Episode 10 Transcript

Alika Galloway

You know, it goes back to, I would rather see a sermon any day than human. You model and teach. And one of the things that you model and teach that I think is so important is courage.

Makeda Zulu

Welcome to Rules of Engagement, a show that highlights the projects and partnerships of the University of Minnesota Robert J. Jones Urban Research,Outreach and Engagement Center. I'm your host, Makeda Zulu. Liberty Community Church in north Minneapolis has been a steadfast partner and loyal advocate of UROC's for more than a decade. In this episode, you will hear how UROC works with the local faith community and its leaders. More importantly, you will learn about Liberty's Northside Healing Space, a community driven solution to healing the trauma and shining the light on the gifts of North Minneapolis residents. Reverend Doctor Pastor Alika Galloway it's good to have you here.

Alika Galloway

Always good to be in your presence, Makeda, and to be at UROC. What a blessing. Thank you for asking me.

Makeda Zulu

Of course. So can you talk a little bit about yourself and about liberty and about Northside healing faith?

Alika Galloway

Well, it's really hard... I don't usually think about myself like that. But the first thing that comes to my mind is that 51 years ago, I went on a blind date, and walked Lake Calhoun, with this young man named Ralph Galloway who would become the reverend Doctor Ralph Galloway. And so we walked Lake Calhoun on and talked about liberation of our people and why that was so important. And both of us at 18 were committed to that. And we believed with everything within us that the revolution would happen and that would happen soon. Now, you know, just to put that in perspective, that was in the early 1970s. And so we believed that and, but we did not believe or understand that we would be part of the revolution that would liberate our people And now, as Ralph and I drove around that sacred body of water, we can now contextualize that we had a little bitty part in that. Very grateful. Very, very grateful. And out of that, out of that union has come three children, 12 grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Makeda Zulu

And five great grandchildren?

Alika Galloway

Five great grandchildren.

Makeda Zulu

So you are a great grandmother.

Alika Galloway

I am a great grandmother.

Makeda Zulu

And you said you all were just a tiny part of the revolution. That's how you say it.

Alika Galloway

Mm-hmm.

Makeda Zulu

Now, if I'm correct, I know we gotta focus, but did the reverend doctor pastor Ralph Galloway take many of these children on college visits to both California and...?

Alika Galloway

What we are committed to, and this all ties into UROC is that Ralph is a University of Minnesota graduate. And so in the 70s when he was a basketball star and football star at North High School, he never expected to go to college. And his father, who was a Jamaican immigrant, used to hang out at the University of Minnesota. And when Ralph said that I'm not going his father pulled a gun on him, and, said...

Makeda Zulu

He had a conversation.

Alika Galloway

Well, you know, ancestral way. So, Yes you are, man. You going. You going to the University of Minnesota. And at that time, the U had opportunities for oppressed student, for oppressed and not ready children to come and learn. It was really compensatory education. And so, having graduated from the university of Minnesota, his father was very proud of that. Yeah. But having graduated, he's always been committed to this land and this space and opportunity then to showcase early on other young people in our community that this is what's possible. Because a lot of what happens with our babies, it is not their intellectual capacity. It is their capacity to believe. And so Ralph didn't believe,

but his daddy believed for him. So when we talk about ancestral ways and passing on our belief system, part of that is standing in the gap for when you can't believe somebody else believes for you. And that for me, has been one of the most pivotal and powerful roles that UROC has played.It is a place that highly esteems the possibility within this community. You believe in the impossible and then you actualize it.

Makeda Zulu

You are preaching.

Alika Galloway

I'm just saying.

Makeda Zulu

And when I was, when you were talking about standing in the gap though, what I went to automatically was 21st Century Academy.

Alika Galloway

Yes.

Makeda Zulu

Of Liberty Church, because that is also standing in the gap. You know, Liberty has been a part of this community a long time. But my first, I want to say, my first interaction came when my children were small and you had Freedom School.

Alika Galloway

Yes.

Makeda Zulu

And so, when the cousins would come up from Illinois and from, New York, you know, because they come to visit, everybody could come to freedom school together.

Alika Galloway

Yes, yes.

Makeda Zulu

So, you all have been loving on the children of this community a long time. And I won't say too much, but a long, long time.

Alika Galloway

Absolutely. As long as we have breath in our body, we're going to do that. That's part of not only our ancestral ways, but as part of our call. Because when we look at the social location that UROC is in, liberties both buildings are in, we understand that if we don't believe and if we don't open doors and we don't facilitate change and challenge existing oppressive systems, then in fact your belief is in vain. There's an old saying that I love. It's ah, I would rather see a sermon any day than hear one.

Makeda Zulu

Amen.

Alika Galloway

You know, so we consider that sermons in flesh. Here we go, you can come to freedom School, which its origins, was in the historic African-American church where during the civil rights era, we, people could not read, they could not write, they could not function. And so your way to freedom there was through education that was your way to freedom. And so the nexus of that was Freedom School. So we always brought more children than we had capacity for. We always brought children in and we hired community. To again break that belief barrier and to empower them because the media would suggest that what is happening in our community is low intelligence. That is not what is happening. What is happening is low opportunity. So Freedom School then provided the opportunity for ladder to leadership. And so with the 21st century now we have people that are staffing, are 21st century, that went through the ranks of Freedom School.

Makeda Zulu

Now, that's growing your own.

Alika Galloway

That's growing your own. And that's what we have to do. And that's what we see with UROC. Opportunities for research, opportunities for participatory research. Opportunity for action. Opportunity for youth participatory action research. That's what, you know, I remember when we were first talking about starting UROC, part of the nexus of the dream was that the community could avail itself to great research tools. Then with that research, then that research would turn to action and that action would turn to liberation. And we're seeing that every single day. And even in terms of the leadership, like you, Miss Makeda, the fact that you are Northsider, the fact that your family is deeply invested in this community, we keep doing it generation after generation after generation. That's what makes the impact. Yes, that's what gives us power and hope.

Makeda Zulu

You're talking. Folks, I don't know if this will make it in to be in pastor Alika’s presence is just always a gift and it's going to touch your heart and your spirit. And so I could listen to you all day. All day.

Alika Galloway

Ask my children.

Makeda Zulu

And as you talk about, you know, what UROC is doing, though I believe, you know, that you have continually stood alongside. I believe you have pushed, you have challenged, you have loved on. You've advised UROC for a long time. So, you know, I'm not sure if you remember all of these, but some of the things I think about are so how are the children after the tornado? Sex trafficking, trading, you know, you started that work there, the trauma recovery project where we meet right in this very room, healing our planet, healing ourselves and the birth justing project. So you have always, through every executive director, whether it was one director or assistant director or try the tripartite, you have been there to challenge each and everyone to hold folks accountable, to be what folks needed to be for the community. You have worked with many faculty members Teddy Potter, Ross Villarroel, Lauren Martin. Those are just a few. I'm sure you've worked with more, but I would say research is a tool but what I believe you've done is you've taught the researchers how to be in community and how to be authentic, how to be themselves, how to be present. So they're growing while this tool is being used. What would you say to that?

Alika Galloway

I really don't have words to say, except I'm grateful. I must have been 4 or 5. My father was in the Navy, and we would, between duty stations, we would, go to Saint Louis and, where both of my parents were from, and we would stay at my maternal grandmother's house. She was a great cook, and I would love to get up early in the morning with her and I must have only been like 4 or 5, but whatever age I was my feet could not touch the ground, you know, I just remember dangling my feet under the chair and my grandmother was singing if I can Help somebody. And she was not a great singer, but she had a great soul. And I remember that kitchen warming up, now there was shrimp on the stove, you know, because it's the Sunday morning and, you know, I had on a petticoat because you couldn't eat breakfast with your dress on. You had to eat it on with you slip. And, you know, I was all greased up had sun cap on my head. And my grandmother was singing that song and I said, granny, I want to help somebody. And my grandmother came away from the stove, wiped her hands on her apron and laid her hands on my head. And I remember her prayer. Now I'm 69, but I remember this. And she said, Oh God, you just heard her. And so I pray that you invite her to always be a bridge between those that need to be helped, the helpless, and empower her to help somebody. And by the way, as your blessing, I would ask, I won't see a colored person there, but if you could be so kind. In your mercy to allow her to see what I'll give you the praise, honor and glory. And then she said, now, baby, say Amen. And I hollered out, Amen! But that's ancestral ways. It is an energy that is being passed on. So whatever I do, I humbly thank God for it. But I know that it started at that kitchen table where I was commissioned in call. And I remember like a feeling of like warm oil going over me. Now, I understand that it was a presence and the spirit because the spirit is always energetic. We're talking about energy transmission there. And so I think when you see something, you have to do something. And you also in the Genesis narrative, you know, whether you believe

that is fact or fiction, it doesn't matter. But in the narrative, God co-creates the world. It is not just God the Creator, it's God, the whole energy of who God is. So everything we do is always in co-creation. We join forces. So this concept of co-creating with the University of Minnesota, it has this theological grounding, but it also just makes sense, even if you are not spiritual at all. This does is just common sense. You just can't do this by yourself.

Makeda Zulu

It's too much.

Alika Galloway

It's too much. And so we...

Makeda Zulu

You can't see everything.

Alika Galloway

You can't see everything. So we hold each other accountable. We bring, you know, that's the whole genesis of the buffet. Everybody got a little something to bring. What do you bring? And then how do you lift each other up in the bringing? And even when it doesn't work, you learn the lessons and you keep going. So when you fall, you fall forward. You keep going because the people deserve nothing less. That's what they deserve. That's what we have to do. So these things you mentioned honestly, I forgot them because it isn't it isn't that the work was so much is that the work we must do together is so much right. We don't have time to dwell on that. We just keep moving. Next. Next, next. Like you, your energy has always, when you smile at me, I think, okay, what is next? I can do it. We can do it together. Because Makeda Zulu is coming. And she's coming with authenticity, with intelligence, with kindness, goodness and love. Let me hook my train on to her's. Let's go, team, let's go. We've got work to do.

Makeda Zulu

Pastor Alika, now...

Alika Galloway

True. It's true. And you know it is. You know it's true. Okay.

Makeda Zulu

Well, you answered the next question I really had. But you know what I would say? I think that the understanding, the power of the ancestors, understanding something greater than yourself, I think ignites the kind of work you do. And so there are different people who come up sometimes and, they want to know what UROC does, but they come almost as if they know there is a door shut that

somebody... that it's for everybody but you. You come from a generation where folks if the door's shut, well, let me figure out how to open it. Let me try to open it. You're going to have to shut the door on me before.. You gonna have to make sure, you gonna have to stand in front of it before I'm not coming in. And I think I belong here. So how do you tell those folks? How do you encourage those folks to do the work that you do in, in their space, whatever that space is?

Alika Galloway

That's a good question. I think you model and teach. You know, it goes back to I would rather see a sermon any day than hear one, you model and teach. And one of the things that you model and teach that I think is so important is courage, is courage. Understanding the power that we have as a collective and as allies, because it's not just a black thing. This is a human condition. This is human curve. And the power of human love. And collective love and collective power and courage. Because in my generation, not only did we stand the door. Listen, listen. Y'all will keep that door. Alright. Who has suppliers who has a screwdriver? We gon' take the doggone door down. We gon' take it off. We gon' take it off because everybody has an open invitation to become the best that they are. Because we believe. And for me, this is part of the. When you guys had that open call for researchers a couple of years ago. And I think you guys are still doing research?

Makeda Zulu

Yes, ma'am.

Alika Galloway

I just saw it. Everybody can come in with a research idea. I read the proposals. Everybody can come in. Everybody is welcome.

Makeda Zulu

Yes.

Alika Galloway

And there is no sense of, you know, I have earned a degree. I'm grateful for that. But I did that because the ancestors, I did that because my grandparents picked cotton. So on my degree it says Alika PE Coy Elvoid Shelton Galloway. Because I did that for my grandma who picked cotton in Louisiana, and Louisville. And so when I transfer that philosophy to UROC, you can come in and research. I have loved the academic research analysis, and it has been important to us. It's been important to us at Liberty. But the first research we did actually at Liberty, that helped propel us into where we are now, was with some children. We hired high school kids to go around the neighborhood. It was Cameron, Derek and Aisha Galloway at that time. And they gathered up children. They gathered up children and said, what would you like this new space to be? And this is what they said. So it was participatory action research.

Makeda Zulu

Yes.

Alika Galloway

This is what they said. We want a place for building. We want a place where we take fences down and we leave fences up because we want the fences down for the good people, but we want the fences up for the bad people. We want a place of flowers. We want a place where everybody is welcome, even if they're cracked out. This is what they said. And we want a place to learn. That's still the five foundational pieces of Liberty and Northside Healing Space.

Makeda Zulu

You honor each of those daily.

Alika Galloway

We try.

Makeda Zulu

You don't try, you do it. I've seen it. You have the Northside healing space. Folks, if you ever get to north Minneapolis and you're trying to do a retreat with your nonprofit or your church or your faith community or just some folks that want to get together and think about some things. That's a beautiful space on 21st and Emerson, we've done looming there. I know that I was going through a tough time, I think, about a year ago. And you had an event happening there, and I said, I'm going to spend my day at Northside Healing Space. Purposeful. So it is a place. And I was healed by it. That's the other thing that you all talk about a lot, healers in need of healing, because that's the truth, right? We're all healing at the same time. But we got to work. We can't just lay up. I mean, sometimes we have to, you know, for those of us who like to work a whole lot when we're told it's time to sit down to sat down.

Alika Galloway

You gotta rest.

Makeda Zulu

Yes. So we won't go more about that. So you've answered all the questions that I think we have time for today. I hope that you might be willing to come back.

Alika Galloway

I'll be glad to come back. I love sitting in your presence.

Makeda Zulu

Pastor Alika.

Alika Galloway

Really, I do, and you know it.

Makeda Zulu

I love sitting in your presence. Wooh. Yes, ma'am. All right, well, thank you for joining us.

Alika Galloway

Thank you so much for asking me. It is an honor and privilege.

Makeda Zulu

All right. You can learn more about Liberty Community Church and Northside healing space at Liberty Church MPLS.org. There are no spaces. And no dots. That's Liberty Church MPLS.org. A special thanks to Nina Shepard, Senior Communications director for the office for Public Engagement and UROC. Today's episode was produced by Blackbird Revolt, engineered by Stan Tequila, edited by Jordan Moses. Please make sure to subscribe to the podcast on Apple Podcasts and Spotify to learn more about UROC and our many community partnerships, visit UROC.umn.edu. That is. UROC.umn.edu. Thanks for listening.