

PARENTING DECOLONIZED PODCAST



Parenting Decolonized Podcast EP #57: What It Means to Be a Good Ancestor with Jana Lynne Umipig

Yolanda Williams: (0:00:00) Welcome to the Parenting Decolonized Podcast. I'm your host, Yolanda Williams, entrepreneur, conscious parenting coach and single mom to one amazing Tyler. I'm on a mission to help shine the light on how colonization has impacted the black family structure. If you're a parent that wants to learn how to decolonize your parenting, you're in the right place. Let's do this.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Okay, fan, before we hop in today, I just wanna let you know that this mama who I'm speaking to JL, her baby is in the room, and if you know anything about me, I am a single parent. She is not, but I am. And sometimes we just don't have, there's nowhere to go where the babies aren't. So you will hear the baby in the background, crying and speaking and talking. If that's something you're not able to handle, I completely understand, but I just wanted to put that out there that, that will be part of this episode, so enjoy.

Welcome back to the Parenting Decolonized Podcast. I'm your host, Yolanda Williams and today I have with me, Jana Lynne Umipig. Thank you so much for joining me. How are you?

Jana Lynne Umipig: I'm blessed. Thank you so much for having me. It's really great to be in conversation with you today.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. I'm so excited to talk to you about this subject, which is being a good ancestor. We are gonna get into that, but before we get down and dirty, I want you to tell the folks all about yourself.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah. I usually, when I introduce myself and your spaces, I do name, where I'm from ancestrally and I also name the names of my immediate ancestors, whose names will also come up, and that's my daughter calling liar, you all will be hearing her in the background a couple of times over.

Yolanda Williams: We're mothers.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Just to reiterate, my name is Jana Lynne called the Umipig. I also go by JL, so a lot of folks know me by that name that was offered to me by some of the young people that I worked with here in New York when I first landed here 13 years ago.

But my family comes from the Northern part of the Philippines and a part of the island of the Luzon called Ilocos. My mother is from Ilocos Norte and a place called Pagudpud and my father is from Ilocos Sur and a place called Santa Maria. And my mother's name is Rose Marie called the Teronipig. My father is Gud Fredo called the (inaudible) and another living ancestor in my life who helped to raise me is my grandmother on my maternal side and are called Tero (ph), so I name them first and foremost, just to kind of be in relationship to the truth that I actually can only name maybe up to my great grandparents on either side and then like, I can't really reach any further, but something that I've allowed myself to like, be very true to is that, you know, even if I don't know the names of my ancestors beyond me, I know my name really well.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And so I make sure to say that really strong so that my daughter and their children and their children after will be able to say my name, if someone were to ask them to call in their ancestors in any like space in the future, so those are some things to share.

I'm educator and kind of the forefront of my work, working with young folks, 15, 16 years now, working in education, but also working as an artist, primarily doing arts that speaks to social justice and has its own form of activism in the ways in which it speaks to and response to the cultural shifts in the world and the ways in which I, you know, live through them as a person, as a human being and I also do healing work in the diaspora, some ancestral practices, but also some practices that have been adopted from teachers in the diaspora who teach from other land origins and I'm also a death doula. So that's like something that I've been standing firmly on, particularly in the past two years now.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Necessarily, you know, in risk relationship to the world. So there are some things about me.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. I'm so happy to have you on. And, you know, I don't know if my audience is speaking to you all directly. If you all understand how colonization has impacted so many people, but especially Filipino people as well. It was Spain that colonized Filipino. And so

there's actually a lot of Spanish words. And even in the cuisines, you can taste it. And it has and its to this day, same with, you know, with indigenous people of the America's turtle island, African-Americans, and beyond that impact is extremely felt throughout the generation.

So we're gonna be discussing like intergenerational, (0:05:00) like trauma and how to like, be a good ancestor, as we decolonize, right. Because a lot of us were basically indoctrinated into thinking that we needed to only really care about those generations behind us. You know, when we get a little bit of money, you buy your mama house, you don't put your money up for your child, you buy your mama house, that kind of stuff. So how does that come up in your culture?

Jana Lynne Umipig: Ooh, that's it, you know, that's like the deepest of deep conversations. You know, like my family was one that, we have three generations here in the United States. My great grandmother on my maternal side was the first that I know had migrated here, particularly to Hawaii. So that's actually where I was born and raised is in Honolulu, Hawaii, and my great-grandmother was there and then she brought over her children little by little, not all of them decide to come to the United States.

But another thing that some folks may not know is that like Philippines was actually a Commonwealth of the United States for a really long time and there was a point where they were trying to make us into a state. We kind of had the same, actually almost the exact same relationship to the United States that Puerto Rico had. So we have very similar histories about colonization, but the difference was that there was right after world war II, the Philippines gained their independence after fighting beside the American soldiers for the freedoms of the United States.

My grandfather on my mother's side was actually also a soldier during that time, but there are a lot of different injustices that like take place in having this type of like colonial imperial type of relationship to the United States with the Philippines. One of the things is that like, there's a glorification of the way that the United States is in the Philippines, which I'm sure is very common for a lot of folks in the diaspora and the ways in which they've seen a lot of their elders, their parents, their grandparents, like really relate to culture.

We were in a position very often when we were growing up in my generation and so just letting folks know I'm in eighties. So like when I was growing up, we were in a time where, you know, my parents were really in a place where they didn't even wanna teach us to speak the language of our family, because they were in a position of believing that we wouldn't be able to thrive in a capitalist existence if we didn't speak English properly. So yeah, like we weren't in a position of learning the language of our people and my family actually speaks a particular language, not

dialect called Ilocano, that's very specific to our region. There's like a thousand languages in the Philippines, so it's something to just kind of be said for us to be in relationship to.

There were certain cultural things that my parents were just like, you're not gonna do that. You're gonna be American. You know, you're going to be raised to be an American first and foremost and I know that that's very true for a lot of different folks.

Yolanda Williams: You know, that is, it's like I have to assimilate to be accepted and the closer in proximity I am to whiteness, the safer I feel like I will be. And then, you know, you get hit with the reality, like I'm not safe, but you know, I feel like as a parent that has to be such a difficult thing because they know what it felt like, you know, very outward and overt white supremacy in their face. So it's like, how do I protect my kid? Right.

And I feel like a lot of black folks do that in the different way. We do it by let's move to what we feel like is the safest part, which is usually the whitest part, let's get our kids out of this school system that seems to be, you know, that doesn't have really good education and then put them in this predominantly white space where they're now racially targeted every single day. So it's like the lesser of two evils, you are trying to figure out how to keep you safe, but that if it works because at the end of the day, it's not about us, we can't keep our, we can do all that we can, and the delusion of white supremacy that folks wanna hold onto is what keeps us unsafe.

Jana Lynne Umipig: I also just feel like those negotiations like did a number my ability to even just accept like the trueness of like who I was, or I felt like I was contending with that very often and what it turned into was me being the rebellious child or being the child that was defiant or the one that like, you know, questioned too much or, you know, even still to the day, like my mother and my father have a very difficult time understanding what it is that I do and who I am in the world.

I, you know, so it's like, it's a really trying thing and as I start to grow my own child and be in relationship to her becoming in the world, I'm always in question of like how much I'm imposing onto her because (0:10:00) of my ideas of what I believe is her stepping into her greatness and her wholeness and me actually listening and being true to like who it is that she lets us know she is, which is something that most definitely was not like, you know, the way my parents raised me.

Yolanda Williams: Oh no.

Jana Lynne Umipig: When I graduated from high school and college, it was like, no, that's my degree. Like, my mom's like, those are my degrees. You know, like they're not yours. I did the work to fake you, so you could be here, which there is a level of truth to that and also there's something there, right? Because like the prescribing to all of it, and like wanting me to be shaped and informed in that, in these really elitist ways. So, you know, my degrees were in theater and then also in cultural studies, both in my undergrad, and then my master's, I went into like a deeper form of education related to social justice. But my mother, you know, her idea of that would always be like, well, the ultimate goal, right, is for you to go to Broadway or the ultimate goal for you in education is to become a professor, right? You're gonna go back to your, to get your PhD. Like it was always like having step into the ray and never enough.

Yolanda Williams: And that's a function of capitalism and white supremacy culture. We know that that elitism is kind and the transactional nature of parenting in that way. It's like we owe our parents a debt because of the sacrifices they had to make under white supremacy and we are always, we're never gonna be able to pay that debt. So they have to always remind us of it, but we won't ever be able to repay them for that. It doesn't matter if you became a doctor or you became a professor or danced on Broadway or sang on Broadway, it would've been then just being like, okay, well now are you the lead? Are you the producer now? Like it's never enough...

Jana Lynne Umipig: Right.

Yolanda Williams: ...and that's a function of capitalism, where you can never be satisfied. It's more, more, more, do better, be better, and that pressure, I don't even know what the heck kind of pressure a lot and I didn't feel that kind of pressure, but I know a lot of first generations, second generation people whose parents immigrated here still feel that immense pressure and they also feel immense pressure to take care of their parents, like, okay, I got this degree, I got this money and now I'm the provider in the household, and I'm just like, when do you get to just live your life?

Jana Lynne Umipig: That's actually a conversation me and my sister have been having pretty deep. Her and I, I feel like have a very different relationship than what we experience from our elders, with their relationships, to their siblings and it's on purpose, because the two of us are really working hard to break a lot of the different toxicities that we understand us embodying in our daily, but she's the eldest, I am the youngest, and we also were the only two girls growing up amidst like 14 grandchildren for a really long time. So we had a lot of responsibilities as the, you know, female born folks, a part of the pack.

There was a really big thing about, well, when you were talking about the idea of like having a debt, we have a word in the Philippines or a phrase in the Philippines called, utang na loob, which basically means like your soul debt that you have to those who provide for you, who help you along the way in your path, in your life and it causes a lot of shame, that is a key word that I feel...

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...is something that we contend with often for ourselves is like being shamed by our elders for not doing it, for not being the people that they want us to be, or like being in a position of doing the things that they want us to do in the world, and my sister being the eldest, she often is put in that position now as like this matriarch, right. Like she needs to step into the role, now that my elders are getting older, they have this expectation for themselves that that my sister's gonna take on everything and she's just feeling all of this pressure and then it creates resentment toward me because I'm not being accepted to do the same thing. Mm-Hmm. Not that I wouldn't step into some of the stuff, but I do distance myself and I tell her like, there's very many moments where I'm telling my sister, like, don't get involved, just don't do it. So I don't want you to hearing.

Yolanda Williams: Cause what I'm hearing too, because I, you know, some of that, I do feel that pressure to be like the family matriarch at 42 years old and my mom is like, not trying to hear that. She's like, I'm still the mom. She still wants that authority over me.

But the thing is, it's the boundaries, right. Like you start thinking, you start digging through, they're really just underlying sort of issues that come up when you sort of parent in this traditional way, are you living in this traditional way that is shaped by colonization, and you dig into how it strips (0:15:00) you of agency, strips you of autonomy, tramples on your boundaries. Again, these are all functions of colonization of white supremacy delusion, of capitalism and of patriarchy. So not feeling like you can ever say no to your family.

Your family asks you to do something, they expect you to do it. There is no negotiations. There is no, no and that's not okay. I should be able to say no and you can feel wherever you want, but it shouldn't be like a whole last family drama around it, you know.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah. And it's so easy to just get caught up, like...

Yolanda Williams: It is.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...you can like have such solid boundaries when you're not present to it too, so one of the things for me is that my family lives on the west coast, mostly in Hawaii and in California, and I live here in New York, and so I'm distanced and that was a very conscious choice and also maybe a subconscious choice at one point...

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...to not be drawn, like taken in by a lot of the things that, you know, I feel like we're hindering me from just stepping into my life and fullness based on what my family wanted from me.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: But I went back home recently and I was there for a whole month because it's been a really long time. My baby is in the world. She is gotta have a relationship to my family as much as my partners here on the east coast and so I wanted to be intentional and my sister was like, yo, come and stay with me for a month. And I was like, all right, I work remote. We can make this happen. And slowly but surely the threads were pulled and I was really coming to understanding like about how much the boundaries really have to do also with physical distance.

Yolanda Williams: Oh yeah, yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Like, because it's hard not to get coiled up in all of the familial tensions and all the stuff that's going on when it's right there in the room next door, like how do you ignore that and be in a position of not feeling responsible in some way, like you were saying, you know, like to not be brought into it in some way and it's something that we're still dealing within and me and my sister had a lot of conversations about the ways in which we wanna do better for each other, but yeah, a lot of it just like for me is like, we just have to not feel like we have that responsibility. This is like a tricky one, right, because the elder conversation's.

Yolanda Williams: It's tricky, that the elder conversation is tricky and it's because we as a collective, right, we're not so part of, you know, indigenous cultures, most cultures in the global majority is we function as communal societies as collectives, so there is still that sense of, I need to kind of honor my elders and take care of them if that's necessary, you know, as they age and I don't think there's a problem with that.

My issue is when the needs of the elders become more important than my needs and my child's needs, because that's not gonna happen. Right. Cause I still have a life and I still have a life to live and I don't subscribe to the same line of thinking that I need to give up everything in order and that's called honoring. I don't think that's honor. Cause I don't think...

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah.

Yolanda Williams: ...that's what our, like, you know, when I think about, you know, my ancestors who were enslaved, I don't think that they would want, I don't know you all like that, but I don't think, you know, liberation includes autonomy. It includes agency. It includes boundaries and to love someone, it, you know, in the bell hurts definition of love, which is basically you gotta give up ownership of that person.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Right.

Yolanda Williams: There's no ownership in love. When they ask us basically to be like this person or these people for the family and basically you have to make all these sacrifices because they're elders and they're asking you, it does get tricky, but it's also like it's part of decolonizing, because you're gonna have to, unfortunately, we always have to give stuff up, but we may be ostracized by our family for saying, listen, this is no longer the way I wanna do things. I wanna start a different family tradition where we honor each other, everybody honoring each other, like, I deserve honor too. I deserve protection and safety too.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah. Yeah. I feel it. You know what's coming up for me, as you're saying, all of this is also like the boundaries that have to do like one, yes. You know, like there's a very real aspect of it, like, oh, like you need to take care of me like in physically until like the ending of my life in these particular ways and this is what it looks like, but there's this other level of that has been coming up pretty often (0:20:00) and since I was a kid too, of like making us aware and making it known like how much was sacrificed and like the guilt of that...

Yolanda Williams: The debt.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...all the things that, yes, that debt that's like I struggled.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And like all of this trauma that I carried is because like I wanted you to have a better future and so you owe me that.

Yolanda Williams: You owe me.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And my sister and I had this conversation because like there was a point where I was talking about boundaries in a really particular way. And she did have a moment of just kind of being like, you know, I'm just gonna be real with you. Like sometimes when you talk about this way about particularly our mother, she's just like, I'm just like, why do you hate mom so much?

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Like she asked me that and I was just like, oh, you're getting it twisted. Right.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: You're getting it twisted. Like I don't need to forego and sacrifice my love for myself and my care for myself just because I have compassion for what's going on with mom. I absolutely do have compassion. I've done so much work to be an understanding of what types of traumas it is that our mother may be holding that maybe she hasn't even contended with, but that doesn't mean that because I understand that I'm supposed to forego my understanding of the trauma that was placed on me and that has come also through her.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Because a lot of the times for us, right. And if, maybe not just a lot of times, the trueness of many of us who grew up in immigrant households, is that the first colonizers that we experienced were our own parents.

Yolanda Williams: Oh, they...

Jana Lynne Umipig: Where the elders that raised.

Yolanda Williams: Under the guise of protection. Under the guise of protection and I am trying to give you this better life. I'm gonna colonize and impress you.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Exactly.

Yolanda Williams: And take away your agency and travel on your boundaries because this is how the world is and I have to prepare you for it. And it's the same song, just a different melody for the black community as well. And it's all a function of colonization. And I think as we do this unpacking of like intergenerational trauma and trying to figure out like, how do we, as the cycle breakers move now, right? Because we know that our family's gonna be like, listen, who are you? What do you mean? You're not gonna, what are you talking about? Like our family's gonna be mad at us, period. We will be the black sheep. We will be the folks who may not get invited to things or if we are invited, it's still like, well, this is my house, do this, that and the other. And I'm be the first person to leave too. So it's like, yeah, it's hard to be decolonizing when there's so many people in your life that are not there yet.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah. And then this is one like I distance, you know, and that's just like the real thing. And I think that maybe even my way of survival at this moment, sometimes I think about this in relationships to my daughter, you know, and I know that there are gonna be moments where like we're gonna be contending with one another, as she grows into her way of being, and like her generations are gonna have a lot different experiences of the world and I wonder for myself where my lines are gonna be, you know, cause I wonder often like did my mother and my father know they would have these lines with me. Did they just think that I was just gonna be this person that they imagined in their own form of what liberation looked like in under the guise of colonization look like?

I hope that we have some alignment, you know, like, I will be like, sometimes I am like I think that might be liberation is a clear one, I hope that it is. You know, I hope that there was some integrity in the ways in which I am trying to raise this young one to be held and honored in their wholeness. But I also know just kinda in human nature and human way of being and just the complications of a life that there are gonna be moments where her and I contend with one another and another thing that I'm hoping for is that we have the types of protocols and relational care developed between the two of us and between us as a family with also her father that will allow us to have the conversations around those conflicts that won't damage us further, but that maybe the openings for us to all grow and to better beings as we continue to be in relationship with one another. I don't want her to feel like she needs to distance herself from me...

Yolanda Williams: Right.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...when there's conflict, you know what I'm saying?

Yolanda Williams: But, I think like as we parent them, like when you colonize in our parenting, I, you know, conscious parenting, we're conscious of that. We're conscious. I feel like a lot of the people who are not doing this work intentionally, it really is just kind of like I was taught this, so I'm doing this. And it really is that binary, it's really that binary, it's like, this is what happened to me, I turned out fine, so this is what I'm gonna do to you. (0:25:00) And it is not until somebody comes like us come across me, which is like aah.

Actually, I'm not fine and I will do something different where we start to question everything and we learn different ways of being with our children of honoring them, of showing them that they matter all that stuff and in doing that, we form relationships, so when they are, when your baby is like, I don't agree with you, it's not gonna be where you're just giving her the silent treatment and you're pissed off and you cussing around. It's gonna be like, all right, well, what's your position on this? Like, it's gonna be a discussion, that's what I hope at least for over here.

You know, where I hope that she, when I'm talking to her, she'll be like, actually, no, that's, I don't agree with that and we didn't have a discussion about it. The problem that I always come across is I feel like I can't have a discussion. I feel like I am shut down and I feel like my feelings don't matter and it's the same feeling I had when I was a child.

So I'm not gonna even try anymore. I'm not even gonna try anymore. I'm gonna distance myself in certain ways, either emotionally and physically, and I'm just gonna go about doing the work to repair the harm that was caused to make sure I'm not causing the same type of harm on my kid. So I feel like, you know, you can, those sort of wonderings are how we get free. I don't know, that's not the word, but that's how we get free by like asking ourselves those questions and not just saying like, well, lemme just leave it up to chance.

Like, no, will I be this person? What will it take? And that's why I say for people, if you want to be this type of parent, you wanna be a conscious parent, the best thing you can do is think about your, why, why do you wanna do this? And my big why is I want Jean and I to be friends when she's an adult, I want her to call me. I want her to think of me as someone she can trust. Let's go, you know, call me up and be like, what you doing? Let's go get a beer. And we are, you know, sitting together at a restaurant and we're having an actual conversation, not one that's forced, not we are having a great conversation like friends. So then I have to work backwards from there.

Who do I have to be in order to have to make that relationship happen? And that's exactly what you're doing by asking yourself those questions, you know?

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah. I think about my whys pretty often also and I really appreciate like, just posing that to our community in that way.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Because, you know, I think a lot of my whys are because the things that I want with me and her are like, didn't exist.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: With me and my mother or me and my father, but you know, where it kind of did exist was with me and my grandmother, me and my grandmother, and this is like the funny part about like ancestry and just like lineage, you know, like where I have so much tension with like my direct parents, my grandmother was the one that like continued to instill in me some of the things that feel like my core values and the way that I move in the world. And as I continue to have that relationship with her, I'm like, I have to breathe really deep because like, I see how much my, my mother steps into the role as a grandmother right now, with my daughter and she's treating her in ways that I'm like, you know, that's what I've always wanted, like one of the things that.

Yolanda Williams: I would be, yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: You know, one of the things that was held real for me was that when I was a kid, I was called a cry baby. Like that was a big thing because I was very, and I still am to this day. I'm very led by my emotions. Like it's very, very present. I've learned to communicate them better. And I've learned how to be in a relationship to them in ways that I understand are a part of the ways that I navigate and have a compass for justice, a compass for care and compassion of others, a compass of like safety, endangerment, you know, and when I see it with her, because she's definitely an emotional creature as well and it's, well, let us know how she's feeling, which both me and my partner, as we reflect on our childhoods and being similar, we're understanding, all right, this is where we get tested, you know, as to how, which ways we're able to content with that because our parents couldn't.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Like I would get locked in a room, like they literally throw me in a room to go and cry and scream and deal with my emotions in there. And then when I would come out, they would make it seem like nothing had happen, you know. And I want for Collie to be in a place where, as she gets older, that she can feel like she can be in her emotions and it's not gonna make me distance myself from her and vice versa that if I'm in my fields, it's not gonna make her feel. Like, she's gonna distance herself from me. But instead that we can see each other as human beings.

Like, I really like pray for that because my mother for all of the reasons, like, anytime my emotions start to show up, there's an immediate like, oh, we're not having this conversation anymore. Like, I'm not talking to you even as an adult, you know, as a child, it was like, I'm gonna lock you in the room, I can do that. As an adult now, it's hanging up on the phone with me. It's like going like (0:30:00) stonewall while I'm in a space in the same room with her. Like it's these types of things that I hope to move beyond and move past, but then I see her with Collie.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And she's straight up, like Collie is crying, I'm here like just kind of trying to be with her and my mom's just like, give her whatever she wants. Like you're making her upset.

Yolanda Williams: You are so different.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Like.

Yolanda Williams: I mean, I'm gonna be honest with you. Like, you know, one of the things I can't say is how I look at how different the grandparent and grandchild relationship is to the parent-child relationship and my mother is a great grandparent. She loves my daughter. She wants to be around her all the time. She has respected that. I don't want to, you know, that I'm a non-violent parent and I love to see because, you know, I see them together, it really does help heal that part of me where I felt like something was wrong with me. The reason why I couldn't get that, like, you know, I felt like she just didn't like me and it wasn't until I became an adult that I realized it had nothing to do with me, that was all her, but she just didn't know how to like talk about it and be you know, having all that stress and be a parent, it's hard, now that I'm going through it, I completely understand. I'm just learning how to deal with it differently.

So when I see how different, I mean, when I say night and day, how different it is. I remember a time where I walked in and my mom was like talking mess about somebody and like, she held that, she was holding that baby, that baby is spoiled, and that's why she did this to the other. Meanwhile, she's literally rocking my daughter to sleep and her arms, Jean's legs are almost to the ground, she's so long. I'm just like, you sit up here talking mess, you brought Jean to sleep. Every time, she comes over, this girl, I have been walking, my mom is like on her chair, they're both asleep and the girl is on her chest, like she completely went against everything, she would say about what it takes to raise a child and is doing things that I'd love to see, so, you know, for some people that's hard. For some people just like, why couldn't you do this with me? And for me, I'm just like, well, they couldn't at that time and this is why I always say people hate it.

People are always doing the best that they can at any given moment. And sometimes that best is harmful. Sometimes that best is toxic and abusive. Sometimes it is really just unfriendly and harsh and other times their best is letting their grandchild, you know, go to sleep on their chest because they have that space now. They have that, it's a different energy. Their best is different now. And understanding that we are always at any single moment doing the best that we can with what we have in under these oppressive systems and that's a hard pill people to swallow because they hear best and they think they should have tried harder.

And I'm just telling you right now, people they are and sometimes they just can't and it has nothing to do with you and that's shitty and I'm sorry, but it has nothing to do with you. And especially when it comes up with like black and indigenous people of color, I just have to remind them, like our parents were once children. So your mom probably did all that...

Jana Lynne Umipig: Right.

Yolanda Williams: ...with the emotions, right. Because her mom probably told her to stop crying.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Exactly.

Yolanda Williams: And you know, she probably was never allowed to show her emotions when she was a child.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah.

Yolanda Williams: It's just generational trauma.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah. This is like the imagining and the meditation that I've like traversed a lot of different times with different community members in relationship to what it means for us to, you know, be doing this tending and reparenting of ourselves and our inner children and what it might have looked like for us to also be in relationship to our parents and our children.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Like if our inner children or ourselves were in relationship to the inner children of our parents, like how and which ways would they marry each other and how and which ways would they be able to inform one another? Like, what it means to be held in wholeness? You know. I think that like one of the things that I have come to deeply understand and be really in like deep inhales and exhales around is that we have way more tools, like right now.

Yolanda Williams: We do. We do.

Jana Lynne Umipig: We are also right now talking about this on a podcast.

Yolanda Williams: On a podcast.

Jana Lynne Umipig: I'm saying like that, that just is not something that was allotted to like my family. And I'm sure like, this is very true in your own community, but like the stigmatization of like mental health work of any sort.

Yolanda Williams: Right.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And that's not even what they would call it back in the day. Right. Like it would be call it like you going to see like a cuckoo doctor, which is what my mom would say is called, you know, like when we would tell her that we were going to therapy, it's...

Yolanda Williams: Like, what's wrong with you? It's like...

Jana Lynne Umipig: You know.

Yolanda Williams: Nothing. I'm just you know on the top.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Why are you going there?

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: You're not crazy. Like, you know, I'm like, well, but the world makes us crazy. So I think we all need spaces in which we're being held to really content with the things that are happening to our mentalities because of the stressors (0:35:00) that you also have faced that have caused some tension in our relationship. But like, yeah, like I know that my mother and my father and my grandmother just were not allotted those types of relational. I don't know what they're like.

Yolanda Williams: The resources, like you said.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Resources exactly.

Yolanda Williams: Resources weren't there.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah.

Yolanda Williams: They didn't have them. All the books and everything. It just wasn't and the time, right, because...

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yep.

Yolanda Williams: ...when you are spending most of your time just surviving, it's very hard to learn. It's very hard to really be able to come out and that's again is a function of capitalism and this is why even today, today was this July 14, 2022, they released the footage of the Uvalde. I think that's how you say it, the school shooting. They released the cam footage and I'm not watching that shit.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Mm-Hmm.

Yolanda Williams: We have been so desensitized by seeing all of these, you know, black trauma, kids being killed, and what that does to us is it exhausts us, it makes us hopeless, it makes us tired, and when you are hopeless and tired and exhausted, you don't have space to go and to figure out, I'm gonna go figure out how to learn now about this, that and the other. It's very hard. I must, we're doing it, but we have a circle. We have more resources. We have more people around us.

There is not one person that I don't think my mom knew one person that wasn't whooping their kids growing up. So who do you go to? Like, you're doing this thing that nobody else is doing by yourself, back in the eighties and nineties, who do you go to? Now, I can call my friends and it be like, girl, Jia is driving me.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Exactly.

Yolanda Williams: Please help me calm down, you know, like, and they will because they're doing it too. And so just I having an understanding that does not excuse any of the abusive behaviors that we all like experienced the harm and the toxicity, just having the understanding of things is not excuse them. What it does do is help humanize people.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Mm-Hmm.

Yolanda Williams: Because in order for me to have empathy for myself, I have to have empathy for other people.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Right.

Yolanda Williams: So I have empathy for my mom and what she had to go through as a single parent of three girls by herself, living under this oppression with a childhood that she had not having any money. I have empathy for that struggle. She still harmed me. You know?

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah.

Yolanda Williams: There was still times where she was abusive towards me, and that's a hard pill to swallow for some people and that again is we can't live in binary cause if we do, it's like either

or, it's like, no, it's both, and I can both recognize that she was struggling and that the way that she poked was abusive.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Right. Yeah. And I think that's something really difficult for sometimes like folks who are doing the work...

Yolanda Williams: Oh yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...to really be able to move with and let's be real, you know, like sometimes I am in that place of being able to hold those things and then sometimes it tips the scale.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And like, sometimes I'm just like, no, today you're just harming me. Today that's what's showing up, you know, what I mean?

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And then there are other days where I'm like today, mom, I'm here for you, like in entirety, like I'm here to like listen to what's going on, but I feel like what our generations is really contending with the most is like finding the balances of the ways in which we're figuring it out so that we have more rituals to really move with of how to address those things when it comes up with our own children as they're being raised cause I think very often and even just even relationship with me and my partner, you know, like he and I, we have check-ins.

I mean, we've been doing this since we were in relationship before, we used to have relationship check-ins just for us, but now it's like these parenthood check-ins and just like really talking to each other about the way in which we are being affected, like our relationships being affected by having our first child with one another. And what are the things that are working? What things are not working in relationship to our different parenting styles, because we do have them.

As much as we like to believe that we have the same exact, like end goal, which is true, I believe our values are extremely aligned and like our ideas are the ways in which we wanna raise our child in those larger picture ways, like they're clear. The way they get there, which is always a thing when we're talking about liberation, walks away like.

Yolanda Williams: Always.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Like, it's not always the same. Like he wants to do things this certain way. I wanna do it this way. We bump heads with one another. We don't wanna be in a position where one person's seeming to step on the other person's toes and relationship to her. Like there's all kinds of things going on. But I think it's those types of conversations that maybe weren't able to be had between even like the people who are caregiving for us, like I heard you saying too like, it wasn't just my mother and my father, there were multiple hands at play in raising me. But sometimes I don't know if they were always in agreeance with one another.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Something that's real for me is that like anyone who is taking care of my child knows what (0:40:00) it is I'm like trying...

Yolanda Williams: Listen.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...to build up in this world, you know.

Yolanda Williams: If you're not, if you don't know, and if you don't fall in line, you can't be around her period.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Exactly.

Yolanda Williams: That's just for others...

Jana Lynne Umipig: That's just favorable.

Yolanda Williams: ...there's absolutely no that's, I'm very, there's a wiggle room in there, right. If it's like, well, you know, we should come over here. These are the rules over here that you won't be coming over there. Like, it's very simple for me, but that's also my part of me having privilege and I like to talk about that because folks wanna be like a no privilege gentle parenting and that's just not true. In conscious parenting, if I have a support system and disappears, cause I was like, I can't have you around my kid anymore, well, work from home.

You know, I work for myself. I have a very loose schedule, so it won't hurt me as hard as, as much to say, okay, well we just won't be coming around anymore. But that parent, that working parent, who depends on their extended family and their extended family is basically like, well, either my way or the highway, they have to make some sacrifices that, you know, we have to recognize the different privileges that we have.

And I feel like for, you know, (inaudible) folks, we only see privilege as like a racial construct and there's so many privileges, you know, time, ability, you know, like being partnered or not, like there's so many different types of privilege that we have to recognize as we go down this journey to being more intentional conscious parents and decolonizing in order to be able to show up for people in a more authentic way.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah. And I think that's like, you know, as you continue to just kind of bring in the truth about being in relation to other folks and being able to depend on other folks, in different capacities to raise our kids. I think that that's one of the biggest things that I've also been when I think about this whole idea of being a good ancestor that was kind of like we were talking about before, you know, is that one of the things that I hope for is to have good relationships with people.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: To build good community, to build good family, not just with the folks who I'm supposed to build good family with, but the people who truly are meaning to, and intentionally stepping into building good family with me, whether or not they are blood related to me.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And the truth is that a lot of folks in my blood relation are folks who want to be in good family with me. They want to like step into the idea of family being a duty, which it is, there's a responsibility to that. And also I think that we are really contending with how and which ways we build good relationships that then model the way that our child will be in relationship to us and to other people in the world and, you know, like as they grow bigger and they build family with others, you know, like what that looks like. I'm totally conscious often about the ways in which I tell people like, listen, my life now...

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...is very inclusive of this little person.

Yolanda Williams: Listen.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And like they're co-creating my life with me now. It's not just from my viewpoint anymore. I mean, it is still there, but I always am thinking about the ways in which what she is doing in the world is shifting, impacting, renegotiating the ways in which I'm gonna decide to do things, and the more and more she becomes fully in herself and she has her own ideas and she's communicating them and building her own relationships, like these little ones are co-craters, you know.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah. Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And they're co-creating this existence in ways that we may not even be able to imagine at this point. So if there's anything that I hope to be a good ancestor with it's the types of things that I feel that I want to be generative, that it's good and that there's some foundation there that feels like in its integrity, that feels is coming from a loving place, but that more than anything else has room to be grown through relational care and understanding...

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Jana Lynne Umipig: ...particularly with her, but like, if I am moving in a certain way with anyone who's helping to raise her it's because not just because like, this is exactly how I want things to be, that I also trust that the people who are coming through that if they were to question me about my parenting, it likely is because they have something loving to add to the equation. And I'm hoping for that for all the relationships that come into our lives, you know, as we move forward and raising this little one that will exist, you know.

Yolanda Williams: You know, when we talk about being a good ancestor, we really are thinking futuristically about what we want the world to look like, that's at least for me, I'm not gonna speak for everybody else. For me, when I think about being a good ancestor, it's really about thinking futuristically about how I want this world to look (0:45:00) and feel and sound for my daughter. And so with that in mind, are there any tips for people who are going, who may have heard this just like, oh my God, I'm struggling with the same thing with my family, with boundaries with my family, with uncoupling, my family's sense of duty from my own liberation walk, like, do you have any tips for some people who might be struggling with that?

Jana Lynne Umipig: Hmm. I mean, I feel like you spoke about it a little bit earlier, the biggest thing that I offer to myself every single day is to be patient and have compassion for the complexities in any given moment. And you were saying that earlier, like in any given moment, everyone's trying to do the best that they can.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And I feel like that there's something to that, you know, like there's something to folks who can hold complication and folks who can't. And usually when people don't hold complication, they run straight into conflict and stay there for a really, really, really, really long time.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: And so my biggest thing that I try to do for myself when I'm finding myself in conflict with my family in particular, is I'll take a deep breath and I'm like, all right, what are you not seeing right now?

Yolanda Williams: Right.

Jana Lynne Umipig: What is it that you're not seeing? Like, what are you simplifying that is always gonna be way more complicated than what's happening in this moment. And do you have the capacity to hold that? And being in the complication and the patience with yourself when you can't, but then also celebrating yourself and like stepping fully into the moments when you have the courage to do that. So I think that's my biggest advice to folks. Is that like be complicated. And then I, I think that also another thing that I'm, you know, just kind of like sitting with, with myself, with my own family in this point, it's just the boundary conversation again, you know?

UNKNOWN: Yeah, it is.

Jana Lynne Umipig: It's like it's having a question with yourself about what those boundaries really not just look like, but they also feel like, because sound.

Yolanda Williams: It sound like.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Yeah. You know, just like being able to be embodied in your boundaries, not just like the theoretically or like being able to just speak it to folks, but like, what does it really feel like to, to have that distance? There's actually a question that I like have for myself, you know, quite often when I'm at home with my mother and my father is like what is it gonna be like, you know, when we're a part again, you know, is that the only time when I feel like I can have a good relation with my parents, is when I'm like physically distanced from them and I don't really have a complete answer for that yet, but what I do know is that the distance does, does do some to my body and allows me to feel, you know, regulated.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah, same, to use some words, you know.

Jana Lynne Umipig: Another system is like, oh, it's safe here.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah. And so I wonder what that is for a lot of different other folks and if we can feel into that more for ourselves, like, and be really honest about that, and be able to communicate that with ourselves first and foremost, before even trying to communicate it with others. But I really appreciate this conversation. We've been having in a moment to reflect after returning from a trip back home, you know.

Yolanda Williams: I know. If you know and these are great journal props, also, if you all are listening to sort of reflect back on after you listen to this, because this is the work like in it's constant, it's never ending. I don't think anyone will ever be fully healed from, you know, transgenerational trauma, but what we can do is just continue to acquire, ask why, and always, I like to ask in everything that I do ask myself, like, how am I upholding or gate keeping for, and investing in these systems of oppression. And you can do that. Even when it comes to like these familial, like relationships and are they serving the point of liberation for you and your children? And if they're not, how can you be a part of that, you can't control nobody else, but what you can do is put up, cause you can't, oh, what you did, what you can do is put up some boundaries around that and that will not be easy. We know this, especially for immigrant families, for black families, we know that you get guilt tripped, shamed, like all these things, all these feelings start to come up, but if it serves to only reinforced oppression and colonization, how is it serving liberation? It's it can't, you can't have both. So just reflect, it's a constant reflection, and with that said, can you let folks know how to find you?

Jana Lynne Umipig: The easiest way is (0:50:00) just to go onto Instagram, that's like one of my mainstays and you can just find me their JL creator. I'm not really traversing to any of the other platforms, these days, it's just like really easy to just be in one place.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Jana Lynne Umipig: So we can connect there if you all feel good about it.

Yolanda Williams: Well, I appreciate you having coming on here and, you know, can you tell the folks, what does decolonized a parenting mean to you?

Jana Lynne Umipig: It means having room to hold the compassion for yourself and who you are growing into alongside your child as well as holding compassion for others that help to co-raise your children and building in those conversations of those relations, generative ways to grow our future descendants and to be better ancestors in the future.

Yolanda Williams: I love it. Thank you so much for joining me today. I really appreciate you. I'll make sure to put all your information to the show notes. You all please go and follow JL on Instagram and, you know, make sure you leave a writing review. Let me know what you thought about this conversation and as always keep it conscious. Thank you.