid Story with Yolanda Santiago-Correa, Part 2

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 00:06

Axis Mundi. 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, an international organization working to end the religious and political oppression of LGBTQIA+ 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

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delighted to be your host as we dive into the thick of it. 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. You'll hear stories of

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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.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 02:01

All right, as promised, today's episode continues the conversation that we started last week with the incredible Yolanda Santiago-Correa, una sinvergüenza scholar, survivor of spiritual violence, and a preacher's kid. If you haven't listened to last week's episode, you may want to go back and get caught up. Today our conversation takes a more personal turn. We spend some time talking about the expectations that are often put on pastor's kids to become some extension of their parents' ministries, the important ways in which Yolanda's parents try to protect her from that, and the struggles she experienced anyway growing up in a world where she was expected to fit into one box or another,

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even though none of them were truly safe. We talk about the dangers of white Christian supremacist pursuit of purity and why this is a harmful system that appeals to the disenfranchised. We consider the importance of enfleshment and how we might reduce harm, but keep the faith. I love that we get to share her wisdom and experience with our community. And now, the second part of our conversation with Yolanda Santiago-Correa. Will you tell us a little bit more about your experience of like, I think it's so critical because children are literal.

We think that means they're simple and like they can't handle nuance,

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but you've said like, I had nuance conversations from the time I was young and that provided a lot of protection against the spiritual violence that happens when we go through that process of being like, we're not good enough or we're not like Christ enough or we're too this or not enough. We can talk about, you talk about your experience with the PKs and I would love to hear more about that. I would love to like, connect the dots for us around that and your experience.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 03:48

Growing up as a pastor's kid, I feel like, I won't say that I was completely, ¿cómo se dice? Like, safe is not the right word.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 04:00

You weren't like immune to it.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 04:02

Immune, that's the word. I wasn't completely immune to it because there's dynamics, right, that are not the responsibility of my parents and just happened. And I think this also has to do with the fact that my mom was a pastor first. I think that also has a really big part of it. Both my parents, unfortunately, in many ways, had been victims of spiritual and religious violence and trauma in ways. And so as they received their call to ministry, especially my mom, was very committed to, you are not the pastor.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 04:36

So you do not need to respond to these people. They do not pay you. You are not a topic. And that is a thing up to this day. Like, still to this day, every time she goes into a new church, she's like, I have a daughter. This is what she does. Not a topic of conversation. Not the pastor. Doesn't owe you anything. And so even that granted me a lot of freedoms from spiritual trauma and religious trauma that pastor's kids and also the children of anybody in ministry, because we talk about pastors, but just leadership in the church in general, like the pressures that the church can impose that end up being traumatic and the ways that people

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 05:18

can utilize pastor's children. That's from everything to imposing, you know, this, this idea of perfection is like, you're the pastor's kid. So you're subjected to a higher moral and ethical rule than everybody else. And so you need to, you stop being a kid and then you become another member of the ministerial team. And so everybody's looking at you and everything that you do, like it's, it's more policed and more judged than everybody else because it's like, it's almost like it, it becomes an extension of your parents position for you to also act as the chosen of God, you know?

And it's a very, and it's a very like,

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 06:01

you're like the proof of whether or not what they're preaching is true.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 06:05

It's true. Yes, exactly. And so my mom specifically wanted very badly to protect me from that. Every time I had questions, we would have conversations about it because especially I was growing up in the early two thousands, I was an avid reader, still am, and was a very obsessed with like fantasy and things like that. So I was reading like Harry Potter and all these things that during that time, like that's demonic, you know, like you cannot do that, you know, and I was obsessed with like vampires.

So I was watching all the Twilight movies and reading the books. And I was, you know, I, I thought, I swore that I was emo. So I was wearing like black eyeliner and all these things. And that was very shocking. Culturally, it was normal,

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 06:50

but at church, it was just like, I was walking around being like Expelliarmus and they're like, oh my gosh, she's invoking the things, you know? But I think one of the strategies, and I say this because I think it's important for us communally, whether we are parents or we provide care or support to anybody, this is a strategy that always works, is that my mom, she was like, oh, you want to read this? Cool. I'm not going to tell you that you can do it.

I'm going to go and sit down and read it to you. Tell me what are you reading? Mira que fueron and they did this thing and she's like, oh, really cool. What happened next? Instead of censorship and extreme repression, which is usually what happens with, especially with pastor's kids,

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 07:33

with children in church in general, but with pastor's kids, their strategy was like, cool, let us accompany you through this. And then let us recommend you, like, maybe you shouldn't interact with this. And these are the reasons why. So it wasn't just, "Ah, que eso es del diablo." It's like, no, no, this is the explanation. And sometimes I was like, I really don't agree. And they would be like, cool. The rule of this house is this thing. Like, this is as much as you can do.

And so it was a negotiation constantly where I had agency and power. And I think that, like, formed me a lot. And also enabled that I'm still within the church, like a lot of pastor's kids end up leaving precisely because there's not that level of protection. And mind you, I said,

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 08:19

not completely immune. Like, I was heavily, like, people would comment about my clothing, like, the first time that I had a boyfriend, he was from the church too. And it was just a mess. Like, everything was just, like, the first time I ever got my period, I will never forget. Thankfully, bless God forever for my mom. But thankfully, like, when I got to that age, like, the women in the church were, like, invested. And they're like, ¡Ay, le cantó el gallo!.

She's like, period. And I was just like, you don't need to know if I got my period. Like, that's not none of your business. But it's these things that, like, sometimes even may seem, like, innocent. It's just like, oh, that's what we culturally do.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 08:59

But then it's this constant thing of, like, everything that you do is being watched. Everything that you do is being judged. And you can't participate socially in the same way, because you're supposed to be separated. And that can affect you in many ways. Like, when I was in seventh grade, I will never forget, there was this kid, one of the most popular kids was having a birthday party. And he was handing out invitations. And he gave one to everybody.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 09:26

And then when he got to me, he was like, ah, pero tu eres santita, so you don't go. And he took it away. So I was the only person in my classroom, I think, in my whole grade that wasn't invited to that party. That wasn't my parents' fault. But it's a direct, you know, effect of, like, this is what happens when you're, like, identified in a certain way socially. It provided me a lot of privileges in certain ways. But it also, like, made me be a particular way.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 09:51

And I think, cognitively, it fed into my need to be perfect. Because even though I wasn't receiving that messaging from my parents, I was receiving it socially. And so I felt very responsible to be the, like, el ejemplo, you know, tu eres el ejemplo, like, you are the example you need to be. And it's still something that I'm fighting against, that the church very heavily added to, because I was just like, everybody's looking at me, I need to always, and I become not just Yolanda, the representative of this family, who ultimately, like, is being paid by the church.

So I think, and this is the other thing, and especially for Methodism, like, the house that I lived in,

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 10:34

the food that I ate, everything was dependent on my mom and my dad staying employed by the church. So I also silently received the messaging, I can't screw this up. Because if they get fired, I don't have a house. Like, there's no money on our table. And contrary to sometimes what ministry looks like in the United States, in Puerto Rico, you're not gaining a lot of money by being a pastor. Like, you're not going to become rich. You're like- Which is why you live in the church's house.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 11:03

Exactly. And so it's like, these are things that I obviously, I'm been, I realized as an adult, but they were there. And so it's messaging that now I realized that, dang, this is trauma. Because this was messaging that I was receiving that was putting this burden on me, that even with all of the protections that my parents provided, was still there. And so then I imagine for people who don't have those protections, because they don't have a parent, or a caretaker, or somebody who knows that these things happen within the church, that people, like, utilize Christianity for harm.

And not only for harm psychologically or emotionally, but also, unfortunately, sexually, like physical harm. If you don't have those protections, obviously,

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 11:48

you're going to be gone. Because then you're seeing this God, and it's like, they're preaching all these things from the altar. But I'm living this life that feels like I don't know myself, my body, everything that my body is doing is wrong. Everything that my friends are doing is wrong. So I'm isolated from community. And it's just like, it's the church or nothing. And that can be very

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harmful. It can be very, very harmful. It's almost like a form of spiritual terrorism. When we talk about spiritual terrorism as this intersection of like many identities that are targeted as like, that's evil, that's bad. And it kind of like creates this surround of like, there's nowhere to escape, or there's nowhere to be safe. And it sounds like in this different way, which is totally how a lot of us who grow up in like, very, very strict religious cults, or fundamentalist homes, feel that same kind of terrorism, even when it isn't the same kind of structural level out in the world.

But it's like, especially in places where churches are

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the center of community. And church is it like surrounds you because you're not free from it at school, like you talked about the experience with that boy and his birthday party, you're certainly not free from it at church. But when the house that you live in and the food that you eat is provided by the church, even at home is inescapable from that pressure from that, like, you know, that loop, that loop, like the microscope on your everyday life, all of that stuff.

And what's at stake is like, so high. Of course, I'm sure if something happened, your parents would be like, you're the fault, it's your fault that we're not, don't have our jobs. But as the person, as the child, in that scenario, I know that it certainly feels like that. And it's a danger when

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it is so connected to your employment, which is like, yeah, totally connected to the Industrial Revolution, where people had to have a signed note from their pastor in order to get a job in a factory to be like, this is an upstanding citizen. And those things were connected to each

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 13:51

other, right? Those of us who currently are at some point, like depended on the church for survival, monetary wise, it makes your relationship with Christianity, very different. So we were talking about me being a pastor's kid, right? And sort of how that happened, and how even with certain protections that I was privileged to have, I still experienced that. And I think something that was added to that, that maybe connects to all of this is also, again, the particular time that I was growing up.

And I talked about the markers in US culture, right? That was fed into Puerto Rico. So like Harry Potter, and, you know, The Hunger Games, all of these things like Twilight and vampires and all of that. But then I also have to talk about the other side, which was

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 14:36

what was happening in Puerto Rican culture at that point. So when my mom started pastoring, I was two, the year 2000. So this is when reggaeton is on the rise, right? So socially, you're seeing the transition from reggaeton being like, this thing that mostly black persons or poor persons do, that is heavily policed. And when I mean police, when I say police, I mean that literally, so like people weren't, were being legally prosecuted for participating, distributing, whatever it was, like, if you want to hear more about this really interesting history, you can look, there's a podcast called Loud, that is narrated by Ivy Queen on the history of this

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 15:20

development, super interesting. So go do that. But she talks about how, you know, initially, a lot of the funders of this because of how like negatively viewed it was, was, you know, narcotrafico, drug money, it was sort of like this underworld scene. And in the early 2000s, you start seeing the transition from this being something that's like, understood that way, to being something that is still understood as negative, but now is exploding all over the world.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 15:53

And so you're having exponentes del género like Daddy Yankee, like Tego Calderón with teams like Gasolina, like "Rompe", like El Abayarde as an album, that suddenly it's like, this thing got extracted, and these people are getting rich. And so the church, and like the government is still saying like, this is wrong. Like this is influencing the minds of our youth.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 16:18

Like it's like terrible. But now it's like our popular culture. As a child, you are heavily immersed when you're growing up that constantly, every school party, every celebration, like every bus drive that we took for a for a road trip, whatever it was, it was reggaeton. And this was influencing not only our music, but it was influencing fashion, it was influencing the like la jerga, so like the the slang of the time, it was our point of reference, it was everything.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 16:51

And so when this is also happening, and then you have the messaging of the church that's already saying and policing all these things, and focusing on particular things of your identity that are wrong, whether that is racially, in terms of gender, sex, or anything like that. Now it's like also focusing on the thing that everybody around you is doing, because it's the cool thing. And it's just like, dang, okay, now what do you do? Because it's like this notion of like, ser recatado, and purity, and saving yourself, especially around the topic of sex, right?

And your sexuality.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 17:28

And then you're having a society, a popular culture, that's heavily sexual, extremely connected to the body, while receiving this messaging of the church that, although it like one of its basic tenets is the incarnation of Christ, and the fact that Jesus became flesh, is saying like, no, you need to separate from anything that is of the flesh, to like, focus on the spirit, right? And your soul, which can have its value, right? And this is the thing that all these things needs to be nuanced.

But in the sort of like, very strict, like, extreme place, you're having a very detached culture, and then a very embodied culture. And they're both who you are,

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 18:14

because it's like, yo soy cristiano, and this is part of my identity, whether I'm a kid growing in that, you know, is that my parents taught, or I arrived at it as a teenager, which also happened, or anything like that, that it's like, pero yo soy puertorriqueño. Y alrededor del mundo, what are Puerto Ricans being known for? Still, to this day, I traveled to Latin America, and they're like, oh, you speak like Daddy Yankee. Like, oh, I've been told, like, oh, my God, you speak just like Anuel, you know, all of these things, like, that's the cultural reference that a lot of people had.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 18:45

And that has its positive things, and its negative things. But ultimately, it's like, this is the global representation at this moment of time that represents the people who are ethnically and racially being told that I'm part of. And this other group that I'm also part of, that is my community that I like, engage with so fully, because at this time, the culture in Puerto Rico of the church, which still predominates, but especially during this time was still very strong, is like, you're going to church almost every day of the week, regardless.

Or if you're not going any every day, at least three times a week, you're at church, because you're going para el culto de oración, you're going to like, kids or youth ministry, and then you're going to

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 19:28

service. And then there's like the anniversary or something like that. So it's like, very heavy. And then you're having this other one, that is also at the same time doing what the church is doing, which is the other side of it. Even the non-Christian people who are at church, when they see you engaging in culture, they're like, pero tú no eres de la iglesia, what are you doing here? So it's also you're receiving rejection. Because if you're trying to make that connection, they're like, no, no, no, you have to choose a side.

You cannot be both things at the same time, either tú eres puertorriqueño, or you are Christian. And so that also then creates an identity, because then you're like, these are all the things that racially, ethnically form your

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 20:11

identity, who you are. And they also form your gender expression, you know, all of these other things, all of that. So all of it is being pushed. And so you're in the middle like, okay, what am I going to do? How am I going to live into this? And how am I going to form, especially during such a like formative time as your childhood and your teenage years, who I am, when everybody like is telling me what I need to be, or how I need to perform this, even if it's not explicitly being said, I'm receiving all this messaging that is telling me, you have to make a decision.

And this is going to define who you're going to be and how successful

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 20:54

you're going to be and what you're going to be able to do for the rest of your life, because you're going to be marked forever by the choices that you make, even though you're hasn't fully developed yet. But it's still like, everything is at stake. And so it feels like life or death, you know, it feels catastrophic. And so it's abuse, it's terrorism, because to a mind that is still developing, where everything already feels like it's the end of the world, because your hormones are out of control and everything like that.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 21:28

Now you're receiving all this messaging. And it's just like, I don't know what I'm gonna do. I feel so guilty for everything. I feel so disconnected. And so me, again, had the blessing of having other outlets and parents who were not against it were and were very much like, these are our reasonings for saying what we say, this is how you can interact. These are the things. But then I also had music as a percussionist that was then giving me another outlet to connect to Puerto Rican culture from a different perspective.

But that still was just like, Oh, this, this is the thing that I'm able to grasp. And like, understand myself with the

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 22:10

other messaging that I'm receiving, as I started realizing that I was, you know, being racialized as a black woman in Puerto Rico, and what that meant for my life and all of that. It's a terrible cognitive dissonance. And it's an experience where just words, it can become, for lack of a better word, but I mean it with all the intent, like life ending, like, people can just be I can't do it anymore. Because if you're experiencing all of this, and then you don't have protection, whether that's by partners, parents, friends, or whatever, then you're just isolated in this world that's giving you all this messaging that

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 22:52

ultimately is making you feel like, Oh, I don't have a purpose. I wasn't meant to be here. Like, I can't do this properly. Like, everything that I am is wrong. Everything that I feel is wrong. I should feel guilty for everything. Like, I don't have any friends. And that's how it needs to be because I need to keep myself away. It can cognitively be catastrophic.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 23:13

Totally, because it's, again, the purity and the binaries, this or that. And I have heard from so many theologians, yourself included, of this concept of things that are embodied, cultures that are embodied, traditions that are embodied, music that is embodied, culture that's embodied, should actually, at least for me, when I got deep into theological work, I was like, Oh, incarnation is a thing. Enfleshment, like the flesh, is actually critically important to the divine. Like, if we believe in a God who took a human form and a human body, then that means God cares about the body, not just the afterlife, but like right here.

And so it's like that same thing

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of like, you have to be pure in the culture, just like in the church, right? Like, you have to be pure as opposed to being like, these things actually help support and form and like balance each other and possibly in really positive ways. And so I just feel like I want to pull back that thread of purity and find your thinking again. Like, that's how that causes, that can cause that

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 24:19

splitting that is super- Yeah, and I think for like a note there, that then it's important for us to recognize this thing too, because then when we're trying to understand historically how Christianity has worked, that's why Pentecostalism keeps being so popular in Latin America, because although it is giving you all this messaging, it's still providing a very embodied experience that is telling you like, your experience of Christ, it's very connected to your body. So if you're coming from a culture that's very connected to your body, and then you're telling like, this is not it, but then it's like, I'm giving you an alternative.

Like, Christ is not just the esoteric

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 25:01

thing, it's something that you feel, that takes hold of yourself. And so that can fulfill that thing that you're missing from your cultural practices. Because it's like, ah, Cristo no es algo lejos, like, he's my friend. And so that's why you have theologians. There's this article, I wish I remember the name, that talks about how Latino Corritos speak about God almost erotically, so that to the point that if you replace Jesus's name for like, a popular name, it would work as a love song.

And as you go and you see it, it's like, you know, *está tan cerca que lo respiro*,

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 25:41

like está en el aire, like, you know, you sing like, oh, el Espíritu de Dios viene y te toca. So it's like very physical, very connected. So that's why like, beyond many other things, why Pentecostalism and charismatic movements as a whole, keep being so successful, because it's like, oh, está aquí, está aquí. And then I'm, you know, I'm being oppressed, not only within the church, right, but governmentally everything. I don't have anything, everything feels like it, like I don't have any hope.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 26:12

And then I have a friend. And this friend, not somebody that's out there, but it's right here. Y yo lo siento, y me llena, y me sana, like very physical, like me redime, like think about it.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 26:25

And it's powerful.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 26:27

Yes, yes.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 26:28

In the face of powerlessness.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 26:30

So much power. And so it's also important for us to keep in mind, not only thinking about, you know, spiritual violence and all of that, but then thinking about, oh, like historically, this is why it works. Like when we're like, we don't get like white people. You should, like, because it's like, this person here-he's here, right? So, tiene su marca en su cuerpo, and I can feel him, and he can touch me, and he can hug me.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 26:58

So like, if I'm a person in grief, and then they're praying for me, and it's like, Dios, en este momento, que sienta tu abrazo, you're being embraced and held. Of course, especially if you feel disenfranchised, especially if you feel like you don't belong, that you're not pure, that you need to, like, do all these things. When you have a God that will still embrace you and hold you, claro, claro.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 27:24

So that's why these connections are really important to make. So we can understand, like, how violence gets perpetuated, and also how history, like, is working, and how that this model, for better or worse, continues to live on, and how it gets preserved generationally.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 27:43

Is there anything else that we should talk about? This has been a phenomenally delicious conversation. I'm so grateful. I can't wait for our folks to listen and engage with it in all the ways. But is there anything else we missed?

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 27:55

Oh, I don't know. There's so much, for sure. I mean, the topic of race, obviously, is one that I touched on a little bit, but it has so much to say on that. But I think, ultimately, what's important is for us to keep making these connections, right, and to really take the time to think through, like, OK, why do we do this this way? And why do we say this this way? And how is this connected to this way?

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 28:21

And also, what are the ways that these things that also can be negative can also be very positive? Because we look at it at lenses, right, negatively. And, for example, Pentecostalism is one, and we talk about las manifestaciones del espíritu and all these things. And you have people that have written also about, like, that is also echoes of us preserving our African ancestors' cultures, right, and living through that.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 28:50

And we see how people have very effectively, like, turned Christianity and all these things into models of resistance and positive things and have said, like, no, this physicality is good. And we can connect. And I can feel God bailando una salsa bien buena en la plaza and then going to church and raising my hands and crying in the presence of God. And that's real. And that demands, like, a different reality.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 29:17

I think that's what it leads to, is that when we make those connections, then we can, it's not about redeeming or not redeeming, but then we can say, like, this is not what it was meant to be. And we can define what it can be and the tools that it can give us to say something different. And that's why we can still be theologians, even holding all the identities that we do. And why we can confidently say there is a different reality.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 29:47

There is something different to say. And even while we're receiving all this messaging, we can still work to say, like, no, this is not, this is not the message of the kingdom. This is not what the Bible has said. Like, however. With whatever, yeah. But-and that's why I think it's important-we make those connections because they become tools. And so recognize the negative and call it out, and make sure that we're reducing harm as much as possible, and also say, "These are the things that it gives us that can become tools to further reduce harm and deconstruct systems of oppression and colonialism and all of that," and that being our divine task.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 30:30

Right. But that is the work of Christ, right? It's doing that labor of trying to unlearn, pulling things apart, not believing purity, not believing binaries, but being like, all right, if we're claiming this thing and it's ours by force or by birthright or by choice, it is ours, and then we do that work with it. Yeah, a thousand percent. That's so important and hopeful. I hope also for people of faith to be like, you don't have to let go of the faith, but you do have to be responsible if you're going to claim that as your belief system.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 31:06

It's responsibility. And that becomes true for all of the identities that we hold. It's being responsible and saying, okay, if this I got by choice, by birth, whatever, my responsibility is to know, to understand, especially the history, for both the good and the bad, so that when I'm speaking in whatever space, I'm not just being like-it's, one, not the oppression Olympics, being like, "I'm the most suffering person in the whole wide world," and recognizing privilege, but also saying, "These are the ways in which this has been harmful."

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 31:40

And so these are the ways that I, as a person, am responsible to other people. Because we love to say that we don't owe anything to anybody, and to a certain point, we don't, right? La gente que vive su vida y deja a la otra gente tranquila. But then I think part of living in community-and I think it's a value that Christianity has as well-is that we are responsible for each other, right? And it is our responsibility to not perpetuate these things because we're misinformed or because we're living into what we've been told without doing our own work.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 32:15

And that doesn't mean that you have to go to school. Most of the things that we know, we don't get by formal education. Do not get in debt to go get a Ph.D. It's not worth it. But what I do mean is, we have resources, right? Community, online, elders, too. And so let's be in conversation. And I think that that's our responsibility-to then make sure that we're creating a more just, equitable world and especially reducing harm.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 32:44

And harm can be-that it's not just like, "I'm misgendering someone." It can be like, it ends lives. And that's devastating, and we need to take that seriously. And so I think ultimately that that's our responsibility. And that helps us all. You know, as I discover myself more and learn more, I become more empathetic to you and want to learn more about you and the communities that you're part of that maybe I'm not. And that informs, you know, the work that we do, whether that's ministerially, socially, educationally, right, in the academy-whatever that looks like.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 33:20

Thank you so much for your time. This is awesome.

Yolanda Santiago-Correa | 33:24

I'm excited.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 33:27

What a powerful conversation. Thanks so much for listening. Yolanda's story is important in part because it shows us how easily spiritual violence coexists with so many expressions of Christianity, and the harm that it can cause, especially at a young age. The systems of power and oppression that are in place are not the world we want to live in. This isn't how it should be. Beloveds like Yolanda, and conversations like these, help me imagine something different-something better.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 33:57

The system we've been given is broken. It wasn't made for our survival, much less our thriving. And the more clearly we can name what's wrong and understand how it works, the better we can reshape the narrative and our imagination about what's possible together. So thank you for being here with us. I can't wait to see where we go next. Thank you for spending time with us today on this episode of Shameless Theology.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 34:25

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.

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 35:03

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

Rev. Alba Onofrio | 35:32

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.