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Episode 6: Continuous Becoming w guest, Aldita Amaru Gallardo

[Opening Exchange] [00:00:00] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** The scale of money now it just becomes like monopoly money. And I'm like, you don't need to hoard that much money billionaires. You don't,

Ain B.: No.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: You don't need to hoard.

Ain B.: No.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Actually, what is it doing historically? It's not yours. Put it to good use.

Ain B.: And if we're thinking and talking about spirit, what actually is happening to your spirit in the hoarding? I think we can look around and see how time and having and holding billions and billions of dollars transforms people.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: I'll leave it to you to decide if that's for better or worse.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right. Listeners insert all the names that we know.

Ain B.: Okay. You know who we're talking about.

[Static Intro] [00:0:44] **Ain B.:** Welcome to the [We Outside Podcast](#), where we explore leadership through the lens of spirit, restoration and transformation. I'm your host, Ain B., a restoration practitioner and founder of New Seneca Village.

In each We Outside episode, we engage in generative conversations with guests who are redefining what it means to live and work outside of the dominant imagination.

Today's guest is Aldita Amaru Gallardo. She is a friend, a philanthropic colleague, and has been an energetic member of The Village even before its physical manifestation. In this episode, we explore the relationship between



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spirit and identity and the process of becoming ourselves within relationships that span societal, philosophical, and generational differences.

We also unpack the role of money and the process of giving as tools for transformational change, distinct from incremental change. You can find Aldita full bio in the show notes and in the end credits for this episode.

Join us as we move beyond the confines of conventional thinking and into other realms of possibility. Now let's dive into today's conversation.

[00:02:56] **Ain B.:** Welcome, Aldita. I'm so excited to be in conversation with you, our first recorded conversation, but one of many and would love to offer you the opportunity to introduce yourself.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Thank you, Ain, what a delight to be here with you and doing this virtual hangout.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm. Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: My name is Aldita Amaru Gallardo. For folks who don't know me, I am friends with Ain. I use she / her pronouns, ella en Espanol, and I'm based in Oakland, California on unceded Ohlone land.

Ain B.: Excellent. Aldita. And what is your internal weather like today and why? If you wanna share.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah. Today it's giving very Bay area weather in the fall, a little cloudy, a little drizzle. You're inconvenienced a little bit, but you wear thicker socks to, you know, to weather the little cloudburst that just happened.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm. I do miss that weather. Thank you for bringing it back.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yes.

Ain B.: My name is Ain. I use she/they pronouns. I'm located on ancestral unceded land of the Muskogee people in Alabama. And my weather right now is porch weather. Where you're sitting outside, it's like the perfect temperature.

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There's a delicious little breeze that's kind of cool, but also warm that's coming by and you're kind of just watching the leaves fall. So it feels so good to be with you friend and be in that. Let's chop it up on the porch vibe.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm. That's right. Whatev. Even if there's a little rain that happens. Well, we're still on the porch.

Ain B.: That's fine. We got it. We'll have some tea. It'll be all good.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: That's right.

Ain B.: So Aldita, as we begin, what is spirit to you and how does it move through you?

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Oh my goodness. I love this question that is both simple and big and profound. I feel like for me, spirit is the all knowing creator universe. That is all the things, all my relations, all that we are, all the things that we are on this planet and all the creatures.

For me, I think one of the forms that spirit moves is through my grandma's prayers. I've just been thinking a lot about the abuelitas. And in particular, sort of related to the stormy, a little cloudy weather, moving through some grief. We just found out this week that [Miss Major Griffin Gracy](#), revolutionary trans mother passed.

Ain B.: Oh, I'm sorry.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yes. All of us are feeling it.

Ain B.: Yeah.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: So a moment for her. And if you don't know about Miss Major, she was at Stonewall. She started T-G-I-J-P, [Transgender, Gender-Variant & Intersex Justice Project](#) in the Bay Area, working with formerly and currently incarcerated Black Trans folks. And she moved her way to the south to Arkansas and opened up [House of gg](#). It was a sanctuary oasis for Black Trans Southerners.

Ain B.: Yes.

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[00:06:27] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** And she just committed her whole life to trans liberation and to living fiercely. I know her through her work and was inspired by it, and she was an abuelita of our trans movement. So I hold her in my heart. I hold so many of us holding this grief and yeah, honor her, her spirit, and her legacy.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: So I think this is where, now as she is transitioning, to as an ancestor, trancestor. I asked myself, how do I continue in her legacy and her work? How do we embody her? She used to, she was on a tour called Tell It Like It Fucking Is to Philly. Hello. Okay. Tell and tell the truth. Tell the truth.

Ain B.: Yes. Tell the truth.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Okay? You know, I think that that message and her work lives through me. And, you know, to answer the question about grandmothers and grandmothers prayers, I think of my own grandmother.

You know, I have my movement grandmother through Miss Major and my last remaining grandparent who's still in Peru. And she also devoted her life to being a woman of faith. She is from Arequipa, Peru, and there's beautiful mountains that are there, and the way that folks got to, you know, be still in sacred relation with the mountain. And through colonization and Catholicism, there was a virgen, the Virgen de Chapi that she honors and has a huge statute of in her house. And every May she throws a community gathering that invites people to come and celebrate and eat and to honor her.

And I just think about the prayers that continue to protect me, to guide me. And I see that as part of spirit and the spirit work that my grandma,

Ain B.: oh yes,

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: you know, my maternal grandma has done, is doing and 97 years old. That's all a big testament.

Ain B.: Yeah. Yes. Uh oh.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Okay.

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Ain B.: Abuelita.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: I know. So I, I'm thinking a lot about the abuelitas and all that they are calling in for us and that, you know, when I turn to abuelita status, that I have those to figures to really lean in on.

Ain B.: Beautiful. Thank you so much for bringing both of them into the space.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: Sending you and Miss Major and all the folks who loved her ease. And this sweet reflection that you've shared, this opportunity to be in invitation around your own becoming during this time is so hard to lose. And it's also a reminder of what is possible for us to create. And you've stated that so eloquently, so thank you so much.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Thank you friend. Receiving that.

Ain B.: Yeah.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: And it's been a reminder that we are in cycles, you know?

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Honor the life cycle of everyone. And that this was a completion and it's still, it's still going. It's still in us.

Ain B.: Right. And what I hear from both your abuelitas is just a real space making reverence for community and for the truth.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yes.

Ain B.: Right. The truth of the mountain, the truth of that we get to be exactly who we are, period.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: And tell it like it fucking is.

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Aldita Amaru Gallardo: That's right. That's right. In every space we enter.

Ain B.: I'm delighted. Yes. I'm delighted to be in their energy today. So thank you.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Thank you for letting me bring them into this space. It feels so appropriate.

Ain B.: Yes, of course. Of course. It's so crucial. And I think in our conversation, you know, we've been talking, I mean, we've talked about so many things, but as we think about this evolution of self is also what I'm really hearing too, right?

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: That's right.

Ain B.: With Miss Major of like, okay, Stonewall and the instrumental moment that was, and then still, okay, there's more to do and this is the new way I will do it in the Bay Area. And oh, okay. And now here's this new offering in Arkansas. And so, you know what it takes to be in a continuous state of becoming, grounded in and guided by spirit. And I'd love to hear any of your thoughts on that.

[00:11:11] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** Yeah. I mean, Miss Major is such a model and also every trans person is becoming, we become ourselves. We embody who we want to be, who we've always known ourselves to be, even when we didn't have the language.

So to me, I'm like, there's so much beauty and the journey that a trans person has, and that is ongoing and continuous that we offer, you know, the world in our communities. But also we talk about trans leadership and trusting folks who have been on this journey and who know who they are, especially given the sort of narratives that are just ugly

Ain B.: Period.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right. I don't even wanna name them, but

Ain B.: Period. Yeah.

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[00:12:00] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** That tell us that we don't know ourselves or that we're new. It's like we have been around since time immemorial. We've called ourselves different names, but we are, we've always been here. Right. That's like indigenous wisdom and that's trans two-Spirit wisdom as well.

Ain B.: Yep.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: And so I just think about that. I think about time, right? Because like, we are in this moment now, and our ancestors and prior generations have also moved through really tough times. When there wasn't infrastructure, there wasn't policies, there wasn't allies, you know? So even though it feels really hard right now, I just think about the long arc of things where there was wisdom, there was resiliency, there were prayers of, of freedom for our folks that we're living into now. Not in the fullest of ways, but then that just asked me to, to pray for more freedom, for more spaciousness, for more that we need to become. And that this moment is only just that there's so much more.

Ain B.: Right

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: You know, ahead of us. You know, miss Major passed on the baton to a lot of folks and it's our duty to take it as far as we can and then keep passing it on to the next generation to take on the work. Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: Yeah. You know what you're naming, of course the existence of trans folks throughout history and time and you know, as we think about becoming, which is not an American concept, right?

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. You didn't mean Michelle Obama didn't create it?

Ain B.: Lemme look back at my textbooks.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: I love about [Becoming](#) by Michelle.

Ain B.: Right? Right. But as a societal practice, we are not practicing becoming. I think our American way is to just be a thing and never be different in many ways. And so also what I wanna just honor and acknowledge is the deep intention and practice that it takes for trans folks. I would also put queer folks, some who have had, you know, a longer journey to their acceptance

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Aldita Amaru Gallardo: mm-hmm.

Ain B.: Of like really putting in the work, frankly, to become. And what a necessary, needed practice in particular, now that we're not just resting on our laurels as being the thing that someone told us we were, decided we were or, you know, looks like we should be. But that all of us should be in the practice of wondering, questioning, listening, seeking.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yes.

Ain B.: And becoming.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah. And I just think of like, what you made me think about is like those first times that we start noticing, questioning, unearthing who we are. For me, it was at a young age and I was too scared. Even all the things you have to unlearn or move through, like the fear, the shame, the thoughts that you might, you know, there might be retaliation, physical violence.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: And I, my heart goes out to like the young people who for their first time are also exploring this. And it makes sense why they are coming after our young people and trans youth in particular because they're, you know, particularly vulnerable and it's the first time they're becoming, or they're entering, you know, this new age of self-actualization, self-awareness.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Naming things for who they are. And it's hard, you know?

Ain B.: Yeah.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: We, we make it look easy now in our middle elder life, but it was hard. And for people who didn't, you know, who are on their own times around it. It's not just a youth issue.

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People are knowing themselves more. And this is, I think, the gift of queer and trans people. We are self-aware. We're saying we know ourselves deeply and we have the courage to share it with you all.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Are you, so I imagine people are like, oh, I have a lot of truths to tell too, but maybe I don't have the courage, the gumption, the support, you know?

Ain B.: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think a lot about the gift of any identity, frankly, that's not lifted up or centered in our society and then in particular identities that are actively targeted and, you know, sending deep, unconditional love and prayer. And also what a gorgeous opportunity.

You know, when I think about coming out as queer, well as lesbian then 'cause it was the nineties, but queer feels more appropriate these days. But you know, it was such an easy conversation with myself and such a hard conversation with the rest of the world,

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right

Ain B.: But as soon as I had the conversation with the rest of the world, it was like, oh, right, this thing that has been my problem is actually, was never my problem. I felt fine about it. And now you get to have it as a problem if you so choose. And you could choose not to. Right? But like

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right. It could be a non-issue. How about that? Yeah.

Ain B.: How about that? Right. But I'm moving on. And then also I think in terms of the sacred, it's just, I'm so grateful to be of a questioning spirit, to be curious, to be not locked into what has been prescribed for me to be. But to instead be wondering what more is there?

And I think that our society, you know, could benefit from more and more of us being able to be in that unbridled curiosity and also confidence to be on a journey of discovery of what that is.

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[00:18:29] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** Mm-hmm. Yes. So much wisdom from queer and trans folks, for everyone to explore and be on their journeys, be on parallel journeys, and we need one another to be able to access that. Right?

Ain B.: Yeah. Yeah. And then there's another side where, how do we hold ourselves in integrity, in alignment with our values, and also be in conversation with folks, I'm thinking mostly family. I'm not asking anyone to cross any other lines, but

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Let's talk about the family of origin.

Ain B.: Hello. Yeah, thank you. Family of origin, being in conversation about what's actually so for us. So I would love, if you can share more about the practice of that.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Absolutely. Yeah. I'll, I'm, I'll be vulnerable and share a little bit more about my coming out journey, which was not easy.

I think as like migrants from Lima Peru, you know, my family and I moved in 93, leaving, the period of time in Peru where Sendero Luminoso was destabilizing the country and my father had visas to the states. And because he had been to Disney World on a trip, he was like, we should move to Florida. The whole world is new. I know when Disney is the anchor of it all.

But I understand that my parents were brought up in a different society where queer and trans people, maybe they didn't know queer and trans people, or if they did know them, it was through like second tertiary relationships. People in community, not actual loving, we're eating together, we're not in relationship, you know?

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: So they had only limited narratives from, you know, entertainment and whatever they were getting, honestly, which is not much. So I think they came with a lot of assumptions.

But when I came out as gay first, I love that we started with different language and we evolved. Honey, at this point I'm almost the whole L-G-B-T-Q-I-A plus.

Ain B.: Let's just walk right through it.

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Aldita Amaru Gallardo: The whole alphabet.

Ain B.: Yes.

[00:21:03] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** But, yeah, it was, I was not met with a loving response. Yeah. And that like really shook me. And I came out when I, like in college, I was in my late teens and was still figuring out what was college, what was this journey I was on.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: But knew that I had to. I moved to a big city, I moved to Chicago. 'cause I knew that there were queer people there. Yeah. And that's what, and from the books that I had read, that's where queer people lived, was in urban centers.

But yeah, my parents struggled and, you know, I was staying in their home that summer break and they kicked me out. Thankfully I had siblings that I could just go to, but that rejection was really hard on me. Yeah.

And, I'm glad that I had the supports. But it's still a site of pain that I still hold and acknowledge now after many years of therapy. Hello. And, I know that I'm not as... Like, as personal of a story that is, it's a common story for so many of us.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: I cut my parents off for a while, that was not helpful for me. So I reengaged with 'em and really through the years was able to mend our relationship. And then as an adult, I came out as trans later. They had the same, you know, not welcoming response, but at that point I was an adult and taking care of myself. So it wasn't like I was seeking much from them at that point.

Ain B.: Yeah. And still you have a little heart. A big heart.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: I do.

Ain B.: Yeah. Just honoring that.

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Aldita Amaru Gallardo: I do. And it was heartbreaking.

[00:22:58] **Ain B.:** Yeah. Especially when it's like you're trying to share who you are. That's ultimately what you're doing. Telling the truth about who you are.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah, about who I am. Yeah. And really, as a parent, you should always be supportive of the child that you brought into this earth, you're supposed to be their cheerleader throughout.

Ain B.: Yep.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: It doesn't stop.

Ain B.: Yep.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: But they had to do their own learning and unlearning. Which I think as like authority figures in this nuclear family, they were like, oh, we don't know everything. So it was like challenging them and their norms. And I'm grateful to say that they're still on their journey.

But my parents try very hard to name me by the name that I have chosen for myself. They, for the most part, gender me correctly. You know, in Spanish sometimes the conjugations and the endings of other things get them a little, like they stumble sometimes, but you know, at least. And there was even efforts when I tried to correct them that that felt like, oh, you're challenging my authority. You don't tell me, you know, that I am wrong.

Ain B.: Right.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: But I'm like, we have to be able to move through conflict. We have to be able to move and understand that this is actually conflict. You're just disrespecting me and -

Ain B.: Right. Let's name it what it is.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Let's actually tell the truth about what this is. And you know, we are able to share space and spend time together. I try very hard.

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This has also been, I have to give credit to myself for sticking through it and wanting more. And also it's a journey to know what they're able to hold in their own boundaries. And like being patient with them is unnatural. When at home here in the Bay Area, you know, they're in Florida, I'm in the Bay Area. Again, the stories of cities, politics.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: That I am like, oh, you're in a different place. Literally, figuratively.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm. Chronologically.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Chronologically. I know. Yeah. And their generation, because thankfully my siblings were like, oh yeah, of course. Aldita.

Ain B.: Right

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yes.

Ain B.: Done.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: You're my sister. Done.

Ain B.: Yes. Done.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: And with the nibbling, they're like, okay, auntie, let's go. Yeah. Let's go out and play. Like non-issue. So I was like, okay. In my lifetime I've seen that difference, you know? Of what's possible.

Ain B.: Thank you for sharing.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: Thank you for being vulnerable with me, with us. And I want to acknowledge you because the thread that I heard through that was your commitment and intention to being in relationship with them, which is the defining piece. Right?

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Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right.

Ain B.: And that there was a lot of emotional labor and probably continues to be Okay. Families of origin.

[00:26:11] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** Families of origins that are listening. There's a lot of labor.

Ain B.: Okay. Hello. Okay. There's a lot of labor to be in relationship with all the caveats that we've said geographically, chronologically, generationally, et cetera,

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Culturally. Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: Culturally, and also like at the baseline, what the conversation is that you named so well is just respect. Respect and love. And so I just, you know, I think it's, I'm always so grateful that we are able to weather the storms and come out stronger. And I also wanna stop and give our hearts a little bit of a squeeze. All that that actually means, you know?

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: Because there are worlds and worlds inside of that.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Absolutely. Absolutely. But you're asking us to, oh, I know that we do this work of mothering and parent reparenting ourselves. And to get to this point, to be able to talk about it and to just also, you know. It changed the trajectory of who I was and the kind of work that I wanted to do, which is immediately why I moved into trans and queer youth organizing, 'cause I wanted to be an adult mentor to young people who were experiencing isolation and rejection and unaccepting spaces.

So, yeah. What a journey. And I think that's for so many of us. And I'm curious for you around how that, yeah. If that, if this is moving anything through you.

Ain B.: Yeah. Thank you so much. Yeah. My, like I said, actually recognizing my queerness wasn't the issue. I was like, oh, okay. I was 16, so it was all in perfect timing for my developmental sexuality at the time. But I was not raised in a household where disclosure was easy. And in fact, my mom found out...I was raised by a single mom and [she] found out sort of by accident.

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Like I had a friend stay over and we were wrestling. Now we weren't doing anything in the house. I would never do that.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Decorum.

Ain B.: Right. Decorum. Thank you. And, still, somehow there was some blemish on my body in the morning. And so,

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Oh,

Ain B.: My mom and I got into a physical altercation, which is a nice way of saying. I mean, I wasn't doing anything physical. Anyway, it was a tense time for probably a week. She told everyone in the family, luckily the family was like, Okay. And, you know, So that took a little bit of wind out of the sails.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right.

Ain B.: And I was blessed with having teachers and a school that was fairly, that were in their own learning journey. So there were a lot of us in the hallways, some of us doing a little more PDA than others. And so they asked GLSEN to come in and talk to the teachers and my mom was the only mom who was invited to that teacher training.

And so the next day when I went to school, all my teachers, or at least three outta my, probably five or six teachers were like, if you ever need to come talk to us, we are here for you. And, you know, great. Thank you.

It was a...I, I couldn't have asked for better or more. And so that was my journey, you know? We don't talk about my queerness at all in the family. And, the last time I brought it up in a rather frustrated way, it turned into a whole other cascade of things that have shifted some of my internal relationships.

And so, I am grateful that it's not a thing I'm ashamed of, that I feel empowered by any identity that I'm so lucky to inhabit.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: That's right.

Ain B.: And, you know, there's still. What are those gaps that happen in sort of natural relationship that don't happen because of my queerness? I wonder.

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I've also been single for a bit, so I wonder if there's any connection to that, but we could save that for an offline conversation.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I wanna mirror back the beauty of your teachers and your school mobilizing to show you support. Bringing in a community partner expert or like someone with the knowledge to share with community. That's how we show up for our young people.

Ain B.: Truly. Yeah. And they really created an environment where...I feel I'll speak for myself. I felt very safe. I felt very comfortable.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right.

Ain B.: There was never...I didn't have fear within that environment in that way for those reasons, so yeah. A lot of gratitude to just the educators who care and who are doing the work because they wanna show up and make a difference. 'cause they do, they really, really do. Still to this day.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: They do.

Ain B.: Yeah.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: And they're usually teachers who are doing this through a volunteer service. They're usually fundraising on their own or spending their own dollars for their GSA club.

Ain B.: Let's talk about it.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: You know.

Ain B.: Okay. Let's talk about it.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Much,

Ain B.: Much love.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yes.

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Ain B.: To the sacrifice and the purpose and the intention and the love, frankly, that's what it is.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: That's right. Yeah.

[00:32:31] **Ain B.:** Aldita, I would love to hear more about your love and sort of where you started to name, what's your relational experience and how that led to your work with queer and trans youth. And yeah, can you share more about how you are, where you are today?

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah. And the theme of becoming. I'm happy to share that, because I think once I moved to California over 10 years ago, I started working around LGBT work. When I was in Chicago, I was doing migrants rights work. And truth be told, I was like, there's a bridge, there's an intersection here. But we weren't, I was not there. And I don't think the movements were there.

There was some budding intersectional movements that were happening at that time, but it really wasn't until I moved to Oakland where I saw Black Indigenous People Of Color. I'm moving for Oakland. Shout out to

Ain B.: Oakland. Oakland. Shout out to Oakland.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: My goodness. Everyone talks about the histories and we should, there's so many like Black Power Movements.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: The American Indian Movement.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Queer and Trans Movements. But like, it was, it's like in the present.

Ain B.: Yeah.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: And yeah, I got to name things for who I am and started embodying my trans femininity here. And it was during the time that I

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was doing this drop in space work with queer and trans youth in West Oakland, going to schools, helping them start GSA networks, like I was exploring gender and playing with gender alongside them.

I was really grateful that the work was able to transform me and allow me permission to explore things that I didn't allow myself to explore.

Ain B.: Oh wow.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: I know. So I have a lot of love and found self-love here. There was no running away from it. We're pretty proud about all of our identities in Oakland. So I'm grateful and so to how I entered philanthropy, 'cause that's kind of the work that I do now.

But it's hard to summarize, you know, all the things that I did prior to philanthropy that had me questioning like, where's the money? Or why is my program officer asking me things? But I'm not the one making decisions on where money is going, how it's being spent from the grant that I got.

And, I was gonna talk about the organizing with other trans people of color locally to create spaces for young people and then also just nationally. Enter a discourse of like, where are trans movements? How are we connecting, how are we creating spaces for strategizing and power building that I was plugged in on that.

Then, you know, through facilitations like Allied Media Conference and creating spaces for other Black and Indigenous Queer and Trans People Of Color who are also trans. Where like, I had more curiosity and someone saw me facilitate and was like, you should consider this job. And I was like, I don't know what this is. Then, you know, I was like, it's time to learn. It's time to be in discomfort about being a learner about something new and know that it was for the benefit of the work and for community.

Ain B.: Beautiful.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah.

Ain B.: Yeah. You know, this world of money as a means to achieving all that. You're naming networks, connections, community mutuality, reciprocity.

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Right. That money is a tool that allows the folks that we care about to have access to those things for themselves. And, and money is a whole world.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Amen.

Ain B.: So, I wonder how does Spirit show up in your money. Learning money, life money intention.

[00:36:46] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** Yeah. I mean, even just entering this world of redistributing money through grants was...I was, I started being in deeper relationship with spirit. Being like, I'm not sure what you're asking me to do, or, I don't know the purpose of this administrative work that then led into, you know, running and directing programs that. Creating vehicles for funding streams to trans movements, to then eventually becoming an independent consultant, an advisor to create more vehicles and flows of money. Like where I am now, I didn't think that I would be. Like, I didn't dream into this job.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: It so happened through my movement work that I think was guided by spirit the whole time. That got me to this point. Now there's definitely like technical things, learning the jargon. Going to the fellowships, going to the events, and meeting people that, you know, I'm glad that I'm a, you know, part-time extrovert Gemini that enjoys that. But it is, it was a lot of work to, you know, create the networks of support for myself.

And ultimately, as they're supporting me, they're supporting trans movements. And it kind of just is an ever flowing flow of care and support that have gotten me. None of us do this alone.

And I really do feel that, I do feel like I am, I was brought in with the right folks and continue to build more spaces and open up more doors for other folks. And that love and trust that is built through this really generates more love and trust, from other folks. And that I know has been true in the sector and it's hard to name that in a, in a space that is about money and metrics and evaluation.

When for me, it has been so much about spirit and the unknown and trusting and having faith that, you know, as we do this work, as we amplify it, as we share more information on how we're redistributing dollars, that, you know, it just grows and it amplifies..

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Ain B.: Yeah. I was talking to [Elissa Sloan Perry](#) [We Outside, Ep.2] and she just really opened up and named that movement work is faith work.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah.

Ain B.: You know, and so it's interesting, not confusing, but interesting that, we're in, or I used to be in a field of philanthropy that doesn't actually name the purpose and also what is guiding it. So, you know, we talk a lot about change. You mentioned the jargon. Oh, the infinite jargon.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: And we talk about change, but we don't equate change to transformation. And I think of transformation as the opposite of incremental change and actually what we're all desiring and moving towards. And then these systems and structures are asking us to do that incrementally,

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right

Ain B.: Or we don't talk about spirit, but so many of us are drawn to the work that either got us into philanthropy or the work that we're doing in philanthropy because of spirit and following our curiosity or following what we're explicitly told to do.

And you know, I think there's a disservice to this. The distinctions that are made here, that one is not the other, that both are not the same. And that we leave a lot on the table as far as approaches and strategies when we're not talking and speaking in the language of love and the language of trust and the language of community and of gift.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: And I just wonder what you know about the unlearning that you might have had to do to be in this space or what you know about this space, better than it knows itself. I'm sure that can fill a book.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Oh, truly. That we should be co-authoring at this point.

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Ain B.: Okay. Let's do it.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: But you're right. Sort of the language, to what you're getting at. The language that we use or that is forced upon us or that we use in philanthropy is limiting to larger transformational work. And this is in large part why I named the fund that I launched last year called the [Action for Transformation Fund](#).

Ain B.: Yes.

[00:41:47] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** That resources, rapid response resources to organizing, power building and healing work led by and for trans people. And it was heavy on the action part. 'cause we needed to mobilize and do, you know, direct actions.

And through my advisors and this work, it's been revealed that we've been funding mostly the transformational arts and culture ritual work. And it was even hard to name, like we wanna fund ceremonies and two spirit balls and like things that give us life when philanthropy is so limited and puts us in little boxes in these silos, our work and our vision. So where there's a subversive sort of work that we, I get to do alongside my advisors, that I think, you know, sometimes we want to be legible and sometimes we don't because we know that philanthropy is limited and we just work, like it's an inside / outside strategy we're doing.

Ain B.: All the time.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: what we can within this inside, right?

Ain B.: Yes. Yeah.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: But you're right around also the things that you were naming around being able to live an integrated life. Right. So much of this sector wants us to compartmentalize, to even disassemble ourselves when actually as trans people, as people of color, we are doing this work with our full selves and bringing not just our mind and intellectual labor, but we're bringing our heart and spirit work. And the spirit work is the thing that sustains us through all of it. And especially in these times, which is like urgency, crisis, violence, which is true, right? Like how are we sustaining ourselves?

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So that's even more of the work necessary for us to stay in this, in this line of work. And the work that trans people model every day of like, we are gonna be beautiful and alchemize all this pain and hurt into self adornment, self-expression, self-awareness, self love, community love. That is really powerful. And that's our gift.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: So like, what a beautiful, what a necessary reframe to invite philanthropy to say. Hey, we are the gift, actually. Not the money, actually.

Ain B.: Actually.

[00:44:28] **Aldita Amaru Gallardo:** Actually. And we have like legacies of resilience and innovation that you all aren't actually resourcing to fund for the long haul. In fact, all communities should be learning from trans communities, especially in these fascist times. We are the blueprint.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Trans movements are the blueprint to move us forward and survive what's ahead.

Ain B.: Right, of course. Which is why they're coming down on trans communities because you are the key in so many ways for us to be fully self-expressed. Fully who we actually are outside of any paradigms that have been handed to us or forced upon us.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right.

Ain B.: And in joy. Right. And so in a society that wants to foment fear so that it can continue to control. Trans folks are a hundred percent a challenge to that. Right.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: A challenge, an antidote.

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Ain B.: Hello. Well. And that is the antidote in the sense of, you know, thinking about philanthropy is like if we are the gift, then you actually just get to receive that and there's actually nothing else you need.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right

Ain B.: Part of, I think, the reciprocity in healing is that you don't actually have to know the widgets and the outcomes and the metrics and the bop bop, like actually to be in gift. You could just receive what is the transformation that's being caused by giving the money. And you know, we talk about freeing the coin all the time. And that's how we met freeing the coin. Okay.

And I just wanna say, I really appreciate your action for transformation because one doesn't happen without the other.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: That's right.

Ain B.: And we need to be in action around sourcing and resourcing all of these practices that will further enable, advance, expand, and deepen our ability to transform. Period.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm. Period.

Ain B.: So maybe we should write a book. Hmm.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Honestly, I have a couple chapters in my heart that need to be written.

Ain B.: Yes, yes. Well, when we get together, we can have a little chat about that 'cause

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah. I love that. I would love that also because the energy of money is so bizarre, you know, like the way everyone wants it, it's been glorified. We need, like, in this capitalist system, we have to, we need it to get our basic needs.

But as someone who grew up like working poor, the scale of money now, it just becomes like monopoly money. And I'm like, you don't need to hoard that much money, billionaires. No, you don't. No, you don't need to hoard you actually for what is it doing historically? It's like it's not yours.

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Ain B.: Yeah.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yeah, put it to good use

Ain B.: And if we're thinking and talking about spirit, what actually is happening to your spirit in the hoarding? and I'm not gonna name names, but I think we can look around and see how time and having and holding billions and billions of dollars transforms people.

I'll leave it to you to decide if that's for better or worse.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right Listeners, insert all the names that we know

Ain B.: you know who we're talking about.

Aldita, I would love to invite you if there's anything that we have, I mean, there's so much. I feel like I could talk to you for probably 10 podcast episodes, but is there anything in this moment in time that you want to share or lift up or name?

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Um, yeah. Let's see. So many things. I think just like this moment is asking a lot from all of us, and I think the things that are keeping me grounded are the silly little things that bring me joy and make no sense.

Sometimes, like for instance, I just bought this beautiful botanical series Lego set. I haven't played with Legos since I was a kid, and I think when I was starting to do some inner child work in therapy, I bought a little baby Moana Lego set, and that was like amazing, right It gave me girly, it gave me nerdy, it gave me the neurodivergent tactical play, putting together things.

And I was just, you know, I just encourage all of your listeners to find their little moments of joy and to do the inner child work as we move through this period of time. Because these little flower bouquet, Lego plastic, tacky little things are giving me so much joy.

Ain B.: Yes.

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Aldita Amaru Gallardo: And taking it apart, like piece by piece. Everything is done piece by piece. And it's just a lot of beauty and silliness that is just giving me lots of joy and I invite folks into that.

Ain B.: I love that. For you and for us, and I have my little, tiny Moana doll right here. So I'm like, yes. Okay. Remind me that all is possible and there's great music happening out there.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: music, yes. To this ride, these waves.

Ain B.: Yes. To ride these waves and to continue to seek, right? For what we know is justice and what is right.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: That's right.

Ain B.: And that we get to play while we do that

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: We do. And to restore our relationship to land and Pachamama and that, It's all. And to folks Land Back, hello. You know, the folks in the islands

Ain B.: shout out. Land Back.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Land back. Yes.

Ain B.: I would like to invite you to share a sacred shout out with our listeners. What is bringing you joy or gratitude or wonder and awe these days?

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Oh, awe. I love the word all 'cause it's kind of always just breathtaking. And to me it's always going by water. I go to the Berkeley Marina, Cesar Chavez Park.

Ain B.: Yes.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Where the kites are flying. The breeze is always cool. Where there's like natural purple sage, just getting lost in the park and feeling

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the winds and hearing the crash crashes of waves, always just does something for me.

It allows me to release, it allows me to reconnect with land and reconnect with myself. And she's always there holding us down, holding us with so much power. And fierceness and calm. And so yeah. Shout out to the waters that hold me here. And that also connect us across lands.

[00:52:21] **Ain B.:** Yes. Yes.

Thank you so much for re-presencing that water, in particular.

My sacred shout out is the [James Webb telescope](#). I am delighted with every aspect of the James Webb Telescope, and in particular, as we're in this moment of government shutdown, I just want to honor all the people that that's impacting.

And also our sense of curiosity, wonder and discovery for what is greater than us. What is a mystery to us. And for me, the James Webb Telescope and NASA, are indicators of our human desire to know and to be known. And I recommend any and all James Webb documentaries, the intentional precision within which this tool was developed and designed is just a testament to, I think, what is best about humanity.

Our full potential, our ability to be in integrity and be on purpose and to create something that is bigger than ourselves as well. And then not to mention all these gorgeous, glorious pictures from the beginning of time that we get to see. What?! So, you know, I'm mindful that as much as chaos reigns and so much is being destroyed, that also so much is being created.

And, even if we don't hear about it in the same way as we hear about the destruction that wonder is unfolding right now, all the time and throughout space and time. So my shout out is the James Webb Telescope, and I invite listeners to get into it.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Yes. I love a science moment.

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[00:54:43] **Ain B.:** I know. I was like, oh, I'm my little nerd self, but that's just who I am.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: I love it. Yes.

Ain B.: Thank you.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Let's look to the stars.

Ain B.: Look to the stars where we came from, frankly, so, you know, that tells you what I think about human potential is just unlimited.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Right.

Ain B.: You know,

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: We are stardust. Yes.

Ain B.: That's it. And that's all.

Ain B.: Do you have a listener prompt or question or practice that you'd invite a listener into?

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Ooh,

Ain B.: You sort of said it a little bit around your toy, but I'm also holding if there's,

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: You know, I, these days, I just have made space for dance whenever possible. And normally I'm a queer that has met a lot of other queers on a dance floor.

At my age now I'm like less social in that way, but I still need to dance to shake, move the energies in my body to tap into energies that are maybe stuck or I don't get to access. It's been little dance breaks in the kitchen in between a call and between washing a dish in between, you know, a little homemaking moment.

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I'm like, just dance for five, 10 minutes. Mm. It just brightens your day.

Ain B.: Beautiful. What a beautiful practice. And I concur.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Mm-hmm.

Ain B.: I also dance in between and I'm like, oh, the body is so thankful to just move.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: She's, she's there. She wants you to move her. Yes.

Ain B.: Yes. Aldita, it's so lovely to have you. Thank you for being our guest and sharing you, just always a delight.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Thank you. Ain. this was such a delight.

Thank you for having me. I love that you are doing this and getting to share all the beautiful stories that you have one-on-one with folks and in service of New Seneca Village. I'm so grateful to have met you prior to that, but to see where New Seneca is evolving and growing into, I'm just, it's such a delight to be a part of this galaxy, this new Seneca Galaxy and Village that we are a part of, so thank you.

Ain B.: Thank you, thank you. Thank you.

[Guest shares their bio] Aldita Amaru Gallardo: Aldita Amaru Gallardo uses she, her ella pronouns is a philanthropic consultant, donor organizer, and founding director of the Action for Transformation Fund, a rapid response fund, resourcing, transit, organizing, healing and power building efforts, and the United States. She is a disabled and Indigiqueer trans woman from Lima, Peru, and has called Oakland, California.

On unceded Ohlone land home for over a decade. She is committed to resourcing generative movements, working toward collective liberation. And transforming philanthropy and society writ large so that no one is left behind. I would add to my bio, Aldita comes from the cerros, which means like small mountains and Santa Pandemia Flores

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She's the youngest of three and an auntie to five nibblings. She is a dog mom to Peppers, a feisty Chiweenie dog. She loves boba and tamales and finds a lot of joy in having little knickknacks around. I love little teacups and little plates, little tiny little things.

Ain B.: Little, little tiny things, just you don't have to tell me. I love a tiny thing.

Aldita Amaru Gallardo: I love a little tiny thing. So, and whenever she travels, which she does often for work, she likes to buy a little gift, a little magnet to remember her travel and tries to support local artists.

[Static Outro] Ain B.: The We Outside Podcast is produced and hosted by Ain B., and produced and edited by Aisha Jordan. For access to resources mentioned in the episode, check out the show notes.

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