

Season 1, Episode 1: God is Change
Published Nov 21, 2017
Run time: 50 minutes

Autumn: A heads up to our listeners: today's episode includes some disturbing recorded audio from the aftermath of a police shooting. If you're listening with little ones in the room, you might want to pause it here and come back to this episode later.

--

[Ambient music playing]

Autumn: So, we can say it together

Autumn and adrienne In unison: All that you touch you change. All that you change changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is change. (echoing) God is change..God is change.. God is change
(ambient sound fades a bit)

Autumn: It's so convenient that you have that tattooed on your body.

adrienne: Yeah. I'm gonna tattoo the next quote on before we meet again.

Both: (laughing)

[ambient music fades into piano music]

--

[piano music and beat playing in background]

adrienne: Oh. Are our voices very similar?

Autumn: They are very similar.

adrienne: How are people gonna know who's who?

Autumn: Maybe they don't have to know who's who. (**adrienne** screams/woo's in excitement) That could be one of the weird conceits of this podcast is that we never let people know who's talking. (**adrienne** laughing)

Both: (laughing)

Autumn: (still laughing) oh my god. Alright so we've got the first thing down, right? Actually, they will figure it out though eventually. Because we'll start to share things about our lives...

adrienne: Oh yeah

Autumn: ..and people will like look us up on the internet and be like well which one of them is the one who has three children? (laughs) or..

adrienne: exactly, (laughs) not me!

Both: (laughing)

adrienne: So, we are the Brown sisters.

Autumn: We *are* the Brown sisters.

[music playing]

Autumn: I'm Autumn Brown.

adrienne: And I'm adrienne maree brown.

Autumn: And this is our inaugural episode of How to Survive the End of the World.

adrienne: Our podcast about learning from apocalypse with grace, rigor and curiosity.

[Piano music descending]

Autumn: It was interesting, I was like having this conversation last night with someone who was asking me like... How could you live where you live? How could you live there? I live in rural Minnesota. And I live on five acres of land in like a country house situation. And I moved there from New York City in 2010. And it was like a very intentional move because, um, my partner and I really..(laughs).. You know not to be too.. I mean whatever. This show is in part about the apocalypse and like how do we navigate and survive it. Um, or whatever. Whatever word we're gonna use for that. But like, for us it felt really critical to think about - what do we need in order to survive? And what do we need our kids to know in order to live over..and like survive the next like 50 years? 100 years?

adrienne: (agreeing) Yeah. Yeah.

Autumn: And a lot of that stuff is stuff my partner already knew about because he grew up out there. Um...And I had been going out there since I was 19 years old. You know we met when we were 18. Um... Yeah! It was a very intentional move on our part to like live in alignment with our values and live in alignment with the land. And really be stewards of a wild space. And so like the space that we live in is also we don't live on a farm, we live on five acres in the woods. And we garden quite a bit but we're also very much like stewarding wild space. And..in a community where um it's like uh ...mostly forest. You know? And that's a significant part of how we all... like everyone sort of understands themselves. In the midst of like we all have very different politics, but everyone understands themselves as being stewards of this piece of land.

adrienne: To me that's a very emergent lifestyle. And also, answering some of the big questions of life. Which is: how do we survive? How..you know um how do we teach our children to survive? How do we prepare our children to be in this particular world and do we choose to to prepare them to live in cities and to sort of tough it out amongst a lot of other people with very little access to nature? Or, do we take them and say the important...you know some of the most important relationships in your life will be the relationships that you have with this particular place. These trees, these lakes, this sort of infrastructure of life.

Autumn: Right.

adrienne: Yeah?

Autumn: Knowing that either way there's going to be like enormous loss in that period. Right? Like, I think that one of the things that I've been thinking about a lot and I know you think about a lot - because we both do a lot of like science fiction writing and thinking - is there's all these interesting stereotypes of like how people behave in disaster situations. Um... (laughs) and in apocalyptic moments that are really not borne out by reality. And so, you know, for people who live in rural areas there's definitely this sort of stereotype that people in cities will come and swarm our rural spaces. And will like try to take like all our land and all of our whatever.

adrienne: And all the jam.

Autumn: And all the jam! Which they know we have.

adrienne: Cus you make jam that's what you do.

Autumn: (in background): I mean that's right, I do make lots of jam.

adrienne: I mean technically you do, but I was saying it as a joke.

Autumn: Yeah, oh- (laughing)

(both laughing)

adrienne: Cus country people they just -

Autumn: Yeah country people, they make jam!

adrienne: Exactly (laughing)

Autumn: Also we make marinara sauce. (laughing) But...but... I but like the reality is, you know, as we see like mini apocalypses on a regular basis, and the reality is that people who experience those happening in major urban areas, stay in those urban areas. Right? They fight for the spaces. They do everything they can to not be pushed out of those spaces. Um, and so, it is interesting to like live out where I live and have a particular relationship to this space. Knowing that actually, um when push comes to shove, I would probably end up more isolated than a lot of people would be in an apocalyptic situation because a lot of people would be centralizing themselves in urban spaces.

adrienne: Yeah. And I think there's a good question around like would you go towards that? I mean I feel like a big reason I live in Detroit is because it's kind of the -- it feels like the place in between those two extremes. Right?

Autumn: mmm, mhmmm.

adrienne: Like, I'm like Detroit is a city, you know. It is definitely an urban area. There's a lot of people here. And yet, it's a city that has lost so much of the, you know, peak population. It feels like a country place a lot of times. And there's like wild pheasants running around. And there's like whole parts of the city that are just wild and growing and growing and growing over. And I love that. Like, on my - I live in the Cass Corridor which is right down the middle of the city - um, and it's being gentrified really quickly. But one of the things I love about it is when I sit on my back deck and look out at the sunset, there's a huge wild field directly in front of me between my space and like the next set of buildings. And there's a dog that hangs out there that I just call "dog" - the neighbors upstairs call Curly - but I really think of it as like that's my dog. And we communicate with each other. I throw him meat sometimes, it's all good. And I like how wild he is, and that he's like, "I made it". You know, this is the third winter now that I've known dog, and he makes it through the winter -

Autumn: Wowwww

adrienne: - and he's like, you know, he's not like scared of human beings but he's also not like running over and like -

Autumn: Right, he's like I don't belong to you. You don't belong to me. (laughs)

adrienne: Exactly. And he gives me a sense - or she, or they - that dog - gives me a sense of the kind of relationships that I would like to have with nature in a post-apocalyptic future scenario. Where it's like - Okay. Like, I'm close to my neighbors, but we all have a little bit of room as well for whatever we need it for. You know some people might use it for gardening. I like to just go out on the deck and do yoga and have my quiet space. But then, we also have a relationship with the natural beings around us.

And it's a respectful relationship. Like, I don't need to- I don't need to tame you in any way, and you don't need to attack me in anyway. (Autumn humming in agreement). Cus we're both operating inside of the abundance we need.

[subtle music starts playing in background]

Autumn: Which brings us too...um

adrienne: Yeah.

Autumn: One of the central questions we thought we might try to talk about in this first episode.

adrienne: Yeah.

Autumn: Which is like - you know we often talk about um you know the idea of how we would survive-

adrienne: Yes.

Autumn: - Um in an apocalyptic situation.

adrienne: Yeah.

Autumn: We don't often talk about ... whether humans deserve to survive. Which feels like - I have to say as a parent - it's an awkward thing to even say out loud, right?

Because like, do I want my children to survive ? Yes. Do I myself want to survive? Yes.

Do I want humanity to continue existing-

adrienne: Hu-MAHN-ity

Autumn: Hu-MAHN-ity. I do. I do. I want all of those things, but I also...but you know, it's hard to divorce our ongoing existence from the ongoing harm that we cause to the planet and to each other. And so, I think - I think there's some argument to be made around like - we have to like start thinking of how do we begin earning back our right to be here. Do you know what I'm saying?

adrienne: I feel this very deeply. Like, I - if I was to say like what are some of the core questions that led to *Emergent Strategy* needing to be articulated, it was I feel like - We need to earn our space on this planet, and in the ecosystems. Cus I - You know when I hear people say like, oh we're destroying the planet. I'm like we are harming the planet, but I really deeply believe that this is a resilient planet. And short of an actual Star Wars Death Star, like, I think this planet can bounce back from-

Autumn: Which to our knowledge does not exist yet.

adrienne: (knocking sound) Knock on wood.

Autumn: (also knocking) Knock on wood.

adrienne: And on our heads, whatever. But. You know, short of that. And if it did we wouldn't know. We would just be gone. Right?

Autumn: (laughing)

adrienne: So,

Autumn: Haha we'd be like what's that! Ahhh! (laughing more)

adrienne: We wouldn't even be like that. You know that's one of the things that's so amazing is I'm just sort of like, Oh! I don't think anyone on Alderon really knew what was coming. It was just like -

Autumn: Right -

adrienne: Alderon's gone now.

Autumn: They're just like that looks like a giant moon that wasn't there before.

adrienne: It's coming closer.

Autumn: Oh well..

adrienne: Now we're gone.

Autumn and adrienne : Right

adrienne: Or you know, *Melancholia's* such a beautiful post-apocalyptic vision of like - maybe you know, and you kind of have a sense of it. But it's still a month of suffering, or like a couple months of suffering. Versus now, we live in this constant sense of - We are making things worse for ourselves at a climate planetary level. So we're making it really hard for our species to live here. Even if the planet will always be able to recover from the impacts that we're having. (Autumn hums in agreement) And then, the things that we're doing, as humans, are unjustifiable. You know? So, we are recording this on June 17th. We got the news yesterday that the -um- police officer who killed Philando Castile was acquitted. And, you know, we all saw the video of Philando being murdered. Or if you didn't see it, you know that it happened. You know that this video is there. That this four-year-old child, his girlfriend's child, watched it happen. His girlfriend filmed it. Facebook Live. I mean, this happened.

-audio from video-

Diamond Reynolds: Please don't tell me this, Lord. Please, Jesus, don't tell me that he's gone. Please don't tell me that he's gone. Please, Officer, don't tell me that you just did this to him. You shot four bullets into him, sir. He was just getting his license and registration, sir.

(muffled background noise)

First Officer (yelling): Get the female passenger out!

Second Officer (yelling): Ma'am exit the car right now with your hands up! Let me see your hands! Exit now! Keep 'em up! Keep 'em up!

(somber ambient music playing in background)

Diamond Reynolds: Where's my daughter? You got my daughter?

Second Officer: Face away from me and walk backwards. (muffled) Walk backwards towards me. Keep walking.

First Office: Keep walking. Keep walking.

A few moments pass.

Officer: Get on your knees. Get on your knees.

(baby crying out)

--

adrienne: You look at something like that and you're like- if I was coming, you now from

outer space. If I was an alien, coming you know, and deciding- Oh let me see what this species is up to- And that's the video that filtered up through..you know whatever I was looking at, I was like- You know, I don't think that would make a case for this species-

Autumn: I'm not gonna land here!

adrienne: I don't wanna land here, and I don't necessarily want to help these folks out. You know I really think like, both- so on two levels - both what we're doing to the planet is like, I don't know that earns us a place, and then what we're doing to each other. I think, it's not a hopeless case, but I do understand why the people we looked up to - like Octavia Butler - was very hopeless about humanity. I get it.

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: Or *Battlestar Galactica* is one of our favorite shows. And I feel like their case was very much like, a hopeless - like, humanity has not earned our right to exist. Let's fly around and space and see what the hell.

Autumn: Right.

adrienne: And, I think, you know, when I look at us now, I'm like, we're basically flying around in space and saying what the hell.

Autumn: (laughing)

adrienne: Like, are we gonna make it right on this planet? Or...? You know or not? I think the last thing that keeps percolating in my mind lately is- Like and even if we are in the midst of the end of our species - which we might be right now. You know science seems to say we are. Even if we are in that place right now, I still think we'd go out fighting. Right? So there's a big part of me that's like, you know, on my most hopeless days, I still think it's a worthwhile endeavor to engage in transformative justice. I still think it puts something into the universe that's important. And, that we don't give up on doing the right things, and the good things and fighting the good fight. Even if it's too small to change the whole course of our species. Because, who knows? The apocalypse might also be the apocalypse of big culture. And it might just be like all we have left is small culture. Your farm. You know your five acres of land might be the place our whole family ends up living. At some point.

Autumn: Mhm, we're planning for it. I mean this is where I think our biology actually really assists us right? In like the face of something that is so...um, overwhelming, and hopeless, our biology insists that we don't give up. Um, and I think that that's like - oh good job cells. (laughing) Um, you know, if you just like sort of like look into our cell structure, you see that the tendency is to um, for us to recreate ourselves. Um, and, and of course, one of the awesome things about the way our cell structure works, and the way we work at like, you know, a very uh, deep molecular level, is that part of how we recreate ourselves is through the inclusion of other things that we don't necessarily think of as human. Um (laughing) you know if you think of the way our immune systems evolved over time, that they evolved through not just like adapting in response to viruses, but like by incorporating viruses into our systems. So, I think that and actually this is one of those int- I'm glad you brought up Octavia Butler, because I think that one of the interesting- one of the most to me brilliant things about *Lilith's Brood*, and this is about to be a spoiler for anyone who hasn't read *Lilith's Brood*

adrienne: Pause, and go read it!

Autumn: If you're planning to read it, please pause now and go read it. But, *Lilith's Brood* is the Xenogenesis Trilogy that includes *Dawn*, and um *Adulthood Rites*, and

Imago?

adrienne: If you are like me, and you have a bad memory, you're good.

Autumn: One of the amazing details is that you know, one of the other race of aliens that comes to earth- and and comes and saves some of humanity, in the midst of a like all out nuclear war. Um, the oankali. The reason why they do so is because they find something in our genetic material they find fascinating and irresistible. And it's cancer. And so, for them, they're like - You, you have this thing that happens in your biology that we think would actually really assist us once we can figure out how to work with it. And that's why we wanna actually incorporate with you. So, it's this interesting thing, I think, too where... um, you now, there is that thing of like Ah! Geez, if an alien race came here, they wouldn't even want to help us. Or you know they might also be like, Oh, it's better for the whole universe if you all just don't keep progressing. We're just gonna take you out-

adrienne: (laughing)

Autumn: -But! There's also this piece where I think, you know, there's this visionary thing too of like - What is that we've got going on that we don't even necessarily think of as a gift? Necessarily think of as worth.

adrienne: Right.

Autumn: What is it about us that might actually be worthy of more attention than what we give it? Or worthy of a different type of attention so that the attention is not eradication, but actually growth. And I think that obviously, for those of us who work in social justice or in movements, um, is a huge part of the argument we're making around social change, right? Like the shit that you're trying to eradicate is actually the shit that we all need.

adrienne: Yep, (laughing).

Autumn: (laughing) Right?

adrienne: Exactly.

Autumn: The stuff that you call progress is actually eradicating the thing that we all need to survive and... So I think that there is something around just re-centering around the things that maybe we often think of as simple, or slow-

adrienne: Yes.

Autumn: - Or too little or too late. That's actually - or that sometimes we even think of as toxic, that are actually the things-

adrienne: Yeah

Autumn:- that might be most useful to us.

adrienne: Right. Well and it's like everything is useful to something. I mean that's one of the trues of our planet and the weird nature inside of that paradigm is exciting. Right? But I do think, this is one of the places I kind of wrestle. I - I love to travel. And I love pop culture. And I love like, big cities with fancy dinners at French restaurants with like - butter, and steak, and bread. And I love like

Autumn: *America's Next Top Model*

adrienne: (laughs) Ha-oh I love.. Oh I mean *The Bachelorette*, you know this season

Autumn: Actually the question really is, What are the things that you would miss most about capitalism? Or that you get to have access to within capitalism, that you will miss most when it's over ?

adrienne: I just wanna push back, because I'm gonna miss- I can't let go.

Autumn: You can't let go (laughs) You're like Whitney Houston, baby.

adrienne: And I- And I feel like maybe, I mean I think this is the impossible thing, but I wanna figure out ways to have- have it all. Right? And I think that's the...

Autumn: You want urban agriculture and Beyoncé too.

adrienne: Sometimes, right? Like this is why I think um... I think it's Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Like, there's this concept in it like, instead of there being Picasso in a museum, and like some rich person actually owns it, it's like the Picasso moves around. And you might get to have the Picasso in your house for like a month. And you let go of it and someone else gets to have the Picasso. Right? And...So... Anyway, so that, you know, is one possibility for how. But. so. And the first thing that came to mind was Beyoncé, because I feel like I've had to fight for my right to be a Beyoncé lover.

Autumn: You won that fight.

adrienne: Thank you. But, I also feel like it's because she earned it. Right? Like, if you talk about a human who's earned her right on this planet-

Autumn: Oh my god

adrienne: -I mean she has like worked so hard. And keeps learning in public. So she to me is someone who - even when someone is like she's a capitalist - i'm like, no. I mean she might be, but -

Autumn: Whatever, no. No one individual is a capitalist, sorry. That's not how it works.

adrienne: Exactly, that's my thing. What she is, is a really, really successful woman in this current system. And the way this current system allows that success to be managed and manipulated is by earning a lot of cash. So, once you earn that cash, you have that freedom to do all these other things. And that's what I've understood to be her framework for it.

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: If we lived in a culture where it was like..if you have the most trees and that's what we give to singers who are incredible, then she would just have a bunch of trees. Or whatever it is. Right? So I'm like, I think that for me I'm just like oh when we see a black woman succeeding like that, I hate that the knee-jerk reaction is like here's what's wrong with her succeeding like that. Like we don't hold others to.

Autumn: Right. We don't even know the names of all the white producers who have like a million more money. (laughs)

adrienne: But. So that's one thing. But, I don't know the other stuff, but I do really love steak, and butter and bread. Coconut water and quinoa and stuff that like doesn't come from the particular ground around me. And I'm like what'll I do if I don't get to have coconut water anymore? That's one of my things. What about you? What are some of the things that you're like...

Autumn: Ohhh, well like Netflix. You know what I mean? Like I think a lot about like what are the things that I get access to through the internet -

adrienne: Yes.

Autumn: -that like um...

adrienne: The whole internet basically

Autumn: The whole internet! That I'm like what is the infrastructure that's going to sustain my ability to access this. But even like, there comes a certain point where like no one's gonna be producing like *The Handmaid's Tale*...on Netflix like in 50 years. Do you

know what I mean? Like that. That's the kind of stuff where I'm like, Oh! Like my ...the things that like technology allows me to sort of like escape into. Um, but then there's other stuff too. Like the sheer pleasure of depositing money in my bank account.

adrienne: (laughs)

Autumn: Do you know what I mean?

adrienne: Yes!

Autumn: Or like, when like, I don't experience this anymore, but when I used to run an organization, um, there was like a lot of pleasure I would experience in like putting money in the bank account of my organization. Because then I knew that like that was paying people's' salaries. So, just the experience of like, getting money -

adrienne: Yep.

Autumn: - And like knowing that it means like this other thing is gonna be able to be possible. And like it's interesting to notice that like, I like that feeling.

adrienne: Yes.

Autumn: Even though I know it's... not...I don't know. Well, what's the word that I'm looking for here? It's not that it's wrong. It's not that it's not real.

adrienne: I think that it's something akin to the feeling of satisfaction that would come from like harvesting.

Autumn: Mhmm.

adrienne: Right? Where I'm like - I did a bunch of work, and now I get to harvest something from that work. But, that gets transferred over into the realm of money, because the work that we're doing is no longer just putting seeds in the dirt, and cultivating them to grow. It's like oh I'm putting seeds of ideas in people's' minds and cultivating it to grow. Or I am, you know, holding a space, or I am running an organization or something else. And, I don't get to harvest it from those people, cus they're out doing a million things. So, one of the only things that I get in response is like, Oh here's a couple thousand dollars that says we value the work that you put into it. And I think it's such a mind-fuck, because I am constantly in this sense of -uh- I don't have enough, but anything I ask for is too much.

Autumn: Mmmmmhm.

adrienne: I stay in that zone. So, like I get some satisfaction from paychecks. And I also feel shame everytime. Like, why don't I just offer this thing for free. I love these people, I wanna see black liberation. I wanna see the earth healed. Why can't I just figure out a way to offer this for free? Or, for just whatever donation people will offer me. Or whatever. And, then on the other side of that I'm like, I can't breathe I'm so burnt out and exhausted from making this offer. And those paychecks coming in help me to have a little space.

Autumn: Yes, exactly.

adrienne: Right? So. Oh! But one more thing on the things we would miss blah blah blah. Just really crappy reality TV shows. I mean, I love those. Like, um, *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* is one of my favorite things now. Like-

Autumn: I've never watched any of the Real Housewives shows.

adrienne: You don't have to watch most of them.

Autumn: Ok.

adrienne: But the real housewives of Atlanta... It's an artform of like... just petty, shady behavior. And, again, I think part of it is like I'm able to hold it like it's on TV. It's these

people who are doing it as like performance art. Like, no one actually acts this way or treats their friends this way. Um, I mean, surely people do, but like, I'm like we're all in on the farcical nature of what we're watching. And we're all choosing to be entertained by these women just being like - u know - I mean I watched an episode recently where someone was like, um. This woman started talking, and this other woman interrupted her and was like you know, you don't know how to be quiet unless there's a dick in you mouth.

Autumn: (gasping) Ohhhh.

adrienne: And it was one of those lines where you're just like (singing) Whaaaaa

Autumn: (harmonizing) Whaaaaaa

adrienne: Right? And I'm like that's something that I would never say to anyone.

Autumn: But do I want it to be said? Yes, someone needs to say that. (laughing).

adrienne: Maybe that's also the thing. It's like places for bad behavior. I think really so much of the stuff that I would miss, I think that in our activist and movement spaces, we make so much room for our good behavior. Our loving, connected like centered, grounded, all that stuff. And we we don't leave room for like our bad behavior. (Autumn laughing in background) Our whole humanity. Like, our shady, petty thoughts and all of that. And I feel like in a lot of the utopian visions of the future, that's the thing that I kind of miss.

Autumn: Right.

adrienne: Oh now everyone's just gets along all the time and no one ever says anything that hurts anyone else. And no- I mean it's like, where's the laughter? Like where's the like, I don't know, just-

Autumn: And also like where's the like reality? Where's the conflict that helps us grow? Right? That like no one, grows or learns anything without like having to be in conflict and be uncomfortable.

adrienne: Exactly.

Autumn: And of course, that's one of the big things that we also miss in our movement work. It's a big part of what like, you know, we're doing this recording in the midst of the 19th annual Allied Media Conference. And Alicia Garza was just here doing the keynote for the opening ceremony. Which adrienne hosted. Um, and Alicia made this really beautiful point of like, I don't remember exactly how she put it,

-excerpt from Alicia Garza's speech-

[soft piano music playing in background]

Alicia: Here's the thing about humanity, we hurt each other. We disappoint each other. We're gonna make each other mad, and we're gonna make mistakes. We're gonna disagree. And we're gonna disagree a lot. But building a movement across difference for the sake of our collective transformation, that's my commitment.

[continues playing in the background and slowly fades out]

adrienne: Yeah, and she said there's no movement that's ever succeeded without people in it that we're disappointing.

Autumn: Exa--

adrienne: And I was like (singing operatically) Girl!! I was like that's so, I mean it's so important. You know we both do facilitation-

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: Like, we facilitate different kinds of things, but really so much. And we get to talk about it. And it is one of the biggest things. So many of the meetings, and the conflicts that people are having is basically no being able to say I'm disappointed.

Autumn: Mhmm.

adrienne: I expected more, I'm disappointed in what's actually happening.

Autumn: You hurt my feelings. And I didn't think that you could do that.

adrienne: And people don't know how to just be like, I'm disappointed. And instead they turn it into, you know, you went against our values. Right? And it's like, maybe you did or maybe you didn't. Or maybe you were just like disappointing and overwhelmed. Or hurtful. Or a little calloused. Um, and I feel like yeah, I love what Alicia was saying. I love the place that it's coming from. Cus I'm like, you know, doing the Black Lives Matter work, I imagine is, and I've seen up close, there's so much disappointment that people have for not already being, you know fully-

Autumn: Yeah

adrienne: - Clear on like their analysis on like how black liberation is gonna work.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: And being all on the same page about it. And - and then, and we've talked about this a lot. There's the people who like just woke up yesterday, um, who are already wanting to tell everybody else about themselves.

Autumn: Mhmm.

adrienne: Right? And it's like how to be patient. It's like you really just learned what feminism was, and you just learned about intersectionality, and now you're being so furious at everyone for not doing it perfectly. When we're all so... we're babies at all of it. We're babies at transformative justice. We don't know yet how to do it, but we want to learn. We're only going to learn by being humble with each other, that we need to learn. So I thought it was - she's incredible.

Autumn: Oh we all needed to hear that message.

adrienne: So one thing I feel like, I had an intention for us, was to always include directly, some words of Octavia's. Because it does feel like she's the root system, or in the root system of this podcast. And in the root system of our lives.

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: I really feel like you and I have been in conversation about Octavia for...

Autumn: Years.

adrienne: So long. Since college. Um, and then I feel like both of us have written science fiction that we feel like is trying to pick up the legacy of Octavia Butler in some ways. And, you know, moving that out into the world in a lot of ways. And honoring her legacy. And so, I would love to have a quote from her each time. And I think this first time, starting with the All That You Touch You Change quote feels really good to me. Um if it feels really good to you?

Autumn: Yeaaaah.

adrienne: So, we can say it together.

Autumn: Mhmm. Like right now?

adrienne: Yeah! Let's say it together.

Autumn and adrienne: All that you touch you change. All that you change changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is change.

Autumn: It's so convenient that you have that tattooed on your body.

adrienne: Yeah, I'm gonna tattoo the next quote on before we meet again (laughing).

Autumn: Ahhhahaha (laughing).

adrienne: Um, so, what does that quote mean for you? How do you manifest or live your life in relationship to that?

Autumn: (Sighs). (Pause). All that you touch you change. All that you change changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is change. Wow, (laughing). I mean, I feel like I've so directly experienced this. Especially in the last several years of my life, of like that it is inevitable. There's a - There's a momentum, and an inevitability of a certain momentum in life that um, you know, I've had experiences in the last few years that are just sort of knocked me off the path that I was on. And onto a completely different path. And I found myself there, and I'm like, oh, this is where I was supposed to be. Um, and my ability to like be on that other path, like, was in part the circumstances of like what happened to me. And then in part the circum- like my willingness or ability to say yes to it. Um, so like, you know, I mean as you know, adrienne, um, in 2014 I lost my fourth baby, and... in utero. And like two weeks later, was laid off from my job, you know, by these evil people. If you're listening right now, evil people, you should know that I still think you're evil.

adrienne: Yes!

(Both laughing)

adrienne: And the whole family agrees with that.

Autumn: Everybody agrees

adrienne: I wish you well in your own transformation, far away from us.

Autumn: Exactly. Um, so, but, you know, but it was like this awful extremely traumatic experience that ultimately, like the way I - the way I relate to my child now, is that like he created - by leaving me - he created a space in my life for me to fill with something that was my choice. Um, and up until that point, I hadn't been feeling much like awareness around like this piece of my life's work or my life's purpose that was missing. Which was my artistic work.

adrienne: Yeah.

Autumn: And, I remember like two years later, it was October 8, 2016, and I was starting the first day of my first ever writing residency in Vermont. And, it was- the day I arrived was the anniversary of the day that I found out that he died. And I got there, and I like settled into my studio, and like set everything up. And then I walked outside and I stood at the river and I was like, ah! Wow Thank you baby. Thank you my baby. Thank you my child, because you - by leaving me, you put me on the path to be here right now. And like in terms of like something like actually really touching you. Like he was inside me. He was alive inside me, and he died inside me. Like, I carried him through his life and his death. And, like, there's no deeper connection I feel like that you can have with someone. You know what I mean? And like, because of him, I was able to actually take the steps toward like writing my book. You know, this book that had been trying to come through me for seven-fking-years at that point! You know what I mean? But like I hadn't actually been able to really create space for it. And so, um, and so that's one of those things where, like-

adrienne: Can you just take a second?

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: I mean that - I just feel like it's so important - like - when you go through things that are that deep, I think there's a way that you get like oh I know how to tell this. I know how to say it.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: And then it's like oh, and also let it land. Like it's like -

Autumn: Yeah

adrienne: - That's, I mean it's so huge.

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: You know? It's so huge. Having walked that path with you it's like such a big part of your life. And such a beautiful place that you've come to.

Autumn: Yeah. Well, and I think this is another one of those areas where like, I've really experienced Octavia as a teacher, right? Because that - the two years between that - those were like the darkest years of my life.

adrienne: Palest.

Autumn: Hah! Very funny. Uh, thank you. Those were the palest years of my life. Um, but like I was, I had so much rage. I was in so much pain. Um, but like the complexity of that, it was that like it also was like so much fire for my creativity. And like, um, you know. And I think one of the things I just - so even for me in saying out loud - like my baby died and created space for me to become like an artist again. Like that feels like a - almost um - uhh... what's the word? Like it almost feels like an inappropriate thing to say out loud because of all of the cultural mores we have around how you're supposed to experience like death and grief and loss and all those things, right? But one of the things I loved about Octavia's work is that she's always fking with that. Like she's always in her work fking with like our - like whatever we believe that we think that's right and wrong. You know what I mean? She's like Oh do you really think that's right and wrong?

adrienne: Yeah.

Autumn: What about under these circumstances?

adrienne: Yes.

Autumn: You know what I'm saying? And that's for me like the in terms of that quote, of like all that you touch you change, all that you change changes you. Part of what I've had to be really open to is understanding that like, I'm gonna have experiences in my life that are gonna fundamentally change the way I believe about things.

adrienne: Yeah.

Autumn: Like what I believe. And how I believe it. And how I walk that belief.

adrienne: Yes.

Autumn: And like, if I can't, I can't be adaptive to like that fact that I just have a new belief showing up inside me (laughing). You know? How am I supposed to even show up and facilitate and be helpful with other people?

adrienne: Exactly. That's great.

Autumn: What about for you?

adrienne: I mean, I think for me, well it's just so interesting. Even right now I'm feeling like oh like I feel so touched and changed by like, you know I was there with you through that pregnancy loss. And I was your doula, I was supposed to be your doula, and I was your doula for what ended up happening with the infant phenomenon. And um, and then

I had my own ectopic pregnancy.

Autumn: Mhmmm.

adrienne: You know? After that.

Autumn: Like, six months later

adrienne: Six months after that. Right? And where, you know... I ...where...(laughing). It's just like the chances of my ectopic pregnancy. The odds of it are so extremely rare. It was like this doesn't make any sense. Um, but I was so touched and changed by going through that experience with you. It was my first time as a doula going through a pregnancy loss.

Autumn: Mmmm.

adrienne: And you know really going through a pregnancy loss. Really being like oh, I need to meet you where you are. You know? And that means, right now I'm gonna come smoke a cigarette with you. Right now we're gonna, you know, stay up all night and we're gonna drink and we're gonna just talk about this.

Autumn: Mhmmm.

adrienne: Or right now we're gonna just not talk about this.

Autumn: Mhmmm.

adrienne: Or right now like, you know you have another friend who's been through this experience, and you all are just gonna go for a walk. And I don't know what you're talking about.

Autumn: Mhmmm.

adrienne: You know, and ah, i'm gonna be here when you get back, and make some bread or something.

Autumn: Mhmmm. (laughing a little)

adrienne: And just be like, I don't know how to be in this. But I'm gonna learn.

Autumn: Yesssss.

adrienne: And I think that piece is like the only lasting truth is change. It's like nothing that I knew on October 7th was particularly relevant on October 8th.

Autumn: Mph.

adrienne: And it was less relevant in that following month. Right? I was like, everything I thought I believed um, shifted. And, you know, and I loved that baby.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: Right? Like the way that I love your kids, it, you know, each child has totally changed me.

Autumn: Yes.

adrienne: And this one did too. Um, and I'm like oh. And then I went through my own pregnancy experience. And I was changed in that.

Autumn: Yes.

adrienne: And really didn't expect to be. Um, like, and I didn't expect to experience it as a loss. But I'm like, I lost a baby.

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: And I will al- That's an experience now for the rest of my life.

Autumn: And a part of your body.

adrienne: And a part of my body. I lost my left fallopian tube, and that's just never coming back. And actually just now, I was getting like a healing session. I was having a healing session. And the woman kept asking me, "What's going on? There's something

going on in your left side.” And finally I was just like, I had a - I had this ectopic pregnancy like two years ago. She was like oh. Alright. There’s probably scar tissue. There’s probably-

Autumn: Mmmmm

adrienne: And I was like, What! No. It’s so small, you know. And

Autumn: Ahahaha.

adrienne: -And of course. Of course.

Autumn: Of course.

adrienne: And of course, I’ve been experiencing nonstop just imbalance on the left side of my body since then.

Autumn: Of course.

adrienne: My knee doesn’t work. My hip doesn’t work. My shoulder hurts. Like everything’s on the left side.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: And my heart is broken about it. You know, and it’s still broken about it. Right?

Autumn: Mhmmm.

adrienne: So, I think there’s one level that’s that. Where it’s like letting go of what you think you know but to be present with what’s changing. And I think the other way that I see it, that it means a lot to me as a quote, is I think most people focus on wanting to change others. And it’s all about like how can I change you? How can I change you?

Autumn: Mmm.

adrienne: And it’s all that you touch you change. We love that part. Um, we don’t love that part that’s all that you change changes you.

Autumn: Mhmmmm.

adrienne: And the idea that like if we change, for instance if we change someone who’s a white supremacist, someone who’s committed to white supremacy in some way, they’re gonna change us back. And we don’t want that. Right? Like I don’t want someone who I feel is committed to hatred, or toxicity, or evil, to change me in any way.

Autumn: (laughing)

adrienne: Right? I don’t want to. And so it’s like - oh how do we do that?

Autumn: Oh except once you let someone in as a fully human person, sorry. You can’t avoid it.

adrienne: Then you’re like, oh, you’re gonna change me.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: And I’d have to be in relationship with that.

Autumn: Mhmm.

adrienne: And I think Octavia throws us in that scenario over and over again. Where someone has to come across some who has what seems like an opposing worldview. Or is upholding the patriarchy. Or something.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: And, that person, they have to figure out how to move forward together.

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: Um. So I think about that for our movements a lot. It’s like, can we measure how willing we are to be changed?

Autumn: Mmmmm.

adrienne: And, like that that actually should become a measure of our success as

movements. It's like, we're willing to be changed by each other. And we still have some intention, something that we're moving towards. You know? Something about our humanity that, um, pulls us forward. So it's not just like, oh just change, me I'll become a white supremacist. (Autumn laughing) It's like white supremacy is the water you're swimming in, and you're interacting with this other human who has been swimming deeper in that water.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: And how do you help bring them up? And how do you change in that process and then keep going?

Autumn: Right.

adrienne: And, I also, you know, something about this that I've been thinking about lately, something about change that I've been thinking about lately, is how so often people are resistant to changing because they don't want to be labeled as anything negative. So, I've had this experience recently where- like I talked to this white lady the other day and she was like well, I mean, this language of white supremacy, I mean that's not. I, I mean, I, you know, I definitely do some stuff and it's a little bit problematic-

Autumn: (laughing). I do some things...

adrienne: I do some things that you know, but I mean, it's not white supremacy, that's like... And you know in her head she's like that is a neo-nazi that's walking around in a uniform. Or it's a KKK person. That's a white supremacist. I'm just a, you know, lightweight micro aggressive person.

Autumn: (laughs).

adrienne: Right? And not wanting to see the tie between those.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: And in the same way, like, you know in moments in my life when I've been learning about trans people. I'm like, oh, I'm not transphobic, I just...

Autumn: I just had this problematic thought. Hahaha.

adrienne: Yeah, I just don't understand this, or don't understand that. And it's like no one wants to be labeled with that stuff while you're in your learning journey. You're like, you know, we can't see ourselves. And so I love this because it's like all that you touch you change. And then all that you change changes you. You can't see the things in yourself that even need changing. You can't see them.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: Right? And so people are always gonna hold up the mirror to you.

Autumn: Or, at the point where you see them changing, is- or the thing- at the point where you see that they need change when they're already in the process of changing.

adrienne: Ohhh, yes!

Autumn: (laughing). Right?

adrienne: Exactly. It's like, oh that's is unravelling. You are unravelling or your life is. So, yeah. I'm just like, I'm so grateful to Octavia for leaving us this wisdom.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: Um, and I feel like -

Autumn: What do you think about God is change?

adrienne: I think that the idea, not just the idea of like, you know, the christian god that we grew up with, um, but like, Jesus, Allah, Buddha, like anytime it was like individualized, that divinity was individualized, I - like I was like I feel the beauty. And I

feel this push back against the individualization.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: Right? That it was like, I think that the god feelings that I have are never individual. It's always a feeling of oneness. Of interconnectedness.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: Of, um, surrendering to the fact that I'm not separate, um, is really like how I feel it. So then, trying to then uplift any one being that's like- looks like a human-

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: -Or, whatever, has always troubled me. And has always, kinda made me like, um, just because I know how flawed I am, right? But I'm like, the idea that this god-being could also be like this flawed being, um always kinda messed with me.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: And then when I read that God is change, I was like that's what it actually is. It's like something, you know, when there was a nothing, something created - some change happened, and then something emerged from that change. And planets emerged. And stars emerged. And matter emerged. And like, magic and miracles. And like over time change change change. Amoebas. Tadpoles. Frogs. You know like ?

Autumn: Whales (laughing)

adrienne: Whales! Oh my gosh!

Autumn: Hahaha

adrienne: Then frickin' humans! Right? I'm like, and I don't think we're the peak. I don't think we're the end of this journey.

Autumn: We better not be.

adrienne: Right? I'm like, I am excited. I want us to keep evolving. I want to know what the next level is. I don't know if it's, you know, cyborg. I don't know if it's organic cyborg, I don't know.

Autumn: Well, and I just like, I think that like the- I actually think that the- The individualization of god being and the idea of peak evolution are very related problematically. You know, I like- We're very much related problems of our very like distorted way that we think about the world. Right?

adrienne: Yes.

Autumn: Right? Like - you know, like the individual god being- like oh! Cool so what happened there like god colonized a body? Great good job.

(both laughing)

Autumn: You know what I mean? And like but then on the other side too, this idea that like- The idea that evolution is going somewhere. Right? That there's a destination for evolution.

adrienne: Yes.

Autumn: That we are the destination, right? Right, so that like - And- And I think that- But- Even we still think and talk about it in these terms. Right? Like, when we're - when we're talking about like all of what science is going to make available to us. And how it might change us. And how we might change in response to it. It's all still framed with in this idea that like there's someplace that we're trying to get to. As opposed to like - As opposed to what I think you point out really beautifully in your book- Which is like actually things like evolutionary processes. Things like adaptation happens in response to other adaptations in systems. Right? That it's not -That it's actually like- It's a

conversation, not um, not a dissertation. (Laughs). You know what I mean?

adrienne: I love that you brought up the cellular structure. It's like so many adaptations are not min-based. It's not like we noticed this. We thought about it. We created a solution, and we adapted.

Autumn: Right.

adrienne: It's like actually the body is way ahead of all that. And the body is constantly making changes and adaptations. And even the things that hurt in our body, are a lot of times are like oh I'm adapting to some behavior that you're engaging in.

Autumn: (whispers) Yes!

adrienne: And figuring out how to adapt to it. I think that a lot of people now, I- I mean I don't know that this has a basis, but I'm gonna risk saying it. I think we have so many more people now who are coming into an awareness of chronic pain, chronic illness-

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: -Chronic fatigue. I think there is something at a large scale level that's saying, "It's time to slow down."

Autumn: Mhmmmm.

adrienne: Like the pace at which your species is trying to move, is too fast for each other. It's too fast for the planet. It's too fast for the resources. You're go- you're just spinning yourselves out of control.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: It's like if we were spinning in a circle, just standing and spinning in a circle, we would recognize it. But because we're in this collective activity, we can't realize - like we are dizzy.

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: But we don't even know it. We're trying to make decisions from that place. So I think that there's so many-

Autumn: That's a really good point.

adrienne: -bodies, that are like slow down. My body needs to slow down. My brain doesn't process stuff that way.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: Like slow it down. And to me, I'm like, oh I think- I think that that's an adaptation in response to our hyper culture. The internet. Our hyper-exposure to each other and each others traumas. Because, we -

Autumn: Yesss.

adrienne: -we have all this exposure, but no tools with which to process all this exposure. So it's not like we learned like- Here's a daily meditation you can do after interacting with the internet and feeling everyone's pain.

Autumn: (laughing) Right?

adrienne: Right? No one taught us that. Or even just like to keep breathing. Keep hydrating.

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: Keep looking for the good amongst the hard. Like, we just didn't learn that. And so, a lot of us, I mean, we just aren't- We're like an open door for all the worst things that are happening in the world to come walking through and sit on our couch. And we don't have any way of setting those boundaries. Closing the door sometimes right? So then I think then this thing is emerging in our bodies that's saying- and we're like oh, it's

disability. And I think it's a brilliance. I think there's a brilliance afoot. And it's an evolutionary brilliance. I think it's saying slow down. So, stuff like that. I'm like that is also god.

Autumn: Yeah.

adrienne: Right. Those things that we look at an initially we're like uhh this is horrible, this is so hard. You know everytime my body fails me in anyway, I'm like, this is so hard. I feel like so sad that this is happening.

Autumn: (laughing)

adrienne: Like, I'm struggling so much with my own ableism and all this. And then if I surrender to it-

Autumn: Mhm.

adrienne: -it's always better for me. Like, it's always like oh. Ah! I need- I needed to ask for help. And I needed to connect myself to another human being to receive that help.

[stringed instrument plucking in the background]

Autumn: I love this idea of like chronic pain and needing to slow down as being like an adaptation or an evolution. And I think the other thing that it affords. Right, like any time we experience that we're in pain, um, or that we have needs it requires us to respond by creating webs of care. Um, and, that like, ultimately that's what's needed. Right? Like, ultimately what we need right now is a planet that we're... orientation to how we like um are self organizing is through the lens of care. Like what care can we provide to each other. What care can I provide? What care do I need? Um, and so I think yeah. If that's- If that is an adaptation that the body's making in response to the internet, um...

adrienne: Yeah. (laughing)

Autumn: Good job body, as always. I'm always- I'm always like this is my whole thing- this is my whole thing about the body. I always say this to people when like people are like thinking about or talking about pregnancy, where I'm like, this is one of those great examples of how it's like really important that the body's in charge of this. Can you think of how much mistake would happen if the mind was in charge of the process of like building this creature that's growing inside the body, right? It's like whoooo! Good thing- Good thing that the body's responsible for this one.

[music fades out]

[intro to *Paladin* by Tunde Olaniran begins to play]

adrienne: Thank you for listening. This is our pilot season. And we ask that as you listen to these shows that you think about what else you'd like to hear. That you listen as someone who's helping us to shape this as a longer project.

[*Paladin* continues]

Autumn: During this season we will be touching on grief and ceremony. Bodies and liberation. Writing and creativity. History and speaking with our ancestors.

adrienne: If you want to help us keep doing this, you can make a sustaining donation

through patreon by visiting our page, patreon.com/endoftheworldshow. You can also find us on social media. @endoftheworldshow on twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Autumn: I don't know if you can hear it, but I have a little kid coughing in her bedroom nextdoor, (laughing), so hopefully that will not show up in the recording.

Autumn: *How to Survive the End of the World* is edited and produced by our beloved Zak Rosen. Today's episode features music from Abishai, Tunde Olaniran, Audiobinger, Kaela Drew, Blue Dot Sessions, and Alex Fitch. Special thanks to Oren Goldenberg for the audio recording of Alicia Garza's keynote to the 2017 Allied Media Conference. And a special shout out to our movement comrade Mahfam Malek who came up with the name for this podcast.

[*Paladin* fades out]