What does it even mean to be an ally? We don’t know, but we have opinions. With surprisingly few digressions, this is a focused conversation about allies, both real and aspirational.

**Transcript**

K: So, lately I’ve been thinking about allyship.

C: That ship sinks on a lot of people.

K: (laughs) I should not be laughing at that. I am only encouraging you. I am only encouraging you. Oh my gosh. That is so funny.

C: You always encourage me. You are an ally in my humor development.

K: (laughs) Yes. I am your humor ally. So, the reason I’ve been thinking about allyship is because a lot of things come up in topics with clients. And a lot of times a client will think they’re an ally or somebody on social media will think that they’re my ally or your ally, and you have an interesting take on people who call themselves allies.

C: Yeah, I think that it’s like calling yourself not a racist. “I am not a racist.” It’s a defensiveness.

K: Yeah.

C: And I think there are other words that some people will view that way, like feminist and things. I don’t view feminists in that way.

K: I think feminist is an awesome word. I’m a feminist.

C: Right. So I think there are certain words that are still highly political. Like ally is always going to be political because it is about politics. That you can apply to yourself. And I just don’t feel like ally is one of them.

K: I feel like if you’re an ally, you don’t need to say it. Show it, don’t say it.

C: Right.

K: Although, I forget who – I think it was Courtney Act – okay, so I’m a huge Ru Paul’s Drag Race fan, which you guys already know. I really enjoy drag queens. I support local queens. I don’t just watch Drag Race. I’ve been going to drag shows since, like, whoa, before Drag Race was even a thing. I’ve been going to drag shows since before Ru Paul’s hit song Supermodel had come out, so I really really support the art of drag. Love drag kings, love drag queens. And Courtney Act, like, gosh I want to say maybe a year ago had a really cool, interesting tweet about what an ally does. And they listed the number one thing an ally does is listen.

C: Mhm.

K: and I always loved that, and I don’t agree with everything – I don’t agree with all of Shane’s – that’s Courtney’s boy name – political positions, but I do agree with that. That an ally should always start with listening because my lived experience – I find a lot of people want to be my ally without ever hearing what my lived experience is, and so how can you support me if you don’t know what support I need? What support I would actually value?

C: Yeah, I think that’s the issue for me in people calling themselves an ally is what’s your purpose in doing that?

K: Yeah, what are you on?

C: Yeah. Why say that. Because if you tell somebody you’re trying to help and an ally, I see it so often related to disability stuff. That they’re like “I’m an ally, therefore I should get a pass on this behavior that I’m being called out on” or “I’m an ally therefore I don’t have to bother to put in the work to understand things “ or “I’m an ally therefore I should be able to just go and do this thing in your name.”

K: Yeah. And – so, I don’t – so, I’m cisgender, but I want to support all of our trans siblings, and the first time I said that I said I want to support all of our trans brother and sisters, and you corrected me, and I took that correction. And so for me, I think of myself as wanting to use the privilege of being cisgender to raise voices on the gender topic because I have what’s considered “typical” and “socially acceptable” – widely as socially acceptable – gender definition. Like, I identify as she/her, and I have breasts, and I have a vagina, and therefore the whole world understands when I say I’m she/her.

C: Right.

K: And I feel because the whole world understands, that gives me a certain amount of privilege, and that gives me a lot of energy to fight when it comes to gender because I don’t care what anyone’s gender is. I think your gender should be your truth, and I think your pronouns should be what makes you feel comfortable. And some people like no pronouns, some people like color for a pronoun, some people – you know, however people want to define themselves, I’m pro-identity, and I’m pro- being able to define yourself, but I don’t know that I am an ally. I feel like I’m a supporter, I feel like I’m open, and I feel like I am pro-gender, but I don’t even know what’s a gender ally. What would that – what does that even mean?

C: Well, I think that the – ally is such an interesting word because we say it a lot, but I think that if you look at the martial context of it. Like, the war context of it, is somebody really your ally if there’s no battle going on?

K: Yeah.

C: So I think that the problem that people who are self-described allies have is that they often only want that label when it’s convenient for them. It’s a way of distancing. Like if somebody says “I’m an ally of the disability community” it implicitly says “I’m not disabled. I’m not part of your community.”

K: Yeah.

C: Like, “I want to be sure everyone knows I am not part of your community. Don’t punish me in any way for how you want to punish them. I am speaking on behalf” like they’re the Lorax. “I speak for the trees” no, we’re not trees. We can speak for ourselves.

K: Yeah. And I am a member of the LBGTQIA+, and I am very proud of that, and I say the plus, and I say the longer name because I am part of that plus. Being pansexual, and so for me, I feel like when it comes to gender politics, I feel like as a woman, I am part of that conversation. And I feel like as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, I am part of that conversation. So I feel like I’m part of the conversation, and I feel like, you know, because of the amount of followers we have on social media, because we have this platform of a podcast, that there are ways that I can elevate people’s voices, and there are ways that people elevate my voice. Like, you know, when somebody mentions me in a book that they’ve written that’s very inclusive and mentions me in the dedication section of it, I feel like they’re elevating my voice and elevating my position as somebody who is a safe person. So, rather than ally, I like the designation of safe person. Because, for me, it means that you’re never going to get hate, now if you’re coming to me with racist stuff or you’re coming to me with bigoted stuff, you’re going to get blocked, and you’re going to be told that you’re being racist. Sometimes people are accidentally racist, and I’m willing to educate, just like some people are biased accidentally and I’m willing to educate, just like sometimes I say things that are ignorant, and I want to be educated. So if people come with a welcoming spirit, like you had, gosh I think it was a year ago now that we had – we have a really close relationship with someone on twitter who I educated on the issue of stimming in the autistic community based on my perspective as a therapist who’s worked with lots of people with autism and as someone who’s married to an autistic person.

C: You – you’ve got another marriage?

K: Oh please.

C: (laughs)

K: You know you’re autistic, knock it off. Don’t confuse the people. This might be the first cast they’re listening to.

C: It might be yes, I am autistic.

K: Yeah.

C: I have no issues with that.

K: And so I switch back between using person-first language and not using person-first language because here’s the interesting thing about it: everyone I know who is autistic hates person-first language. And everyone who’s not autistic uses person-first language. And here’s the thing that’s even more wild is that as a therapist, they tell us “no, you have to say a person with autism” and I say “no, I have to either call them by their name or just say they’re autistic.” They don’t like being called a person with autism.

C: Right.

K: And so if you’re autistic and you like being called – if you like person first language, hit us up, let us know. I’m always down for education.

C: Yeah. Every time they run a survey about it, it’s like 8% - like one in twelve autistic people prefer person with autism.

K: So that’s why I switch back and forth. (laughs)

C: And it’s so cultural – going back to pronouns – it’s so cultural and linguistic because in Japanese, it’s not typical to use somebody’s gender.

K: And it’s not typical in Lao PDR either.

C: Yeah, and so you just say their name over and over, and the grammar lets you leave out their name when it’s apparent who you’re talking to, so it doesn’t become super repetitive.

K: Yeah.

C: So a lot of the issues about pronouns are not the same in Japanese as they are in English even though trans rights are arguably must more advanced in the U.S. and the Anglosphere than in Japan.

K: Yes. Because Japan, to have your gender changed on your passport or identification, you have to agree to be sterilized, and that is so so upsetting to me. That upsets me so much.

C: Yeah. So, I think that the point about allying is that if you’re an ally, and you’re in a space where there’s nobody that you want to – let me rephrase that – nobody of the group that you are trying to ally with because I do think you can use ally as a verb – “I’m trying to – I’m trying to assist you, I’m trying to ally with you here” – then that’s the time to speak up for it. I’m often in groups that only have men in them because in Japan a lot of things are very segregated by sex.

K: Yes.

C: And so… if somebody is saying something sexist in that context, then I can speak up. Now, if

K: Do you speak up?

C: I do speak up, yes.

K: Okay. Because if you don’t speak up, you’re part of the problem.

C: Right.

K: If you hear something, say something. Like if you hear somebody saying something bigoted or racist or discriminatory, I always speak up. And I speak up even when I think it will cost me money.

C: Right.

K: And that’s because I feel like being a therapist, I can help people elevate themselves. Because I think bias is just the lowest form of ourselves, and I think that bias comes from fear and a desire to be higher up in the pecking order than someone else. And I think that the world is a cooler, more interesting place, when it’s not based on hierarchy. When we’re all standing shoulder to shoulder as people fully embracing our humanity. I think that’s when the world is really cool. Those are the spaces that are really interesting to me. Where everybody’s equal in that space just based on the fact that we’re human.

C: Yeah. I think when we’re growing up, we learn these heuristics. These rules of thumb of how to treat people. And so it’s easier to just go off of those. And certain people may challenge the way that we have to behave.

K: Yeah.

C: For some people, that results in anger. Like, you know, “how dare you say I can’t just treat this person however because they’re disabled. Why do they have so many extra rights?” Like, you not treating them like an asshole isn’t an extra right. It’s just being decent. The fact it takes more effort for you says more about the- says more about you than it does about them.

K: Yeah. So, I find it’s interesting to me that I don’t – maybe it’s a me being kind of on the outside of things because I’m really on the outside of things because I don’t speak Japanese.

C: Right.

K: And I’ve been transparent about that the whole time, so if you’re a first-time listener, yes, I have lived in Japan for many many years, over twelve years now, and no, I don’t speak Japanese.

C: Sugoi. That means amazing.

K: Yeah. And I’m working on it. You know. I’m studying Japanese, but I don’t feel like I’ll ever be an insider because I will have never been raised in the culture, so allyship in Japan - it’s so interesting to me how Japan is just really segregated and doesn’t seem to mind the segregation.

C: Right.

K: And so there’s women’s groups, there’s men’s groups, there’s women’s things, there’s men’s things. And they’re segregated by gender, and then the third gender – they recognize the third gender, and in some ways they’re just accepting it as existing however, here’s the rub: existing but invisible. So, “we accept that you exist, but we don’t want to talk about you, and we don’t want to recognize you as a group – as an independent group. We just accept that you exist, and you can have these rights, and as long as you’re sterilized, then you can marry and have all the rights of whatever gender you have – that you’ve been sterilized to become.”

C: So I think that that this is a lot that you don’t speak Japanese because in Japan, at least from my perspective, and I am also an outsider not being Japanese: a lot of the battles are linguistic. Like, one of the first ones that I heard of was the push to change the word used for nurse from “kangofu” to “kangosha” – and the difference is only apparent if you know the individual character that make it up. In kangofu, the last one is woman, and in kangosha it’s person. So kangofu inherently means that nurses are female.

K: Yes.

C: And kangosha could be a man or a woman. So, and Japanese has gone through this kind of linguistic change – I studied a lit bit about this in college – has gone through this kind of linguistic change for hundreds of years. So, you know… “performer,” one of the words, one of the root characters in “performer” used to mean “prostitutes” so prostitution and performance were intimately linked, and then that was changed.

K: Yes.

C: And so I think a lot of the battles are linguistic. Because the Japanese labor system used to have explicitly men’s jobs and women’s jobs.

K: Yeah, but that was a 40-year lawsuit to change that.

C: Yes, yes. It took a really long time to change that, and now there are – there are mobile jobs and non-mobile jobs. And it’s still being fought.

K: And mobile meaning upwardly mobile, where you’re on a promotion track. And other jobs where you can have lateral movement, but you don’t have upward mobility.

C: Well in the other sense, too, where if you take a mobile job, you’re agreeing that your company can tell you that you have to relocate.

K: Almost every job in Japan, your company can tell you that you have to relocate.

C: There is a separate track of people who don’t have to relocate, but they can’t ever be promoted beyond a certain level. They’re usually part-time, it’s a thing.

K: Yeah.

C: So, now women are suing saying “this is still”

K: Just another way.

C: Just another way. A couple years ago it was found out that the medical schools had been deducting something like 50 points from the exams if you were a woman.

K: So I find what’s interesting to me is the difference between allyship and activism because I believe that I do micro-activism in Japan. Where I did macro-activism in the United States. And in the United States, I would march, I would sign petitions, I would do all of those things. In Japan, nobody even contacts me about signing a petition because one, they don’t think I can read it – and they’re right, I can’t read it – and two because I don’t vote I don’t matter.

C: Right. And they assume you can’t vote. It’s also true, but it’s not true that everybody who’s not ethnically Japanese can’t vote. There are lots of people who can vote who are not typical Japanese appearing.

K: And so I find myself that the things that matter to me are race, gender, and sexuality. Those are my three things. I know yours are more capitalist and that’s okay, we have different things that matter to us. So when it comes to ethnicity, I let people know that I’m black because I’m what they’re calling now “racially ambiguous” which I don’t enjoy that term, but I understand that my whole life people have wondered am I Middle Eastern, am I mixed, what am I? And I have people in Japan all the time come up to me and speak to me Portuguese because they presume I’m Brazilian. And then some people assume I have Japanese ancestry, which we’ve talked about before.

C: And there’s a lot of overlap there because a lot of Japanese people moved to Brazil after World War 2, so there’s the Nisseijin, the second generation, which means usually people from Brazil who have Japanese heritage. And have special legal rights in Japan.

K: And so for me, I find that I like to educate. I had someone about six or seven months ago tell me that they do voice acting, and they get criticized when they “talk black.” And I said “well, how do you talk black? I’m black. Do you sound like me? Do you try to sound like me?” And they were like “no, well you know, I put on a stereotypical black voice.” And so what is a stereotypical black voice?

C: Yes.

K: And I had a conversation with them, and I said “are you speaking” and then some of the stuff they were saying to me sounded more like what I grew up with as part of the gay slang and gay culture – the queer culture that I grew up with, and I said “that sounds more queer than black to me” and so, I didn’t feel like they understood what they were saying. And so, like, do you think that you’re speaking jive? And then didn’t know the term jive, they didn’t know what jive was. And that’s 70s African American slang.

C: Uh-huh.

K: And so are you trying to sound African American, are you trying to sound Afro Caribbean, are you trying to sound Afro Latina, and so we had this

C: And what from part of the country.

K: And we had this really – so the person is multiethnic themselves. They’re a person of color, and – but they don’t have any African descent in them whatsoever. And we ended up getting into this really great conversation about what Afro-centricism is and what Afro speak is, and all of the different dialects and all of the things that are regional, and the difference between putting on a southern voice, putting on a gay voice – putting on different voices when you’re a voice actor, and why those voices are reserved for the people of that demographic. Because there are fewer opportunities for them, it’s not just about cultural appropriation, it’s about opportunity. And they were like “wow, that’s really cool, thank you for explaining that to me, I hadn’t ever thought of it that way.” And then I had another opportunity with someone talking about putting on a “black voice” and I just kind of let it roll by, and I wonder if I had taken that opportunity to educate them, then would I have had the same effect as I did with this other person? And then I just felt tired. And I felt like I don’t have the energy to be woke on this.

C: Well, it’s hard. I’ll tell you something that you already know, but you might not if you think about it this way: you’re putting on a black voice right now.

K: Yes, I am. Every time I open my mouth, I’m not putting on a black voice, I’m just speaking in the voice of a black person.

C: Thank you.

K: (laughs) Which is my point, but with allyship, I feel like people who want to be my ally expect me to be woke all the damn time, and I feel like sometimes – and I know this is privileged, I know I am speaking from privilege – a few months ago I was tweeting about my privilege, and I think I still do just randomly tweet about it, but a few months ago I was just really focused on it because it is so privileged of me that I can chose to not to be woke today. And that means I don’t have to deal with any of the intersectionality in my life. I don’t have to worry about class, I don’t have to worry about color, I don’t have to worry about gender, I don’t have to worry about all of the things that are stressful and painful, and I can just choose to go through my life not thinking about them, and that is such a privilege. Some people don’t have the choice but to fight every day of their lives.

C: See, and I think that I partially agree with you there. I think that being

K: So do you agree that I’m privileged?

C: I agree that you have some privileges.

K: Yeah.

C: And I agree that a lot of that is down to living in Japan and not living a highly social life. But I think that being woke all of the time, if you want to be an ally, like if you want other people to think of you as an ally… expecting them to always be active and actively fighting their own oppression and all of that is itself a kind of imposition.

K: Yes it is.

C: It’s – and this is something that you taught me that I had to learn because I was really fired up about like… getting together with you just how badly people were treating you, and I was like “but that’s racism” and you were just like “I’m just trying to live my life here.”

K: Yes.

C: And so I think that

K: That was an interesting process though because in the beginning you were like “that’s not racist” and when I proved to you it was racism, then you were like “you should always care” and I’m like “nooo, I can’t.”

C: Yeah. I felt so betrayed. Like, how was this never pointed out to me?

K: Yeah.

C: And that’s why now I tend to focus on systems and things rather than individual causes because… you know, I’m cisgendered, I’m Kisstopher-sexual, which that’s a variant of heterosexual for men, but

K: Yeah, and I’m Chad-sexual.

C: But very specific. And… you know

K: We’re basically saying we only get horny and excited about each other.

C: Yes.

K: (laughs) But I don’t think people were going to be like “What is Kisstopher-sexual? What does that mean? What is the deeper meaning?”

C: “Am I?”

K: Yeah, no. I don’t think so. (laughs) Maybe you are, I don’t know. Maybe I’m just something hot and tempting to you, I don’t know.

C: You know, I’m formally educated, I have a lot of different ways in which I am privileged. But what that does is it means that sometimes I can just… just take a step back from being woke, and I’m honestly not affected by those things because I am privileged.

K: Yes.

C: Whereas when you take a step back, you’re still black.

K: Yes.

C: You’re still pansexual.

K: Yup.

C: So… I think

K: Still disabled.

C: Still disabled. Yeah. So I think that when people expect people to be activists, like you should care about this issue because of your personal characteristics, that itself is an expression of their own privilege.

K: Yes it is.

C: Or sometimes it’s an expression of their own frustration or anger. It depends on who’s speaking.

K: So… I’ve dealt with a lot of – in my life growing up – with a lot of people who consider themselves liberal allies.

C: Right.

K: And I’ve been oppressed by allies. And pushed by allies to… care about things I don’t care about.

C: Right.

K: And I think that’s because they make the mistake of looking at these identities that we talk about as monoliths.

C: Yes.

K: And so for me, I can only speak about one black girl’s experience with authenticity and lived experience because I’ve only lived Kisstopher’s experience, and then I try to reach out to my siblings and uplift their voices and speak on things I’ve witnessed and things I know about. But always acknowledge my limitations and my – and having humility. And I find that people, a lot of people who want to come in and be my ally say “no, you’re this representation for this thing.” And I realize that in Japan specifically, literally I might be the only pansexual person that people who meet me will ever met. And

C: That they know of.

K: Yeah, that they know of because there are a lot of pansexuals here in Japan, and I find that I meet more of them probably than the average person because my practice is very LGBTQIA+ friendly, and there’s – if you

C: And you’ve developed a reputation for that.

K: Yeah. And I have a reputation for it, and if you read my website, and you know what you’re looking for, there are signs and signals that are there for people wondering if I’m safe.

C: Yeah.

K: To know that I am safe.

C: It’s kind of the obvious of racist dog whistles.

K: Yeah. And so when they’re reading it, they think I might bd safe, and then they come in and talk to me, and during the free intake, we do a little feel-out, and they realize – and I just tell them. When someone’s, when I can tell they’re trying to find out whether or not I’m safe I just say “just full disclosure, I’m a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. I’m pansexual, and that’s just my identity. Shouldn’t affect what we’re doing here, but I just like to disclose who I am.”

C: Yeah. I know you go for the “I was married to a woman before” they’re like “oh okay, so you really are.”

K: Yes. What I think is funny is when I tell people that you’re my second marriage they always act like “dun dun duuuun.” Like they’ve got some big dirt on us or something. And it’s like… we talk about it all the time.

C: Yeah.

K: So I don’t always tell people that my first marriage was to a woman. Because when they act like the first marriage thing is a huge deal

C: Well then yeah you’re not trying to complicate matters. You’re trying to help them, you’re not trying to

K: Yes. If I think it’s going to be titillating, then that’s not appropriate.

C: Yeah, you’re trying to help them feel better not help them be woke.

K: Not focus on me. That’s not – that should never be the focus on therapy.

C: And your job as a therapist isn’t to make people woke.

K: (laughs) But that’s one of the micro ways that I still do activism.

C: Well you can help peo

K: So for you. Sorry I’m just going to cut you off. What is the difference between (laughs) So in transcribing and doing our take twos, I cut you off a lot, I’m so rude. But that’s real talk, that’s how we talk.

C: That is how we talk yes.

K: I’m sorry I cut you off so much babe. I shouldn’t have. Please continue what you were going to say.

C: I was going to say, “please ask your question.”

K: (laughs) So, in Japan, what do you think allyship looks like in Japan? Because it’s so homogenous.

C: But it’s really not. It just

K: It appears to be.

C: It appears to be. So, I had a coworker who would go to anti-war rallies. I think that’s one kind of activism.

K: Mhm. And the – there’s a march, a suicide march to… march against the lack of mental health support in Japan.

C: right, right. There’s – yeah – the disability issues are really poorly handled in Japan, and the Paralympics coming in i2020 is not… not really helping much despite a lot of people saying that it is. That’s a different topic. So I think that you’re always going to be perceived as an ally to somebody.

K: Me?

C: Everybody.

K: Everybody.

C: I think everybody is always going to be perceived as an ally to somebody – to some group, and what really

K: Are you saying as an ally or as aligned with?

C: As an ally.

K: Okay…

C: And what really brought this home for me was the proposition 8 in California, which was trying to put… which successfully did put a ban on same sex marriage in the California constitution, which was subsequently overturned by the supreme court.

K: Yeah.

C: Being secretly funded by the Mormon church. Like it came out, so it wasn’t secret for long, and that was when I said “you know what? I need to go through the process and file to not be a member of the Mormon church even officially.” Because I

K: Despite the eternal consequences.

C: Yes. Because I hadn’t gone for years, and years, and years – not since I was like 19 – because I just didn’t believe it, but I hadn’t ever seen the point in…

K: Formally disconnecting.

C: Formally disconnecting. But then they said, “we’ve got this million members who agree with us.” And I was like “well holy shit they’re counting me there.”

K: Yes.

C: They’re counting me as an ally against same-sex marriage. They’re counting me as part of the, you know, silent army of people who don’t want same-sex marriage to be legal. And that’s what I’m saying about I think everybody will always see you as an ally to somebody.

K: But I’m not – how would that work for me. I don’t belong to any groups. Well, I belong to a lot of Facebook groups. (laughs)

C: Right. So I’m saying that was a much more explicit way, but I think that if you are silent when people are making, let’s say, gay jokes, then onlookers assume that you’re okay with it.

K: Okay. I get what you’re saying. So, people who do nothing look like they’re allied with everyone, and people who are active are allied with the things that they’re active about.

C: Right.

K: And now all of a sudden I’m craving pizza.

C: Yeah?

K: Yeah. I got all of a sudden a mad craving for pizza.

C: Okay.

K: Like hardcore.

C: Do you feel like you’re an ally of the pizza makers of Japan?

K: Yes, I do. So something I feel guilty about is that in theory, and I wish I could be in practice, I believe in vegetarianism. And people say it’s really hard to be a vegetarian in Japan. I don’t think so. I think it’s really easy.

C: It’s hard to eat out as a vegetarian. If you want to eat more than rice because a lot of the sauces and things have fish in them.

K: But you can literally ask for a vegetarian choice at every restaurant.

C: Not every restaurant, there are some restaurants that

K: That are specializing in meat, and then why would you go there? But it is so easy.

C: Yeah.

K: And there’s like.. Happy Cow, which you can do veganism in Japan. Oh, something that chaps my hide: vegans who eat sugar. It bugs me. It bugs me. Because, okay, so there’s one particular vegan that I had this debate with. They were just bugging me and bugging me and bugging me because they have this thing about honey. So, there’s a famous vegan in the United States who is now saying that because of colony collapse, that there is a way to raise bees and produce colonies and a way – and the honey whenever you create a false hive, a man-made hive for them, the honey will bust the box and damage the hive, so the honey has to be harvest every now and then. He wrote a whole long paper on it.

C: Yeah. And I’ve seen hives that they use at apiaries where there’s a spigot on the hive that basically as the pressure builds it forces it out the spigot.

K: Yeah. It’s ethical honey.

C: Yeah.

K: However, with sugar, you have to burn the field to get the sugar cane. That’s the practice is to burn the field. And somebody told me “yeah, but anything coming from Brazil is the highest standard of veganism.” And I felt like “really queen? You’re going to say Brazil, the country that came out and said we owe the world nothing when it comes to protecting the rain forest because we owe the world absolutely nothing?” I was so fired up. I don’t have a thing against vegans, I don’t want it to seem like an anti-vegan rant.

C: Right.

K: This – just this one particular vegan works my nerves because they’re just so perfect and so right, they’re like a level 5 vegan, and they’re so perfect about everything and everybody who doesn’t agree with them, you hate animals. And I was like “girl, I do not hate animals. I have a blood disorder that requires a specific amino acid that can only be obtained by eating flesh, so I can either eat other humans or I can eat an animal, or I can die.”

C: Yes.

K: So I’ve chosen to eat animals.

C: Because your disorder is that most people can produce this internally, and you cannot.

K: Correct, and so should I just be a cannibal? Should I just do that? Like “no, you should find a way to work around it.” Okay, find a way to work around my physiology. Really?

C: Well I mean that’s a whole thing for disability because a lot of time people expect people with disability or with chronic illness to just work around it, and I think that the intersection between people who are self-declared allies and people who are performative activists is pretty strong, and by performative activism is people who are activists to be seen being activists. Who care more about being heard on topics than on actually doing the most good. Who will burn all of the fuel and incur all of the environmental cost to ship in Brazilian sugar because they feel like American honey is unethical.

K: Yes. And sugar is unethical.

C: Yes, I agree.

K: Because you have to burn the field, and so you kill all of the insects.

C: But there’s something that’s said that I agree with: that there’s no ethical consumption under capitalism.

K: No there is not, and if you’re importing anything to Japan, you’re doing way more harm to the earth than being a locavore would do.

C: Right.

K: Because we do – I do a mix. I try to do locavore except for the things I crave. (laughs)

C: Yes.

K: Because I’m a bad human. I’m a bad human.

C: Which are mostly candies with sugar in them.

K: No, I don’t think I’ve done that with a while.

C: Well popcorn with sugar in it.

K: I haven’t done that in a while either.

C: Well yeah, you try to limit it.

K: Yeah.

C: We try to do it in a way that contributes as little as possible, but you know – I liked it on The Good Place, that TV show, when they were like “it’s not possible to live a good life because of all of the extended effects of what you do.” So I think that when you’re trying to be an ally what you have to look at is “am I doing the most good?” not “am I getting the most ally cookies?”.

K: (laughs) What an ally cookie? Are they special? Are they good? What flavor would an ally cookie be?

C: You don’t know about ally cookies?

K: I don’t know about ally cookies.

C: It’s a twitter thing, but you don’t always pay as much attention to the same – you don’t pay attention to the same conversations on twitter as I do.

K: Yeah, not always – I almost never pay attention to the same.

C: An ally cookie is the sarcastic retort when somebody says “well blah blah blah, ignorant statement”: and somebody calls them out on that they say “I’m an ally” and you say “do you want an ally cookie? You’re still wrong.”

K: Oh okay. So, I see people on twitter being like “when you give me unsolicited advice, and I don’t take it” and they say “well I can’t even talk to you” I’m like “no you can talk to me, just don’t give me unsolicited advice.”

C: Yeah.

K: And I find that to be the most annoying thing. I only give advice when the people are – when mutual, and I make sure that they’re a mutual of ours, are explicitly asking for advice. And then I give it. And usually, it has to do with vagina stuff.

C: Yeah?

K: Yeah.

C: Okay. I give a lot of writing advice when people ask for it.

K: (laughs) I just give vagina advice.

C: Yeah.

K: (laughs) Specifically. And I’m always good for our mutual. I always love to tell people they’re awesome.

C: Yes.

K: There’s a difference between you’re awesome and you’re ten kinds of awesome sauce.

C: There is a difference.

K: Yeah.

C: So our rule that you had us put in place, I don’t know it was a while ago on twitter, is we don’t follow anybody who doesn’t follow us.

K: Correct.

C: And that’s not about our numbers or anything. That’s about if I see somebody that’s not been tweeted onto our timeline, I’m going to respond to them usually. If they’re saying something that’s interesting to me. And I don’t know everybody’s quirks and foibles. I know that there are some people on twitter who are like “I don’t want anybody who I don’t know responding to me.”

K: Yes.

C: Then make your account private.

K: Yes.

C: “No” then say it in your pinned tweet or say it in your profile, whatever. “No, everyone should just know like everyone around the world should just know my preference.” Okay. That’s fine. So, what we’re going to do – and it’s worked out pretty well – is only follow people who follow us, so I know that they’re interested in what I have to say.

K: Yeah. And if we don’t follow you on twitter and you want us to follow you, just say “hey follow me”

C: Yeah. And you have to be following us. That’s the rule.

K: But we don’t follow – there are some people who follow us because we have a lot of followers who we don’t follow back, and it’s because they’ve done something. (laughs)

C: Or sometimes it’s because they don’t tweet in English or things like that.

K: Yeah, if we can’t read your original tweets, we don’t follow you

C: If you don’t tweet, which some people don’t tweet at all, they just want to follow tweets – if you don’t tweet in English

K: And some people don’t want us to follow them back and we always respect that boundary because they want to remain a quiet – some people want to have quiet accounts, and that’s completely respectable and okay.

C: So we tend to – we tend to follow back on people who look like they’re open to being followed and who are saying things that we can understand and agree with. But we welcome anybody to follow us.

K: Yeah.

C: So what Kisstopher was saying – if we missed you, like if you followed us and you think we should be following you, just tell us.

K: Yeah.

C: But I think that… when they do analysis of twitter, this is not actually a digression, I’ve edited

K: It’s so a digression, but let’s see you spin it and bring it back around.

C: Okay.

K: Impress me. I’m ready to be impressed.

C: So I’ve written papers on graph theory.

K: Mhm. You have.

C: Yup. And when they do graph analysis of twitter

K: (laughs) Just in case they need me to validate you. Yes, you have.

C: What they find is that tweets tend to circulate within pretty tight-knit communities, and then occasionally make it out to another community and then circulate within that community.

K: Yeah.

C: So what that – how that relates to allyship is that.. I can take ideas that I learn from other people and rather than try to circulate among, let’s say, the black community – I’m not black. And so the ideas that I learned from the black community, trying to uphold them and school people within the black community is completely both inappropriate and useless. But trying to introduce some of those ideas into the communities that I’m in that are all white not because they have an explicit policy of exclusion, but because of the way the expat community is here in Japan,

K: Because like people in Japan tend to congregate with like people – all over the world.

C: Yeah.

K: People like to be around people like themselves.

C: So then I can say you know, this thing I learned. And spread it to that group. And I think that a lot of allyship, like honestly being an ally, is helping to shift the conversation that society is having. It’s not so much railing at one person or like… you know, going person by person and converting people. It’s changing the climate and the tone of the conversation to where hate becomes unacceptable or to where inclusion becomes the obvious thing.

K: Yeah.

C: Like within the autism community specifically, in recent years, it’s become more and more normal to have non-speaking autistic people participating in conversation however they communicate. Because just because they don’t speak doesn’t mean they don’t type or use some kind of thing. And it used to be that even a lot of autistic people didn’t want to hear from them or were like “you don’t count” and so now it’s become normalized that there are some well-known autistic people who are also well-known to be non-verbal. Non-speaking. And so I think that as an ally it’s on us to… kind of try and shift the whole conversation, and you don’t do that by preaching to the choir.

K: And I think, too, that we should just remember that the first job as human beings – if you want to know someone’s lived experience, ask. And then listen. Listen when they tell you. Don’t police other people’s realities. Don’t police other people’s identities. Don’t police other people’s stories. It’s not my - I’m not out here to be someone’s validator – like to validate and truth and fact-check everybody’s story. I can support and say “hey, I see you. Human to human, I see you.”

C: Yeah.

K: And I’m forever sending people spoons. (laughs)

C: Yes. And I think

K: I just want people to have more spoons.

C: Part of that asking, too, is to hear if they say no.

K: Yes.

C: Like, you don’t have a right to anybody’s story.

K: Correct. And it’s not my job to educate you on my truth.

C: Right.

K: Because that’s exhausting. And so for me, with allyship in Japan, I think I’m still on the fringe of society. And so I don’t quite understand it, and I don’t – I just… I see everything so peripherally it feels. I don’t have – so I’m in the expat bubble, fully living in the expat bubble and slowly integrating more into Japanese society, and I am up on Japanese politics, and I do speak with Japanese nationals, but I am always other.

C: Right.

K: And I don’t know, I enjoy being other here in Japan. I didn’t enjoy being other in the United States, but I really enjoy being other here in Japan. I enjoy being on outside of it. And I wrote a whole blog post about it, so check out my blog. Shameless plug (laughs)

C: As Americans, we’re in a privileged position relative to other immigrants.

K: Yeah. And relative to some Japanese nationals. We have certain -- I know that I get exceptions made for my behaviors all the time based on the fact that I’m not Japanese, unless they think I’m Japanese and then they hold me to a higher standard.

C: And I think that’s part of the way that you shift the window. I think foreign women in particular shift the window for what’s tolerated by Japanese women. And so that’s one way in which you can be an ally is to help shift the window. If people tolerate it from you, just put it in their face over and over.

K: Yup. So, I think we did pretty good saying on topic.

C: I think so.

K: I don’t think we really digressed because I think we were both in the ally zone because when I said it you were right on it. And so literally how it goes, I just say, “hey babe let’s record the episode” and then I say, “hey I want to talk about this today” and then he says “okay”: (laughs)

C: Yup.

K: And then that’s when it starts with “lately I’ve been talking about” I mean “lately I’ve been thinking about” because it really does start with my thoughts, and so… yeah. It is what it is. So thanks for listening and we hope you do it again. Come back next week. Come back, y’all.

C: Bye.

K: Bye.