

## Interview with Milton Nokes

Renee: 0:01

Alright, for the record, please state your name and how you define your religion or path.

Milton: 0:09

Milton Nokes, I'm an eclectic Pagan. Wiccan would be a good way to define it. American Witch would be another way to define.

Renee: 0:24

And are you generally okay with the term Witch?

Milton:

Yes

Renee:

How do you see the relationship of your beliefs with witchcraft and magic?

Milton: 0:37

That's transformed over the years. For me, I was brought into Paganism, through something called the Midwest Men's Festival, which is a big event that's held every July in Kansas. And I was agnostic or atheist at that point. And then, during this event they held two large rituals, and I was really questioning at this time. But the one that was most significant to me is they held what was called a full moon ritual. And we went out to the pond, and we were, basically most of us were undressed, and we engaged in a ritual. And I was amazed at that time at the transformative power of just being with different men who were celebrating... a type of spirituality that I had never been exposed to in my entire life. And I walked away from that feeling very empowered, but still questioning just as to what that meant, because they were talking about magic, and the experience was magical in the colloquial sense, but like, nothing magical happened to me. And it was transformative. So I'm still struggling with what people mean by the term magic, or what the time, what they mean, by spell casting.

Milton: 2:04

I know when I engage in ritual, that is a transformative, uplifting experience for me. And it can be cathartic to because some of the rituals I've been in, have dealt with grieving and loss. So it's certainly important to me to connect, and that up to that point, I wasn't connecting with anything. And then during that particular event, it's kind of funny, but they had something which was almost totally make believe, they had something called the queer god ritual. So we went up to this place called sunset ridge or sunrise ridge, I don't remember exactly, and they took us through a guided imagery and stuff. And then after that, people started dancing, and drumming and the facilitator priest, if you want to be. And then again, I was with a group of men who were transformed by that experience. And there's an uplifting, it's the middle of the night, and we must have been up for hours just dancing and doing rituals and doing the ritual and just not

even really communicating in the traditional sense, just being in the presence of other people who were celebrating their spirituality and their sexuality. And, and it was amazing, and I connected with that. And then that started, that was like in 1992. And it started my path. Definitely, into what is commonly called Witchcraft. And people have all sorts of misconceptions about what Witchcraft is. But for me, I certainly bought into... that I can be who I want to be, I can celebrate the seasons, I can find a power outside of myself, and in ways that can heal me that I never expected. I mean it really transformed me, and helped me deal with fundamental issues. And I don't really consider myself reaching out to any deity to something greater than myself. And it's ultimately helped me a lot with other parts of my lives.

Renee: 4:15

How would you describe your general beliefs? What is the defining characteristic for you?

Milton: 4:21

The defining characteristic for me, in my current way of believing, is that I make sure that I pay attention to the eight major sabbats; that I pay attention to the concept of the wheel turning, and that I least once every couple of months, take time and just be present during one of those sabbats to realize that life is changing and growing and things are happening. And for me, those are the defining moments in my life, is to be connected to those moments in time. I'm also not so good outside of that. I mean, people have a whole sorts about recycling, and eating vegan and saving the planet. I'm not that, I'm not that Pagan. But I am about realizing that we live on a planet, and that planet has finite resources, I need to tap into that. And if I don't take time to pause and listen to what's happening, then the time just flies, I lose all continuity. I mean, I can go on and look back in 10 years, I won't even... But since I've been doing this, I take those eight moments, those eight seasons, and listen to where I'm at in my life. And each one has a corresponding meaning to me, but we'll probably get into that later..

Renee: 5:45

All right. Are there particular gods or goddesses you worship?

Milton: 5:50

Not in particular. I, right now, I'm currently practicing with groups who like to have deities involved. But mine is more fluid than that, I think. It's it's about reaching out. I don't want to sound like Star Trek or something, or Star Wars, but I want to reach out to a life force around me. And I think there's there's constructive things about that energy, destructive things. And either one of those can be used in a manner that can be helpful. But... so during a traditional ritual, there's usually like a god or goddess evoked, but I do that more out of respect or convenience for the participants, than for my own personal belief.

Renee: 6:39

Is there a name to this energy, something bigger source that you can call upon? Or is it just present?

Milton: 6:48

I mean, the traditional term that I would, I mean, that has been used a lot, and people misunderstand it, is karma. Karma is not just the rule of reciprocity. Karma is the rule of awesome. Well, there's whole stuff about karma, but there's a rule of hospitality, there's the belief in responsibility, there's the... So karma would be like one. But when I say that again, people tend to want to go to the colloquial meaning of that word, all they think about is the... lots of people believe it's reciprocity, and karma is so much greater than that. And so there's really no term that really fits. I don't want to steal from any particular belief system, that's not appropriate, but the closest that comes to that other than karma is the Great Spirit. But I don't want to appropriate that because I'm not Native Americans. But that's certainly framed how I think. If you actually talk about the Medicine Wheel, being in the Red Road Recovery, and then be... I've done Native American sweats, and invoking, or asking the Great Spirit to be present. And what's different about that it's not a living being per se. It's there to help guide you to draw upon its strength and sometimes to teach you lessons if you need be. But it's it's very similar to karma in that it's not there to hurt you at all or harm you it's just there to provide a framework on which to live one's life.

Renee: 8:49

And do you believe in, and seek assistance from other supernatural beings?

Milton: 8:57

If I was to seek assistance of power from anything it would be the elemental energies. And there's different cultures with that, but I basically latch onto air, fire, water, and earth. And I do pull energy and power from them, too. And I even combine those at different times. So for people, what I would say is I latch onto the elemental forces of life.

Renee: 9:31

And what are your beliefs about the afterlife?

Milton: 9:35

I go back and forth on this a lot. So my current belief right now is if I die, I die. There's no afterlife at this point. I don't, I truly don't believe in that. Ask me on another day, it might be might be different. But my firm belief is that we, this is the fundamental principle of why I practice the practice, that we need to use that limited time we have here on Earth, to be a positive force, and to connect with other people, and to grow the collective conscience in a positive way. So we can evolve as a race and hopefully become better than we are today. And the only thing that is left of me is what I have contributed to that collective conscience. And I do live my lives, and the jobs I have selected, almost my entire life has been trying to add to that, what your conscience or that way of improving humanity. And I've spent a lot of time professionally, volunteering, through advocacy, to create that. And it's, it's one of those pillars of my spirituality is that we need to leave this place better than we've left it.

Milton: 11:01

We need to, humanity needs to grow, and change, and adapt all avoiding to destroy ourselves. We're in that crisis right now. I know there's chaos, magic, and out of chaos, good things can happen. But it feels like we're just in this place of chaos. And we need an organizing force to come in and to bring some harmony. And if we don't do that, we're going to rip ourselves apart. And my spirituality or what my practices and what I do with like even through Pagans in the Park, is to bring some organization to our chaos so that we can be better people.

Renee: 11:46

And do you consider your beliefs to be a religion or more of a spiritual practice?

Milton: 11:50

It's definitely a spiritual practice. I when I think of religion, I think of very orthodox biblical texts that are written, and my spirituality does not fit in that box at all does not, it's not a religion at all. There's one of the things I talked to people about, there's religion and their spirituality. Religion is about rules, and structure, and orthodoxy, and dogma . Spirituality is about that moral compass, it's about becoming better than you are, connecting with people in a positive way. And even though religion may add that structure, spirituality is ultimately that action, that how you're going to interact with people, how you're going to leave the place. And when people use religion, they get caught in this box, and they distort that. I mean, we're in a crisis right now, in this nation, of how we're going to handle immigrants. And the way we're doing that is by holding them in detention camps. And some people who practice Christianity are distorting that text to say, "Oh, this is okay." And I'm familiar enough with the Christian doctrine and said, This isn't ever what what the Bible intended, especially in the New Testament. You've got, people are going to have to step outside of that orthodoxy, they're going to have to go back to their roots, they're going to have to find that moral compass. And right now, I don't think religion is providing that for a lot of people. I think it's being used as a weapon to hurt. And I'm saddened by that. It's like they're using this dogma, and it can I could say, for Christianity for Muslims, even for, for Hindus who battle with, with Muslims in the streets of India. I mean, it's like, they got to figure this out. I mean, they've got... I mean, or we're not going to be around much longer. They got to stop. And, and that's religion, for me. It's like, even when you talk about the crusades, it's like, there's Muslim beliefs, the Christian beliefs, and there are these seven crusades, in which people were killing each other, because it couldn't get out of their religion their orthodoxy. And they, they would say that they're very spiritual people. And I'm going like, that doesn't ring does not ring the spirituality to me. Thats you trying to protect a belief that's failed. And there is this, a there's a piece of psychology where the more energy you put into something, the harder it is to change your belief system. So it's like, if you have Christianity as or any religion as a, as a framework to work, and you put all this energy into it, and you and someone comes up to you and say, "I don't think this isn't working." Once people are embedded in that it's very hard. So the more energy you put into something, the harder it is to change people's beliefs. Spirituality, I think it's more fluid and flexible. But like I could say, Well, today, I don't believe in an afterlife. And tomorrow, maybe I do. That's spirituality.

Renee: 15:16

So for you spirituality is more like a practice than a belief?

Unknown 15:21

Action

Renee:

Action, yeah.

Milton:

Yeah.

Renee: 15:24

Do you think it's important for people to recognize Paganism as a religion in order to get like government recognition, and...?

Milton: 15:35

I think that there's been a lot of real positive work with getting especially soldiers, the military to recognize that people are practicing Paganism. But if you went to those very soldiers, they would each have a very different belief about what it was. But yes, because in then there are the ways in which they want their bodies to be interred. They can put symbols on the... they can put symbols now on the headstones. They can actually file, if you want to be a conscientious objector, you can actually go, "I'm practicing this form of Paganism. And due to my beliefs, I can harm no one." A Pagan didn't used to have that, availability. I mean, because nobody recognized but now I can literally talk to somebody, teach them how to write a conscientious objector form and say, "I'm a practicing Pagan." And that, I don't know the Supreme Court but the Supreme Court's decisions recently, recognizing that this has to be held has to be recognized by the military, is important. Or even goes into, such as a lot of Pagans get hand fasted, rather than traditionally married. So then that leads to recognizing our marriage benefits. Yeah. And so if you want to play semantics, whether spirituality or religion, again, that structure that orthodoxy allows other people to wrap their mind around something else. But, and it does, it does provide a framework for people to get benefits, to be recognized, to gain some strength, but it's a double edged sword. I do believe that if... I've been involved or been near or associated with some people who were practicing, and they became very rigid in their beliefs. And like the Dianistic cults, for example, nothing wrong with it, but some go to extremes to where men are excluded. When you get to that. When you get to that extreme again, you become a religion, you become dogma, and you start hurting yourself when you start excluding people like that.

Renee: 18:06

How active would you say you are, in terms of religious/spiritual practice?

Milton: 18:13

Not very much, I guess. My biggest thing is, in the last year, for a lot of personal reasons, I

reawakened something that was here in Topeka and that have existed for a long period of time and and for whatever reason, it kept falling apart. And it's called Pagans in the Park. It's kind of gone under Sophia's Garden, it's gone over the Lavender Circle, it's kind of taken different form throughout, throughout the years. And I'm, I've been a mainstay in getting that group of people, for those people who are interested, and to celebrate, you know, at least the equinoxes and the solstices. And so about once a month, I put a lot of energy into into it, and then it goes away for a couple of months. So I'm not that active, I'm not as active as other people would be. But I kind of have become one of the two or three people who have become the faces of Pagans in the Park. So and that's been really successful. I, a long time ago, stopped going to Midwest Men's Festival for a lot of reasons, I kind of fell out of that group. And then the, I'll say the group that I was practicing with most, which was the Web of Oz, the numbers kept dwindling. And I think again, they got caught up in their own orthodoxy. And they couldn't find new people. And I kept on making suggestions about, "well, if you do this", and they kept.... Basically as far as I was concerned I basically kept getting shot down. And finally I said, "I'm, for a lot of different reasons," and I'm not talking about all of them right here, but I said, "I'm going to... this group's dying, and I'm wanting to try to reawaken." And this is a process by Pagans in the Park and so far knock on wood, wish us well, cast great spells, we will be very successful at doing that. But there's no guarantee. Pagans are kind of their own people. They're interested in something for one minute, and then they're, they're interested in something else. So right now, I think I'm a force for that, a positive force.

Renee: 20:49

How long have you been involved with Pagans in the Park?

Milton: 20:54

In its various form since 1992.

Renee:

92 wow

Milton:

But it's been like I said, it's been it's been Sophie's Garden, then Pagan Pride. It's been the Lavender Circle, it has been Pagans in the Park, we always go back to Pagans in the Park, I don't know. And if you look on Google or something like that, there's a lot of groups that are, that call themselves Pagans in the Park throughout the United States. And none of them are associated with each other that I that I that I know of. But it's, this thing though, that we kept going back. But it was like, once I came back from 1992, Midwest Men's Festival, I started looking for a way to bring that into my life. So I don't know, the first time we did Sophia's Garden, I know we have done two Pagan Prides. And then we used to do, I didn't use to do Bert used to do the Lavender Circle, out at Shawnee. So probably right around '92.

Renee: 22:03

And had the group been in existence before that?

Milton: 22:05

Yeah. Well, I was fairly young. So I don't know. I mean, I was in my 30s in there, I'm six. I was, I was I was probably 28, or something like that. I'm trying to figure out the math. So I don't know whether it existed or not, I mean, I got involved with I know Sophia's Garden was existed. And I know that, Bert owned the alchemy shop, and that he did this thing. And then I became aware of Pagan Pride. And so I mean, so the best of my knowledge, I got involved in 1992 so I mean....

Renee: 22:51

And how do you see your beliefs play out in your daily life?

Milton: 23:03

Ok I'll go here I guess. In 1992 I was using alcohol and drugs fairly regularly, and I was in a long term relationship. That relationship dissolved in about, right around 2000. And on December 6 2000, I got clean and sober. That's the last day that I used. So I went into the rooms of, I went into the rooms of 12 step programs. And they were talking about finding a higher path. And that for me to be clean and sober, I had to do blah, blah, blah. And I'm like, "I'm never gonna stays clean and sober. There's no way. I mean, I can't do this. I can't. This is way too much like religion, it's way too much like Christianity." They talk about finding a higher power or understanding. Wink wink, we're really telling you to be a Christian. And then and then it was like, I'd go to meetings and people would actually tell me that maybe I was in the wrong recovery program or whatever. And then they used to do the Lord's Prayer thing in one of my home groups, and I would literally walk out. And they decided, they literally decided, that they wanted me to stay at the end, so they started saying the Serenity Prayer. Took 10 years for them to change, but they changed. I've been clean and sober for a little while. And now they say that the reason they started saying the Serenity Prayer, rather than the Lord's Prayer, most of the time, it's because of me. And then I was just some place the other night, and something really tragic, had happened to somebody. And I spoke up about how things would work for me. And I'm trying to be very vague here, intentionally. And at the close of that I said, "my wish for you, here my spell for you, is I want you to have the best possible outcome. I don't know what that means for you or your family or any of that. But hear them, I am with you in this moment wish you had the best possible outcome." And then like three people after the meeting came up well two, actually two people came up to me, and I actually invited her today, she didn't show up. And said, "do you practice?" And I said yes, you can. This is my name, this is who I am. We have Pagans in the Park. This is somebody, This is Mrs. D, she knows who I am. She has my contact information. So it's been a while. For me, part of my recovery from alcohol and drugs has been finding a higher power by understanding that's not Christian by any stretch of the imagination. I've literally had people yell and scream at me at meetings. I'm not exaggerating. I mean, just rip into you, right in front of me and I'm going, "this is not what recovery is supposed to be about. No way."

Milton: 26:08

And, and through that, and being very me, I can be very assertive but very, almost, but in this sense, I just stand my ground. And, it's saved my life. I mean, it's, it's through every tragedy. And just because I got clean and sober doesn't mean life on life's terms. It didn't mean people didn't die, or unfortunate things happened in my life. But it gave me a resource to go back to. The groups that I practiced with were supportive. They understood my, to the best of their ability, my spirituality. And, I've celebrated births, deaths, weddings, hand fasting. And I've had people come up to me at times and say... A really good friend of mine actually says to me. "I know that this paganism is really interesting to you, it's a lot of fun. But you know, you're going to outgrow this." And I said, "I'm not. I mean, it's like, this is so incorporated into the who I am." I mean, we celebrate the seasons, my family of choice gets together, we feast together. When somebody dies, we get together and we celebrate their lives, and we release their spirit. When people get married. We celebrate, there's not a better word but when babies are born, we bless them, you know. We carry our traditions, mainly through an oral tradition but there are some ritual traditions. But we carry... This is why this interview is so important to me, because most of our traditions are oral we carry our traditions orally and if people don't share, they lose that. So having that community... I can't imagine outside some majorly fucked up Christian stuff, I've never experienced this level of commitment to a spiritual path. Like I said, I'm not the best Pagan, there's people out there eating vegan, and they're recycling every day. And I don't know. I did mine through social activism more than anything else. And my life is my job, everything I've ever done. It's just recently that I actually got a decent job. But I even have taken jobs due to my spiritual belief system saying, this is where I need to be, I don't know what's telling me this, this is the place I needed to be. And this is the place I will. and I have lived in poverty doing that, not as a conscious choice. But I mean, because of that, I made different choices in my life. And, and again, you know, there's this whole loss there with alcohol and drug use, and you know, maybe seeking false ways to connect. But everybody has their own path that this is so incorporated into who I am as a person. I mean, and by living my life the way I lived it, I dragged my family along, I mean, kicking and screaming. And they know my wishes when I pass. They know if I was to get married, how that would look at, you know, I've I've taken people who were really difficult situations and done particular rituals because they couldn't get out of the place that they were in, this ugly place they were in. And they came to me seeking something that other traditions weren't. So I can't answer it, I don't know how to answer that question. I guess I'm done.

Renee: 30:07

Are you a member of a coven?

Milton:

No I am not.

Renee: 30:14

And what do you see as the pros and cons of solitary worship?

Milton: 30:18



Well I'm not really practicing solitary. I've been practicing with Pagans in the Park, which isn't a coven,

Renee:

It's a group

Milton:

It's a group. It's a virtual group. I do spiritual practice. Of course, the pros of it are always I get to do things my way. And I can do my ritual anyway, I want to, and if I mess up, there's nobody around. And if I want to dance around naked, I can. you know. Or if I don't want to dress or if I don't want to do a formal ritual I can write something on a piece of paper and I can just burn it and put my wishes into the universe. So it's all about how, when you're solitary, how you want to do it, you know. And when you're starting to work with your group, oh my god. When you start to work with a group, there's a push me pull you. And people want to do this and this. And not right now, in the middle of that, and it's one of the reason I swore to god, I would never do what I'm doing. You pull people together. The cool thing is like, you get to watch people develop and learn their practice, and you get to support others, you get to know that you're not alone. There's also I think, there's something about adding the cumulative energy during a ritual. But I think I don't think it has to be black and white. Even if you were practicing this as a Christian, in your your daily life, you have individual rituals you do. Like my sister has a master's degree in Christian ministry. I know that she has prayers she says every morning, I know that she reads her daily devotions, I know that she does all these things. I do something very similar, but I don't call it Christianity, I call it something very different. But you get that private time, that moment with yourself to be reflective and meditative, and you're not at that moment really pay attention to the needs of other people. And it's kind of selfish, it's, it's about you. But so I think i'm not solitary, but I do have things I do by myself. I can go out to a creek, I could pick up a handful of stones. And so, I can put my intent wherever and I can cast that into running water. And that intent gets carried to wherever it needs to go. It's not fancy, I don't have to have 20 people around me. I just get to walk out to the creek and throw a bunch of...And nobody knows what I'm doing. So I think there's there's a lot of pros and cons. I love being involved in a group. It's a lot more work. It's a lot of work. I mean, just crazy an example. Just like we were gonna have this huge, we had this great plan having this cookout for Litha, and we're all going to cook our food. And then the floods and the water and whatever. We all knew that wasn't going to work. So at the last minute, we're trying to figure out, trying to get 20 people to put together how we're going to fix that. And everybody was going in ten different directions. And then finally I said "just bring food,, I don't care what it is just bring food." And that worked out but it was like, "we're gonna put pop tents up" and I was like "we're gonna have somebody standing out in the rain turning hamburgers first, no that's not gonna work." Just trying to problem solve can be a real issue when your with a group. But also on the other hand, you don't have that collective resources. You're trying to figure something out by yourself. You don't have somebody else there to kind of crowdsource, so so there's pros and cons to both of them.

Renee: 34:20

Were you raised in a particular religious tradition?

Milton: 34:23

Either Presbyterian or Methodist, we went back and forth. I don't know. But I was raised basically, as a Methodist. My family was, you know, we were like, show up on Sunday for Easter and Christmas, you know.

Renee: 34:41

Growing up, how aware were you in other faith traditions?

Milton: 34:46

You know, I really wasn't at all. But this is so corny. It's stupid. But maybe it will be fun in your paper. One time I was watching Star Trek, and there's a there's this episode about Apollo. And it's kind of a sad episode. And Apollo has to die basically and dissipate the universe. And I remember turn around and my sister going like, "well, what if I wanted to worship Apollo?" My sister has supported, her name is Gladys. She goes, "Well Milton you could worship Apollo if you wanted to. But people might think you're a little strange." And she gave me, from then on she gave me permission to do whatever I wanted to. People are just going to think you're a little odd. I love that.

Renee: 35:37

Today, how would you rate your knowledge of other religions? Have you studied much about world religions?

Milton: 35:43

No. I would say other than picking the normal college courses, and you know, reading the Bible, but outside of that no. I mean, no way would I consider myself anywhere near knowledgeable about other religions. I mean, I certainly take an interest and I read up on them. But I would say I'm, I know more than probably the average person, but I certainly know hundreds of people are far more knowledgeable about them than I ever will be. Because I won't put the energy into doing it.

Renee: 36:31

And after the Men's Festival, were there are other experiences, books or people that influenced you to really follow this path?

Milton: 36:40

Yeah, there was a woman, at my place of employment. I kind of, well, I guess you should say she was a future place of employment. Let's say that. But there was a woman who I never knew worked in a mental health center. And she started, she used to have these group meetings and I used to go. She wasn't a Wiccan, but she used to celebrate the Sabbath. Just like.... So I used to go over there. I'm not sure I should use her name which is fairly well known in Topeka so I'll just say it, it's Oma Lacey. She use to have this group that I used to go to on a fairly regular

basis. And then for a little while, I was traveling kind of like, I was going to Oklahoma basically. And I was in other places just to celebrate various sabbats and various traditions. But I'm not as well connected to the Pagan community as other people who I know go to all sorts of events throughout the year. But, you know, before all that, you know, there certainly was an awareness of something greater than myself. And one of my great moment, I won't go into all the details, but I was in the Grand Canyon, I was hiking, and I was with my partner at the time. And the difference between the two of us. We got caught in this virtual thunderstorm, basically a flash flood. I thought we were going to die. I mean, it was intense. So his solution to the problem was to set the tent up literally rolling boulders under the tent to hold the tent up, so it won't blow away. And I thought, you go ahead and do that. But we were in some place called Indian Gardens of the Grand Canyon, it's fairly well known. But there was a picnic table there. And I said... So I took all my clothes off down to my underwear. And I put them in a ball, I put them in the tent. I said "I'm just going to sit here and let this happen." And it was like trains flashing. It was the loudest thing, and it was echoing off the wall. And I just let go at that moment. This is the most amazing, total, incredible experience in my life. And I was just open to it. And then as fast as the storm came on, it went away. And then I went back into the tent to dry off or whatever and get dressed. There's something called moon flowers that bloom after a rainstorm, but their delicacies for deer and stuff. So literally I was sitting there in the tent getting dressed and this fawn and doe came up to the moon flowers which were literally blooming. They do this, they were literally blooming in front of me. And and they were and they were just picking the blooms off as they bust open. And I just sat there. And I knew from that moment that I would never never be in the traditional religious path ever again. And that's before 1992. We use to hike the Grand Canyon, ohh it doesn't matter, but a long time ago, But that was amazing, just had this incredible thunderstorm and then to just to sit there and let it happen, because there's nothing that I was going to do that is ever going to impact that.

Milton: 40:12

And then when I'm getting dressed, I had this... out this incredibly chaotic and very destructive, was to watch this flower, this big bush bloom. And my partner and I we just sat there, we didn't move. I could literally have reached out to touch them. I didn't even know then what these flowers were. I didn't even know that they bloom. We just set him up there. Or he did I should say. So I didn't even know, I thought that they were just so type of.... And that all sudden they bloom. So I asked people going like "what are these things?" And you see them even in people's yards. They're like weeds. But it was cool.

Renee: 40:58

Why do you think people are attracted to Paganism?

Milton: 41:02

They've been burned by traditional religious beliefs. I mean, I'm currently kind of focused on this, my social activism I guess. But when you know what your religious text says, and you're doing the direct opposite, that causes cognitive dissonance. People have to somehow in their head make sense out of that. And change comes from cognitive dissonance. When you see

something, and it's not congruent with your reality, you either confabulate or you change, or you do something. Or you end up making up a reality, and that's how you end up with a lot of mental illnesses. So I think that people are coming to terms with this cognitive dissonance. I mean, I'm very liberal, in my beliefs. I don't want to pick on anybody, but you have a president who says he's a Christian, who was having sex with a paid prostitute essentially, while his wife was in the hospital, with their baby. And religious leaders of our times are saying that he's the most spiritual person, and he's going to guide us to the spiritual utopia. And people are going like, "that's inconsistent." That's their cognitive dissonance, once again. It's like, "that doesn't make any sense to me." So I think people come seeking Paganism, because of cognitive dissonance. They see the way the world is, and then they see the religion that they're following, and it's not making sense to them. And I can tell you, not everybody sticks around in Paganism. And it draws from the fringes of society at times. It's becoming more mainstream, but you can get some pretty odd characters showing up at rituals. That's why you have people like me, called the Dragon, who kind of walk around and make sure that people... Because I've seen some pretty strange stuff. And people showed up, that otherwise should not have been there, for a lot of reasons. I'm not picking on anybody.

Renee: 43:22

Have you had to, kick people out of rituals?

Milton: 43:27

I can't remember kicking anyone out of a ritual. I'll just said there was a sex offender. You know, I just had to be very kind of clear that this wasn't a place for... I mean I didn't tell him this, but this isn't a place for predators. You're more than welcome to come and practice with us. But this isn't a place you're going to be allowed to pick up, your next victim. Because what I'm involved in right now is very family friendly. People bring their grandbabies and their children, and we got people who are pregnant. You know, I mean, I haven't ever personally had to kick anybody out of a ritual, but I've had to set some, like boundaries. It's like, even at Pagans in the Park, you know, I don't drink, so I set the ritual around no alcohol use, you know. I mean, it's like, we have rituals, and this is why the Lavender Circle dissipated. Bert was out at Shawnee Lake, and we had not rented the shelter house, we had rented the space outside. It's kind of strange, how they do that. And we're doing our thing. And these people came up to us and just start screaming at us, "how dare we interrupt their wedding." And we're going we're trying to be very calm and going "We've had this space rented. We're not trying to disrespect you." But you have to have somebody kind of, and I'm not always that person. That time it was Bert who was that person. Have to go up to people and go like, "We're not here to... we'll leave. I mean, we're not here to hurt you, or to disrespect you. If you're upset, we are sorry. And we will leave the space." And they're all the time cursing. Yeah, I mean, literally yelling at us, and we're going, we're all getting in our cars leaving and you're going like, but you had to have somebody there to say. And not everybody can, people get arrrr. You know, people want to get macho. I'm like no guys. "We will leave. We're okay with that." And then you know, that particular experience, I know that Bert after that stopped doing the Lavender Circle and a couple of other people won't come to public rituals anymore, unless they can be private. So that type of stuff, you know.

Milton 45:56

And then because Pagans is in the Park, and no, like somebody is currently practicing a branch of Voodoo, in Pagans in the Park. And then you have to play the teacher, you have to teach him what that means, because people think necromancing, That's part of the religion, but it's such a small part of that, even though it is a part of that. And so, yes, that type of stuff. We bring all these eclectic people who really don't even for themselves have a good idea of what they're doing. And then you have to say, "No, this is a safe space for everybody. But we need to honor everyone." And holding that, that space for people and making it safe, so everybody feels welcome. It can be challenging at times.

Renee: 46:51

How many people are involved in Pagans in the Park, and how many show up for rituals?

Milton: 46:57

Right now we got about a core 25. We've had up to I think 30 or 50. People come and go. There's about four or five of us, Jeannie and I really are the core as far as making sure things get ready, things get set up. But there's about two other people there that kind of add to that. And I've kind of started inviting people. Because like the first two rituals, I basically, Jeannie and I, not me personally, Jeannie and I kind of developed we put it together. And then I started reaching out, and starting to ask other people to take a more active role. And that's exactly what I want them to do. So that's growing, it's kind of limited right now. And some people like are inexperienced, and they just need some guiding. But we have probably solid, I'm gonna say, you can check with other people too, I'm gonna say we have 25, solid 25 to 30 people going to Pagans in the Park. And I don't, do a head count or anything. Basically how I count that is I rent the shelter house. And I ask for a \$2-3 donation. And then basically, I figured out, I get \$56 for the shelter house, that means 25 people showed up and tossed a few dollars in. And you know, that's how I kind of categorize it.

Renee: 48:30

And does Pagans in the Park do like educational programs or anything other than just hosting rituals?

Milton: 48:35

Just hosting rituals at this point. And I don't see us doing that in the future. Yeah.

Renee: 48:48

How much planning goes into each ritual?

Milton: 48:50

I don't know, we spend maybe 10 hours tops, if we spend that much. Probably about, and it's all online. I mean, we tend to get together for coffee, but it's no more than 10. But that doesn't. But I don't know what the people who are currently priestess or priests, how much of their individual

time that they're spending on it. And you'd have to ask each person, because that's individual to the person. Like I know, I'm spacing on her name right now, I know that she's going to be the High Priestess next time is going to be, she's gonna have 18 participants. And I'm one of them. So she's going to have to put a lot of energy into that. But it won't be me. I'm done, tell you the truth. I mean, I rented the shelter house. I paid the fees. The space is available. I'm going to be a participant. That didn't take me even two hours. I mean, so but the people who are actually going to be facilitating that, I don't know how much time they put into it.

Renee: 50:03

And how do you determine who leads each ritual?

Milton: 50:07

I just ask.

Renee:

So just volunteers, and then they take it upon themselves to write a ritual?

Milton:

Yep

Renee: 50:18

Do you guys create new spells and rituals? Or do you have traditional scripts you always use?

Milton: 50:23

Depends on who's leading. [unclear murmuring]

Renee: 50:36

Do you have a favorite ritual or sabbat?

Milton: 50:40

Mine. Okay, I have a ritual that I do that's for my own personal space. And I haven't really taken it into public area. But yeah, there's one ritual that I do. And my favorites would be Mabon, and, and the summer solstice are my favorite. I like Halloween, but at least in Midwestern Kansas, a lot of that has got to be pretty heavy. It has to do with a lot of grieving and loss and honoring the ancestors. And I love those rituals. And I always walk away feeling fulfilled, but they're sad. And then Yule has too much of a Christmassy feel to it. But like, the summer solstice and Mabon are really detached from any traditional... Like even Lughnassad or Lammas as the Christians say, is the Mass of the First Loaf. Where in Ireland and England they actually celebrate The actually pretty small loaf of the bread as John of the Cross. So I like the rituals that are more detached. Like even Ostara, I like that but it also is so connected to traditional Christian beliefs. So and then Mabon, not Mabon, but Beltane people infuse so much sexual energy into it and that makes me uncomfortable. So I go with Litha and I go with Mabon are my favorite.

Renee: 52:16

Overall, how would you describe the Pagan community in Topeka, and the surrounding areas?

Milton: 52:21

Very eclectic, very loose, very closeted. I'm trying to change that obviously by making a public space available. Skittish. Maybe too big for this paper. But there's been a lot of what we call Witch Wars over the years; which is just basically in fighting and people just bickering about... And they get caught up in "this is how we do things. And if you do it this way, then that's not going to work." I don't know. Pagans in the Park is avoided that in fighting so far. So far.

Renee: 53:08

Is there a large community here? Or is it mostly the people who show up to Pagans in the Park represents most of it?

Milton: 53:18

It's huge. You'd be surprised. Camp Gaea is a good place to represent that. You go to Heartland in May, and you see 2000 people on campus. I mean, I don't go but it's huge. I mean, there's... and we've only barely touched what's there. I mean, I talk to people all the time who are in the broom closet. I mean, all the time, they're just, and they're not coming out. Like Oma Lacey was really big at one point in doing a lot of different stuff. She just got tired, you know. And then there's a lot of energy when like when you're trying to start something new and trying to get people to come and you get a low turnout or whatever, people get frustrated. And you know, there's a larger contingency but people are just like.... So, even like at Midwest Men's festival, hundreds of men show up to that. Well it used to be, I think it's smaller now. And you know, that most of the people who are showing up to Midwest Men's Festival are practicing. And you know, but you don't. People are I mean, and then of course... I mean, even being in a coffee shop and me speaking publicly, you know, say you say witchcraft, you know. Or if I'm even in my recovery stuff, and I say I'm a practicing Witch, you can see the room. Or like in the park, you know? So it's huge. It's huge.

Renee: 54:59

Is there active discrimination that you've seen?

Milton: 55:06

Yes. Yes. And no, I mean, it depends on the people. And you know, for the most part... I've faced it myself. So if we say active, I will disagree with that. Is it hidden? Is it passive? Yeah. It's there, I've experienced it myself. And I was caught off guard, because I thought this was such an open. And find out that all this was happening, and I can't remember where, but in a very subtle way. And it was directed towards me. And I was like, "wow." You know, I was blindsided by it. And then, it's so secretive. I mean, it's really super secretive. And so when you start talking to people about it, it like "Is this in your head, are you just overreacting?" No. And then we get some the Nordic cults, some of those some, not all but some of those Nordic cults can get pretty white supremists. I mean, and that's, that's the ugly truth about who we are. And the Dianistic

cults, you want to talk about, androgyny, that's what that's called. Where it's pure out hate for men. I've actually had people at Dianistic cults threaten to castrate me. Or like, a transgender person was trying to show up for the Goddess Gathering out at Gaea, and had not made the transition. And they effectively banned her because she still had a penis. Yeah, I've seen it and it's ugly. And but when you talk to people, they were like "no, no." But it's there. And when it happened to me, I was even unaware of it. And then some stuff happened, and I was like "How was I blind to that?"

Renee: 57:24

So it's happening both within and from outside the community?

Milton: 57:29

Oh yeah. It's a lot from inside. I mean, you do expect a pushback from society at large, you don't expect your brethren to like... When they actually banned the transgender person from the Goddess Gathering because she had not transitioned. When she finally transitioned, they let her attend. But while she was making the transition, she wasn't. I mean, how is that...I don't know, it blew my mind. And I can tell you exactly who that person was off tape. And it was like, I was like, [makes exasperated shrug gesture]. And then like I said, some of the some of the Nordic cults. And Odin cults, especially from the prison systems, are down right ugly. I'm not saying everybody is that way, never intended that way. The Nordic culture was very embracing and very open. But for people to take that, like any other branch, or religion, or spirituality and twist it to their own use. It was never intended that way. And I could point you to people who would say, "Yeah, that happens. But that's not what I'm about." But that doesn't change the fact that it's happening.

Renee: 58:51

Have you ever felt the need to hide your own beliefs?

Milton: 58:57

No, I'm too much me. I'm too much me.

Renee: 59:03

How does food figure into your religious practice?

Milton: 59:07

It really doesn't. And I mean, I would like to say it does, but it doesn't. We're, I'm frustrated with myself is I'm obviously obese. And I do believe that we should take what we need, and no more. And obviously I overeat, and obviously I consume more food than I need. But other than that it really doesn't. If you talk about food in general then it really doesn't. But if you talk about the practice of sharing meals or breaking bread, or feasting, I've had rituals specifically centered around the Viking log houses where people would actually set and there would be an empty chair. And then you would put food on the chair and you would actually have a meal and you would honor people who had passed. I've actually had meals which, there's a great ritual, it's



born out of the Jewish tradition, that Pagans have copied it that is called... Are you familiar with the myth of stone soup. So literally pull up a pot, put a big stone in, have everybody bring vegetables, and then make a make a soup from that. And then so... The act of eating, or breaking bread, or feasting is a huge part of my spiritual beliefs, gigantic. But as far as am I vegan, omnivore, carnivore, it doesn't. But bringing coming together a meal that other people can share, incredibly important. It's one of the best parts of ritual for me, the feast.

Renee: 1:00:59

Do you guys have any rules regarding matters of dress or style, or behavior codes at rituals?

Milton: 1:01:07

Well, Pagans in the Park, in particular there's a list of park rules, that we have to obey. And then there's the city codes, like for example, you can't show up nude to a ritual. okay. So we don't have any formal rules other than the rules that already exist. Now if someone came in wearing a shirt saying fuck the police, I might go up to them as the Dragon and go like, "is this something we really..." Because you end up into this horrible debate, you know, so you really want to be careful about that. But there's no formal rules other than, we're using this space and these are the rules that we have to adhere by. And if you can't adhere to the rules of the city and state codes, and the park rules then you're not welcome here because then you take the space away from everybody. And if they want to get a fight over that, we just pick up our stuff and leave. I mean, we have to obey those rules.

Renee: 1:02:24

Have you ever thought about leaving the group?

Milton: 1:02:28

By the start of it but not right now. Well, I have to say with it, basically, its inception as the Lavender Circle, and Sophie's Garden, and Pagans in the Park, and Pagan Pride day. There are times I got very frustrated with it. When the guy at Shawnee from the wedding party at Shawnee Lake, you remember just started screaming at us. I mean, you know you're going like ??? And I seriously thought about it. And then there's the most recent I guess, I kind of blocked this out a little bit. This is kind of sad. We were at our second ritual for Pagans in the Park in this manifestation of Pagans in the Park. During Yule, one of the participants got up and she went to the bathroom. And she had a grandbaby there. And she called 911, and she collapsed. And I was smudging people at the time and fire trucks showed up. So I thought... I went out and saw the fire trucks. And I thought I set off some type of alarm. So I walked up there. And I'm kind of dressed odd. I have a headband on, and I've got an abalone shell. And I smell like smoke which smells like pot. I'm not drugged, but I'm running. But they're going like "who is this." I said, "Hey, I have smudged a bunch of people. If I set off alarms, everything's okay. There's no fire." She goes "No, somebody was in the bathroom, her name is Sage, she's collapsed." So I went up there with them. One of the paramedics actually fell on the way, but we went up there. And they got in there and said she had coded. And I knew what that means from my own professional life anyway. So I went back and got Jeannie and I said, "she's coded". Jeannie goes, "What do you

mean” I said “She's dead.” And she goes, “Well, they're resuscitating, they're doing CPR on her right now.” I'm going, “Yeah, Jeannie, shes fucking dead.”

Milton: 1:04:41

Im sorry, I shouldn't use the F word so much. And they got her to the hospital. She never woke up. And she was brain dead. And the family had to make end of life decisions. And her grand baby was there, we had to make arrangements for the grand baby to be picked up and taken home. I was like, “we're never doing this again, I can't do this.” And then the group reached out to me, and said “so and so wants to lead the ritual, will you rent the space.” And I said, “Okay, we're off and running.” But that was the closest I ever came to like totally walking away from this whole path. I was going like, and then you know, we had to end the ritual to. And I even walked in and said... And we're trying to keep the grand baby kind of off to the side. And we're kind of going like, “Guys Sage is dead.” I mean we didn't quite say it that way. “Do you want to continue with ritual?” And they said, “Yeah, sure.” And some people didn't even know what happened. It was such a large group of people, some didn't even know who Sage was. I was out of my rhythm. And I was like.... Yeah, so yeah. But when the group itself, they probably don't see it that way, but when the group reached out to me and said, “We want to continue,” that was a huge commitment on their part. Me just kind of being a vessel saying, “Okay, I'll set it up for you guys.”

Renee: 1:06:25

How do you see the future of the group? Is it growing and changing?

Milton: 1:06:30

I'll wait till Mabon and see where we're at. That will be actually the first complete year. We did our first set of four rituals, this will be the second one. Right now, it's not growing, and that's my concern. I'm trying to get people to come and let people know that it's there, and it's available. But again, people are skittish for good reasons. I mean, when you've had to deal with Witch wars, and you've had to deal with with the community, and you've had to deal with the infighting, people get battle weary, I mean, they just get tired. You know, it says it's easier to practice solitary, than to have to put up with all of this. Then, like the big battle is, “Well, why don't we do this? Why do we have to pay for space? And why can't we do this in somebody's backyard, and all that stuff.” And that used to be a huge fight in the community. I'm the one who finally said, “I'll rent a shelter house, I'll pay the money. You guys reimburse me. And I'll set the schedule.” I mean, it's rude, but that's the way it is. And you'd be surprised how much people still want to fight about it. “But why can't we have these parts?” “No, it's not that way. This is the park, these are the rules, follow them.” And that kind of keeps people in line. But people just have... I mean it's inconvenient, but powerful. People just have to deal with the structure of what we have available. And I'm not saying.... And then either me or someone else who's willing to step up and say, “Okay, we'll pay for the shelter house and take that financial risk.” But if I wasn't doing that, I can tell you right now, Pagans in the Park wouldn't be happening.

Renee: 1:08:28

What has been the best and worst things about being involved with the local Pagan community,

Milton 1:08:33

The Witch Wars, and just the fighting. "You're not doing it, right." "This person is doing that." Or sometimes you go into circles, and this person is sleeping with that person, and the person happens to be married. And you go, like, "Come on, guys. We're supposed to be better than this." But it's nothing that you don't... doesn't make it right or wrong, or that you don't see in other places. But, you know, my attitude is we're supposed to be better than this.

I felt like these last two years resolved that. But when I thought that I was personally attacked for something that happened, and I was like... But I'm the kind of guy, like I said, this is why Pagans in the Park happened. I said, "If you feel that way towards me, you truly believe that I'm that person. I don't want to be the source of your misery. I will go and do something somewhere else, and have a more positive experience. But, you know, sometimes the personal attacks are not fun.

Renee: 1:09:46

And the positive things?

Milton: 1:09:48

Positive thing is I found the path that allows me to stay clean and sober, that allows me to celebrate life, that allows me to honor my ancestors, that allows me to recognize that the wheel is turning. Because I choose to be involved in it, it forces me to take eight days out of my life every year, and look where I'm at. To evaluate that, and to truly spend time working on me, and defining who I want to be as a human, and how I can become better as a human, and what it means to be human, and what I can contribute to humanity. What it means to have these wonderful relationships like around Samhain, and then honor those people when they pass you know. Not just forget them, but actually set a day aside and say, "I miss you." And then to do that collectively with people. we used to do something called I called... I call it the Wailing. But anyway, we used to sit around and we would just wail and let our grief go, and share that moment of loss. But also realize life goes on. Like I said, it's been incorporated. I celebrate births, marriages, babies being born, people getting married. And even the dissolution of relationships can be honored when the when they need to be. One of the most powerful things for me as a Pagan is the year and a day people take. it's like, I will do my best with everything I can within this year. And if it doesn't work out, then things can change. But I think if other people entered their respective lives saying, "This is a year and a day. We will try to make everything we want. At the year and a day, when that ends, we come together and we have a conversation. But even having that principle of my life, and that's how I treat my clean time and sobriety, as a year and a day. It's like, every year, I make an oath to stay clean and sober for a year and a day. On December 6th, I re-evaluate that. And I just wish other people, not that some don't. But know a lot of patients do, is that they make that year and a day. Whatever situation I'm in. Is it working for me, is it functioning, is it the way I want it to be? And then if it's

not, because of the way I believe, then I need to change something. I think a lot of people would be more happy in their lives, and be would be less stuck. And I think relationships would be a lot less chaotic. But just that pause, every eight days out of the year. And Each sabbat has a different meaning to me. So I specifically look at one aspect of my life. Like Mabon is coming up for Pagans in the Park. Specifically, that's about harvest and abundance. And there's other things that go along with that. So it lets me celebrate what's in my life, and what I want, and the gratitude for that, and what that brings. And lets me really think about that. And then part of that is because it's a harvest festival, how do I keep hold of that? What do I need to preserve to make that happen again next year. And if for some reason this particular thing didn't work, then let's let the soil rest. Let it go fallow for a year. And maybe not plant anything there. And those types of metaphors and stuff. When you talk about Yule, you talk about the light dimming. So what meaning and power can we find in the dark? What about that shadow self? What about that piece of ourselves? And when the sun rises, what do we want to take from that dark place? And every year... I mean, each sabbat has has different meaning. So I like the power that causes me to pause and reflect.

Renee: 1:14:12

Final question, what do you wish more people understood about Paganism?

Milton: 1:14:21

I wish more people understood that It's really, for me and most of the people I associate with, it's really just about watching the wheel turn on the cycle of life. It doesn't have all the negative connotations of Satanism or human sacrifice. Santeria does sacrifice chickens. Some on the Nordic path they do sacrifice goats. It's hard. Yeah, there's a long story on that one, I'll tell you one of these days. Want to hear it. They take a goat out to Gaea and there's gonna be a sacrifice. They had this poor goat in this cage all the time. And it wasn't well fed. It wasn't well taken care of. And they knew that the sacrifice is going to take place. And by the time the goat got there, the goat was like all sick and not well or anything. So they went ahead and sacrificed the goat. But then a big pile of guys said "You're never do this ever again." I mean, there's a way to do that and you honor. But what they did to this port goat. I mean, the guy I know was like "You did what?" Everybody was like "We can't believe it." It's stuff like that, people want to focus on that stuff. But the positive stuff is, even though I talked about discrimination within the groups and stuff, and it does happen, it can be a safe place. You just need if you can, and you can't always in a public setting, but if you can find a close group of people with who you are like minded, then your healing can be, your recovery from whatever horrible stuff has happened in your life, and you can move forward. You know, the teaching, kind of like honoring your ancestors, learning what they had to offer, the sacrifices that they made. The truth of that fact is that we do live on a planet and that it is finite. And celebrating that and honoring that. And wanting that to be a safe place for other generations to grow up in.

Milton: 1:17:01

That you don't have to be, and this gets into real hardcore Paganism, you talk about that some of the positive stuff, I don't have to be afraid of my sexuality. I don't have to be afraid of sex. I

don't have to be afraid of my body. I don't have to be afraid of the negative thoughts or the shadow that exists in me. Paganism teaches me to live with that. The natural human urges that we have or desires, there's nothing wrong with that. But learning to honor those and to do those in a way that's respectful of others. I think Paganism does a lot of that. It's learning how to interact with people, other people in a respectful, meaningful way. I mean, people are being shamed for who they are. And there's this idea of egalitarianism in Paganism for the most part, outside of some of what I would call the extreme ends of it, where everybody is equal, everybody has the same amount of power. Now, there are people in groups who go on power trips, I'm not arguing with that. But that sense of, you lose the pretense that one person is better than another because of their color of their skin, their sexuality, their gender, their sex; that everybody has worth. And when when things happen in the Pagan community at large, and that's threatened, I speak about it. It's like I will never shut up about the Goddess Gathering, banning a transgender woman because she had not transitioned. That should've never happened. Never, never, never never fucking happen. And then only when she cut off her... When when she went through the the sex reassignment change were they willing to accept her as a woman. That's bullshit. And I think Paganism gives me that voice to say "what you did was wrong. And you may disagree with me. We don't have to come to blows over it, but what you did was wrong." And you know, so I think I think Paganism gives me that voice. I am sorry for those who are in the broom closet and don't feel that they can. But again, I've been very like I said in the beginning, I have been very selective about. I don't want to say very selective, that's not a fair way to say it. I've been put in jobs, and positions, and careers, that I've been fortunate where it hasn't mattered. Now could that change tomorrow, could I lose my job and get into an anti-Pagan.... because I need to put food on the table? Yes, it can happen. But for the most part, I've been really lucky that I that I've been able to speak my voice. And I think that's what Paganism gives to people, is that voice to say "there's not one way, to spirituality or one path, that there's multiple ways, and somehow we can come together. And you as a person figure out what that means, as one group, as one collective conscience so that we as a species can evolve and become better.

Milton: 1:20:37

And the other thing that's really positive about Paganism, because I have so many positives, it recognizes that there is a dark side. It brings it out. I mean, some of the rituals, bring it out, put it on display. And due to that, we learn to live with it, we learn to adapt, we don't let it consume us we don't let it eat us. And other religions spend so much time suppressing that and hiding it, or try to stick that in a corner. Priesthood in the Catholic Church is one of those things I think about. And if people were just allowed to acknowledge and recognize those things about us. There's nothing wrong with anger when it helps me survive. There's nothing wrong with being fearful because fear keeps you from being hurt. And I love that about Paganism, that we're not afraid to look at those things and honestly say they're part of us. And ritual helps us develop a way in which to make those a meaningful part of ourselves you know. Jung talked a lot about animus and anima and talked a lot about about the shadow, and we have to find a balance there. And I think paganism allows us to do that. I've been in rituals where Kali was evoked. And Kali is a really scary deity. But we didn't shy away from that. Kali births worlds and she destroys

worlds. So part of what you're doing is deconstructing, one of the parts is you're creating. And you have this chaos magic in between. And I think that's where our society is. We're in this place where a lot of chaos is happening, chaos magic. And I hope our society can come together and say "Okay, we rip the scab off the ugliness of our society." And see, wow, we made this horrible puss riddled world. But then, how do we cleanse that wound, rather than just putting a bandaid on it? How do we heal? How do we get that infection taken care of? And Paganism is very good about that. It's very good about ripping the scab off and saying "let's just not put a bandage on this, let's figure it out. And the tradition of the midwife and the and the men and the women who practices healing, all come from that place of like we're just not going to look at this. We're actually going to try to heal and try to fix this. And that's the best thing about Paganism, it's not afraid to look at that stuff and take steps to correct it. Now. There are some negative things to say about that too. But that's where I will leave on a positive note.

Renee: 1:23:59

Anything else you want to add?

Milton: 1:24:03

I don't know, you got anything else for me?

Renee:

I think we're good.