

**Natarsha Sanders:** And we're all trying to figure out how to get it. How to actualize it. How to manifest it. How to keep greed at bay long enough to say this right here, even if it only lasted for ten minutes. That was an example of reconciliation. We need to replicate that. We need to do that. That's what led us there. And if I could get people to come in and stay in, then that's how we get there. It's a journey. But we've got to be committed to it because we've done some harm to God's creation, and we have to be willing to, to own it, and then reconcile back to it and seek forgiveness, not just to God, but to one another as well.

**Sam Fuqua:** That's Natarsha Prince Sanders, and this is, Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds. In this episode, we talk with Natarsha Prince Sanders about racial justice and spiritual development. She's a speaker, teacher, and community pastor, as well as a doctoral student at Columbia Theological Seminary.

I'm Sam Fuqua, co-host of the program with Alexis Miles. Hi, Alexis.

**Alexis Miles:** Hi, Sam.

**Sam Fuqua:** So glad to have Natarsha Prince Sanders with us for this conversation. Hello.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Hello, you all. Hey, thank you so much for having me for this conversation.

**Sam Fuqua:** We met at the White Privilege Conference, uh, in Mesa, Arizona, and we're glad to reconnect with you. Tell us a little bit about your background and, and how you got started on this, this particular path within your faith.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Thank you so much for that question. And it does seem like so long ago when we met, um, but I also feel like I've, I've known you all 'cause now I've started following your work. So, I appreciate the work that you all offer, um, in spaces like these. So, I got started on this path of reconciliation, I'll call it, it was actually at a dinner with my family, um, my immediate and extended family. Um, my mother has, uh, six brothers and they were kind of gathered around the table talking about the, their school days. And, um, I listened as they were in conversation and they began to talk about people who had not been so nice to them and wondering where they were, um, at this point in their lives. And my uncles now are all considered, would be considered elderly. They would have, um, AARP membership, so say that. So, they're up in age, uh, but they were wondering where some of their classmates were who weren't so kind to them. And I, I thought about if my uncles, um, and my mom are alive and well to remember some of the atrocities that were visited, uh, on them, that the people who did it might be alive and well as, also. And, I got to wondering what they talked about around their dinner table. Um, what they would tell their children and their nieces and nephews about their back in the day in school, like what, what was their story? What story are they telling? was my question. And so, I proceeded on a journey to try to figure that out. And so, that's where I am.

**Sam Fuqua:** Well, I love that you're centering that around stories. The power of stories.

**Natarsha Sanders:** One of the things I found is people are more willing to tell a story than just go right into answering a question, if you will. So, if I say something like, do you remember your third grade teacher? Most of the people that I've asked this question do in fact remember, but I'd rather say, tell me about

school when you were in third grade, right? That's all. It seems very unassuming, right? And so, people are more willing to engage with that type of prompt, given our nation's history with segregation in schools and then, uh, desegregation. Um, because that's ultimately where I'm getting it when I request that prompt, but they don't always know that that's where I'm going when I request that prompt. So, they engage very openly in the beginning.

**Sam Fuqua:** Maybe as an example, I recall that when we spoke at the conference, you talked about work you were doing with an elderly white man in the church, member of the Presbyterian Church, I believe, uh, who was kind of coming to terms with, uh, with his own racism. Uh, do you remember that example and can you speak to it?

**Natarsha Sanders:** Yes. So, um, I have worked with a number of individuals now, um, just as part of my research. And, one of the oldest members or individuals that I've worked with is entering his nineties, and he was remembering some of the songs and some of the things that he did as a child, as a five- and six-year-old. And, it was one point in our interview where I think it just dawned on him that he was, in fact, a product of white supremacy, right? And he paused and looked at me with teary eyes and said, "I've never talked about this before. And I didn't know how hurtful it was." So, from that moment, um, what I learned, uh, Sam and Alexis, first of all, was to use a little compassion when operating in this way. Um, and so I sought, um, some resources on how to, um, engage pastoral care during these tender moments. But also, how to help them go further into the story without inflicting any type of emotional or psychological harm. Um, so I do encourage them to, to do therapy alongside this kind of unearthing of story.

But, the wrestle is that a lot of times people didn't want to unearth these stories. One, because they didn't know that they were stories worth telling. It's like, so what? I sang Yankee Doodle and I thought George Washington was the greatest president alive as a five-year-old child. What, what does it have to do with anything? So, they don't think it's important, but then when they realize that it actually is important, how to talk about it among their friends and also towards the end of life, right? I said that this person was entering his eighties. So, at this time, you're really wanting to be making peace and living your last days and okay with everything. So, to unearth something that might take longer to reconcile than you have life left, is a very big act of courage because no one wants to close their eyes finally in disarray or with dis, dis, disarray in their spirit or their soul. And so, working toward that end is, is indeed an act of bravery. And I, I invite people into it, but there are also those who choose to not, and I'm just as okay with that as well because it is a brave work.

**Alexis Miles:** Natarsha, you've used two words that really intrigued me in this context. You talked about tenderness and bravery. Can you say more about that, and what you mean when you say this is a brave work?

**Natarsha Sanders:** Absolutely. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil in her, um, most recent book, *Becoming Brave*, she parallels the story of Esther in the Bible, who was ultimately called to be a queen and free people, um, using her political post, um, and title as a queen. But she talked about Esther's beginning and the journey of her life and parallels it through the journey, many journeys that we take as Christian folk and where we are called to. Particularly in the work of reconciliation, um, because while it is a, it's a, it can be kind of a buzzword, nice to say, cliché-ish, those of us who live our lives into it understand the risks and the bravery that's required to be in that space. And so, I use that word in part because the, the word brave, um, in part because this is not work that everybody chooses to do, and it's, but it's work that we are all called to. We're

all called to reconcile. We're all, we're called to reconcile with our siblings, in Christ, which would be all of humanity, and we're called to reconcile ourselves to God through Christ. And so, understanding that as a Christian, as a follower of Christ, that is a brave work because it requires us, one, to be vulnerable, trust, trusting ourselves in these moments, and trusting the God who called us to it.

And we don't always know where it will end. Um, we open ourselves up to the unknown because we live in a world that is by and large unreconciled. So we don't, we don't really know how reconciliation looks in this body, in this life. And so, when we, it is a brave work because the end, it's not known. We don't know when we get there. And it's also a work that, that is, I'll say, when you think you've done it, keep doing it. There's no destination. The journey of reconciliation is the work because just when you think you have done it right and done it well, you're called to a deeper level. Um, and so, it is brave to continue to surrender yourself to a work that is really beyond you. Like, I really need the people that I've gathered for this research project to be engaged and do it. I cannot do this by myself. I cannot reconcile myself, by myself, right? And so, I'm vulnerable to a point where like, I need my siblings to be just as committed to the work that, as I am. And so, that is the part that leads me into tenderness.

When I first started this journey, I'm in this research, I thought, I am so sick and tired of white people researching and putting labels on me as a black woman. I'm tired of people saying, well, I'm tired of white people saying, well, this is what black women or black people need. Or this is what black, black people, um, want. Research has shown... And I'm like, well, that may be true of your research, but I really got tired of hearing people from outside of who I am, tell me about me. And so, the stubborn kind of, mmh, we-going-to-see-about-that part of me said, I'm going to research you and see how good it feels, right? And so it was kind of, there was, that was not the right attitude. This is probably why one of the first things, my first conversation pulled some tenderness out of me because I think God was saying, "Honey, now, if you're going to do this, you have to do this from a place of love, right?" Even if it's radical. And so, being tender to the point where I can sit with a person when they are on the, on the verge of tears, or really trying to redeem their parents memory and make sure that the memory of their parent isn't painted in an ugly way like, "Oh, my parents were white supremacists," right? Because I'm not talking to people whose parents participated in lynchings, right? Or, or the mob who went to go and beat and mangle and dismember black people and native people. I'm not talking to those people.

I'm talking to the people whose families went to Sunday school every Sunday. Whose parents were probably members of the deacon board or the board of trustees, or very well may have been the pastor, right? Or, you know, I'm talking to these families. So, it's not like, um, they would see themselves as families or members of families who are white supremacists. So, reconciling that and coming to that truth is very difficult. And so, it does take someone, first of all, who they trust, and I have to, I do have to show up in a tender way in an authentic way, and it took time, Alexis, for that tenderness to become authentic, for it to become a part of me. 'Cause when, when it first hit, I was like, oh boy, you know, here come the tears. I don't need this. I just need to get this project done so I can finish with my doctoral degree. But God was like, yep, no, we're going, if we're going to do it, we're going to do it real, we're going to do it whole. That's also part of the life that I'm called to as an educator. It's not just about teaching a lesson, which I wish it were. But for me, it's often, it's most often been about showing with my life the lesson that I'm trying to teach or that I'm called to teach.

**Alexis Miles:** So Natarsha, can you tell a story, a short story that illustrates what you just said about coming into something maybe not full of tenderness, but that evolving. So, what does that look like, and what resources are you and the person you're interviewing pulling on to reach trust, tenderness and bravery?

**Natarsha Sanders:** So I will say, by and large, the trust is building as we go. The people who have agreed to be a part of the research have known me for maybe about four or five years. And some of them have journeyed more closely with me than others. But all of the people knew of me before I reached out to them and said, "Will you participate in this, in this research?" And that was important for me because I knew where I was going to ask us to go together. So, I needed there to be at least a modicum and willingness of trust in which they could engage in significant or heavy subject matter about their families in many instances, uh, their parents or siblings who are no longer with us. And so, we're talking about folks who've passed on and that is always a tender space. So, I wanted there to, um, already be some type of relationship and then to be able to leverage that, taking it to another level.

So, I'm blessed in that the people who know that I'm working on my doctoral degree really want me to do well, right? That is a blessing and everybody doesn't have that story, but I do. And so, when I approach and I say this is to help me finish my research, that is already, um, kind of like a thumbs up from them like they want to do what they can to assist and knowing that the, the way that I'm asking them to assist is not monetary but it actually comes from your life. Because I don't always tell them up front how they're going to assist me. I tell them that I need them to assist. And so, they agree to meet me, but so there's already the trust there. One of the times, um, that I showed up where I will say I probably wasn't as tender, uh, then that I, as I am now, is we were watching, um, something called *The Identity: White Rage*, is a video series published by the PC USA, and we were watching these videos and one of the videos, one of the videos in the series deals with racial identity and the, some of the people who are being interviewed, talk about how white people in America often don't, uh, identify racially like they are white, right? Um, and then talking about race as a construct and it's not, it's, it's not anything based in anything real, right? It's a social construct. So, they talk about all of that, but then they talk about the damage that white supremacy has done to everyone, in this particular video.

And so, you talk about how, yes, people from Ireland were stripped of their ethnicity. People from Germany were stripped of their ethnicity. People from Italy were stripped of their ethnicity. Um, and the closer you were to white in America, the safer you were. And so, the push was figure out your ethnicity, figure out who your people are, um, go deeper than just whiteness, right? Um, go to like, really, where are your people from? Because white supremacy has stolen something from everyone. It has, it has stolen all of our identities. And so, one of the people, um, watching the video talked about how they didn't feel the need to do that, to do that work of racial identification. And, um, they felt content knowing and they feel bad about what white people have done, but there's nothing that they can do to change the past. And I said, well, they, while that may be true and I, I didn't say it as kindly, but I said, while that may be true, there's still a responsibility. And so, we are left to deal with what our ancestors made, like some of the mess that they made. We're left to clean it up. And, um, we kind of talked about how the role we have in owning the sins of our ancestors, right? Because I'm of the belief, I'm like, well, if you have an inheritance from your grandfather, that may be monetary or land, and you receive that, then surely you can grapple and wrestle with the hatred that was passed down as well. Like you, can you own that as well? But people don't want to.

And so, that was a moment of push that this person wasn't really able to receive. Fast forward a couple months, I took a completely different angle where I told a story about talking with someone who didn't quite understand human sexuality. So, they had questions about LGBTQI+ and people being children of God and I was like, well, can we agree that everybody's a child of God, and they did. And so, I talked to them about how they were homophobic and didn't know it. So, because this person has a loved one who is saying gender loving, they were able to hear that and say, now I understand what you mean by saying that white supremacy has impacted us all. Because while this person that I'm talking to, um, helping them understand, um, human sexuality and gender identity, they didn't readily identify as homophobic. They just thought, oh, being homosexual is a sin. And then that means that I need to pray for these people that their soul get right. And I'm like, no, not really. That means you're homophobic. So just saying that, and then walking that path tenderly with them, helped me understand how to walk that path tenderly with someone else. And I was able to do that, Alexis, because I love this person genuinely. And I said, if I can have this kind of love and compassion for one, then I should be able to have this kind of love and compassion for many. And so, this person that I'm walking tenderly and gently with through this, they need the same compassion and gentleness and care over here. And so, I began to apply it. And that's when I saw more people begin to say yes to the research opportunity, and I began to grow as a person as it relates to being tender in this space. And I didn't know that I needed to grow in this. And I probably would have never known had I not decided that this is going to be my research journey.

**Alexis Miles:** And that reminds me of what you said early that it truly is a journey. You never reach the destination.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Correct. Gotta be in love with it. Oh yes, I love this reconciliation.

**Alexis Miles:** You have this quote I love, "It's the expectation is not that you come in perfect." It's that you come in and stay in.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Yes. Because so many people come and go. And, we can't, we can't get the work done when people are coming and going. Like I, I like to use a cake analogy or anything or bacon. If you keep the oven open, it's not going to get done, whatever you're trying to cook. And so, yes, it's hot and yes, it's uncomfortable, and no, we don't necessarily want to be in here. We want to be at reconciliation already, but right now it's a dream. It's a goal. It's, it's an end. And if we can, we can begin with the end in mind, but we have to begin and we have to keep beginning every single day. And, in order to get to an end, in order to realize that this journey that we're on, this path we're taking is hard work, but it's worth it work because that's what we're called to. When, when I realized that this was the work that I was called to, and there was no, no real getting out of it, I told somebody one time, if you can find something else to do, do that, right? Do that other thing. What happened with me, Sam and Alexis, is that I couldn't rest at night. I couldn't sleep well if I didn't do what I was called to do in a given day, right? And so I would be tossing and turning and, oh my gosh, I'm looking at the clock and it's 4am and it's almost time to get up again and I hadn't even been asleep yet. And I can't live like that.

So, the get in and stay in for me is really about obedience to the call and saying, yes. And we do need people to get in and saying, and that does take bravery and courage and a willingness to acknowledge that we don't know. We have to, our way of knowing is together. And together we really are building a new way as we go. And that's the scary part. That's the, also the courageous part. And knowing that no one person has the answer. And it also takes so much unlearning. So much unlearning that as adults, we have kind of

embedded in our heads, and I imagine this is also where the compassion came in for me with some of our elders, is that they've been on a knowing journey for twice as long in many cases as I have. And so, for them to unlearn things that they've known their whole 80-year life, lives is, it's a lot of, it's a lot to ask. But when I, when they get in and they're willing to stay in, that lets me know that they are committed and they want to do right. And they all, they are also doing the work of inheriting everything that their parents left them and figuring out what to do with it. 'Cause we don't have to accept everything that was left for us. In fact, we should turn a lot of it down as it relates to emotional intelligence and, um, dealing with the love God's beloved community. But absolutely we need people to stay in, but if you have to leave, leave.

**Sam Fuqua:** As you know, the title of the podcast is, Well, That Went Sideways! So, we'd like to ask our guests if there's a particular sideways moment, uh, that comes to mind for you where, you know, you found yourself in a conflict in the moment and, and how you handled it, what you learned from it?

**Natarsha Sanders:** Yes. I can give, I can give two. I can give a really funny one and I can give a serious one. So, uh, a funny one that, that went sideways. Um, I have the privilege of being an auntie biologically to 13 nieces and nephews, and they are all various different types of ages, okay, from seven to soon-to-be-27. So we got some, some range there. One time, my youngest niece, I was reading and it was actually *Becoming Brave* by, um, Reverend, uh, Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil. And she likes to be read to, my niece, um, and so she's like, "Can you read me the story?" I'm like, "You want me to read you this?" She said, "Yes, because that's what you're reading." I'm like, "Okay, if you want to read, you'll probably be sent for a page of *Becoming Brave*." And so, I'm reading it, and she, she says, um, "Are you like Esther or am I like Esther?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. You tell me." She says, "Mmh, I think I'm more like Esther because I listen to God better than you do." Okay. Okay. So now you all up in my life and my business about how I listen to the Lord, but all right. We had a further conversation about how, how do you know how I listen to God, because I really do believe when children say things like that, that they are speaking beyond what they see. Um, and so, um, I learned, I genuinely learned quite a bit from my six-year-old baby in that particular conversation. But it definitely went sideways 'cause first of all, I was not expecting her to say yes to me reading her that book. I wanted her to bring me one of her little storybooks, but that is not how that went. And so, talk about going sideways and my little plan backfired. She has continued to be our little hot tamale ever since, like, since she was born.

Another time that something went sideways, I will have to say, when I actually allowed someone to make an assumption about me. Um, one of the things I'm learning is to, um, just really let people people, and however they show up, that is how they show up. And so, uh, got to a space and the person that I was supposed to be facilitating with was not well, so they couldn't attend. So, you know, COVID times, we like, please keep your germs where they are. So, they couldn't be there. Um, but I was at, not met this group of people before, just the, uh, phone call and email, not even, but we haven't even seen each other on Zoom. I was supposed to be kind of the backup sidekick, but it turns out that I'm here, front person leading this. And so, I get there, um, they, uh, introduced me to the person who was in charge and the, this person proceeds to call me by the name of the person who was supposed to show up, completely overlooking the fact that we look nothing alike and that's just not my name. So, I let him do it, and the people were okay with that. And so, at the very end, one person asked me why did I let him continue to introduce me as that? And I said, "Well, he just made an assumption that that was my name. He never asked my name." And their response was of, was that, well, you should be willing to introduce yourself among people, and, um, while I am, I also want there to be a lesson in mostly everything.

Uh, the lesson that I hoped to get to was that you always ask people about their identity and who they are. But, but we got lost in the sauce in that moment, um, because they were genuinely confused and really thought that I was that person who was supposed to show up. And so, we spent like a month trying to undo that. It also showed me that people really do get set in their ways, like refusing to acknowledge that I'm not this person and really latching on to the thought that I'm someone else. So, I think it went sideways for both of us because the impact that I wanted it to have, it didn't have that impact. They were just, they just ended up confused, and that's not how I wanted that to go. So, that definitely went sideways. Um, and there's so many other sideways stories now that I'm talking about. But yeah, sometimes, sometimes, Sam, I just feel like I just need to, um, walk through life on the side, and so it, when it goes sideways, it actually goes the right side up.

**Sam Fuqua:** I'm going to remember that. Thank you. It's, it's clearly, this is important and difficult work leading people to understanding, to recognition, to owning up. Do you have hope or vision for, uh, that work expanding or whether it's within the Presbyterian Church or, or other faith communities?

**Natarsha Sanders:** I do believe that the earlier we start, the better. So, I'm working on working with younger people so they won't have to unpack 80 years of stuff to begin the journey of reconciliation, or, you know, maybe they only have to unpack 20 years, which is much easier, right? So, I'm working with some colleges and even camps that are on this journey of vocational discernment and that I see as part of discernment, like knowing who you are definitely helps lead into your vocational, um, journey. And so, I've done some, some work with camp counselors whose, their ages tend to be around the late, like 18 to 25-ish, in that range. And that's been really rewarding. But I do see, I do see the work expanding. That is my goal. And I also want to be able to do work with, uh, pastors who want to lead their congregations on this type of journey. Again, because leveraging the relationship and the trust is very important. And most congregations have a pastor that they trust. And so, being able to equip spiritual leaders, specifically pastors and or Christian educators or religious educators in this way, I think would be a good way to help the work expand beyond me. And there's also some writing that I'm, I've been doing kind of as I work on the research, and I hope to create a curriculum that will help guide people through this.

So there, there is some hopes of expansion only because the work is necessary. And there are some amazing people who have been on this journey for so long. I've referenced Reverend Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil. She's amazing out in Seattle. And even, um, Lisa Sharon Harper, her latest book *Fortune* is about the journey for uncovering race and ancestry and her family, and how it can help shape a family unit. Um, and then, uh, Dr. Christina Cleveland is another person who has helped shape me theologically as well as so many other people. But those three women are like at the forefront of my mind, part because I've been reading their books actively. But there, there is a hope. There's also a hope that this work isn't necessary. But every time I say that I am assured by the God who created us, that as long as there are people on the Earth, people will need to be reconciled. And so, I don't do it for accolades because that is a route that some people take. I do it because I can't avoid it, which is also why I tell people, if you can do something else, you better do it. And I say it jokingly, but I'm also very serious, in a loving way. It's, it's part of me helping you on your vocational journey.

**Alexis Miles:** Natarsha, so when you say reconciled, can you say more about what that means and what it looks like? How, how do people who are reconciled relate to each other?

**Natarsha Sanders:** In many ways, um, Alexis, I'm still learning because when I think about the prophets that I've studied in the Bible, most recently I'm studying Nehemiah, and when I think about who I would consider modern day prophets, I think one of the go to's is Dr., Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and even, um, Mother Teresa. People have very adverse responses to their lives. And so, why, while these people who were and are indeed reconcilers were alive, they were wanted dead. That is not reconciliation. But after they were dead, after they ceased to exist in their physical bodies, they became beloved. Even, even talking about Jesus, he had, poor thing, people wanted him dead from the time he was in Mary's womb. And, um, they eventually got him. It, we, we began to celebrate him many, many years after his death. So, we see that with the, Dr. King, we see that with the prophets in the Bible, we have a, a, a Bible with prophetic books, because the words they spoke in the days of old were not, were written where, they were written, but not necessarily revered. And so, I do believe though, that their lives were examples of lives reconciled or reconciling to God, trying to get us back to a place where we could commune with God in a spiritual way, spirit to spirit.

And the physical, our physical being, our greed in many instances, is what has kept us as humans apart or separate. I mean, we don't have to look very far to see how socioeconomics divide us, race divides us, we're divided by so many things. But we're called, those who are called to reconciliation are called to bring people together to reconcile those things that once separated us. So, I will say that there are some key components of reconciliation, and love and truth are two of those things. I think it's, um, Dr. Cornell West that says justice is what loves, love looks like in public, right? Or something to that effect that he said. And even Bryan Stevenson said that the opposite of poverty is not wealth, it's justice. And so, in a world that is filled, uh, almost to capacity with injustice and where the cries for justice are long and the cries for reconciliation are ample, it's hard to see it here, which is why I believe it is a dream. It's something that has been visualized, but not actualized. And, part of my prayer and part of my communion with God and my plea is God, why would you show me something that I can't have? I don't see it manifesting in this life. That is a point of, uh, bereavement for me. Like it makes me sad.

'Cause I think about so many people who have been here before. I think about how Nehemiah was killed and how Isaiah was killed and Jesus was killed and King and, uh, so many people, right? Um, just because they wanted leaders to be led by love and truth. And this is what we, we are willing to die and live for. Like I w, I don't want to, I don't want to die because of the message of truth and hope and love I bring. I want to live. But it too often has caused or cost those who call for reconciliation in the public square. It costs lives. And so, I know what's in my mind and in my heart. I know what I've seen. And it's nothing different than what my fore-parents have called for. Um, it's not new. It's the thing we all hope for. But we don't know how, we are, and we're all trying to figure out how to get it. How to actualize it. How to manifest it. How to keep greed at bay long enough to say this right here, even if it only lasted for ten minutes, that was an example of reconciliation. We need to replicate that. We need to do that. That's what led us there. And if I could get people to come in and stay in, then that's how we get there. That's how we get to reconciliation on this journey of like, it's just a walk. It's a journey. But we've got to be committed to it because we've done some harm to God's creation, and we have to be willing to, to own it and then reconcile back to it and seek forgiveness, not just to God, but to one another as well. So it, to answer your question, um, Alexis, I, I know that some components to reconciliation is love and truth and a heap of justice. And I long for the day when it can be manifest on Earth as it is in heaven. That's what we pray. And that's what I believe.

**Sam Fuqua:** Natarsha Prince Sanders, thank you so much for speaking with us and thank you for your work.



**Natarsha Sanders:** Thank you so much for this opportunity and I look forward to hearing more of your work.

**Sam Fuqua:** Natasha Prince Sanders is a speaker, a teacher, a life coach, and a community pastor. She's also a doctoral student at Columbia Theological Seminary.

Thanks for listening to Well, That Went Sideways! We produce new episodes twice a month. You can find them wherever you get your podcasts and on our website, [sidewayspod.org](http://sidewayspod.org). We also have information on our guests, interview transcripts, and links to more conflict resolution resources. That's [sidewayspod.org](http://sidewayspod.org). Our production team is Mary Zinn, Jes Rau, Norma Johnson, Alexis Miles, Alia Thobani, and me, Sam Fuqua. Our theme music is by Mike Stewart. We produce these programs in Colorado, on the traditional lands of the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, and Ute nations. To learn more about the importance of land acknowledgement, visit our website, [sidewayspod.org](http://sidewayspod.org). And this podcast is a partnership with The Conflict Center, a Denver-based nonprofit that provides practical skills and training for addressing everyday conflicts. Find out more at [conflictcenter.org](http://conflictcenter.org).

**Natarsha Sanders:** And we're all trying to figure out how to get it. How to actualize it. How to manifest it. How to keep greed at bay long enough to say this right here, even if it only lasted for ten minutes. That was an example of reconciliation. We need to replicate that. We need to do that. That's what led us there. And if I could get people to come in and stay in, then that's how we get there. It's a journey. But we've got to be committed to it because we've done some harm to God's creation, and we have to be willing to, to own it, and then reconcile back to it and seek forgiveness, not just to God, but to one another as well.

**Sam Fuqua:** That's Natarsha Prince Sanders, and this is, Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds. In this episode, we talk with Natarsha Prince Sanders about racial justice and spiritual development. She's a speaker, teacher, and community pastor, as well as a doctoral student at Columbia Theological Seminary.

I'm Sam Fuqua, co-host of the program with Alexis Miles. Hi, Alexis.

**Alexis Miles:** Hi, Sam.

**Sam Fuqua:** So glad to have Natarsha Prince Sanders with us for this conversation. Hello.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Hello, you all. Hey, thank you so much for having me for this conversation.

**Sam Fuqua:** We met at the White Privilege Conference, uh, in Mesa, Arizona, and we're glad to reconnect with you. Tell us a little bit about your background and, and how you got started on this, this particular path within your faith.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Thank you so much for that question. And it does seem like so long ago when we met, um, but I also feel like I've, I've known you all 'cause now I've started following your work. So, I appreciate the work that you all offer, um, in spaces like these. So, I got started on this path of reconciliation, I'll call it, it was actually at a dinner with my family, um, my immediate and extended family. Um, my mother has, uh,

six brothers and they were kind of gathered around the table talking about the, their school days. And, um, I listened as they were in conversation and they began to talk about people who had not been so nice to them and wondering where they were, um, at this point in their lives. And my uncles now are all considered, would be considered elderly. They would have, um, AARP membership, so say that. So, they're up in age, uh, but they were wondering where some of their classmates were who weren't so kind to them. And I, I thought about if my uncles, um, and my mom are alive and well to remember some of the atrocities that were visited, uh, on them, that the people who did it might be alive and well as, also. And, I got to wondering what they talked about around their dinner table. Um, what they would tell their children and their nieces and nephews about their back in the day in school, like what, what was their story? What story are they telling? was my question. And so, I proceeded on a journey to try to figure that out. And so, that's where I am.

**Sam Fuqua:** Well, I love that you're centering that around stories. The power of stories.

**Natarsha Sanders:** One of the things I found is people are more willing to tell a story than just go right into answering a question, if you will. So, if I say something like, do you remember your third grade teacher? Most of the people that I've asked this question do in fact remember, but I'd rather say, tell me about school when you were in third grade, right? That's all. It seems very unassuming, right? And so, people are more willing to engage with that type of prompt, given our nation's history with segregation in schools and then, uh, desegregation. Um, because that's ultimately where I'm getting it when I request that prompt, but they don't always know that that's where I'm going when I request that prompt. So, they engage very openly in the beginning.

**Sam Fuqua:** Maybe as an example, I recall that when we spoke at the conference, you talked about work you were doing with an elderly white man in the church, member of the Presbyterian Church, I believe, uh, who was kind of coming to terms with, uh, with his own racism. Uh, do you remember that example and can you speak to it?

**Natarsha Sanders:** Yes. So, um, I have worked with a number of individuals now, um, just as part of my research. And, one of the oldest members or individuals that I've worked with is entering his nineties, and he was remembering some of the songs and some of the things that he did as a child, as a five- and six-year-old. And, it was one point in our interview where I think it just dawned on him that he was, in fact, a product of white supremacy, right? And he paused and looked at me with teary eyes and said, "I've never talked about this before. And I didn't know how hurtful it was." So, from that moment, um, what I learned, uh, Sam and Alexis, first of all, was to use a little compassion when operating in this way. Um, and so I sought, um, some resources on how to, um, engage pastoral care during these tender moments. But also, how to help them go further into the story without inflicting any type of emotional or psychological harm. Um, so I do encourage them to, to do therapy alongside this kind of unearthing of story.

But, the wrestle is that a lot of times people didn't want to unearth these stories. One, because they didn't know that they were stories worth telling. It's like, so what? I sang Yankee Doodle and I thought George Washington was the greatest president alive as a five-year-old child. What, what does it have to do with anything? So, they don't think it's important, but then when they realize that it actually is important, how to talk about it among their friends and also towards the end of life, right? I said that this person was entering his eighties. So, at this time, you're really wanting to be making peace and living your last days and okay with everything. So, to unearth something that might take longer to reconcile than you have life left, is

a very big act of courage because no one wants to close their eyes finally in disarray or with dis, dis, disarray in their spirit or their soul. And so, working toward that end is, is indeed an act of bravery. And I, I invite people into it, but there are also those who choose to not, and I'm just as okay with that as well because it is a brave work.

**Alexis Miles:** Natarsha, you've used two words that really intrigued me in this context. You talked about tenderness and bravery. Can you say more about that, and what you mean when you say this is a brave work?

**Natarsha Sanders:** Absolutely. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil in her, um, most recent book, *Becoming Brave*, she parallels the story of Esther in the Bible, who was ultimately called to be a queen and free people, um, using her political post, um, and title as a queen. But she talked about Esther's beginning and the journey of her life and parallels it through the journey, many journeys that we take as Christian folk and where we are called to. Particularly in the work of reconciliation, um, because while it is a, it's a, it can be kind of a buzzword, nice to say, cliché-ish, those of us who live our lives into it understand the risks and the bravery that's required to be in that space. And so, I use that word in part because the, the word brave, um, in part because this is not work that everybody chooses to do, and it's, but it's work that we are all called to. We're all called to reconcile. We're all, we're called to reconcile with our siblings, in Christ, which would be all of humanity, and we're called to reconcile ourselves to God through Christ. And so, understanding that as a Christian, as a follower of Christ, that is a brave work because it requires us, one, to be vulnerable, trust, trusting ourselves in these moments, and trusting the God who called us to it.

And we don't always know where it will end. Um, we open ourselves up to the unknown because we live in a world that is by and large unreconciled. So we don't, we don't really know how reconciliation looks in this body, in this life. And so, when we, it is a brave work because the end, it's not known. We don't know when we get there. And it's also a work that, that is, I'll say, when you think you've done it, keep doing it. There's no destination. The journey of reconciliation is the work because just when you think you have done it right and done it well, you're called to a deeper level. Um, and so, it is brave to continue to surrender yourself to a work that is really beyond you. Like, I really need the people that I've gathered for this research project to be engaged and do it. I cannot do this by myself. I cannot reconcile myself, by myself, right? And so, I'm vulnerable to a point where like, I need my siblings to be just as committed to the work that, as I am. And so, that is the part that leads me into tenderness.

When I first started this journey, I'm in this research, I thought, I am so sick and tired of white people researching and putting labels on me as a black woman. I'm tired of people saying, well, I'm tired of white people saying, well, this is what black women or black people need. Or this is what black, black people, um, want. Research has shown... And I'm like, well, that may be true of your research, but I really got tired of hearing people from outside of who I am, tell me about me. And so, the stubborn kind of, mmh, we-going-to-see-about-that part of me said, I'm going to research you and see how good it feels, right? And so it was kind of, there was, that was not the right attitude. This is probably why one of the first things, my first conversation pulled some tenderness out of me because I think God was saying, "Honey, now, if you're going to do this, you have to do this from a place of love, right?" Even if it's radical. And so, being tender to the point where I can sit with a person when they are on the, on the verge of tears, or really trying to redeem their parents memory and make sure that the memory of their parent isn't painted in an ugly way like, "Oh, my parents were white supremacists," right? Because I'm not talking to people whose parents

participated in lynchings, right? Or, or the mob who went to go and beat and mangle and dismember black people and native people. I'm not talking to those people.

I'm talking to the people whose families went to Sunday school every Sunday. Whose parents were probably members of the deacon board or the board of trustees, or very well may have been the pastor, right? Or, you know, I'm talking to these families. So, it's not like, um, they would see themselves as families or members of families who are white supremacists. So, reconciling that and coming to that truth is very difficult. And so, it does take someone, first of all, who they trust, and I have to, I do have to show up in a tender way in an authentic way, and it took time, Alexis, for, for that tenderness to become authentic, for it to become a part of me. 'Cause when, when it first hit, I was like, oh boy, you know, here come the tears. I don't need this. I just need to get this project done so I can finish with my doctoral degree. But God was like, yep, no, we're going, if we're going to do it, we're going to do it real, we're going to do it whole. That's also part of the life that I'm called to as an educator. It's not just about teaching a lesson, which I wish it were. But for me, it's often, it's most often been about showing with my life the lesson that I'm trying to teach or that I'm called to teach.

**Alexis Miles:** So Natarsha, can you tell a story, a short story that illustrates what you just said about coming into something maybe not full of tenderness, but that evolving. So, what does that look like, and what resources are you and the person you're interviewing pulling on to reach trust, tenderness and bravery?

**Natarsha Sanders:** So I will say, by and large, the trust is building as we go. The people who have agreed to be a part of the research have known me for maybe about four or five years. And some of them have journeyed more closely with me than others. But all of the people knew of me before I reached out to them and said, "Will you participate in this, in this research?" And that was important for me because I knew where I was going to ask us to go together. So, I needed there to be at least a modicum and willingness of trust in which they could engage in significant or heavy subject matter about their families in many instances, uh, their parents or siblings who are no longer with us. And so, we're talking about folks who've passed on and that is always a tender space. So, I wanted there to, um, already be some type of relationship and then to be able to leverage that, taking it to another level.

So, I'm blessed in that the people who know that I'm working on my doctoral degree really want me to do well, right? That is a blessing and everybody doesn't have that story, but I do. And so, when I approach and I say this is to help me finish my research, that is already, um, kind of like a thumbs up from them like they want to do what they can to assist and knowing that the, the way that I'm asking them to assist is not monetary but it actually comes from your life. Because I don't always tell them up front how they're going to assist me. I tell them that I need them to assist. And so, they agree to meet me, but so there's already the trust there. One of the times, um, that I showed up where I will say I probably wasn't as tender, uh, then that I, as I am now, is we were watching, um, something called *The Identity: White Rage*, is a video series published by the PC USA, and we were watching these videos and one of the videos, one of the videos in the series deals with racial identity and the, some of the people who are being interviewed, talk about how white people in America often don't, uh, identify racially like they are white, right? Um, and then talking about race as a construct and it's not, it's, it's not anything based in anything real, right? It's a social construct. So, they talk about all of that, but then they talk about the damage that white supremacy has done to everyone, in this particular video.

And so, you talk about how, yes, people from Ireland were stripped of their ethnicity. People from Germany were stripped of their ethnicity. People from Italy were stripped of their ethnicity. Um, and the closer you were to white in America, the safer you were. And so, the push was figure out your ethnicity, figure out who your people are, um, go deeper than just whiteness, right? Um, go to like, really, where are your people from? Because white supremacy has stolen something from everyone. It has, it has stolen all of our identities. And so, one of the people, um, watching the video talked about how they didn't feel the need to do that, to do that work of racial identification. And, um, they felt content knowing and they feel bad about what white people have done, but there's nothing that they can do to change the past. And I said, well, they, while that may be true and I, I didn't say it as kindly, but I said, while that may be true, there's still a responsibility. And so, we are left to deal with what our ancestors made, like some of the mess that they made. We're left to clean it up. And, um, we kind of talked about how the role we have in owning the sins of our ancestors, right? Because I'm of the belief, I'm like, well, if you have an inheritance from your grandfather, that may be monetary or land, and you receive that, then surely you can grapple and wrestle with the hatred that was passed down as well. Like you, can you own that as well? But people don't want to.

And so, that was a moment of push that this person wasn't really able to receive. Fast forward a couple months, I took a completely different angle where I told a story about talking with someone who didn't quite understand human sexuality. So, they had questions about LGBTQI+ and people being children of God and I was like, well, can we agree that everybody's a child of God, and they did. And so, I talked to them about how they were homophobic and didn't know it. So, because this person has a loved one who is saying gender loving, they were able to hear that and say, now I understand what you mean by saying that white supremacy has impacted us all. Because while this person that I'm talking to, um, helping them understand, um, human sexuality and gender identity, they didn't readily identify as homophobic. They just thought, oh, being homosexual is a sin. And then that means that I need to pray for these people that their soul get right. And I'm like, no, not really. That means you're homophobic. So just saying that, and then walking that path tenderly with them, helped me understand how to walk that path tenderly with someone else. And I was able to do that, Alexis, because I love this person genuinely. And I said, if I can have this kind of love and compassion for one, then I should be able to have this kind of love and compassion for many. And so, this person that I'm walking tenderly and gently with through this, they need the same compassion and gentleness and care over here. And so, I began to apply it. And that's when I saw more people begin to say yes to the research opportunity, and I began to grow as a person as it relates to being tender in this space. And I didn't know that I needed to grow in this. And I probably would have never known had I not decided that this is going to be my research journey.

**Alexis Miles:** And that reminds me of what you said early that it truly is a journey. You never reach the destination.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Correct. Gotta be in love with it. Oh yes, I love this reconciliation.

**Alexis Miles:** You have this quote I love, "It's the expectation is not that you come in perfect." It's that you come in and stay in.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Yes. Because so many people come and go. And, we can't, we can't get the work done when people are coming and going. Like I, I like to use a cake analogy or anything or bacon. If you keep the oven open, it's not going to get done, whatever you're trying to cook. And so, yes, it's hot and yes, it's

uncomfortable, and no, we don't necessarily want to be in here. We want to be at reconciliation already, but right now it's a dream. It's a goal. It's, it's an end. And if we can, we can begin with the end in mind, but we have to begin and we have to keep beginning every single day. And, in order to get to an end, in order to realize that this journey that we're on, this path we're taking is hard work, but it's worth it work because that's what we're called to. When, when I realized that this was the work that I was called to, and there was no, no real getting out of it, I told somebody one time, if you can find something else to do, do that, right? Do that other thing. What happened with me, Sam and Alexis, is that I couldn't rest at night. I couldn't sleep well if I didn't do what I was called to do in a given day, right? And so I would be tossing and turning and, oh my gosh, I'm looking at the clock and it's 4am and it's almost time to get up again and I hadn't even been asleep yet. And I can't live like that.

So, the get in and stay in for me is really about obedience to the call and saying, yes. And we do need people to get in and saying, and that does take bravery and courage and a willingness to acknowledge that we don't know. We have to, our way of knowing is together. And together we really are building a new way as we go. And that's the scary part. That's the, also the courageous part. And knowing that no one person has the answer. And it also takes so much unlearning. So much unlearning that as adults, we have kind of embedded in our heads, and I imagine this is also where the compassion came in for me with some of our elders, is that they've been on a knowing journey for twice as long in many cases as I have. And so, for them to unlearn things that they've known their whole 80-year life, lives is, it's a lot of, it's a lot to ask. But when I, when they get in and they're willing to stay in, that lets me know that they are committed and they want to do right. And they all, they are also doing the work of inheriting everything that their parents left them and figuring out what to do with it. 'Cause we don't have to accept everything that was left for us. In fact, we should turn a lot of it down as it relates to emotional intelligence and, um, dealing with the love God's beloved community. But absolutely we need people to stay in, but if you have to leave, leave.

**Sam Fuqua:** As you know, the title of the podcast is, Well, That Went Sideways! So, we'd like to ask our guests if there's a particular sideways moment, uh, that comes to mind for you where, you know, you found yourself in a conflict in the moment and, and how you handled it, what you learned from it?

**Natarsha Sanders:** Yes. I can give, I can give two. I can give a really funny one and I can give a serious one. So, uh, a funny one that, that went sideways. Um, I have the privilege of being an auntie biologically to 13 nieces and nephews, and they are all various different types of ages, okay, from seven to soon-to-be-27. So we got some, some range there. One time, my youngest niece, I was reading and it was actually *Becoming Brave* by, um, Reverend, uh, Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil. And she likes to be read to, my niece, um, and so she's like, "Can you read me the story?" I'm like, "You want me to read you this?" She said, "Yes, because that's what you're reading." I'm like, "Okay, if you want to read, you'll probably be sent for a page of *Becoming Brave*." And so, I'm reading it, and she, she says, um, "Are you like Esther or am I like Esther?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. You tell me." She says, "Mmh, I think I'm more like Esther because I listen to God better than you do." Okay. Okay. So now you all up in my life and my business about how I listen to the Lord, but all right. We had a further conversation about how, how do you know how I listen to God, because I really do believe when children say things like that, that they are speaking beyond what they see. Um, and so, um, I learned, I genuinely learned quite a bit from my six-year-old baby in that particular conversation. But it definitely went sideways 'cause first of all, I was not expecting her to say yes to me reading her that book. I wanted her to bring me one of her little storybooks, but that is not how that went. And so, talk about going sideways and my little plan backfired. She has continued to be our little hot tamale ever since, like, since she was born.

Another time that something went sideways, I will have to say, when I actually allowed someone to make an assumption about me. Um, one of the things I'm learning is to, um, just really let people people, and however they show up, that is how they show up. And so, uh, got to a space and the person that I was supposed to be facilitating with was not well, so they couldn't attend. So, you know, COVID times, we like, please keep your germs where they are. So, they couldn't be there. Um, but I was at, not met this group of people before, just the, uh, phone call and email, not even, but we haven't even seen each other on Zoom. I was supposed to be kind of the backup sidekick, but it turns out that I'm here, front person leading this. And so, I get there, um, they, uh, introduced me to the person who was in charge and the, this person proceeds to call me by the name of the person who was supposed to show up, completely overlooking the fact that we look nothing alike and that's just not my name. So, I let him do it, and the people were okay with that. And so, at the very end, one person asked me why did I let him continue to introduce me as that? And I said, "Well, he just made an assumption that that was my name. He never asked my name." And their response was of, was that, well, you should be willing to introduce yourself among people, and, um, while I am, I also want there to be a lesson in mostly everything.

Uh, the lesson that I hoped to get to was that you always ask people about their identity and who they are. But, but we got lost in the sauce in that moment, um, because they were genuinely confused and really thought that I was that person who was supposed to show up. And so, we spent like a month trying to undo that. It also showed me that people really do get set in their ways, like refusing to acknowledge that I'm not this person and really latching on to the thought that I'm someone else. So, I think it went sideways for both of us because the impact that I wanted it to have, it didn't have that impact. They were just, they just ended up confused, and that's not how I wanted that to go. So, that definitely went sideways. Um, and there's so many other sideways stories now that I'm talking about. But yeah, sometimes, sometimes, Sam, I just feel like I just need to, um, walk through life on the side, and so it, when it goes sideways, it actually goes the right side up.

**Sam Fuqua:** I'm going to remember that. Thank you. It's, it's clearly, this is important and difficult work leading people to understanding, to recognition, to owning up. Do you have hope or vision for, uh, that work expanding or whether it's within the Presbyterian Church or, or other faith communities?

**Natarsha Sanders:** I do believe that the earlier we start, the better. So, I'm working on working with younger people so they won't have to unpack 80 years of stuff to begin the journey of reconciliation, or, you know, maybe they only have to unpack 20 years, which is much easier, right? So, I'm working with some colleges and even camps that are on this journey of vocational discernment and that I see as part of discernment, like knowing who you are definitely helps lead into your vocational, um, journey. And so, I've done some, some work with camp counselors whose, their ages tend to be around the late, like 18 to 25-ish, in that range. And that's been really rewarding. But I do see, I do see the work expanding. That is my goal. And I also want to be able to do work with, uh, pastors who want to lead their congregations on this type of journey. Again, because leveraging the relationship and the trust is very important. And most congregations have a pastor that they trust. And so, being able to equip spiritual leaders, specifically pastors and or Christian educators or religious educators in this way, I think would be a good way to help the work expand beyond me. And there's also some writing that I'm, I've been doing kind of as I work on the research, and I hope to create a curriculum that will help guide people through this.

So there, there is some hopes of expansion only because the work is necessary. And there are some amazing people who have been on this journey for so long. I've referenced Reverend Dr. Brenda Salter

McNeil. She's amazing out in Seattle. And even, um, Lisa Sharon Harper, her latest book *Fortune* is about the journey for uncovering race and ancestry and her family, and how it can help shape a family unit. Um, and then, uh, Dr. Christina Cleveland is another person who has helped shape me theologically as well as so many other people. But those three women are like at the forefront of my mind, part because I've been reading their books actively. But there, there is a hope. There's also a hope that this work isn't necessary. But every time I say that I am assured by the God who created us, that as long as there are people on the Earth, people will need to be reconciled. And so, I don't do it for accolades because that is a route that some people take. I do it because I can't avoid it, which is also why I tell people, if you can do something else, you better do it. And I say it jokingly, but I'm also very serious, in a loving way. It's, it's part of me helping you on your vocational journey.

**Alexis Miles:** Natarsha, so when you say reconciled, can you say more about what that means and what it looks like? How, how do people who are reconciled relate to each other?

**Natarsha Sanders:** In many ways, um, Alexis, I'm still learning because when I think about the prophets that I've studied in the Bible, most recently I'm studying Nehemiah, and when I think about who I would consider modern day prophets, I think one of the go to's is Dr., Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and even, um, Mother Teresa. People have very adverse responses to their lives. And so, why, while these people who were and are indeed reconcilers were alive, they were wanted dead. That is not reconciliation. But after they were dead, after they ceased to exist in their physical bodies, they became beloved. Even, even talking about Jesus, he had, poor thing, people wanted him dead from the time he was in Mary's womb. And, um, they eventually got him. It, we, we began to celebrate him many, many years after his death. So, we see that with the, Dr. King, we see that with the prophets in the Bible, we have a, a, a Bible with prophetic books, because the words they spoke in the days of old were not, were written where, they were written, but not necessarily revered. And so, I do believe though, that their lives were examples of lives reconciled or reconciling to God, trying to get us back to a place where we could commune with God in a spiritual way, spirit to spirit.

And the physical, our physical being, our greed in many instances, is what has kept us as humans apart or separate. I mean, we don't have to look very far to see how socioeconomics divide us, race divides us, we're divided by so many things. But we're called, those who are called to reconciliation are called to bring people together to reconcile those things that once separated us. So, I will say that there are some key components of reconciliation, and love and truth are two of those things. I think it's, um, Dr. Cornell West that says justice is what loves, love looks like in public, right? Or something to that effect that he said. And even Bryan Stevenson said that the opposite of poverty is not wealth, it's justice. And so, in a world that is filled, uh, almost to capacity with injustice and where the cries for justice are long and the cries for reconciliation are ample, it's hard to see it here, which is why I believe it is a dream. It's something that has been visualized, but not actualized. And, part of my prayer and part of my communion with God and my plea is God, why would you show me something that I can't have? I don't see it manifesting in this life. That is a point of, uh, bereavement for me. Like it makes me sad.

'Cause I think about so many people who have been here before. I think about how Nehemiah was killed and how Isaiah was killed and Jesus was killed and King and, uh, so many people, right? Um, just because they wanted leaders to be led by love and truth. And this is what we, we are willing to die and live for. Like I w, I don't want to, I don't want to die because of the message of truth and hope and love I bring. I want to live. But it too often has caused or cost those who call for reconciliation in the public square. It costs lives.



And so, I know what's in my mind and in my heart. I know what I've seen. And it's nothing different than what my fore-parents have called for. Um, it's not new. It's the thing we all hope for. But we don't know how, we are, and we're all trying to figure out how to get it. How to actualize it. How to manifest it. How to keep greed at bay long enough to say this right here, even if it only lasted for ten minutes, that was an example of reconciliation. We need to replicate that. We need to do that. That's what led us there. And if I could get people to come in and stay in, then that's how we get there. That's how we get to reconciliation on this journey of like, it's just a walk. It's a journey. But we've got to be committed to it because we've done some harm to God's creation, and we have to be willing to, to own it and then reconcile back to it and seek forgiveness, not just to God, but to one another as well. So it, to answer your question, um, Alexis, I, I know that some components to reconciliation is love and truth and a heap of justice. And I long for the day when it can be manifest on Earth as it is in heaven. That's what we pray. And that's what I believe.

**Sam Fuqua:** Natarsha Prince Sanders, thank you so much for speaking with us and thank you for your work.

**Natarsha Sanders:** Thank you so much for this opportunity and I look forward to hearing more of your work.

**Sam Fuqua:** Natasha Prince Sanders is a speaker, a teacher, a life coach, and a community pastor. She's also a doctoral student at Columbia Theological Seminary.

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