

LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.
JACQUI LEWIS

Ruby Sales

Jacqui Lewis: Hey everybody. This is Jacqui Lewis, and this is a special miniseries of Love Period in which we're focusing on Black History Month. Of course, you and I know that black history is American history, but my guests are going to bring special perspectives about what it means to be black in America in these days. And I hope you enjoy these conversations.

Jacqui Lewis: Ruby, I miss seeing your face. What?

Ruby Sales: Yes, me too. I've missed seeing yours. I've also missed the good singing at Middle.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh, man. Miss you, too.

Ruby Sales: In person.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I'm missing that, too, Love. We were meeting for a little while at this church called Calvary, which was great, but then COVID kicked back up again. Right?

Ruby Sales: Right.

Jacqui Lewis: So we're back in the digital spaces, but do you get the worship link? Do you get the... ?

Ruby Sales: Yes, I do. I listen, but still, there's something wonderful about hearing this music in person.

Jacqui Lewis: That is a fact. I have to... Shocking-

Ruby Sales: And the interaction between the congregation, the pastor and the choir.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right.

Ruby Sales: It's really priceless intimacy.

Jacqui Lewis: It is. It is. And the spirit that flows, right Ruby?

Ruby Sales: Right.

Jacqui Lewis: It's so beautiful.

Ruby Sales: And so Middle has played a major role in just bringing together one of the most democratizing, diverse communities in New York City, and I'm so pleased that whenever we are in New York, we have the opportunity to come to Middle.

Jacqui Lewis: I'm so glad that you call us a democratized and unifying... Are those the two words?

Ruby Sales: Yes, yes, yes.

Jacqui Lewis: Democratized and unifying space. Mama, if that's what we're doing, I am serving my Lord, because that is-

Ruby Sales: You're serving your Lord and so is your wonderful congregation.

Jacqui Lewis: Wonderful congregation. Tell me how are you feeling? How are you doing?

Ruby Sales: I'm doing well. I'm just really doing well. Just trying to deal with the fact that it's very difficult to navigate isolation in a society where we are constantly dealing with segregation in normal times because it intensifies the segregation that lays at the very heart of the society that we're in. But other than that, it's coming.

Jacqui Lewis: What's coming, Ruby? What's your prediction about what's coming?

Ruby Sales: Well, I think that it's really... Two things are happening simultaneously. One thing is the evil that's constantly evolving in this society. One of the things that I discovered is that when we think about love, we think about how is it that we love other people. But the first question is how is it that we love ourselves so that we extend other people to love that we feel for ourselves. It's hard to love yourself when you follow people who want you to kill yourself. It's hard to love yourself when you follow people who degrade your humanity and teach you to hate other people. It's hard to love yourself when you're being used by powerful people to carry out an agenda that buttresses their power but disempower you. And so that I think that the critical question that white people must deal with, and all of us must deal with, in the 21st century is how is it that you can love ourselves so that we might extend that love to others? Because I think that we have been taught to hate and despise ourselves.

Jacqui Lewis: Yep. That's right, Ruby. Did you get a copy of my book? Did we get that to you, in your hand?

Ruby Sales: Yes, I did.

Jacqui Lewis: Okay. I'm so glad. When I wrote that first section on love yourself... And it seems to me that I didn't think that was the controversial part Ruby, but we haven't raised a culture, period. Whites, blacks, indigenous, Latinx, Asian folks, this culture has not taught us self-love as a value.

Ruby Sales: I think that in many ways, the society that I grew up in in the south... Because if we had learned to hate ourselves the way the official requirements required us to do, then we would've never survived, and so I think that out of the black community in the south, you have a kind of agape growing up. I love everybody, and in order to love... And so we had to counter the narrative that we were nobody with the sense that we were somebody, and that that meant self love. And I think many communities who stood on the outside of the gates of power have had to come up with a way of finding themselves worthy and beloved.

Jacqui Lewis: I love hearing the stories of your childhood community, Ruby. How did your folks, your elders, your village, how did they raise Ruby Nell Sales and your contemporaries to love yourselves? What was the pattern? What was instruction? What was the feeling of it? Can you talk about it?

Ruby Sales: Yes. The theology and a pedagogy of somebodiness, that I might be enslaved, I might be small within the state, but I'm somebody not only with God, but with each other, and about myself. And so the pedagogy and theology of somebodiness, I'm a child of God, and being a child of God, I'm essential, and no one has the right to limit, or the power, to limit my ability to be somebody. So I grew up in a society where that theology was so powerful, Jacqui, that it never... The white view of black children as being inferior never penetrated my being because I was surrounded with the possibility that I could live into my highest capacity

and to love myself. And by the time I got to understand that white America did not love me, I had already been formed to defend myself.

Jacqui Lewis: It was too late, because you already loved you.

Ruby Sales: I already loved myself, and that's how it gave rise to a Julian Bond, to a Bernice Johnson Reagon, to a John Lewis, to a Joyce Ladner, to a Dorie Ladner, a generation of young folk who were the beneficiaries of a theology and a pedagogy of somebodiness. And not only did we think that we loved ourselves, but we loved our elders. We thought they were the most powerful people in the world. We never saw them as being traumatized and small. We saw them as powerful.

Jacqui Lewis: So Ruby, is it fair to say that the theology and pedagogy of somebodiness was rooted both in your identity as child of God, but also as child of your mother and your father, the elders?

Ruby Sales: Yes, and a child of the community that I... People would ask me, who are your people? It meant that I belong to someone more than just my family. I belong to people. I belong to an extended family. I belong... My name. James [Wallen 00:07:42] said nobody knew his name when he came up. I was thinking about everybody knew my name in the black community when I was coming up because I had a context.

Jacqui Lewis: You had a context.

Ruby Sales: I had a context.

Jacqui Lewis: That's so important. A context. And the context was both theocentric, God centered, but also really human centered. You're talking and kind of making me think about a kind of divine human partnership where God was raising you, but your elders were raising you. Is that right, Ruby?

Ruby Sales: Yes, and no matter how far away I was, people would look at me and say, "Are you Reverend Sales' daughter?" because I looked like my father. People knew my father, people knew... We had a context. We were not invisible. We were very, and who I was was not about just Ruby Sales. It was about being Reverend Sales' or a Willie Mae Sales' daughter. Let me tell you a story real quick.

Jacqui Lewis: Tell us, please.

Ruby Sales: So Cheryl, Nancy, and I went to Jemison, Alabama, which is where I was born and grew up. And we stopped at... The city had changed, and... Well, it's really a little country town. The town had changed so much, Jacqui, until we didn't know where we were going, so we stopped by this little country store, and this old white woman who must have been in her nineties... We went in, we asked her did she know where all Ola Sales had used to live? And you know, she said to me, "You must be Joe Sales' daughter."

Jacqui Lewis: Wow.

Ruby Sales: My father left that town 50 years ago.

Jacqui Lewis: And she knew you.

Jacqui Lewis: And she just looked at me and she said, "You must be Joe Sales' daughter."

Jacqui Lewis: Wow. How did that feel?

Ruby Sales: This was a white woman, and this really happened, and I had a context with her. Despite segregation, there was a certain kind of intimacy that she knew my name and she knew my father's name, and she knew my grandmother's name.

Jacqui Lewis: Even in the midst of segregation is what you're saying.

Ruby Sales: Even in the midst of segregation.

Jacqui Lewis: She knew you. Uh-huh (affirmative).

Ruby Sales: Black people had a context.

Jacqui Lewis: Wow. So Ruby, what has happened? And I've talked with you about this before, but just what happened to the project? The project of black somebodiness, let's say. Right? What happened to the context of black somebodiness alongside the kind of integration and let's say the history of the last 40, 50 years. Can you describe to us what you think has eroded? Has something eroded? Shifted? What is that?

Ruby Sales: I think what happened is that there was a war on the strongholds of black culture because after the Southern Freedom Movement, that was a major moment in American history because it was the second time that the white supremacist Confederate culture had been destabilized and had shifted, and for the second time in American history you had a democratization in the South that changed power relationships, economic relationships, and social relationships, and no longer were white men at the center of power. So, in response to that, they set about using every weapon that they had in their arsenal, in order to reclaim the power that they had lost. Basically, during the Southern Freedom Movement, they declared war on us. They burned buses, they beat up people, they sicced dogs on us, they bombed homes, they followed us in pickup trucks and tried to run us off the road and kill us. They beat us up, they threw us in jail. They used every weapon they had in order to destroy. Because they were fighting for their lives. They were fighting for their way of life and we were fighting for a different way of life.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes.

Ruby Sales: And so once the movement was over and the gains were solidified by the 1965 civil rights legislation, they set about to mobilize white resentment, and also they built think tanks to answer the fundamental question, how did the Sambo peasants, that we thought were Sambos, how did they destroy our empire without firing a shot? What were the resources that they drew on? So that they engaged in a project of cultural and spiritual genocide, by attacking the black family, the black school,

the black church and the black playground. So that they decimated what had been the fountain in the center of black life and culture, which was the South, which was the home of descendants of enslaved Africans, and that had been the fertile bread basket of a black spirituality and a black resilience, that had not been decimated by... that had not been weakened by migration, and northern materialism.

Jacqui Lewis: And so they...

Ruby Sales: So that they set about to separate the young from the old, by firing 38,000 black teachers in the South, and create a situation where young black people will not be in touch with older black folk. By doing that, you decimated the continuing of a black future. Because there were no culture carriers who were decoding the meaning of the journey to young African American young people abused in the same way. But I had cultural carriers. Older black people who would decode to me the meaning of the journey and give me the resources that I needed to navigate without feeling alienated and without being a broken wing bird. So integration was a project not designed for democratization, was a project designed for cultural annihilation. So we did not want integration. We wanted democratization.

Jacqui Lewis: Can you say how they're different, love? I really think I feel how, but just tell the listener how that's different.

Ruby Sales: Integration means that you... it's like integration means that you figure out a way of becoming a part of someone else's table and the table is white. So, how is it that you become an honorary white person? How is it that you melt yourself into the white world and take on the accoutrements of whiteness, whereas democratization means that we are all deciding how the table will be set and the table belongs to all of us. We're not trying to diversify a table that's already set. We're trying to engage in a project of creating a new table where every hand has an important role in putting a piece of wood on the table.

Jacqui Lewis: That is so [crosstalk 00:15:38].

Ruby Sales: So what happened is that they turned our cry for democratization into the project of socialization into whiteness.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah. So, rather than the aim being, how can we, I'm going to say, sit at the white table, Ruby, more, the aim of the Southern Freedom Movement would have ideally been, the aim is, how do we create a new table?

Ruby Sales: How is it that we democratize the table?

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah.

Ruby Sales: That white people have thought that the country is their country. How might we understand that the country belongs to all of us?

Jacqui Lewis: All of us. Yeah.

Ruby Sales: Even today, we talk about diversity, inclusion and equity. Those are very deceptive terms. Inclusion into what? Including doesn't mean that you're changing the table. It means that

you want a seat at a table that's already set. Let's have the same thing as democratization, but democratization requires deep structural and fundamental changes.

Jacqui Lewis: That is such a more ambitious, more holy, more kingdom of God, kind of a project.

Ruby Sales: Yes. It's more beloved. It's [crosstalk 00:16:55].

Jacqui Lewis: More beloved community.

Ruby Sales: It's also a Pentecostal moment. We speak different languages, come from different ethnicities. How is it that we build a common table where everybody can speak their own language without becoming mean?

Jacqui Lewis: That's the Pentecost paradigm. John and I wrote a book about that.

Jacqui Lewis: So Ruby, here we are in this month of black history, looking over our shoulders, like the Sankofa, looking backwards to see what's rich, what's beautiful, what's instructive, what's wisdom to take forward into a future. When you talk about what was lost, the sort of decimation aimed at black communities, to disrupt, to dismantle, destroy the strength and beauty of the Southern black community, how do you connect that to what's happening today? I feel like whiteness is in death throes once again. Is that right?

Ruby Sales: I feel like what we are experiencing today is what I call a desperate attempt of the guardians of whiteness to erase people of color, not only from the voting, from democracy, from being an American, because when you suppress people's right to vote, basically you're stripping them of their citizenship, and you also say that they are people without a state. You're saying that they're not legitimate Americans, so you're basically stripping them of their nationhood and peoplehood. Secondly, and then in addition to that, you're also stripping them from canonized knowledge in this country, by saying that critical race theory cannot be taught. And that's really a buzzword. What they're really saying is that black history and ethnic studies cannot be taught because when you read the criteria, the laws that's being created in different states, it says that you can't talk about racism, and you can't talk about sexism and you can't talk about systemic injustice. Well, that means that black folk can't talk about the Southern Freedom Movement. We can't talk about Martin Luther king. We can't talk about enslavement. Basically, we are in a period of great social and political genocide.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes.

Ruby Sales: And then, if we are not careful, we will come face to face with physical genocide, because to start removing books from the library and to start stripping people of their Americanness and their legitimacy as an American... Because that's what the steal was about. It is not by accident that the states and the cities where Donald Trump and the Republicans pointed their fingers as having where votes were being stolen, were predominantly black cities, or at least cities that were brown also. And so that's because they are the authentic Americans and for black people to vote in large... We were taking away their country. They're the ones who own this country. They're the ones who have the right to participate in democracy. So what I'm saying, Jack, is that we are at a very dangerous juncture in this country, and I don't think we are paying careful enough attention.

- Jacqui Lewis: Ruby, it is so George Orwell, it is so science fiction, it is so Octavia Butler, but it's real, or the Book of Eli, right? The way the books are being banned, the way they're being burned, the way critical race theory is tossed around as some code name for, "Don't teach white children anything," the absolute wholesale erosion of voting rights in 19 states with more to follow. I know you're alarmed. What does a historian, who is a long distance runner for freedom and justice, want to tell young people about this moment, Ruby, and how urgent it is?
- Ruby Sales: That we are living in a very dangerous moment, where we must begin to weave together the stories that we're seeing. And that we don't look at things as disparate moments, that we see the interconnection between the moments, and that we must begin to read and think again. Young people must begin to read books again. They must ask themselves, "Is there really a Trump base?"
- Ruby Sales: That's not true, there's no Trump base. A Trump base is not driving critical race theory. The Thomas Smith Foundation, which has spent \$12.5 million, the Judicial Crisis Network, which has spent another \$10 million, all of these corporate and nonprofit right wing entities, they're the ones who are formulating the issues. And then they're the ones you are triggering white people with those issues by using race and class as triggers to get white people to fall in line with those issues.
- Ruby Sales: But white people are being manipulated. They're not the instigators or the originators of even things like suppression. Do you know that AT&T, Comcast, State Farm, Boeing aircraft, do you know that those countries have spent millions of dollars supporting voter suppression under the organization called [Alec 00:24:22]?
- Ruby Sales: And so that I would encourage young folks to get serious about, and understand the world that you're living in, and stop being parrots who repeat things without digging into the reality.
- Ruby Sales: I mean, really Jacqui, there is no Trump base. We live in a corporate state with a coalition between corporations, nonprofits, where nonprofits, academicians, and trade organizations are driving the discourse today. And that's why it seems that Democrats are impotent. And that's why Republicans are no longer legislating. That's why they engage in nullification and interposition rather than legislate, because they are no longer served. We live in a technocracy, where technocrats are even driving issues today. The whole nature of politics have changed.
- Jacqui Lewis: Ruby, where are the critical conversations happening that you think young people, and I'm thinking young adults right now, and then I'm going to ask you about teen and kids, but where are the critical conversations? Who are the sources? Where's the best I'm going to say curriculum, but like, where's the best wisdom, where's the best instruction?
- Ruby Sales: Well, I think that it is in spaces like this, where we're having the conversation. But I think that young people that we need hindsight, insight, and foresight. And so the critical conversations must occur between older and young folk. Young people might have... They need the history, they need the hindsight. And when you don't have an intergenerational conversation, that's culture genocide.
- Ruby Sales: So we need to reestablish spaces where younger and older people are talking with each other about the critical issues of the day, where young people are talking to us about what is their reality that they face today. Because we don't know their reality, because we have not experienced it. And we need to tell them what we know about today, and also what we've experienced. And we need to put that all together and come up with the critical analysis.
- Ruby Sales: But it's not just young folk without old folks, and neither, because as an older person, if I want to talk with young people, if I don't understand what's going on with TikTok, and the ways in which

TikTok is defining what it means to be an influencer, which changes our whole understanding of who are influencers in society, if I don't understand the values that's been perpetuated by TikTok that says that you are somebody because you have a large following, or you are somebody because you know famous people, whether you are somebody because you're a child of God, all that's important. And I need to know that in order to engage with young people.

Jacqui Lewis: So you're talking about being culturally nimble, dextrous, walking a mile in each other's worldviews, right? Cross-generational conversations that help us to understand where each other's bread is buttered, or values that we have on, right?

Ruby Sales: Yes. I'm talking about becoming one with each other, where we can't become each other, but we can become one with each other. And what I'm saying is that we have to really stretch ourselves on this, because young folk will often say to me as a black woman that, "You older black people do this."

Ruby Sales: And I'm thinking, "Don't you understand that I'm not white? Don't you understand as an older black person I'm experiencing some the same things that you're experiencing? Don't you understand I'm up against a medical industrial complex that does not value old black bodies? Don't you understand that I'm a part of a community of black folk who are the poorest in this country? Don't you understand what I've gone through as a black woman? Why would you think that I'm white? Why would you think that a seat of power rest with me in this country?"

Jacqui Lewis: And why do they think that? Is it-

Ruby Sales: Because their visions have been shaped by... Because we allow them to be taught by older white people who shaped their gains. And they don't see us as being separate and distinct from older white people. They see us as a monolith.

Ruby Sales: Whereas when I was coming up, I knew that my father was not like Mr. Stonehill, the white man. I never thought that he had... And so I was not against my father. I was working for a world that would, and has my father's place in the world. I didn't think that he was part of a power structure. And I don't think that we've talked, how do our children know Jackie, when they don't know us?

Jacqui Lewis: No, [crosstalk 00:29:26]-

Ruby Sales: We don't have an intimate relationship with them. It's not their fault. They don't know us. I work with students at Howard University who tell me that Howard is their first experience of having a black teacher.

Jacqui Lewis: What?

Ruby Sales: That's right. They've gone to all white schools.

Jacqui Lewis: Wow.

Ruby Sales: So how would they know that?

Jacqui Lewis: So Ruby, we're in this crazy... We started with how wonderful it is to be together in person, to have music flow, have voices lifted up together in song, frankly to hug each other, to look at each other in the eye to have that dynamic between preacher and preached, and sister and brother, and siblings. We're all missing that so much. And I wonder, do you have a sense that in this technocracy, is there a way that the Zoom, the social media, the meet up places, Clubhouse, I don't know all that stuff Ruby, but is there any way the technology can help us connect, or do you find it to be just an

artifice?

Ruby Sales: I don't think life is about extremes. I think that in everything that you can find something good if you look for it and work for it. But I do think that technology has been used, and you can't separate the use of technology from the people who are manipulating it. And so as a society, if the guardians are racist, the use of technology is going to be racist. If the guardians are anti-human, the technology will dehumanize us. And so if it's being run by people who support individualism, technology's going to accelerate individualism.

Ruby Sales: And what we see is that we see that happening. We see people confusing virtual relationships with real community. We see people thinking intimacy is a Facebook friend, we see all of that happening and we see people being willing to give up their lives and their privacy to a computer without a thought. We absolutely see people texting instead of talking on the telephone.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, that blows my mind.

Ruby Sales: And so, yes, Jackie, I think that you can't separate technology from the values of the society and the people who control those values.

Jacqui Lewis: So AI, technology are infested with our white nationalist values?

Ruby Sales: Yes. And also the problem with AI, artificial intelligence, is that it has replaced the value and the place of intellectuals who are no longer the producers of knowledge, technocrats are the producers of knowledge. And in addition to that, it has changed the whole significance of books in society, reading. And therefore knowledge, instead of evolving, people are devolving instead of evolving. For example, I bet if you were to ask people to name 10 intellectuals, they couldn't do it, and the books that they've written in the last three years.

Jacqui Lewis: Hmm. That makes me sad to imagine that's true, but it's not that hard to imagine that is true. If they Google it, right? Right, Ruby? They'll Google it.

Ruby Sales: Right. But that's somebody else telling you something.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right. That's right.

Ruby Sales: That's not you having an instant relationship with books and information. You're relying on someone else to tell you who's significant, and the people that they will name can't be extricated from the values that make them decide who's important.

Jacqui Lewis: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jacqui Lewis: So, it is February 7th, and I can't believe it's February already.

Ruby Sales: Me neither.

Jacqui Lewis: I really can't. I'm thinking about Black History Month, but I'm really also thinking, Ruby, about Black future. You are a public intellectual and a mentor to so many of us. What do you hope our little people, I mean grammar school age kids now, what do you hope that they're hearing from their parents and their teachers about a Black future? What do you want

them to think about a Black future?

Ruby Sales: That they're important, that they're worthy of being saved, and that they're worthy of participating in their own salvation, and that they come from a people whose great stories, that they come from generations of spiritual geniuses who created all the [inaudible 00:34:59] soul of oppression. They created hope zones, and their work was so significant that it brought down an empire without firing a shot, and that I want them to know that, and I want them to stop talking about...

Ruby Sales: If they're going to talk about trauma, I want them also to talk about surviving. How is it that we navigate a trauma through shouting, through all of the modalities that we developed, singing the blues. All of the modalities that we developed that allowed us to navigate trauma without becoming broken-winged birds. To fly, to rise up like eagles and fly above. To fly through and above the trauma. That was the gift of my Black ancestors, that they knew how to fly through, but also fly above at the same time, and that's what they did. They walked right through the trauma, but they also flew above it.

Ruby Sales: So the young people must realize that we are not traumatized people, and that you could not have been traumatized and developed a generation of young folk who stood up to the most powerful empire in the world who had German shepherd dogs, cattle prods, water hoses, bombs, without running away and without being afraid. If we were so traumatized, then white people wouldn't shoot us 85 times when it's clear that we are dead at the first shot.

Ruby Sales: So the question is, why is it that police shoot Black people 85 times when it's clear that they're dead at the first shot? They're not trying to kill their bodies, our bodies, they're trying to kill our spirits, because it's not our bodies that they fear. They fear our indomitable spirits. Everybody around the world knows the power of our spirits except Black people ourselves. That's the sad part about it. Everybody knows it.

Jacqui Lewis: Why don't we know, sweetie? Why don't we know?

Ruby Sales: Because we look at ourselves through the white gaze, and we believe that in order to legitimize our existence, we must talk about the ways in which white people have been at the center of defining our lives, how miserable they made our lives, how they've done this, and how they, without ever saying yes, all of those things happened. But the genius of African American life and culture is that out of that, we made our own lives, as Ralph Ellison would say.

Ruby Sales: But in the midst of all of that, Black people made joy. They had children, they built institutions, they loved each other, they had petty jealousies. We had a world, we made a world.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, we did make a world.

Ruby Sales: It wasn't just that we were traumatized. You have to talk about the world that we made. What were the bricks that we used that allowed us to make a world, that allowed us to build a Tuskegee, that allowed us to build a [inaudible 00:38:23], that allowed us to build a Jackie Lewis. What were the bricks that we used? What were the resources that we relied on?

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, and we still have those resources.

Ruby Sales: Yes, and contrary to what calling white men masters during enslavement, which is really, I have a problem with that, because it suggests that they are in charge of our destinies and that they are somehow divinely anointed. I don't believe that white people are God, I don't believe that they have the final word, that they've had the final word in who we are as a people. If that were the case, then we wouldn't be here today.

Jacqui Lewis: Right.

Ruby Sales: Because they did not intend for us to live or thrive.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right.

Ruby Sales: So that's what I would say to young people. As you're looking at the systemic racism of systemic, the systemic heterosexism, it's also important to understand how your community handles that, and why you are still standing today in order to look at it.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah. So Ruby, I think we started off our conversation today with love in the middle of it, which is not a surprise.

Ruby Sales: Yes.

Jacqui Lewis: This love is a potent, powerful, transformative force that democratizes spaces, that unifies spaces, right? That is the brick, maybe, that builds good humans, right? So, what's love got to do with this moment, and what do you know for sure about love, Ruby? What do you know for sure about love?

Ruby Sales: I know that love gives us the third eye, the ability to see the good in people that they fail to see in themselves, and to call them to that goodness. That's love.

Jacqui Lewis: Love it. I love it.

Ruby Sales: To be able to see in you what is possible that you fail to see in yourself, and to work to call you, to provide opportunities that allow you to reach your highest good.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh, I love that. I love that. It's like W.E.B. Du Bois's sense of double consciousness, like say there's a love consciousness or something, right?

Ruby Sales: Yes, yes.

Jacqui Lewis: Love causes us to see through that third eye. I love that.

Ruby Sales: Every group has had it. I know I've talked a lot about white supremacists, but in the American white story, there's also a stream that has trended toward love, and that stream is with the abolitionist movement, that stream is in the social gospel movement. Every society has goodness in them, and it's our job, the movements are not to condemn people to hell, but to raise people up to heaven.

Jacqui Lewis: Ooh, yes, yes, yes, yes. Mama Ruby, finally, when I say the words fierce love, what comes up

for you? Fierce love.

Ruby Sales: The ability to go all the way to the cross, the ability to put one's body and self on the line, and to imagine a world that you want to have not only for yourself but also for others, and to be able to be willing to go all the way for that.

Jacqui Lewis: All the way.

Ruby Sales: Unwavering. I think a fierce love [inaudible 00:42:08] of the world, who fought to open up doors, but then that they themselves would never walk through it, because they didn't have the credentials to do it. But they were opening doors, not for themselves, but for generations, and they were willing to go all the way to open doors that they themselves would never walk in, because they thought that that would benefit the race.

Jacqui Lewis: Well, this is Ruby Nell Sales, y'all. Ruby, thank you so much. I love you.

Ruby Sales: Love you too, Jackie. Thank you so much.

Jacqui Lewis: Okay, honey.

Jacqui Lewis: Thanks for listening to this episode of Love Period, a special series we put together for Black History Month. As an African American woman who grew up in this nation, I think about the poet James Weldon Johnson, who says about my people, "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered." I think about tears of my ancestors watering the soil of America, tears baptizing my hope, tears that are often tears of joy, because we've learned how to make a way out of no way. Black history, Black heritage, it's everyone's history. These stories belong to all of us, and I hope because you've listened to these episodes, you feel connected, and that you'll dig and do some research about Black folks in America.