

LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.
JACQUI LEWIS

Detoxing Wellness
with Kerri Kelly

Jacqui Lewis: Hey everyone, I'm Jacqui Lewis. Welcome to the third season of Love Period. In this season, we are exploring what fierce love looks like, in a time of trauma. When all around the globe folks are trying to figure out how to be the best version of human they can be, in these difficult and traumatic times. Today's guest on Love Period is my friend, Kerri Kelly. I met her on the Together Tour, traveling around with authors, women trying to change the world with their words. Kerri's new book, *American Detox*, is a calling in to real healing and real transformation beyond what might be superficial in the wellness culture.

We interviewed each other, really, about her wellness book and mine. And I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did. Kerri Kelly my friend, hey.

Kerri Kelly: Reverend Jacqui Lewis, my friend.

Jacqui Lewis: Hi.

Kerri Kelly: Oh my gosh. So great to see you, and be here with you, and be in conversation with you. Across the country, by the way.

Jacqui Lewis: Across the country. The magic of Zoom.

Kerri Kelly: That's not what I'm used to though, I'm used to sitting in your church.

Jacqui Lewis: I know. I was looking the other day through some photos, Kerri, and there it was you and me at the end of worship at the door. And it broke my heart. I was like, "Damn, there's no door. That stuff is gone, bye-bye."

Kerri Kelly: I want to say that the pandemic was hard.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, it was.

Kerri Kelly: But the levee broke when Middle Church burned, for me. That was it, that brought me all the way to my knees. All the way to my knees.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you for saying that, love. I got so much love from you then, and so much from friends all over. And I tell you what Kerri, every now and then... And I don't mean to whine, but I'm going to tell you that it is the fire keeps on burning. That's what I'll say. The fire of COVID, the fire of the fire, the fire of... It's not a secret that the Collegiate Church made some investments with some partners, and it went down in a way, and so we had a big hit to our endowment. Which makes the fire of scarcity, and the fire of fear, and what are we going to do, and what are we going to do.

We literally voted to rebuild the church just last February, so February of 2022. And then the larger church for some voted to rebuild us in April. But still we have one more meeting at the end of May, by the time this comes out, we'll know what are the real ramifications and implications of this. Kerri then you are auditioning, you feel like, for your life. Because this is my life.

Kerri Kelly: You have been such a model of grace. When I think about what happened... For folks who don't know, we're talking about Middle Collegiate Church in the Lower East Side, which was

my home church. And Reverend Jacqui Lewis was my pastor. I say that to you all the time, you were my teacher.

Jacqui Lewis: Kerri is my confidante and my friend. That's right.

Kerri Kelly: During the pandemic, the most tragic, tragic thing happened and the church burned to the ground. When I think about you, when I think about who I know you to be and what I have learned from you, I feel like you are walking the path of phoenix rising from the ashes. I look to what you are doing, and how you are rebuilding, and the way in which the world is raging and burning. And yet so are we.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, we are.

Kerri Kelly: We too are the fire, right?

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, we are the fire

Kerri Kelly: We are blazing strong, and we are fierce like the book that you wrote.

Jacqui Lewis: We are fierce. We are fierce doggonit. Yes, we are.

Kerri Kelly: And so I just want you to know that I think about you often, and I think about the lesson that you are giving all of us. That even when shit burns to the ground, we can rise, and we can rise into more.

Jacqui Lewis: We can be transformed. Kerri, when we were talking, right as pandemic was coming, we were both about to write a book. And we were thinking about the books and we were like, "Oh my God! Oh my God! Can we write? Can we breathe?" Wow! How are you doing? Can you breathe?

Kerri Kelly: What did we say yes to?

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my gosh! But you finished your book and it comes out June 7.

Kerri Kelly: Oh my gosh. I don't have children by my body, and it does feel like the closest thing to birth. I feel like my guts are hanging all over the place, for one. It's like I can't see into my future, I don't know what's next. This book changed me, it was a practice in and of itself, and I'm different because of it. I'm different because of the people that inspired it, and so I'm both terrified and excited to see what happens next in this new life with this new baby.

Jacqui Lewis: I can totally relate to that.

Kerri Kelly: I know you can.

Jacqui Lewis: Just because we're on camera too, let's lift our books up so that when we get through this place, people will be like, "Yeah, there's this book." I love your title, I love American Detox. Let's just dive in a bit and tell the folks, because we know what was going on for each other. But tell me about why you needed to give birth to American Detox. You'll ask me the same question, and I'll tell you.

Kerri Kelly: I love this. I love this kind of interview, we should do this all the time.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, exactly.

Kerri Kelly: Mutuality, which is the practice. Oh gosh, there are so many reasons I wrote this book. I wrote it because the stakes are so high, and the crises are accelerating, and they're coming fast and furious. And we need to do something different, so that was part of it. I wrote this book from my location, and so it was about my journey to awakening and, "What do I need to be doing differently." As a white, cis straight, able-bodied woman in the world, what is my right role and responsibility in this mess? And what is my part in shaping the future? That was one of the things that brought me to this book. In holding that question, it was a complete unraveling of... I want to say I wrote this book, but I didn't write it. I rolled around on my mat, and I screamed, and I cried. I danced.

Jacqui Lewis: Her yoga mat, she means her yoga mat.

Kerri Kelly: Yeah, that's right. I practiced. I really did practice the idea of detox, I practiced the idea of deconstructing everything that I knew. I practiced the idea of dismantling the constructs, and the veils, and the cloaks that were in the way of myself and of my well-being. This book is about... It's a critique of wellness, but it's really about what it means to be well in a toxic world. And that was the question that brought me to this book, "How do I be well? What does it mean to be well?" And not the kind of wellness that Wellness sells us, that we can just drink green juice and do a hot yoga class and we're good to go. But the kind of detox that brings us to our knees, that challenges the ways in which we've internalized whiteness, and colonization, and individualism, and perfectionism. And all the really messed up things that have shaped us, that have shaped our bodies and our minds and our hearts.

The last thing I'll just say. Maybe this isn't the question that brought me to this book, but this was the thing I got from the practice. This was what I took away from the journey, is that I wrote this book because I believe there's more. And this is what I feel like points back to your book. I'm like, "What is in the way of more love? What is in the way of real well-being? What is in the way of liberation?" And then what is our part in confronting those things, and transmuting them into something different, something beautiful? And so I just want to say fierce love, I think, is the thing I got from this book.

I don't even know that I asked for that going into the process, but afterwards I was like, "There's more. There's more than what we have inherited, there's more than the systems that we're a part of, the toxic culture that we are breathing. There's more possibility for love. There are more ways to love. There are more ways to create and build, and be well together." And so that's where I left off in this book.

Jacqui Lewis: Well, so we're going to have to write part two to these books together, right?

Kerri Kelly: Fierce love and radical well-being.

Jacqui Lewis: Fierce love and radical... That's right, get well. Let me just say, I'm so proud that you

got it finished. Because writing a book, it really is having a baby. Let me come back and follow up. But I think what I have loved about being your colleague, your friend. Your ally, I'm going to say, in the healing of the world, is your citizen well work. I read a bunch of stuff. But when I get your email, which we've talked about how you curate that, and what you think about. And that's not just, "Let's bit and skip, and do it." But thoughtful, mindful, well-inspiring, calling in, informative, beautiful work, and just knowing your story. I think we are so the same and different. But so much the, "well, Mama Ruby will put us both the work. So that's what we have in common too."

Kerri Kelly: There's that.

Jacqui Lewis: Did you do the thing?

Kerri Kelly: There's that.

Jacqui Lewis: But seriously, Kerri, the world demands a new recipe. A new program, a new practice, a new religion. You've heard me talk about getting a grown up God. And I did not write the book, Grown Up God after all. I've thought those thoughts and prayed those prayers, and got my own grown up God I did. But I actually wanted to go past God, sorry God. Past God, if God would be a barrier, Kerri, let's just say. If God would be a barrier to wellness to somebody, because of the ways we've constructed God. We don't have enough information to know who God is for sure.

So we're always making up some stuff, which is a projection, and in our own image of God. 13 years ago maybe, I started thinking about this. I Remember talking to Maryanne Williamson, a friend we have in common. She's like, "Yeah, I heard you say that." And there was something about the way she said I heard you say that, made me think, "What else am I trying to say?" And this is what happened to me. I almost wondered if I needed to get a new vocation, because I can't be that kind of Christian anymore. I wasn't really ever that kind of Christian, I don't want to be associated with that kind of Christian. If Christian means white, nationalist, hegemony, sexist, patriarchy. Anti-gay, anti-women, anti-choice, anti-science. I'm embarrassed, I was embarrassed about that. That constellation of ideologies that felt like Christian.

So I would say, "I'm a Universalist Christian, and I am." But I wanted to say, "Actually, I follow Rabbi Jesus to love." That's really what it is, that's really what it is. And so I ended up writing fierce love to save my soul, and to try to describe something I think can heal us. Trayvon Martin, I'm the girl whose mother told her the story of Emmett Till, there's no way we can still be the people that'll just lynch a boy for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. And we are, over and over and over again, we are those people. We are those violent people, we are those snatch the children out of the arms of their mothers. I can't do it, sweetie. I just couldn't do it so I was like, "What is it?"

So I really believe that this book is my sermon. This is my sermon, and it's for everybody. Love yourself well, love the people around you well, so you can love the world well. And I'm not talking codependent Naomi/Cammy love. I'm talking

sacrificial, truth-telling, ferocious engagement, go to the mattress love. The demands, candor and demands, justice for all, and acknowledges that we're inextricably connected. So I wrote my sermon, and I thought, "If I should die before I wake, I've written it." That's what happened. And I started writing before COVID, and then the church burned down in December. And my editor was like, "I think we have to take a break, and take another month or two." So the fire is in the book.

Kerri Kelly: I want to resonate with just what you were saying. And I know you know this about me. I was called to spiritual practice, and wellness and yoga, and meditation. Because I was recovering from Catholicism, because I felt betrayed by the church in many ways. And then I felt betrayed by wellness, which is really what I write about in here.

Jacqui Lewis: I want to talk about that some. Yeah.

Kerri Kelly: Yeah. For all the reasons I use because of the construct, not because of the origins or the source of the wisdom, but because of the way in which it's been interpreted, adapted, stolen. Stolen from indigenous people, exploited. And what I want to say is that somehow, through that process, I was led back to the church to you. Because what you were speaking to me went beyond the house, which is why it's so ironic that the house burned. But the spirit is still there. The house being the construct, the architecture.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah.

Kerri Kelly: The house burned, but the spirit was there. And I wasn't called to the house as much as I was called to you, and I was called to this idea that you were putting out there, that God is love. And that God is beyond, and that God is more. And so I just want to say that back to you, because that's what I get also from this book. Is that, I get God in your book on such a deep and transcendent level.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh sweetie. It meant so much to me. You and I started this conversation with, "How vulnerable do you feel when you write your book?" And you feel like your panties are showing, and your gut is hanging out, and your SPANX fell down, and all the things. Everything is just out. So do you feel free? Do you feel afraid and free? How does it leave you feeling?

Kerri Kelly: I feel like... You never know what you're going to write until you write it, you just named that. And I ended up writing about the messiness of my journey, the mistakes, the learning. It felt important, especially as a white person in this work, to model what it is to walk the path. And not to make it neat and tidy, and not to pretend like I know everything. But to actually just be like, "I have no idea what I'm doing, and I'm going to do it anyway." One of the quotes that you have that I love so much, and I remember this always is, "Movements are messy, but we have to move." I learned that from you.

Jacqui Lewis: Movements are messy, but we got to go.

Kerri Kelly: And so that was the stance of, "You got to go." And so I just kept going, and I think I ended up excavating more than I asked for. I had a lot of work to do, actually, in writing this book. I did a ton of grieving about 9/11. This book begins on 9/11, I lost my stepdad.

Jacqui Lewis: When you lose your stepdad? Yeah.

Kerri Kelly: Yeah. Who was a fireman, in ladder 15.

Jacqui Lewis: A fire took your stepdad.

Kerri Kelly: So that part too. And you know, I want to tell you something crazy by the way. Is that my stepdad's house responded to your fire.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my God! I knew that.

Kerri Kelly: And I have videos of it. And so how wild is that? I completely forgot to say that. I was home for the 20th anniversary, and I asked some of the guys in the house who I've known forever. And I said, "My dear friend's church burned down on 9th and 2nd. And he was like, "That fire? I was at that fire." And then he proceeds to send me a bunch of videos of him inside the fire.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my gosh. Was he okay? Because a few people got...

Kerri Kelly: He was totally okay, but he said it was precarious.

Jacqui Lewis: It was a crazy fire, Kerri.

Kerri Kelly: And he also said that, I forget the words that he used, but he said it was felt. Yeah. That it was felt, the loss of that place was felt by the guys that were, they weren't just... Firemen respond all the time to lots of fires, but that felt different. Different enough for him to record it.

Jacqui Lewis: They were so special, let's just say. Of all the things, things found in the fire, is what I'm thinking about for this next book. Kerri, those women and those men were so fricking awesomely, amazingly great, kind... It was a ripping love, it was a ripping of my soul, I would say. And I don't talk about it that much, because it's just hard. But they were so sweet. Oh my God, they were so kind, and so faithful. That's what I would say, they were ministering to us.

And while the building was burning, my congregants were sitting Shiva. We were all just standing around, watching the smoldering bricks, watching the smoke. Oh. And then the women next door who weren't burned, but were smoked, were standing outside. And my congregant went, "Well, there's nothing else for us to do. So we're going to take these women shopping."

Kerri Kelly: It's nice.

Jacqui Lewis: And if that's not fierce love, I don't know what is. They're like, "Okay you all, we got to go. We're going to take these women and go. Not to the Kmart around the corner, but we're going to Macy's and we're going to go give them some love." It was amazing. So your book starts at 9/11 with the loss of your stepfather.

Kerri Kelly: So yeah, the nugget. You were just like, "What is the nugget?" And I was thinking, "By the end of this book..." Because you may have to work all the way through the labor to get to the

thing. At the end of the book, what I realized... And I realized this actually on the 20th anniversary of 9/11, I was doing a talk with someone and I don't know how these words came out of my mouth. But they were asking me about my stepdad and I said, "He was an ordinary guy." The way we often talk about 9/11 firemen and first responders is that they're heroes, and they did insane and amazing, brilliant, courageous, unimaginable things. They're just ordinary guys. Ordinary guys and girls, and everything in between. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

And, I had a hard time remembering him as a hero. Not because he didn't do an amazing thing, but because I just knew him, I knew him to the core. And it just made me realize that that's what we're all being called to do, we're all ordinary people being called to do extraordinary things. And that's what you all did, and that's what the guys did when they responded to the church burning. And I think that's the call right now, is how are we all first responders on the front line of this epic fire that we're facing?

Jacqui Lewis: I love the way you said that, Kerri. "How are we all first responders?" And I love this idea of this calling to the front lines, Kerri, by being ordinary people who will hack through, chop through, dismantle, detox the crap in ourselves. My book is *Love Yourself First*, and I'm like how? By looking fiercely at yourself, and being honest with your stuff, and getting through it and over it, and stop it. And then turning that same compassion, and love, and grace to the other folks. So we can do the world.

So look, my great uncle George was not a fireman, but he worked with Fannie Lou Hamer to register people to vote in Mississippi. And then this crazy behind time, when the court already gutted the voting rights act and we all went, "Oh my goodness, look at what they did." And now they're gutting women's right to choose, folks right to choose with their bodies, and Senate won't even pass a law that says women could... Who are we? What is happening? I'm so mad about that, what the hell? Kerri, are white, nice women going to read your book and go, "Damn, I better get in the game."

Kerri Kelly: They better! You know me, this book is a hammer.

Jacqui Lewis: I know it is. It's not-

Kerri Kelly: It's not an invitation, it's a hammer.

Jacqui Lewis: What do you want people to do? Because you are miss healthy, California skin, drinking the right water, doing the yoga poses, sitting on the mat. You are writing citizen well, you are healthy from the inside out kind of human, you just are. But yet you're critiquing something fundamental about that movement. Say about that.

Kerri Kelly: I feel like you're doing that too in many ways. What you were saying about challenging religion. One of the things I write in this book is that this is not a rejection of wellness, it's a reclaiming of it. Because while I rage against wellness all the time, I was called to wellness because I was called to heal. In 9/11, I had realized I'd been living a lie, and I started to question everything. And I was called right to this promise, if you will, of truth and unity and wholeness. And so I fell for it face first, and I went all the way in. I became a yoga teacher, I wore mala beads, I was that girl who did all the things. The way that you describe me, that is true, that happened.

And then the other thing that happens, I think, inevitably if you actually do the thing. If you actually pray, if you actually listen, if you actually detox yourself from the delusions, is that you can't not see what's really happening. And so that happened to me, and I started to see that what wellness was promising was not really real. And that there was no way that I could be well on my yoga matter,

or in my gated community of wellness, when so many people were suffering. On the backs, even, of so many people. And so that's when I started to really push up against the system of wellness, the dominant culture of wellness. Which isn't special, it's just an indoctrination of everything else we talk about, as is the church.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah. Same thing, different language maybe.

Kerri Kelly: Yeah, same. Different house.

Jacqui Lewis: Different house.

Kerri Kelly: But it's not a rejection in that the idea of wellness as wholeness. As returning to our whole selves, not the selves that we were told we should be by dominant culture, and by societies, and by constructs of race and gender, and all that messed up stuff. That kind of wholeness. And also not the wholeness that's the individual, the wholeness that includes all of us, the wholeness that includes mother Earth and all living things. And so wellness to me is a longing to return to that, and to remember the truth of that. And so the contradiction that you're naming of me being this healthy wellness person, and also me raging against the machine is the line that I walk. And also I feel like what I try to capture in this book, where I just, "Wellness is this!" This vicious and ferocious, the word I love that you use.

Jacqui Lewis: Isn't that a good word?

Kerri Kelly: Ferocious critique. It's the greatest word.

Jacqui Lewis: It's the best word. But listen Kerri, I wasn't thinking about the contradiction, I was thinking more about an evolution. I think Kerri who reminds me of an ivory girl, of just wholesome looking, Irish, clean living girl also is a hammer to say, "Cut this crap out." So I don't think of that as a contradiction, I feel like you've evolved though. There's something that's been transformed?

Kerri Kelly: I think so.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah.

Kerri Kelly: And I want to say, I don't mind the word contradiction. Because in many ways, that helps me grapple with the truth that we are all immersed in these messed up systems whether we like it or not, and we're raging against them. And I feel like you embody that too. You're inside this construct as you actually break it down, and try to burn it to the ground.

Jacqui Lewis: That's true.

Kerri Kelly: And to me that's spiritual practice. "How do we hold the absolute truths? That we are one, and we are all human, and we are all love. And we are all deserving and worthy." And the very brutal reality that we are not having the same experience of being alive on the planet, because of how things have been designed and constructed. And it just feels important, especially as a person with so much privilege and proximity to power, for me to hold that complexity.

Jacqui Lewis: I love that, Kerri. I love that about you, I love that you're saying it out loud. I think it is the place that we need to go. My friend, Amanda Haberecht reminds me so much of... You know Amanda from Middle. The idea that more white people, and John my beautiful white Methodist man, more white people more often saying what I think indigenous folks, and African American folks, and Asian folks. I'm going to even go, let me take it back a step. Before white people put on whiteness, Irish people in Ireland, the Gaelic, surviving, joyful spirit. The resilience, the "make it we can do it".

Whatever it is about the Swiss, whatever it is about the Germans, whatever it is about the Brits, God bless. There's something that happened before whiteness, before passing for white. That it was ethnic, and earthy. And had culture, and stories, and recipes, you feel me? Language, and dance, and it's all in there. And it is how we made it through the famine, how we made it across the ocean, how we made it when we couldn't make a way out of any way. So the indigenouslyness of that, the rawness of that, the medicine. Then whatever, let's take the first 20 people that screwed it up. And coming to get something that they don't have, but they come and take to have it. And suddenly white is a religion, Kerri. Whiteness is a religion.

And this is the religion that masquerades as Christianity. This is the religion that sets up this nation against its indigenous inhabitants. Builds the nation on the back of enslaved folks. Dares to make treaties to take Mexico from Mexicans, and then make walls so they can't come get their stuff. This is what I'm fighting against, and it is what you are fighting against. And I think it's a shared fight to look critically and detox those systems that are designed to kill us all, kill our souls.

Kerri Kelly: I have a question for you related to that, and about your work, and your book, and the ways in which it stirred me. I don't know if you can reimagine love, but I feel like you're doing that. The idea that love is ripping is my going to be my favorite quote of all time. "Ripping love, that's the kind of love I want to get with." But the way that love takes many forms, it has a lot of different medicine. It's not just neat and tidy, and it's not civil. And sometimes it's fierce, and ferocious. You were talking earlier about we have to love ourselves to love other people. And so much of what I see... Well, I can only speak from my experience, and maybe people like me, I don't even want to generalize to that extent. And how it feels easier often to love others than to love myself. It's way easier for me to advocate for other people, I'll put it all on the line. And yet there's like something in the way of me-

Jacqui Lewis: Loving you.

Kerri Kelly: ... loving me, giving me time, take it... And I think that's a thing in just dominant culture. And yet what I know from you is, you can't do one without the other. And so that's a question I have for you is, what's in the way? I feel like there's a stone on my heart. What is it that you have learned is in the way of self love.

Jacqui Lewis: That is a very powerful and wonderful question. And I also am shaped by my experience. My location in the world as a black girl, oldest child in the family. So maybe there's different kinds of things, Kerri. So I'll try to say a couple of different kinds of things. I think for people of color... Again y'all, I don't mean all the people of color in every world and way. But the messaging and the culture, the container in which we find ourselves, the environment in which we find ourselves is not conducive for people of color to love themselves. It's not. The media says you're not cute unless you're white or light, you got long hair and whatever. All the messages from the time you are born as a black child, I'll be really particular. The story of America, it is not for you to love you.

So if you are lucky enough, and I was to be born in a family that said, "The people are going to say, but we say." The first time I'm called the N-word, "She thinks you're not wonderful, how silly is she that she doesn't know that you're amazing." But it is just so difficult, honestly,

to move in the world and have a love for yourself. So it's a barrier, the culture is a barrier to self love. And I would say, Kerri, white culture is a barrier for white people to love themselves too. And the reason is, maybe Dave Chappelle said this famously, but the white people aren't even white unless they're rich and white. Your whiteness isn't white like Trump white. So there is a class element to it, and there's the Anglo-Saxon protestant ness of it.

Norman Vincent Peel famously, one of my Ecclesiastical ancestors in the Collegiate church, campaigned against Kennedy because he was Catholic. Period, that's it. So the pockets of Europeans who came here, not in the mainstream of white Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, land owning men. Those guys aren't white enough either, so you're not white enough. So the story of what is lovable doesn't work for us. So what we have to do is resist that, and it does start... I was talking to one of my friends and she said, "What about Dylan Roof and those guys?" I'm like, "Yeah, can we save Dylan Roof from the ways he didn't learn to love himself? And then therefore he was a butt-head and killed people?" I don't know. I don't think so. But I do think we could today raise little white boys differently. We could.

And I dream about that, that's my project too. I want little white boys to be taught to be tender and gentle, and to understand that they're lovable. Because if they know they're lovable, they don't have to conquer everything, or stick their thing and everything, which is what boy children learn. "You go get it, you conquer it, you take it, you hump it, you kill it. So you can have it. You eat its heart so you can have it." But if we started with every little boy, every little boy is going to learn that they're lovable. From their mommies, and their aunties, and their fathers. And no matter what ethnicity they are, and I'm just doing one trope of people, little boys thinking that they got to be a certain kind of way. We could change the world, and we could change the world with little girls. Every little girl, "You are the prettiest when you're sassy, you are the cutest when you're strong and honest. You are the bravest when you cry." We can rework that.

Kerri Kelly: You are forgiven when you make a mistake.

Jacqui Lewis: You know what I'm saying? My grandchildren are sometimes... They're going to hear this. My grandchildren are sometimes like the feral wild children in the world, because their mom and dad are saying, "Show us who you are." Not sit down and be quiet.

Kerri Kelly: Or not, "Be like these people."

Jacqui Lewis: Jump off the couch onto the ground. Mother says, "Watch your body, honey." I'm like, who are you? Watch your body. Not don't, watch your body. Kerri that's revolutionary

Kerri Kelly: Radical.

Jacqui Lewis: It is. So that's a long answer to your question, but I'm saying this is the revolution you and I are both writing about, and leaning into.

Kerri Kelly: So we're both speaking to entirely different experiences, and such different socialization. And you're right, I internalized messages of superiority around whiteness. And I internalized messages of, "You're never going to be good enough." And from a gendered standpoint, from the same culture.

Jacqui Lewis: From the same culture.

Kerri Kelly: From the same polluted culture. And it makes me think, to your point, that none of us are well. None of us are lovable inside of that story. Some of us are, if you're white and wealthy, and at the top, and able bodied, and straight and cis, you're good. You're fine, you're protected, the structure was designed for you. But for most of us? And I just say that because that's where I feel like there's some potential for us.

Jacqui Lewis: I think so. Partner.

Kerri Kelly: We're fighting against the same machine, even if we're we're impacted differently. And I also want to say disproportionately, that feels really important to say.

Jacqui Lewis: I think that you're saying truth. It is different, it is disproportional. And all of us are capable of thing-fying someone else. I want to own that. If I'm not careful about my disabled siblings and what kind of language I use, or if we're not careful about our trans partners. Let's just be honest. Everybody got more privilege than somebody else it's what I'm trying to say. Most of us have more privilege than someone else. And so there's a constant self-evaluation and critique, and analysis, and detox, to be a fierce truth teller to yourself. And Kerri, we have to start some place together. We are going to hell, I am so sorry, but this is a hell time.

Kerri Kelly: Or we're in hell.

Jacqui Lewis: Exactly.

Kerri Kelly: Or we're here.

Jacqui Lewis: Woo. So we are going to have to talk a million more times so we can.

Kerri Kelly: How did the time go like this?

Jacqui Lewis: I know. But Kerri, I want the people who listen to this podcast to buy both of our books. And in the show notes, I want-

Kerri Kelly: "Together with." We got married today you all.

Jacqui Lewis: We got together. They're together, they're going to make a baby called Fierce Detox or something.

Kerri Kelly: Fierce Wellbeing

Jacqui Lewis: Fierce Wellness. Yeah. But also for them to hear you, and I say something that's a one thing. In the midst of all the crazy pull one thread, what is the one thing Kerri, that you would say, "If you all would."

Kerri Kelly: The activist in me wants to say get political.

Jacqui Lewis: That's good.

Kerri Kelly: But my soul wants to say question everything.

Jacqui Lewis: I love that

Kerri Kelly: Question everything. Everything you think you know, everything you were taught, every story you've internalized. Every limiting belief you've embodied, question all of it and consider that there's more beyond it. There's fierce love beyond the lie.

Jacqui Lewis: That's beautiful.

Kerri Kelly: And that to me is the beginning. Because I want it to unlock for people an ability to experience ripping love across lines of difference, across the aisle. Hard love, gritty love. And I also want it to move people in the way that you talk about movement. Movements are messy, but we have to move. I want it to move people into action. Because I feel like if we start to question everything, and we start to embody a fierce love, we can't not show up for the future that we all deserve. We can't not. Where we can't not do something, it would be absolutely... It would be ridiculous for us not to act. So I would start there.

Jacqui Lewis: I love that.

Kerri Kelly: How about you?

Jacqui Lewis: At the risk of being repetitive, I do think we need to make it a project to love ourselves. A spiritual practice to love ourselves. How, why, why is it important? Isn't that narcissistic? No. And also don't BS yourself.

Kerri Kelly: That's right.

Jacqui Lewis: This is me. Right Jim Loader, my professor, said love is the non possessive delight in the particularity of the other. The non possessive delight and the particularity of the other. So I think, "Well what about if I love me that way?" I'm absolutely but dragging tired, I am so tired I could cry. And therefore I don't know where anything is. I lost my favorite red hat, what the hell? Yesterday I left one phone home, and today I left the other one home. I got to know myself, and love myself. Know you are goober, know that you need to get in the bed and go to sleep, know that you need to say no more. Know that you're wired for sound, know that you talk too fast. And I'm shiny, and brilliant, and fabulous and bad-ass.

Kerri Kelly: Yes you are.

Jacqui Lewis: And I can do anything I want to do, anytime I want to. Because I want to. All of those things are equally true. I got to look at myself honestly, and love myself. If every human being, and if you do that parents to your littlest one, you love them enough. So they take in how much you love them, so they love themselves. That's the revolution, that's it. That's the thing. Do not shit on them, do not critique them, do not tell them how to be. Let them be, and love them so they can love themselves.

Kerri Kelly: Amen.

Jacqui Lewis: That's what I would say. My friend with your beautiful shirt, with your new book that's coming out June 7. We had to talk again.

Kerri Kelly: Our book babies are married.

Jacqui Lewis: Our book babies.

Kerri Kelly: It's an arranged marriage. No, we're not going back there.

Jacqui Lewis: I love it.

Kerri Kelly: That's not the direction we're going in folks.

Jacqui Lewis: That's so funny. When can I come to California and hang out with you? I want to come.

Kerri Kelly: Oh my gosh. The invitation is wide open, I'm going to try and come to New York in June.

Jacqui Lewis: Well, come in June. Let's do that.

Kerri Kelly: I'm going to try and come to New York in June.

Jacqui Lewis: Come do June and let's do church.

Kerri Kelly: Love it.

Jacqui Lewis: At the temple. How about that?

Kerri Kelly: Oh my God.

Jacqui Lewis: Church at the synagogue.

Kerri Kelly: I actually don't even know if I can hold it together. No, because I'm going to keep seeing the Phoenix rising from the ashes and I'm just going to cry the whole time. I'm going to cry.

Jacqui Lewis: And when you cry, pray for us. Because raising up a Phoenix out the ashes is hard work. It really, really is.

Kerri Kelly: Yeah, but you know what? If anyone can do it.

Jacqui Lewis: We can do it.

Kerri Kelly: You can do it.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you love.

Kerri Kelly: Thank you for writing this book.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you sweetie, for writing yours. I love you Kerri, I'm so glad you're in the world.

Kerri Kelly: I love you so much.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you.

Kerri Kelly: This was so fun. I think we should have a show.

Jacqui Lewis: I know, we should. Hey Corey, you hear that? Jacqui and Kerri talk good stuff.

Kerri Kelly: Oh my God. Talk about everything.

Jacqui Lewis: I know, everything. Be well.

One of the things that Kerri Kelly and I have in common is a dream of a whole person wellness. That's about our bodies, that's about the body politic. That's about breathing and healing, but that's also about helping mother Earth breathe. Where are you in your journey toward the intersections of the personal and the political? And I hope this conversation helps you weave those strands of your life together.