

Melungeon Voices Podcast Season Three Transcript, Episode Seven: Dr. Melissa Carver

Lis Malone: Welcome to the Melungeon Voices Podcast presented by the Melungeon Heritage Association. My name is Lis Malone, I'm the Podcast Producer. And as always, I'm here with the one, the only Heather Andolina, president of the MHA. I have to say it has been another amazing season. I think that you and the MHA should be so proud to line up such a fantastic and phenomenal group of podcast guests. And all of the fantastic work you all do to put together the Union Conference. So, congratulations to you in steering the ship in such a positive direction. And I don't know, it's still bittersweet, right?

Heather Andolina: It is it is. But hopefully we'll be back for season four.

Lis: We say that at the end of every season, and then you know what? It happens. Because we're going to, make it happen. Right? We got to create, you know, visualize it manifest it. So, you're manifesting season four. I think we have to have a season four, because you keep getting contacted by people who either want to hear the more of the podcast or actually want to be on this podcast, which is actually very cool that the podcast has grown to that level where people are seeking us out.

Heather: I love it. And it makes me feel so good. I really feel when you have people who reach out and say, hey, I want to be on your podcast, or hey, we love what you're doing with the podcast. It makes me feel so good inside.

Lis: Well, you should feel warm and fuzzy inside because there's a lot of work that goes into creating the podcasts. And Heather is an amazing Trooper to keep me in check. Let me just say people watching sausage get made it's ugly. But in the end, it tastes delicious. Right?

Heather: That's right. Well, let's, you know, we wouldn't be able to do this without you. I mean, you have been so phenomenal with helping us produce this podcast, and editing. Um, let me tell you, everyone, she works so hard. I mean, the editing is where it's at. She makes us all sound amazing. So, we just want to say thank you so much Lis.

Lis: Well, thank you. It's been a wonderful experience is always a wonderful experience. I can't wait to work with you on season four.

Heather: Exactly. There we go, it's going to happen.

Lis: So, before we jump into what we're talking about for this final episode for this season, we are going to do a little bit of a catch up with some of our previous guests and talk about what they've been doing since they've been on the Monty Voices Podcast. So, who are we going to talk about first?

Heather: Yes. So, Lis, first we have Frederick Murphy and Kimberly Knight, got a little update on the two of them, from Season One, and Season Two. Kimberly, from Season Two and Frederick from Season One.

Lis: So, what are they up to?

Heather: Both Frederick Murphy and Kimberly Knight have an update on their documentary they've been working on called, "Duality, a Collection of Afro-Indigenous Perspectives. They will be finished with filming around the first of the year, and are looking at a release date sometime next year. So, we'll keep you all posted.

Lis: And we have another former guest update from the very charming owner Kaya from season two.

Heather: Yes. Onur Kaya, who as we all know is from Turkey. Onur was awarded a Fulbright scholarship for his ongoing academic process in which his research of the Melungeon people take a significant part. He will be teaching at the University of Mississippi through May of next year.

Lis: Oh Onur, I'm still waiting for my invitation to come to Turkey.

Heather: I know I told him that. I would love to go I told him I said I would love to visit you and your wife Betul. We've got to make plans. We got to go visit him. He's here in the United States right now, but maybe we'll go fly back with him and his wonderful wife Batool. And do a cross country trip around Turkey.

Lis: We need to take this podcast International. Exactly.

Heather: I think so.

Lis: Live from Turkey. Yeah, Melungeon Voices.

Heather: Wouldn't that be? Awesome. I would love that. That'd be that would be a special episode.

Lis: We should just do a whole season out there just saying.

Heather: Yes, I agree.

Lis: Well, I think that's these are wonderful updates with three wonderful former guests. So please go into the podcast archives, and listen to Frederick Murphy, Kimberly Knight, and Onur Kaya. All wonderful episodes. So, let's talk about this week's interview, who we talking to?

Heather: Dr. Melissa Carver is the author of "Who the Hell Told You That? She's also the founder of the annual rejuvenation retreat, president of the nonprofit organization, mindset junkies, contributing writer for Chopra and elephant journal, as well as a Chopra certified instructor. She is a mindset practitioner who feels authentic perspectives, generate happiness, and fulfillment in all aspects of life. And this week's episode, we will be discussing historical and generational trauma, hidden heritage and transcending racism. And we will be making an exciting announcement about next year's annual Union Conference,

Lis: huh? I love the intrigue. Oh, yes.

Heather: You don't want to miss this one.

Lis: Well, thanks, everybody for listening to another season. And Heather and Dr. Melissa Carver. Take it away.

Heather: All right. Welcome, everyone. We're here with Dr. Melissa Carver.

Dr. Melissa Carver: Hello, how are you all today?

Heather: Good. How are you doing?

Dr. Carver: I'm doing really well.

Heather: All right. Well, let's just get right into it. I always like to start with asking our guests about their personal connection to the Hmong luncheon people. So how did you first learn about your ancestry?

Dr. Carver: Well, it was probably about 16 years ago, or so I decided to do the DNA test. And a lot of things came back that I didn't know about. So, it all made sense to me, though, you know, everything that came back, I was like, Yeah, I've always felt a connection to this group. So, it completely made sense for me. And at first, I didn't even really know that that is what all of those things were one of my other family members that is super into ancestry as well. I sent it to her and she goes, Melungeon. And I said, what is a Melungeon? I don't even know what you're talking about right now. And I still find that today that most people have not heard of us.

Heather: Oh, yes, we get that all the time at the Melungeon Heritage Association, all the time, we get emails that somebody just learned about their religion ancestry. And that's how it was for me as well.

Dr. Carver: Yeah, a lot of people just are learning and I love being the person that helps people learn about it, because it's so important for so many reasons. It bridges so many gaps.

Heather: It really does. And that actually brings us to our next question, would you please explain to our listeners, what is transcending racism?

Dr. Carver: Man, that is so complex, and also so important. So, I feel like the more that that we can talk to people about what Melungeons are and who we are, where we came from all of our religious and spiritual and culture backgrounds, then it just helps bridge all of those racist gaps, even if someone is Melancon. And they don't necessarily look at themselves as a Melungeon or maybe they look at themselves more as one of the particular ethnic groups than the other. Just knowing that that is in your background, in your family, within your state if you're not Melungeon, but you know, that these people lived here. And that culture has been around you in your family for hundreds of years. I mean, we're told in school, you know, obviously, Columbus discovered America by this point, everyone knows that that is 100% False. You can't discover something where people already live. But even outside of that and then people think, oh, well, it was just, of course, it was just, you know, Natives. But there were so many other cultures that were already here as well.

Heather: Right, exactly. So, what is the significance about the history of the Melungeons? And how do you feel this could contribute to what some may refer to as the healing of America?

Dr. Carver: Well, just one of them, for example, is part of mine is Moorish. So, knowing that the Moorish people were here, and they lived within the natives, and they built their own government, and they were Muslim. So today, people think that Muslim people are just recently coming here and building these mosques, and bringing this religion to America, when in fact, it was already here, long before Europeans and Christianity was coming over here. And it was just erased. From what we know, it wasn't told in our history books. And you know, I held a lot of resentment for that for a very, very long time. And I think I've let go of most of the resentment, I can't say that it's fully gone, because it does still boil my blood when certain topics are brought up. But I try really hard to look at both sides. I do understand that, of course, as the victor, you're going to write, you know your story, you're going to write, what

made you look the best, and you're going to try to erase anything that you don't want to continue in the future. That doesn't make it right. But I understand it from their point of view, as well.

And I also understand why so many Melungeon people lied. And they said that they were white, if they could pass as white. They said that they were Christian, when they weren't still necessarily practicing that faith within their own home. But maybe they weren't going to the church. And they were, you know, walking out the walk because they thought they and they were in most cases, saving their own lives, and their children's lives. But that really erased a lot of our culture, generation after generation. And it doesn't take long to do that. When people are in fear. They just stop talking about it and act like it never existed.

Heather: Right? Exactly. I know, within my own family, my grandmother wasn't light complected, but she lived her whole life, quote, unquote, identifying as white, because that's all she had. I mean, she didn't know about her African ancestry, she didn't know about her Indigenous ancestry. So that's all she had was to identify as white. So, you were mentioning about your Moorish ancestry. Not everyone in America, who is black was a descendant of slaves, can you share some more insight on the Moorish people and why that was true for their case.

Dr. Carver: I love talking about this, being married to someone who identifies as black and native. And knowing that the trauma that this has caused for so many Black people, and those of us who don't necessarily identify as Black, but have that Black ancestry, and have a connection to that, and feel that within our bones and our soul and can't even necessarily explain it. Just the trauma that comes from all of this, knowing, and learning and teaching others, especially teaching my Black children, that yes, slavery did 100% exist in America. But not every Black person that lives in America came as a descendant of a slave. There were Black people already here. And there were Black natives. There's Black people that have been here for hundreds and hundreds of years with their own structures, their own government, their own buildings, their own success. I mean, even just looking at Black Wall Street, was that taught to you in school? No, no, and that wasn't very long, right. And going back even further, and knowing that this did not happen in the way that we were taught, really puts a lot of things into perspective and brings about a lot of healing. And I'm looking forward to the day when this is more public knowledge.

Heather: Me too. And going off of that, does the, quote, hidden heritage of so many of us and the way in which we and our ancestors were treated, does that contribute to why so many of us feel like outsiders, a lack of belonging within our own communities?

Dr. Carver: Absolutely, I mean, you just look at so my mix is gypsy Turk Moorish Cherokee Shawnee, and I am a Melungeon on both sides because my mom and dad are third cousins.

Heather: Yes, I got that, too.

Dr. Carver: When you have a group of people that run off and run away have all of the war in everything that is happening, that tends to happen, right? Yes. But you look at all of those cultures, all of them having their own version of how they live, and their own spiritualities. And you take that away, then something inside of you, as a child knows that you're missing something, what is this whole that you feel like you don't know. And then you try to bring it up to maybe some of your grandparents and you're shut down rather quickly, either because they don't know, they don't want to have the conversation, or

they don't want you talking about it, they don't want you bringing up those reminders that this isn't who we always were this, now that we have pretended to be something else for so long, I don't need you talking about it or bringing it up. And then a lot of it is also their own ignorance.

Because again, like I said, it doesn't take very long to erase that history. So, they don't want you to bring up the fact that they don't know. And you find yourself drawn to all of these various cultures. And then sometimes you're looked at as though Oh, you're not enough of this. For us to even share this with you. You're not enough, Shani, for us to sit down verbally, give us the culture that we've missed out on and how we practice our spiritual rituals and so forth. So, there's a lot of racism all the way around. You know, people often look at Oh, racism is just white against whatever other race, but it's all the way around, it's across the board, we have to stop looking at. Well, how much Shawnee are you? Are you worthy of this knowledge.

Heather: And I think you mentioned it earlier about how these leads into historical and generational trauma, what our historical and generational trauma?

Dr. Carver: Well, when we are deprived of this culture, and our ancestry, that is one form of the trauma, because now we have to spend so much time searching for this information and trying to reconnect to something that our soul knows that we want more of. And then we also have, like I was saying before, I find myself still being a little bit resentful, but I have worked through a lot of it. When we talk about what our government has done in the history of our cultures, and we talk about corporations in the quote unquote, white, European, Christian, Catholic, how they, you know, stripped our children away from the parents, and they cut our hair, and they put us in hot boxes, and they refuse to allow us to practice this for spiritual rituals, and the language even was taken away. So, the trauma is very deep on several levels. And we have to be careful not to get too angry, it's really hard to not get angry when you see these patterns repeating themselves, because we are still seeing it to this very day. On individual levels. There's, of course, the judgment and the racism. But then there's also the structures and the laws that we still have to this day. And we've just seen it, you know, with women, there's always something trying to hold us down. And if we allow it to make us too angry, then we're going to just lose the fight again. So, we have to bond together and decide what we are going to do to cause real change in solid change and keep it that way, so that we don't lose our heritage once again.

Heather: Exactly. I completely agree, Melissa. And that leads me in to my next question with you know, what are some things we can do to both to heal both historical and generational trauma?

Dr. Carver: One is definitely connecting to those rituals and practices and stories of creator, the universe, who we are as a people who we are as individuals, and exploring all of that and seeing what So, connects to you. You know, we do have a lot of different cultures, within our ethnicities in which one draws you in and which one do you want to learn more about, start there and then learn all of them. And you will see that they're all really the same totally different way. So, connecting to that, and then letting go of that resentment as much as possible every single day reminding ourselves when something pops up on the news, or we learn something new about our history, is the anger is not going to be beneficial to us, we have to transform that fire from that anger into something more productive. How can I be a part of the change, rather than just being angry all the time. There was a moment in time when I was going through and just learning more about what was done to our people. And it just made me so incredibly angry. And it also made me angry with our school systems, that our schools are not

teaching us or our children about all of these various cultures, which again, is controlled by the government, we know that the government controls the public school system.

So, it's like that part has never ended. And I think that is my favorite way of being a part of the solution is, I love social media. So, posting on social media as much as I can about the other side of history that's not told, and other cultures, within my own culture, and then also other people's cultures. What are we missing out on here? What is not taught to these kids, and also being a part of it at the school as much as I can be teaching my own children and encouraging them to include this information whenever they possibly can?

Heather: You know, that's exactly right, Melissa, I have so many people who contact the Melungeon Heritage Association. And there, like, they know that they didn't learn this in school. They didn't know anything about it. And they asked me why. And you're right. And this is why this is so important for this organization, and for what we're doing, to get this education out there. And to and to get people to know that there is so much more.

Lis: Right, absolutely. And how long this has been just a continuous battle. You know, I have documents from broadhead, Kentucky that says, no gypsy I, I'm paraphrasing here, because I don't have the document in front of me, but I do have a copy of it. It basically says no gypsies are allowed in the city of broadhead. And if they are caught there, they will be fine. And they will be possible jail time. I have another document from my own family members, where they were taken to court, because some people were saying they were black. Some people were saying they were not. So they were in court, the entire document, you know, everything is word for word. And there were people on there saying, well, they don't have Negro smell, I was always told they were Turk. And then that's also another thing that we're not told. So, I learned this from my African history, Professor friend, Dr. Jose, that Turk actually meant Moorish for a very long time. So, people were saying, even though we do often have Turkish blood, also, people were just rolling with that, hey, just telling your Turk. They don't know that that's Moorish halfling. them don't even know that Moorish is black. So, we can say this. And it still holds true to us. But it still passes.

Heather: Wow. That is interesting.

Dr. Carver: Yeah, I found that very interesting when he taught me that as well.

Heather: So, Dr. Melissa Carver is the author of who the hell told you that? Can you go into more about what your book is about?

Dr. Carver: Well, it is about getting rid of all of those indoctrinated thoughts, those, quote unquote, truth that we were told and we held on to and we carry them with us as absolute facts carved in stone when they are not necessarily. We need to research and look at all sides and take into consideration how we feel, what are our personal organic thoughts, what are our feelings and emotions behind this? And there's a lot of different categories that I cover in the book and I do talk about my Malaysian heritage and how I transform that fire that I originally had when I started learning that these things are not true that we learned in school, and this is what was really going on. So, transforming that and becoming a better version of yourself just a little bit every De becoming more and more who you are more authentically who you are from all aspects?

Heather: Yes, I love that. Tell us how our listeners can find you on social media in a different website where they can purchase your book.

Dr. Carver: You can find me on Dr. Melissa carver.com. And I'm on all social media platforms as Dr. Melissa Carver, my personal page is just Melissa Carver, you can feel free to send me a request there too. And the book can be purchased at Amazon and a lot of other local bookstores.

Heather: Awesome. Well, Melissa, it was an absolute pleasure having you on our show. And we just want to thank you so much for taking the time and talking to us.

Dr. Carver: Heather, thank you so much for having me on. I look forward to this for so very long. And I'm excited to play more role hopefully within them one's inherited Association and help you as much as I possibly can and share everything on all of my platforms as well.

Heather: Oh, that would be wonderful. And yes, we are coming to Berea, Kentucky next year. Yeah.

Dr. Carver: Yay. I'm so excited that Maria and I am totally down to help you all plan for anything you all need. I'm here to help.

Heather: Awesome. I'll take you up on that.

Dr. Carver: Thank you.

Heather: Well, thank you, Melissa.

Lis Malone: You've been listening to the Melungeon Voices Podcast. On behalf of myself, Heather Angelina, and the entire MHA executive committee. We'd like to thank all of those who participated in making this episode possible. For more information, you can visit them on the web at www.melungeon.org. The information views and opinions expressed in this podcast episode do not necessarily represent those of the MHA.

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