

Queerology Episode 99

On Justice (Broderick Greer, Brit Barron, Robin DiAngelo, Darren Calhoun, Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, Kenji Kuramitsu)

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[Show notes and resources included at the end of the transcript.]

- Matthias: 00:00 Hey, friends! This is Matthias Roberts, and you're listening to Queerology: A Podcast on Belief and Being. This is Episode 99.
- Matthias: 00:14 This is a little bit of a different episode. I had a whole episode prepared, but the way the production schedule now works for Queerology is that episodes are completed a full two weeks before they go live, so it didn't even begin to address the reality that we're now living in.
- Matthias: 00:32 This past weekend, as I witnessed the protests in response to the state-sanctioned murder and lynching of George Floyd, the protests in response to the state-sanctioned murders and lynchings of countless Black and Brown people, including Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and now David McAtee, who was shot by police during the protests in Louisville, and many, many others—as I witnessed these protests this weekend, I knew that Queerology couldn't proceed as if it were just another week. So this is an attempt at doing *something*.
- Matthias: 01:09 I've gathered excerpts from many different past episodes and put them together to create this new episode focused on justice and liberation. I'm so grateful for Darren Calhoun, Brit Barron, Kenji Kuramitsu, Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, and Broderick Greer for agreeing to let me pull excerpts from their episodes. I'm also continually grateful for the work that Robin DiAngelo did way back in Episode 3, which I also pulled from. I'll say more about these folks as they come up later on in the episode.
- Matthias: 01:41 So before we dive in, a few points. First, this episode is primarily for my white listeners. I found this weekend, over and over again, I really want to offer care and rest to my Black and Brown listeners through this medium, and I also realized that I am not the most equipped and not exactly in the position to be able to do that. So I think, and I may be wrong on this, but I think that my ability and my responsibility rest squarely in this space of speaking to my audience. So if you're not white, and if you're looking for care, I've included some links to places you can go for care in the show notes.

These are places that are led by Black and Brown folks who are more equipped to offer spaces of rest, spaces of care to folks of color.

Matthias: 02:30 The protests that have been happening around the country this weekend—and around the *world* this weekend—they're not just about George Floyd. They're not just about state-sanctioned lynching and police murders. Black, Brown, Latinx, Native, and other people of color have disproportionately been affected by COVID in the last months. They have had higher infection and death rates due to the ways our systems have been set up to fail people of color, and thus they've already been living in trauma. That's on top of the trauma they exist within daily simply from not having white skin. So, thus, more murders, *more* lynchings at the hands of the state, at the hands of the police, is heaping incalculable amounts of trauma upon already-existing indescribable trauma. There's so much more going on here.

Matthias: 03:23 So, property can be replaced. Lives cannot. And to back that up, here's an excerpt from Nordstrom Corporate. They sent out an email on Monday—so, yesterday—addressing some of the things that happened this weekend. They had some stores that were damaged this weekend because of the protests here in Seattle, and they wrote: "Windows and merchandise can be replaced, but we continue to believe as strongly as ever that tremendous change is needed to address the issues facing Black people in our country today." Target Corporate released a similar statement; many independent stores have released similar statements.

Matthias: 04:03 So I hope in the midst of this, we can become people who work to address the actual issues—not damaged property—the *actual* issues, and people who can work for change. We can start exactly where we are right now, and the voices in this episode can help point us in the right direction. But after you listen, it's time for you to act. So: I want you to commit to listening to this episode, and after you listen, *do something*. I'm including tons of resources in the show notes of things you can do, but I especially want to encourage you to donate to your local bail funds. That's where money is needed right now.

Matthias: 04:40 And finally, I want to remind you that it's not the job of Black and Brown folks to educate us white folk. Please *do not* reach out to the folks in this episode asking what you can do or asking them to further educate you or elaborate on a point they made. That's *your* responsibility to figure out. Use the resources I've included. If I hear that you've reached out to one of these folks or any of your Black and Brown friends for advice, then I'll know that you weren't

listening! You have resources right in front of you at your fingertips, so do a little bit of your own work instead of expecting others to do it for you. Even Instagram comments. Even Twitter responses. *Google*. If you want to reach out to someone, reach out to me, and I would love to help point you to more resources. You can also just look in the show notes.

- Matthias: 05:31 I want to give a huge “thank you” to AnaYelsi Velasco-Sanchez—she’s a Washington, D.C.-based activist and consultant who helped guide my thinking around this episode. Because of Queerology’s generous patrons, I was able to hire her. And I want to make that a really clear point, especially because of what I just said about not heaping emotional labor on Black and Brown folks. I was able to *hire* AnaYelsi as a consultant for this episode to bounce my own ideas that I came up with off of her, and I am so grateful that she agreed to help guide me to continue doing my own work. I’m really grateful for her and for her wisdom.
- Matthias: 06:09 So, with all that said, let’s go ahead and dive in! To start us out, I thought it’d be really wonderful for us to pray together. This prayer that Kenji’s about to read is a prayer for justice, and it comes from his book, *A Booklet of Uncommon Prayer*, which is available online from Evangelicals for Social Action—there’s a link for that in the show notes. So here’s Kenji reading a prayer for justice. This comes from Episode 18, and then again, we repeated it in Episode 46 of Queerology. Will you pray with us?
- Kenji: 06:42 God, make us instruments of your justice. Where there is a false and untenable peace, let us sow dissent; where there is injustice, fury; where there is oppression, hope; where there is false fluorescence, profound darkness; where there is social depression, life; where there is crime and poverty, a sustainable economic infrastructure. Grant that we may not so much seek to be uplifted as to uplift; to be seen, as to see others. For it is in protesting the sin of the system that we can more fully acknowledge our own sin; it is in demanding justice of the powerful that we live out God’s demands for us; and it is in rejecting the American Dream that we are born into God’s dream. Amen.
- Matthias: 07:34 Amen, indeed. Okay, now we’re going to get into it. To start, let’s define some things. What are we talking about when we mean “racism,” “white supremacy,” “whiteness,” even? What are those things?
- Matthias: 07:51 There are three guests in this section. I’m not going to do full introductions because you can go back and listen to their episodes—and I encourage you to do so. This is just a primer.

- Matthias: 08:03 First, we have Dr. Robin DiAngelo, a critical race theorist. She wrote a recent bestselling book called *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Go get that book, and if you want to listen to her episode of Queerology, this is from Episode 3. There was an encore in Episode 34, and there was another encore early in 2019 as well.
- Matthias: 08:30 Next is Darren Calhoun. He's talking about whiteness and assimilation, so you'll hear his voice next. Darren is a justice activist, speaker, musician, photographer, and conversation-starter based in Chicago, and this first appeared in Episode 22, *Worshiping While Queer*, if you want to hear more of Darren, which I encourage you listening to.
- Matthias: 08:56 Next, you will hear Brit Barron. Brit Barron is a speaker, a teacher, and author of her forthcoming book—it's coming out in just a month—called *Worth It*. We're actually going to be doing a whole episode about that book later this summer. So excited about that. But this is from Episode 27 of Queerology, when Brit was on the podcast with her wife, Sammy, and that, too, is an amazing episode. So: Dr. DiAngelo, Darren Calhoun, and Brit Barron.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 09:32 Probably the most brilliant adaptation of racism post-Civil Rights was to make being a good moral person and complicity with racism mutually exclusive. So you actually... racism became bad, and only bad people were racist, and since I was good, and I was against racism, and I was not aware of any conscious dislike, I could not be racist. That's the definition the average white person has. Trust me, it'll come up in responses to this program. Therefore, if you suggest that anything about me has anything to do with race, or that I've done anything racially problematic, I'm going to hear a question to my very moral character. Then I will need to defend my moral character.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 10:27 That's why I think, actually, white progressives are the most difficult. One, we think we're good to go. We're down. We've been exempt from all of this. That's where our energy is going to go, to making sure you understand that we're down and good to go. None of our energy is going to be going to what it needs to go to for the rest of our lives, which is continual self-awareness, reflection, analysis, engagement, interruption, accountability, and so on.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 11:00 Interestingly, where we are in dominant culture, so where we are in the norm, where we are swimming with the current in the water rather than against it. So as queer people, we're swimming *against* the current. But as white people, we're swimming *with* the current. One of the privileges of swimming with the current is that you are

not reduced to that identity. You get to be an individual, right? So that becomes something to which you feel entitled. It is a very precious ideology of dominant culture. Now, where you're not swimming with the current, you're always labeled. So you're always going to be the gay guy, right?

Matthias: 11:41 Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Dr. DiAngelo: 11:43 But not the white guy, right? So one of the ways that we get our backs up, and again as you'll notice in white people's responses to what I'm saying, is that I'm challenging individualism. I'm actually not granting white people individuality. I actually am—yes, I want to be really clear to all your listeners—I am proceeding as if I could know something about you just because you are white. That is because we live in a society that conditions us together.

Dr. DiAngelo: 12:21 I doubt any queer-identified person would deny that gender socialization is profound, right? That that's what it's all about, is there's that binary, and how relentless it is. So perhaps we feel we can say some general things about cisgender people, or about heterosexual people, and what they're able to take for granted regardless of other aspects, but it's very difficult when we want to apply it to ourselves.

Darren: 13:05 I think there's a historical context that really comes into play here, especially for people who live in the United States. We tend to think that the world we're born into is the world that always existed, or the way things are are the way that they've always been. I think, especially in our context, that's not very accurate. Nationalism, or affiliating or identifying with the country that you're from is something that's common, and it's something that's been going on for a long time, and it definitely would have been the case when Jesus first walked the Earth. So when we see things in the Bible that refer to nationalism, it's in a specific context. But when we look at it today, and we try to apply that to the conversation about race in particular, there's some missing parts there.

Darren: 13:57 So what I'm often hearing when people say, "Why identify with a certain thing," is informed by the way whiteness works in the United States. Whiteness is a construct. It's not a nationality, it's not an ethnicity, it's not a culture, per se, in the traditional sense. Whiteness is something that was defined by policy and legal terms that created a class of people or a group of people who had power and ruled over everyone else. People often had to, as immigrants, lose their nationality as well as lose their ethnic identities. When they came to this country as immigrants, to hold onto those identities meant to be oppressed, to be "other," to be an outsider.

So to become American, which, also, very specifically, they were trying to achieve whiteness, they had to lose their accents, they had to lose their culture, they had to lose the special spellings of their names and become Americanized, or assimilate. So that creates this value that was taught by parents who were immigrants, taught to their first-generation children, and eventually lost by the time you hit the second generation, that there's something special, unique, different about them, and that the best thing you can do is hide your uniqueness or hide what makes you different or stand out.

- Darren: 15:20 For whiteness, that's a benefit, because after a certain point, if you don't have the accent or if you don't practice certain cultural traditions, you just blend into white American culture. But for other people, we never have had that option. No matter how much we Americanize our names, no matter how much we lose certain accents, people of color tend to stand out as being "other" because of skin tone, as well as all kinds of other structural things that maintain the establishment of race.
- Darren: 15:53 So when we get to people in modern times saying, "Why are you identifying with that, why are you dividing, why are you separating yourself out," I think that's informed by the fact that to be "normal" in America, and I used some air quotes there, to be "normal" in America, you had to eschew everything that would have made you different. To be "normal" also meant to be Protestant Christian in America. So that becomes the prevailing identity, the thing that you hold up as a shield, as "this is the only thing that matters" in a system that only benefits people who can blend into that. What people are usually asking someone to do is just "stop standing out as being different—that makes me uncomfortable."
- Darren: 16:41 But I think what's really going on is that we have to get back to the place where we realize that we all lose something in that assimilation, that people who are now raced as white lost something to become white—they lost history, they lost language, they lost family connections. In the same way, when people are upset about me identifying as gay, or when people are upset about how various groups name their oppressions, name certain things that they experience, it's because we're trying to reclaim something. We're trying to get back to something, where we're a whole person—an intersectional person, not just a single identity label, and not just so we can push other people away. It's actually so that our whole stories can be told, because we don't want to lose something and ascend into whiteness. We want to be our whole selves.
- Brit: 17:46 I think when we talk about race in America, or racism, we pick an event that happened, right? So what's the most recent shooting, or

what's the most recent *something*, and then we dissect all the reasons this maybe can or cannot be racist. It's sort of taking a step back and saying, "Okay, but really, can we talk about the fact that this is a nation built on white supremacy?" This is a nation built on understanding race and racism. That's not meaning to say all people of color are angels and all white people are bad. Let's just understand the world that we live in. When we understand that, then we can choose to go in a different way.

- Brit: 18:40 Talking about that in terms of Gladwell and 10,000 hours is looking at, essentially, the time from the time the first slaves were brought to the U.S. until Brown vs. Board of Education. Even though that wasn't necessarily a huge turning point for race, that's when segregation was no longer quote-unquote "legal," right. And in that span of time, our country intentionally practiced a few things. We intentionally practiced this separation of Black folks, the dehumanization, the characterizing—so many practices just became second nature. That's what I talk about in the TED Talk, and what Gladwell talks about is once you've put 10,000 hours into doing something, 70% of that action gets relegated to your subconscious. You just *do* it, right? It's like when you have a day off, but you get in your car and you still start driving to work. So when we talk about race, just understanding... I think this country has put in 229 10,000-hour units. When we look at the time since Brown vs. Board of Education, assuming that's when we tried to even start doing anything else, that's only been 63 or 62 years. That's not a long time.
- Brit: 20:11 So when we enter into the conversation about race, I think it's helpful to just understand a little bit of context outside of some individual nuances. Let's just understand the context of America, and then we can have, hopefully, a conversation that's less "you did this" or "I did this" or "your family"—it's, "okay, we live in this place that was really good at being racist for a really long time, there's still some residue, and we're cutting through that—how do we actively become experts in something else?"
- Matthias: 20:47 How *do* we become experts in something else? This next section, we're going to be hearing from three more people—one of which you've already heard from, two new people. The first is the Reverend Canon Broderick Greer. He's Canon Precentor at St. John's Cathedral in Denver, Colorado, doing a lot of coordination and ministry work for folks in their 20s and 30s. This is from Episode 48.
- Matthias: 21:15 The next voice you'll hear is Dr. DiAngelo again, and then finally in this section you will hear from Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza. Dr.

Robyn is a trans queer activist, a Latinx scholar and public theologian who just published a book last year called *Activist Theology*. I'd encourage you to go pick that up. Dr. Robyn has been on Queerology three times already. This is from their most recent episode, Episode 90.

- Broderick: 21:53 Just because something is new to someone doesn't mean that it's *new*. That's part of the difficult work of this era is catching some people up to the fact that this is not a new thing. You think about Denmark Vesey back in the 19th century in Charleston, and that way that he as a minister—if I'm not mistaken, he was an AME minister, African Methodist Episcopal—they staged a revolt in the 19th century, and Nat Turner staged a revolt. So many different Black people have resisted white supremacy, enslavement, and other forms of indignity from day one. People say, "Well, no one knew enslavement was wrong in the time of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson," on and on. Black people knew! Why else did they jump off of slave ships? Why else did they try to escape the labor camps that they were being held on? They knew that there was no dignity, and the way that they were being commodified and turned into private property.
- Broderick: 23:21 The difficulty of this time is not getting, just, so frustrated. I live in the neighborhood of frustration emotionally because there are people who are coming to their senses about the presence of Black theology and womanist theology and queer theologies and on and on and on and are saying, "Oh my goodness. This is amazing. Why weren't you saying anything before?" We're all like, "You weren't listening! We have been saying this for centuries. This isn't new! Just because it's new to you doesn't mean it's new to us."
- Broderick: 24:00 I even remember being 12 years old, sitting in a pew at church—it was a Thursday night, if I'm not mistaken—and it was the day the Iraq war started. The moderator of our Baptist District Association stood up and said, "War is wrong. We don't support this." These are Black Baptists, who historically aren't necessarily pacifists or whatever, but there was a sense... people would say the whole nation was beating the drum of war. Not everybody!
- Broderick: 24:36 There were people who were saying, "This isn't right," but when the priority is destruction and creating a sense that there is a consensus to be destructive, then all of the people who are concerned with life and dignity and respect and peace are ignored. They're not silenced, because they don't stop talking. They don't stop organizing. But they are ignored, and that is literally what we have... that has been our story this whole time. We've been ignored. That's what I tell people all the time. Sometimes I have to check myself

and look back at things I've said on Twitter, and I basically have been saying the same stuff on Twitter since, like, 2011. But no one cared. Which is fine—I was never saying it because I thought that I would build a platform or an audience. I was saying it because I felt like it was right.

Broderick: 25:42 That's how so many people have existed in the world. We know we're not going to be noticed. We're not going to be famous. We're not going to have a huge platform. But we quietly do and try to act and try to live in a way that is consistent with Christ—to use evangelical language—Christ being the center of our lives, and what are those ethical and moral implications for that? Even when no one is watching. We're still baptized, even when no one is watching.

Broderick: 26:17 That is the task at hand in the church, in the academy, in theology, is people not getting too ahead of themselves and saying, "This is great that you're just now saying this." It's a matter of having some humility and saying, "Wow. I didn't listen to you. You were right the whole time."

Dr. DiAngelo: 26:48 White people are born into a society that from the moment we open our eyes is relentlessly giving us messages that we are inherently superior, that we are basically the norm for humanity. Again, I'm hoping that your listeners can understand that maleness is the norm for a human—androcentrism, right?—and anything else is a deviation from that. Heterosexuality is the norm for a human, and everything else is a less-than deviation from that. And whiteness is the norm for a human.

Dr. DiAngelo: 27:32 In my workshops, my goal is to make that visible. So there's a question that I ask in my sessions. There's a series, but one of them is, "What are some of the ways in which your race has shaped your life," or "races" if you're multiracial. Most white people answer that question—they pair up and they begin to tell a story of their first cross-racial experience. You can kind of imagine that, right? So you and I are paired up, and I say, "Well, when I was five, I had this little friend. I didn't even *notice* she was Black. Then one day, my dad said this thing," right? Can you imagine that's kind of how...

Matthias: 28:13 Absolutely.

Dr. DiAngelo: 28:14 ...or, "Gosh, just the other day," or... What we tend to do in answer to the question, "What are some of the ways in which your race has shaped your life": tell about a cross-racial experience. I want you to notice that's not answering the question. That's not the question. That cross-racial experience that I may have had at five is not how race has shaped my life, okay? But what it reveals is how deeply we define race as what's happening when "they" are present, and if

“they” are not present, race is not happening.

- Dr. DiAngelo: 28:46 When I eat for dinner in Ballard tonight, I’m going to think race isn’t happening unless a Black man walks into the restaurant, and now race is happening, right? No. It’s teeming with race. It’s just the water. The way we should be answering that question is, “Well, even before I was born, the forces of race were operating on me and shaping the trajectory of my future life. So what transportation, education, nutrition was available to my mother? What environmental safety did she carry me in? Where did she deliver me? Who delivered me? How was she treated? Who owned the hospital I was delivered in? And who came in that night and mopped the floor and took out the garbage? I was born into a racial hierarchy.”
- Dr. DiAngelo: 29:40 In the same way... I used to be a childbirth educator. I can’t tell you how many couples would come in and say, “We had an ultrasound.” I’d say, “Why? Was there an indication of a problem?” “Oh. No.” You know why they had an ultrasound—they wanted to know the sex of the baby. Why? So they can prepare, right? Even before that child is born, the forces of gender are operating on it.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 30:04 Even if you have progressive parents who are like, “We’re not going to do that. We’re going yellow, not blue or pink,” good luck fighting off your friends and family. Good luck fighting off the television and the Happy Meal toy and the Target toy aisles. Good luck, right? We understand that it’s relentless. So is whiteness.
- Dr. Robyn: 30:35 Activist theology is what we’re trying to do on the porch with iced tea. It’s what we’re trying to do in the streets with our banners and with our marches. We’re not trying to replicate empire religion, which I believe is complicit with white supremacy and supremacy culture writ large. So that would be capitalism, that would be militarism, patriarchy—the three problems of empire. I’m trying to call it out there in that sentence.
- Dr. Robyn: 31:07 If I can recall the people who have come before me, and in particular liberation theologians who woke up to the inhumanity of the poor in Latin America and realized that the church was doing nothing for the poor. I am trying to write in that tradition and I’m trying to help us all wake up to the inhumanity that is a result of supremacy culture. That we are silent to the oppression of women. That we are silent to the oppression of LGBTQ+ folks. That we are silent to so many oppressions, to the killing of trans women of color, to the killing of Black and Brown men. We need to wake up to this inhumanity, and we need to live differently.
- Dr. Robyn: 31:49 That’s really why I felt like I needed to write the book, because... the

ways in which Black and Brown men in particular and trans women of color were being killed by toxic white masculinity. I woke up to the inhumanity, and I woke up to my own story. And my mother still faces racism. So I'm still waking up to the inhumanity of racism. This is about waking up, and this is about becoming clearer with who we want to be in the world—what kind of human we want to be.

- Matthias: 32:28 And what kind of humans *do* we want to be? I hope you're starting to get a picture of things here. I hope some of this information is new; I hope some of it is stuff that you've heard before. This next section, we have more teaching from both Reverend Broderick and Dr. DiAngelo. This section is about what keeps us from speaking up. This is from two different perspectives—from Broderick's perspective, which he is talking about from a marginalized perspective, and Dr. DiAngelo's perspective, which is from a white perspective. Hear the language of shame in both of these.
- Broderick: 33:17 And when people are saying, "You're only a failure," you can say, "That's not true. That's not true. I'm not just a failure. Yes, I've made mistakes. Yes, I fail at times, but that is not the whole story."
- Broderick: 33:35 I think that is the motivating factor for so much of how liberation movements have operated, at least in recent history where women who are extremely intelligent—and also women who are normally intelligent! Just barely... whatever—know that they're capable of working and running things and being CEOs and voting. And when people say, "Oh, women shouldn't be able to vote"—I just saw, I think it was Newsweek released a poll that said, "60% of Republicans say they do not want to see a woman as president in their lifetime." Yet you have women who say, "Well, whatever. I'm still going to run for president. I'm still going to make this work because I know that I'm qualified." And gay people throughout the '60s, '70s, and '80s, specifically in the '80s, when the AIDS pandemic was ravaging urban gay communities, and people were saying, "I am entitled to healthcare. The president's press secretary should address this. The president should address this. I am worthy of dignity. Yes, I make mistakes, but yes, I am a complex human being!"
- Broderick: 35:10 All of these people—I think throughout history, Black people, LGBT people, women, Black LGBT women—have come to these realizations and probably are born with the reality that "I am deserving of more, and I'm going to fight until I get what I deserve, even when people define us by mistakes or define us or project." This is unfortunately what ends up happening is all of the greatest fears that people have, specifically straight white people have, unfortunately, about their own capability to be inhumane, they then

project it onto us and scapegoat us. We have this capacity. And even oppressive people have the capacity, too—and I put myself in that category—all of us have the capacity to say, “Oh my goodness, I am profoundly in need of help, and I have made profound failures in my life, I’ve made huge mistakes—and I’m loved.”

- Broderick: 36:20 I think it’s Brené Brown who says, “Guilt says, ‘I made a mistake.’ Shame says, ‘I am a mistake.’” It’s really having that healthy distinction that “I am not a mistake. Yes, I make mistakes. They may be profound. But I am my person. I am not a mistake.”
- Dr. DiAngelo: 36:54 I had spent my life thinking deeply about how I had been oppressed because I was raised female, Catholic, and poor. What are the messages of those three identities? “Be silent. Be subservient. Suffer. Martyr. Invisible. Disappear. Do not use your voice. Do not question authority.” Those are deep messages I got as a little Catholic girl.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 37:28 Now, those messages set me up beautifully to collude with racism because they’re going to keep me silent. They’re going to keep me from avoiding conflict. They have kept me in my life very focused on my outrage about those things, right, my sense of injustice about patriarchy and sexism and classism. I could tell you so much about how those things work, but never, ever had I examined whiteness, or my ability status, or any of those things. So what I’ve come to realize is that I’m not less racist because I was raised in any of those ways. I learned my racial position differently than a white middle-class female learned hers, but I still learned it.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 38:27 I’ve sat there in those faculty meetings where it’s almost all-white, always, and we’re discussing something. It’s so clear to me that there’s racism in how we’re discussing it, or the impact of the decisions we’re going to make... and that there’s a whole perspective missing. Yet I feel really intellectually inferior, often, in academe, based on my internalized sexism and my internalized classism.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 38:55 So I sit in those meetings in silence, even though I’m noticing racism and I’m feeling unsettled about it. My silence really is coming from a place of inferiority. It’s not coming from a place of superiority. Yet I had to step outside myself and ask, “Well, how is it functioning? How is your silence right now functioning in this room? Oh my God. You’re colluding with racism. You’re maintaining white solidarity. You’re going to look like a team player. You’re going to get ahead precisely because you’re not challenging racism.” That is not acceptable to me.
- Matthias: 39:36 I think that question that Dr. DiAngelo asks—”How is this

functioning?”—is one of the single most important questions, at least for me, that I’ve learned, that I can ask. It’s a filter to filter through everything. “How is my silence functioning,” or “how is this action functioning,” is so important.

- Matthias: 40:01 We just have a little bit more teaching from Dr. DiAngelo left in this episode. Right before she starts talking about this in the episode, I share a reflection of my first experience being taught a lot of this stuff in a class in grad school, and how it felt like I was waking up to this reality that was so sickening. I thought about trying to cut this section down, cut parts out of it, but everything that she has to say in this chunk is so important for today that I think we need to listen to all of it.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 40:47 Even the few white people who grow up in urban poverty, and they grow up in neighborhoods where they are around people of color—outside of that, the wider culture is still... they still know that they’re white, and that they can leave, and when they leave, they’ll be in a better situation. I grew up in poverty, but I knew that if I was going to have an upwardly mobile life, I wasn’t going to be... I’d end up in white space. Which I have.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 41:16 So we grow up in this insular, rarely ever challenged, deep internalized superiority. I’m sorry. You *cannot* miss the message of white superiority. It is not conscious, necessarily, but it is deep and relentless. Then, this obliviousness—at the same time, we’re taught not to see or know it. But let’s face it, we don’t want to see or know it because it could require something of us or could challenge our identities as good people.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 41:55 So at the same time, like you might say—you’re telling me this example of when you were in that class. You really were oblivious. There is this really... this actual, “Oh my god.” *And* on some level, you always knew it was better to be white.
- Matthias: 42:11 Totally.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 42:12 Didn’t you? Yes. So did I. I always knew. We know. We also know that white people talk racist talk to each other. Any white person who came up to me and said, “I’ve never in my entire life heard a racist comment or joke,” I would just say, “You’re lying. I’m sorry.”
- Matthias: 42:26 Yeah. It’s not true.
- Dr. DiAngelo. 42:28 Okay. In both those things—it’s a both/and. We don’t know, and we do know but can’t admit to it. All this, and then individualism and then arrogance and then ignorance and then insulation—it makes us really irrational and misinformed.

- Dr. DiAngelo: 42:48 So, you challenge me, and it's going to throw me so off of my racial equilibrium. 24/7, I am comfortable as a white person in this society. 24/7. It is rare for me to be uncomfortable. So you make me uncomfortable racially and I'm going to lose it. Some cognitive dissonance, just panic, anxiety.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 43:15 I need that to stop. I need to get back onto my equilibrium. I will do whatever it takes to back you off of me. If I need to cry so everybody rallies around me and then the person who gave me the feedback now becomes bad and I get all the resources back to me, I'll cry. If I need to get indignant, I'll get indignant. If I need to shut down and go silent and then withdraw, I'll do it. Pretty much anything but engage with humility, for all the reasons I've just said. You can get to a place where you're able to engage with humility, but it does take some work. We're not socialized that that would be a natural response for us.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 44:14 So while it's fragile and weak in the sense that I can't tolerate it, it's actually incredibly powerful in its impact and effectiveness to police people of color back into place. So I think my inability to handle it, my white fragility, actually functions as a form of bullying. I'm going to make it so miserable for a person of color to call me in on racism that they just won't do it. Trust me, people of color suck up microaggressions constantly and just don't bother. Why don't they bother? Because it's too hard, because they're exhausted, because they need to get through the day, and so it's really powerful.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 45:06 I've been thinking about it lately as, I'm not the 1%. I'm not the 1%, but man, I can control people of color through my white fragility in my workplace, in my relationships. I can keep people of color in their place through that. So when you're in these spaces and people of color maybe think, "Okay. These people, they experience a form of oppression. They're going to get this." And they take a risk, and then we counter with defensiveness or "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I already know that," it just shuts them down, right?
- Matthias: 45:49 Mm-hmm [affirmative]. As white people who are trying to do better, I think a lot of times we'll realize a few things about ourselves and say, "Okay, now I'm not racist anymore because I know these things. I'm an ally." Then we enter spaces. I think a lot of times, that also causes more harm than good.
- Dr. DiAngelo: 46:17 Well, the moment you think you're not racist anymore, you don't understand racism, because racism is not an either/or proposition. It's not dependent on your self-image. It's not dependent on your friendships. It is a system that we are immersed in, and that we navigate 24/7, and again, in the same way that I am not now free of

gender—do you know what I mean? I might say “I refuse to identify,” “I’m non-binary,” but everything is always in relation to the relentless reality of having to navigate the gender construct, right?

Dr. DiAngelo: 46:57 No one, I don’t believe, would say, “I am free of all gender conditioning, all gender navigation,” and certainly not a cisgender person. So let’s go there, right, because we’re talking white. You’re now talking about a cisgender person telling you, “I am free of all gender impact.” Is it clear that that’s impossible? Because that’s the first thing that’s happening. You just don’t understand racism if you think that.

Dr. DiAngelo: 47:26 You will never be free. I will never be free. I’ve committed my life... I do less harm. I’m more conscious. I’ve built relationships, and there are some people of color who consider me to be a supportive person—and I step in it all the time. Probably the difference is I step in it a little less, I’m rarely defensive about it anymore, and I have really good skills at repairing it when I step in it. That’s what we can go for. But in my lifetime, it’s not going to end, and I’m not going to be free.

Dr. DiAngelo: 48:05 Okay, one. Two, I do not call myself an ally, and I do not even call myself an anti-racist white. I’d say that I’m involved in anti-racist work, but the reason I don’t self-appoint myself as an ally is because I’m the least qualified to make that determination. I’m invested in not seeing racism, and put another way, I’m invested in racism. How would I not be invested in racism? I am. Oh my God, it works so well for me. I mean the psychic freedom that I don’t... that I have. All of it.

Dr. DiAngelo: 48:43 Now, I don’t want those investments, and I’ve committed to challenging them, but they’re deep and they’re wily, and I am not to be trusted. The question, again, white people have to ask ourselves is, “How do you know? How do you know? Are you in a relationship with people of color? Do you talk about racism? If you don’t, why not?” Do you think maybe, I would offer for your consideration, that you have indicated that you’re actually not open. So they’re not talking to you about racism, and therefore the relationship’s probably not as close as you think it is, right?

Dr. DiAngelo: 49:20 While I don’t call myself an ally, that is because it is for people of color to decide if, in any given moment, I’m behaving in allied ways. Notice a few key things. In any given moment, how am I doing? I’m not, “I marched in the ‘60s, so now I’m certified as free of racism for the rest of my life.”

Dr. DiAngelo: 49:43 Since I said that, let’s look at that for a minute. This is often the evidence—”I marched in the ‘60s. Therefore, I...” I often facetiously

say, "Damn, I wish I had marched in the '60s!" Then I would be certified as racist-free for the rest of my life, even though we didn't even know race wasn't biological in the '60s. I'd still be certified as free of racism for ever and ever.

Dr. DiAngelo: 50:07 Do you see that? Do you think maybe—yes, people who marched in the '60s were not fire-hose racists. They weren't the KKK. They were against those forms of racism. Do you think maybe they were running some other subtle martyr, white savior, arrogant, patronizing racism as they took over the movement?

Dr. DiAngelo: 50:32 So it's an ongoing process that is ultimately determined by peoples of color in any given moment. That also reminds me, one, that it has to be demonstrated, and two, that I need to always be coming from a place of humility, not arrogance. Not ever already knowing.

Dr. DiAngelo: 50:55 Let me just give you a heads-up to any listeners who may need this heads-up. When we say, "I was taught to treat everyone the same"—trust me, people of color do not think, "Oh, this is a down white person." They're rolling their eyes. When we say, "I'm an ally"... Well, maybe a way to put it is, when a man says to me, "I'm a feminist," the bubble over my head is, "I will be the judge of that."

Matthias: 51:29 Sure makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? We're nearing the end of our time together, and I want to end us with some words from Reverend Broderick. In this part of his episode, he's talking a little bit about the long arc of justice and about how for him, the work that he does is not specifically for us white people. And I think that's a call to us. It's a call to us to do our own work in the places where we need to do it. So I'm going to end this episode with that. End with these words and hear them as a call to go out, to do your work, and to *act*. As a reminder, there's a ton of resources in the show notes for this episode. Choose something, and do it.

Matthias: 52:29 Thanks so much for listening. Here's Reverend Broderick.

Broderick: 52:37 I think about the number of people I know who are Black and in their 60s, actually, who are a part of these class action lawsuits against the federal government because of treatment by officials in their various capacities and in their employment in the 1980s and '90s and early 2000s. These people have been in these class action lawsuits, some of them, since the early 1990s, and one since 1993, 25 years—almost my whole lifetime—and are saying, "I may die before a decision's made on this case, but I'm still going to file the case. I'm still going to stick my claim at this." That's courage: knowing that the outcome may outlive me, but I'm still willing to assert my humanity and my dignity and show up and say, "I deserve better. I deserve better." Now, the issue, and people will say... I can

hear them. “Oh, well, that’s so self-centered.” Yeah, it’s self-centered if you are at the top of the feeding chain and you still think that you’re entitled to even more at the cost of everyone else.

Broderick: 54:01 These are people saying, “I’m at the bottom. I have been on the receiving end of violence upon violence, and I don’t deserve to live in violence economically, socially, politically, religiously, familiarly in my own relationships or marriage. I don’t deserve this.” This is not a framework for people who are at the top, but that’s the AppleCare woman on Vine. She’s at the top and she wants more. That’s this current president. He’s at the top and isn’t done. This endless consumption and hyper-confidence about what one is entitled to is destructive. Showing up on the continent and saying, “God is giving us this continent. This is a new world.” That’s wicked. That is evil. That is unrestrained capitalism and imperialism and colonialism at the cost of far too many lives.

Broderick: 55:12 This kind of self-referential, self-compassionate framework is for marginalized people. I’m not doing this for people at the top of the food chain. This is about people at the bottom, people like myself, people who I love in my own life who are just trying to make it, make ends meet, make sense of their lives, who have the courage to just get out of bed in the morning even though they know that they’re going to a low-wage job. People who have never known... people who have worked their whole lives and have never had a career. That’s every person I grew up around. Almost no one had a career, but they worked their whole lives. Yeah. This isn’t for suburban folks. Somebody else can do their theology.

Show Notes:

Join Broderick Greer, Brit Barron, Robin DiAngelo, Darren Calhoun, Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, and Kenji Kuramitsu for this special compilation episode about liberation and justice.

Links & Resources

Care by and for Black and Brown folks (white folks, give these orgs money):

- [The Mystic Soul Project](#)
- [The Nap Ministry](#)
- [Sweet Rest](#)

Other Links and Resources:

- [Google](#) (learn how to use it)
- [National Bail Fund Network](#)
- [Donate to Black Lives Matter](#)
- [Anti-racism Resources for White People](#)
- [75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#)
- [White Homework by Torri Williams Douglass](#)
- [AnaYelsi Velasco-Sanchez](#)
- [A Booklet of Uncommon Prayer](#)
- [Nordstrom Corporate Statement](#)
- [White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race](#)
- [Darren Calhoun](#)
- [Dr. Robyn Henderson Espinoza](#)
- [Activist Theology](#)
- [Brit Barron](#)
- [Worth It: Overcome Your Fears and Embrace the Life You Were Made For](#)
- [Broderick Greer](#)

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Until next week,

-Matthias