

Transcript of Oral Interview with Karina Rodriguez by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Karina Rodriguez

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 06/13/2020

Location (Interviewee): Victorville, California

Location (Interviewer): Unknown

Interview Technology: Zoom

Transcriber: Jason Inskip

Some of the things we discussed included:

Kit Heintzman interviews nurse and death doula Karina Rodriguez about her perspective, experiences, and insights from the opening months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Karina discusses motherhood, shamanism, mental health, nurses, the healthcare industry, family graduations, spirituality, emotions and their relation to vibrations, the impact of dying alone, celebrating death/helping the journey, and her explanation of spirituality. Through her unique perspective of a nursing background and working as a death doula, Karina shares an important and underrepresented perspective in the COVID-19 pandemic story.

Karina Rodriguez 00:00

Hi, my name is Karina Rodriguez.

Kit Heintzman 00:03

And what's the date and time?

Karina Rodriguez 00:04

Today is June 13, 2020, to 9:37am in Victorville California.

Kit Heintzman 00:16

Perfect. And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under Creative Commons License Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike?

Karina Rodriguez 00:26

Yes.

Kit Heintzman 00:28

Would you please start by just introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening? What would you want them to know about you?

Karina Rodriguez 00:37

I am I recently started doing my death doula work. But I've been doing nursing since about 2006. If I'm correct. I'm also been studying shamanic...shamanic Andean shamanism up around 2018. And the way you found me is because I merged them together death doula with shamanism.

Kit Heintzman 01:11

Would you share a little about how you see those practices working together the shamanism and working as a death doula?

Karina Rodriguez 01:19

I was I've been interested in, in the practice of death and or in how we treat the death, the person that you know, after, after they have passed away. But as a nurse, from my perspective, as soon as the person dies, some nurses, they become afraid. It's like, it's completely different, they're afraid. They don't know maybe how to approach it. And it's, it's very, it's hard to believe it right? Because as nurses, you are surrounded by the effort of nurses not to feel comfortable with it, not only not, I think nursing has changed a lot. And because there's nursing shortages, there's not enough time we really don't spend enough time with, with our patients. So I feel like a person that is getting ready to pass, [unintelligible] had special one to one, I mean, this is the end of his journey. And the very best we can do is just be with them. My father passed away in 2012. And we did hire a great hospice. But they didn't, you know, how they'll give you the pamphlet, and like "you have this, you have this care and this and that," and they give you different options. But when it really happened, not all of it that the nurses go and they, they they're looking for signs or symptoms, and they do educate you, but no one is really they're really there for the person, you know. And also, I think it's not, it's not even that is is that they also see the family being involved. And maybe they don't want to like, step in. So, there's just a lot of in between.

Kit Heintzman 03:15

Tell me a story about your life during the pandemic.

Karina Rodriguez 03:21

I mean, it was it was scary, I was very glad I wasn't working as a nurse, because I do have a history of [unintelligible] that always and then the nursing supplies, I would hear my friends saying that the nursing supplies that they didn't have no gloves, no. And I mean, that's scary. That's scary to to, to, to see yourself that you could you could have been in that situation. Or know that your friends and your family and loved ones are going through that situation. I even had a friend who she was crying and just telling people like on her Facebook, like "please don't go out like take care of yourself I work ICU people are dying left and right." And it does create a fear not only like in your home, it creates a it ripples out. You know, there's so many people who were scared is scared of them being the next one's of I mean of the unknown. And you you hear what you hear on the news and and then, you know, will you hear through your family that this person died, or this person is sick and it's just like, we don't we're scared of the unknown.

Kit Heintzman 04:47

Pre pandemic, what was your day to day looking like?

Karina Rodriguez 04:52

Pre pandemic. I mean, I would take some classes like for shamanism, different classes and I would actually attend the class, which gives it a different, you know, a different feel, I would take my daughter, I would go out, go eat, I would go to Disneyland, you know, just go ahead and have fun. And it's just like, I haven't even renewed by Disneyland pass, because I don't really feel like I want to expose myself to a lot of people. And then, with the children, we still we still don't know. We still don't know necessarily what the repercussions are, and, you know, for future.

Kit Heintzman 05:35

To the extent that you're comfortable sharing, what were some of your experiences with health and healthcare infrastructure prior to the pandemic,

Karina Rodriguez 05:44

Prior to the pandemic, I used to work at a facility where it was always short, it was it was unsafe, because whether people call off or they don't want to pay for overtime, they rather keep nurses short, because it's just once you clock in, it's just like, you're already obligated to go ahead and provide service, the same service that you would whether you're short or not. I think that didn't really change, it probably got worse, because now you have people calling off because they're sick. And that's going to be maybe two weeks or a loved one is sick, I don't think I don't think anything has changed. If anything, it's probably worse than the stress. They don't they don't even consider the amount of stress that they put their staff, their staff under which at the end of the day, it hurts, it hurts their patients.

Kit Heintzman 06:45

Would you share something about some of what becomes stressful in those circumstances?

Karina Rodriguez 06:51

Sorry, can you repeat the question?

Kit Heintzman 06:53

Yeah. Would you share something about what makes things stressful in those circumstances?

Karina Rodriguez 06:59

Being short stuff, I think that always makes, I mean, you're asking nurses to take an unsafe load. And if an emergency arises is just like they have to somehow be okay with all they don't have the health maybe they're not getting their breaks. Most likely, they're not getting their breaks as they should. It's just an it's and it piles on day to day, they nothing is really done. You know, you can go ahead and maybe write a note or complain. But then I don't know, maybe they'll just think you're the bad guy for reporting or something, you know, but it's not even about that. It's about the safety. It's about the safety of the patients and I forgot her name, but that was a nurse who made a critical mistake. Right? And she was given she went to complain...it's all about safety. It's all about safety and having the right load. If not, it's just anything can open for any mistakes.

Kit Heintzman 08:09

Do you remember when you first heard about the pandemic?

Karina Rodriguez 08:15

Yes, I think it was close to January 2020. It was I mean, you you read all these history books, or you hear about epidemics you never think that it's going to happen, and it was it was scary. But at the same time, I was like oh I'm just gonna take my vitamins stay home

Kit Heintzman 08:50

Would you tell me a little bit about your early reaction sort of thinking? January 2020 when you first started hearing about it to maybe like April 2020

Karina Rodriguez 09:02

It did progress, it was it was quickly a lot of fear as you saw like the toilet paper ran out. We we're trying to save and maybe cut from other areas of the home so that we can stock up on on you know, like oatmeal, water and just different stuff like that. Buying extra food for our dogs for our pets. Maybe even buying medications you just don't know. I mean, you see all these shows right? Like Walking Dead, and you're just like "how much do I need to see these people buying and getting batteries in this" that so it's just like we don't know we didn't know how it was going to turn out. So, you want to prepare without you know, overdoing it. My husband, he was given a letter in which he can go to work. Because remember, they were trying to limit the amount of people that were were driving that were going out. So, he was given a letter that he can he can go out and work. My son stopped going to school, which he thought it was tragic. I mean, it was his senior year from high school, so he wasn't able to experience that. That he, when he actually graduated, we did attend, they had two to two graduations to limit the amount of people. But my nephew graduated from from college, and we got to see it through somebody. And he picked up his diploma, and it was through the car. This I feel like it did take a lot from us. But we also learned a lot, you know, maybe a lot of people. I mean, it's a good thing and a bad thing. Because when there's children that are abused at home, when there's not enough food at home, now you have all these children with their predators all day long. When, what when you have you know, your husband and your wife and, and you're not getting along together? And you know, you're stuck in this house, that is just probably best to to separate. I mean, it just really made you look at things, you know.

Kit Heintzman 11:35

What was it like going to your son's graduation?

Karina Rodriguez 11:43

I think there was still a lot of fear. I can't speak for the fact my son was kind of like, and yes, you think COVID. But I think their perception of things is a little bit different. They're not really thinking so much COVID they're thinking, "Oh, I missed out on in my, my senior year, you know, where they didn't get to do the fun stuff." Because towards the end of the year, it's like the fun stuff. For the seniors, they didn't get to see that. And that's probably their focus. He felt like a little depressed, he felt that the classes were like, they took a lot, because it was just like, some kids were even joking around the you know, like the internet connection, that he wasn't learning as much. I did get to enjoy the fact that at least they did have a ceremony. And I mean, but the fear was there, there was a lot of people. So, the fear's there people were wearing their masks, people are spaced out. But they've been can't complain. You know, it's like, it's the same thing.

Kit Heintzman 13:00

What were some of the changes that happened with the classes that you were taking?

Karina Rodriguez 13:07

Well, definitely no, no, no one on one which changes, you know, like, during break, you get to meet new people, that's no longer happening. But one of the good things is that sometimes, you know, maybe the teachers going too fast, or you didn't quite catch that and thank you to zoom like you're doing right now. You're recording, I can go back to it, and maybe write it down or review it. And this is best for like people who are older and might need that second review or maybe you know, you didn't catch something so you need to go ahead and review it. But um, the good thing about that is just that I didn't longer have to maybe travel or, you know, pay more money for for lunch, or for food for for for a hotel. So cut down on that cost.

Kit Heintzman 14:11

So, the classes were pretty far away then.

Karina Rodriguez 14:15

Sometimes, I'm here in Victorville, which is San Bernardino County and sometimes I have to drive like eight eight hours for a class or yeah, cuz it's like somewhere up north. In a very small location, you probably won't know are there?

Kit Heintzman 14:37

Are there aspects of the teaching that required sort of more in person attention or that required a really like different kind of approach because you've moved online?

Karina Rodriguez 14:50

Yes, I had a class with and his name is not hitting me but he's a Shaman and [unintelligible], the father and son duo. And there was there's a lot of of their practices actually to practice with somebody else. So, what they would do, I mean, obviously, if you were there in person, you would go to glue yourself to an area known location and practice this energetic exercise, but because we didn't have that they would put us in rooms. And even you can still feel the energy I won't say you don't but I can only imagine that if you're doing it one to one, it's just gives it a different view

Kit Heintzman 15:37

What does spirituality mean to you?

Karina Rodriguez 15:42

It's freedom. It's freedom, it's it's digging in into who you really are, and shutting off the layers. It's also shedding off it's, it's removing them, how can I say it? I forgot that word. The training that our parents give us and it's just like sometimes who we are as an adult is just the echoing of other people's beliefs on to us are how we were raised by our parents and and it's shedding all of that and and being who you really are and being okay with that and being able to express it

Kit Heintzman 16:29

Has your relationship with spirituality changed at all over the last couple of years

Karina Rodriguez 16:37

Yes, I would say so. I think every day, I mean my teacher used to say, "You must die to the old in order to live your life to the fullest so just like the sun dies we die every day we must shed to the old every day." So, this is an ongoing process is just like I don't think you ever finish

Kit Heintzman 17:03

Okay, give me a sort of narrative arc of your spiritual journey throughout your life.

Karina Rodriguez 17:09

Um, I started in I've always been interested in spirituality because I would get those you know you get the weird dreams when you're a child and you're a teenager and all that stuff but back then we're very you know, like oh, that's that's the depths work and so you kind of like push it down. And I met somebody at work who she told me that she she she she was taking Shamanism classes and "Oh, that would be good." And I started taking these classes and you know just trying different teachers and I found some teachers who are really really really great and and then it comes a point when you've taken enough classes that you just learn that your teachers are just tools and that the real truth is within you I mean yes you go to these teachers just so that they can give you the the foundation but in reality is like the work is within you. So, you don't have to continue to go to more and more and more teachers is just like getting connection with you with with the land with you know with the stars with the air with the fire with with everything because everything's eventually like things will just talk to you and and that's really what it is. It's about it's about you knowing you because maybe would work for that teacher is not going to work for you. I mean, we're all the same but we just have our unique blueprint so you need to find a unique blueprint

Kit Heintzman 18:49

What's motherhood hood meant to through out the pandemic?

Karina Rodriguez 18:55

Um, I was already being a stay-at-home mom. But I feel like it kind of did just kind of put us in here which sometimes you know, you do need that outlet I mean, but I was already doing that beforehand, but I love being a mother. It's like now I think with all that stuff going on. It's you're more protective because now you're more protective because now well at least for me, I'm aware I try not to take my child where there's a whole lot of people, but I mean I we've been doing, we've been doing we've been doing but it's just like we're just more careful more careful now.

Kit Heintzman 19:52

What are some of the ways that you've been more careful besides avoiding large crowds?

Karina Rodriguez 20:00

We come out here to our yard, and we ground. Um, we'll do some sun in the morning, we'll take our vitamins, we do teas, you and my daughter does some, some teas, not all teas and, and in reality is just trying to elevate our vibration because you know, it's just like, well I feel, I feel that if we raise our vibration, it's just like things don't get to stick to you, if you notice, it's just like, if you're sad and depressed, and it's just more of more stuff happens and then you think you're having bad luck, but it's just that your vibration is low, but kids naturally have tend to have their vibrations up high, unless something else is going on.

Kit Heintzman 20:48

Would you share a little bit about how vibrations work?

Karina Rodriguez 20:56

Its emotions, basically emotions is if you're thinking negative things they will bring they'll bring down that vibration, you know, if you're having bad thoughts, if you're having any of that is just is just gonna go ahead and it's gonna plunges down. And we know that because we're not going to feel well, you're not going to feel sad, or we're gonna feel angry, or we're just going to have all these emotions and then and then it can be to the point that you feel them in your, in your physicality. You know, when you're happy, do you really see a person being happy and pain? You don't, right. But there's also other methods to, to just try to to release, it's a process, it doesn't really happen from one day to another. But it's a conscious shift. Like when I get a bad thought, it's just like, "Okay, I acknowledge it, and it's just like, I release it." And then I tried to bring in, you know, a different a different thought, which I've been doing with my brother, he was very negative. And now things are looking pretty good. And he admits "because I was so negative." So, it does work, but we have to be conscious, and there's a lot of work behind it. And, and, and also is like if you're vibrating low, low energy, you know, all these, we tend to attract them. But if we're in a slightly higher vibration, we will attract people situations. At the same time that were you know, at the at the same level, or more.

Kit Heintzman 22:34

How much do you think your children understood about what was going on?

Karina Rodriguez 22:40

Well, my son was definitely aware. He thought the world was just gonna go ahead and change and some things have changed, I believe for the best. If you really think about it, this COVID put a lot of people in their homes. And now there's a lot of people interested in spiritualism. And they're in their own path. And that's beautiful, because it's just like, that was unheard of before at least, like it was kind of hard. And now there's a lot of people. And I feel like I said it's just like the, the more the more a community is interested in this and is vibing high is just it just ripples out. Because now you're conscious like, Oh, I just had that thought. And I wanted to tell this lady this but now I'm not. And it's just like it just ripples out. Not only into our lives, but our family, like your home has a vibration, your land has a vibration that just spreads out completely. And if we had more people interested in doing their healing work, I mean, that's amazing. As far as my daughter sometimes, she tells me, she when the pandemic was going on, she would tell me she would want to go in the car and just go because I would take her I would take her out often. But then that stopped so I don't I'm not sure if she she was really even aware because she's she's only just going to be for this month. But for the older kids and my nephews it did that create chaos, because now they needed somebody to be at home. Just taking care of them. And maybe some parents were were working remotely. And how can you help your child? You know, "Hey, it's your lunch, hey its this, it's that," when you are you have your own responsibility.

Kit Heintzman 24:37

How are you keeping in touch with extended family?

Karina Rodriguez 24:42

Calls, calls and text. My mom was here with us and then she left with my brother and when there was a switch because she had to come by back because I had to take her to the doctor or something like that. It was always kind

of like that. Fear, like a little bit like, what if she's sick? Is anybody coughing? You know, just checking in, but and there really no celebrations kind of took place. I can only imagine what it did to people who lived there maybe in a small apartment or maybe just rented a room? I mean, what do you do? Like staying? Locked? In such a small enclosure? You know?

Kit Heintzman 25:33

What are what are some of the things that you think drew people to spirituality at this moment?

Karina Rodriguez 25:43

Well, I think the fact that they have so much time, I mean, we have never been offered so much time to just really be with ourselves. I mean, you're talking about celebrations not happening about the nightlife not not being busy like that, I mean, bars closed down, right, restaurants closed down. And so, it's just like you were forced to, to just be with you. Some people talk and talk and talk and talk. And when a person does that, honestly, that person can't stay quiet, because they don't want to hear what's inside. So COVID did that. Like I'm telling you is like, if you were in the wrong relationship, it made you aware. You know, made you aware, because you had the time to, to look within, and we have never been given that opportunity. It's always about like work, then you have duties at home, whatever they might be. And then it's just like you have your, your you have your family life, you have work, and then you might have some friends. But it's just like when it's all narrowed down, maybe to work or not even that is just yourself. That hasn't been that opportunity hasn't been given given to us. I mean, when you when you practice, right spirituality, whatever path may be, is just, you know, that a big part of it is, well, you know, that it's you, it's you, but when you when you've ignored all of this, and all of a sudden is just there in your face. Maybe it just gives people the courage to to start looking with him.

Kit Heintzman 27:32

Was there anything you missed during lockdown?

Karina Rodriguez 27:34

Um, yes, absolutely. I mean, just the freedom that we used to feel and just being able to go everywhere. The sense that you didn't have to be worried about. And I was lucky because at the time, I, we have always had cloth diapers for our daughter, but there was a shortage in diapers. I didn't go through that I had cloth diapers. People were worried about formula. I didn't worry about that. I breastfed all the time. So, I didn't worry about that. But, you know, like the right now they have a formula, right? A baby formula shortage. And it's just like, you have probably mothers now who are trying to pump or trying to find just different. They're even going to teach it to Mexico to buy to buy milk because I mean, you're a mother you're gonna do whatever you can to take care of your children. So, I mean, we didn't go through a lot of these things so that that was that was that was just luck

Kit Heintzman 28:55

Are you feeling freer these days?

Karina Rodriguez 29:01

Um, yes, I mean, I think we all are, I think things are a little bit more relaxed. But I think it's still in the back of their head. And I think it's going to be there for a long while. I mean, it's recent, right? You don't know of. I have a friend who got COVID. And after having COVID, he has tremors, and his lungs are not the same. So, they're still we still don't know what the aftermath of it will be for the people who survived it. And for the people that

didn't make it, I mean, you still have loved ones who are probably scared if you sneeze or you cough next to them, you know, it's just like, whoa, because it's just like it's the trauma. It's just they were fine one day and it's just like they left so suddenly. So, it creates a creates a wounding in the community, but this wasn't community this this was local. So, the wounding is there? I mean, we still see how we'll be able to to move through all of this.

Kit Heintzman 30:14

What was it like when you heard your friend had COVID?

Karina Rodriguez 30:23

Well, he's young. So, you're thinking, okay, he's gonna make it. But then you hear that even young people are dying, right? And then I know he has a history of I believe asthma. So, you're just kind of hoping for the best, you're just like, it makes you think it makes you want to be hopeful be like, "Oh, they'll be fine." You know, they're at home, you told me that he was given a voucher, and he took to a hotel. And he had to, you know, stay away from the family. And he just stayed at the hotel, and they would give him food, which is a great thing, though, that was something great that they did to keep the families safe and keep it from spreading any further. And the fact that, you know, people were getting paid while this was going on, and also it removed this stress, because imagine if you're like, "Well, I'm the only one that works. And now I don't have money to pay." I mean, it creates a stress if you if maybe if it's a small home, and maybe there's only one room and you have more family, I mean, how do you isolate that person? So that was that was a really, really great idea. And in the government being able to, to provide this this output?

Kit Heintzman 31:39

How are you feeling about how local governments handled things where you are?

Karina Rodriguez 31:48

Um, luckily, where I'm at, I think there's not a lot of population. So, in places where I was hearing in LA, that they were short on, or there was none, there was a lot of people coming out here to buy diapers, because they still have some diapers here. So, I'm thinking is just like we had more resources, because there's less people. So, I don't have any complain about that.

Kit Heintzman 32:24

The last few years have had so much going on, that isn't just the pandemic. I'm wondering what some of the other big issues on your mind have been over the last couple of years.

Karina Rodriguez 32:44

Like I said, it's just it's not only like I was talking about, like, the pandemic, but mental health, I would say, I'm imagine it's just like, sometimes, it drives me nuts, just to have like, my chat with my children will, my son and my daughter here all day, is just like not really being able to step away for a little bit. So, I think it's that as far as the mental health like the responsibility, like I said, it's just like, maybe you're doing remote work and, and they have other things going on. And now and now it's even more because it's just like, you still have those responsibilities, but you have children, you know, that that you have to teach, but things that that have gotten probably worst, I would say it's the healthcare. I would say it's the healthcare, it's just like, I don't know, everything takes a long time. And then I don't know. I just think it's because you know, nurses are overworked. And they're probably not being given what they should be given. So, it just kind of carries down you know.

Kit Heintzman 34:19

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Karina Rodriguez 34:25

I mean, I feel that there's a lot of work to be done. I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful for the future. It's just we all have different views of what's important. So, I just hope that they make the right ones.

Kit Heintzman 34:48

What are some of the right ones for you, in your view?

Karina Rodriguez 34:51

Um, I would say I would say childcare, like preschool, my daughter doesn't qualify for for free preschool. And I can remember seeing that like No Child Left Behind No, if you make, if you make above, about, you know, if you make a decent living, then it's just like your child does not qualify for that. In my case, if if you have we have like in health insurance, you, you pay a portion of it, but when you add these bills, on top of your preschool bills, on top of everything else, I think you're you're pretty much left. Having difficulty, so I hope that they can help incorporate all children. And I don't know, you know, just to be able to help out a lot more. And one of the things I do feel is that maybe schools with all these shootings and all these things going on, they should they should run an eval on each student every year, because they don't know what's going on at home. There's so many different ways of abuse. How a person's feeling is just like a child has feelings to you are, we always think of them as being happy. But there should be more care into them. You hear the news about all these children being being killed and being abused. And it's just like, how could that not be caught? I really wish that they would really focus on on these things.

Kit Heintzman 36:54

What are some of your hopes for longer term future?

Kit Heintzman 37:09

That's a hard one. I think maybe we have to take care of this world. So, it's just like, more resources or more things in which they encourage everybody to recycle more to take care of the waters just like I don't know, maybe definitely along those lines is just like a protecting, ending, and maybe that they can incorporate this into schools. Because if you don't start teaching your young, how can you expect them as adults to care about this, this thing that they haven't, they haven't, they haven't seen it at their home, you know, at home here, we recycle, we do our own compost. We limit shower time, was just like, so we are doing our part, but I'll go to my brothers and they're not doing that. So it's just like, it's just to incorporate that into into schools, and to incorporate instead of, I don't know, instead of giving kids detention, you know, do programs while you're to take them to the beach, and they'll pick up trash. Now, things that actually matter. Instead of them just staying, sitting down in a classroom, down 15-30 minutes without doing anything. I'm gonna go ahead and move into the living room because my battery's running low. Can you give me a minute, can you stop the recording?

Kit Heintzman 38:41

Has your relationship to death changed at all? Over the last couple of years?

Karina Rodriguez 38:46

It has. Um, when I was about four years old, I lost my older brother. Um in a hospital I'm not going to name in Mexico. And they removed his organs without my mom's consent, and they were not willing to give the body back to my mom, but eventually they did. And that's actually the one thing I've been working for. For some, I would say some years. My father passed away. And yes, he was older. But his death gave me the greatest gift. And it was the gift of realizing your worth. That your time is limited. That to stop wasting your time on things that are meaningful lest you that not everybody's your friend. And they you shouldn't be dedicating all this time to just things or, you know, like going out and having a good time and going out with, like, 10-15 people, to me, it's just meaningless because my circle is just so close. And whenever I take away from and do all these other activities as I was going out, I was really being honest with myself, because I wasn't enjoying it, I was just doing it because my boyfriend at the time, he enjoyed that. But that wasn't who I was. And to be honest, and my father passed away in March. And in August, I told him is just being real with myself and just letting him know, "I'm not happy with you, I'm not in love with you." And being able to break off, I mean, having that strength, but having that realization that that our time here is so valuable. And the best thing we can do is just to be be happy. And I'm not mean, I'm not meaning like in a clown way, like, "Oh, you're always supposed to be happy." But do what makes you happy. You know, find that happiness, and I'm glad I gave myself that chance. So his death while it was painful, and as like, we still miss him, you know, especially around I mean, I talked to him, I just talked to him, I'm like, go, this is going on this and that. But it's just like, it just gave me that. That realization that is just like, "Do what makes you happy?" Because Because that's all we have. You know, we as we grow up, it's just like, we think, "Oh, I was a good student, oh, I'm a good mother, oh, let's just say, Oh, I did these classes." "And I went here. And I did this." And it's just like, we just build this portfolio on, on all these achievements, right? And death when you're approaching death. And when you have when you're getting older, or you know, you're gonna die. Well, life does to everybody, whether you're rich or poor, it doesn't matter. It just starts stripping away titles. I mean, you retire, right? And then it's just like, it starts taking things away. And I think the natural way, if you made it to old age, it's, it strips you out of everything. A lot. When you're when you're getting ready to die, and you're just you're in that bed waiting. It's just like, okay, yes, you're a father, you're this and you're that, but you're no longer you don't even see yourself as a doctor, you probably don't even see yourself as a father is just you're with you. So that changes in that perspective, where where we have built, you know, where our ego feels so big around all these achievements or, or places or where do you think everybody's just taking pictures? And, you know, they want everybody to see this is who I am. But are they really truly 100% happy? I mean, there's no 100% You got me?

Karina Rodriguez 43:32

Are they really okay with who they are? And at the end of the day is just this just working through all of that in doing what makes you happy so that when you're on that bed, you don't have and we all have regrets, but you don't have much regrets. And you, you listen to yourself to your soul, and you let go of that relationship you let go of that person, even if that person is family is just about, you know, a lot of people don't realize that that is just about them in a good way, not a neat, an egotistical way. But yes, my relationship with this has has changed because I see, well, you know, my father, he he did live a hard life, but he died at an older age versus my brother, my brother passed away when he was sick. Six. And it's just like then when I got sick, and I had my child I had that fear and to be honest, I still have that fear that I might have a clot and the it might go and and I'm so lucky that I didn't die. There's so many women that die in childbirth and the complications of it. But that fear is still

there and I work through it because As I worry, like, what would happen if my, if I were to die? And I mean, obviously my husband will be married because I'm not expecting for him not to. But it's just I mean, would he find the right woman to take my spot you get me and it's not really taking my spot. But at the end of the day it is because that's who she would remember as mother and not really me because she's so young.

Karina Rodriguez 45:27

So, just getting so it just makes me think about all these other women, or all these children like during COVID All these women or men that passed away, and it's just like it wasn't like they died of old age, it was like, from one day to another, somebody barged in, and they took their life. And the next day is just like, how do you continue it? And me, what kind of closure do you have, you know, when you know, you're gonna die, you go ahead and you, you write your letters, you you do whatever you need to do, but a lot of these people that just died from from COVID, they didn't have them. And a lot of people that just died in car accidents, they didn't have that they didn't have that time to go ahead and prepare, it was just one day to the next because as you as you, as you know, is just like when they were hospitalized, no one could go in. Right, no one could go in, people died alone. There's even a foundation, No One Dies Alone. It's important for people, not a feel for people not to die alone. Even though I do believe that, you know, spirits spirit guides and angels and probably ancestors are there when the person is getting ready to pass. I do believe that. But I feel like there's something important about that person just kind of holding your hand. You know, just just just being there I have witnessed. In my early nursing years, I had a client by the name of Jose, and he was contracted, he was unconscious, but I would talk to him when I would clean him when I would just you know, provide his care, I would talk to him and I told him the day you're getting the day you pass I'm going to be here. And he wasn't my patient that day. But even though he wasn't my patient, I would make rounds because I knew he was getting ready to pass. And I had no notion of death doula or anything like that. But I told him, it's okay to die. It's okay to let go. I went and I held in his hands because I told you, we don't have a lot of time. So, I would go and hold his hands. For a few minutes on and off his nurse was busy with other things or sitting down or whatever she was doing. He had no family. Why? How could this soul be left? Without any? I don't know, no compassion, to be honest. And that's the reason why I started. That's one of the reasons that I thought like, oh, no, my that's not like no one, no one else should die. And like that alone, you know, there was no one there. So, when he passed away, then nurses were afraid. You know, his nurse was even scared to give the after-death care and, and they shouldn't date nobody wanted to go in the room and they start kind of like whispering like, like is this taboo is like death is normal, just as birth is just as we celebrated. We should celebrate their journey. Granted, I don't know him, but I don't need to because it comes from a place of compassion, and empathy. And not everybody is ready for that. I don't want to say that they don't have it within them is just I don't understand their beliefs and how they were raised. To do this in my family. When a person dies, my mom gets them dressed, because she started with her own son. And she said, "I'm gonna get my son ready, because I don't want anybody to be grossed out by him." Because when it's family, even if they're dead, you don't have you don't feel that you don't feel. You don't feel like they're grossing you out or they're dirty or they're this or that or they can give you you know, some type of germ, it's love. You know, you don't you don't feel that and and for this guy is just like a I think I did his care because I don't know. But he he was meaningful in my life even though I didn't know him I didn't. I didn't really get to, to speak with this, you know, patient but he was meaningful. Just being there he he exposed me to something that I wanted to bring change, to bring awareness to.

Karina Rodriguez 50:43

Now, the thing that I'm having trouble with, is as a doula that hospices will say that they already have their people, and that they spend time with the client. But I can't really say that's true, because they're, they're writing

notes and talking to doctors, and, and there's just a whole lot, but how often do they really have the time to go ahead and hold somebody's hand and to really, really dive into what's going through their head, because what they might tell you is completely different to what they might tell their families. Because I, as a as a patient, right? I can tell maybe a secret I or I can tell them something that I'm not comfortable telling my family, the fact that they might see me in a different light. So, that might be that might be it. But a lot of the Give me a sec, can you go? Go grab just so I'm sorry. So, I think that that us that doula's week is like they see us maybe some of them as competition. We're not competition, we're really there. We're not there to take notes. We're not there to make sure that we are following the rules. We're just really there for the person. We are really there for the family if they need it. I think we just fill in the gaps. And hospitals or hospices or anything like that. Yes, they do have people who will go when and will pray with you. And that's great. You know, we do that prayer does bring some peace and to us if that's what we believe, right? But does it really allow you to unburden yourself, like just to go to go over and say, "Well, you know, what, these are my regrets this is they don't they don't give you that time that they swear they do." And this is I feel that that's important. Because when you do this work, and you just open up to it, just shut it. And I think people who are dying are just the best at it because they have nothing else to lose. And now so I think having a death doula is important. It's important for the people that are getting ready to pass. And for COVID you didn't get all this they didn't even really get the time to say goodbye to, to their loved ones. Like I said, you know, to have their handheld to, to be in prayer, a lot of ceremonies, my husband's grandfather died of COVID and he died and what Amala and my, my husband got to see or just a recording. And it was at a distance I'm talking about probably 20 feet being recorded with a phone and you just see how these people who look like they're wearing some protective equipment everywhere. Just you know carrying the body and just bearing it no ceremony no nothing. And we are I mean; we are creatures of habit. We like to have ceremonies. Not only that, but it's just like he was Catholic. This just we have a belief that if you don't have your I guess your ceremony, you know is just like you need it. And how many people ceremonies or, or rituals and happen it it also helps bring closure because you feel like okay, we did this, we did that. Okay, he's resting, you know, but when all those steps were missed, what happens? What happens next?

Kit Heintzman 55:13

You mentioned speaking with your father after he'd passed, can you talk about how we can maintain connections with people after they've passed?

Karina Rodriguez 55:31

Well, my belief is that I mean, there's just, they're here, they're here, they they visit. It's just, it's in a different plane, you know, not everybody has that connection to him. And but just because I feel that he's here, or it's kind of like, I can just pick up my phone and call him. I don't feel like I need to have him here. Or I need to call him every single time. I know he's doing his thing. But I know that he'll come and he'll just say, you'll say hello, especially he always tends to say hello around my birthday. But I don't feel I guess it gives me a sense of, of peace. It brings, it lightens my heart, I would say to to have that belief or idea. Because for my son, which he doesn't believe a whole lot in this at times. It makes death for me, it's very hard. Our dog passed away in August, and we had him for like, 1213 years. And sometimes I'll feel him Yes, I mourn him, but I'll feel him and I'm like, Okay, what if you're resting, but for him, it's just like, he's still going through it. And it's his state of mind as well, you get me. It's a state of mind. Because we also have to let people go and understand their cycles and understand their path and honor it. And that's what I've done with our dog, Damian, but he doesn't see it like that, from his death on. He doesn't see life the same he thinks life is tragic, and he thinks it's, it's painful. And, and like I said, it's, it's, it's about I don't know, seeing the best versus seeing the worst. And that's, that's where it comes to

vibrations. So, he's my teacher, because he wants to by float. And I want to bring hi, and I want, you know, we're trying to balance each other.

Kit Heintzman 57:51

What was it like having dogs during the pandemic?

Karina Rodriguez 57:56

I was worried for my dogs. Well, some people were thinking that, "Oh, they could be COVID carriers," no, that was not a thought. I'm like, "My dogs are fine." Because they do have dogs and cats. But to us is just, it's not only having to look out for yourself, but having to look for look out for your dogs. So, we have an extra fridge in the garage and a freezer and just stocking up on rice and meat in case anything happens having to stock up on on dog food and uncap food that's kind of like also a little scary because they do wonder. I'm like, "Oh my God, this because they did go to the store once and they couldn't really they couldn't find out food." So, I mean, these are people. Well, they're not people, but these are loved ones you also have to provide for. So yeah, it was kind of it was kind of scary. And then some people would say like, oh my God, you're gonna start going into people's home and people can't find food. And I'm just like, well, I have a lot of dogs. Just let them roam everywhere. I mean, but but some people did believe that that people were gonna come into other people's homes because you see that on TV, you see that on the shows? Right? That they go into your house. And it's just like the meat you know, you start thinking about shows and stuff like that. Could that happen? But no, everything was good.

Kit Heintzman 59:32

Who's been supporting you during the pandemic?

Karina Rodriguez 59:36

My husband? I wouldn't know what I would do without him. He's super chill He's He's great. He's amazing. Yeah, him because all went to him about our kids about my family. Yeah, my mom to my mom.

Kit Heintzman 01:00:00

What does that support look like?

Karina Rodriguez 01:00:07

I mean, it's this hard to explain because this just like, support comes in so many different ways. You know, but just somebody's been listening to you. It's good therapy.

Kit Heintzman 01:00:25

What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself?

Karina Rodriguez 01:00:36

Ah, since my daughter doesn't sleep much, it's just like, I don't really have a whole lot of time for myself. But if you don't have that time for yourself, at least have fun. At least, right? At least it's just like paint with them or something, you know, but do something fun. Blueberries, Okay, grandma? Yeah. Yeah. So it's just like, if you don't have that time, to be alone, it's just have fun with whatever it is that you're doing. Because then I don't want to do something and have like, a bad attitude, like, let's say with my daughter, right? Oh, college, you know, is just because it's not her fault did that maybe there's a pandemic, and that we can go as she doesn't understand. So,

at least at least have fun with it. You know, what we did was to buy, we bought a jungle gym, we can't go to the park. So, we bought a jungle gym, well, I can't go. And so we bought a sauna. And then we put like a hot tub. And it's just, but because I have this space, you know, if I lived in LA, I wouldn't be able to do all these things. So so, now it's just like, a she goes outside, and she has a tricycle and all these things. But what happens with parents that are just in a small apartment, and they don't have access to all this stuff, it's just like, that made me have some sanity, because my child was still happy. You know, but if you're stuck, let's say you rent a room and you have a child or two child. There's just families that have like three or four kids, and one of their close stuff space, and they don't go to school. And it's just, they're like, day after day that that has to be tragic, not only for them, but the mom, you know, mom, and somebody else.

Kit Heintzman 01:02:40

I'm coming to the end of my questions, and they're all a bit odd. I want to start with asking if you could tell people in the social sciences and humanities so people who study things like literature and political science and sociology and media and culture, if you could tell them what they should be doing right now to help us understand the human side of this moment. What What should we be doing?

Karina Rodriguez 01:03:16

I feel like people say mental health, right? Mental health, mental health, a lot of stigma. I feel like people think "oh, mental health oh, you're crazy." No, why don't...is just bringing it more into awareness of of just saying you know, in emotions, let's deal with our emotions. Now with our mental health because, I mean, we are having mental health issues, depression, etc, etc. It's because started with our emotions. So, why don't we just bring this this awareness more into, into the schools into even young children into okay, go into into why don't we, we just bring all these things into into working, working with children and working with with everybody and educating people on on that it's okay to be angry. It's okay to feel this. It's okay. But when they label it, oh, mental health, I think is just, it makes people I think especially men not want to participate. I feel like a nowadays is a lot more open. But I'll tell my son, let's go to a psychologist and talk. No, I'm not crazy. And it's not about that. It's about learning how to deal with our emotions. So maybe, I mean, they like to label things different ways. It's just maybe dealing, maybe labeling this in a in a different way, where if they feel that it's okay to step into this into tapping, but this honestly, it should be taught in schools how to how can we deal with our emotions remove something we don't need, there's a lot of things that they teach that we really don't need, at this emotion at this meditation at this releasing of this emotion that I'm feeling and feeling it acknowledging and letting it go. Because if we start doing this, and we start building people with with these tools is just I think it would be a lot better.

Kit Heintzman 01:05:44

What are parts of history you wish you had learned more about?

Karina Rodriguez 01:05:49

This, emotions? Emotions, because I felt like, "Nick, I had a lot of anger." You know, and I think I think there comes a point where you just think it's normal. Like, this is the way I always feel. So, it's just, you know, just to do that, just to be able to, just to do this, just to be able to to teach children, which I'm trying to teach my daughter mean, little by little, but just just to do this. And I think this, this would help out a lot. Because everything comes from our emotions and being able to shed you know, what other believes and things that have been told to want to us, it's just like, we we believe it? And and we believe it's true. And it's about that? Well.

Kit Heintzman 01:06:59

I'd like you to imagine speaking to some historian in the future, who's watching this, someone far enough away that they have no lived experience of this pandemic? What would you tell them cannot be forgotten about this moment?

Karina Rodriguez 01:07:19

I think what cannot be forgotten, and it's gonna take a while, is the fear that I brought on, that we believe that this couldn't happen to us, right? Because now we have this technology, and we have medications and we have the best doctors that you know, there's been from the history of, of the earth. The fear, like it really shook it really shook us. Um that we saw that this only happened. I don't know back then. Because he didn't have hygiene and I look we have running water, we take showers, we, you know, we take vitamins, it's just like, I think that was unheard of before, but it's still it's still hit us and it just makes us I think it shook us because it it gave us a reality check. So, we can't forget the people I mean, even though we don't know but we can't forget the people that died, we did hear some some news coverage from or from people. That people that that died and left their kids, I mean, death years probably going to be there when they grow older and somebody sneezes or something, they're going to remember that if they have, you know, respiratory illnesses, like it's gonna be there is just the traumas gonna be there for a while. And it's up to us as a society, I guess, to to start working together. But the fear that you know, as a person as a parent, what if there's no food? What if there's, there's no milk? I mean, the diapers, okay, you can clean your baby, but the food at one point is just like, well, what if something happens with the water is like, it seems everything's running now. It's just that fear that you don't know, whether you're going to have what you can to survive the next day, or the next weeks or what's coming. They were saying, "Well, if you don't get vaccinated," and then they were thinking, "Well, what if they forced you to get vaccinated?" "What if you don't get vaccinated? They take you into camp," it was just so much fear. It may be nonsense, but because we don't know we just make up all these ideas in our head. So, I think I think that's what is what It is and it's just like we are in a time and space, like what you're doing where we can record our experiences. You know, like, look at 911 It happened a while ago, but there's still something right about that, about that day about what happened. You don't know the knees, but you feel it in your heart. And is this COVID is like that. But it just happened to the entire world.

Kit Heintzman 01:10:35

I want to thank you so, so much for the generosity of your time, and the beauty of your answers. Those are all of the questions I know how to ask right now. But if there's anything that you'd like to share that my questions haven't made room for, please take some space to share it.

Karina Rodriguez 01:10:53

I would highly encourage just people to start little by little but tapping on to to themselves to, to their emotions to to those beliefs that make you feel unworthy. Or, you know, just anything that you feel like you want to work through and start peeling of the layers, because most likely that's not your thought. Um, start teaching your children as to save the water to to be resourceful to teach your child that you know the kindness so that he probably or she won't grow up with the wounds you did like stop the cycle. Connect, just just spend that time with

yourself. You know, put the kids early to sleep and then just be able to connect. Because a lot of illnesses and stuff like that they come from our emotions, a lot of everything, everything is really up to us and there's no teacher that can heal you. Because it's up to you. Whenever a person wants to do it. They will do what they really want, won't need anybody else? It's like we all have it in us. So, in order for you to start believing, you have to start lifting those layers up.

Kit Heintzman 01:12:28

Thank you so much.

Karina Rodriguez 01:12:30

You're welcome.