

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH REVEREND DR. CARI JACKSON, PART 2

Monique Moultrie: [00:00:01](#) Okay, so you were speaking about the value of service, the value of helping others, but also it seemed a value of openness that you received even maybe if it wasn't intentional.

Cari Jackson: [00:00:18](#) Right, right. One of the powerful things that happened for me when I was 14 years old, I met and became friends with a classmate of white woman, a white girl whose family were, her parents and herself, were atheists and I had never met an atheist before. Growing up a Pentecost, everybody in my whole world were church-going Christians. Not just Christians but church-going Christians. I met some Jews but even the Jews I met they went to synagogues and to meet someone who is atheist I thought, "Well, how could anybody atheist?" Because God was always so very real and palpable for me and so I couldn't even understand. But then what was really life-changing for me was that this family, they were often much more loving than some of the people I knew in my Pentecostal church and that caught my attention. I said, "It isn't religion that makes people be loving. There's something else."

Monique Moultrie: [00:01:50](#) Right.

Cari Jackson: [00:01:50](#) Maybe for some people religion can help, but it's a conscious choice and speaking in tongues doesn't make people be loving. So those kinds of things were very powerful for me and I remember one night, I was still about age 14, I went to a youth conference, all Pentecostal, young people from across the U.S. and there might even a bit some from elsewhere. We would gather outside of Atlanta. I don't remember exactly where but I remember it was at Atlanta and it was in August so it was a muggy summer night in Georgia and people were in there dancing, and speaking in tongues, and just worshipping Pentecostal style and I stood there and I felt nothing. I thought it was because of sin in my life. I thought it was because of my attraction to females why I couldn't experience what others were. I was heartbroken and I said, "But I'm not going to stand here and feel this sense of not fitting, this badness, the shame." I'm not going to subject myself to that anymore.

Cari Jackson: [00:03:34](#) I walked outside of the church into the night by myself, I'm still on the church ground, I looked into the sky and the stars and the moon were so vibrant to me. Within a moment I felt ushered into this oneness with the cosmos and I stood there and I began singing one of my mother's signature songs, How Great Thou Art. As I stood out there in the darkness of night and only with the stars and the moon, I felt God's presence with me

in such powerful way and it was that night at **age** 14 I said, "Oh, wow! God comes in lots of different ways to us." Sometimes it might be in the dance, and running around in the church, and speaking in tongues, and sometimes it might be in the quiet. That was absolutely life-changing.

Monique Moultrie: [00:05:00](#)

Yeah.

Cari Jackson: [00:05:02](#)

Life-changing.

Monique Moultrie: [00:05:06](#)

That leads me to one of the question I had about your Pentecostal background. So, you're the youngest. All the children went to the Pentecostal church. What about your extended family? Were they members of the church as well?

Cari Jackson: [00:05:21](#)

No. Only my parents were Pentecostal. My father's family were AME. His mother and her family had been some of the founding members of the AME church in Baltimore. My father was very Methodist in his orientation. What happened was he came to church with a young woman who was Pentecostal and that introduced him to the Pentecostal experience and it was there he and my mother met. My mother was introduced to Pentecostalism through an aunt, one of her deceased mother's sister, who was Pentecostal and who mandated them, my mother coming to church because at that point, my mother was living with this aunt. That's where my parents met, in the Pentecostal Apostolic Church.

Monique Moultrie: [00:06:28](#)

Okay.

Cari Jackson: [00:06:31](#)

Our other relatives were Methodist and Catholic, some Baptist, but we were the Pentecostal Island all on its own. And I say it that way because the teaching of the church at that time was that we were not to interact too closely with our unsaved relatives, that anyone who wasn't Pentecostal was unsaved, and so we didn't have lot of family interactions and when we did, for me as a child, it always felt like we were sneaking because we weren't supposed to go to non-Pentecostal churches. We weren't supposed to have associations too closely with people who were not saved and so when we had those interactions, it really did feel like we were sneaking and especially because many of those relatives, when we would have family gatherings, they were drinking, and they were smoking, and they were cursing, and they had make up and jewelry, and wearing and all the things that we weren't allowed to do. I again felt very much like an outsider with my own relatives.

Monique Moultrie: [00:07:58](#) In that organizational structure there of your island, what did you all do for fun? Because I know the Pentecostal church limits a lot of worldly options.

Cari Jackson: [00:08:10](#) Yeah. We did a lot of music. Every one of my family, all six of us in the island, all of us were singers and a few phenomenal musicians as well, instrumentalists. We did a lot of music and some of my dearest memories are my mother, and one brother, and I, singing and marching in the house like we would in the way to church and we would do our dips and you know. So we did that and we had impromptu jam sessions because somebody would drop by the ... our house was always open and folks would just, "Oh, there's Jackson's house." So people would come and we would just have fun that way.

Cari Jackson: [00:09:02](#) My father felt very strongly that young people need to have structured activity or they will get in trouble, so he led Boy Scouts. But even before he did the scouting because in early years, he was not allowed to do that because it was deemed paramilitary. So he couldn't even do that and he had been a scout growing up as a young boy. Even before that, he brought young people together for different kinds of activities that were allowed. We couldn't go bowling because people smoked in the bowling alleys. So he would take them hiking, and camping, and swimming, but certain activities then we did the final ...

Monique Moultrie: [00:09:57](#) Scout scouts.

Cari Jackson: [00:09:59](#) Right. But he would separate by gender because you can't go to the beach and see the flesh of ... you know. So he kept pushing the envelope in those ways and I think I'm an envelope pusher because both my parents modeled that for me in some powerful way, but very subtle. They were much more subtle about it I think.

Monique Moultrie: [00:10:29](#) You spoke a little bit about your civic organization personally. Talk to me about high school and the academic side, the social side.

Cari Jackson: [00:10:43](#) High school. I went to an all-girls high school. It was one of a few public high schools in the U.S. at the time that was single gender and it was one of the top schools in Baltimore. I went there in what was called the advanced college prep. So everybody called it the A-course. They only accepted 100 girls into the A-course every year. So it was to be the crème de la crème in the school and they were doing quotas so of the 100 there were 10 black girls, and I think three Asians, and there might have been one Latina. It was what it was.

Monique Moultrie: [00:11:45](#) From across the city?

Cari Jackson: [00:11:47](#) Yes. Academically, I was in the right place for me because I've always loved learning and I love being with people who love learning. But I had overheard my mother say to a friend of hers that one of my brothers was the smartest of her children. From the moment I heard her say that, my grades plummeted and I wasn't doing any of my academic ... and I was smart enough to skate by. So I didn't graduate in the top 20% of my class, but I graduated.

Cari Jackson: [00:12:41](#) It took me a while to reclaim for myself who I am separate from what I overheard my mother say. I didn't hear the whole the context of it and it talked with her about it many, many years later and she was pained that that had happened to me. Of course, she didn't even remember the conversation but she could understand what she was saying was out of her frustration with how poorly my brother was performing in school. But he was performing poorly because of his struggle with his sexuality, so that's what was going on for him and I went through my struggle because I thought I wasn't smart. So I said, "Okay, well if I'm not smart I won't ... "

Cari Jackson: [00:13:39](#) I had been kind of marginalized. Not kind of, I had been marginalized within the context of my church because of my academic brilliance. Marginalized in two ways. One, some people perceived me as too smart to hang out with and then others, because I was fairly articulate and my smarts came through, they were always pushing me into leadership roles that I didn't want to have because I didn't like being up front and I didn't like being ...

Monique Moultrie: [00:14:24](#) How ironic.

Cari Jackson: [00:14:25](#) Right? I didn't know it then. I only knew that I was shy but I'm also an introvert and so I need a lot of alone time. Oh, and I'm also an empath. I pick up on other people's energy and all that is just draining for me, so I was juggling those things. I was a kid, I wanted to be in but I wasn't and that left me feeling rejected. But it was rejection and pedestalized at the same way.

Monique Moultrie: [00:15:14](#) Interesting.

Cari Jackson: [00:15:15](#) You know, so can't hang with us but ... I can't tell you the number of times folks would say to me, "Cari, you talk with Deacon so and so, or you walk with the head of ushers, you talk with this teacher and represent us." For whatever reasons, they

felt that I had the gifts and skills to do that and I was very respected by the adults because I was the only child.

Monique Moultrie: [00:15:46](#) I'm going to move us ahead a bit. What led to the decision to choose Oberlin?

Cari Jackson: [00:15:52](#) I applied to Georgetown, Temple, and Oberlin. It was my school guidance counselor who urged me to apply to Oberlin. Georgetown I knew of its great academic program and it wasn't too far. I wanted to get away from my parents and have my independence, but I didn't want to go too far and so that was also the appeal of Temple. Philadelphia is not too far from Baltimore. I was glad to be accepted in all three. Oberlin won out because I got more money, scholarship money to go to Oberlin and that's purely how that won out.

Monique Moultrie: [00:16:50](#) What was your experience like there? What did you major in? What were your off-academic activities?

Cari Jackson: [00:16:58](#) Well, I went there with the intention of doing pre-law. I really wanted to become a lawyer and I wanted to focus on civil rights issues. Because Oberlin had this wonderful history and my school counselor in high school talked with me about this, Oberlin's history of including free blacks back in the 1800s, I went there as a 17-year-old imagining I would have the most racially equalizing experience and in some ways, it was that and, in many ways, it wasn't. I realized as a young person that legacy and reality are not the same thing. That the people who made the decisions a hundred plus years ago were dead. A new set of people here. So that was a sobering and important learning for me.

Cari Jackson: [00:18:20](#) So I experienced lots of racism from professors and not me alone. I saw that happening with a number of black students and those of us who had dreams of going to law school and to med school, etc, et cetera, had many professors along the way tell us we weren't smart enough to do that. That was in the '70s. That was also an era when there was this 5 to 10% rule of letting enough of them to say that we're letting them in. So I had experiences with one professor in particular who was a self-described atheist Jew who wore a yarmulke. He didn't wear the yarmulke because he was in prayer or in devotion to the Divine. It was I'm a Jew, now deal with it. It was really his positioning.

Cari Jackson: [00:19:34](#) I had a misguided assumption as a kid, I guess I was about 19 then, that oh, Jews have been oppressed, Blacks have been oppressed. We've got this solidarity. So I was totally unprepared for the racism I experienced from a Jew and he would look me

directly in the eye and call on someone else. The times that I would get into the conversation he's like, "Okay, yeah." There was never any affirmation and it was interesting because it was an English course on the Utopian Society so this was like this is not what Utopian Society looks like. But it was also absolutely wonderful.

Cari Jackson: [00:20:38](#) From a religious perspective, I was transformed in so many ways. One, I met Christians and others in whom I felt the presence of God and they didn't speak in tongues. So that began calling to question for me what I had been taught that in order to have this oneness with God, you have to speak in tongues. I was like, "Okay, they don't do that but I'm really feeling God in this person, seeing God." That was transformative for me. I took a class and I was introduced to Søren Kierkegaard and in reading one of Kierkegaard's books he asked the question, "Why do you serve God?" Then his second question was, "Do you serve God to avoid going to hell?" I said, "Yeah. I'm a good Pentecostal." It's like, "Yeah, so I could avoid ... " Then, Monique, something about that grabbed me. That that was totally out of balance and I asked God, "So why do you want me to serve you? Is it from this fear-based of trying to avoid hell?"

Cari Jackson: [00:22:13](#) So, I ruminated, meditated, reflected, cogitated, all of those things for three days. I was distressed. I came at the end of those three days with I'm taking hell off the table. I don't know if hell exists or it doesn't, but it's no longer going to be part of my construct for why I serve God. I choose to serve God because I love God and God loves me. That revolutionized my way of being, and thinking, and my way of relating with God. Totally turning on its head so much of what I had been taught in Pentecostal church because hell was at the center of the theology and so that's why it took me a while ... I just had to really wrestle with that. This central piece is about fear. No. So it really shifted it for me.

Cari Jackson: [00:23:38](#) College also for me was ... There was a gospel choir and I invited white people to sing in the gospel choir. OMG, the pushback I got from black students. Because I was focusing on the spiritual element of gospel music, not on the racial element and so folks were like, "Hey, sister, girl, this is our space." So I think that was really important for me to help me recognize that my spirituality is really the most important part of my being. My race is important, but so much of that I understand is social construct. my spirituality, how I've shaped it, is not social construct. It started that way and over the years, how I understand myself as

a black person has shifted also as I've reclaimed and not just focused on the social construct in the relationship.

- Cari Jackson: [00:25:16](#) Each of those things I've had to become empowered to claim for myself who I am and what all of those things mean to be a spiritual person, a black person, a female person, a gay person, on, and on, and on, and on. So it's been good for those reasons. But yeah, college, it was what I think college ought to be for folks in awakening new ways of thinking, and being, and challenging the socializations that we often just live out unconsciously because we've not examined them.
- Monique Moultrie: [00:26:08](#) Right. So during that time, you are away from home.
- Cari Jackson: [00:26:13](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Monique Moultrie: [00:26:14](#) Significantly away from home. Were you able to act on the same sex attraction that you'd had that you were trying to fix as a younger woman?
- Cari Jackson: [00:26:25](#) Well, I started acting on it when I was in high school, just dipping in and around. But it was really in college away from home. My mother really should have been a private detective. She had an eagle eye watching me. We never talked about it then. We didn't talk about my sexuality until I was in my 30s and when we did, she was able to talk about what she had observed from the time I was about 14 years old. So it was when I was away at college, not under the ever-peering eye of my mother, that sexually both with men and with women I was exploring, seeking to understand who I am, what is authentic for me, seeking to discern am I hetero with some fanciful thinking about females. Am I gay with some fanciful thinking about males? Am I bisexual? So it's really looking at all of those things and it became clearer and clearer for me while I was in college that I'm kind of bisexual but with an overwhelmingly strong preference for females.
- Monique Moultrie: [00:28:34](#) So, college, a period of exploration. You went there to become a lawyer. You went to law school. Which came first, seminary or law school? Which won out?
- Cari Jackson: [00:28:45](#) Well, law school came first but not until my 30s. When I was 19, that's the first I knew that God was calling me to ordained ministry.
- Monique Moultrie: [00:29:09](#) Was that possible in your denomination?

Cari Jackson: [00:29:14](#) Well, what I said to God was, "God, you know I'm gay. Ain't nobody knows that I'm ... So are you telling me I need to stop being who I am or you're going to transform ... ?" I was still wrestling with that piece and I also didn't want to become an ordained minister because in my experience, ministers hurt people. That was as big an issue for me as my sexuality. I said, "I don't want to hurt people," and that's what had been overwhelmingly modeled for me was these power dynamics that were so unhealthy and so hurtful to so many people. So that was a real turnoff to me and I didn't know any way to be in ministry and not hurt people.

Cari Jackson: [00:30:19](#) It was interesting for me. In my church context, I saw women being licensed as ministers but they weren't ordained, so they never had a reverend in front of their name or minister in front of their name. They were evangelists. They would never preach on a Sunday morning. They could preach on a Sunday after or even Sunday evening because we had church 99 million times on Sunday. But they could preach at the missionary anniversary service or to usher anniversary service or something like that at the 4:00 service and some of them were phenomenal, phenomenal. Now, there were some women in our church, in that denominational system, who pastored but they were women who formed their own churches.

Monique Moultrie: [00:31:23](#) Okay.

Cari Jackson: [00:31:25](#) And they still have the title evangelist, not reverend or minister. That second-class citizenship, if you will, wasn't appealing to me. What I had observed ministers hurting people in the power dynamic, that wasn't appealing and it was not plausible to me that I as someone who is gay could become a minister even an evangelist. That just wasn't possible. So there was nothing that made any sense about that. Two things not attractive and one thing not plausible.

Monique Moultrie: [00:32:20](#) So tell me where we want to go. So you said you don't go to law school until you're 30, what did you do after Oberlin until the ... ?

Cari Jackson: [00:32:30](#) I was working in nonprofits. I worked for United Way most of that time and absolutely loved the work that I was doing. I worked for foster grandparent program and I worked for AARP. The foster grandparent program and AARP, because I've always love older people, always had some very rich relationships with older people throughout my life. So the whole community service and civic mindedness that I grew up with, nonprofits were really important to me. In high school and in college, I had

been involved with programs hoping to reintegrate men who were post-released from prison and also programs for teens, juvenile offenders.

- Cari Jackson: [00:33:38](#) Similar to my experience in the hospital as a 13, 14-year-old, I was thinking about there's nothing distinctive about who I am relative to people who end up in jail but for a set of circumstances. I think having a mother who was orphaned and who was brilliant, I knew that if she had a different set of circumstances, she could have done some phenomenal things. So I was thinking about people's social context and not so much just the person. Yes, the person has a big piece but it's also social context. So in college, I ended up majoring in psychology and sociology because the two had to work hand in hand for the kind of analysis I was doing as I was observing people in their lived experiences and I did a minor in religion because that was also a big artifact.
- Cari Jackson: [00:34:48](#) So I'm constantly, you know, looking at people, and the choices they make, and the decisions, and the consequences that flow from that, and how their social context impacts the kinds of choices they make. You know, I've been looking at that since I was a young kid really. So college was an opportunity for me to really study that. Initially, I was going to just do psychology and that wasn't enough. I had to add sociology because I said that's too narrow to focus. Those particular majors and minor have followed me through my whole life, so I continued to look at people psychologically, sociologically, anthropologically, theologically, you know, so it's all of those things for me.
- Monique Moultrie: [00:35:52](#) Okay. So when you get to law school, is it the same goal to do civil rights work or did you have a different goal by that point after doing the nonprofits for several years?
- Cari Jackson: [00:36:05](#) I had the same goal but narrowly focused then on parenting rights for LGBT or back then, for LGB folks. That was really important to me from a few influencers. One, my mother having been orphaned and thought, "What if there had been a same gender couple who could have been profound? What a difference that would have made." I had wanted to parent. I've always loved children and so I was ... In addition to my mother's life, from my own life, it did not feel right to me someone whose always been nurturing, since I was very, very young, I've been a nurturer and kind of mom to even some of my peers. A mother who I am and not to have the right to parent in that way was highly distressing for me and to think about the kinds of realities that many gay individuals, this is in the '80s now, that

many - is that right, '80 - were experiencing that if one had a child, the other one could adopt.

- Cari Jackson: [00:37:48](#) I was doing a lot of research on second parent adoption and really looking at those kinds of issues, and so I was wanting to focus on that work and while I was in law school at the very beginning, my first year is when I finally said yes to God about the call to ministry. That is what it began shifting things. Three years after I finished law school, I started seminary.
- Monique Moultrie: [00:38:23](#) Okay.
- Cari Jackson: [00:38:23](#) It wasn't my plan. That was so not my plan.
- Monique Moultrie: [00:38:32](#) Why did you choose Union for a seminary? I mean, you were ...
- Cari Jackson: [00:38:36](#) That was a God thing. I did not choose Union. I was directed to Union and in a couple of ways. One, I went to a New Year's Eve party in the home of, and she passed last year, Reverend Dolores Barry, who was an evangelist within MCC and one of my mentors. She was one who helped me finally say yes to go to seminary because when I said yes to God, I was only saying yes to preaching. I was not saying yes to go in the seminary because I said, God, "I told you when I finished law school, I'm not doing anymore school." I was so clear about that, you know, I wasn't trying to be in school forever.
- Monique Moultrie: [00:39:33](#) Right.
- Cari Jackson: [00:39:33](#) But she was one who said to me that seminary would help me have more tools in my toolbox. She said, "You've got incredible gifts that Spirit has just given to you naturally and doing the study that seminary would offer would help you add even more." So she was talking with me about and it happened several months after that particular conversation she and I had that I was in her home for a New Year's Eve party. I met two people, one who was a Union alum and another who was currently a staff person or at that time was a staff person at Union and they were both ... You know Dolores would say, "Oh, Cari has finally decided she's going to go to seminary," and they're, "Oh, you really ought to come to Union." I'm like, "Oh yeah, I don't even like New York." I was living in Washington, D.C., I don't like New York. I was pleasant with them but I don't like New York. I'm not trying to live in New York. I don't want to go to seminary, number one, and number two, I don't like New York. If I'm going to go to seminary, I think I'll go someplace, in a city that I like.

Cari Jackson: [00:41:14](#) So then I think about two, three weeks ... It was a very short period of time. After that conversation, I was talking with a friend who was at the time studying at Howard Divinity and she said, "You know, I was talking with one of my advisors who's a Union alum and she thinks I really ought to go, you know, transfer to Union. Will you ride up to Union with me?" Okay. All right. I was clear. I wasn't going. I was just going and support her, right? I exaggerate not. The moment she drove up to the front of Union, the moment I stepped my foot on the sidewalk in front of Union, I knew that's where I was supposed to be.

Cari Jackson: [00:42:12](#) So I was with her for an entire weekend. They had, you know, perspective student thing and I'm like the first time ever there's a gathering of gay students and staff and faculty at Union, and one of the professors who had been at Union since the late '50s, early '60s talked about his experiences at Union when he was very positive and so I'm hearing all of these, and then I also meet a woman who was then the coordinator of worship at Riverside. So I'm meeting all these people and making all these connections and then I remember sitting in the apartment where this gathering was happening and I looked up slice of a window, I see the angel atop Riverside Church steeple. I left there sobbing. I'm supposed to be at Union. I don't want to move out to New York. I don't still want to go to seminary. But, you know, all that.

Cari Jackson: [00:43:33](#) So a year and a half, something like that later, Union was the only school I applied to because that was the school I knew that I was being directed to. I got in, and said, "Okay, you all, I ain't ready to come here," so I deferred my admission for a year. And finally, when I was about to move from Washington to New York, I was standing in front of my house talking with a neighbor. While he and I were talking, I heard Spirit say to me, "Join Riverside Church," and this is about a week or two weeks before I was moving to New York for seminary. I like, "Okay, God, I'm talking with this neighbor, right? Why? What's with Riverside?" I have never been to Riverside. I really didn't know anything about Riverside Church and when I finally got to Union and I visited Riverside, I was like, "God, why are you calling me to be here? I don't like this church."

Monique Moultrie: [00:44:41](#) Was this under Forbes?

Cari Jackson: [00:44:44](#) Yes. But of course, he was on sabbatical my first semester at Union. He was teaching at Yale that semester and he did come back to the church a couple of times and I wasn't there either Sunday. That was important because I needed to join because that's where I was supposed to be, not because of him. At the

time when all of these was happening, Dolores Barry is my mentor and all of that, I had left the Pentecostal Church when I was about 29 and I joined MCC in Washington, D.C. So when I was first saying yes to God about ministry, and seminary, and all of that, I assumed that I was going to be ordained within MCC. But I also knew that my calling was not to MCC. I thought I was going to be going out to other churches as this as this gay representative and that was my vision of my ministry. I never saw myself being a pastor within MCC, never saw that nor an evangelist within MCC.

Cari Jackson: [00:46:28](#) Shortly before I left for seminary, God told me to leave MCC, but didn't tell me to go where. So when I began seminary, I was not affiliated with any denomination. So I said, "God, the timing was really not good." I'm starting seminary and generally, ordination track leads to some denomination or other. So, you know, what do you? So of course, for five years before I left for seminary, I had been leading a bible study group in my home and it was an MCC bible study group and we had 15 to 25 people in the home every Friday for five years. That was one of the things that helped me say yes to this whole thing about going to seminary because God just kept using me in some ways or pissing me off and delighting me at the same time.

Cari Jackson: [00:47:51](#) One of the women in the bible study group was a member of a UCC Church, but her partner was a member of the MCC that I belonged to. So the only time they really had a spiritual communion together was in our home on Friday evenings because on Sundays, most Sundays, they were in their different churches and so they loved having that spiritual time together on Friday evening. So the woman who belonged to UCC said to me for five years, "Cari, I feel like you're supposed to be in UCC." She kept saying that to me maybe twice a year or something. So one time I went to church with her and I'm like, "No, no, no, no, no, nope. I'm dealing with all these white people in MCC. I don't want to go over here and dealing with white because I live in a black Pentecostal Church."

Cari Jackson: [00:48:59](#) So my life in its own way was very bifurcated. Socially, I was an academically, and in workplace and all that, it was very interracial and I loved it. The church from my earliest memory was a black place. That was black community and so MCC and its interracial iterations and I say that plurally because different congregations looked different.

Monique Moultrie: [00:49:33](#) Right.

- Cari Jackson: [00:49:36](#) But I was dealing with racism there from white people who just assumed, "Oh, we're gay. We can't be racist." I'm like, "I'll put up with you but I don't want to be over here in UCC with the white people who also think they're not racist and the racism shows up." I said, "No, I'm not feeling that." And so I listened to her really for five years and it wasn't until I went to Union and Riverside, my very first Sunday at Riverside, as much as I didn't like the church, I sat and sobbed through the entire service because I knew that's where I was supposed to be and that was in September, you know, the very beginning of the semester.
- Cari Jackson: [00:50:26](#) I said to God, "Okay, if I can have another church that I go to as well as this one, I'll be here." So I kept visiting and this is how missed Forbes a couple of times because I'm gallivanting around New York trying to find another church. I want to be obedient to the Spirit but in my way, you know, and I've always been like that. I'll be obedient, you know, whatever. I used to never use that word obedient. But fast forward in January, the beginning of the next semester, I went to church again one Sunday, sobbed through the whole service. Cari, this is where you're supposed to be. It's not about you having a couple of church that you go to. This is where you're supposed to be.
- Cari Jackson: [00:51:23](#) I went to the coordinator of worship who I had meet a couple of years earlier at this gathering of all the LGBT folks and went to her and said, "You know, God called me to come talk with you," and she said, "Do you know about what?" "No, I don't know." Snot everywhere, I was just not the way I wanted. I don't know this woman. So it took me a couple of months before I sat down with her because I really didn't know why I was being called to talk with her.
- Cari Jackson: [00:52:03](#) In the interim, I was sitting in church one Sunday and Spirit ... I guess you hear now, I have a very auditory relationship. Spirit says to me, "The church needs a Wednesday night worship service." So I said, "What are you telling me for? What am I supposed to say?" He was back from Yale then. "Yo, Dr. Forbes, you all need ... " Hear my distance. It wasn't we. "You all need a Wednesday worship service. What are you telling me for?" I don't know this man. And so I finally meet with her and she invited me to ... She said, "I feel you're supposed to do your internship here." I had an internship plan at Columbia University. They had wanted me specifically to work with LGBT students of faith at Columbia. So I was beginning that already. That was my plan and this whole thing about being an intern in the worship office at Riverside was not part of that plan.

Cari Jackson: [00:53:21](#) But anyway, she said, "Well, you know, we want to have some offers of alternative worship experiences for folks. Would you write up something and bring it back to me next time we meet?" And so I go back to her, I included in there what Spirit said to me. But I was not going to be so presumptuous as to say Wednesday, so I just said midweek. She read the list of ideas I presented and to that one, she said, "I just met with Dr. Forbes this morning and he told me he wants to start a Wednesday evening worship service." So I said, "Okay, God, is this how this is going?" So I did my internship there then I went on staff there and finished my seminary education working at Riverside and we had an amazing worship service on Wednesdays that drew people from throughout New York City including other pastors who needed to come and not just Christian pastors but people from other traditions as well who needed a spiritual boost for themselves.

Cari Jackson: [00:54:47](#) When I was working there, we had an average 200 to 300 people on the stage in a completely different kind of worship experience from the Sunday morning service and very participatory. People used to say to me, "Don't let Cari talk to you too long because she'll have you agreeing to do something you never thought she could do." But I believe in creating or co-creating worship experience that is held and owned by the community. So I was always getting people, different people, different ages, different races, different religious backgrounds; people who had official positions in the church and those who had none; people who had voice, and those who had none, and bringing up a whole range of issues in people's lives, you know. We talked about domestic violence and brought art into the space. We talked about organ donor, organ donation because there were so many black people, in particular, who die because there's not sufficient organ donation. So whatever issues were happening in people's lives, we brought it into that space and because that's what church is for me.

Cari Jackson: [00:56:22](#) Then I was ordained into my position at Union Seminary as the interim seminary pastor and I followed the seminary pastor who had died while in the job. That was also one of those things about a month before she died, Spirit told me she was going to die and that I was to be the interim, I'm serious, the interim seminary pastor. I'm like, "I don't know if I really want to do that because that's going to be really hard because she's very loved." To follow someone who died is not the easiest of things, but I did. Two seconds after the semester started, the Trade Center was destroyed and so it was an intense time there. Very, very intense. Then I've just continued on in various other pastoral roles and as I knew from when I was in MCC that my work in

ministry was not specifically to the LGBT community, but to be a same gender loving identified person in ministry out in different context and that's really what I have done.

Cari Jackson: [00:57:54](#) So I've served, you know, at Union. I've served as associate pastor in the United Methodist Church. I've served as the interim senior pastor in the Presbyterian Church and I've served as senior pastor in the UCC Church. So I've done all of those different things and it's fun. Each of those has been predominantly white context and so I've had the experience of dealing with racism with folks who don't think they're racist and sexism with people who don't think they're sexist, and heterosexism with people who identify as open and affirming, so it's been interesting.

Monique Moultrie: [00:58:47](#) Yeah.

Cari Jackson: [00:58:48](#) And exhausting.

Monique Moultrie: [00:58:50](#) As I would imagine. I realized in the timeline you've just laid out, we skipped the section where you started identifying as one of your identity constructs as an SGL, as a lesbian, as a gay person because usually that's the pathway to MCC, but we skipped how you got to MCC in the first place. Particularly, if you could also talk about how you then brought in the other parts of yourself, your mother. You said you started having conversations about sexuality with your mother in your 30s.

Cari Jackson: [00:59:30](#) Yeah. How I got to MCC was my then partner was white - the only white partner I've ever had, interesting experience, very interesting - and Episcopalian. So here's this white Episcopalian and this black Pentecostal, and for a period of time, we were alternating which church ... We will go to an Episcopal Church. We will go a Pentecost Church. I like Episcopal experience but not every Sunday. She really did not like Pentecostal experience at all.

Cari Jackson: [01:00:20](#) So, I was really looking for something that could be home for us both and that's really what led us to MCC and that worked well for both of us. It brought in some energy from each of the denominational experiences that we're home, or at least that particular MCC Church did. So, the music was rousing enough that I've got a little Pentecostal taste and there was enough in the liturgical flow that she had her Episcopalian fix. But that's what led us there and it was there that my spirituality and my sexuality both found home in the same place and that was absolutely transformative for me.

- Cari Jackson: [01:01:31](#) My pastor, Larry [Eurich 01:01:34], was so affirming of me when I went to him and said, "I really know God is calling me to preach," and he created space for me to do that and then I remember him saying this to me, he said, "You know, you have a pastor's heart," and I said, "I know, but people have too many issues and I have enough issues of my own." So I really don't think that's the direction I want to go. Larry died before I went to seminary but I know he was laughing at me going to seminary and laughing at me in my various pastoral roles and he continues to be a strong spiritual father for me. He really does.
- Cari Jackson: [01:02:43](#) It was also at MCC that ... I mentioned that I was leading a Bible study group and one of the men in the group was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and he was preparing for surgery and there was a revivalist, one of the elders in MCC who was going to be leading a revival at our church and I wasn't planning to go because the revival was Friday night, Saturday night, and all-day Sunday. I wasn't planning to go Friday night. That was usually our Bible study time. I said, "Good. I can get caught," because I was in Law School at that time. I said, "Good. I can't get caught up on my academic study." Bill asked that I come to church with him and go up for prayer, for laying on of hands. So, I'm not going to say no to the man who's going to have his surgery, right?
- Cari Jackson: [01:03:51](#) So, I went up and Reverend Elder Freda Smith prayed for Bill and as we were turning back to go to our seat, she grabbed my arm. I don't know her. I ain't never seen her before that day. Grabbed my arm, pulled me over to the side and she said to me, "God is making a way for your ministry. Just take one step at a time." When she said that, the first wave through my body was a wave of affirmation. The second wave was, I want no ministry with the wave of fear and it was soon ... I'm not remembering the chronology of things right now but around that same time, one Sunday I was in MCC and as I walked across the threshold into the sanctuary, Spirit said to me, "I want you to speak to the Congregation." So that's all I heard. I didn't hear anything else that anything that happened during the worship service because I'm like, "You want me to do, what? What?" You know.
- Cari Jackson: [01:05:28](#) So, this was a Communion Sunday and uncharacteristically, our senior pastor, Larry, did not preside at Communion. The associate pastor, Candace Shultis, did. So, I went, received communion. I'm coming back to my seat, the Spirit was like drives me over to talk to Larry and I say, "There's something God wants me to share with the Congregation." So Larry says, "Do you know what it is?" It wasn't until that moment I realized I had no clue what. I had no idea what the content was. All I was

doing was wrestling with that God wanted me to speak anything and I wasn't on the program. You know what I'm saying?

Cari Jackson: [01:06:20](#) So, Larry, uncharacteristically, because he was control queen, everybody knows that about Larry, anybody who knows Larry. He said, "Never mind. I'll trust the Spirit." When he said that, I knew unequivocally, because for Larry to say, "Okay, I don't even have to know what it is," I knew this was God. That was really the first time I preached. It was probably five minutes but I hadn't any clue what I was going to say. I heard it when everyone else did. So, when I talk about trusting the Spirit, I really mean that in every area of my life. It was around that same time. So, three things happened around the same time and in that day, about three people said to me they saw a glow around me while I was standing up. So, I'm like, okay.

Cari Jackson: [01:07:41](#) and Elder Freda Smith talking, saying what she did and then one Sunday when Larry was recessing at the end of the service, I happened to be seated on the aisle, which was very uncharacteristic, and he slipped a torn-off piece of paper into my hand as he walked by. When I opened it, similar waves, I opened it and it said, "God has given you a ministry of worship and praise. Do not be afraid." So, I had a wave of affirmation and then wave of fear, but it was just this confluence of things that were happening at the same time. What led me to MCC was trying to find a church that my partner and I could both worship in and feel at home in. But it was there then that a whole host of things happened that helped me say yes to the call that had been there since I was 19.

Monique Moultrie: [01:08:54](#) How did the other pieces of your life fold into that? Your relationship with your siblings, with your parents, your career.

Cari Jackson: [01:09:02](#) I was 29 when my father died. So, he was deceased by the time I started going to MCC. Before my father died, I had not come out to my parents because of how horribly I saw them deal with my brother. I was like, "Oh no, I ain't never going to do it with my parents." No, we ain't going there. So, when I was at MCC and I started preaching, I invited my mother to come. Then I came out with my mother. I invited her to come to church and she refused. Crushed me, that my parent who had such a strong role in shaping my spirituality would not come and share in a particular expression of my spirituality and she felt that for her to come would be affirming what she felt was sin because you know from her map, being gay was sinful. So, that hurt me and it caused a real tension between us.

Cari Jackson: [01:10:43](#) Then my then-partner and I had a holy Union ceremony and I guess I was 35-ish something like that, this was a minute ago. 34, 35 something. I invited my family including my mom. One brother and his wife came and that hurt. I remember also around that same time, there was an interfaith AIDS healing service that was being held at Washington National Cathedral and the choir from MCC was one of the chorale groups and I was singing the solo lead in a song. So, I invited my mother. I was like, "This is not a 'gay church'," and I'm putting that in quotes, right? Surely, she'll come to Washington National Cathedral. At first, she said yes and the day that we were to sing there, she changed her mind.

Cari Jackson: [01:12:11](#) So, for two or three weeks, I'm excited. My mom's coming and dadada, and then that day she changed her mind about it. To say that I was heartbroken, disappointed, and angry still doesn't capture all of what I felt. It went well. It was a marvelous experience. The next day, I was off from work because it was my day to stay home and catch up on my law school and so while I was at home, I'm fuming and I said to God, "Why can't she love me and accept me the way I am?" God said, "Love her and accept her the way she is." So then I got more angry. Now, in addition to being glad, I'm mad at God. I said to God, "Well, she's the parent. She's supposed to show me how to love like that."

Cari Jackson: [01:13:22](#) Then there was complete silence. I didn't hear anything and it was in that silence I got it. That it was about my spiritual journey. Whether she ever developed the capacity to love like that, that's her spiritual journey. I had to focus on what my spiritual journey was and I went through a profound experience that began that day where I recognized I had created an idolized image of my mother and I kept comparing the mother I had with the idol I had created and she always fell short. So I was angry and resentful toward her all the time. Well, why can't you be like this? Which in essence was the same thing she was too, right?

Cari Jackson: [01:14:25](#) You know, I'm her only girl. She had a vision for what my life would look like and that included a husband and children because she had this notion that the daughter's relationship with the mother was very distinctive in how the mother would then be able to relate with the grandkid. She had been longing for a certain kind of relationship with her daughter, and her son-in-law, and her grandchildren that did not happen for her. That was something that she was grieving just as I was grieving some very real things. So I went through an experience where I made

the decision to let the idol that I had created die so I could have a truly authentic loving relationship with the mother that I had.

Monique Moultrie: [01:15:31](#)

Okay.

Cari Jackson: [01:15:32](#)

I did that and for about a month, I didn't speak with my mother because I was really grieving. I had to accept that the idol that I had created, I would never have that. I grieved and I gave myself the space to do that grieving. Then when I was ready, I was able to resume connection with my mother and it was better than you'd ever, ever imagine and I'm grateful for that because about seven or eight years after that day my mother developed dementia and that was a different transformation that happened in our lives. So, I was able to care for her and support her with much more tenderness.

Cari Jackson: [01:16:30](#)

So, I wasn't mad at her about anything anymore and she wasn't mad at me about anything. Because also one of the things that happened in the course of that, she was able to say as she watched my life, she was able to say, "Here's what I've been taught in church about homosexuality, that it's sin, but when I look at your life, I see God using you in such powerful ways." She said, "I don't know how to reconcile it, she said, "But I know this is God in your life and everything I know, God would not use your life like this if God had some issue with your life." She said, "I don't know how to reconcile these, what I've been taught and what I'm observing, so I'm just going to leave it to God." That was where she came to and I was fine with that and that was major. when I turned 35, my mother gave me the best present ever. She said to me, "I thank God for using my body to bring you into the light." That was big. That was really big.

Monique Moultrie: [01:18:03](#)

Beautiful. I want to jump us ahead.

Cari Jackson: [01:18:06](#)

Okay.

Monique Moultrie: [01:18:08](#)

... and then have a very awkward segway, but I also realized as you were speaking that a lot of the activist-oriented Union that I know of may not have been what was speaking to you as why you felt when you stood on the ground, that you were supposed to be there. So, what did Union mean for you? What did you get from your Union experience?

Cari Jackson: [01:18:37](#)

Well, when I felt the Spirit affirming this is where I was supposed to be, I didn't know why. I just knew that that was the place. It wasn't because of any legacy or any of that comparable to when I went to Oberlin. It was just I knew I was supposed to

be there. So, I was involved primarily in the Black Women's Caucus and chaired that for a couple of years. So with that, was a lot of activism primarily within the context of the seminary and it was interesting for me. It felt, in many ways, that there were more black people than there really were there because the folks who were there were so dynamic and powerful and doing amazing work within the seminary and beyond and then I was connected with Union alum from around the world who were just doing phenomenal things.

Cari Jackson: [01:19:56](#) So, I was like "Wow, I'm part of this community," and learned you know Jim Forbes had been a student at Union in the '60s when they were like two black people and then one of my dearest, dearest friends, who I did a lot of work with through the years, Fred Dunard, was also at Union when Forbes was there. Fred, I just have to say this because I love him so much, he made his physical transition last year, last September, at age 92 and he's one of my best buddies. He will always be. Not a father, even though we had 31-year age difference, but really incredible partners in ministry and just as my buddy, as my buddy.

Cari Jackson: [01:20:59](#) It was there that so many issues, and I think it was at Union I began thinking more about intersectionality because there were so many issues. You know there were always different caucuses around different issues, but they often didn't come together and I began thinking about those realities. So there was a Black Caucus, but then there was also a Black Women's Caucus because in the Black Caucus historically have been very male-led and males primarily from Methodist and Baptist traditions who, for the most part, even if their rhetoric was very feminist and womanist in orientation, their behavior often did not follow suit. So a Black Women's Caucus emerged from that and it was interesting to hear so many students, white students in particular say, "Oh wow, we wish we could be in the Black Women's Caucus because you know, the kinds of things you're doing is just powerful and we don't have such a space." You know that kind of thing.

Cari Jackson: [01:22:21](#) So I graduated, went directly into my doctoral program, me, the one who said to God when I finish law school I'm not doing anymore school. So, I went directly to my doctoral program at Drew with a Union alum. Traci West was my adviser and why Drew and why Traci was another God thing. I'm so... But really looking and so many of the courses that I took in seminary and in my doctoral program looking at justice issues, I thought at first I was going to do my PhD focusing in systematic theology and the more conversations I had with folks, folks said, "You're

an ethicist," because it's always, "Okay, so this is what we believe. How's that going to impact how we're living, what we're doing?" I want to know just what you think and then what you talking. How you walking and at the end of the day, that's where it really matters most for me.

Cari Jackson: [01:23:57](#)

So, you know as pastor, as student always involved in social causes of one or the other. So, homelessness. When I was living in Washington, D.C. before I went to seminary, I was very involved with homelessness in D.C. and I also was involved with Adult New Readers. I was a volunteer helping adults learn to read, which was really powerful for me. Absolutely powerful. I don't even remember all. There's so many things before seminary. So I continued doing those kinds of things during seminary. Homelessness is a big, big issue for me. The prison system and the whole justice ... No, I will say the criminal justice and you can use that word criminal however, it's adjective or an adverb. I keep looking at those kinds of things.

Cari Jackson: [01:25:12](#)

Islamophobia is a big issue for me when I was in Stanford, pastor there. There were a lot of mosques in Connecticut that were being defaced and destroyed. So we did an interfaith prayer vigil on the lawn of the church because it was in the central part of the city. I didn't want to do that one indoors. I wanted it outside so people driving by could see this beautiful, beautiful array of skin colors and religious garb, et cetera, et cetera, all gathered together. It was so powerful that I asked some of the Muslim leaders if they would be willing to organize folks for us to do a Ramadan Iftar, the Break Fast, that was coming in a couple of weeks. If they would be willing for us to do that, to do it as an interfaith Iftar and they said

Cari Jackson: [01:26:28](#)

yes. We've organized that. We had people from throughout the city come and it was so wonderful for me, and this was held inside the church, to have Muslims doing their evening prayer in a Christian church. There were people from throughout the area who came and of course, there were some members of the congregation who, "Why is she doing this? Who does she think she is?" Then they would go into their work places in their communities and folks, "Oh that so wonderful that your church," "Oh yeah, you know ... "

Cari Jackson: [01:27:24](#)

We did work relating to death penalty. I'm totally opposed to death penalty. So, I've always been involved in a whole range of justice because justice for me is about, and some call it spiritual activism, I can't, from my perspective as a spiritual person, not be engaged in justice work because then it's not really ... There's no meaning. If spirituality is to make any difference at all, it is to

see others in a namaste. That the Divine in me sees and honors the Divine in you. I'm very much a namaste girl and always have been. Whether it was the young girl working in the Children's Hospital or working with juvenile offenders or what, I see the divine in other people and I seek to create spaces where people can see that within themselves because so often, the messages people receive from their social environments say to them that the divine is not here and that's what I grew up with.

Cari Jackson: [01:29:12](#) I grew up hearing that homosexuality is a sin and anyone who is homosexual is an abomination. I grew up thinking regarding myself as an abomination. So, it's really important to me whether it's because of religious difference or poverty or homelessness or experience with the criminal justice system or sexuality or whatever, I want people to know, I want them to really know that the Divine is within them. That is so important and that drives everything from here.

Monique Moultrie: [01:30:04](#) So, we go from ... That I think is a natural segway to you founding the Center for Spiritual Light. Now, how do you go from not wanting to be in New York to founding and pastoring a congregation?

Cari Jackson: [01:30:20](#) Well, Center of Spiritual Light was never a congregation. It was a space for people. I guess one would call it an alternative space. Very inter-spiritual for folks like I mentioned, my buddy, Fred. Fred who was born in 1926. No, he would have been 93 this year, so he was born 1925, yeah. So, Fred deeply, strongly, Baptist and I'm Christian, and right before I started seminary, a good year before I started seminary, I was sitting with a Buddhist community and I would most Sundays, because I would sit with the community different evenings in the week and most Sundays, I would go to my Christian church, Sunday morning, and sit with the Buddhist community on Sunday evenings. That was so nurturing for me.

Cari Jackson: [01:31:45](#) When I was in seminary, I was receiving calls from people who were Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, all varieties of Christians, atheist seeking spiritual care and guidance. Because someone says atheist ... Unless they say they're not spiritual, I don't jump to the assumption. Atheist means their spirituality is not theistically oriented unless they tell me otherwise. I was asking God when I was in the seminary, I said, "God I don't think this is the usual experience for someone in a Christian seminary." I haven't heard from my colleagues here that they have people from these different traditions seeking them out for spiritual counseling, guidance journey, whatever. I said, "Okay, so God

what is this about?" Here's what I heard. Spirit said to me, "You have the gift of tongues."

Cari Jackson: [01:33:08](#) It blew my mind. I always thought of it only in the way I have been taught in Pentecostal. The day I heard Spirit say that to me, I got it that part of my spiritual gift is to be able to speak in languages that resonate spiritually for different people who are plodding along in different ways on their own spiritual journeys and dadada that I've been given this gift to speak in ways that are relevant to them in their own journeys. I really do understand that. I embraced that. That must have been in '98, year 1998. So, a good 20 years ago I heard those words. The Center of Spiritual Light really emerges from that kind of understanding that there are so many people who may be part of a tradition and other traditions also speak to them. They might be Methodist and Yoruba speaks to them as well or they might be Jewish and Buddhism speaks to them or whatever.

Cari Jackson: [01:34:35](#) So it was designed to be a space that offered for folks, one, permission to explore things that were outside of a tradition that they know because a lot of people need that permission because they think, "Oh something's wrong with me if all of my spiritual need is not being met here. Something's wrong with me." Also, a space to expose people to other traditions and define the bigness and richness of God in each of those things. So, as we've had gatherings, we've had folks from lots of different traditions come. Some of it has been intentionally worship gatherings and some of it has been emotional and spiritual healing space.

Cari Jackson: [01:35:46](#) For example, for years we offered something that we called Taking Back My Life and it was intentionally a healing space for women who have experienced sexual trauma and what was so wonderful, because as a survivor of sexual trauma myself, I know that it's not just the physical body that experiences the trauma, but there's emotional trauma and there's spiritual trauma. So, I wanted to create a space in which women could talk about and could raise the question, "So where was God when these harms happened to me," and really wrestle with that.

Cari Jackson: [01:36:39](#) This is just an aside. When I worked at Riverside I taught, not taught, but I facilitated a conversation that I titled Is It Okay To Be Angry with God, because in my experience, many people feel like it's really not okay to be angry with God and have this notion and this goes to their God construct, that God's going to zap them or something. You know, lightning volts are going to come strike them or their next child's going to come out, you

know, whatever. and I don't have that particular god construct. I've been comfortably angry with God many times and I see that as part of the richness and the intimacy that I have with God that I get to bring my whole self, including my anger. So I don't just show God the nice pleasantries.

Cari Jackson: [01:37:35](#) So in Taking Back My Life we had people from every religious tradition and none in a room together in an eight-week or 16-week group dealing with the issues of sexual trauma and some of those traumas happened at the hands of religious leaders. So while the group was primarily focusing on sexual trauma, it also helps people heal from some spiritual traumas that they've had in their lives too. We did grief groups that were so life-changing for folks. All of it spiritual but recognizing, growing in a Pentecostal church, Spirit was treated as disinfected from physical and emotional, and financial. It was like Spirit is again on some island. I realized, "No, that's not true to what it is to be human," and to act as a spiritual is just relegated to some other part of people's lives is to do harm to people. So, that's been a big part of the work of Spiritual Light is to help folks know more ways how to integrate Spirit into every aspect of their lives.

Cari Jackson: [01:39:19](#) So, if there's some healing work needed, how do you use your spiritual resources to help with that. If there's exposure to some other traditions that might speak to your heart, to your life that people are given permission to hear, and learn, and experience some new things. So that's really what it was designed to do. I'm not doing that work right now because I'm with RCRC and unfortunately, I don't even have time. So it's one of the things I'm really looking forward to getting back to. I'm hungry. So I'm doing some pieces of it because we had spiritual retreats of all kinds. So every now and then I'll do a retreat. Just the past few months I led a Taking Back My Life group at my church in Phoenix. For the first time ever, this was a mixed gender group and it worked marvelously.

Monique Moultrie: [01:40:35](#) Wow.

Cari Jackson: [01:40:37](#) It was really, really powerful and I'm looking forward to doing that again.

Monique Moultrie: [01:40:42](#) Wow.

Cari Jackson: [01:40:44](#) That's the thing for me. What I don't like about most churches is that there's not a sufficient attention, in my opinion, to the emotional lives of people and when that's not attended to, and I think TD Jakes gets that, because I know one of his undergraduate majors with Psychology. So he gets that and you

know I grew up and I think particularly with black Christians, I know I grew up in a tradition where respectability, you know black folk, respectability is really important. Then you add the Christian to that, then you got to look like everything's fine because you're representing God and if everything's not ...

Cari Jackson: [01:41:47](#)

You know, my dad used to say all the time when my mother would yell at him because he was notorious for agreeing to a musical engagement for him and my mom and not telling her. He was notorious. So, of course she would feel some kind of way when he would tell her the day before the thing. "Honey, why did you do that again? I told ... " She'd be at the top of her decibel level and he would say, "Honey, we're the Christians. What are the neighbors going to think me?" So you know, that was the kind of household I grew up in, and church context. So everything had to look respectable, had to look Godly and Christian. In the midst of all of that, healing can't happen because how are you going to heal something when you don't acknowledge the hurt, and the brokenness, and the pain internally?

Cari Jackson: [01:43:01](#)

So, a big thing, anybody who is participating a thing from Spiritual Light know I say all of the time, if you have been rear-ended and experienced an injury, it doesn't matter who rear-ended you. If you have an injury, you have an injury and often, if there's some hurt that happened in someone's life because their mother or their father or their spouse or other loved one did it, we try to act like we're not hurt because we don't want to be mad at them. The injury is the injury and it also doesn't matter why the person rear-ended you. It could be they were putting on their makeup or they spilled their coffee or they had a heart attack. It doesn't matter. That also is a separate piece from the injury and that's what I strive to help people look at the injury so it can get healed so we can really bring it to Spirit and say, "This is what happened in my life. Here are some of the effects of it and I don't even know what to do with them."

Cari Jackson: [01:44:14](#)

I feel very strongly that when we're trying to address something, we need to use all of the resources that are available to us and I see Spirit as one of the resources. So, the issue might be financial, but how come we bring Spirit to help us look at that or the issue might be legal, how can we bring Spirit? Not say either/or because that is one of the things I think that harms people is this compartmentalization and I grew up very compartmentalized as a person who was only gay over here and I saw the adverse impact of those kinds of compartmentalizations. So, I worked very intentionally at

becoming more integrated in my own life and that's what I seek to help other people do as well.

- Monique Moultrie: [01:45:13](#) Wow. That's such a powerful gift to be able to share with others and to you still withhold yourself, not letting suck everything from you as you're giving back to others.
- Cari Jackson: [01:45:29](#) It requires a lot of intention. A lot of intention.
- Monique Moultrie: [01:45:34](#) So we're two hours.
- Cari Jackson: [01:45:36](#) Okay. I was feeling ...
- Monique Moultrie: [01:45:38](#) I always check in with those because two hours is usually the spot where you need either a bio break or you just need a mental break.
- Cari Jackson: [01:45:45](#) Oh, I'm done for the evening. Is there more? Are there more questions?
- Monique Moultrie: [01:45:49](#) There is more. There are more questions. We haven't gotten to your consultancy. Your wife. There's more.
- Cari Jackson: [01:45:55](#) Oh my gosh. Okay.
- Monique Moultrie: [01:45:56](#) But I want you at full energy, full capacity, and full willingness. So, that's why ...
- Cari Jackson: [01:46:03](#) So this and for tomorrow morning is the reason I'm here.
- Monique Moultrie: [01:46:06](#) Yes.