K: So, lately I’ve been thinking about what it means to be tolerant and moderate, and what it means to be tolerant and moderate as an expatriate living in a host country. And what it means to be tolerant and moderate in the United States. Because I find that being tolerant and moderate in the United States – something I never was; I’ve always been an activist. I’ve always been really outspoken. But I find that, since moving to Japan, the first decade we were here, I want to say, I was really tolerant and moderate and slow to criticize. And, now that I have permanent residency, I don’t feel that way anymore. I feel like, kind of like, the shackles are off, and I can return to being who I really am.

C: Yeah, I feel the same way. I don’t know that I’d say, “shackles” just because like that might offend somebody, and I grew up being taught to be super inoffensive. Just super anodyne.

K: Just because you’re white, you can be shackled. You can be white and shackled.

C: Yeah, see, that makes me uncomfortable because

K: Really? The thought of being – well, the thought of being shackled

C: Well, yes.

K: Well… I was going to say makes me uncomfortable but not always.

C: (laughs)

K: I like being oppressed sometimes in certain situations.

C: (laughs)

K: Blue humor. Blue humor is like porn humor.

(laughter)

K: I’m looking at Chad, and I’m like, “hmm. Do I really want to send my sexual partner the message that I don’t want to be shackled?” And the answer is “no.” And it’s so funny because he’s not kidding about it being really uncomfortable, and this is going to make him even more uncomfortable, but some of the things I’m into make him uncomfortable because he’s white, and he doesn’t want to be my oppressor. And there are times that I am asking him to oppress me, but we worked it out over 20 years.

C: We have worked it out, yes.

(laughter)

K: That was like TMI into our bedroom a little bit. Looking behind the curtain.

C: (laughs)

K: Into Oz and its wonderful. So, as a white man, you can be shackled. You can be oppressed.

C: Yes. But I just feel like… that language is so often appropriated. And this is part of what I struggle with. So, what I struggle with is that I know I was socialized to never… kind of be the rebel. Never be the activist. Never complain about how things were.

K: Mhm.

C: But I also know that, by not complaining about how things were, sometimes I was… taken to

K: Upholding.

C: Yeah. Taken to be support for that. And I think – like, the time I remember just definitively saying, “just fuck no. You’re not going to use my name in this” – is when the Mormons, secretly because they were fucking ashamed of it as they should be, supported Prop 8 in California.

K: Yeah.

C: And that took me from, “well I’m technically Mormon, but I don’t go to church and I don’t talk to anybody” to writing a letter demanding that they take my name off of that because I would not cosign

K: And that was a decade-long journey.

C: Yes.

K: They fought tooth and nail to – against taking your name off the rolls.

C: I think it took them like nine months once I sent them the letter. Because there was a website explaining the letter. They had lost a lawsuit. It had gone all the way to the Supreme Court that they had to let people off the rolls.

K: But your journey took a decade.

C: Yes, it did.

K: So, finding out how to say it in a way that they would legally have to uphold it and respect your wishes.

C: Yes, correct.

K: So… see, that, again, was you being moderate.

C: Right.

K: Because you’re like, “no, no. I don’t want to say that it was the Mormon church’s fault that it took ten years for them to respect my wishes to not be a part of their institution and not be on their rolls. It was my fault for not knowing the proper way to do it.”

C: Absolutely. I was – I was brought up to take blame for things, and… it’s hard to break. So, when you say that you feel unshackled, I’m like, “ohh, that word is so… racialized” but I know what you mean about, now that we have permanent residency, I don’t have concern that our neighbors will go to the website to complain about us being foreigners.

K: Correct.

C: Which that website you can no longer choose the drop-down to complain about people being foreigners. That could still be your write-in reason.

K: Yeah.

C: But you can’t choose that as the justifiable reason. Like, “I’m going to complain about my neighbors because they’re noisy; because they destroy property; because they do drugs; because they’re foreigners.”

K: So, I think people don’t understand what we’re talking about, so I’m going to loop them in.

C: Okay.

K: I think some people will, and some people won’t. So, there is a website for every neighborhood in Japan that you can go to – it’s the government website – and there is a drop-down menu, and you can pick reasons why you don’t like your neighbors. Neighbors why you’re writing a complaint about your neighbors, and the drop-down menu used to be just because they’re foreign. And, so, it used to be just enough – like, just foreign. That’s all they had to put. They didn’t have to put anything else. They just had to say, “just because they’re foreign.”

C: Right.

K: And there are bars and restaurants in downtown Nagoya, today, that say, “no foreigners allowed.”

C: Right.

K: And they don’t let foreigners in. And our son, who speaks Japanese, I tell him, “if you want to go in those places, don’t understand them.”

C: Mhm.

K: And that’s what I do. So, one of the things that I do as a protest, which makes you very, very uncomfortable, is when people say offensive and bigoted Japanese statements to me, I refuse to understand them. And I do understand them, but I just refuse to acknowledge that I understand them. “So, you think I’m an ignorant foreigner. I’m going to lean into that and do that.” Which is something I’ve done my whole life is I just leaned into whatever the stereotype is. Like, if a person is afraid of me because they think I’m an angry, Black woman, I will use that. I will – sometimes, not always – lean into that and get what I want from them because they’re afraid of me. And you’re like, “that is so bad. You’re just promoting this stereotype.”

C: And, yet, I’ve gotten more comfortable with it over the years.

K: Yeah, you have.

C: Because I am a lot taller than most Japanese people.

K: Yeah.

C: And a lot heavier than most of them.

K: Yeah.

C: And, so, yes, I do use that.

K: And you are the picture of “the criminal.” They don’t – they took them down, but it used to be

C: Yes.

K: A guy with a hat and beard and glasses, which we’ve talked about before on the show.

C: Yes.

K: So, I think it’s interesting that, now we’re in Japan, I’m no longer the intimidating one because people just assume I’m Japanese or part Japanese if they can’t see my eyes, which we’ve talked about before. You’re now the imposing, intimidating one. They’re either intimidated by you or disgusted by you.

C: Yeah.

K: And it’s interesting to me to see… it switch so drastically because I’m about the color of most Japanese nationals.

C: Right.

K: I’m the same color as them.

C: Lighter than some, darker than others.

K: There’s a lot of fat shaming that goes on.

C: Yes.

K: And I don’t tolerate it at all. I had a doctor once spank me, like physically spank me on the bottom with his hand, because my weight hadn’t changed. And I was like, “yo dude, that’s not okay.” That was the last time I went to see him. And then I had a doctor once tell me, who was obese, tell me that I was fat because I ate udon. And I don’t like udon.

C: I remember that doctor because I went with you to that appointment.

K: Yeah.

C: And he said, “do you know how many people choke to death eating udon?” We’re like, “no, fuck off. She doesn’t eat udon. Just fuck right the fuck off.”

K: Yeah. He was saying that the udon would make my stomach stick together and make my intestines stick together.

C: Right. Like, “are you sure you’re a medical doctor??”

K: Right? Because he did not know his science.

C: Okay because all I’m hearing is a duck going, “quack, quack, quack.”

K: Yeah. So, for me, I think it’s interesting that… in the United States, I felt partially in bondage. And I could read situations, and you were like – we were sitting down with a friend, we had dinner with them, and we were talking about – and it was really just sort of strange how it happened – we were talking about a friend. I was talking with a friend of mine who was Black, and she still is Black. Love you girl.

C: (laughs)

K: We were talking about how, sometimes, you go to the counter – you go to the counter to get a sandwich at, like, a coffee shop, and they serve the person behind you.

C: Right.

K: And, afterwards, we had the conversation of, “does that really happen?” And I was like, it happens all the time with us. And you were like, “what are you talking about?” I said, “you don’t realize how often people look around me to serve you. And I just tell you go ahead.” And you were like, “what are you talking about?” And then the very next day, we went out to get sandwiches, and you saw me standing – I was standing in front of you, and you saw the person look around me to serve you.

C: Right.

K: And you were like, “no, fuck that.”

C: Yeah.

K: “You’re going to serve my wife.” And you were shocked. Because you just – you were shocked that you hadn’t noticed all of the times people looked around me to serve you.

C: I was because I would never let them serve somebody – I would never let them serve me before somebody who was in front of me.

K: Correct.

C: Because that’s breaking the line order.

K: Yes. (laughs)

C: But it wasn’t clocking to me

K: Which would bother you on, just like

C: An autistic level.

K: Yeah. In your marrow, it would be like, “you’re breaking the line order. It’s chaos in here. I can’t take it.”

C: Right?

K: And you would leave. You would leave any place that you felt was chaotic.

C: Yes. So, I hadn’t noticed it because it was something that I automatically corrected for. Not with any intent. Not with the intent to right this injustice

K: But there were times, like, that people were aggressive about it. And you were like, “I’m just leaving. This is upsetting me. I’m leaving.”

C: Yes.

K: And… it was – it wasn’t until we had the conversation about it that I didn’t realize that you were leaving because of the chaos not because of the racism. And I was supporting you like, “yes. I’m down. This is racist bullshit.”

C: (laughs)

K: “We’re out of here.” So, I always thought you were an activist.

C: Mhm.

K: And then, when we sat down and talked about it, I found how triggering, like, even calling you an activist now is.

C: Yes.

K: You don’t like it. And you’re like – so, I don’t call you that when I see you doing activism. I don’t call you that. But I do… often tweet out about you being one of the most inclusive people I’ve ever known. And we talk about it a lot because you are so inclusive. And it was really painful when we moved to Japan – all of the racism you were having to endure. It was really painful for you.

C: Yeah.

K: And so, for me, I feel like if there is a website where people can report you for the color of your skin, that is racism. And that is bondage.

C: Mhm.

K: And that is being shackled. You’re not allowed to speak out. You can’t complain. Like, your first job, they set the clock two minutes fast.

C: Yes.

K: And because a Japanese receptionist said you were late, even though you could prove – because I always set my watch by the train.

C: Right.

K: So, I would tell them, “this is JR time” or “this is the Meijo line time.” And I tell every – I would tell every employer when I started there, “my watch is set to the Meijo line. Is Meijo line – does the Meijo line subway run on time?” Which is a manipulation because Japanese nationals, in Nagoya, are very proud of how on-time the trains are.

C: Mhm.

K: To prevent them from ever calling me late.

C: And they are on time, like, 95% of the time. Not delusion.

K: Yeah. So, I use that, but I learned that from your experience

C: Right.

K: Of you set your watch to catch the train. You arrived on time, you punched in on time, but someone who was your subordinate, because they were Japanese, they were right, and you were wrong.

C: Well, they weren’t my subordinate. It was kind of parallel structures. The way that the Eikaiwa systems work, the Japanese employees and the non-Japanese employees aren’t in the same hierarchy at all. Which… prevents… non-Japanese employees from ever being able to effectively lobby to become management or anything like that.

K: Yeah.

C: Like, there are branch managers, but they’re not really managers. They’re just… people schedulers.

K: Yeah.

C: They’re not going any further in the company. But… yeah, I mean… just, growing up, I was just taught, “well, just always be inoffensive. Always be quiet” and all of that. And I don’t know whether it was because I was particularly noisy or whatever, but my dad would run into a room

K: You were non-verbal until you were 2 years old.

C: Until I was almost 3, I think.

K: Okay. And you didn’t like to make noise beyond – I know non-verbal is offensive to some people, but listen to our old episodes and you’ll know Chad likes the way I talk about him. And if it’s offensive to you, I’m not calling you that. I’m calling my husband that.

C: Yeah. I was non-speaking, but

K: But you identified, to me, as non-verbal.

C: At that age, I definitely identified as non-verbal. Yeah. I wouldn’t call an adult non-verbal. I’d call them non-speaking, but – an infant, a toddler, I would probably still think of them as non-verbal. That’s definitely what I thought of myself.

K: You were non-verbal because you were non-vocalizing.

C: Yes.

K: You didn’t make any grunts, sounds, cried.

C: No.

K: You didn’t make any sounds at all. To where your parents were concerned that you were mute.

C: And, maybe I’ve mentioned this before, but it’s weird because, a couple years ago, we found an old baby book where my mom had written this whole fake history of me. Like, my first words and all of this, and I know it’s not true

K: Yeah.

C: Because they both complained a lot about

K: That was like fifteen years ago that we found this.

C: Okay.

K: Sorry, my f’s are still weird. I don’t know if you guys can hear it, but I’m still going through my oral stuff.

C: Yes. Months and months, which sucks. But.

K: Yeah. It is what it is.

C: Well, my dad would run into a room where all I was doing was sitting there reading and go, “everybody calm down.” Like, really angry about it.

K: Yeah.

C: So, I learned early on that to be seen was to be a victim of violence.

K: Yeah.

C: Because the yelling was the least of it. If I actually was being noisy, that came with beating with a belt or whatever.

K: Yeah.

C: So, I just… I didn’t… feel comfortable being called an activist because I was just trying to, like, fit into the social order.

K: Mhm.

C: And, so… it took me a while to understand that the social order – fitting into the social order was itself an oppressive act.

K: Yeah.

C: For me. And, so, I think that was a lot of the – when you say I really suffered from racism when I came over here, a lot of it was… also retroactively seeing how I had been upholding it in the United States.

K: Yeah, it was really a painful process for you.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so, we have this thing – so, on twitter, I tell Chad not to tweet about Black stuff. And that’s something that’s been challenging in our marriage, and I – the reason why I’ve asked Chad not to tweet about Black stuff because we share a twitter account, and I don’t co-sign all of his beliefs on racism. And I don’t co-sign all of his beliefs on… and his views on the Black experience. So… I don’t agree with them, so I don’t co-sign them. So, he is kind enough to not express any of his opinions, but it’s been a negotiation over the years of what he can talk about, and what he can’t talk about, on our twitter account. Which led to a silencing of him that I didn’t like.

And, so, now, it’s, “if you’re going to tweet about Black stuff, if you’re going to talk about Black stuff” – and yes, I say Black, not African American because I don’t believe that I should have to hyphenate my Americanism. And I know it hurts some people who strongly identify as African American. But, if Michelle Obama can identify as Black, and all of the dark skin girls stand around her and uphold her, then I don’t think because I’m light-skinned that that right should be taken away from me. I should have the right of self-identification. I am not distancing myself from Mother Africa. I am proud of the fact that my… great-grandfather survived slavery. That my bloodline survived slavery. Because that was not an easy thing to do. And… I cry bitter tears for all of – all of our fallen brothers and sisters who died in that oppressive regime. But I am not distancing myself from Africa.

I am saying that you don’t – for me, it’s a matter of “they don’t get to pretend that they are restoring my country to me because slavery took away my country of origin.” I do not know what country in Africa my people came from. And I’m not going to pretend, like, America has restored that to me.

C: Mhm.

K: Because they have not. They have – there’s – they haven’t sat down and done the research to say, “where did the Africans that lived in this region – the African slaves that lived in this region, where did they come from?” We’re guessing, and we’re having to search archives and all of that. And they did search archives, and they could not find – when they did our family’s history – they could not find our country. So, that’s history that has been lost to me, and I will not pretend that it has been restored. So, for me to say I’m Black is an act of rebellion, and it’s rebelling against this… falsehood and this fake narrative that my African-ness has been restored to me. It hasn’t. Or that my family has been made whole because it is not. So, I still feel the legacy of that slavery today. And I see it all around me in the United States. Just like I see fascism all around me in Japan.

C: Yes.

K: So, for me, there – it’s a really sad process when I’m hanging out with a Japanese friend, and then they say something racist against a Chinese or Korean person. And... they oftentimes are pointing at someone, to me, that I don’t know if they’re Japanese or not.

C: And they don’t either.

K: Yeah, they don’t. There’s nothing… that differentiates. And they’re pointing to someone, to me, that looks Japanese, and they’re saying, “oh, look, they’re misbehaving. They must be Chinese.”

C: Right.

K: Or, “they’re misbehaving, they must be Korean.” And then they go on this hateful, racist rant. And I lose a friend.

C: Mhm.

K: Because they’re not… racist against Africans. And then, come to find out, they are racist against Africans. They’re just not racist against Americans.

C: Right.

K: And… that process of being, like, wow. Okay. It’s a really weird place to be. Like… I’m the right kind of Black.

C: How narrowly should they have to be bigoted before it’s excusable? Like, “no, no, I can still be your friend. My bigotry is really narrow. It doesn’t include you.”

K: Yeah.

C: “It includes people who look like you, but it doesn’t include you.”

K: Yeah.

C: Well, then, just fuck off, ho.

K: Exactly. So, for me, I – like, in the United States, it was so in my face, and a lot of Black people think I’m so pale that I can pass. And I don’t. I don’t pass. I’ve never passed. I don’t know what passing would be like.

C: And that’s interesting to me because those Black people never doubt that you’re Black. They just think other people

K: An instant. Yeah. They don’t doubt for an instant.

C: We had one person who was so bold he worked for us, and he’s Black, to give you a book called “Uppity Black Women.”

K: Yes.

C: And he soon found himself out of a job.

K: Yeah. Yeah. I didn’t like it at all. I didn’t like it at all.

C: It just

K: So, how does it feel having racism pointed at you? Because I see… that… since – I feel like, since we got permanent residency, you stopped supporting all of the institutions in Japan that promote… the stereotype of Charisma Man.

C: Yes. So, Charisma Man – I don’t know if it’s in other Asian countries or whatever – but it’s basically the white guy who comes over and gets all the Japanese poontang. All the Japanese pussy.

K: Yeah.

C: Because he’s just so smooth.

K: Yeah.

C: And it’s just foul. And there are guys who come over here with that hope. And there are guys who come over where with that hope and have lots of Japanese girlfriends. So, it’s not… completely imaginary, but… yes, I… can’t tolerate it.

K: There is a fraction of the population that wants to move, and, so, there are Gaijin hunters.

C: Yes.

K: So, a Gaijin hunter – Gaijin, to me, is a slur, as it should be Gaikokujin, but it’s been shortened to Gaijin, which is a slang word for foreign. I don’t particularly care for it. And there are women who are looking for that foreign husband to – specifically because they want to move to a specific country when their child turns 5.

C: Right.

K: Or before their child turns 5. Like, I’ve known women that are looking for Australians, and they’re super specific.

C: Yes.

K: “I want somebody that comes from this part of the U.K.” or “I want someone that comes from this part of Australia” or “I want to live in this state in the United States.”

C: Right.

K: And I’m like, “okay girl go on with that.” I am not mad at it. I’m like, right on. I tell my son about it because I’m like, you know, I don’t want my son to suffer from that.

C: Let them know you are not leaving Nagoya. Let them know

K: Yes. (laughs)

C: Just because you’re American doesn’t mean they can marry you, and you will move them to America.

K: Right. That is not happening. That is not going down. So, how does it feel to have your voice restored to you? Now that we’re permanent residents.

C: It feels strange because I feel – I feel like… in the United States, I had a voice, but I was often reluctant to use it. And I still often feel reluctant to use it. I feel like I’m a bother to people. Or like I’m stepping in places that aren’t my space. So, it’s taken me a long time to negotiate… like, when to say things. I know that, for example, in all white space, calling out racism – totally my place to do. I’m going to make everybody fucking uncomfortable because I’m going to do it.

K: Yeah.

C: And, you know, people are like, “whoa. It’s just us here.” I’m like, “no, don’t put me with your us. I am not part of your us.” But I still struggle a lot with when I’m in a space where there’s the people being discriminated against to not… it’s hard to know where that line is between patronizing, like you can’t take care of yourself, and justice-oriented, like you shouldn’t have to take care of yourself. And this is something you and I have struggled with in our personal relationship is how much should I defend you.

K: Yeah.

C: Like… I know that what they’re doing is wrong. Should I leave it to you to handle, or should I be handling it?

K: Yeah. And that’s a hard one. And, then, I find where I struggle… is I like to support my people.

C: Mhm.

K: But it’s really hard – so, I’m going to say something that’s going to be possibly very controversial. Issa Rae is so hard for me. Like, Issa Rae is an African American writer who has a T.V. show called Insecure. And… the first season of Insecure, I was super supportive even though it was really, really hard for me because I think that Issa Rae tackles issues that need to be tackled, and they were having conversations that needed to be had, which she’s still doing. And doing it through comedy and everything, but her use of the N-word. And… like… I love Ice Cube, and I love Ice-T, and I love… rap music. But… the use of the N-word, to me, is… so hard. And you see it when African American rappers call up white people from the audience, and they’re singing along.

C: Mhm.

K: For me, I feel… like that’s our word, but we want them to consume our music, so maybe we shouldn’t be using that word because we’re teaching a whole generation of white people that it’s okay to use that word. From my perspective. And we’re desensitizing a whole bunch of Black people to that word. And… saying reclaim it and all of that, and there are a lot of things that me and my very, very close friends call each other in private that I don’t allow someone to call me in public. I think there needs to be… private, within-group things, and public, all-group things.

C: Mhm.

K: And I feel like I can’t support… Issa Rae. I feel like I can’t support… Ice Cube and Ice-T. And I know I’m dating myself. And, like, Snoop Dogg. So, when you look at Snoop Dogg and Martha Stewart when they come to dinner, and that relationship, I think, is really great. But what if… that relationship had resulted in Martha Stewart dropping the N-bomb.

C: Mhm.

K: You know. So, I just… I feel like there is a public face and a private face, and that I really enjoy in Japan.

C: Yeah, yeah.

K: I really enjoy that there’s no pretense in Japan that who you are in public is not who you are in private, and that is the way it’s supposed to be. And I really, really enjoy that. In the United States, I do not enjoy this pretense that who we are in private is who we should be in public. Because it’s just not true. It’s just not true. In private, I’m a nudist. Like… I don’t wear clothes at home. Ever. It’s really are. So… if I’m going to be my authentic self in public, then I would be naked in public. So, to me, there’s always been, because of my nudist beliefs, there’s always been a private me and a public me, and the public me puts on a uniform. And that uniform really communicates a lot about me to other people. The way I dress. Like the fact I don’t wear makeup. The fact I don’t shave. The fact I have tattoos. All of these are… codes. And I’m just talking about me naked at this point. (laughs) I’m not even saying what my jeans say about me. (laughs)

C: Mhm.

K: So, what do you think about the whole public face and private face? I know that you do not enjoy shows that drop the N-bomb.

C: I don’t, and it’s not about respectability politics. I disagree with respectability politics. You don’t need to pull up your fucking pants if you’re not showing anything.

K: Yeah, no.

C: Like, that kind of…. I find it really uncomfortable because I know… exactly what you’re saying – that people will take that as justification to step outside the lines.

K: Yes.

C: And it always makes me uncomfortable when people step outside the lines. And it’s been a very long process to understand that, sometimes, that’s necessary. To step outside the lines.

K: Yeah.

C: That the intent in doing so is what matters. So, sometimes people step outside the lines of so-called “acceptable discourse” to put somebody else back in their box.

K: Yeah.

C: And, sometimes, people do it to… break those boxes or make them bigger.

K: Yeah.

C: So, for me, no, I don’t like watching shows that use the N-word, but I also don’t like shows that use the B-word and the C-word, and…

K: Yeah.

C: Like…

K: So, that’s something that’s really beautiful in our relationship. You’ve never called me a bitch. Not once. Not ever. And we’ve had some throw-down fights. And you’ve never, ever, ever called me a bitch or a cunt or any of that. For those of you that don’t know what the B-word and C-word are. (laughs)

C: And I think that

K: That’s just – you just don’t like cursing.

C: I don’t, but when I talk to guys who have heard you say this kind of thing – because

K: Mhm.

C: And they’re like… “how do you stop yourself from calling her a bitch?” I’m like…

K: (laughs)

C: “I just never think of that.”

K: Yeah.

C: That’s how I stop myself. It’s just never a thought that enters my head.

K: So, like, the first couple of years we were together, I was like, “I can feel you flipping me off.” And you were like, “what are you talking about?” I’m like, “well, if you had said that to me and walked out of the room, I would have flipped you off behind your back.”

C: (laughs)

K: You were like, “no. Why are you doing that? Are you flipping me off behind my back?” And I was like, “yes. Aren’t you?”

C: “Why don’t you say something to me if I’m bothering you that way?”

K: (laughs)

C: How will I fix my behavior if I don’t know what’s bothering you?

K: And you were like, “how will I know what to tell you to adjust to when I won’t fix my behavior?”

C: Yes.

K: Because you’re very much yourself.

C: I am. There are some things I’m not going to change even if it bothers you, and there are other things I’m like, “oh that bothers you? I’ll change it.”

K: Yeah. And I can never predict which one is which.

C: I can’t either.

K: Oh my god, and now I have a massive, massive craving. I’m so hungry right now.

C: What are you craving?

K: I’m craving Jack in the Box. Because I’m thinking about, like, the house, and… the United States, and when I think about the United States, I crave either – oh, cheesecake. Nations. I didn’t eat before this podcast, so that hasn’t changed. (laughs)

C: Okay.

K: Last week, I had eaten. I had eaten a tuna sandwich.

C: Yes. Yes, you had.

K: Yeah. And this week, I haven’t. So, when it comes to, like, identity politics… I feel like… that people should have the right to use language that makes them feel comfortable. And I do believe that there are things that certain people can’t say. But, for me, it has to go both ways. So, if we’re going to police speech and language, then we have to police and monitor our own speech and language. So, while I agree that racism is a power construct, and racism is about who’s in power – and that Black people, because of that, because they are not in power, cannot be racist, I do believe they can be bigoted and biased. And for me, because I am mixed race, for years just saying I was mixed race was a political act.

C: See, and I think that they can absolutely be racist. What they can’t be is they can’t be racist against white people. They can be bigoted against them.

K: Mhm.

C: They can be bigots all day every day.

K: Yup.

C: But they can absolutely support the dominant racial structure. And I know people

K: Oh, you mean internal racism – racist against themselves.

C: Yeah. Or lateral.

K: Ah.

C: Where they’re like, “you know what, I’ve got mine, and I’m wealthy and I’m powerful” or whatever “and it suits me to have the people around me kept in their place.”

K: Ah, okay. Yeah. So, you’re saying that, once they achieve, pulling up the ladder.

C: Yeah.

K: Like, once you reach the next level, pulling up the ladder like a lot of women do. A lot of people of color do. Like, “there are only so many Black seats at the table, and I’m here, and if another Black person comes in, then that jeopardizes my ability to be here, so I’m going to do my best to make sure no other people of color reach this level.”

C: Exactly. Or, from my background, poor white people. Who are like, “okay, I got an education through whatever means, so now I’m going to pull up the ladder to make sure that nobody else can. Because now I can exploit this whole class of people.”

K: Mm.

C: “That I belong to, but I’m at the top of the heap. I don’t want anybody else climbing that hill.”

K: Yeah. I think you saw that a lot in the Mormon church.

C: I definitely did. Yeah.

K: Do you see that a lot here in Japan?

C: I definitely see that a lot here in Japan. And I think people here in Japan, foreigners here in Japan, have less… access to the levers that make that happen. But

K: I see it a lot among foreigners. I am always helping people out, and they… trip out off that. They, like, trip heavily off it. I have helped two other therapists start practices in Japan.

C: Mhm.

K: But I believe that – I always believed that part of the reason it was so difficult to start my practice is there was only one other English-speaking practitioner, and they practiced in a bubble.

C: Right.

K: And they don’t advertise. They don’t do anything. And, so, the fact that therapy is available in English, in Japan, I really had to… get the word out there myself. And it was exhausting. So, I feel like more people doing what I’m doing raises awareness that it’s available.

C: Well, and I feel like – yeah, definitely for you – but I’m thinking of one specific person… who was a manager at an English school – at an Eikaiwa – and said… “oh yeah, my employee is really talented at art, and they’re trying to start an art business. So, I have changed their schedule to make them miss gigs that they had scheduled.”

K: Oh, yeah.

C: “Because I don’t want them to quit.” So, they were intentionally sabotaging somebody else’s attempt to move out of an exploitative English teaching position into a better position where their art was supporting them and stuff. And I see that a lot.

K: And the restaurant owners in Japan – the foreign restaurant owners, at least in Nagoya – sorry guys, you’re horrible.

C: Yeah.

K: You treat your employees horribly, and it’s really, really exploitive. So, yeah, there is this sort of class war that goes on in Nagoya between… like… we’re sort of – we’re not at the English teaching level of income.

C: Well, we’re in an odd position because we have permanent residency, but neither one of us is Japanese.

K: Yeah.

C: So, there’s definitely a difference

K: We’re outliers.

C: Yeah. We’re outliers.

K: And, so, the fact that we’re a foreign couple with permanent residency who did – neither one of us works for a Japanese company.

C: Yes.

K: And… I own my own business, but you work

C: For an Australian business.

K: Yeah, so we’re really weird because we don’t… I own a business that supports… it’s so hard to explain the socio-economic quagmire.

C: Okay, so, the socio-economics of it is we pay our taxes to the Japanese government.

K: Yes.

C: But we don’t get taxed by any foreigners via employment or that kind of thing.

K: Yeah. So, we’re uniquely insulated in that… we can say and do whatever we want in the foreign community without having to fear backlash.

C: Right.

K: And we joined a lot of foreign groups and then quit all of those foreign groups because we saw the insidious nature of them. And, now, I find that the… most controversial and most activist thing that I do – there are three things that I do: I support the LGBTQIA+ community always. I’m a member of the community, so I always support our community. And, so, right now, my focus is fighting for trans rights and intersex rights as well as same-sex rights. For same-sex partnerships in Japan. And I do that mostly via education. And, then, the other thing that I fight against, mostly, I educate – is I educate a lot of English teachers about what their rights are.

C: Mhm.

K: And put them in touch with the union. I think the union is amazing.

C: They do a lot of good work, yeah.

K: Yeah, the general union, awesome group for English teachers. So, if you’re an English teacher in Japan, just google “General Union Japan English Teachers.”

C: And if you’re hearing bad stuff about them, yes. You will hear bad stuff about them because that’s part of the union busting that the schools try to do.

K: Yeah. And then the other thing I – the other way that I advocate is I advocate for mental health rights.

C: Mhm.

K: And, in Japan, I let the people that I work with know that I connect them with a psychiatrist that I work with and let them know that they can get an excuse to be off of work for 30 days for mental health reasons. And there are companies – English teaching companies – that have rules that, if you’re gone for 30 days, they won’t renew your contract. And I help people navigate and negotiate that. So, I help people get out of school, get out of work, and all of those things to take care of their mental health.

C: I think we’ve mentioned this before, but it bears repeating always, in Japan just because something is illegal doesn’t mean that you can actually stop it.

K: Correct.

C: In the United States, if something’s illegal, you might have to sue, and it might take a while, but, eventually – perhaps not by the time it’s still worth anything – you can probably get it taken care of and make legal.

K: Yeah.

C: Here in Japan, that’s not the case.

K: At all. (laughs) Just because something’s illegal does not mean that you can

C: Right. It’s illegal not to rent to foreigners just because they’re foreign.

K: Yeah.

C: But there are still billion-dollar companies that will take listings and tell you, “no you can’t rent here because you’re foreign.”

K: Yeah.

C: You’ll say, “that’s illegal” and they’ll say, “well… go ahead and try and sue the owner. It’s not illegal for us to enforce their illegal rules.”

K: Yeah. So… what’s your activism now? How are you using your voice? Because I think you do use your voice.

C: I think I’m mostly using my voice online to try and… um… I – to try and combat ableism.

K: Yeah.

C: And I’m particularly bothered by intellectual ableism.

K: Yeah.

C: So, I am… I have always been called intellectually gifted or genius or different things by whatever system because the way my wind works really fits with the answers that they want.

K: Yeah because, hello, you’re a mathematician.

C: Right.

K: So, if they’re measuring your ability to compute or make logical arguments

C: Right. But it bothers the fuck out of me when people act like that makes me better than people who aren’t aligned that way.

K: Mm.

C: It just really bothers me, and it’s a really hard thing to talk about because… what do I say? Like…

K: “Stop calling me smart.”

C: Yeah.

K: (laughs)

C: It doesn’t actually cause me pain to be called smart except that I know that you are using that against other people.

K: Mm. I think that that’s sort of where you’re at. It’s like, “don’t give me privilege.” You’re fighting against being privileged because you think that privileges should be earned, and it puts you in that catch-22 where people tell you, “shut up and sit down. You’re not affected by this.”

C: I think until everybody has the basic necessities, until people can have food and water and shelter and clothing and health care… to say that anybody can “earn” any privilege… is like, we need to be really specific about what that word means. Those things aren’t privileges. They’re basic human rights.

K: Yeah.

C: And to tell me that, “well, you’re smart, so you can have a job, so you can pay all of those things, but this person is too stupid to live.” Like, that phrase just sends me.

K: Yeah.

C: So, I think that’s where my activism is because I can feel myself getting heated.

K: You are. You’re like turning red. You are getting fired up. So, if you want to keep hearing about our passion and how fired we are about this – we hope that you are enjoying the new format. We’re digressing a little bit – digressing less and changing the focus a little bit because we have a platform, and I think that we should use it to… make our voices heard. And spread what I think is good thoughts out there. And I hope you guys keep the conversation going. Hit us up on our social media and let us know what you think.

C: Yes, please do.

K: (laughs) We’re going to head on over to our Patreon and drop our take two on this, so we hope you come on over with us. Talk to you next week.

C: Bye.

K: Bye.