

# SPIRIT & ——— RECOVERY

*\*\*Warning. This episode includes conversations about trauma, addiction, abuse, and other subjects and situations that may be triggering for some listeners. Our intention with this series is to educate and inspire. And while mental health professionals are being interviewed, this podcast does not offer personalized medical advice. If you need help or are in crisis, please seek medical attention and advice from a professional. Thank you for listening, and we hope you enjoy this episode of Spirit and Recovery on INSIDE THE WOONIVERSE.*

## **EP56:**

# Emergence, Self-Exploration & Recovery

With Dr. Bayo Akomolafe

## Colette:

From states of euphoria and joy to grief and trauma, the human condition asks us to bear witness to it all, yet how we respond, how we react, and how we internalize these events and memories can be extraordinarily unique and profoundly impactful, especially where trauma is involved. But if we've surrendered a spirit, we gain the most amazing partner in our healing journey. Spirit and recovery go hand in hand.

In this limited series, we'll explore healing modalities, philosophies, and soulful practices that are designed to support recovery on all levels. Let's navigate these waters together with compassion and love. There is wisdom waiting to be shared. You are not alone. We're in this together.

Hi there and welcome to Inside the Wooniverse, a podcast brought to you from the corner of Fringe and Main. I'm your host, Collette Baron-Reid. Welcome to another episode of our limited edition series called Spirit and Recovery. With us today is Dr. Bayo Akomolafe. Bayo is a celebrated international speaker, post-human thinker, poet, teacher, public intellectual, essayist, psychologist, and author of two books called, *These Wilds Beyond Our Fences* and *We Will Tell Our Own Story*.

Rooted with the Yoruba people, Dr. Bayo is the founder of the Emergence Network, host of the online Post Activist Course Festival Series, *We Will Dance with Mountains* and lectures at

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Pacifica Graduate Institute in California and the University of Vermont. He sits on the board of many organizations and considers his most sacred work to be learning how to be with his children and their mother, his wife, and life nectar. We are honored to welcome you to the Wooniverse. Welcome Bayo.

Dr. Bayo:

Long welcome, but I'm so happy to be here. I'm grateful.

Colette:

You've made such an impact on me, which is why we invited you on the show. I discovered you through the Science and Non-Duality website. I first saw something on Facebook and I loved the poetic quality of the query that you were posting to us.

And I found the questions just the asking us to look deeper beyond what we think we already know, which is really the best way I could summarize the experience and the discomfort of moving beyond that into some uncharted territory, which is really where all the action is, where all of us need to be right now was just extraordinary.

And I'm still slogging through the four-day workshop that I signed up for, but I had to go back over to the first module. I think I've done the first module. It took two weeks to get through it because I kept asking different, deeper questions of the same question. So, I'm finding it amazing. But let's talk about you.

Dr. Bayo:

Thank you.

Colette:

What was your childhood like? Want to talk about little you. And when did you feel you became aware of the unseen energies of the world?

Dr. Bayo:

Whoa, whoa. Well, how do I dance with this one? Most people who have known or encountered my work know that I frame it within my emergence, my home, my adoption of my faith, which I

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no longer subscribe to at this point in time. But all of those agencies and forces gave birth to me in some way.

I grew up in Nigeria, which is west of Africa, and I did a lot of traveling with my family. My father was a diplomat working for the Federal Republic of Nigeria. And so, we did a lot of traveling. I feel that impacted me in a very, very profound way, having to move from here to there, having to see different cultures, to meet different people. We were constantly traveling and I think that kind of deposited a seed of transgression in me, maybe a notion of irreverence.

Because the trickster is a traveling trope. The trickster pushes against sturdy and final boundaries, not that the trickster is against, but when I speak of the trickster I'm speaking about this energetic more than human force that feels archetypal, which we often describe in terms of an anthropomorphic figure in our stories and folklore.

And I use the trickster to describe a lot of what I feel inspired to do with the world, to push against boundaries, to disturb our notions of reality. I remember taking a walk. I've skipped across various timelines, but just the sticky point here is that, oh, glowing point in my growing up is one day walking from the library to my room. This was in my undergrad days and I was a loner. I was a nerd. Still am.

Colette:

Me too.

Dr. Bayo:

Exactly, I can sense.

Colette:

Nerd here. Total nerd alert.

Dr. Bayo:

I just remember walking down. I was just profoundly haunted by this idea that reality is a method or there I say reality is a risky form of closure. There are always questions about what has been left out when we describe what is right. I just felt flawed by this idea that I was on a roving

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roaming planet that was itself orbited by a moon, by some satellite and that the world was still being made, if you can understand what I'm saying.

Colette:

I totally understand what you're saying.

Dr. Bayo:

Emergent relational, fleshly corporeal, loamy quality that things weren't finished. I wasn't living in a finished state of things. I was living and inhabiting a world that was being shaped by my questions that was reacting and morphing and moving with my so-called internal states that nothing about what I was feeling about the world was private to me, which is the myth of the individual that I wasn't removed or separate, but that I was wording the world just by asking questions about what the world was made of.

And this feeling is almost religious hasn't left me. I just feel that reality is what we rudely call nature or reality or existence is always a practice that must be cradled in play, that we're constantly playing with things and played by things, if you will.

Colette:

Don't you think too, I totally hear you with this because as my work has been all about that, it's been about challenging the confines of reality as language has provided both a context and too rigid a container. The minute we put language on something, we give it a name, but then we also stop it in some way. We have to transgress it as you say, to see it emerge from itself into something else.

And so, given that, I want to go back a little bit too. So, this is being something that has been emerging and will continue to and I believe is the only way to see reality. But when you go back to your human story, for example, and your family went to Germany. I want to go back a little bit in time to so that the listeners and the viewers really get to know you a little bit better. Your dad had passed, so I want to just ask you how the loss of him also led to you or added to this conversation that you have about emergence and what that means and what is reality, what is life, what is it not, what is the unseen truth, those kind of questions.

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Dr. Bayo:

He passed in Zaire, which is in Central Africa, now called the Democratic Republic of Congo. So, we were in a different place when he passed away. It was my first real crisis. I mean not mine, it was my family's. But in a very personal sense, it was my first encounter with trouble at a deep molecular level.

I was asking questions that were not possible up to that moment. Because I'd always taken the world for granted. I thought about the world as a finished quality. It was a fate of complete. It was done. My work was just to eat and play and have fun and grow in the already established. There was nothing else to be done. My faith was based upon an ecological kind of commitment to stability.

And so, once my father's passing pulls the first challenging question to my sense of stability and individuality, a crack or crack started to emerge. And then questions about, wait a minute, why did god allow this and what does it mean to be in faith? What does it mean to believe things? Questions that led me spiraling down rabbit holes of different qualities.

Ultimately, I felt there was a father-shaped hole in my chest, and I was seeking desperately to fill it up with stuff. Thankfully to my family, and my mother reminds me of this often that I didn't fill it up with socializing or doing some other thing that was damaging to the family. I filled it up with nerdship.

Colette:

Nerdship. I love that "nerdship". Worship the nerdship.

Dr. Bayo:

Yes. Deep form of worship. It was deep philosophical inquiry. Of course, it made me a recluse and I had no friends. I didn't know how to make one, but I read books. It was my way of holding onto the pearly gates as it were, and screaming for my father to answer the questions that he had left me with in a sense.

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Colette:

Yeah. I think knowing your story and also because of your work is very much about the collective emergence as well. That's why you're really, I think you become so lately, I've just been gobbling up your words on the different videos I have that we are all almost that parental loss, the concepts of conditioned reality that we have bought all of us, wherever we are in the world for different reasons. Our own personal ecology is the structure of what we consider certainty and stability.

And now all of that has been challenged. And I think that crack that you talked about what you went through personally, now we don't have the opportunity to disconnect, read philosophical, the world is going to bite you fast. So, you are the perfect person right now to steward this conversation because I think questioning everything right now is so important and that's what you did.

So, in your opinion, so all the magic that we expect I know comes to those cracks. It's not from what we know to be reality. It is not defined by that. It is other. So, do you still think the world is a magical place?

Dr. Bayo:

Oh, definitely. I mean, cracks to me are places of excess. When something yet to be articulated, something not part of the program, something not calculable emerges as part of the program, like a story concept or figure or an idea. It's disturbing. It's disturbing in a way that it shows up, but it always leaves a sense of grace or a sense of-

Colette:

Right. A gift.

Dr. Bayo:

... a possibility, like a gift. Yeah, a gift that would not have been possible if not for that opening of excess, of surplus, of spillage. I come from a people whose stories are baked in loss and suffering and pain. The story of the libation, for instance, from ancient commit is the story of blood and carnage and death, uncontrollable suffering.

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And yet out of stories like that emerges a sense of liberation. The ritual of libation came from the carnage caused by Hathor and Ra. There's something that there's just tiny molecular piece that is a symbol of freedom. And more than a symbol, more than a representation of something else, it is that thing. It is that quality.

The stories of the trans-Atlantic slave trade might be from colonial perspectives, a story of loss or from different perspectives, not just a colonial, a story of deep suffering and economic activity. But there's something else. There's always something else. And magic to me is the refusal of reality to fit neatly into any one frame. That's what magic is. Spillage.

Colette:

Yes. And right now, I feel we're all being invited to explore that magic. I have so many questions for you. I don't know where to start. Okay. You have said you are both a practicing and recovering psychologist because I think that kind of segue back around the magic. So, tell me what you mean by that.

Dr. Bayo:

I was trained as a psychologist. My undergrad, master's, PhD. I teach psychology and did some psychotherapy training in a hospital in eastern Nigeria and practiced a little but went fully into teaching. And then I quickly discovered that even the disciplinarity, the profession was blind and deaf to contextual realities.

And I might be invoking terms and sentiments that are familiar to cross-cultural thinkers, cross-cultural psychologists who understand that the way you practice psychotherapy in the west might be entirely different from the way you practice it. There is no universal psyche or universal therapy. But I'm speaking beyond that. I'm speaking about even psychology itself is framed within very troubling parameters. And it seems, it's one conversation to have about what our bodies or body minds are doing.

So, tracing the genealogy of the discipline that I inherited as a practitioner has led me to state over and over again that I'm a recovering psychologist. I cannot fully recover from my training, but I'm seeking other ways, other stories about humans and their worlds that might open up new places of power.

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Colette:

No, I love that. Because this is really about spirit and recovery. This is the mini-series. So, we're like, this is such an interesting thing. Where does he talk about this recovery? And I think that your entire body of work is about recovering magic. It's about recovering that entrance and the exploration.

And you use words like disturbing and words that typically would have a negative connotation. But when you use them, they're really a description of letting go the rigidity of the condition concepts. It's like you have to push against it. There has to be some level of resistance in order to get to that exploration point.

And even then, you can't define the boat you're on or even the water. So, you could be on a boat in the air, all of a sudden. It's allowing yourself to turn the whole world upside down. And I think that right now, because everything is up for grabs. I think everything right now is possible experiment of seeing what else there could be.

There was a lecture that you had about the new gods at the end of the world about exploring what could that be, the new mythology that we could be creating right now. And we haven't done it yet. We don't know who they will be yet. They have yet to come forward to talk to us. I think that's also the essence of the animist, right?

Dr. Bayo:

Yes. But I'll just take several steps back and say about recovery. You are saying something about my work centering recovery. And I just want to say that I think it centers on repair-

Colette:

Repair. Right.

Dr. Bayo:

... more than recovery. And let me say something about that, that there is a sense, and of course you mentioned the event around trauma that I spoke hosted recently. And I'm trying to distinguish, notice that healing is a political event. It's not just this self-evident return to an



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original. That wounds are already striated marks and tensions within the body. They don't just come after the fact of an injury. Wounds are the experimentation of the body.

The injury just materializes those marks that are already there. It's like the Kintsugi art form of putting gold on a crack. It's part of the body. We are already cracked agents, if you will. We're already never not broken to use the-

Colette:

Never not broken.

Dr. Bayo:

Never not broken. The goddess Akhilandeshwari from Hindu cosmology. But yes, so I speak about re-pair not as a return to an original model or image. I speak about re-pair. I hyphenate, re and pair. We're constantly borrowing other bodies to move with the world. Like eating is a form of borrowing bodies to navigate the complex demands that the challenges we're facing. So, we're constantly using and being used by the world around us. So, re-pair, modern recovery is an animist, post-humanist, Dionysian, carnivalesque festival movement of bodies that is always emergent and never arriving.

Colette:

I'm going to interrupt you one second because I'm going to actually add to this or maybe even challenge you on this because it depends on your definition of the word recovery. Because recovery doesn't mean to me to go back to an original state, which then brings us back to a conditioning again, or a structure that we've all agreed upon is okay in a society that we've built that you said is politicized, right?

Dr. Bayo:

Right, right.

Colette:

What if recovery was about recovering the initiation, the potentiality just in its own emergent state? That's the recovery. That's what I think recovery is. It's about being able to dive back, being able to have that Dionysian experience of repair. Anyway, I just wanted to throw that in because that's how I see recovery.

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Dr. Bayo:  
It is not beautiful.

Colette:  
But anyway, go on.

Dr. Bayo:  
Even the word "repair" could have different sentimental values for different people or semantic meaning. But I'm speaking within a strict politics that has seen healing or recovery as a sense of regaining even in a sense of repatriation or restitution in politics as let's return back to an original. And I'm saying even originals migrate.

Colette:  
Yeah, yeah. I get it. I'm nerding out with you here.

Dr. Bayo:  
And that makes the conversation even more interesting and welcoming, I assure you.

Colette:  
Anyway, I'm getting too heady here and too nerdy. So, I'm going to reign it in a little. So, now you said, when I meet people I recognize how utterly beyond right and wrong they are, how their lives are symphonies and orchestration, how their mistakes and failings are actually cosmic explorations on a scalar grander and of a texture softer than our most dedicated rule books could possibly account for. Obviously, I love this, otherwise I wouldn't have quoted you. How can we embody this philosophy because this is so beautiful and how do we put it into practice with others and with ourselves?

Dr. Bayo:  
I think we are already embodied by and embodying this. And this might be a very tricky thing to convey. So, you might hear some kind of aesthetics of failure that is alive in the way that I feel led to describe or to stay with things and how the world is moving. Failure, not as deficit, but failure as this machine that produces novelty.

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Colette:  
Interesting.

Dr. Bayo:  
It's a failed star. I often ask before what shines better than a star? And my response is a failed star because it does more than shine it.

Colette:  
It explodes.

Dr. Bayo:  
It spills its guts and explodes and it becomes flesh and it becomes politics. And so, it is shining in more ways than one. So, I feel failure or the queer art of failure, which is a multi-species arrangement, is how bodies meet other bodies. Bodies unbecome themselves and become something different. It's how we become monsters.

Here are negative terms. Again, many people might shrink back and say, monsters, but I don't mean monsters in a pejorative sense. I mean, monsters in the ways that cultures across the world have always or seemingly always used the notion of the monster as something wild that defeats conventional ideas of stability on normal fear or habit.

Colette:  
And it's scary. They depict it with fear because it challenges the certainty that's been so shined up and created so that everybody behaves.

Dr. Bayo:  
Yes. And it needs to, that's why the monster is at the edge of the village or at the edge of town. And that's why parents say, "Don't go there. If you cross this boundary, you meet a multi-headed beast of some kind." But there are moments when the center we're trying to preserve becomes stuck or monstrous, in the pejorative sense.

And then we need to transgress boundaries and then we do that by meeting this thing that we've externalized and that we've kind of pathologized. And that's where real work begins, in my

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opinion. So, this is what I mean when I speak about falling away from rule books and meeting worlds that are bigger than truth versus heresy.

It's the Rumian notion that there are fields of intensity that are more powerful than I'm right and you're wrong. There's something else that is at work in the world in an agonistic, wild, promiscuous world nonetheless, that is inviting us to become something different.

Colette:

So, in order to do that, in order to meet the monster because not in the majority, meet the wild thing, really to where the wild things are at, like you said, it's out in the forest, it's at the edge, it's at the fringe. That's why we are at the corner of Fringe and Main here. There's a quote that your elders have said, "If you want to find your way, you must be willing to become lost." So, is that kind of the same thing? You have to go to the place where you don't know. There is no path. It's on the fringe. It's on the edge. The wild thing is where there is no path.

Dr. Bayo:

Either you go to the place or the place comes to you. And I think as a civilization, we're in that place right now. I think there is a pedagogy of lostness that is an invitation to do something with the woundedness of uncertainty, of indeterminacy that instead of rushing back into let's build back again, let's finish everything we started before, there is always an opportunity to go in a different direction. There's always that shimmering glimpse of the otherwise, the exquisite radical otherwise that we tame in our attempts to restore what we think we knew before, which is a troubling thing to do. Not a bad or evil thing to do, but it's troubling.

Colette:

Okay. So, we can agree that the past three years, we've all been through a period of sustained uncertainty. Really when you think about it. That everybody has. So, there's been so much that has risen to the surface as people have not been able to distract themselves too much from their everyday coming and going or their automatic pilot way of doing things.

And now, there's this calling forth of here, come and explore this. We still don't know 100%. And that's where we get into trouble is when we say, "I know this for sure." What I know for sure is emergence is a continuum and magic is a continuum and it's always asking us to explore it. And

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the minute you know it and you say you know it, you then cut yourself off from exploring more because it becomes a finite thing.

So, a lot of people talk about ancestral work and being rooted. I want you to explore it a little bit. So, imagine that the main piece, we're at the corner of Fringe and Main, and we're talking about recovering or spirit and recovery or spirit and repair if you will. So, now we are being taught, oh, get rooted, look back into your ancestors, get your roots. And then at the same time, we're being asked to go explore. So, there's a real stretch. Can we do both or do we have to even let go of the root?

Dr. Bayo:

No. I think letting go of the roots might presume that roots are stable themselves. Roots travel too, right?

Colette:

Right, underground.

Dr. Bayo:

Right. So, even roots, even ancestry is a migrating discourse. More than a discourse is a migrating phenomena. Roots are fugitive. They're hidden from view. They're constantly becoming something else, but there are no less material in their consequences. So, I feel that yes, these times call for, and I have lots of stories that could bring some sense of practicality to that. I'll just share one.

Colette: Yes. Love to hear it.

Dr. Bayo:

A brother of mine, he is a Nordic shaman and he shared this story with me in an essay about a particular American, Native American group that traveled to Asia to participate in a coming together of indigenous cultures. I can't quite recall what this conference was named, but what it was about was indigenous people coming together to have a conversation and it was festive and it was playful.

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Now, the delegates that left from the United States of America and traveled all the way to Asia, they had identified themselves as having some problems with connecting to their ancestors and with a practice of dreaming. It was an art form that invited dreaming into their process, some kind. But they were blocked somehow, they were stuck. There was no creative juices. There were no creative juices flowing. And so, there were asking questions, praying, but it seemed the heavens were closed or the ground was shot out, so to speak.

Well, they went on this journey and they had almost forgotten that they had this problem when in the midst of the proceedings of one particular day, they were dancing on the streets, a police officer, I think the story goes, accosted one of them. And that person started to act drunk and was immediately possessed by something else.

And I don't know how to describe it. The story is kind of vague, but it seemed like, I think my brother described it as a crow. The spirit of the crow descended and possessed this delegate. And this person's really started to act out on the streets. And it became a moment, not only in the conference, but for this group, because being possessed was a big thing. They all went to sleep that night and they woke up in the morning with ideas, just concepts, generous ideas on what to do with paintings and arts and blah, blah, blah, which is very interesting.

What was very interesting to me about the story was how their expectations about what they were supposed to do in connecting with ancestry was actually blocking them from connecting with their creativity. The images they had in mind were maybe of urban pots. I'm riffing here, or trees or honoring the ground. And the images that they were visited with were about phones and digital systems and computers sprouting stuff in here and there. It was unlike what they expected the indigenous to feel like.

So, that in a sense, ancestry isn't some essential thing that is stabilized in some colonial time trajectory, which we have to turn around to meet. Again, it's the ongoingness of our rootedness with things. We are even modernity is a form of ancestral. It's a form of indigenous connection, embodiment. Modernity is just good at dissociating itself from his rootedness, but that doesn't mean it's not rooted.

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Colette:

My nerd, my nerd brain just exploded. We have to take a little break now. More with Dr. Bayo when we return. We'll be right back.

Welcome back. We are here with Dr. Bayo Akomolafe. Okay, Bayo, my next question is, when speaking about modernity, I've heard you say that we can get caught up in things and the thingness of things.

Dr. Bayo:

The thingness of things.

Colette:

The thingness of things. So, how do you feel this feeds into our concept of feeling separate from each other in the world? Because I think that this is also a big piece we need to talk about.

Dr. Bayo:

I mean in terms of our most endearing politics today, you can think about as an identity politics. You can think about it in terms of representation or essentialism. I'm speaking about what I've learned to call nounism. Did you hear that nounism? The idea that we're nouns.

Colette:

Nounism, right.

Dr. Bayo:

That we're stabilized, stable, finished products. And that we're acting out from this place of thingification, if you will. We're things. We're citizens. We're citizens and we're subjects. And when you think about agency, we're thinking about the English structure, the linguistic structure of subject verb object. Climate chaos is about acting upon the world and the world being this passive recipient of our agency.

So, this is nounism. This is the idea that we are still, but it's not just recent thing. It's indigenous ideas from long, long ago interacting with beautiful feminist insights, feminist materialism, post humanist thought that is really saying we are not as well put together as we think we are. We're

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porous. We are membranes that are migrating. I like to use the word "migrating". I like the idea of migrations.

We are constantly being used by the technologies we think we use. We don't just use Facebook. We are also used by these algorithms. There are many studies in this book called Epistemic Situationism, big word for the idea that things that are around us actually influence our behavior. The texture of the furniture around us could have an untoward impact on how judges interact with people who come before them in courts of law.

Think about that for a moment. You would think that we have the attributes within ourselves, but the world is teaching us in slow homeopathic doses, if you will, that we are microbial assemblages. That we are the effects of gut bacteria. That we are not just individualized separate beans, we are ecological secretions, that we are ancestralities playing themselves out experimentally with ecology and we're constantly moving. There is no sense of arrival. And that is the sense that feels magical to me. Dangerous but magical.

Colette:

I'm an animist and I see literally everything is having a spirit or having a conversation. So, when you said that about texture of the environment, let's say the texture of a chair, when I look even at what would be called an inanimate object, there are stories, there are living things that impact, can impact what appear to be something that's solid and final, finite, but is actually having a conversation with us all the time about where we are, what we could be doing next, et cetera.

I wonder, these are things, this stinginess, this nounism, which I love, my head exploded there too. The concept of when we name, we name something. I mean when you look back at some of the older magical traditions that naming or nouncing is actually a way to steal magic. So, if you have the name of something, then you have access to its magic. So, therefore, having no name or having a different name or hiding behind a name, there's this idea that there's something there.

And I even think in that kind of mythology or folklore way of telling things, that there is a danger in a way of recognizing this because we then lose our sense of eye. And that's dangerous. If we



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have a very well-constructed eye in a very well-constructed we, in that serves a greater construct than everything that is wild and open than is dangerous to that, nounism. So, I wonder that I think that that's probably why people are having so many mental health issues right now, et cetera, because they feel the danger that we're being invited into. But it's the only way we're going to grow, I think. But there's danger there. What are your opinions of that?

Dr. Bayo:

One of my descriptions of trauma, well not my description, but one of my attempts to reframe trauma has been to stay with one particular definition. There are multiple definitions in conceptualizations of trauma, which is an essentially contested concept. But one definition is that trauma emerges when something external to us hits us and experience something outside of us disturbs and punctures our boundaries.

Colette:

Our boundaries. Right.

Dr. Bayo:

And yet what often escapes us when we describe trauma that way is that there are two definitions at work there. Not just the definition of this externality, but the definition of our internality. Because immediately, you define the outside. You've already named the inside. So, in a sense, the modern dominant theories about trauma are ideological commitments to what it means to be a self, to what it means to be an individual. Once you mark the ground and say that is external, you are already saying this is what it means to be normal. This is what it means to be a proper human subject. And so, it's a deeply political concept.

And I say this because I once sat with babalawo. A babalawo is a healer from the Yoruba cosmology traditions. And I remember me, I'm this western trained clinical psychologist, and I was doing a PhD then. And I sat with him and I was asking him questions about his nosology, his classification system, his own indigenous DSM manual. I was like, "So, tell me how do you diagnose, think about or go about to treat and possibly even cure auditory hallucinations?" And he asked for clarification. "What's an [inaudible 00:38:11]?" Hearing voices in your head. And was like, "Why would you want to do that? Look at this kid. Why would you want to get rid

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of that?" It was shocking to him and me because I felt it was obviously pathological. No normal person should hear voices in your head.

Colette:

I'm a walking pathology because I hear voices, I see things, I talk to dead people. Yeah.

Dr. Bayo:

That breakthrough is where I come from. He was of the opinion. And more than an opinion, there is this phenomenon, this appreciation that we are not as tightly closed as we think that your grandmother is speaking through you. You don't own yourself. You are an ecological effect. You are the interstitial applause of multiple generations and multi-species assemblies. You're not yourself. You are beside yourself, if you will.

And so, mental illness is an opening, a possibility, and ontological apostasy, an eruption. So, they stay with it in a way of trying to attend to that moment. What does it desire of us? There isn't a rush to close the gap. And this is what we're trying to express without confusion, then why would you want to close that up?

Colette:

That's a very different way of approaching.

Dr. Bayo:

It is, it is.

Colette:

It's very, very different.

Dr. Bayo:

In tiny different, yes. It's really the notion that we are not as close up as we think as modernity would have us think we are.

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Colette:

I love when you said the self is beside the self. We're actually beside ourselves that we don't own ourselves. Because then what that really challenges the western notion of self and self [inaudible 00:39:55] and being in society, that I wonder, the whole concept of trauma has become very popular lately in the past year and a half. Everybody's teaching about trauma, talking about trauma, about addressing trauma and identifying yourself with trauma. And again, almost nounising or if that's nouning trauma and finding these routes back to something that you are saying, well, from what you've just described isn't the way.

And I think that's another reason why people get so screwed up. Because it sounded to me that we're being interrupted in some way when we try to shut it down too quickly.

Dr. Bayo:

Yes.

Colette:

I've been in recovery. You'll call it a recovery, and that's just language. I was a drug addict and an alcoholic in my early 20s. Got clean and sober. Went through a program for many, many years that was quite distinct. The 12 steps had a very distinctive way of being, and god forbid that you ever steered out that way to explore something else because something terrible would happen to you.

All of a sudden, the wild thing that was at, I guess pushed out to the edge of the forest, which is really the source of the real story. The deeper story is waiting. And we actually have to push beyond the boundaries of that tight container that made it very safe. But at some point, one must explore beyond that. And that's been my personal experience, which is myself beside myself story.

But I look at society like that right now, that again, there's been this addict that now we're saying, "Oh, this is the only way. This is a psychology. This is the pathology. These are the language. This is the nouns. This is how you have to do it." And right now, none of that's really worked. I mean, it's worked to a degree. And so, what would you say to all of us about how do we move

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out past that fringe and step into the wild without really completely losing ourselves or is the point to lose ourselves? Is that the point?

Dr. Bayo:

Yeah. And the point is also migrating.

Colette:

Right. Oh my god, you're so funny.

Dr. Bayo:

Moving errand lines. But let me put it this way that I think you're speaking about trauma, and I was just imagining circus. It's like a circus produces bodies. It produces acts. It has audiences. It has wonder and spectacle. And there is a sense in which it contains itself and it allots roles in its body manufacturing rituals.

And I feel trauma is part of the act. Some of the most pervasive notions of trauma also speak to this politics of making bodies. And it's a form of containment. Rituals help us contain. Reality is more than complex. It's too weird and wild for us. And so, we will need a form of containment. I'm not pathologizing.

Colette:

Right. I agree with that. No, no, I agree with that too. Yeah, I agree with that.

Dr. Bayo:

Even binaries are a form of entanglement. Even if there's a wall between us, the wall is agential, and the wall might represent a transmission or transmutation of bodies as well. So, I guess what I'm trying to say is that we live in this wild, this promiscuous world that is not easy to stay with or to determine.

Even how we describe the addict or addiction. I feel we're constantly building fidelities with other things around us in responding to the larger questions or the smaller questions, whatever. Skill is of no importance here to me. We're constantly building alliances, whether it's with a concept

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or with an idea or with a sense of identity or with certain substances. We're constantly doing this. We're affiliated. We're building alliances. And those things use us as much as we use them. I think psychology is trying to describe what and to provincialize what is already more than psychology, which what is spiritual and social and political, but it kind of isolates us and says, "This is normal. We'll focus on you guys who are abnormal here and try to fix and get you back into the wheel."

Your question about what we do during these times is precious to me, because that's my question as well. And I've come to a place where I recognize that we're not going to do it on our own, just like whatever the addict or the affiliated or the incarcerated does is still within a territory of acting and need something outside of that territory to emancipate it in some sense. We need cracks. We need openings. We need interruption. We need a disruption of the transversal. And by the transversal, I mean that a knot on a string cannot unravel itself. It needs something else. And this something else is all around us. I'm not speaking about something spectacular, a comet or a pandemic. I'm speaking about the fact that the world is constantly producing cracks.

We have just gotten very, very good at containing them, pathologizing them, making them shadows or beasts, explaining them away, understanding them, rehabilitating them. But history is replete with stories of people who accompany them, instead of trying to fix them.

The story of Deligny, Fernand Deligny, the French special educator and visionary who decided to take away kids from the asylum in the '60s and to accompany them to create communities, not try to fix them, not try to therapeutize them, not try to do anything, but to stay with them. And his work is the foundation of my work. It has become foundational. Is that we need ways of sitting with monsters at picnics. We need ways of staying with those chasms, those entities instead of trying to put them in a family way and get back to normal. Maybe that's how novelty appears.

Colette:

Yeah. I like that you said that about putting it, really trying to make everything back to normal or make the restitution and it will be okay. All of this is the neat boxes that we would feel so much better if we could have that. And I do think that containers are really important.

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Dr. Bayo: They are.

Colette:

Flexible containers are even more important. So, it starts out rigid, then it needs to be flexible. And then again, the idea of safety. I think that's a really big one for human beings, because I think our stride need for certainty and safety, which is how we're built. I mean, we have a reactive system that's built into us. We think that there's going to be a big T-Rex come after us immediately we go into fight, flight, freeze, fawn, attack. Whatever it is that we do, we've been doing a lot of it.

So then, how do we have both and how do we be at the picnic, have the safety of the picnic, the container of the circus, and also still explore and allow ourselves to be with that, like you said, that monster?

Dr. Bayo:

I don't think everything will be to our terms all the time. I do think that the world isn't one, that there are many ways and multiple localities and specificities and needs. That's why I wouldn't even pathologize safety. But I will say that there are moments when safety becomes a kind of prison.

Colette:

Yeah, yeah, I agree.

Dr. Bayo:

Some of the slave ships that traversed the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas from Africa had safety nets built on the side of the ship, safety nets to prevent the slaves from jumping overboard into the water. Think about that for a moment.

Colette:

Wow.

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Dr. Bayo:

Safety nets for slaves. So, that even safety can take on very pernicious and insidious qualities. Think about a utopian, sci-fi has done this to ad nauseam.

Colette:

Right. The utopian society where everybody is dull].

Dr. Bayo:

Utopian society where everyone is safe, everyone is safe and everything is fine. But there's something about that that is deeply troubling. You don't even need to go deep into the plot before you start to feel a sense of unease by watching all of this safety.

Colette:

Yeah. All the safety.

Dr. Bayo:

That's scary. There's something about that that's not to say we don't need safety. Oh, we need it. The world needs it to produce certain kinds of events. But there are also moments when safety becomes...

Colette:

A prison.

Dr. Bayo:

... a form of entrapment. And then we need to address that. Yes.

Colette:

It's funny, one of the things that I teach in my school, Oracle School, is about leaving the comfort zone, the importance of leaving your comfort zone, recognizing what that is, and then being willing to cross that line and not know where you're going. Get lost. Just allow yourself to get lost a little to discover what you might find.

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And I don't want to use the word trauma, but it's more like the pushback and the resistance brings up so much in many of the students because it's like, well, what do you mean? This is what I've worked so hard to have this. I mean, yes, but the you that you want to become isn't there. It's because you're saying that you see yourself as other, how would you get there. You can't stay here and be there at the same time. You can't.

Even though there're multiplicity of dimensions of consciousness going on at the same time all the time, if you want to play, you have to pick one and see, and then see where it leads. It might lead you somewhere it's completely different.

Okay. You are the recipient of the 2021 New Thought Walden Award, meant to honor those who use empowering spiritual ideas and philosophies to change lives and make our planet a better place. This is a big question. What opportunities do you feel that we all have to heal and change our lives and make the planet a better place? What does that even mean?

Dr. Bayo:

Well, it comes again to the kind of politics that I'm hoping that I can see already taken root, but I feel can thrive and flourish in these times. Many people, I would say, I have no empirical evidence to validate this, but I think the world goes beyond empirical evidence sometimes at critical junctions. So, I would say that many people are feeling politically homeless.

Colette:

Yeah. I agree with that.

Dr. Bayo:

And I'm not speaking about being on the left or on the right, or being independent. There's a sense in which the entire apparatus no longer sustains us in our desires for something else or something different. You would wonder why conspiracy theories are flourishing in a time where there's a preponderance of information.

Why is it that we are constantly creating these alternative realities to live in? It's because something about the rat maze doesn't appear to us. The cartography is, it's like the highway is there, but it no longer leads to anywhere interesting. We've been cycles through this thing and



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we want out of it. And so, we're creating stuff. A dear friend of mine, a professor of psychology, said to me that psychology is the policeman of capitalism.

Colette:  
Oh my god.

Dr. Bayo:  
There's a sense of containment here. And stay put, calm and what's the word? Is it keep calm-

Colette:  
Keep calm, and carry on.

Dr. Bayo:  
And carry on. Yes, yes, yes. Keep calm and carry on. Just go to the pub and do the same old things and come back home and get a job and reproductive and die and let the other people who can sustain this, it feels like we're tired. And I think this exhaustion is a visitation. I'm happy that the exhaustion is here because it's a sign that other things might be possible, right?

Colette:  
Right. And now new emergence of something new, new myths. We create new stories. And the stories are alive, and therefore we're visited by new beings, new archetypes, new everything. But we have to allow it.

Dr. Bayo:  
We have to allow it. And I dare say that there is a sense in which it even goes beyond our allowing things. It seems like there are forces that will enlist us to produce other things, even if we don't anticipate or articulate or intend them.

Colette:  
Or allow. Yeah.

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Dr. Bayo:

That we're doing things that goes beyond our allowing most of the time. We're caught up in these murmuration, these whirlwinds of action, and we might think, that's not what I want to do. That's not what I allowed. That's not what I consented to. But we're still doing them. We're caught up in these multi hyper realities.

Colette:

Okay. You keep bringing back birds. So, you talk about migration, you talk about murmurations. So, the murmurations of birds are instinctive. So, when you talk about murmuration, one of my favorite divination systems that I studied in my nerdy moments is augury, which is the study of the formation and movement of birds.

So, you talk about migration, you talk about murmuration now, which is an instinctive group movement that one doesn't even know, is that something that they decided or is it something that dance that just arose?

Dr. Bayo:

There you go.

Colette:

So, I just wanted to say that just in case the listeners don't know what the hell we're talking about here today. But this picture is so extraordinary. You're right. Did I allow that? Was I part of it? But we are swept up in something that is very much alive. I think that's what we're getting at.

Dr. Bayo:

Yes, yes.

Colette:

In all of human history, we get to be here right now when everything is changing. It's exciting. It can be. It can be very exciting as long as we, I think, and again, I could be wrong because now I'm going to noun something and then I could be like, I'll hear myself say it maybe not that, but the self beside the self, the consciousness, the witness can watch the other self or the small self. The big self and the small self can have a little dance and pretend that it has power, but it has some co-creative power. It has some because it shows up anyway.

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Now listen, I want to pull an Oracle card together, and we're just going to play a little game. And we're just going to pull a card. We're going to ask what does the Wooniverse want us to talk about to conclude our great conversation. Did we miss anything? I'm sure we did.

Feast of Plenty. This card talks about choices and their consequences. So, I'm going to ask you to close out our conversation with just speaking a little bit about choices and their consequences and the abundance of what that actually means to you in your cosmology of the world.

Dr. Bayo:

I saw Feast of Plenty, or I heard Feast of Plenty as, especially when you framed it together with choices and consequences, I heard it in this way that there is a feast or this party outside of choices and consequences. Can I go with that?

There's two narrow a field when we frame things in terms of choices and consequences. And we were just saying that right about now, about there's also being swept away and being deployed and being enlisted and being co-opted and being rearranged and being possessed. There's all of that. These animist agencies at work. And I think that's the feast of plenty. That there's so much more than our imaginations can articulate than language can even come to embrace. And we will find this strange carnivalesque festival party, whatever you want to call it, in the most unsuspecting of places.

Colette:

Mundane.

Dr. Bayo:

Inappropriate, in the most ordinary, in the most mundane of places. We will find a dance, a number, a move, music, rhythm in the most dire circumstances. And that's the feast that I'm speaking about when I speak about cracks. So, cracks are feasts of, well, it's again, feast of plenty, yes.

Colette:

Plenty. Yeah.

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Dr. Bayo:

Surplus, spillage, openings, new possibilities, risks, dangerous. But yet the only way that the world knows how to produce the exquisite.

Colette:

Oh, I just love that. And I think I'd like to add, when we think about choices and consequences, I agree with you, we get co-opted, we get enlisted. But there is, I think that letting go the notion that we are always choosing. We have to let go that notion, that in fact, we are also being chosen without our permission to enter into this extraordinary circus of life, I think. Anyway.

Dr. Bayo:

I love that. Thank you.

Colette:

Such a great conversation. Oh my gosh, this has just been so amazing. So, to learn more about Bayo and his offerings, you can visit him online at Bayo, B-A-Y-O, Akomolafe dot net. To learn more about his online courses, please go to [emergencenetwork.org](http://emergencenetwork.org). It's all written on the transcript of this episode, quotes and links to what we've been speaking about here today. Also, on SAND, the Science and Non-Duality. You have some great courses on there as well too. You're everywhere right now, which is just amazing.

Anyway, to find a transcript of this episode, quotes and links to what we've been speaking about here today, head on over to our show notes page at [itwpodcast.com](http://itwpodcast.com), or click the link in this episode's description. This has been such a treat. Thank you so much for joining us today, Dr. Bayo. That was amazing. I can hardly wait to talk to you again, and I hope I will.

Dr. Bayo:

Yes. Thank you so much.

Colette:

Thank you so much.

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Dr. Bayo:  
Thank you.

Colette:  
So, what did we learn today? Well, I have to say, and for those of you who know me, you know I'm an absolute nerd. So, to me, this was one of the best conversations. And I could have talked to this man for hours and hours and hours because it made me think.

But I think if I were to summarize this today and going back to the card that we pulled, which was the Feast of Plenty, when you think about that, that in order for us to really accept our role in the abundance of the universe, we absolutely have to let go the confines of our conditioned ideas about who we are and who we're supposed to be, and allow ourselves to leave our comfort zones to explore what is yet unexplored. So, that was amazing. Until next time, I'm Collette Baron-Reid, thank you for listening. Be well.

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