

# LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.  
JACQUI LEWIS

Does Your Work Fulfill Your Spiritual Purpose?  
with Majora Carter

Jacqui Lewis: Hey, everyone, I'm Jacqui Lewis and I am the host of Love Period, a podcast produced by the Center for Action and Contemplation. This is our fourth season and in this one, we're thinking about how to reframe and reclaim Christian as a religion of love, as the religion of Rabbi Jesus. What about if we took it back to Jesus and took it back to love? What if we take it back to scripture that elucidates this beautiful movement of love and justice? Join us this season for beautiful conversations with folks across the spectrum to talk about what's love got to do with scripture and what scripture got to do with love.

Today's guest is my friend, Majora Carter. She is a real estate developer, urban revitalizer, a strategist, a MacArthur Fellow and a Peabody Award-winning broadcaster. Not only that, she's quoted on the walls of the Smithsonian Museum of African-American History and Culture in D.C. as saying, "Nobody should have to move out of their neighborhood to live in a better one," which is also the subtitle of her 2022 book, *Reclaiming Your Community*. She's a member of Middle Church and she's my bud. I hope you enjoy listening to our conversation as much as we enjoyed having it.

Majora, hi.

Majora Carter: Hey, Reverend Jacqui. How you doing?

Jacqui Lewis: Fine, fine, fine, fine, fine, fine. I'm so glad to see you this morning.

Majora Carter: Exactly.

Jacqui Lewis: People can't see your smile but I can and it is a light. It is a light today, I'll tell you what. Yeah, thank you so much for saying yes to come and have a conversation with me today. I appreciate you.

Majora Carter: My absolute pleasure. I was delighted to be asked.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you. And let me ask you a question, can you give our listeners a little sense of your faith journey? I think of you as Madam Faith but tell me about your faith journey.

Majora Carter: Oh, that's so funny because it's weird because, when I was a kid, we didn't go to church at all until I was about ... Occasionally, my parents would send us to Sunday school, frankly, just to get us out the house, that's what I think, but we didn't start going until I was almost in high school and it was just like, "What is going on here?" But I never felt connected to God, I felt more like it was a community of people that loved each other but the God that we worshiped was one to fear. And really, I remember getting baptized because I was afraid I'd go to hell. And if I'm being very honest with myself, that's what it was.

And then college came and that just when I was like, "Okay, I don't want to do that no more," and I did not, did everything but.

Jacqui Lewis: Where did you go to college? Where'd you go to school?

Majora Carter: I went to Wesleyan University in Connecticut.

Jacqui Lewis: And you're like, "No, I'm not doing that."

Majora Carter: Yeah, It was just there was none of that. And then it was also really weird, a few years after college, I was actually married young in a not particularly well advised marriage, we were both too young, and it ended very badly. And I got met by another group of Christians who also ... I felt like it was still based on more of a punitive God that was just like, "If you don't do this, you're going down." I don't think until I became, frankly, older and developed my own connection with God and just thinking that there must be Jesus is really cool, it's awesome.

Jacqui Lewis: Right.

Majora Carter: Why is this? And those were just questions in my mind, I didn't read the Bible that much but I'd read a little bit enough to know that the Jesus that I see there is different from what I've been taught. And then pandemic happens and a friend of mine was just like, "Yeah, my mom goes to this church and she's got her friends there," and I was just like, "Maybe I should just do something because I could use something." And I was just nodding, I was very open to anything it could be. And then I found you guys and was just like, "Wait, this is about people, loving people on earth while we're here in the way that Jesus loved us all," and I thought, "Oh, that's it, that's it."

And it's funny because I struggle, Jacqui, I really do with feelings of worth and I'm obviously doing everything wrong even though I know that I was knit together in my mother's womb by a God who made me and only me as a beautiful handmade jewel. But do I believe that all the time? No. And do I act that way most of the time? Absolutely not. But still going back when I would ... And I live for those moments where I was just like, "No, remember whose you are," and that's when it's like, "Okay."

Jacqui Lewis: Tacks you back to center? Does it tack you back?

Majora Carter: Yeah. Oh, totally. But then I realize so much of life is such a spiritual battle, all of it is, I really do. It's almost like that weird good angel and bad angel you'd see in cartoons, I think that happens all the time. And in my work, I felt like I had found real meaning in the scriptures when Jesus would say, "What a year two ..." Now I'm embarrassed to say I can't remember if it was the Sadducee or the Pharisee that was just trying to catch Jesus. The big lawmaker is just like, "Hey, so which is the best? Tell me what's the most important law?" and He was just like, "Yeah, there's actually only two. Love God, love your neighbor." That's really all it is and I was like, "Oh, my gosh, that's what I do in my work. I want to love God, I want to love my neighbor," and my work is the manifestation of that.

And sometimes it is really difficult to love your neighbor even when you're trying to do great work for them and with them.

Jacqui Lewis: That is a whole truth right there, a whole word.

Majora Carter: And I know you know that.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, I do. Yes, I do. I want to make sure we get a good chunk of time to talk about your work but let's stick with faith for just a second and these different gods, I'm going to say. The different gods that are in the world right now, god's, in quote, listeners who are battling for the soul of America as we do this podcast. We're two weeks away from my father died and a

week away from his funeral. And Majora, I grew up in the church, the first Air Force based church which was not a church but was a club but it was a nice club. I don't remember a lot of beautiful spiritual energy in those places but I remember safety and my mother singing solos so that was a good thing.

And when we moved to Chicago, I honestly, though I was about six or seven, I could feel the difference in the Air Force base theology. It wasn't like, "Let's go heal the world and let's do justice and love mercy," it wasn't that but it also wasn't you are going to hell fear-based theology which is what we got in Chicago right away at the first church. I would watch the ladies get the spirit, I would watch the doilies on their hair and skirts fly and the music was hot but in the middle of it all was you are bad, you are wrong, you are a worm, you are disgusting, God doesn't like you especially you girls.

Majora Carter: No, especially not the girls. Oof.

Jacqui Lewis: Your little smelly selves, you little fat behind, you look like ... Ooh, it was horrible.

Majora Carter: Yeah. You temptresses.

Jacqui Lewis: Temptress, yeah, and can't speak in here.

Majora Carter: Lord, mm-mm.

Jacqui Lewis: You're unclean and, ugh. I could feel the heat of that. And then found a Presbyterian church with my mom and dad. They took us to a church that was Middle-esque, grace, justice. A bell bottom wearing Black man with a big afro named Oliver Brown was like, "We go to the jails, we feed the people, we handle our business."

Majora Carter: Mm-hmm, right.

Jacqui Lewis: So, today you and I are watching, all of us are watching the God of wealth, broken capitalism, hate the gays, design the whites to be white and better. The environment, don't fix it because we're going to heaven soon or all of it's a hoax versus conversations about love and justice. Where do you see the most conflict between these two kinds of theologies and do you find any hope even in the midst?

Majora Carter: Well, yes, the fact that there is so much conflict going on. Where I find the most reasons for hope is that I am seeing more folks within the faith actually going, "Dominion doesn't mean lording over." And yeah, God gave us that but it actually means more along the lines of how are we stewarding this amazing creation. And the creation is not just the birds and the things that slither across the planet or in the water, it's more about how are we living connected with our fellow man.

And so, I guess I have been really encouraged by, in particular, the number of folks that I meet who do the kind of work that I do, which is all about building community, that encourages me to see that they see that their faith is something that is moving them in the direction of how do you build community especially in the places where we're told it's not worthy just by virtue of being what it is. Whether it's

an inner city, Native American reservation, even poor white towns where there once was industry and even white folks were feeling like they had it all together and then, suddenly, it's just you may be white but you're not a part of the class that actually rules this world and they discover that real quick.

And that's what encourages me because, honestly, if I took the whole big picture in, and when I do that, and I do do that sometimes, that's when it gets so hard to take that it feels like it cripples me and I can't afford that, I can't afford that. So, I really do have to focus on the things and the people that I know are just getting caught trying to make things different. Because I feel like, if we are consistently trying to boil the ocean, we're not going to get there. We do have to focus on the here and now and find goodness and strength in that because, honestly, that's what feeds me.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, we can't boil the ocean. I was struck by your Psalm 139 hook at the beginning of our talk. Even though I know, you said, I'm wonderfully knit in my mother's womb. Even though I know I'm awesomely and wonderfully made, there can be times, if we aren't able to focus, that the overwhelm of the ugly, I think, gets inside us and, therefore, we don't believe-

Majora Carter: Totally.

Jacqui Lewis: ... the truth of our beauty and fabulous godness image of goodness.

Majora Carter: Yeah, you won't and that's why you just got to ... I find, if I'm not recognizing that I was knit together in my mom's womb, if I'm not taking care of myself, all of it, if I'm not working out, if I'm not reading, getting spiritual food, then I'm the biggest hot mess and it only takes a day or two. In a day or two, literally, I feel like a different person, somebody I don't want to be but I can fake it because you have to be a semi-public figure. I can't afford to not feel like, oh, I have to put a certain face out there even though I'm exhausted or I'm feeling completely attacked in a bunch of different ways, I still have to be the one helping people see that hope's not lost if we try to win for communities like ours.

Yeah, I can't even imagine what Jesus must've felt like. And obviously, He's God and He knew everything that was going to happen but still had to love up on people knowing that they were going to betray Him in the most awful, awful way. And that makes me, obviously, really sad but, also, it encourages me because I'm like, "But look what He did," and that's our model because He obviously rose again. And not only rose again, made it so that the rest of us could too.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh, yeah. Whoo, preach, preach, Majora. I do think that the model of the Jesus that we know to be outsider, marginalized, poor, itinerant, I say afrosemitic because all the Jews are afrosemitic.

Majora Carter: Yeah.

Jacqui Lewis: Come on, people.

Majora Carter: I know. I know some believe that but how many ...

Jacqui Lewis: Lots of people don't believe that, that rocks their world.

Majora Carter: I know, I know.

Jacqui Lewis: It rocks their world.

Majora Carter: Wouldn't it be great? I think, if we could just sit down and think about that and just have a real conversation, let's just pretend, let's just think maybe, I wonder how it would change things to just let it sink in for a minute. I don't know.

Jacqui Lewis: I think it would have changed the whole world if the Jesus that got evangelized, the one that got taught, if the spread of Christianity had really taken root in northern Africa where it was and, really, at the same time, there wasn't conquest of Africa, that the Jesus we would've been teaching and preaching would've been looking like you and me more, browner, kinkier hair, not peacenik with the peace signs and the blonde hair. But just what would've happened if that Jesus had been in the minds of folks when they encountered the indigenous people in our land or if that Jesus had been in the mind when they went to Africa, like, "Ooh, free labor." Or the way we interred Japanese people or the way we ...

All of that, a whole world of view shift if the person of Jesus guiding ourselves more deeply as somebody like us, brown outsider as opposed to empire blesser.

Majora Carter: Yeah, empire bless ... That is the funny-

Jacqui Lewis: Empire blesser. What?

Majora Carter: Empire-

Jacqui Lewis: You want to kill those people for their land? Have at it.

Majora Carter: Yes, we're going to create and manifest destiny.

Jacqui Lewis: Exactly.

Majora Carter: Oh, my God, that painting still kills me.

Jacqui Lewis: Go get it.

Majora Carter: Oh, my God. It's like, "Seriously, someone" ... Of course it not just came out of the minds of the artist, it came out of the whole culture of like, "No, this is who we are." Oh, it was just ...

Jacqui Lewis: It's a mess.

Majora Carter: Yeah, I know. And then I wonder why. I don't wonder why I go through what I go through, I really don't.

Jacqui Lewis: But you do go through it, Majora, so people know an accomplished, an accomplished young-ish woman who has pioneered this incredible development of real estate and people and projects that says our people are valued and our people are loved and you don't have to

run away from home to have a great life. Talk about your work and how did you get into it.

Majora Carter: So, I am a urban revitalization strategist and real estate developer and I actually got my start professionally in this work as a project-based environmental justice activist because we worked to build projects that would change the environmental and economic quality of life within my community which is specifically in the South Bronx. And what was really interesting was that I was a kid who grew up in the burning days of the South Bronx, we were literally the poster child of urban blight and, honestly, it was that space when there was financial disinvestment, landlords were torching buildings to collect insurance money, we lost like 60% of the population in this community. It looked like Europe, in particular London, after it was bombed in World War II and that's what I grew up with.

Hip hop came out of that, amazing culture comes out of these kind of places as well but it was honestly the place where, the smart kids, we were taught to measure success by how far we got away. There was no if, ands or buts about it that a smart kid ... I was reading when I was three and I know that because, when I was four years old, I remember literally sitting at the kitchen table reading my Christmas cards to my mom when I turned four so I was good, whatever, and could do all sorts of fun things. So, it was just I was a smart one, she was like, "You're going to get out of here." And so, brain drain was real. But when I realized, and it wasn't until after I got home, I went away to college, I only moved back in with my parents because I needed a cheap place to stay when I started graduate school, it was a horrifying time for me, utter defeat.

Because it was just, yeah, I wanted to stay with my parents because my mother was an excellent cook, basically, but she really was. But other than that, in my mind, I was grown and here I was having to live with mommy and daddy and it was just the worst and it was like "I hated my neighborhood." But I got only, I honestly can say, reintegrated into my own neighborhood when I met someone who had started an arts project around here who was doing this amazing work and he kept talking about it and I was just like, "Oh, my God, that sounds amazing." Turns out, it was two blocks away from my home.

Jacqui Lewis: What?

Majora Carter: And there was this amazing ... Because I spent no time in my own neighborhood at all and it was just I didn't want to be around here, nobody's here, nothing's here. No, it turns out that there was this spot became this amazing place where all these artists hung out and I happened to be one of them so I was like, "Yo, that's where I'm going to chill." And around that same time, that's when I discovered that our city and state were planning on building a huge waste facility on our waterfront and then I realized that our community had already handled about almost 40% of the city's commercial waste and it was about to get more and that's when it hit me.

And maybe I also realized, thank you to God, because that education that I had and the distance that I'd had for so long literally helped me see the world in a completely different way and I was just like, "Oh, I see what's happening here. This is a poor community of color and politically vulnerable and that's why this is happening." And I felt, oh, I don't have to stick around obviously but I felt, and I know this was the Spirit because I certainly wasn't going to do it, I felt pulled. Literally it was just like, "What else am I going to do?" It didn't



even occur to me to do anything except work to help my community see itself as, not the way the repository for all the things that wealthy white neighborhoods could afford to avoid, but how do we show ourselves for the beautiful things that we are.

And since I was an artist, yeah, I worked on the solid waste management plan part, but I felt like my skills were more in showcasing our community for the beauty that it had and could have more of because, believe me, there was some things that were horrible. So, I worked on transforming dumps into parks, we did public art projects, I did a green collar job training in placement systems that was still one of the best in the country because we worked on developing relationships with employers and doing really strategic training to help folks, many of whom who'd honestly never had a job before or, if they had a job, it was not within the legitimate economy, but getting them to the point where they saw themselves as agents of their own power and grace and they kept their jobs.

But all of that really pushed me into thinking more about the neighborhood itself and how we were always fighting from being reactionary as opposed to why aren't we developing and designing the community on our own from a real estate development perspective. And so, now, we're working on developing actual real estate projects and economic development projects that do the kind of things that we know people leave our community in order to experience. We both have roots in the south and one of the things that ... My father's father and parents were enslaved but there was always this thing where folks were just wanted to move to places that allowed them to be even best at their best selves. So, we often don't think about the unintended consequences of integration.

The fact that, when people could afford to move wherever they wanted, racially segregated but economically diverse communities, we lost that as a consequence of integration and we still see the impact of that especially in the Black community. We see it in other communities as well but it's, when we lose the ones, the people in our communities that actually are often the ones who can create more access to ... That have more access to capital, that could be entrepreneurs, that are reinvesting money into their own community, we lose generational wealth in those communities and we're not setting up the conditions for people to see that that's even possible.

But someone else is benefiting from those neighborhoods and that's why we are working in the real estate field and with a very specific focus on working on supporting home ownership but also creating opportunities for people to see their own communities as places in which they want to stay in and build, whether businesses or homes, within those neighborhoods. And it has been a struggle but it's also been the highlight of my life.

Jacqui Lewis: I'm so, so inspired by the work you do. It seems to me that living out of our faith, living out of the belief that we are created in the image of God, that we are, therefore, called to partner with God in the healing of the world, in the tikkun olam, our Jewish friends would say and in the furthering of love period. Love God, love neighbor, love self, love period and that theological centering for you then you're able to create ripples of opportunity. So, folks who would have, could have low self-esteem, feelings of shame, feeling of not belonging, not belonging ....

Majora Carter: Not belonging, oof.

Jacqui Lewis: ... not belonging because the world says this is not the marker of beautiful and success, it's get here, get out. I love the reversal, the intention of your work to have people know you don't have to leave home to live in a beautiful place, you don't have to leave yourself, your Black beautiful, brown beautiful, indigenous beautiful self to be shiny in the eyes of God and the world.

Majora Carter: No, and that's challenging to a lot of people. And one of the things I realized that, moments like



this, I'm like, "I don't want to say I suffer," because I don't think I suffer at all from being Black and female or born in very poor circumstances but I know that that is all held against me. And at times, especially right now, I'm going through an incidence where I'm feeling the anti-Black female misogynoir, it can feel utterly overwhelming. But can I read you one of the scriptures that actually has kept me-

Jacqui Lewis: Oh, please do.

Majora Carter: ... so, so close. So, this is actually Psalm 119:76 to 80, this is the message version. With your own very hands, You form me. Now, breathe Your wisdom over me so I can understand You. When they see me waiting, expecting Your word, those who fear You will take heart and be glad. I could see them now, God, that Your decisions are right. Your testing has taught me what's true and right. Oh, love me and, right now, hold me tight just the way you promised. Now comfort me so I can live, really live. Your revelation is the tune I dance to. Let the fast talking tricksters be exposed as frauds, they tried to sell me a bill of goods but I kept my mind fixed on Your counsel. Let those who fear You turn to me for evidence of Your wise guidance and let me live whole and holy soul and body so I can always walk with my head held high.

Just so I can walk with my head held high so others can see it.

Jacqui Lewis: Just so I can, yeah.

Majora Carter: Yeah, others can see it and be like, "Hmm, what's that? Oh."

Jacqui Lewis: What's that about?

Majora Carter: I'm like, "That's it, that's it."

Jacqui Lewis: How did that scripture find you or how did you find it?

Majora Carter: I might've been just absent-mindedly going through a devotional because, when I'm really not ... Now I remember, when I'm really not in a great place, I'll just be absent-minded and I'll literally find a devotional, pick it, something and just go, "Okay, fine," and that happened to be it. And I immediately cut and pasted and sent it to Tanya, who is also a member of Middle Church and I met her online, she lives out in Seattle, we're dear, dear friends and it was when I was going through some really bad stuff and she's like, "See? See?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I got it. I do." But it has been a really crazy moment to be in but still it just makes me go, "I know where we are. I know whose I am."

Jacqui Lewis: You have a friendship across the country through the digital church, it makes me smile.

Majora Carter: Yeah, yup.

Jacqui Lewis: Well, that psalm is really one of my favorites as well. You quoted my other one, Psalm 139, and that Romans 8:28. What shall we say? If God is for us, who's against us? I'm convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things high, nor things low, nothing in all of creation will separate us from the love of God. I was saying that to my dad when he was dying, Majora, he was doing those things you do. What did I do? What did I do to deserve this ALS? What did I do? I was like, "Dude, you didn't do anything to deserve ALS or to get ALS, God's not meting out disease to teach you lessons but the Bible says ... Aah, aah, aah, yeah. There's a reason for those theologies that deal death as opposed to the ones that deal life.

Majora Carter: Right. And so, how did he take that?

Jacqui Lewis: Well, daddy's super smart and was teaching Sunday school when he was eight years old to teenagers and all of us, I think, has his own canon. How we all have our, your Psalm 119, my 139, the things that really hold us together, the texts we go to but I think he was happy to think about interpretations of scripture that were from a hermeneutical lens of love and grace as opposed to punishment and fear which is where you and I started this conversation today.

If you're an ancient person that's Hebrew and you live in the Middle East and, every time you turn around, somebody's coming to get you, Canaanites, Philistines, whoever, they all are just kicking your butt and raiding your land and you just are always, always, always under siege, the theology that would develop in that kind of context would be the nations don't love us but God chose us so we are going to be all right type of thing.

Majora Carter: Right, mm-hmm.

Jacqui Lewis: I think that the Black church had a similar theological orientation. The nations hate us, they have enslaved us, we are not going to get 40 acres and a mule but God loves us, we're going to be all right.

Majora Carter: But that's the thing that I don't understand which is why it was so, I think, just a breath of fresh air to just go to a place where, at Middle, where it was just about love. Where did that come from? If it's, yeah, we're not going to get our 40 acres, they're going to figure out ways to lynch us-

Jacqui Lewis: Right, that's what's going to happen.

Majora Carter: ... physically and emotionally-

Jacqui Lewis: Emotionally.

Majora Carter: ... so how did it get to this point where it felt more like it's still punitive? Post-traumatic slave disorder, I think, is real but I don't fully understand it.

Jacqui Lewis: I think that's a really good way to call the trauma of it. Girl, I got to preach my father's eulogy, that was interesting and really was wanting to preach to him in the casket even but to all the people around him who grew up like he did, he's 88 years old, who really think, "Remember that psalm where it says the sins of the fathers are ..." So, it isn't that the words aren't there that could shape us to think we're being punished but I think human beings need to feel in control and so, Corey's going to put these things in the notes in the podcast, but like Rabbi Harold Kushner's *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, I read that book over and over again.

He's a rabbi who had a son who was born with this debilitating disease that he was aging as soon as he was born. So, by the time he was three, he had an old body, he only lived to be 14 and the Rabbi is wrestling with the *Odyssey*. Why are these bad things happening? What happened here? So, I think, just like Harold did, the canon is God is still speaking. I should say that better. God is still speaking. So, just like Rabbi Kushner was wrestling with why did this bad thing happen to me, the writers of the psalms and in other places of the scripture we're wrestling with why do these things happen to me. And I think we'd rather believe we

failed or we didn't pray hard enough or there's something wrong with us than to think that the universe can randomly deliver suffering.

Majora Carter: Oh, my gosh.

Jacqui Lewis: Right? Psychologically, isn't it better to think I screwed up, I'm a worm, I'm so sorry I didn't do the right thing. God, thank You for kicking my behind like a mean parent so I get clear and do better next time. It gives me more control than thinking there is a loving God who allowed us to have a bad thing or gave us a bad thing, none of which I believe that God gave us a bad thing. Does that make sense? Does that resonate?

Majora Carter: It totally does, huh. Because then you could extrapolate on that in terms of why things like white supremacy are just bound to happen. Because, even though we might forget that there was ... No, it was the federal government going we're going to create redlining so that Black folks or anybody else we don't want will not have opportunities. But what we see, the manifestation of it is more simply just Black folks never really getting anything. Because if you don't know all that goes on behind it, then it's easy to make it up so that it benefits you.

Jacqui Lewis: Absolutely, yeah. And the writers of the Constitution didn't have either of us in mind and also, I would say, the early shapers of theology didn't have either of us in mind. So, the words that get passed along the most or resonate the most or end up in preaching, bad preaching the most, is the words that justify the way the world is as opposed to the words that conjure up the way the world should be, could be, the way God ... Because it should be everybody has enough.

Can you imagine that guns kill more children every year than anything else? Should be you ought to be able to go to school, movie theater, grocery store, Target, Dollar Store and just walk out. But if you create a world in which guns are worshiped and gays are loathed and racial hierarchy is some way blessed by God, then this is the world we get. Not to be all downer about it but, right?

Majora Carter: No, but that's the thing. That's why, I think, the small bites approach I take to my work, I find so much more conducive to actually moving forward because it's just like, "Okay, what can we do?" Because I was actually just in Jacksonville, and not to date the program, it was the day of ... I was literally there a day after the gunman walked on the campus and then into a Dollar General and shot three people, killed three people. And it was hard being in Florida because I kept thinking, "How am I going to be treated down here? Am I going to get out alive?" And it's just I know I'm not, people look like me or not, I'm appreciated and loved legislatively. Legislatively, it's getting to that point. But again, I got to spend some time with folks who were just like, "No, this is"...

Yeah, guess what? It could have been worse. There was supposed to have been a huge conference that was happening there but it didn't, literally. That's why he had targeted that day because it was supposed to be a thousand extra people on campus at that moment, I can't even imagine. And it just made people feel like, "Nope, we got our work cut out for us but, guess what, we are going to keep going." And so, seeing those things and listening to people who were literally trying to rebuild their communities block by block is just like, "Okay." The strength and the power and the compassion that goes into getting up every day

and just going, “I’m going to do what I can.”

Jacqui Lewis: I’m going to do what I can where I can in the place I am.

Majora Carter: Yup.

Jacqui Lewis: Majora, that is it. I love can’t boil the ocean and I love people doing what they can where they can. You’re making me think about two things. One, that, as we record this, it is the week that is Emmett Till killed, lynched, the people arrested and them acquitted in September. But his mother Mamie, how brave and bold, how Emmett’s murder galvanized a whole generation of young people who call themselves the Emmett Till generation who just kicked butt in the places they were, didn’t try to boil ocean but tried to take a cup and do something with it, a little bit of work to do something with it. The March on Washington, its anniversary is this week, 60 years. And so, again, people doing what they can do in the ways that they can.

So, as we wrap a bit, which I don’t want to, I want have lunch and talk some more, your book *Reclaiming Your Community* is so amazing. Remember, I got to talk about your book when it first dropped. I feel like *Reclaiming Your Community* is Middle’s signature project as well and that our community is not just the people in the East Village or just the people in the Bronx or just the people in New York but our community is global.

Majora Carter: Yes, totally.

Jacqui Lewis: And so, just as a word of calling in to anybody who hears this, what would you say to listener number six who lives in a place where they feel left out and undervalued and like they don’t matter? Is there a word of encouragement to say something to them as we wrap about how they do and how their faith or our faith in them could change them?

Majora Carter: Yeah, remembering whose you are, and I do, I have to say that a lot to myself and to other folks as well. But also knowing that being able to share and to do something, anything, in service of showing love, that’s how we reclaim our power and showcase it but also create the kind of healing that I think we really need to experience on our own but also give to each other because it is the grace that was given to us as well. I think that’s really it and I say that to myself every day, even today because I’ve got to say some hard things to somebody. But it’s because I actually do care about them and they’re not showing just how wonderfully made they are and I hope a good word can help.

Jacqui Lewis: I hope so, too. Majora, I’m so conscious that, because of who you are in the world and what you’re doing in the world, that there are darts and arrows and talons and rocks thrown your way.

Majora Carter: Yup.

Jacqui Lewis: And I’m so grateful to God that you have crossed my path.

Majora Carter: I know. Oh, my God.

Jacqui Lewis: That we have shared work to do. And to look across the borough and know you’re over there,

also everywhere, teaching, making beauty, making art, as I would say playfully, making love everywhere, making love everywhere, thank you for that.

Majora Carter: Thank you. And thank you, Jacqui, for also creating this space that allows people like me and others to feel as though we can be a part of something as big as it is. And just the fact that there's a group, a reparations group at Middle that are trying to come up with a path forward but for Middle to show what they can do, not just for the history that the church in which it's in is dealt, but also how you can use its position to show other faith communities how we can actually deal with this in a loving way. I don't know too many other folks that are doing that but that's just one small example of how you use your position in a way that I feel is so Jesus like. That you're showing just how much you love God and how much you love your neighbor by making sure that we feel empowered to do things like that.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you for that, my love. Thank you so much. Have a beautiful day and, the hard conversation you have, may it flow with truth and grace.

Majora Carter: Thank you.

Jacqui Lewis: Okay.

Majora Carter: Thank you so much. All right, take good care.

Jacqui Lewis: Take care.

Majora Carter: All right, bye.

Jacqui Lewis: Bye-bye. Thank you so much for listening to this episode of Love Period. As I reflect on my conversation with Majora, I'm deeply moved by her humility and her passion. This is a super gifted woman who understands that, if we leave our gifts in our neighborhood, we could make a better world every place we live. Let's go and do that. Hope to be with you again soon here at Love Period.