

Gender race, and religion: exploring the identity of care experienced children and care leavers transcript

Welcome to CoramBAAF Conversations, a podcast series dedicated to adoption fostering in kinship care. We ask children, social care professionals, and experts by experience to join us to share with us and you, our listeners, their experiences, reflections and knowledge. I hope you enjoy.

Hello and welcome everyone. I'm Ann Horne, CoramBAAF's Kinship Consultant. This podcast episode is being recorded as part of CoramBAAF's Members' Week, which is a yearly event for CoramBAAF members. The focus of our week this week is listening to the child. Each day we'll be exploring a different theme relating to the diverse experiences and challenges faced by children and young people who are adopted, who are living in foster care or growing up in kinship care. If you want more information, visit our website corumbath.org.uk. Our focus today is on listening to the child through exploring and supporting the identity of children and young people. I'm really excited to introduce and have a conversation with Saria Cherryville contractor. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Thank you and it's fabulous to be here. I am a professor in sociology and religion at Coventry University. I work in a peace studies centre and all of our work is about.

You know, making the earth a more peaceful place. Now, peace is not just about the absence of war. It is also about creating environments where we look out for each other and that is really how I've, you know, arrived here at this conversation with you. How can we better address? Needs of children in care. And and and. And as you said, today we'll be. Talking about identity.

Thank you. So your research includes quite a wide variety of information, doesn't it in sort of key findings? Yeah. Where did your interest in identity sort of as a sociologist and sort of feminist researcher, come from? Where did that sort of originate from?

A long time ago. Almost. A decade ago now, I I. Decided I was going to do a PhD, I say decided but it all sort of happened. And my PhD ended up being a feminist, giving a voice to Muslim women.

And I realise.

When you talk about Muslim women in Britain, there are lots of different people back then and even today, talking about them talking for them and I felt it was really important. For the Muslim woman to speak for herself. That was the premise of the PhD Petero other academics, it's all about theoretical framing. All of that jazz. And as I was delving into

Muslim women history. These, as I was talking to them, I realised that they were all so different and that's really first when I started talking, thinking about identity, I came across the work of a black theorist, a black academic called Stuart Hall, and he he wrote a lot about culture. You wrote a lot about black identity. You wrote a lot about British identity. Now remember this quote for him from him that he talks about how. So you know we are sometimes labelled as such and such, you know, Muslim woman care experienced young person. And you can you know. Whatever label you want in between, but what he also said is these. It's not quite true. These labels are often a single story, you know, to draw on. The Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie Noguichi. People steal their stories because. I mean just. Look at my own identity. In addition to being. Perhaps a visible Muslim woman, a sociologist of religion? I am also. Indian heritage. I am also female. I am also an academic. Take without. I have a faith and all of these things, these different things, some that I can think of today, some that I cannot come together to form. Who we are. This is the thrust of my work in relation to to identity is to get other academics like me, but also policymakers, frontline social workers, any everybody really to think about identity, not as something that is singular, but as something that is layered and nuanced. You know, with I was listening to a piece of music today and I thought about texture and our identities have so much happening within them and and that's really what I want us to think about in relation to children in care as well. And they've got the child in care label or care experienced adult or whatever. But there's so much more. No. To these children to these young people than just that.

I think that's such a helpful. Sort of starting concept, isn't it? That it's not just a single story and that we're all more than just a single story? And and so do you think that's sort of one of the key concepts from your research that is sort of most important for sort of practitioners? To to sort of think about or do you think there are sort of other key concepts that sort of lead on from that, that it's important for practitioners to kind of hold on to when we're thinking about kind of the identity of children and young people?

Yes. So just just to you know, say a couple of sentences, a bit of background about the research a few years ago, I was given a lot of funding from the charity Penny Appeal and the Department for Education. And they asked us to do a piece of research around Muslim heritage, Muslim children in care. So forget about the heritage bit. You know, I was delighted to do the work. I I personally would have liked a wider. Label. If we stay with that term for now. But they said go and go and look at the journeys of Muslim children in care very quickly. I I realised that this, this Muslim label, you know, wasn't sufficient you. Know there were. And we were talking about texture. There were children who had. Muslim names and I can Muslim backgrounds and I can think about one of the stories I heard this was Mansoor and his siblings. They had come into care after their parents went from. You

know, being not very Muslim at all, you know, they drank alcohol, they had their drugs, they were quite anti social. So from that kind of behaviour, they went to becoming, you know, really super devout Muslims. And then they forgave me. These are generalisations, but this is how you know, takes it easier to to talk about these complexities, and suddenly these parents were their parents were praying more than five times. They suddenly they went from not very modest clothing to, like, super modest clothing. And the children struggled. They couldn't cope with this newfound practise of their parents. They often faced corporal punishment because they didn't conform to their parents beliefs and social workers had to take them into care after working with the family for almost six months with these children, when they came into care, they wanted nothing. To do with. Islam, they were so damaged by what they had encountered in their biological. They wanted nothing to do with faith. They demanded things like beer and and ham because that was how they thought they could reject their. Like, but they had Muslim names and and you know. So we what we mustn't do is make assumptions I have encountered, you know, other children and young people for whom faith has been the front all and be all of their identity, you know. You know, the upheavals that coming into care. You know that that are part of coming into care. But in in all of those uploaders in that you're living out of a suitcase kind of mode, not having biological family. Your children have told me how they have found solace from their faith, where they have drawn courage and resilience from their faith. So it. Comes you know the the the picture is quite complicated. Other children who have struggled to settle down been branded. All sorts of, you know, negative things, including troublemakers, badly behaved, have settled down and they have moved into a foster carer who had either a shared faith or a shared. Ethnic identities.

So.

In thinking about, you know identity and in working with professionals, so these might be social workers, decision makers, policy makers and also in working with carers, whether they are foster carers, they're doctors, there are others, we've. You know, rather than. You know, rather than go and and look at the child as somebody who fits into a category, what the whole thrust of my work is in. Instead to say that you will go and ask the child, be curious about what matters to them, what is their authentic self? Or is it that their gender matters more to them? Or is it that their faith matters? Or is it that their ethnicity matters? Ask the child you know. Ask the child. And then any care plans, any decisions need to be. Need to foster that, that child's sense of self. Sometimes it this is, you know, brilliant for the child and sometimes as responsible adults, you foster a child's identity. You know, for example, Mansour, who was rejecting his faith. You support the child in this moment. That is what they need, support them, but also perhaps leave bread crumbs in life, story, work, etcetera, so that they can find. Who they were. If they're ever so. You know valet.

Because I noticed at the beginning when you talked about Muslim heritage children and then you said Ohh, but actually the research, uh, what I was asked to do was work with Muslim children. But I know that you prefer the term Muslim heritage children. Don't you want to just talk a little bit about that? Because I think that makes an interesting point.

Yes, but I was hoping thanks for asking me that question. And so, absolutely when we started. The work you know the the funding, the you know, the the scope. About Muslim children, but as soon as we started doing the work, as soon as we started talking to people who cared for, quote unquote Muslim children, we realised that there was so much more texture, you know. Children's Muslim.

Is.

Is is predicated on the kind of environments that they have had prior to coming into care. I spoke to a young woman, she she was in care since the age of 11, and she spoke to me about, you know, when when she was with her biological family. Everything she did was from the lens of her faith, even the song she sang the Fate Day songs. And and to her, at least early on in care, all of her identity was determined by her faith. But but this same child, and she she spoke to me, you know, when she was about 13, she managed to organise a trip. To the the the pilgrimage city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, she says. There I held the Kaaba, which is the little black box that is. That you know you see in images of Mecca that Muslims believe that Adam laid the foundations, Abraham built it. So there's there's a long, you know, theological significance. But she held it and she wept tears of joy. She was so spiritually moved. Right. So that was this young woman's reality. When she, you know, right through to the age of 13. Now I interviewed her when she was about 15. And and, she said. Can I say something to you? I'm like, yeah. Is your work about Muslim children? And I'm like, not really. No, I'm talking about Minoritized children of the different ethnic backgrounds, different religious backgrounds or men. And she said, OK, that's fine then because I'm no longer religious. The whole Muslim heritage thing is about capturing this, this complexity that you know identity moves, you know, peaks and troughs, different points on the board. But you know, whatever metaphor you want to. Use. Your religiosity is also determined by. You know your ethnicity. So a black, a black Christians experience of worship is very different from a white Church of England. Anglican Christians experience of worship, whereas 1 is is formal, is structured. You know the other. Experience of the same sort of worship, the same faith. It is much more musical. There's a lot more. Movement and dancing and whatever and and so the whole focus on heritage is to say, look, religious identity, ethnic identity could be a point on a continuum. Rather than a set idea, let me give you an another example. So another young woman I spoke to black woman. She'd been adopted since birth by a white family, and she says all my life I thought of myself as white.

My skin was darker than my parents, but I thought of myself as right. That was who I was and she never thought, you know, years later, she encountered black culture as an adult, as a young adult, she'd gone for a walk due to Hackney and encountered her version of black culture there. And it completely threw her. She couldn't make sense of who she was anymore. She was briefly estranged from her adoptive family. It's all hunky Dory. No and and and and that's where my Muslim heritage. You know, my preference for the term Muslim heritage over Muslim comes from points on the continuum in terms of religiosity, deeply religious to not very religious at all. There could be ethnic variations where even the food we eat, we might have two Muslims. In Indonesia, say and of of Indian heritage and the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the language they speak is going to be very different. But they're both Muslim and using the term heritage, we feel just allows for that. Place saying that though, and recently this it it. It has also occurred to me and this is through work with dial frontline social workers. While the term Muslim heritage. Is good for planning thinking. Writing up reports and whatnot, but when you are working with children, when you're talking to them again, find out from them. What and how they would like to be described, so they might not like Muslim heritage because they've never encountered the term. So yeah, it's about curiosity.

That phrase it allows for space because then within that space you can have the curiosity, but if you don't allow for the space, then you're gonna go straight to a much more sort of fixed understanding, aren't you? That my fixed understanding of what it means to be a Muslim is XY and Z and it doesn't allow you to step back and have that. Curious space to kind of explore. Or what does it mean? For that child or young person.

Yeah.

And and I think that possibly and this might be going a bit off topic, but kind of relates as well to the to the distinction between kind of cultural competence and cultural humility, because cultural competence might suggest I have some knowledge about the Muslim faith and therefore this child is Muslim. And therefore XY and Z. Whereas actually if you come from a kind of. Place of cultural humility. You're much more allowing that space, aren't you? And sort of learning from the child or the young person about about what that culture or ethnicity or religion means to them.

Well, I think you're absolutely right. I'm so you know, me and my colleagues Allison Copal, Manusha Anand, Alison Halford, we've been delivering training workshops to social workers in, you know, across the country. We started with workshops on Muslim heritage, children in care. Now it's sort of widened. We've had, you know, funding from the Nuffield Foundation to talk to children about identity. We we spoke to Black and South Asian children, so it's, you know, it's widened. It's no longer just about Muslim children, but in

doing these workshops, you know, you're often asked, so, you know, what is can you do something about Islam or can you do something about blackness or whiteness or whatever it is? And we always say. We're gonna tell you lots of things. We're gonna talk. We're gonna have conversations, but we're not going to tell you what Islam is because there is no one meaning of it. We're not going to tell you what blackness is because. You know. It could. Blackness could mean something completely different. To you know, to it would be completely different for somebody who is a black African heritage, black Caribbean, the heritage that are completely different migration patterns, histories, trajectories, which have an enduring impact on class and you know where these communities are in the UK today. Blackness could mean something, you know, if somebody has. A first generation migrant. Their idea of blackness is going to be very different from somebody who is 3rd, 4th generation who's who lived their life here, who are as British as can be. And and so practising humility. You know, it's yes, do, by all means, equip yourself, by all means, go and read and find out, you know, equip yourself with the basic narrative and not I was going to say facts. But I said basic narrative around these labs. That humility is what is key here, because every single person you speak to every single family you're going to be working with is going to have their own perspective on things their own way of doing things. And you know, the one with social workers I often say going to make your job harder because. We're not going to be able to give you answers. Instead, we're going to go and say go and seek them out for yourself. But what ends up happening in these workshops is also that the people who we, you know, the social workers have attended are. They feel a bit more empowered than I think. When it comes to questions of identity, particularly minoritized identity. And with the workforce being largely right, there are concerns. Am I going to offend by asking a particular question? Am I going to? Be politically incorrect? Am I going to inadvertently be a little racist and we say our answer to that is your cultural humility is fabulous and and it empowers you to ask the questions that you need asking because finding a family, assessing the needs for a black child or a Muslim. Child is no different from assessing the needs of a white child. Then you have got to ask the questions that you've got to ask full stop. But when it comes to a black child or a Muslim child, just be prepared that some of the answers you get in return. Might surprise you might flummox you and then you know, get those. Take those answers and judge them their own right. And I'm wondering whether I should give you a little story here. Let me give you a. Quick story and so. A social worker told us she was assessing this Muslim couple they wanted to adopt. They were in their mid 30s and she said I asked them about. Where? Where have you lived? You know, you at rest and you know with whom have you lived. So sort of a little map of that which is standard in adoption assessments. And she says. They said that both of them separately, they lived with their respective parents till such time as they got married, which was around the age of 28. And then they'd lived together and she said she was a bit thrown

by that. Were they hiding facts? You know. They can't have. Lived with their parents till the age of 20. Right. And she was quite from, you know, she was concerned. Are they hiding facts? What's happening here? And I often pose this as a case study when I'm doing training programmes and the answers we get are amazing. You know, so a South Asian heritage social worker told us maybe she needs to stop thinking about relationships and. You live from a Eurocentric lens. You know, lots of South Asian families. There's no sex before marriage, no relationships. So you live with your parents. That's a done thing. And then you live with your spouse. You move in together. Sometimes your spouse. If especially if you're a boy, you might continue living with your family and your spouse moves into, you know, the, the, the. And you have a big joint home with mother, with three or four generations living together. That still does happen. I've seen massive homes that have outskirts of the city. They've got 3 generations of Big South Asian families. So that was one answer. The other answer. Some other social workers have said to me will be that they they didn't relationships before their marriage, but they don't feel comfortable talking about it in front of their spouse because that's not a socially appropriate thing to do. And in that case, it may well be that the woman because, you know, women's choices. Across all cultures are chosen are scrutinised a lot more.

Oh.

It may be harder for the woman and it's about creating perhaps separate spaces, individual spaces where they can be more transparent, so I don't know where we started with this one. But yes, cultural humility is recognising that your own lens, your own world view, is, you know, first of all, knowing what your own worldview is. Recognising your own identity, recognising your own position on social hierarchies, are you an authoritative social worker with power assessing a couple here for whatever you know, where do you stand? What authority do you have? What power do you have or not have? And they're also realising that your own worldview is not the only world view and being curious, but everybody else's ways of doing things.

And that, in a way, does make me think then about foster carers and the doctors and kinship carers who are caring for children and, you know, obviously. The. Well, not, you know, we try and, you know, match children, so they might be being brought up in, you know, similarly or similar culture or religion. But like you say because because of the textures then obviously what what does that, you know, what does matching mean because you've got so many layers and textures and. And so when I think about hairs. And as you were saying, you know, this sort of fear of social workers have it as well. You know, that fear of sort of getting it wrong and saying the wrong. Saying what would be your advice to, you know, to carers and therefore also to social workers, to support carers, to kind of to

enable those conversations about, you know, identity and what that means to children, to kind of continue because it's not also just a one stop conversation, is it? It's not just old tick. I've done that. What advice would you give to kind of carers to to yeah, so that they don't worry about getting it wrong, just to kind of keep the conversation going.

Let me start with a story on this one. So I interviewed a young black woman. I'm going to call her Rose. That's not a real name when she spoke about being in care for a long time, she spoke about being in homes that completely matched well on paper, matched her ethnic and religious needs. So she speaks. She spoke to me. She was black herself, and she spoke about being in a black Muslim home. And she says I was despite having come from a Christian background. I wasn't religious myself. But when I saw the discipline, that and the love that this Muslim family had in, you know, in their home because of their faith, was quite impressed. And I started thinking about faith. This family never imposed. Their faith on her that that she has and and she has. This fond memories of them because of that, but she also garnered respect for the office. She then got moved on, as is often happens, multiple homes after. Sometimes she found herself in the merged. Christian home and here, she says. It was amazing because they got as a black family. They understood her hair, care, her skin care. And and she she began to settle down quite nicely. There she was quite fond of them. They were a religious home as well. And she says I started becoming. I started practising my Christianity. And that that practise has stayed with her ever since. But there were key differences that she says, even despite their ethnic religions, we were a match. But there were differences in cuisine, etcetera. But we could cope with that. It's time to get moved up here to move on again. And she she spoke about it. But during her journey she was often described as an angry young black girl. Whenever she asked for support with her hair and skin needs her needs. Skin needs anything to do. Racism in school? No. Why? She was telling me all of these stories. They also decided to say, you know, the one home that I was happiest. And she says it was only a short term placement was with her wife. Single female force together, she said. We had almost nothing in common. I came from a big, huge family. I was black. I was Christian. This woman was on her own. But she says she really got to me. And I said, why did she really get to? She says the first day of my placement when she sat me down and she said. You have read through your forms and the records and I know a lot about you rules, but please can you tell me about yourself please? Can you? Me who you are and what you like. And you know what kind of food you do. You you know you enjoy. And what are your hobbies? Tell me about who you are. And and loses, despite being in care and having spoken to so many young people, so many careers and so professionals, nobody ever asked her that weirdly. And she was moved. And she was able to answer and she said we had a long conversation and that conversation sort of became the foundation for her time in that foster carers.

Home and the other thing that happened with this foster care was, you know, they'd have conversations and a few days later, the foster carer said sat her down and said, look, I've seen you've you've got this label of somebody who runs away, a runner away and and that often happens to to children in care and. And then they're in multiple cases where Rose had run away. Whatever reason police called in, she had the label. And she says, look, wherever you are, whatever time it is, whatever you have done. You know, don't be afraid to give me a call. Just tell me they and I'll come. I'll get you. We'll have a chat and that. That, that. That the ability that this foster carer had to help rose talk to give rose the confidence that whatever their circumstances are, I'm here to talk to you. That. Stayed with her. She's now no longer in care. She's really successful young women, among other things. She also works to improve the the social care system. But she said, I remember that was together because she empowered in different ways. So coming back to your question then, and it is about.

You know.

You cannot be expected as a foster carer or as a social worker to understand all the different identities that we have in Britain to, you know, today we are a super diverse society. Stuart Hall, whom I quoted earlier, he said that. In the 60s, you know, ages ago in the 60s. Now we are even more diverse and complicated and nuanced and textured, so you can't really know everything but what you can do is be curious and humble and ask the questions, even if it's a young child, they will have an opinion.

That's really helpful. Really helpful. Thank you. And I guess it it sort of leads on naturally, cause you've just mentioned you know the thinking sort of more broadly about British society and the diversity within our society and and when you kind of think sort of recently obviously it's you know it's September 24 and it's not been long since obviously we've all seen the kind of you know the the. The racism and the violence, you know, that kind of went on. What have you sort of seen an impact on sort of children and young people have kind of witnessing that sort of violence and that racism, you know, do you have any advice as well, maybe for foster carers or doctors or kinship carers who are caring for children, for minoritized groups, who may be, you know, witnessed that? And sort of it. It's impacted them. What are your thoughts about? That you know those.

Those riots there, when they occurred, they were particularly focused on. You know, Muslim communities, Muslim women had stuff through all the thrown at them and all of that. And I and my husband had a little chat with me because I'm, I I walk, I walk at all sorts of weird hours. I love walking. And he said, you know, darling, few days don't walk out in the dark and. And so there were, I know communities. Not just Muslim black communities. South Asian communities who are not all Muslim. Everybody felt a little. Insecure there.

There are people saying that since the 70s and the 80s, you know, old timers, grandparents saying we've never felt like this. We thought all of this was, you know, long lost history now, but. I think there are a few things to bear in mind and a few things that can be said to reassure children and young people.

Oh.

You don't. If you think about the British Empire, it was super diapers. That was what, 200 years ago now. Well, OK, the 50 years ago. But but the empire existed for much longer. And what we see in Britain today is, is is a distillation of all of that diversity and greatness. And so. People who are not white, people who are not, we are still in many ways as British as can be and talking to children and young people about the black and proud soldiers who fought in World War One and World War 2 and whose graves are still part of, you know, you can can be seen in, in, in, in various military. And other cemeteries across the world so. There is a responsibility, I think, that carers have. But also educators to talk about this shared heritage, this shared history, the British Empire and and Britain today is not one story. It is complicated. Many very many stories. So that is that is one thing I like to talk about. The second thing I think local authorities. Governments, the media, everybody was. Act, you know, everybody acted decisively. You know, the riots stopped. Yes, because of government action and police action. But they also stopped because ordinary people like you and me came out in the streets and said this is not us. And again telling that, you know, telling children and young people who are. Probably going to feel. You know, even more insecure because they don't have that biological, you know, back dressing around them, but reassuring them about their place in this society. If you're in an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, you're going to feel even, you know, just just reassuring them that this was a fringe, this was. A minority voice that was dealt with decisively and that the majority voice came out and said, you know, there's not in our name. And I think the last thing I will say this is where I get a little unpopular. The people who were rioting, right and and you know, we we must not paint them. Solely through negative lens, I do not. You know, often they are portrayed as racists and ohh right, they're racists are the baddies. Let them go. But actually these are ordinary working class people who have been denied opportunity, whether it's employment, whether it's education, who are often, you know, relegated to the darker side of town. Whatever that is by successive. Since. And. And I think. When we are talking to children and young people, we need to also remind them that these are not all baddies. They're people who are frustrated by consistent lack of access to resource and and people have come and have. Somehow mobilise them, perhaps around the wrong label and and perhaps even thinking about all our you know what we've been talking about over these last few minutes about texture and labels. These these you know, so these are people who have been denied resources and we I think the government has a

role to play. Researchers have a role to play in listening to their concerns. That have perhaps manifest to themselves as racist during those rights, but which in some cases are real. You know, they're genuine concerns. How can we have? More equitable sharing of resources I I sometimes get really eyebrows when I say this, but I think in talking to children and young people we need to try and give them as much information as we possibly can so that they they can make up their minds.

I could talk to you all afternoon I feel, but we will probably have to draw this to a close shortly so. So before we do, though, are there any other sort of key messages or key concepts that you think from your research or from your stories of you know, the stories that that you've heard from children and young people that you think it's important that both practitioners and carers kind of hear from you?

We have been doing this work for a few years. Now and and. The most recent research project, funded by the Field Foundation, called Expressions of Self. We spoke to about 30 children and young people. And you know, you do your whole academic thing and your analysis and whatnot. And we came up with a concept called influx identity. Now we call it influx identity because a, you know, as you know, it's what it says this time on the label. Identity is constantly changing in flux. It changes in relation to intersectionality, so the layers in. Since identities you know their faith, their sexuality, their gender, your young men, for example, would have a different experience of religion than young women. So thinking about layers, the second aspect of our influx identities is this. This whole idea of. Who is who is around the child's peer group? Social workers asking the questions. They're all going to impact on a child's identity so that it's oscillating. You might be Muslim in some context you might be. Black in another context, you know a young black woman told us how she uses she caught switches. That was her phrase. So she says when I'm at work, I speak posh English. When I'm with my grandmother, you wouldn't be able to recognise my voice because it's a completely different tone. So that oscillation is really key in thinking about identity. The last part of influx identity is is child determined identities. So what does the child want to be known as? And we've had children who have said, you know, a young lesbian woman said to us. But actually my lesbian is doesn't matter my faith. Matters to me, so I want to be known as a Christian woman. My blackness doesn't matter to me either, because I'm an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, have come here from a country in Africa. I won't say which one, and there we were all black, so I don't really think about my blackness. You're another young South Asian woman who had. A really dark. Skin tone. So she was. Considered black by her peers, she lives in a transracial placement. She was adopted by a white family, and she was the only white person in her town, and she says, I asked her, what is your identity? And she's an identity is family because that allowed her her space to capture all these dissonances and convergences. And then the the

children were young people who said I don't want to be known by an ethnic label or a religious label. I don't want to be known as somebody care experience. I want to be known for my potential. I'm going to be the world's. That I'm going to be the next best selling author. I'm going to be an artist, namely for that. So I think to close, I think influx identity, thinking about it through these layers. And and creating spaces where children where you can help children determine who they want to be, but also help children recognise that they can be one thing today and something else tomorrow. And that's fine. You're in a biological context. That would happen naturally because you know in a family. Everybody. It. You know, usually gets these ups and downs and everybody can cope, but for a child in care, the identity is so much more in focus than any. We've got all our professional guidelines and what not, and we try to conform to those guidelines. But what we often forget is the child needs space. You know, Alina, the young woman who went to Mecca, whom I told you about. She rejected her faith and she still isn't very Muslim. I happened to, you know, in a in an interview context, meet her foster carer and and the foster carer said to me, Alina was contemplating suicide because of some things that had happened. But she didn't, and she was coming back to live with this foster carer now. Which everybody was very pleased about. And she said they asked her, you know, why what happened? You know, Alina, why were you? And Alina told her everything. And she said, you know, it's contemplating suicide. But the one thing that helped me back is that I know my faith, Islam or my previous faith. Islam said suicide is a bad thing. And and that held her prevented her from committing suicide now. Is it a good thing that faith prescribes something? Sometimes? You know, that's debatable. Is it a good thing that Alina is alive? Yes. So the thinking about all of this, she isn't Muslim anymore. But she remembers that. I asked Selena, what would you like to tell social workers you're going to train everybody and do these podcasts with brilliant people like Ann Horn from core and back. What do you want me to say? And all she said is tell them people like me. I I still do not know who I am. I am 16. I'm finding out who I am. Maybe the space to do so?

I think that is such a powerful place to end on and on Alina's words because they are so powerful. I mean, they're literally giving me goosebumps. So I think that is, yeah, that's the that's the place to to pause isn't there. I think if, like I said, I could talk to you for hours and I'm sure others listening now want to know more about, you know what you've written and your research. Where are the best places that people can go to to find more about your work?

On the Coventry University website, there are. Pages about the project, so if you. Google expressions of self various links will will come up. We have also worked with research and practise to provide to you know, to create a whole host of Open Access resources. You know frontline briefing kits. So all of that's available on their website. It's

better. If you Google, if you put expressions of self onto YouTube, you will find a little animation we created as.

Well, thank you so much for talking to us today. Saria, it's been a really insightful conversation and I can't thank you enough. And like I said, I could have talked to you all afternoon, but we probably both need to pause and. Well, so for anybody listening, do remember to take a look at Coinbase's website For more information about our members week and any further information around listening to the child, about their identity and and more. And and yeah, just thank you again so.

Absolute pleasure and we were fabulous to take care. Thank you.

Thank you for listening to this episode of calling back conversations you'd like to know more or listen to earlier episodes. Visit colinbaff.org.uk.