# 18. Understanding the Power of...doptees with Milton Washington

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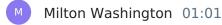
#### **SPEAKERS**

Milton Washington, Lauren Pinkston



#### Lauren Pinkston 00:04

Welcome back, everybody. I am so thrilled about today's conversation with Milton Washington. I have come across his work and his story through listening to other leaders and podcasters that talk about transracial adoption. And today we're going to hear directly from Milton, what that experience is like and why families need to be very sensitive around the layers of identity when it comes to transracial adoption. Milton, I can't thank you enough for being willing to chat with us today, to share part of your story and we are both of us are very open to where this conversation may lead and so I hope that it's helpful especially for families who may not have fully grasped the realities of the depth of racial identity, and how that impacts a family system. So Milton, welcome and would you just start by introducing yourself to everyone what we need to know about you.



Thanks for having me. My name is Milton Washington. I am a transracial adoptee, or transnational adoptee really, from South Korea. I was born in South Korea. My mother's Korean my father's black and I was adopted into a black family. I live in Harlem, New York. I am a photographer. I am a type of creative that I say that I'm just a storyteller. I happen to be pretty crafty with an iPhone in that photography. I also am a founder of a fitness system called Rock Boom Fitness which really kind of continues to help me heal from from my experiences. And I am also in line in New York to become one of the legal cannabis operators here in the city. Because that's something else that I think is instrumental in my healing power. I like to kind of evangelize that so, yeah, my business here and the projects that kind of revolve around that I say it's: photography, it's fitness, and it's flowers.

Lauren Pinkston 02:30

That is a great way to sum it up. We were just talking about how I was in New York a couple of

days ago. And the, you know, the scent of cannabis is everywhere and I love that we're moving towards legalization and certain cities are ahead of other cities in the country, but the ability to actually monitor it and have it produced in ways that are healing, like you said, we'll dive into that too. All right, so, Milton, if there's anyone who can really talk to the realities of a transnational and transracial experience, I think that you might just take the cake so are you willing to kind of share part of your story how how you came into a different family system and what the layers of your family and society look like as it formed who you are today?

- Milton Washington 03:29
  Yeah. How much time do we
- Lauren Pinkston 03:32
  Take as much time as you need.
- Milton Washington 03:36

Well, you know, typically when it comes to transnational adoptees, it's a transnational thing and it's oftentimes a transracial thing, but my story is somewhat unique in that, in which there's smaller numbers of Korean adoptees out of the 200,000 Korean adoptees. First of all, there's about 20,000 or 10% of us are black, and Korean. And within that, there's a smaller subset of those black Korean adoptees who also got adopted by black people, normally, black Americans. So that's a wrinkle in that in which many of my fellow Korean adoptees they call themselves "Twinkies" because they consider, they say that they're yellow on the outside and white on the inside because most of them have been adopted by white families. And then they didn't, they kind of, you know, there's a whole kind of struggle that kind of comes with that in terms of their racial identity. Because culturally they're white. But you know, ethnically, you know, they remain to be different, right? But my story is a little different, because, you know, there's a book that I've been writing for quite some time and the first words of that book are in Korean and it says [koren langauge]. That means, those are the words that means "the black monkey's butt is red". And basically, it's the kids singing that song to me, they say that because I was black and therefore different. They weren't going to play with me. So I was called black before I even knew what black was, because that was in the countryside of South Korea and I had never seen a black person. I basically, you know, looked at my own skin and I just thought that this was just some sort of anomaly. You know, maybe this is just a really big birthmark. You know, but I also knew that there wasn't anything wrong with me. I knew that I was the only kid out there that looked like a superhero.

Lauren Pinkston 06:02

You do. You actually, I mean, like you are the embodiment of a superhero.

Milton Washington 06:05

So. and as a little bov. you know. four and five years old... You know. there's ways that we

measure up to each other, and I just knew that I had value. And, you know, I always kind of thought that my blackness had something to do with it. It's just, it was just a process of deduction for me. And I knew this blackness was good and it was confirmed when my mother and I moved into a town and I saw black soldiers for the first first time in life. And to me as a little boy, you know, their musculature, you know, their style and the way they moved about - It was very attractive to me and very affirming to me. And so, when I was eight years old, living in the town of Bupyeong in South Korea, I get adopted by the Washingtons. My parents Don Washington and Gwen Washington, it was Captain Donnell, Washington at the time, and his wife Gwen Washington, and they had four natural kids of their own: Don, Donna, Darren and Dwen and once I got adopted to this family, you know, in some kind of weird, odd way, like I kind of came home to blackness. I got adopted by a black family where I was already black and now was almost kind of free to just be. That was an interesting wrinkle for me and to be adopted by a black family, when I didn't know what blackness was, but I had my thoughts and then to be able to be free to settle into blackness and to learn, you know, kind of the American brand of blackness and all that comes with it - the good and the bad. But with me always having this almost a fantasized version of blackness, and I say almost because I just think that it's true to me. It's been a wonderful journey. It's been a wonderful journey. And I think I'm one of the few kind of really fortunate ones in the adoption story because of the soundness of the family. I got adopted by the balance of of love and nurturing from my mother, which was a continuation of my Korean mother, but also the balance in the structure of a military father, which is also a continuation of my Korean mother. You know, it wasn't perfect, but it was there and it was solid, and it was a continuation of my Korean mother, but now black. So that's my journey.

## Lauren Pinkston 09:14

It's a powerful one and you're speaking to what so many kids are longing for as you talked about settling into your blackness. That is something that I I often hear adoptees talk about, especially transracial adoptees, where that picture that you gave of feeling one race on the outside and another race on the inside. And, you know, whether that's military kids that grow up in a different culture than the ones that are their passport, whether that's blended families that are trying to fit... just individuals that don't fit a stereotypical ethnicity or even what they feel on the inside. So it's beautiful that you have felt that freedom to explore that and it seems to me that the Korean component of, I'm here looking from the outside, but the Korean ponent component of your racial identity has been something that you've also explored and leaned into. What was that journey like for you and how were you able to hold on to the the heritage that was passed to you through through your mother?

# Milton Washington 10:24

You know, first of all in a nutshell, my journey has been a journey of really looking to be me. You know, I'm not trying to be anybody else. And I've always looked to embrace me even in the in the face of my world telling me I was different. I knew I was different. It was obvious being a black kid in rural South Korea, but I felt my difference was good. And I always knew my heart. I always knew my heart and I always I was a kid who just wanted to be, you know, accepted, because I thought I had a lot to contribute. So that's my journey and then then later on in life, you know, especially getting acclimated into my family, into into the American culture, you know, especially right around grade school and high school in which you kind of want to be able

to fit in with everybody, I was really fortunate in that aspect, that bumpy part of the journey, because I was a football star. And being a football star, you know, on the front page of the paper and talk about, you know, recruitment to Michigan and Notre Dame and Tennessee and all that. You know, it just, the world kind of keeps telling you, you're valuable while you're different. So I had very little time to feel bad about that. So it's been very easy for me to kind of lean into different and I think, you know, differences are ammunition for those who like to kind of keep others down. But I like to almost kind of evangelize the notion of, hey, lean into your differences, because it's the differences that really kind of set you apart and can really make you stand out in this world. And it's those differences that kind of makes us a bit more interesting. You know, why be like everybody else, because it's those differences that might be able to help you professionally, it might be able to help you personally, when you're looking for a mate. Oftentimes people aren't looking for someone who's of the herd. Someone who's outside of the herd is the person that may get their attention, right? So, I'm very much about really leaning into differences. And I think when when people kind of change that mindset, you know, regardless of how much the world has ridiculed you or made you feel less than because of those differences, you know, if you kind of look at the math of it, if you flip that part, that means you have broken up some traumas in a way that can really release you. Because if the world says, "Hey, you're different, and therefore you're not as valuable" and then if you can flip that, man! So I think it's an exercise that everybody really ought to get into, because it can really go a long ways to healing.

## Lauren Pinkston 14:07

It sounds like this was something that was a part of you even from a young boy. Do you think that's something that was just intrinsic in you, something that was like just written into your DNA? Do you think that that's a message that you received from your birth mother? Do you... where do you think that strength and resiliency came from?

# Milton Washington 14:29

You know, I've been asked this and who knows. I have come up with a case in which this is what I think it is. First of all, my mother was a boss. Yes, she was a prostitute, but she was a tough Korean woman who had to do what she had to do back in those days. And she thrived. You know, she was a madam. She was a madam in a camptown, red light district, and she had a bunch of her girls working for her. Like mother like son on that. I think I'm a boss. I'm an entrepreneur because I got it from my mom and she was highly resilient. And, you know, bosses oftentimes have vision. I knew that I had to get the hell out of Korea because I wasn't getting the proper amount of love from everyone else. Because I'm like, I got value when no one said yesterday. I had to change the scenery. So I think I was I was born with some of that. I think I get that a lot from my mother. But I was also just... kind of there was an aesthetic about me that was constantly reinforcing my truth. I had value as a little kid, built like a superhero. I was like, "What are you guys talking about? Like what is going on? You mean I don't have value? What do you mean?" And you know, because I was bigger, stronger and faster than all the kids and, you know, I can fight and do all the things that kids measure each other up to. I felt like, you know, I'm Jordan and you guys telling me I can't play ball because I'm black. Like, what is this? So I had to make sense of it. And I knew that I had to make some changes and which prompted me to start really asking my mother about my father. And she told me that he's in America and I made a decision to get to America, because the circumstances weren't

doing me justice. So I had to change those circumstances. And my idea was, I was going to find my father reunited with my mother, and I'm going to be living in America and living a life that was better suited for me. So I think I was born with some of it. I was constantly reminded of the truth, you know, which I knew I had value, but they said that I did. I thought they were wrong. I thought I was right. And I had to take some action. And to do something about it, because I had to prove this point.

## Lauren Pinkston 17:32

Yeah, yeah. Which, you know, that kind of leads me to another question of with blended families or families that are non traditional in however the way that they are put together. There are, you know... we can't escape people's curiosity. We can't escape their comments and their questions. I'm wondering if there were certain things that were said to you, or said to your parents, or said to your siblings that were particularly unhelpful, in terms of your attachment or your identity?

## Milton Washington 18:05

You know, my family, really coming from kind of a leadership of my parents...We were we're a military family. And my parents had... they'd lived a little bit everywhere, you know, in the world, even though my parents are originally from Texas. But at a very young age, my father got into the army and really started to work, you know, kind of work that route and became an officer quickly because, you know, talk about superhero - that quy is, you know, he's amazing and then my mother is just a perfect balance to him and a perfect complement to him because she was a homemaker, an artist, and just sweetest person, to anybody, not just her kids, but to anybody. The level of empathy that exuded from them that kind of permeated throughout my my siblings and therefore my family. I literally cannot, you know, think of anything that was said that really kind of hurt me in that way. My problem was really, because I was a kid that was used to being out living in the streets, because when my mother was at work doing her thing into the wee hours of the night, I was running the streets. So I had a propensity to get into stuff, get into a lot of trouble. And getting into a lot of trouble in a household, you know, led by a military officer doesn't bode well for, you know, for a kid. I was getting into serious trouble. I got arrested in the 10th grade, you know, walked out in handcuffs from high school during lunchtime because I had this propensity, like I said, to get into get into some things. It was exciting to me. It's what I knew. You know, so the problem for me in terms of what was said, really came out of discipline. You know, the discipline that my father gave me, you know, because he was a hardcore disciplinarian. You know, and probably, by today's standards, you know, he would've got arrested for all the times he whooped my ass, really. And he was a strong man and those whoopings were terrible. But I was very fortunate because, you know, even after those kind of brutal beatings, just like it was as a kid in Korea, I was able to kind of crawl into my mother's lap and she would do the explaining where my father wouldn't explain. It was just, you're in trouble, therefore you got to pay for it. My mother would explain, Milton, you know, you represent the Washington name. Milton, you can't be out there doing these sorts of things. And your father is angry at you, but as angry at you as he is, it's because you were soiling the name. No one ever told me that and, you know, that's not a concept that, you know, when you come from what I come from that you come in with. A bunch of my brothers and sisters they know that they're Washington's, they've been Washington's all their life. And there's a culture to the family. And that culture, you know, easily dictates that you can't go

outside of that culture, in terms of aesthetic, in terms of behavior, in terms of actions. You can't do it. You know, me I come in and I'm like, "Oh, I'm this other kid." That's got these ways, and I'm trying to figure out kind of how I fit in, but I love having fun. And hey, "let's go steal that car. Yeah, that's fun." You know, so and then when somebody clarifies you know, what the real issue is, with the love, and the calm, and the empathy that my mother did to balance off those beatings, it made sense and, you know, it allowed me to kind of really go through a process in which I had to acquiesce, you know, in a way that kind of complied to the culture of the of the Washington family, but I was still able to live my life in a way and find a good middle ground. And thank God I had something like football to really get those kind of feelings and aggression out on, because if I didn't have that, I don't know what could have happened. So that that's not a direct answer to your question. But from my family and my siblings, I just never had that kind of negativity because, you know, you can ask any of my siblings they go, "Milton felt like one of us from day one" and they backed it up. I was one of them from day one. I ate what they ate, played with their toys. They gave me stuff just like I was from their mother.

## Lauren Pinkston 23:53

I am in the south and we talk about clutching pearls and I can hear or I can see the social workers or the people who are facilitating adoptions kind of clutching their pearls right now in some of the things that you're saying, because the idea of of disciplining a child that is in the process of attaching to a family is one that people are incredibly uncomfortable with. And what I'm loving about this conversation is that you are bringing such a specific experience to who you are and to how you blended into your family and became who you are today. And as a, you know, as a mother of four that's making me just kind of think about how each of my kids are so different and the way that I connect and attach and guide and train each of them is so different. And you're disrupting even the normal narrative of transracial adoption. If you were going to give advice to a family that was pursuing adoption, and they felt that they had the capacity to bring a child into their home that was not a biological child and you were going to tell them what either you learned from your parents, what was helpful to you or what you wish someone, you know, had said to your parents as they were raising you, what advice would you give?

# ° 24:21

You know, there's a single piece of advice that is definitely easier said than done, because every child is different. Every child is different. You know, every circumstance is different. But this is almost just kind of a North Star that factors in all those differences. That advice is that, at the end of the day, the child needs this kind of duality. Because they're children. I think children need structure, but balance with that structure. They also need to know that they are unconditionally loved. And, you know, and that's what I talked about with my parents. Both my Korean mother, in those tumultuous times... You know, yes, she discipline me hard, just as hard as my father. Like I said, that was a continuation, her beatings. Listen, being beat by a Korean woman is the same thing as being beat by this large black man.

Lauren Pinkston 25:56

## Milton Washington 26:33

There is no difference, you know? But she would let me, like I said, while in tears and in pain, she would let me crawl into her lap, physically hold me, and talk to me with a tender voice. You know, basically just like my mother, Gewn Washington, did after the beatings from dad and that just told me that this is all about love. And I'm like, you know, me, I really wanted to say, "Hey, Mom, I think Dad has an anger management problem, because he's really kind of going in on it." But it was lov, because she explained that and I believe my mother. You know, I believed when she said that your father is angry at you because, not only did you break the rules, you are misrepresenting the Washington name. And that made sense to me.

## Lauren Pinkston 28:19

Yeah, that connected with you and what attachment looked for you. Yeah, it was almost an invitation...

#### Milton Washington 28:26

Yeah. So, I felt, yeah, I'm hurt. And, you know, after these times, it would take me to these kind of dark places in which you know, I would kind of lament the notion of, like, I didn't ask to be adopted, I didn't ask to be in this situation. And I felt like I wish that I had more support, someone else to talk to, like, I didn't just want to have these kinds of conversations when I got in trouble. I want it more. But, you know, that's life. You know, you don't always get what you want. And, you know, and even in those times, I felt like running away. You know, there were even a few times that I had even thoughts of suicide, because it was a tough situation. But, you know, I kind of had that. I never in these dark spaces thought that my father didn't love me. Because when it wasn't discipline time, you know, he was a father. He was a father that was engaged in many ways. You know, and he was very busy with work and all that but he showed that love and my mother always showed that love so there was always this foundation of love that allowed me to quickly get over it. You know, by the time that it was dinnertime, I'm back in with a smile... "hey, these ribs are great mom." So I think that that you know, the thing that a child needs, and this goes beyond adoption, they just need to know that they are loved. And I think that is a insulating, it's not the perfect thing and doesn't work in all circumstances because it doesn't always get through, but if it gets through, I think it's the best chance that someone has, that child has, and that family has to have a healthy relationship.

## Lauren Pinkston 30:42

It's incredible how just the presence of love and being able to feel that manifested in your body, it really does transcend all of the sociological phenomenons that we try to put words to because it really kind of disrupts how we expect people to respond or how we expect them to process trauma. And I'm going to wrap up with one more question. I didn't expect the conversation to go this way. But people who listen to this podcast know that I am an anti-trafficking researcher and so vocationally that's what I do. And within the anti-trafficking space, there is a lot of debate around prostitution, around women's rights and criminalization and legalization of prostitution andthe way that you have spoken about your Korean mother, the

work that she did, and the strength and the resilience that she had, also pushes up against some of the more conservative approaches to prostitution in the world today. But there are plenty of women who have worked in the field of of sex that say, "I have a right to not be rescued from this work" and I try to present that alternative narrative anytime that I can. Between the way that you entered the world, how you how you grew up as a kid, the way that you grew up in a family that adopted you. I just feel like there are so many pieces here talking to you, that are an invitation to allow people to be human in the way that they that they process the world around them. If you had to put words to a larger societal phenomenon of children, families, and the way that we all grow together in society, how would you paint a picture of caring for vulnerable children in a way that accounts for their full humanity? Is that is that question clear enough? I don't really know where all I'm going there. But...

## Milton Washington 33:07

Give me more clarity on that because it's, I think it's a specific thing that you're asking and I just want to make sure...

#### Lauren Pinkston 33:13

Well, I honestly I'm trying to get there myself. I will say that a lot of people who listen to this podcast as well come from a faith background, and sometimes that that understanding of adoption is very basic. There are kids in need, or kids that have families. We're going to adopt them and then everything's going to be great and we're going to make a beautiful video and it's going to be the end and, you know, that's the end of the story. Sociologically, there's so many layers to identity, so many layers to who we are as people and the way that we interact with one another. And I'm wondering for you, if there have been overarching narratives around adoption or around ethnicity, that you have just kind of felt like didn't fit you? Or if there were ways that you feel like people should be pushed in some way to reconsider what it means to grow a family via adoption.

# Milton Washington 34:19

Right. You know, this whole thing about vulnerable children around the world in need, and how sometimes adoption is the quote, unquote solution? Let me speak to that. You know, first of all, vulnerable children around the world is a thing and it happens. You know, it even happens in nature. Sometimes, you know, a cub is left by the mom, for whatever reason, right? So, it's a thing that happens that, you know, who would want that to happen? Nobody would want that to happen, you know, but displacement happens all the time. And I think it's one of the toughest things for a mother to get separated with their child. I think it's at the top of the list of some of the worst things that can happen to a human being, you know, but it's just a fact of life. It happens. And there is a whole world of folks with a level of awareness that want to come in and try to do good by helping out, even to the degree of taking in a child as their own. And then there's some other real, you know, suspect players out there that are doing all sorts of devious things. It's a fact of nature. It just happens. It's there's an economy around and you know, anytime you put an economy around something nice, chances are, it's just not going to end up being good, especially when it involves children. Women who are kind of exposed to this economy and there's people behind the scenes pulling strings because there's this economy

and I say that because within the book that I'm writing, you know, I talk about the economy of prostitution in South Korea, because I saw it from my vantage point, as a child, and I saw my mother and I coming from the village, to this camp town, living right across the street from the military base. I saw my mother transform into somebody else, like literally physically transformed, and within her transformation, not only does she aesthetically start to look different... She started from a traditional Korean woman... I didn't know this at the time, but she started to look like a black woman. And not only did she start to look like a black woman, and I didn't know this at the time either, but she started to sound like a black woman. Because the rules... this chapter is called "Prostitution Protocol". The rules behind the military, these kind of rules for engagement with the South Koreans, was, "hey, we have to have prostitution, but we're going to limit it." But the Koreans go, "Well, it has to be limited to these red light districts because we don't want your soldiers running around our country doing that." And the prostitution protocol rules were rooted in the notion of, "Hey, because the black soldiers were the soldiers responsible for spreading disease. We're going to have to keep the black soldiers and white soldiers separate in terms of the prostitutes that they would engage with. And part of the part of this separation will require the prostitute to not only carry VD cards, venereal disease cards, to signify their record of health, but they have to look aesthetically obvious to the soldiers that they would serve." So I'm saying all that to say that, you know, once you create an economy around such a fate you know, a woman and a woman's right to do kind of whatever she wants to do with her body, once you put an economy around that and then and then the displacement of children and the separation of and put an economy around that, you know, there's going to be a whole lot of bad. So you can't really even have a conversation about this in a pure state because it's already sorted. It's just almost a fact of life that you almost kind of have to pick aside and do your little work and do the thing that you can do to try to make an impact on somebody's life. Because chances are you're not going to change the economy, because once there is an economy, that ship has sailed, and, you know, you can debate until you're blue in the face, but there's some bad stuff going on. So, all that to say, you know, I like to focus on first of all, just awareness of the economy - that there is an economy around this thing, so therefore, intrinsically, you're gonna have a dark side to it. That's virtually permanent. But if you are somebody with a good heart, see if you can make a difference in somebody's life, because you can. Get in there, because, you know, this is the yin and yang of it all. If we don't have people that are willing to jump in and to help a hand... And by the way, jumping in to try to do good, you know, you're gonna come under fire. You're gonna, because doing good nowadays, you know, it's a very dynamic thing and people are gonna say this and then and you're doing good, it's not perfect and you're doing good might not even be perfect for that child. So, it requires someone who not only has a good heart, but can withstand the swings and arrows from all direction. But we need that because there is a lot of vulnerable children out there. There are a lot of vulnerable women out there who need the help of good hearted people.

# Lauren Pinkston 41:55

You have just put words to something that I don't think a lot of academics can describe, sociological and philosophical words. Because what you're saying is you're trying to make something good that's already been tainted. That's going to be something that sticks with me, but also, what it means to inject yourself into a system that has been tainted, without the promise that even injecting yourself into that situation is going to lead to the problem, you know, to something perfect in the end. And so just that picture that you just painted for us of arrows coming from all direction is something that's going to stick with me for a long time. I can't thank you enough for the layers of everything that you shared today. The layers of your

story, the layers of who you are, the layers of understanding about culture and people that you've brought to this conversation and it is exactly why I wanted to talk to you today. It's such a such a thrill to get to know you and I would love for you to share with everyone how they can kind of follow along with you or any projects that you'd like to point them towards.

## Milton Washington 43:10

Well, I appreciate that. Thank you so much. And it's like I said, you know, anytime that someone asked me to kind of, you know, have a conversation in earnest about kind of heavy topics that can help others, I'm with it all day long. So I really appreciate the invitation. I really appreciate this engaging conversation. In terms of following along with me, you can look me up on Instagram just by typing in Milton Washington. But my company, I have several different kinds of Instagram handles. The company is Rokmil, and it's Rokmil because it's ROKMIL which is Republic of Korea and "Mil" for Milton and, you know, because I think a lot of what I do here with the photography and the fitness and even the flowers, you know, it's a promise, it's a how I run my business. And my brand is based off of a promise that I made to those kids who didn't accept me and pushed me away and said that I didn't add value. I said that I'm going to be the one who is going to get to America. And when I do, I'm going to fight to become kind of big and strong and powerful and have power. But once I get that power, I'm going to show them that you can have power and be good. And that's what this whole brand is, that's what my mission is and I do business in a way that that oftentimes inspires folks. I try to be as transparent as I can, because I think through transparency, there's plenty of inspiration. Because as I was a kid that didn't start school until I was nine years old, I was well behind academically, but I knew that I was smart and I just needed to be kind of shown. If you can tell me or show me how to do something I can do it. And I like to show people how to conduct and run their businesses to ultimately give freedom, you know, from a lot of life. And that's kind of... If you say "Milton, what are you in the business o?" I'm in the business of community and I'm in the business of inspiration. That's what I'm in the business of. And I think my story lends itself well to that, which is why my company's name is Rokmil, because it's the story about me and where I'm from and what I am. So yeah, follow me on @rokmilstudios, which is the photography side or it's @therokmil for the cannabis side and kind of the storytelling. It's a book that I'm going to have a memoir that eventually it's going to be out, hopefully, called Slicky Boy, but if you punch my name up "Milton Washington" it should come up, Slicky Boy, so they can follow me there.

# Lauren Pinkston 46:33

Awesome. I can't wait to hear when that comes out. And I'll help you promote that however I can. Thank you again for sharing your story and your inspiration and just your inner strength. You just exude like a peace inside of you that is so helpful. So thanks again.

Milton Washington 46:56
Thank you so much for having me.