

# Aurelia Pratt

📅 October 29, 2020 ⌚ 46:23

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

COVID-19, pastor, religious leader, woman of color, Chicana, decolonizing/decolonization, progressive, racial tension, justice, liberation, anti-racism work, microaggression, marginalized communities, social media, Philippines, Baylor School of Social Work

## SPEAKERS

Mary Wilson, Aurelia Pratt

**M** Mary Wilson 00:01  
Hi, I'm Mary Wilson. It's October 29th, 2020. I am talking to Reverend Aurelia Pratt and we are in the midst of chatting about the pandemic, and pastoring, and just life stories. Really i'm wondering if you could - well, I've already given your name, but if you could introduce yourself a little more, and give us a little background of your story and things that have been important to you to shape your life to where you are today.

**A** Aurelia Pratt 00:34  
Yeah, my name is Aurelia, I'm from a little town in rural North Louisiana, called Homer. I grew up in the, basically in the 90s. What's interesting about that is that the town I grew up in was essentially segregated and [there was] a lot of racial tension even in that time. That experience really shaped me, especially as a Brown woman, who - the tension was mostly between White people and Black people. There weren't a lot, if any, people who looked like me, and White people didn't always know what to do with me [laugh].

**M** Mary Wilson 01:18  
Yeah, were you feeling very much in between?

A

Aurelia Pratt 01:22

Yes. I consider myself a Chicana woman. I grew up very disconnected from my identity and my heritage because of being in these small rural town, but I can say any Latina or Latinx woman that I talk with will resonate with that liminal space - very much in between-ness.

M

Mary Wilson 01:49

Can you say more about what Chicana means to you?

A

Aurelia Pratt 01:52

Chicana is basically a - Tejana, it would be a Mexican from Texas, a person of Mexican heritage from Texas. Chicana is a person of Mexican heritage from anywhere, I guess, in the United States. That's my impression and that's how I identify. Also, a Filipina, my grandfather was an immigrant from the Philippines, my maternal grandfather. I have those backgrounds that kind of shaped my life and my identity. Then growing up in the context I did, very disconnected from all of that. Then I moved to Texas for seminary and I also got my Master of Social Work when I was doing my seminary degree. I actually went to Truett and the Baylor School of Social Work. That's how I came to Texas.

M

Mary Wilson 02:13

I did not know that. That's another great thing about doing these interviews, I'm learning so much about you.

A

Aurelia Pratt 03:03

Yeah, I'm actually still affiliated with the Baylor School of Social Work. I'm on the board of advocates for it, going on maybe my third year. I still get to be connected to that community. That's a great connection to have. I basically, right out of seminary, I started a church in Central Texas.

M

Mary Wilson 03:32

What year did you all start that?



Aurelia Pratt 03:34

It was 2012.



Mary Wilson 03:37

2012. What kind of congregation is it?



Aurelia Pratt 03:40

We are a progressive church affiliated with some progressive Baptist affiliations. We started out less progressive and sort of moderate. The marker of the church was that women could be preachers, women in ministry, that was the big thing that made us so progressive. When we first started the church, we were very closely affiliated with the local Baptist denomination. I forget what you call it, but the community for local Baptist denomination, which has a whole spectrum. What they would do is they would support people in starting churches and so, I sort of fell into this because we were moving to the area already because my husband is in the tech industry and we were moving to Austin. I was looking around and this opportunity came up and I really loved what the church was, what the vision was on paper. We started it in conjunction with some close affiliations, including the cooperative Baptist fellowship, "Kyle CBF" We started it as a team and then about five years in, the other pastor that started the church with me, the lead pastor at the time, he moved on to work for CBF global, overseeing -



Mary Wilson 05:11

I don't know that I remembered where he had gone.



Aurelia Pratt 05:14

Yeah. He went to CBF, they liked what he was doing, what we were doing and were like, "can you oversee all our church start programs?" He went to go do that and I moved into the role of lead pastor. That was about two and a half years ago. Also, around that time, our church experienced a pretty significant rebirth. I mean, nothing is the same, we changed everything. In the last five years, we changed our name, our mission, our vision, our core values, we changed everything. We just became unapologetically bold and just repentant for how we've been complicit. Our work is the work of justice and liberation and we have to do some decolonizing, and deconstruction, and some confession. That's kind of who we are now. We call ourselves a unicorn church because we just sort have all kinds of traditions that inform who we are. We don't compare ourselves

to anybody. We just make it up as we go along. But yet, we really are grounded in ancient practices that we believe are important.

M

Mary Wilson 06:31

Yeah, I've got to ask, what was the catalyst for the changes - the change in name, the change in vision, the change in focus? Did something happen or was it just the growth?

A

Aurelia Pratt 06:48

Some of it was just gradual. We started this church with the help of this organization and it was sort of being spearheaded by the director at the time. A month before we launched, he said, "I can't help with this anymore." We inherited kind of what was his vision with a couple of other people, me and the other pastor at the time, Kyle, we inherited this. It wasn't necessarily what we created. And so, over time, we would change things. We would say, this doesn't really feel - we're just a church who always has held things lightly, and have always said, "okay, are we living fully into who we believe the church should be? And if we're not we need to change it." We're just constantly changing things. We did that with the name, and the mission, and vision, and all that. Where we've started becoming more bold, in terms of justice work, and really just saying, what we would say was, "there are countless other churches who aren't being bold. You could close your eyes and point and find the perfect church for you." We need to be vocal. What I always say is, the right people left. The right people left and then we were like, "we're free!"

M

Mary Wilson 08:17

I understand and I think every pastor would understand what that means.

A

Aurelia Pratt 08:23

Yes and at the same time, and I don't mean to be mean, that's the insight of a pastor. There are loud voices that hold you back and we were able to slowly become the kind of church that is very rejecting of hierarchy. And so, there's no one person that runs the show when our lead pastor left, we didn't, we were fine. We just kept going because we all share the load. When people come in with a personality or an intention that is not kindred to that non-hierarchal way of being, they just don't want to be there.

M

Mary Wilson 09:07

Right, right. I want to go back to something, you used a word that I'm not sure a lot of people understand what it will mean in practice - decolonizing. Could you go into that a little bit more?

A

Aurelia Pratt 09:22

Yeah. Let's see, how do I go into this without being too jargon-y. This is how I explain decolonization and explain it in the context of faith work. Decolonizing is the idea, to me, and these are my words, that our faith has, especially in our Christian faith in the United States, has been shaped by a White supremacist paradigm and a patriarchal paradigm. Those paradigms were brought by people who colonized the land, the land that wasn't ours. And that spirit, and that posture of taking, and controlling, and power has informed everything, every person of faith or not in our country. It has informed us the way we look at success, the way we look at money, the way we look at every single thing, including our faith. We have to decolonize, we have to look past that and not accept it as normal, as a part of our anti-racism work. When I talk about decolonize in a faith context, what I like to say is that we are all, hopefully, we are waking up to some things. As we wake up, as the church wakes up, and confesses, and repents, and seeks to change, we realize we have to deconstruct. There's a lot we have to deconstruct. What I'm saying is that we can't deconstruct without also decolonizing, they go hand in hand. We can't separate our faith work and our anti-racism work. I don't know if that answers your question.

M

Mary Wilson 11:23

It was very helpful. Then I want to come back to what that means for you personally, as to kind of how does that tie into your personal story?

A

Aurelia Pratt 11:35

Well, I had to wake up. We're all waking up, we're never gonna arrive. That's why we say it's a practice. It's a part of our spiritual practice. We just practice over and over and over and forever. I had to wake up to this stuff too because I grew up in a context that I was so disconnected from my identity on top of all those historical and cultural factors. I never had a space to really wake up because everything was accepted. And it's embarrassing for me, because I go into spaces with people of color and this is their whole life. I'm actually writing a book about my experience with racial trauma and why that gives me

authority to critique the church. Sorry, I just totally lost my train of thought.

M Mary Wilson 12:46  
That's okay.

A Aurelia Pratt 12:47  
I just have all of these experiences with racial trauma that I'm now remembering. It's not that they never happened. When I talk to people of color, a lot of people of color have been awake to it for a longer time because they were in context with other people of color and this is their life. For me, I do have the trauma and a whole book worth of experiences of microaggressions.

M Mary Wilson 13:12  
Would you mind sharing an example of and how that's impacted you?

A Aurelia Pratt 13:18  
I'll share a recent example, which is, to me, relevant because what I talk about are microaggressions because that's the problem. I mean, blatant racism is a problem, most people agree on that. Where it gets tricky, especially in predominantly white churches, and especially progressive ones, who think, "we've arrived," is that we don't notice the microaggressions and how much ongoing trauma they cause. This is true for any marginalized group in you can identify with that - as someone in a marginalized group of microaggressions being really seeping into your spirit, and keeping you shrunk and bent and small. An example would be, I have a daughter who is four years old and she looks just like her dad, who is a White man. She doesn't look like me. I have nieces who are blond haired, light skinned nieces. Before I had kids, I use to take them on outings, I still take them on outings, but I used to take them on outings, and I would always make this self deprecating joke like, "oh, everyone probably thinks I'm the nanny, look at the contrast.

M Mary Wilson 14:43  
Yeah.

A

Aurelia Pratt 14:44

Then one day, I was with my own daughter, and I got mistaken for the nanny. An interaction happened where I was assumed to be the nanny. It's one of those things where in the moment I just functioned because that's what you do. And then I thought back on it with this constant rage that's burning within me anywhere. But you downplay it, you go, "she didn't mean anything by it or you look young, maybe she thought you looked too young or, I don't know, whatever, she didn't have bad intentions." If they don't have bad intentions, okay. Then I'm like, "no because if I were a White woman with a Brown child, I would have adopted that child, I would have been that child's savior."

M

Mary Wilson 15:43

Right.

A

Aurelia Pratt 15:44

But because I have Brown skin, I'm the nanny.

M

Mary Wilson 15:48

Exactly.

A

Aurelia Pratt 15:49

Then that's more recent, but I can go through my whole life and I can think story after story after story. They're just coming up and I'm writing them down because I got to get them out of my body.

M

Mary Wilson 16:03

Right because we carry things in our body. Well, thank you for sharing that and being vulnerable enough to share it in this and the rest of the stories that will be in your book. I have no doubt it will be an important read.

A

Aurelia Pratt 16:24

Yeah, and I'm just writing. In my mind, I'm writing a book. I'm not saying, "I'm writing a book, it's gonna be published at this time." I just know I'm writing.

M

Mary Wilson 16:33

In my mind I'm writing a book too [laugh]. I have an idea that my doctoral project can become a book. We'll see if that can happen, see if I can put in the work to do that. I'm just struck by where we are in as a society, the stories that you have to share. Then how does that translate into your work as a pastor? How does your congregation respond to work of decolonizing or the microaggressions you've experienced and how much of that do they do they know happens? What's the awareness?

A

Aurelia Pratt 17:25

I never talked about my identity or didn't even think I was allowed to claim being a person of color because I was, I didn't have a community of color to go to. I didn't feel like a lot of what I realized now was trauma, I didn't even know was trauma up until a certain point because you're taught this is all acceptable. This is you, you are the problem. Then not having a community of color, being in that in between space, I just didn't talk about it for probably five years in the church. Then 2016, that election, oh god, that election was so terrible and I was so frustrated with the White people who were on the fence about whether or not it was terrible. I hadn't ever felt this disconnect with certain people that I engaged with because we tend to be on the same page and stay in our little bubbles, right. And so, it was weird to see people have a hard time voting against Donald Trump. It was like people had to go through this struggle. I'm over here, like, "what the heck, this is obvious." I realized in that moment it's because of my experiences a Brown woman. This is why so many of these people can't understand this and this is why I'm feeling the way I feel. It was the first time I said that out loud. Then Charlottesville happened that next summer, and I thought all year long, I thought, "okay, this is evil, people are going to see it now. This is evil people are gonna see it now." Charlottesville happened and people had white hoods on with tiki torches, and were marching through the streets, and I thought, "okay, this is it, everyone's gonna agree that Black Lives Matter, and that it's totally reasonable that Colin Kaepernick is kneeling at the football game or everyone's going to understand now because we can see a vision of it." I mean, some people did.

M

Mary Wilson 20:01

I don't want to interject my personal experiences in your interview because I want hear from you, but the sermon I preached that Sunday meant we had one less couple in our church afterwards. I had a man so angry that they would not even shake my hand on the way out the door, and never came back. In my progressive church, I was being too



pro people of color. It was more or less said to me. Seriously, they're shouting nazi slogans.

A

Aurelia Pratt 20:45

I know, it's like, it should be a big deal. It should be obvious that we would -

M

Mary Wilson 20:52

Yeah, and you're angry at me for calling that out as wrong, even evil? Anyway, it was interesting.

A

Aurelia Pratt 21:00

It was a really significant marker in time, that whole year, and I ended up writing a sermon after that call. I think I called it "my race story." You could probably find it on her podcast. I literally told the story and for the first time, in a public setting, spoke on being a Brown woman, and owned it, and shared personal stories to my community. Thank God, I mean, it was so well received. That whole fall, we just really - that's the fall that everything changed. It was not just me, it was the whole election, it was Charlottesville, it was the whole year leading up, and realizing enough is enough. We cannot straddle the fence about - we have to be more vocal. That is the first time that I shared with my community. Then over the course of the last three years it's just been a beautiful journey together of waking up.

M

Mary Wilson 22:14

I was gonna ask, what was the response of your community to share?

A

Aurelia Pratt 22:17

It was a great response. That sermon was probably one of the highest shared sermons I've ever preached, if I had to guess, and it was a great response. Then we had more talks on racism after and then the next spring, that's when Kyle left, and I stepped in as pastor, as lead pastor. We're redoing our website right now, so we're rewriting content. One of the pages that we're going to have is our commitment to anti-racism. And so, what we wanted to do was just list everything we're doing, a timeline of our continued work, and to show we're committed to this. I was writing it out and I was overwhelmed. I was so proud of how much we've done since then, just for a tiny, predominantly White church. Just documentary

series and book clubs, and immigration workshops, and trips to the border. The majority of people we're bringing in are women of color, just a total commitment to learning and sitting at the feet of women of color. Like I said, any marginalized group we want to, I say, "Jesus took his cues from the margins, and that's who we need to take our cues from."

**M** Mary Wilson 23:47  
Yeah, that's the gospel, huh?

**A** Aurelia Pratt 23:51  
Yeah [laugh].

**M** Mary Wilson 23:55  
Well, let me move a little bit to the pandemic. How are things? How is it being a pastor in the pandemic right now?

**A** Aurelia Pratt 24:03  
You know, no one's thriving.

**M** Mary Wilson 24:09  
I think that's what I'm hearing, yes.

**A** Aurelia Pratt 24:13  
Yeah, it's hard. I will say that because of some of the things that are essential to our culture helped us. The fact that we always hold things lightly helped us. We were earlier on the side of shutting things down and going online, without a problem, just not one single complaint. We still haven't met in person for a Sunday gathering. We have not had one complaint in eight months. We're moving toward a monthly outdoor something, but we haven't done that yet. It's been very hard because we had to start a new church. That's the way I look at it. It's like, okay, we're a new church now. What do we need to do? Everything we had planned when we shut down to go online, everything we had planned and we planned through September back in February, we threw it all out the window. We said, "we got to speak to the times now, period." We're not doing any of it. We just

created all new programming and a whole new rhythm. It has been very hard, but our community has been so beautiful throughout this, and I feel like we're closer. I feel like we've actually grown in number. We haven't taken a financial hit, but we never had a lot of money to begin with, and we don't have a building, so [laugh].

M

Mary Wilson 25:41

Yeah. When you don't have a whole lot to begin with, I get that. My congregation was never an economic powerhouse in terms of the amount. The way it was used was phenomenal, but always made me very proud. Yeah, I get that. Talk a little bit about the fact that y'all don't have a building. Where had you been meeting? And what are you doing now?

A

Aurelia Pratt 26:13

Well, we had been meeting at a little music lesson, music school, which worked pretty well. We have tons of kids. I mean, we have so many little kids, a lot of young families. It wasn't ideal for the programming for classes and stuff because you could only fit four to five kids in a lesson room, they're small. The recital room was where we had our worship services, so it was perfect. The chairs were already there, the sound system was already there at the stage, it was already ready for us. We were there for a couple of years. We just decided early, we decided in April to end our lease. We were on a month to month lease, and we decided to just end it. We have been saving everything, [it] feels so good. It was so stressful before just barely getting by to pay our rent and everything. And we have three pastors, so we're all basically part part time with no benefits and doing it out of the love of our hearts and the belief in it. And because we all have three amazing partners who enable us to do it.

M

Mary Wilson 27:38

I understand that.

A

Aurelia Pratt 27:40

Yeah.

M

Mary Wilson 27:43

I'm familiar with that relationship.

A

Aurelia Pratt 27:45

Yeah, we've been doing online. We put out all kinds of creative programming in the beginning. If it wasn't so crazy, it would have been fun. We went every day on Facebook live with "coffee with the pastor," and we would get to share reflections and pastoral support. Then we started doing "coffee with a guest pastor" and we bring in, once a week, a guest. One of the gals in our congregations is a super fit person, and we did happy hour HIIT, and she would do live HIIT workouts every Friday. She only just stopped because she's getting married this week and then I think she's gonna continue and we changed to sunrise HIIT now, so first thing in the morning. We did so many different little live things. One thing we're doing now that's super cute for kids is a group - we made a team of people to think about what we could do for the kids. We divided them into age groups and so, for the last several weeks, right after church, one age group gets on and they make sock puppets together. The deacons delivered all the sock puppet materials, went around town delivering it, and they make sock puppets. And then there's going to be practices and there's going to be a whole music theater sock puppet show at Christmas.

M

Mary Wilson 29:09

Oh, wow. Right because you're not anticipating being able to meet for Christmas either.

A

Aurelia Pratt 29:15

We might do a one month thing, but we're going to be streaming it. We're not going to stop streaming because we grew, like there are people that join now, but don't live around, so we'll just continue streaming. Then the other thing I just want to say about what I've loved during this pandemic is that our deacons have been incredible. They have been the heartbeat of our church. I don't know how we would have made it without them because they just added so much where we didn't have the bandwidth to do all the pastoral care we usually do because we all have young kids. All the pastors have young kids and their jobs. They did this thing called the deacon door dash and over the course of several months, they dropped care packages off for every single family and family member, customized based on who lived at the house. It was just so super fun for people to open their door and get that surprise over the course of the month. We've done two whole nations online.

M

Mary Wilson 30:21

Oh, great. Well, I was wondering, you were talking about at the beginning, you did this daily content. Are you doing daily content now on Facebook Live?

A Aurelia Pratt 30:34  
No.

M Mary Wilson 30:35  
Did you find it was not sustainable?

A Aurelia Pratt 30:38  
It was not sustainable. And the other thing we do is we do not overwork ourselves, especially in these times. We did it every day and then in April, we added a guest. Then in May, we dropped a day, in June, we dropped a day. Right now, we do one a week and we all just rotate so it's one a month per person. The other thing we did starting in quarantine is that we split the preaching rotation equally because it used to be primarily me. Our other pastor, Matthew, once a month, and our other pastor friend, who does music, could only do it when she could find somebody to lead the music for her, right. So soon as quarantine happened, we just split it evenly and that has been beautiful. I don't think we'll change it after this.

M Mary Wilson 31:40  
Well, that leads to another question. What do you think will stick even after you can start meeting in person again, say potentially sometime next year? All the changes besides the rotation of preaching, what else do you think will stick?

A Aurelia Pratt 32:02  
Definitely the streaming and our relationship with social media. It's not like we get tons of energy into our souls from being on social media, we do not, but it's something we never had the bandwidth for, to figure out how to make it all accessible online. Now, we feel like it's the way of the future and we need to just keep going with it. Yeah, we're gonna keep streaming. That's the big thing. Lots of things will stick. I mean, just little things, little events and ideas. Also, small groups being on zoom, realizing that that's an option is great for us because we're a metro area church. People drive from Marble Falls, people drive from Stiletto, people drive from South Austin. People are driving for an hour.

M Mary Wilson 33:00  
During the week you can't do that in Austin.

A Aurelia Pratt 33:04  
Right. Realizing, okay, we can actually do some zoom small groups, even in the future, just to be helpful to those people who are having to drive so much.

M Mary Wilson 33:17  
Are you finding with people working from home as much as been needed and the amount of online either via zoom or some other medium, that there's any fatigue in those kind of gatherings?

A Aurelia Pratt 33:35  
Yeah, I have fatigue.

M Mary Wilson 33:37  
Yeah. I'm tired of it. Has that altered what you have offered?

A Aurelia Pratt 33:46  
Yes. That's why we went down to one a week.

M Mary Wilson 33:49  
There you go.

A Aurelia Pratt 33:50  
We altered it every time we dropped viewership, we would drop a day. Even for this one a week, I don't know if we'll keep doing it because people are pretty much back to whatever the new normal is, they're just not available. You know, like the way people were just on lockdown and everything was so up in the air. People are just trying to figure out how

to live in this now. The Sunday gatherings are full of energy. We have a great attendance for our size and everybody is engaging in the comments we push to Facebook for the whole time. I feel like we all feel like we're together and we're talking to each other. I know a lot of my colleague friends, they feel a huge disconnect on Sundays and people aren't participating in comments, but I think because our congregation is so young, and then people that aren't young. I mean, to be in our church, which is so progressive, and decolonizing, and deconstructing, and all this kind of stuff. We do have older people, but they are just all with it, and they're into the social media and they comment, so everyone is on. I think we had two people not on and they both caved and joined.



Mary Wilson 35:22

And so, everybody jumps on Facebook live stream?



Aurelia Pratt 35:27

Yeah, on Sundays, and they all talk to us and share comments, it's great fun.



Mary Wilson 35:34

Yeah, that's really great. Well, I want to ask if there's anything that we have left out of your personal story that you think would be valuable to share, or anything from your congregation that's going on now, during the pandemic that we just haven't hit on for some reason or skipped over?



Aurelia Pratt 35:54

One thing I just want to say is that it is extra hard for women and especially mothers because I always would say, even before this, patriarchy is what it is and we're working on that. But, I inherited, like a lot of other women in my partnership dynamic, I'm the primary caregiver because I don't have a 40 hour eight to five job. I get the groceries and I mean, there's just a lot of dynamics that I inherited as a woman. Even without the pandemic, I would be fielding calls while I'm on my way to pick up my daughter from her school, the kind of thing that male pastors don't just often don't have to think about. They might have kids, but they're not the one having to go pick them up and having to change something because they have a doctor appointment and blah, blah, blah, blah. And so, that level of exhaustion because I lost all my childcare for five months, for the first five months, I had no childcare. I had a grandmother that was able to come get her once a week for a few hours. And some weeks, it didn't work out. Just adding that and leading

a church is just, I just want to acknowledge how hard that is. And then, as a woman of color, the exhaustion with the race, with all of the racial tension in our country and all the injustice. Then it's always more tiring navigating a predominantly White space because of that, but it's just a whole nother level of trauma right now.

Mary Wilson 38:03

M

I'm so sorry.

Aurelia Pratt 38:05

A

Well because I know - I feel like I'm making everything sound great. And so, I just want to say, there are some really big struggles.

Mary Wilson 38:13

M

Yeah. No, I think you strike a great balance of pointing to things that are inspiring, and yet there are obstacles, continual obstacles. Thank you for for giving us that perspective. I appreciate it very much. Well, keep up the good work. I know you're doing great work. That brings me, and I was just thinking - you're in Round Rock, which is sort of a suburb of Austin. How is it in the suburbs?

Aurelia Pratt 38:54

A

Yeah, I live in Cedar Park, but same thing, it's suburb.

Mary Wilson 38:59

M

Exactly. Yeah.

Aurelia Pratt 39:00

A

I was just staying with a friend who also lives in Cedar Park. Cedar Park is the gated neighborhood of Williamson County because they declined the Austin Metro coming through, so that basically people can't get here with public transportation. It's a lot of people just proceeding as normal. Just a lot of privilege, a lot of just life is - if I look around, I don't necessarily feel like people are acknowledging the seriousness of this pandemic in my neighborhood anyway. And then definitely going out and about, there's so many people wearing their masks not covering their nose and they don't want to have it on, and they're being defiant by doing that.



M Mary Wilson 39:59  
Yeah.

A Aurelia Pratt 40:00  
There's a lot of that. I mean, we're definitely not in Austin.

M Mary Wilson 40:04  
Yeah. Have any members of your congregation gotten ill?

A Aurelia Pratt 40:13  
No, actually not. Actually no, that's wrong. We had one person get COVID in the summer and she was not, she had hardly any symptoms. It was not serious by any means. It was like she was sick, she was normal sick.

M Mary Wilson 40:30  
Yeah. Yeah.

A Aurelia Pratt 40:31  
Then we had a scare this last week with one of our people whose niece tested positive and she had been at dinner with her, at a family dinner. And so, she works with cancer patients. She had to immediately stay home, work from home, and she had to be tested twice before she could go back, and both tests were negative. We've had several people need to get tested, but only one positive from this whole time that I can think of.

M Mary Wilson 41:07  
Do you think that impacts your neighborhood that they just don't know of people that are sick or have had difficult times and so, they don't take it seriously?

- A** Aurelia Pratt 41:18  
I feel like the pandemic has been politicized. Depending on your political leanings is going to determine what information you're taking in. And if you're leaning a certain way, the information you're taking in is downplaying it. If you're leaning another way, the information you're taking in is saying this is very important, wear the mask. For me, it's very political.
- M** Mary Wilson 41:47  
Yeah. Do you think that'll change any after next week?
- A** Aurelia Pratt 41:51  
I think that we've been planning our sermon series around next week. Everything we have planned is planned on the assumption that no matter what the outcome is, it's going to be chaos and it's going to be hard.
- M** Mary Wilson 42:08  
Yeah. I think that's an intelligent way and thoughtful way to function. Because I think, well, I agree with you. I think that's true. I think there will be some chaos no matter what.
- A** Aurelia Pratt 42:22  
I don't think we'll have the answers right away. I don't know. I'm not looking
- M** Mary Wilson 42:28  
It's hard to say.
- A** Aurelia Pratt 42:29  
I'm looking forward to it being over, but I'm not looking forward to it. Like I said, I feel less anxious than a lot of the people around me and I think it's because I felt very similar in 2016. This is not new to me. It was crappy then and it's crappy now.
- M** Mary Wilson 42:52  
I think that's - if White people listened to people of color, that is what they'll hear.

Some things are not so different. You may be having a different experience, especially White progressive spaces, but we are not having a different experience. And maybe now you just realize more that this racism has always been there.

A Aurelia Pratt 43:25  
Right.

M Mary Wilson 43:26  
There's something to be said for exposing it.

A Aurelia Pratt 43:31  
Mm hmm. Yeah.

M Mary Wilson 43:34  
And making people grapple with it that have not had to grapple with it before, in a conscious way.

A Aurelia Pratt 43:41  
Yeah, definitely.

M Mary Wilson 43:44  
I hope, I hope, this leads us to a better direction.

A Aurelia Pratt 43:50  
I think we're chugging along. I think we're moving that way. It's exhausting work.

M Mary Wilson 43:58  
It is why we got to take care of ourselves.

A Aurelia Pratt 44:01  
Like Michelle Obama said, "you got to put your own oxygen mask on first."

M Mary Wilson 44:08  
Well, that is going to be my last question. How do you do that for yourself?

A Aurelia Pratt 44:14  
Lately I've been really thinking about energy, my energy, all of our energy. We have limited energy and we need to be strategic with how we're doling it out. That means setting boundaries and that means rejecting productivity culture, and creating your own embodied measure for what you need to exist in these times.

M Mary Wilson 44:44  
Right.

A Aurelia Pratt 44:45  
And just protecting your energy. If somebody else is full of anxiety and whatever else and you don't have the bandwidth to take that energy on, then you need to run the other way until you can have some energy to help them or whatever. We gotta be so strategic about our energy. That's what I'm trying to do, I'm rationing my energy.

M Mary Wilson 45:15  
Yeah. What feeds your soul then? What feeds your energy?

A Aurelia Pratt 45:19  
Creative collaboration is my energy, just connecting with people right now who were not doing things to work, we're just creatively dreaming together. Dreaming feeds my inner - dreaming about abundance and dreaming about good things helps me believe that I can usher those things into reality. Practically, I've been taking walks every day. I don't even like walks usually. I mean, even in the cold I am bundled up, I'm taking the walk. That is the typical.



Mary Wilson 46:03

Yeah. Well, that's great. Aurelia, thank you so much for taking time to share your story with me today. I appreciate it so very much and I'm going to go ahead and stop the recording and then we'll sign off.



Aurelia Pratt 46:21

Okay, thanks.