

## Transcript – Nourishing Our Roots Episode 1

### **15 second Musical Interlude – Drums, Forest Sounds with Birds**

#### **INTRO 0:15 – 1:35**

**Ashiana:** Hello and welcome to Nourishing Our Roots, where we bring you practices and conversations around wellness from a decolonized perspective and help you dig into your roots and find wellness from within. We will be having 4 episodes in this series, based on different themes that will be released bi weekly.

According to us, wellness should be approached in a holistic manner including mental, physical as well as spiritual and emotional wellness.

**Grace:** The podcast is called Nourishing Our Roots because when you think about the imagery of a tree, it has an expansive and beautiful network of roots, and as the roots grow deeper, the tree branches grow out that's what we want to do in this space. We want to take the time to deeply connect and care for, or nourish, our roots within community, our ancestors and ourselves. This podcast is supported by LGBT YouthLine's Provincial Youth Ambassador Project.

**Ashiana:** And LGBT YouthLine operates on the land colonially known as Ontario, home to 133 first nations. However, the contributors to this project are situated all across Turtle Island, therefore we acknowledge that we are working and living on land that does not engage many indigenous communities consensually, and give thanks for their continuous stewardship of this land.

Music Interlude, Fade out 1:35 – 1:50

#### **HOST INTRO 1:50- 3:43**

**Grace:** My name is Grace and I one of your co-hosts for this podcast. I'm a black non-binary second generation Haitian immigrant to Turtle Island and I'm also an undergraduate student at the University of Guelph, who is passionate about spirituality, wellness and healing practices within community. Here in Guelph, I'm located on the ancestral lands of the Attawandaron people and the peoples and the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. I recognize the significance of the dish with one spoon covenant to this land, and offer my respect to our Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Metis neighbours as I strive to strengthen my relationships with them. I would like to also acknowledge those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly black folks forcibly brought to Turtle Island as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. My parents arrived to this land as immigrants from Haiti, the ancestral lands of the Taino peoples, having ancestors who were enslaved and forcibly displaced from West Africa. As a child of displaced immigrants in this land, understanding and acknowledging my relationship to the First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples of this land is crucial.

**Ashiana:** Hello! My name is Ashiana, your other co-host and co-creator of this podcast. I am a gender non-conforming person of color, a recent immigrant from India, and a mental health champion, among many other things, currently residing in what is colonially known as Thunder Bay, in Ontario, which is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabe people, which includes the Ojibwa of Fort William First Nations. And I also acknowledge the various contributions made to this land by the Metis people. We stand in solidarity and action with our Indigenous relatives against the past and ongoing violence committed by the state and settler colonialism. As we engage in this discussion of decolonizing wellness, we remember that our liberation and resistance is connected in creating futures centered in well-being, joy and community.

#### **EPISODE/GUEST INTRO 3:43 – 4:43**

**Grace:** This is the first episode of the series, and today our theme is spirituality. Spirituality can mean many different things to many different people. My favourite view of spirituality is that it is a creative experience and a place for genuine expression. And that is the very reason our guest today recommends that we look into ourselves and our roots to find our own kind of spirituality.

**Ashiana:** Today our guest is none other than our very own, Gabriel Marie, who is an integral part of the PYAP program and LGBT YouthLine. They have been working in the not-for-profit sector for over 6 years, creating safer and more inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ youth. Being someone who identifies as neurodiverse, they're constantly dreaming of innovative and creative ways of making spaces more accessible and decolonizing, rigid corporate and capitalistic ideas of productivity. Welcome, Gabriel!

**Gabriel Marie:** *[Sung]* Yay, Thank you for having me. *[Laughter]*

#### **FIRST QUESTION: 4:43**

**Ashiana:** Awesome, so right off the bat, we would like to ask you our theme question, which is about decolonized wellness. As a person who's already working towards decolonizing different aspects of society, what does the phrase decolonizing wellness mean to you?

**Gabriel Marie:** oh oh oh. Decolonizing wellness. Well, yeah, it really needs to be to be decolonized because it's very much been commodified, monetized, especially the whole concept of mindfulness. Seeing a lot of white folks, just really thinking that they're, like, Yogis, and it's actually like a very- It's like the idea of mindfulness actually comes from, like Southeast Asia right? So, just wanting to acknowledge that mindfulness is definitely a concept that has now been very much Westernized like that. But yes, so decolonizing wellness for me means healing intergenerational trauma through learning, connecting to and remembering my ancestors. And when I say remembering, I say it as R.E. dash M. E.M. B.E.R.I.N.G. (re-remembering). So, remembering my ancestors, rituals, traditions, all pre-colonization. And I actually have like 3, like I have an image in my mind, I – I that – I have something that comes to mind when I think about decolonizing wellness and 2 words that really come up for me as well. So. Yeah, I'm wondering, is it ok if I share that with you, with y'all?

**Grace:** Yes, please do.

**Gabriel:** Okay. So I'm not sure you've seen this, but it's this image, I'm going to put it in the- the chat. I'll try to describe as much as possible but it's called Lapu-Lapu in the battle of Mactan. So it's like this image this painting that's depicting Lapu-Lapu, which is this Visayan datu and datu, it means Chief, killing Ferdinand Magellan. And Ferdinand is this dude. This is from- from Spain. He's part of, like, Spanish monarchy who came into- to the Philippines in 1500s. And he was like "Hey y'all, like become Christian" And Lapu-Lapu was like "Ah no. We're not gonna be- We're not gonna do that because we really have our own like, belief systems. And so, Ferdinand was like well, "I'm gonna use

force and we're gonna use modern day warfare during that time to kind of fight y'all". And Lapu-Lapu was like, "Bring it." And so Ferdinand brought it, and his ass was beat, like he was – he was done. They were using like a lot of like indigenous, like weapons, spears, and they were done so. So I love that image, of just someone being like no I'm not gonna follow whatever everyone else is doing. Conforming to this idea of like Christianity, this religion. I'm actually very happy with where I am and how dare you try to enforce this on us. So that's a little more like aggressive kind of imagery of what decolonizing wellness looks like for me, and also love the term kapwa , which in Tagalog like it can mean, I'm actually not too sure exactly what it means, like truly, truly. But it can mean, like both, like neighbour, some kind of like mutuality. And I remember when I was first introduced to this term, I remember, like, really thinking about it, It was just this mind fudge of just like Oh, my gosh! This is like the whole concept of, like non-duality of like questioning the conventional relationship between subject and object, exposure to socialized boundaries, questioning of me as an individual. It was like this, existential hole that I typically fall into a lot of the times. But anyways, Kapwa is actually very non-binary like it's nothing is one or the other it's just everything. Right? So it's- it's really weird. It's like makes me uncomfortable for the good for a good reason, because I'm so used to seeing things. As much as I want to be non-binary about my approach, I have been conditioned to see things in such binaries. And so. the more of like Oh, what it- what is it is actually such a good thing for me to really explore. And so that's why kapwa, is for me. It also goes into the idea of like the shared self.

So it's like this collective kind of like healing, knowledge, growth. So, seeing yourself in others, in beings and things. And when I'm saying like seen, I'm like being seen. Like not seeing curated parts of yourself, but like every facet of you as a person, the shadowy parts, the parts that are not as pretty and that's what kapwa is. It's just like, I see you, because we are connected your growth matters to me, and your growth elevates me. So yeah, I really like Kapwa and also Babaylan, which is spiritual leaders in the community, conduits of the divine. I think I shared with this with you all before. But yeah.

**Grace:** Thank you so much fo-r for sharing all that of Gabriel, and I just want to ask what were the 3 words again?

**Gabriel:** It. So the first image is a painting of Lapulapu in the battle of Mactan, Kapwa, and then Babaylan

**Grace:** Awesome, Thank you so much. That was- that's beautiful and I think also with what you mentioned around community that is such a decolonial thing to really reach for community and be in community and view-move away from individualism.

### **QUESTION 1 10:43 – 20:52**

**Grace:** So. Yes, thank you. So we had a very brief introduction to who you are, Gabriel. But as our first question, we'd like to know a bit more about your journey and your background, and what your story is so yeah, what's your story is, so yeah, what's your story?

**Gabriel:** Okay yeah, what's my story? So definitely so I'm Filipino. I'm one of 7 children, as you know. As many of you may know, Filipinos are very, very, very Catholic, because we've also been colonized. We've also been we have been colonized by- by Spain. So I'm one of 7 children. Parents immigrated from the Philippines, to Tkaronto where I was born. They're a very religious, my dad was a deacon at one point, my sister went to a convent to become a nun for several, several years. I was about to go to the seminary at a young age, but didn't make it because I was late, which is great. *[Laughter]* And we like prayed four times a day. We did like a 12 o'clock, 3 o'clock 6 o'clock, night time prayer. I went to Daily Mass, Sunday mass. So, so much like so much, like a lot of just that kind of exposure.

Yes, so I've always like held shame about my queer identity at a very young age, just because like that's what was shared in the bible. And that's what was being explicitly said to me by priests, right? Like "homosexuality is abnormal" stuff like that. So, I've always held shame with that part of myself. I also was super interested in very like new agey occulty things, too, at a young age, but never like felt confident to delve into that, because again anything deviating from this very rigid structure that I was in just wasn't allowed and yeah so that's what's like my childhood.

It's just very like typical I would like I would say like typical Filipino boy kind of coming of age, and then high school. Still be very much religious. (I) was still very much like very Catholic. I remember during that time, that's when I became very like aware of my body and my gender. And I hated puberty, like I hated puberty. Like I- I also shared this with you all before in the pre-interview. But like I really wish that I was a woman like I hated being like inhabiting this body that was seen as like masculine. And I would like daydream and just really wish and like cry to be a woman. Like I thought that like God, would like, strike me with this transformative lightning that would make me into a woman. And I just wanted to be a woman so badly, and a lot, of that was because I wanted to be loved, right? And I wanted to I just expressed myself in a way that I wanted to but this was like another layer that I had to really fight against, because I was like, "Oh my god I'm gay, now I want to be a woman" like this is too much. Like it's like my parents would never. Would never.

And then in university that's when I was still very much religious. At that time I was I was no longer in denial of being gay but still holding onto the notion that my queerness was abnormal. And this is things that, like I was like saying, like it was so gross. I remember just being like yeah I'm queer, I'm like I'm gay, but you know like it's not normal. It was really fucked up. It was just like very like mind-washy, brainwashy stuff.

And I went to this Catholic group where gay men would congregate. And they would recite 12 tenants that encourage chastity and problematized like anus, essentially. Just like, you are abnormal. You shall not. It's kind of like the whole concept of like love the sinner, not the sin kind of thing. And so like the sin for folks who were homosexual was like their homosexual identity. So it was just like weird. It was like such a like a weird space where I actually remember, even though I was so- I felt very much at that time.

My head was hurting, because I was like this is. This is too much. Like, like so much self hate that I was experiencing. So self shame and stuff. So yeah and yeah I was just like so angry. I was so, so, so angry, and I remember, I exploded like in my early adulthood.

I started working at this not for profit and that's where I learned a lot of these late concepts around anti-oppression, anti-racism. And I was just so resentful and angry and sad. And I started doing things that were like, not very Catholic. [Laughter] And I Yeah, I just like hated the church. So yeah, I- I think I definitely went to like really self-destructive behaviour. And once I started like equalizing a bit more. I started pursuing that desire that I had when I was a younger kid. Of like, wanting to check out new agey occulty stuff, right? And so, I I started looking into that and it was really cool and very like a lot of it- a lot of things I was looking into were very like Nordic or Western understandings of cultism or spirituality.

But it wasn't until I met someone in my work, who is a Filipinx person and I realized that my culture and it's history, ancient history, pre- colonization, was so rich with magic. I was like fuck, like all these concepts that are coming up now about like non-binary, gender non-conforming (folks) - this was happening way, way, way, way, way before and it's just like really, like things that were, you know, like worshiped and seen as very wonderful and beautiful, like way, way, way back then.

So I started connecting more with my culture with my cultural spiritual community, started attending ceremonies, started learning about my histories. And it's so interesting because the things that I've learned through that like, being like such a devout Catholic, working in community, and now as like this queer, mad, neurodiverse, Filinx-Filipinx, spiritual person has all informed my growth and journey. And I know that sounds like, such a happy ending like tying a beautiful spiritual bow at the end. But I really feel like those darker, shadowy parts of my journey.

It has been so integral in like how I navigate my own spirituality, my own connection to my ancestors, my spirit guides, my angels, my like family and all those things. So yeah, so it was really long, I guess.

**Grace:** No, thank you so much for sharing your journey. and how you got here, and your story with us. I'm- I'm wondering what it was like. I myself, I come from a very religious like Christian family. *[Gabriel Mhmms]* And so I know that I struggled a lot when it came to distancing myself from the faith that I was raised in. So I was wondering what it was like for you?

**Gabriel:** Oh my gosh, yes, it was real tough. It was real tough. I remember, when I first moved back home at the beginning of the pandemic, because I was nominated by my siblings to take care of my parents *[laughter]* along with my other brother, too, who also is queer so the only queer kids are caring for the parents. But it was tough. I remember, I had my altar set up in my space. My dad came in and started throwing holy water around everywhere. I was like, I was like please don't. Please don't, first of all, get my cards wet and get me wet just like, do that outside. I remember I was like, I was like "what?" But my mom, on the other hand, is very interested in it. She lets me read for her a lot. Like she actually has her own oracle deck and so it's so weird because they're so like Catholic, and very rigid with some of their- with how they approach things.

But it was so nice to see that my mom was like, "Gabriel Marie, can you read for me?" and I'm like "hell yeah" like "Duh?!" And then just my dad just being like, "Yeah it's ok, like Gabriel come on, No please" It's kind of those things where it's just like they'll just say it like no and then continue eating. And I'll be like still shuffling my cards. But it was really hard in the beginning, but now they're coming around for sure.

**Grace:** Yeah, Thanks for sharing that Gabriel it's kind of funny. I- I have similar experiences with my parents. *[Gabriel Mmms]* But the opposite. So my Dad is very much the one who's like supporting me like going into like pre-colonial, like Haitian spirituality, whereas my mom's like "ahhhhh!" But she's- she's also coming around. So I'm glad that your parents have changed.

**Gabriel:** Yeah, Mhmm. Yeah.

**Grace:** Yeah.

## QUESTION 2 – 20:54- 21:57

**Ashiana:** Yeah, yeah, it's like definitely great that you were able to reconnect with your own culture and discover elements that identified with your queerness within. Right? So anything more you can tell about your journey reclaiming the Filipinx spirituality?

**Gabriel:** Other than that- just like the person that really helped me through this journey was integral, and the people that I met along the way so like I mean is Sam and I meet Jen Maramba and Jana Lynn, who are so integral to that growth. And the reason why my parents are so, are a little more just like, okay, I guess. Is because the cards that I have, the deities that I look up to and research are all coming from our culture. *[Ashiana Mhmms]* so, yeah

### QUESTION 3 – 21:57- 28:14

**Ashiana:** Yeah. So I'm very much like interested in like this ancient culture, those stories. And like, deities, divine people, because around the world, you know, non-binary people have existed. The binary, gender binary is actually so recent, and, you know, made up. So if you have any, like you mentioned earlier, like Babaylan and other divine people like, if you can elaborate on that because I just love, those.

**Gabriel:** Yeah... yeah, like, the whole concept of non-binary I think it came into trend or came into awareness like the past 10 years. I think? But it's so interesting that, yeah like Lakapati. Yeah like these deities that were non-binary, that were Trans, you worshipped them. Like they were not just like deities or people that were just there. There were like people and deities that we worshiped and revered because of their- their gender fluidity and gender-gender non conformity, so actually, you know. So you put up in the chat like Lakapati, the dating of fertility and the harvest. So Lakhapadi's actually a two-spirit deity. So like they hold both male and female energies in their being, and just kind of oscillate between the two. It's like doesn't matter and they're very beautiful. Like they're just very like, like the harvest, fertility, the earth like that's what they're prayed to for and that is huge right? So it's like these deities that are are non-binary. They're not just like some side character or side thing it's like they are the like the person, the deity.

Also, I really love Sidapa, the deity of death. And it's so interesting. I've done so much research on Sidapa, and they never know if it's male or female, because they just don't care, Right?. It's just like Sidapa is this person who ushers folks into death, and death is like really beautiful for us as well. I also love Myari. Oh, so Myari is one of the sisters of Pala, the star Hannan, in the morning, and is the- they're they're demigods and they're- they're their father is Batala, who is like the big like who would be considered like Zeus of the deities in Filipino culture, Filipin-ies culture, The Filipino culture. And that's the deity that I pray to the most.

I actually have been doing a lot of like research on this deity called kamatayan the sulod trio, and they're also deities about ushering death. So there's 3 of them and I don't know why I've been so interested in this, but like the whole idea of death being centre of- of like our journey. I think it's also very decolonial as well. It's like nothing, it's like not scary. It's not something that you're met with- with like fire and brimstone, or whatever right it's more of like this is a journey that starts and ends and it's fine. Like impermanence is fine.

So yeah, I really love the Sulod trio. Because the Sulod trio there's a person who watches before the soul is born. Another- soul, another person, or another deity that ushers us into life, and the third deity that makes an agree with the soul of the newborn about the way they will want to live and pass. So- so it's so real because it's like death has been with us, not only at the end, but from the beginning and through our life right? And it's just like I think that's very- like I like that. I really enjoy that. So yeah.

**Grace:** With- with what you've mentioned around death, I feel like that's such a big thing when it comes to like capitalism, could colonialism and just controlling people like I feel like this fear of death that has been created, and death and this heaven and hell and things like that are very, much, very much colonial, and very much means of control. So I love that. Sharing of that deity with us, sounds so beautiful thank you.

**Gabriel Marie:** Thank you. Yeah, like It's just like I feel like there's so many people who are afraid of death and just want to live forever. So they just live life as if they're gonna live forever. And or like, if

they're gonna pass, it's like they don't think about like consequences, or whatever of like what the impacts of their actions, will be. It's just it's just very like it's Yeah, there's so much here.

**Ashiana:** It's the yolo concept right? *[Gabriel Marie laughs]* You only live once? But in most ancient cultures, we say the opposite things. It's not. No, this is not a single life, You- you know we believe in rebirth or the permanence of the soul. And that, you know the soul is still existing even after you know, the death.

**Gabriel Marie:** Also just like, cycles are real. Right? Like cycles happen like I think it's just what it is. So I mean it's enough is like nothing is permanent, and that's so freeing and scary at the same time. Yeah, cause I feel like there's such an obsession with permanence, like if I have this- I want it forever. This is my like is something about permanence feels like you own something, but it's like no, you don't own it. *[Laughter]* So , yeah.

**Grace:** Yeah, then ownership goes back to colonialism. Who so yes, definitely all these themes like connect.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah.

#### QUESTION 28:14 – 30:35

**Grace:** I'm wondering what felt the most euphoric about the journey, like what's one thing that feels super euphoric about your journey of reclaimed Filippinx spirituality.

**Gabriel Marie:** I think it's when I gather with my spiritual like cultural community. And when we're like introducing ourselves into that, in ceremony. Or opening a circle. The parts where we introduced ourselves, and invite spirits to join us, is so euphoric for me. Because it's like I'm, remembering who I am, and like where I come from. And so how I start, how I open my- my ceremonies, my circles is like, my name is Gabriel Marie Borromeo Bacani. I'm the child of Arturo Bacani, or Terresita Bacani.

I, I would like to invite my angels, ancestors, spirit guides. My light family, including Tita Oma and Emanuel Marie. It's just like remembering and then anchoring myself. I'm like Oh, this is who I am. Like, I'm the extension of ancestral knowledge, ancient ancestral knowledge and wisdom, and connected to future generations, and so that part just feels very like endless like I would describe the feeling as endless and that's like very euphoric for me. It's like no longer being bound by things that I can't even begin to comprehend, and I like that. Like I like not being able to comprehend everything, and just letting it be. Which is so hard for someone who's neurodiverse and like mad right? It's like, it's just wonderful, and hearing other people talk it just feels like a symphony of just- of just like it's so, it's so hard to articulate, it just- it really sounds like music like this harmonious like music. I'm just like, Oh, this is who we are, and this is like how we're going to exist.

Our existence is, is good and helpful. Even the parts of us that aren't so nice and also, it's going to help future generations. It's just like, it's a really nice. Yeah

**Grace:** I love that imagery so much. Thank you for painting that beautiful picture for us.

#### QUESTION 30:35- 34:00

**Grace:** So you mentioned remembering a couple of times. So I'm wondering if you could describe what remembering is, and the role it's played in your life?

**Gabriel Marie:** So I heard about this term from Jana Lynn so it's the same person created the kapwa deck that I have. And it's basically society, and just the place that we live in the systems that we operate within have dismembered us. Right? It really feels like parts of our own bodies like doesn't

like our spiritual bodies, our emotional bodies. Our spirits have been, like, taken apart piece by piece. Being like No, the system is not is not for you so change. Change your body. Change how you kind of come into the system. And so remembering is like putting these pieces back together and being like Oh, it's not me that's messed up. It's the system, kind of thing, right? And so I'm remembering who I am by connecting to my history to the legacies, honoring my ancestors, and putting those pieces back together and being like I'm happy that I don't fit into the system. Like I'm happy that I'm putting my pieces back together. Because that's how I know that, like lapulapu fighting, like, Ferdinand, that's what I'm also doing. I'm like Oh, no. No, no, I'm not gonna just like be like "Yes, let me be indoctrinated to this religion because I want to live in this way". But it's more like "Oh, I want to fight" and so that's like my form of resisting against these systems and structures is by putting parts of myself back together.

**Grace:** Thank you so much for sharing that.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah. Thank you for listening.

**Ashiana:** Yeah, that's that makes a lot of sense, when, especially when you talk about dismembering right? That I find so much truth, and that it's like you know you have lost parts of yourself, and you just don't, you know there is something missing but you quite don't know what it is.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah.

**Ashiana:** So yeah. It's, it's really thought provoking when you put it like that. We need to re-member ourselves.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah.

**Ashiana:** Yeah.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah and it's also like, because I'm so used to masking right? And sometimes I'm so unsure like, has the mask fused with my face right? And so it's even like hard to remember like what my face is. And like who I am, unmasked. And so like it's just so sad (*laughter*), to know that, like I've tried. And also so many people have tried to fit in a system that was not made for them, do you know what I mean?

It's just like it's so sad and so like finally knowing that like Oh, no, no! No, I need to just like see the parts of this mask, identify it, so I can take it off. So I can be like I'm done with this mask. I could just be like who my ancestors dreamed of me being.

**Ashiana:** Yeah, And I think, yeah, that's why like spirituality can be such a beautiful platform of like deep connection with others.

#### Question 33:58- 36:38

**Ashiana:** So how do you like? Currently, now you have, like, you know, turned. (*Laughter*) How do you currently connect with your family members or community through this new found form of spirituality?

**Gabriel Marie:** So I have a dambana in my room. So a dambana is like a shrine or an altar that I've been treating longest ancestors and I pray in front of it. I speak to them, I-I-I always feed them. I know they love Filipino food. So I make sure to give them some good Filipino food. Every time like I make, karne ng buto, which is like this beef stew. I always have a little bit of stew in a little bowl that I place on the altar. I know they love fruits, too, they love fruit. So I always get like a nice little clementine there too. So yeah. It's really- it's very nice to be hanging out with your spirit family

through the altar like, lighting the candles, dancing in front of it like, before we recorded. I was saying Grace thank you for that idea of dancing naked in front of the altar, because it's amazing. And that's actually helped me so, so much with how I view my body too.

This was actually what Destiny has shared me before, and I found it like so wonderful too, was like my body was the build up of my ancestors right? Like my nose, my cheeks, my hair, my eyes, like these, are all beautiful because they are coming from my- my people. Right? So, our people, my Kapwa.

So Yeah. I just began to, like, love it. And I went from like hating my body, to body neutrality. Now it's like body love, or just being like this vessel is real, is real cute.

It's real nice because (*Ashiana laughs*) I see this from the other babaylan in the past.

So yeah. So dancing in front of the altar has really been helpful, and also the pulling tarot cards. Writing. Writing spells has been really fun. Holding ceremonies, full moon, new moon, waxing (*Ashiana Mhmms*) waning, all that stuff. I love the moon. Oh, my gosh! And just like connecting to that earth. Yes, connecting to the earth. So. Yeah, those all have been really helpful.

**Ashiana.** awesome.

QUESTION 36:38 - 39:01

**Grace:** Can I ask you to describe 3 things? (*Gabriel Marie Mhmms*) I can repeat them, if after, but writing spells, and then also separately, like what it means to connect with the moon and the earth, and what that looks like for you?

**Gabriel Marie:** Yes. Oh, my gosh, Okay, so writing spells for me is very like I always do when I'm high or just like in front of the altar. Kind of, usually comes up with- through prayer or talking and then things just come to mind of like this is what I pray for. This is what I pray for myself and for others. And then it's like a poem that I recite and then I'm very intentional with how I recite it. With the things that I have in the space, when I recite it. The candles, the color of the candles. The crystals. The- the way that I- the direction that I face. Like everything, is very intentional, so usually comes from that prayer of like, this is what I desire and this is what I want. And that's been very like transform- transformative for me to do, because I've been taught to feel selfish when I desire or want something. And I always feel like I can't have those things. But being like no, I want this, and I desire this, and I should have this. I deserved it. And just like writing that through prayer and being like Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. and making it happen just positioning myself in a way that is, like relevant is, is how I write spells. So yeah.

**Grace:** That's amazing and even like the word spells, you know? It's, you know, spelling and like writing and like speaking (*Gabriel Marie Mhmms*) like it's all connected, so- cool

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah and prayers. Like I remember Catholic prayers. Like saying the Hail Mary or the Our Fathers. Those are spells. Like in that like, we are drinking the blood and eating the body, like how? (*Ashiana and Grace Laugh*) Like what?

And then that you're just like, no don't do that. Don't like write spells. It's like, ya'll are- ya'll are eating, eating someone's body, drinking someone's blood. So let's talk about that. (Laughter) Yeah.

QUESTION 39:01- 42:50

**Grace:** Yeah. And then my second question is like, around moon. The moon and the earth, and you measure that you love the moon, and you love connecting with the earth. So what does that look like for you? What does that mean?

**Gabriel Marie:** I love the moon so, so, so much. And I think what I'm kind of projecting on it too, I'm realizing, is like. I used to love Mother Mary like, like feminine- femininity, kind of like matriarchal kind of archetypes. And the moon kind of represents that for me. It's like this feminine energy. And something about it feels very like, home. It feels like home, when I look at the moon. It's- it's like, it's, it can be so bright, it could be hidden by the clouds. It's always there, kind of casting like shadows. It's mysterious.

You never know what the moon is up to. That's like when other creatures and beings come out too, and the moon is like what like, helps that. The- these creatures, and beings to come out during that time, and it's so powerful too. Just how it controls the water, the- the waves, the currents, our moods sometimes, you know? (*Ashiana Mhmms*) It's very like – it's so powerful and it's so just like effortless. It feels like-like she feels so effortless and I love that. And I love that because I love that juxtaposition of some- something that is so gentle and kind of like soft, but is so powerful. You know what I mean? It's just like, I like that, that combination. And the moon is that for me, And I love shadows. I love, love shadows because I'm scared of scared shitless of shadows. Which makes me love it even more because I'm like, Why am I scared? I need to equate myself with the shadows. So yeah.

**Grace:** I call- I- I don't even know when I start doing this, but I would call her sister moon.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah

**Grace:** For a long time, yeah.

**Gabriel Marie:** What- If I could ask, what- what compelled you to call her sister moon?

**Grace:** I have no clue. I truly don't know. I cannot draw the line back. But I do know that, like when I was discovering a bit more about Haitian like spirits, and we call them lwa. I really connected with Erzulie and she is sort of like, the spear. She's like connected to the moon, and and so I don't know. I just saw her as like an older sister and so I guess that's sort of where the connection came from.

**Gabriel Marie:** I love that. Oh, thank you for sharing that I'm so interested in learning about other cultures relationship to spirituality, too. Because I feel like there's always connection and always learnings. Yeah, Yeah, so.

**Grace:** Thank you so much for all that you've shared Gabriel. Oh, my Gosh, it was so lovely to learn so much about Filipinx spirituality, and your journey, and just to be in this space with you, you are such a lovely person with great energy and I feel so deeply grateful and blessed. And yeah, so it was great to get to know a bit more about you, and how you were able to like, discover and accept your truth and your divinity.

(music fades in the background)

**Grace:** So that concludes the discussion component of our episode.

**Gabriel Marie:** Thank you both. I'm so honoured to use because I feel like I was just flat blubbering

**Grace:** Oh hell no! So we'll be back with our practice segment where Gabriel will share with us a spiritual practice that will help us connect with our ancestors.

Musical Transition 42:58 - 43:19

**PRACTICE 43:19 – 48:34**

**Grace:** Thank you so much Gabriel for sharing your story, your wisdom and your knowledge with us. On this podcast we believe that stories are sacred. So we thank you deeply for being in and co-creating this space with us.

Now we are moving to the practice segment of the podcast. So, Gabriel, what practice would you like to share with our community today?

**Gabriel Marie:** (*Thinking sounds*) One practice that I really, really encourage you all to do is creating your own dambana, your own altar, your own shrine, and it doesn't have to be anything too fancy or elaborate. It could just be a simple candle with a few drawings or pictures or symbols that really mean a lot to you and your journey.

**Grace:** Amazing.

(*All burst into Laughter*)

**Ashiana:** Is there more to elaborate?

**Grace:** would you be comfortable with like walking us through it (*Gabriel Marie: Yeahhh*) like maybe steps that you would take? And if you're comfortable with sharing like, maybe like a bit about the everlasting flower, because that was super interesting. Yes, so yes, if you could just walk us through, through the steps, take us on the journey

**Gabriel Marie:** A 100,000,000%. So I've always had altars in my own. I'm not sure, if you come from families that have altars.

**Ashiana:** It's a very common practice in India to have like a shrine, mostly in Hindu households. But it is still very common.

**Gabriel Marie:** Mhmm, Mhmm. So that's like, that's an altar that you could like, literally dance in front of, if you have a connection to it. How I created with my alter and what I really encourage you all to do is just sit with yourself (*laughter*) and- and like, talk. Like start talking to the beings around you, or to your ancestors just like imagine yourself being like, "hey, what's going on? How is it" and stuff like that it just asks like, what do you want to do want? What do you like? It can be like a simple as that, or actually doing research, right? Some things that have really helped me is researching the land's history. My culture's history and the people that I've really looked up to in my family. And through tho-that- through that research, and honouring of those, those that have passed. I've been able to figure like. Oh, my gosh! My Tita Oma loved, loved, loved like Kare-Kare, which is this, this dish on my altar. And then from there just things started like developing. Like I used to have this angel that I that I used to always like hold whenever I was scared when I was like a young kid. I think my ancestors would love that on the altar. So I put that on my altar. So it's very like there's no one specific way to create a sacred space.

It could be super small, it could be super big as long as you have this, this little like thing that you could come to. And be like I'm gonna connect with my spirituality, with the spirits around me, my ancestors, all that stuff. And I also remember to someone created to go, a portable altar. It's just like a box where they put in like a feather, a stone, and an image of someone that had passed away, and that was their altar. And the beautiful thing about that, is that it's very safe, too. Right? Like you

don't have to have it exposed in a space where you don't feel like you could practice this kind of spirituality. You can also take it with you everywhere you go as well. So really just taking time to sit with yourself and with the things, the beings around you, and being like, how can I get to know you better? Like it's so, it feels very like nebulous just to be like "I'm gonna get to know you better" kind of thing. But like honestly is so good, it's so scary and thoughts just come and it's like just, just go with those things that are feeling right to you. Oh, it sounds very generic, but really just sit with those things, do your research. Get to know them better. And create an altar. Like one thing that I love, though, is candles. I think candles is always a must in an altar for me. For me, candles are like a representation of all the elements, like the wax is like the earth. The wax that melts is the water, the fires is the flame, the air that comes from the flame. And then, I think, like you need all those elements to kind of activate something and to honour also the elements. So yeah, as long as you have a candle or something that represents the different elements, you can use symbols, just having that in the space. And dance in front of it, like dance! Light up the candle, dance in the dark. Get the candle light, like it's great! Yeah.

#### **QUESTION 48:34- 51:21**

**Grace:** And I- you mentioned. Yes, you mentioned sitting with yourself and sitting in front of the altar and waiting for things to come. Is it- Is it like waiting to hear from ancestors? And what was- was that like for you, when you first created your altar and first like sat in that silence?

**Gabriel Marie:** Oh my gosh! I can never be- yeah. I remember, doing it. I do it when I'm smoking, but I remember before I hated it. I hate just, silence, I feel like it's so awkward. And also when I'm like please like, say something, tell me something. It was really painful. So it didn't really like happen the first time I did it. But I think when I started researching, that really prompted more like those discussions that I- I feel like I had with the beings around me. And also just like accepting that, yeah like this is uncomfortable. And that's it, kind of thing right? It's just like it's just like, yeah, it is uncomfortable and that's life, kind of thing. It's just like, and then just things just come in like where I'm not yeah. I'm always trying to...

**Ashiana:** Yeah I think you like it's at some point, you know you have to get comfortable with that uncomfortable feeling of like sitting with yourself and in silence, and I think only I mean, it's my perspective so it's only once you are- you accept that for yourself can more things flow into you, right?

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah, and literally like just lighting a candle, staring at it. Like that's already so spiritual, do you know what I mean? Like, that's already a way to connect to remember like that's enough, right? And art, like creativity is so, so such a great conduit of connection to spiritual-spirituality. So like drawing, writing poems, singing. I love singing when I'm also in front of my altar. (*Ashiana Hmms*) spinning around movement. Yeah, like yeah.

**Grace:** One thing I- I saw this actually on instagram. There was someone- there's someone I follow who is Hawaiian, and- and they were like doing this ,this practice of like. I think they were burning incense, or sage and they were like controlling the smoke coming out of it, and I thought that was so cool. So I would just stare at smoke and i'll like--

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah!! Oh, my God, yes, yes, that's wonderful. And that's like you can actually like divine a lot of stuff from staring at smoke or a candle flame.

**Question 51:21- 1:07:13**

**Grace:** So I was wondering what the significance of, so in the pre-interview you mentioned that you have at your altar, or you've had at your altar the everlasting flower. What's the significance of that for you.

**Gabriel Marie:** Oh, my good! Oh, my goodness! Yes, yes, yes. Okay. So I remember it was and like, my partners- part of like my partner's friends like centerpiece- the flower there, and it's called the everlasting. I was like Oh, I'm- I like it's nice and I remember I was a ready to like dispose of it. But because like but I just like love like dried stuff, because it's something about it just feels really nice. But my mom was like "Oh, my God that's from the Philippines that flower" I'm like "What?!" And I was like "Oh, my gosh!" So then I just have it on my altar. Everlasting. And it's just like "Oh, my God that's from the Philippines, that's from my home country." That's like, yes, I just have it on my altar.

**Grace:** That's awesome, I need to get some dried Flowers.

**Gabriel Marie:** It is easy to dry yourself to like, just press it against.

**Ashiana:** A book yeah, we used to do that as kids. Alot

**Gabriel Marie: Mhmm.** Yeah. So I how do you practice spirituality both of you?

**Ashiana:** So for me. I think, I just talked to everything like you said talking to the moon, you know, when it's full moon. I just go out into my balcony, have a conversation with the moon, and like, be like "Oh, where are you like? I've been waiting for a bit" (*Laughter*) And just have some random conversations. I don't have an altar as of now, but I'm definitely planning to set up one. I have like few things already in my mind, what I want there. And now that you've talked about incense sticks. That was a big thing when we were kids back in India, we used to always- because it's a very common thing in a household. We used to always play with it. Like go into a dark room and swirl it around, and to do like you know various things like that. So I'm definitely gonna get me some incense sticks as well.

**Grace:** For me, what do I do? You know what? I had an altar without even knowing it was an altar. (*Laughter*) And I feel like- I feel like it's so beautiful because I feel like creating these altars is such like a -I don't know. I don't in my perspective it's just like a natural thing that so many cultures seem to just have, and and so I feel like there's some sort of weird inclination of humans towards creating these altars. So I think that's really cool. I have candles, lots of candles. And yeah, and I would put like also a lot of like my makeup around there. Like in the same area, which I think you know, connects a lot to like creativity. And whatnot, and I think that makeup is like what are the rituals I mean, I don't wear a lot. I only wear eye shadow, but, like I like to wear very colorful eyeshadow. And so, yeah, I think I think. And what I do about that is yeah. And I like to like the candle and put on like traditional like haitian music and just like dance around. (*Laughter*) (*Gabriel Marie Mhmms loudly*) With no like, What's the word? With no...

**Ashiana:** Abandon?

**Grace:** Yes, that's the word, abandon. Yes, dance around without abandon. And that is one of the practices I really love. Yeah. I've been wanting to connect, like I mostly connect with ancestors like through the music, and like waving the stage stick around and like calling to them to come into this space with me. (*Gabriel Marie Mhmms*) So that's that's all really exciting.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah. I love that you mentioned like getting ready for- for that like ritual. Like, like getting ready is part of the ritual like putting on colorful makeup, and that, like I think that's so fun and kind of important to me to because it's like, I'm gonna hang out with my ancestors and spirit

guides. So I want to be, I want them to know that I'm like dressing up for them, or getting ready for them. I think that's really, really beautiful.

**Grace:** And with that like in the pre interview you mentioned liberation through movement, especially like when it comes to like stimming and like, and all that. So I was wondering if you want to talk a bit about that.

**Gabriel Marie:** AH Yes. Oh, my gosh being someone who's like super- just has been masking so much. (*Laughter*) And also very subconscious moving in ways that feel good, and may not look the prettiest conventionally, is so liberating, even like making sounds. Like, I remember there was this one time where I was wailing, like wailing, which I never do like normally, but it was such a good release of like my- my body, like it was a release of something I know, for sure. So yeah, like movement is very liberating, and it's a great release of things trapped inside, and I feel like doing that in a way that's feeling very like, like in a very spiritual way is so profound.

So yeah, it's- it's so, so fun to move. To move in ways that, like I just want to not- feeling like someone's watching me, like like external like people.

**Grace:** Yeah and I feel like that's like hugely decolonial within itself, because we're so policed about how we're allowed to talk, especially when we're talking about like queer and trans people of color. Like how we're allowed to like talk and express ourselves and what we're allowed to wear, and how the ways that we're allowed to like, move our bodies, and things like that. And so I- I love that, incorporating like free-flowing movement into spirituality and letting that be a space of strength.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah, Yeah! And like free flowing of emotions, do you know what I mean? Like it's- like that's so like fuck you to the system.

It's like I will cry. I will like weep, I will wail and I'll feel good. Like it's not something I'm gonna be ashamed of. And I also just want to mention, too, that I know using sage and the shell, I know that definitely comes from like indigenous cultures like indigenous folks, and so like always thinking about ways that I could, thinking about my relationship to those to those materials, to those like magic magical materials. So I know like for me, I haven't been using sage a lot, because I know I wouldn't be like more ethical with the way that I go about things. But I always make sure that this sage that is being used as always given to me by other indigenous folks, or yeah, stuff like that. And like what I use now is like, eucalyptus, it's like dry eucalyptus, which is really great, and also cedar, which is also very wonderful to- to utilize and a lot of like resins. So, yeah, I'm always like trying to think about what is my relationship to these magical items and materials, that I'm utilizing in my- in my work in my spiritual work.

**Grace:** Yeah, yeah, and like in using these materials making sure that you're acknowledging, you know, the ancestral folks of this land whose relatives are still on it, and like still growing. And so Yes, absolutely Thank you for mentioning that and as we close, I just want to ask if there are any tips that you want to share with folks for creating their altars. Any last tips?

**Gabriel Marie:** Okay, one thing that I would, would be really helpful, because other than doing the research, sitting with yourself and your own thoughts and the beings around you. Another great way of doing it, is just going for a walk, in nature. A forest is always great to- to go into. And just asking the forest like, " Is it okay if I come in?" " Is it okay if I pick up this stick?" And just placing that on your altar and like, when you get like the- the forests consent and you'll feel it.

Just bring that stick with you to the altar, and just like having that as a reminder of your connection to the earth, to this- to spirit and knowing that this is something that you'll need to return one day

kind of thing, and it's also just a reminder of like impermanence, and just the flow and cycle of stuff. Because nature is very much about that, cycles. And that's the great way of also building your altar, having that reminder.

**Ashiana:** Alright. Wonderful! Thank you so much, Gabriel, for that amazing walk through and tips. I'm sure a lot of listeners are gonna build their own altar. I'm super excited by, you know build- about building my own. So thanks a lot for all these spiritual insights that's going to help us connect with our ancestors and culture.

**Gabriel Marie:** Sure, thank you, thank you both. Oh my goodness, I would love to even talk to you all more about this outside of the podcast, I want to learn more about how you navigate your own journeys, and experiences.

**Grace:** Also - quick comment, I love what you mentioned around, like when you go into the forest, and you're like asking for permission. And I just think that's so important of like you know of moving with humility, and- and trust in in the earth, and- and also to like the people who walk the earth before you. This part of it or whatever. So Yes, yeah, I think that that was beautiful. So thank you for sharing that.

**Gabriel Marie:** Thank you, thank you. Yeah you should try it's really fun. It's really fun. Just to be like like "Hey? Is it Okay, if I like, use this twig or this stone?" and use it as like way to- to meditate. It's- it's really it's very different. Like it hits different, then if you're not asking.. There's permission right? And also, like I'm going to return this back to the earth. Because things need to be returned some that something needs to be like, you can't just take. Like I'm always thinking like I just can't take like something needs to be return so like that whole practice is super helpful for me yeah.

**Grace:** And it like, like you mentioned it sort of reminds us of, like the cycle.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah

**Grace:** Of life and of things growing and rebirthing, and being born and dying.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah, yeah, even in a winter, cause I know I was talking to I don't know, Destiny, if I can mention your name in this podcast, if not well I was talking to one of my staff... Oh yay! So, Destiny mentioned this, so I was talking to Destiny about going for nature walks during winter, and how it could be very like, Oh, like dismal, because it's like It's very wet. It's really grey outside, but something about seeing like trees with no leaves, seeing it very like kind of desolate sometimes is so beautiful because it's like the earth is sleeping and like, y'know what I mean? and it's just a reminder of that like, yeah, like we also- if the if that earth needs to rest and go to the cycle of rest, rebirth and like life and all that stuff, we also need to go through that, we need to experience, rest. Like if there are things to do it, I definitely need to do it too. So it's a great reminder of like Gabriel Marie, you need to rest, the earth is resting as well. The cycle is- you're not greater than the cycle. It's like you need to be kind of in flow with that.

**Grace:** Yeah, I think that that's such a beautiful like, and also like perspective of humility of like I'm not going to like, like sort of like breaking out of capitalism, and being like all these like sort of I- I don't want to use the word unnatural. But I'm going to use it. Unnatural ways of like pushing our bodies and ourselves to move and and- and all these things. And I love that like move at the- at the- in time with like, nature.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah, Yeah, than'k you for that.

**Ashiana:** Okay so as a closing question, after this whole conversation about spirituality and you also mentioned the respecting all the 4 elements that we- that is essential part of our life. So at this moment, what element are you connecting with the most?

**Gabriel:** Water, water, water, water, water. Yeah, I have very little water in my natal chart it's a lot of earth, and so water yeah.

**Ashiana:** Always water *(Laughter)*

**Gabriel Marie:** Mhhmmm

**Ashiana:** Like for most people.

**Gabriel Marie:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, no. It Yeah Our bodies are made up of so much water, so it kind of makes sense yeah also

**Grace:** also it's winter so there's water everywhere now.

**Gabriel Marie:** Now. Exactly.

**Ashiana:** yeah. But I like water in water warm not snow form. *(Laughter)* Too much snow here. I know it's water but -

**Gabriel Marie:** So water. I associate water with like tears, and I know like people have been mentioning, like I've been witnessing a lot of tears and I think that's so nice, cause like tears are like medicine. It's like so healing, and so is good and sometimes I'm so scared to it to- to cry to like ,let that medicine flow. So I want to get more in touch with water, and the medicine that comes from the tears.

**Ashiana:** Because it's the month of February, only recently, we just figured out that we both are Aquarians (Aquarius). Grace and I.

**Grace:** Yes, water bearers.

**Ashiana:** Yes, we are the water bearers, and the queer Aquarians.

**Gabriel Marie:** Wow! it's so weird because aquariums are air signs.

**Ashiana:** I know I you don't know how disappointed I was when I found that out at the age of 10, or something you know first I was so proud about being in aquarian, because I connected with the water like since I was a child with rain, because where I am from, there's lots and lots of rain. There's monsoon. And I'll also just fell in love with my- with rain. And so I was very connected to waters ince I was a kid, and then I was like yes, I am an aquarian I'm the water bearer. It's only like you know, a year or something after, I looked into like what it is actually is and it's like sign? Air? What no!

*(Laughter)*

**Gabriel Marie:** Also you, you both still are the water bearers so you're still bearing water.

**Grace:** I feel your disappointment ashiana. I felt the same.

**Ashiana:** Mhmms.

Music Interlude 10 seconds

Increases in volume, Decreases volume

Credits 1:08:08- 1:08:34

**Grace:** This podcast was created by Ashiana Ismail and Grace Guillaume with the support of Destiny, Kumari and the PYAP team. This episode was edited by Umang, with music created by Grace. The art for the podcast logo was created by Tahmina Giasi.

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**Ashiana:** See you next time - until then keep drinking water and nourishing your roots.