

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays in the background as Katie speaks.]

Katie Axelson: When we travel, we get to know people who are different than we are. We hear a different perspective and we better understand others' stories. The world becomes a smaller place and we learn to stand with people instead of having opinions on issues. I'm your host, Katie Axelson. This week we're here traveling to Indonesia with Jenny Lee, who's vulnerably trusting us with her story. I have to warn you though, it is in this episode we're talking about impressive environments especially religiously oppressive. We're going to talk about the objectification of women and we're going to talk about abortion. Yes, we are going to go there. If these would not be good things for you to hear right now maybe check out Episode {93} where Brittany Simmons talks about women in leadership, or maybe Episode {92} where we also travel to Indonesia and hear from Janet about what it's like to raise and have a family abroad. Wherever you are, know that Have Hope; Will Travel supports you and there is an episode safe for you - even if it's not this one. Alright, let's bring in Jenny.

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays and then fades as Katie speaks again.]

Katie Axelson: Welcome to Have Hope; Will Travel, I'm your host Katie Axelson. I'm here with a new friend today, her name is Jenny Lee. She grew up in Indonesia, she now lives in the United States. We were actually just talking, we've both lived in Wisconsin. She lives in Connecticut now. She's got a hard story - a unique perspective that I'm really excited to get to hear more about. So Jenny: welcome to the show.

Jenny Lee: Thank you so much for having me! I'm so excited. Yay fellow midwestern!

KA: Here we are, here we are! So thank you so much for being willing to share your story. I know that this is a hard story to share and I know that we already talked and we've talked about the shame with your story so thank you so much for trusting us with it. I know that's not something that you do lightly and I want to start off by saying thank you.

JL: Well, you are very welcome and thank you for listening and I feel this is a very important part of humanity that I think I should share. Especially for fellow women, and with the reproductive rights debate around the country, which like, I can't believe is happening. But yeah. I could definitely contribute from a different perspective, having lived in another country where there's a lot of sexual shame and abortion, while that is - I can't even like, you know? It's like beyond being prohibited, it's beyond taboo.

KA: Sure.

JL: Like for a woman there, it's very dishonorable to have, to have some kind of sexual intercourse outside the marriage and then they get pregnant and then they would have to have an abortion. There's a label for women like that in the country, you know? It's either whatever, "Damaged Goods" or you know, all kinds of objectification. But yeah, we can get through more of that, the process that I had to go through because abortion is illegal in Indonesia, and I would be intrigued how I articulate that. [Jenny laughs.]

KA: Yeah! I am too. So let's start a little earlier in the story: so you were living in Indonesia. Tell us a little bit about what that environment was like for you growing up and I don't know how old you were when you left.

JL: I grew up there. So Indonesia is a mostly Muslim populated, oh 90% or so. But I was also raised in a conservative Chinese family and I also went to Catholic Church and Catholic School.

KA: Okay.

JL: So you can imagine the kind of oppression, pressure, and expectation that fall on women in that environment. Within the outer environment, outside of my family, okay I was raised in Jakarta so it's like around the neighborhood. I would be slut shamed if I walk out in shorts or in tank tops, like although it's like super hot there, right? But I show too much skin and I would have to cover my skin if I don't want to be sexually harassed. Oh but not really. I would be walking home with my Catholic school uniform and I would still be sexually harassed.

KA: Wow.

JL: Yeah. As a middle schooler and high schooler on a daily basis. Right? So that's the environment. Then in the Chinese, in the conservative Chinese family, I had my life mapped out. I was supposed to go to school, not have any contact with any boys until maybe later when I'm at a marriageable age. [Jenny laughs.] I was supposed to go to school, maybe get a job if I'm lucky but if not I would be married off to hopefully you know some boy from a good family, a well-off family. That was the expectations that my family had for me. And then of course, the Catholic church, the Catholic school - well actually, I would talk about the punishing nature, right, of my family and then the Catholic school. They practice corporal punishment and that's just like the normal, that's like the way of living for them for them. In order for them to control the ones who are supposed to perpetuate the culture, or instill what they call "respect" right, "respect" but it's actually just fear, is by beating them up. That's just like, crazy.

KA: Wow.

JL: And then the Catholic Church of course you know and all kinds of shaming and what women should be. Yeah, so I think for me being a girl, there were so many restrictions and my self expression was constricted and suppressed, right? I would be punished if I climbed the gate because I just wanted to see what's going on outside and I shouldn't, and I would bring shame to the family if I climbed a tree, and I really shouldn't be riding a bike 'cause I could hurt my hymen and I could be non-marriageable.

KA: Ohhh.

JL: Yeah. It's that kind of environment.

KA: Yeah.

JL: And it was, yeah I would say not a conducive environment to be myself because the slightest self-expression I would be pushed back to the box or beaten back to the box of conformity. so that's how I would describe how I grew up.

KA: So then what changed? How did you break out of that?

JL: I don't think I ever really broke out of it, it was just more like power struggle the whole time I was there. [Jenny laughs.] A lot of fights with my parents, and I would deal with the sexual harassment on a daily basis and I would fight back. Yeah. It was just a lot of angry days for me. When I felt like I was objectified, I would talk back to like whoever was objectifying me and when I felt like I was constricted, when I could start talking back right? Late teenagers and early twenties. So it was not easy. I had a lot of fights and struggles with my parents and at some point I stopped going to church. Yeah. That caused a lot of turmoil too because I was such a sinner. [Jenny laughs.]

KA: Sure.

JL: And they didn't want me to go to hell. [Jenny laughs.] Yeah and I think I was able to minimize my contact with them by just getting busy at work, so I finished high school and then I went to college and I was recruited for a teaching job in my second semester. I was nineteen and I got a job. I would work maybe twelve hours a day

KA: Wow!

JL: Yeah, pretty much. And I think that's what helped me, kept me busy and it made me forget how oppressive things were for me. And sometimes I would wonder 'cause that was all I knew right, growing up. And I was really unhappy but then I also knew that from my understanding, the limited horizon at that point like, maybe this is what life is supposed to be like? Like me struggling and all that. And then at some point I got a job in Thailand and that changed things for me. And so the first time I actually was in a place where I felt like I wasn't being judged. I got a teaching job, you know the Thais are just really gentle people, they're very welcoming to foreigners. But because I looked like them, you know, they would smile at me, they would kind of accept me as one of them although I don't speak their language. But you know, I was always respectful and I always appreciated them and they were so sweet and accommodating. And so I had a really good time there and I think that was when life became less stressful. And that was probably the first time that I had a more regulated nervous system. [Jenny laughs.] Like, among these calm people in Thailand.

KA: It makes a difference, yeah. So you moved from Indonesia to Thailand. makes sense yeah so how long are you in Thailand?

JL: About four years.

KA: Four years, oh wow.

JL: I did a lot of beach trips. [Jenny laughs.]

KA: As you should!

JL: Yeah, it was amazing.

KA: And then did you go back to Indonesia or where did you go after that?

JL: After that I went to Wisconsin for grad school and I was there for about three years, until I got pregnant and then I moved to Connecticut because my ex-husband's family is from

Connecticut. It only made sense for us to deliver the baby in Connecticut, and we had some family support.

KA: Okay. That helps, I'm glad you have that family support.

JL: Yeah.

KA: Or at least had it. And that wasn't your first pregnancy, correct?

JL: That was not my first pregnancy. My first pregnancy was when I was nineteen.

KA: Okay. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

JL: Oh yeah absolutely. And so that was with my very first boyfriend, a Chinese boy from a well-off family. So that was really interesting, because I guess I can – looking back now, of course I wouldn't have dated him knowing what I know now! – but it was our first sexual experience, right? And now here's the thing too, I - because sex, there's so much shame around sex, we never talked about it. Yeah we would probably get some you know, shell sex education when we're in middle and high school but who pays attention really?

KA: Sure. [Katie and Jenny laugh.]

JL: That was interesting. And there's like, you know all of these weird terms and like whatever but none of that really registered. Okay I guess if you have sex you can get pregnant. That was like the idea. So we knew at that point to be a little careful. I guess not careful enough, right? Because, "Oh wow I'm late. Let's go have it checked." And it turned out to be positive and so when we found out, it was a lot of - wow, trepidation I guess. Like I would say a lot of fear there, a lot of shame there. And honestly my thought that time was like, "Wow I would rather die than if my parents found out about me getting pregnant." And it was yeah, a couple of weeks of fear - like struggling with all of these heavy emotions, but I would especially because abortion is illegal there and it's like kind of underground operations and all that. But that's the thing: when it's illegal, there's no protection. And if something goes wrong you can't turn to anybody, right? So I was really scared and traumatized that time, and I think that time that the boyfriend was just like, "Okay I'll leave it to you to find out. I'll leave it to you to find the best solution," pretty much. And yeah he was an asshole.

KA: Yeah.

JL: But it didn't matter to my parents because he was from a well-off family and I was supposed to marry him. [Jenny laughs.] That was, you know, their perspective. And I got in touch with - so I was like asking for one... so I guess I was, lucky to be well connected to the popular girls in college.

KA: Yeah.

JL: And there's one girl who was well connected and resourceful, and so she gave me a couple of addresses to visit and find out more. And then I found one so he's supposed to be like the gynecologist but he also does the underground operation. And it was just all really fishy, really scary. I had to lie to my parents. "Oh, I'm going to now go shopping, or whatever," and yeah so it was me. And so when I found that doctor, I told my ex-boyfriend that time and he was like,

“Okay so I'm glad you found a doctor. But you know, you might want to stop being so dependent on me about this. Can you go with your friend or something, you know, to do that?” It's like, “Yeah,” right? So yeah that is one thing that a lot of women and girls right? When they're in that position they're really dependent on the mercy of the closest people around them. At least that's how I was brought up. I mean after a lot of arguments, he finally gave in and he took me to the practice and even then: wow! There was all kinds of like people trying to scam us because we didn't know who, who we were supposed to go to. And then we called and we were like, “Oh okay some people are like, trying to sidetrack you,” but you need to go back to the office, which address we gave you. So we went back there. And then the thing too, because it's illegal and all these underground operations are around, and you have all of these - I don't know what you call that, you know it's like people trying to take advantage – right? – of your situation by like sending you to maybe another practitioner or whatever. And so it was just like a lot of dishonesty and a lot of fishiness around the process. And finally I got on the operating table, you know whatever table that was. Yeah, they put this whatever pipe over my face and over my nose, and that was it. I was out. And it was all over. And it turned out to be a very smooth operation, it was, you know, it was pretty much over. And my ex-boyfriend was with me at that time and so okay. You know, we just kind of went back to our lives and I was supposed to go back there to you know, to kind of follow up and see like you know, whatever. But it was all clean and there was nothing wrong with me. Everything went smoothly. I have heard horror stories about that and I think the only thing that was like lifted off of me was, “Okay!” It's like the shame that kind of like lifted. Right? It's fear that was lifted. It's everything, just felt so, so much lighter and it was so much relief. Yeah. So that was pretty much the process. But then - and there's also this awareness that I was breaking the law, and I was doing what is considered taboo and shameful for the culture, for the family, for the religion. For you know, for the society. But who cares? I did not want to have that child.

KA: Yeah. Wow. Thank you for sharing that with us.

JL: You're so welcome. But you're right: I had nobody even to talk about that with. I think sometimes I would like, “Oh wow, at this time of the year he would have been like eighteen,” “...at this time he would be been twenty-two,” or whatever right? But I never really felt like anybody would have understood that, and yeah. For a long time because of the shame, I never really talked about it. yeah.

KA: Yeah.

JL: Yeah.

KA: Is it something you can talk about more openly now or not really?

JL: Oh yeah absolutely because I just don't find that to be shaming anymore. You know, I'm owning that and I had to do that, I had to do what I had to do. I was nineteen. Like what would have happened if I had decided to keep the child? Marrying this asshole? [Jenny and Katie laugh.] Absolutely not. Because that would have been the step that my parents would have taken. “Okay, you're going to marry the father of the child.” Like oh wow, I guess I won't wouldn't have been alive. I would have killed myself long before. And so yeah. In the whole process, although my ex-boyfriend was there, he was not present so I felt alone. You know, it's like wow

the lawbreaking, the shame, the fear, and like nobody really I guess understood what was going on, especially from that culture. But yeah I'm happy at this point to be owning that story. So.

KA: How have you found freedom from that shame?

JL: It took time. I think it took me a few years really. Like, just a few years ago when I felt like I did what I had to do, and I had to rethink if the shame is really from me personally, if it came from me or was it conditioned? Was it instilled by my culture and religion? Because yeah of course, my mother at some point did find some papers that documented my visit. And she was like, "You - did you have an abortion? Like, no this is an address!" Because in Jakarta, in Indonesia, like the place that is infamous for the procedures, you know it's concentrated. So she kind of guessed it and I said, "No I was just visiting a gynecologist," whatever that was. Maybe she knew, maybe she knew I was lying. But whatever that was, there was just I would rather die you know, than if she knew. And it's just like all this fear of judgment right? And finally, just recently, when I started learning about self-acceptance I accepted everything that I've done that has made me who I am right now, including the abortion. I had to do what I did, or I wouldn't have been here right now where I am. And I love where I am, right? And it would have been stupid for me to have kept the baby and go on with the tradition. And like, where would I be? Caged by the fear and the judgment. I could not live like that. In the way I had to free myself and I am proud of myself for choosing the freedom and so that helped me with accepting that story and it taught me to be more careful, and yeah there's no shame in it anymore really.

KA: That's a beautiful feeling.

JL: If anything I'm proud of it.

KA: Wow. So thank you for sharing that because I'm always curious like, "How do people heal from whatever hard experience that they have?" Especially yours is obviously very hard, but any hard experience - like how do people move forward and what does that journey look like? And then I love hearing that you got to a point where you're not shamed by it and even that you are proud of it. Like that's cool to think about how it has made you who you are and how it has shaped who you've become in a positive way.

JL: Yeah. I guess at that point, I just had to do what was intuitive right? And I'm glad that I did, because like, I was a kid.

KA: Right.

JL: I was alone, I was pressured, but I chose to do what I thought was right for myself and I think that's the biggest thing that I'm proud of. I chose me instead of the approval of society.

KA: That's a good point and I think that's something we can all learn from, because I think we're all pressured by society from different things. Choosing what's going to be right for us vs what society says is right for us. on what's going to be right for us versus what society says is right for us.

JL: Exactly. Thank you for that.

KA: How has it affected you being a mother now?

JL: Well I don't think the abortion had anything, you know, I don't think it had any effects on my being a mother now really. My child is now, you know, he's a beautiful boy, he's a nine-year-old. It was an easy delivery, I had a C-section. It went smoothly. And he had so much hair and so loud and big personality and so yeah, I don't think he was affected in any way. And I don't think any abortions have any effects for the like, the next pregnancy because especially because its like so far apart. I was nineteen then when I was pregnant with him I was thirty-four. Yeah, and he's like super smart, super healthy and yeah - I think that what really affects me is the way that I was shaped as a woman in that culture, you know? All the pressure, the expectations of what I should be as a woman like you know, I'm a mother and I'm supposed to also be the housekeeper, the cook, the teacher, the cleaner. and so at some point I had to go back to labor, right, you know like the workforce. I went back to being a teacher and still have to look so pretty! A pretty wife for my ex-husband at that time and yeah that was just not sustainable. Because it was really eating up my emotional health and at some point it crumbled because I fell into depression. All I wanted to do was just hide and whenever I could, whenever I wasn't working I just wanted to hide in a hole and sleep. But yeah, at some point I just had to heal. That didn't come until the divorce. I got a divorce because all of my relationships were pretty much destroyed with my state, my unhealthy emotional state. I was very confrontational, unhappy, and so easily triggered. and I don't think my ex-husband could stand me. and I was not emotionally available for my child, it was such a mess. And so I got a divorce and finally I got to spend time with myself, because we had split custody. And I had like a few days for myself which I didn't know what to do at first. because it was like oh I didn't have to take care of anybody what am I going to do with myself here? [Jenny laughs. It's like, "Oh I don't have t start taking care of anybody?" It's like, "What am I going to do with myself here." But that was the time when I started reconnecting with myself and actually ask myself, "What really makes me happy?" Because I hated my job, I hated everything about my life.and I was suicidal. But by spending time with myself I got to sit with my emotions and heal it. and just allow myself to to immerse in whatever traumatized me and accept it. and I think that's really what helped heal me. Accepting all the trauma, all the wounds, all the ugly stuff and the shame and process that, until I got to this understanding that you know, there's really nothing to be ashamed of. Right? It's like, I finally got to a new level of this personhood. That sees things from a higher level. And yeah of course they of course my parents treated me the way that they did, they raised me the way that they did, and the way that I was raised in this environment and all of that these people did not know better. And I just happened to be born there but without - but if I hadn't been born there.,I wouldn't have aspired to be where I am now where I am appreciated by I mean where I'm appreciated for being who I am instead of conditionally. Like, loved it's not even love right? It's more like all right I'll give you some love if you do this if you do that and I was more like a robot you know kind of conditioned robot rather than a person with my whole personhood and personality and my whole expression. and that was the biggest understanding that I obtained by spending time with myself away from, after I got a divorce - because when I was in the marriage I was still in the system. I was still going through, I was still living the life that was expected of me, that was not aligned with my true self. So once I got out of it it, it was an ugly transition. but still that was so necessary because that made me reconnect with Who I Really Am.

KA: what advice do you have for someone who feels like they're stuck in a tradition or a system

or a shameful environment that's not working for them and they want the healing that you're talking about?

JL: Get out of there! [Jenny and Katie laugh.] I mean that's what I did, right? I mean - I think so this is really interesting. There was this talk, I don't know if you're familiar with Dr Bruce Lipton was talking about all these different cells, all identical. Like you know, similar structure and everything. but then they're put in different environments. So there's one with like no different maybe temperature, there's snow in this one, different kind of - there's probably like music or whatever and they all the cells mutated differently, depending on the environment. Right? And you probably heard about how when you talk to plants, when you talk bad to the sibling and then it died and then you talk lovingly to the other sibling, and it would turn out to be this beautiful plant. Like it's - so you got to change the environment that you're in. And when I was in Jakarta I was living with my parents. But I did change the environment that I was in. I minimized my contact with my parents, and I was going out more with friends at that time. I was already teaching for this English - so it's like some kind of a company that sells English courses. So there's a lot of expats from Europe, Australia, and the U.S. And would hang out with them a lot. I would go to their parties every weekend. And so - and also, I changed my friends. So that, so. I created this completely different environment where I could kind of block out whatever you know I don't know, mood, or whatever air that my parents are creating at home.

KA: Yeah.

JL: But of course I still had to deal with like, all the trauma, the trauma response that I was still living in. But by changing my environment, I changed my aspiration, I changed the momentum of where I was going, right? And of course there has to be some kind of an aspiration: like, where did I want to go? And at that point, I wanted to, I wanted to get a job overseas. And interestingly, I got one in Thailand. [Jenny laughs.] Yeah. So I think it's the inner environment and the outer environment that I would suggest that you can change. You know, it could - I don't know. I guess at that point I was not into spirituality so I wasn't aware of you know the practice of gratitude.

KA: Sure.

JL: But at this point I do know that there's a lot of people who are probably overwhelmed and so easily triggered by negativity of the environment and all that. But what I do first thing in the morning is to generate that joyful, happy energy when the world is asleep. So it could be me dancing or practicing yoga and I would do something that gives myself the most exhilaration. I'm so happy and it makes me smile, right? [36:06] And that happy energy is what armors me from say, the news, or when I go to work, like negative colleagues or road rage and you know all those things. But yeah, you can - you have the capability of generating that happy energy and with intention, and then you can then build your life, build your day - it's day by day - that energy of love and happiness that you've created first thing in the morning. I mean that's something practical that I do.

KA: And I think it makes such a difference too like if you start your day hitting snooze, hitting snooze, hitting snooze, running behind, eating your breakfast and doing your makeup in the car on your way to work. Like, I hate that Environment because I feel like then I start my day

stressed. Can I do it? Sure. Do I want to? Absolutely not. So I actually set my alarm a little bit earlier than I need to so I have the time to hit snooze – because I know I'm not popping it out of bed the instant the alarm goes off – without running behind. And then take the time. I like to read or to workout or whatever it is that I like to do to get myself set for the day, so that's good.

JL: Yeah exactly. I completely understand for some people when you wake up to, say a job you don't like which was me – like school is punishing, my parents were punishing, my environment were punishing. Like the mornings were so hard for me, it was so safe being in bed so I carried that energy through my teenagehood and adulthood and then motherhood and then like I didn't like my job. I couldn't wake up to that. But then when I changed it, stepping out of that hamster wheel right? Stepping out of that environment and create your own environment – your inner environment – by doing something that gives you the most joy. And that's how you then rebuild your life. So say, you take the same route to work - what about trying a different route? You know, so if your routine when getting out of bed is looking at your phone, what about not look at your phone for a little bit and jump on doing something that makes you the happiest. What is that? Right? And by doing that, you are nourishing yourself emotionally, and it's that emotional nourishment that actually gives you energy that gives you energy that inspires you to do something, to take a - let me see... a step that is not normal, that is not what you normally would do.

KA: Sure.

JL: And who knows what that would be. But the first thing is to prioritize your own joy generation.

KA: That's good.

JL: If that makes sense.

KA: Yeah that does make a lot of sense and that's good. I like your point too about just mixing it up, even just a little bit. Like taking a different route to work. I know I've got a route that I always take, like we all do. There was one day I went a different way, and I was like “Hey this is actually faster!”

JL: There you go! [Jenny laughs.] So much fun.

KA: What have I not asked you that you want to talk about?

JL: Oh, actually I can't think of any. I mean, how about what you did last weekend? [Jenny and Katie laugh.]

KA: Last weekend I did home renovation projects because I'm in the middle of selling my house, I went to a concert, and then I played tourist in my own city to make sure I've done all of the cool things before I leave.

JL: Oh that is amazing. How long do you have left in Minneapolis?

KA: So, about a month.

JL: Wow, oh that's going to go by so quickly. And it's so much fun in Austin.

KA: I'm so excited about it! But it's gonna be a -
JL: What a temperature difference!

KA: Yes! [Jenny and Katie laugh.] I know we were talking earlier about how you miss the midwest winter. It might take me a couple years before I miss it, but I do think at some point I will miss it.

JL: Yeah. Like, and you can always go back.

KA: It's true and I still have family here, so I'll come back and visit and it'll be Christmas time and snowy so.

JL: How fun is that! There's a lot of things going on in Austin and I have - so there's a show that I really love on Netflix called Somebody Feed Phil, I don't know if you're familiar with that.

KA: Okay, I've never heard of it.

JL: It's like a food travel kind of show. This guy Phil, he's so goofy and so funny and happy and he would go to all these different places like Philadelphia, or Portland. And then one of the places that he visited was Austin, Texas and he was like, showing all these beautiful barbecue stuff and amazing food trucks. Like, "Oh I gotta go to Austin to try this place!"

KA: Right?!

JL: Yeah!

KA: Everyone tells me the food, the music, the culture scene, is really great in Austin so I'm looking forward to exploring that.

JL: I bet it's going to feel like a different country.

KA: I think you're right. [Jenny and Katie laugh.]

JL: It's so exciting.

KA: Thank you. Thank you, thank you. So I have one final question for you then. Because we're always learning here on the show – the whole point of the show is to create a culture of learning – what's something that you've learned recently?

JL: Oh my gosh. This just turned out, I mean it just turned up yesterday morning. During my morning routine, and I always have this audiobook playing and it was Martha Beck's Finding our North Star or something like that. But it's an excellent book and I love Martha Beck because she's so funny and even in her books! So this is what she said so like you know, backstory: I think I told you how I grew up, like how women are like repressed into like some kind of a mold and like what you should be. And so it's like if I get out of the mold then oh yeah, it's like you're asking for trouble. And so I grew up with this idea that nobody was supporting me. You know? Like everybody around me just wanted to see me lose right? They can't see me succeed because if I succeed, I don't know - I think like, I've always was a pariah anyway right? It's like whatever I did, it was never good enough and nobody supported me in whatever pursuit that I was - whatever that I was trying to do. And so I was listening to Martha Beck yesterday and one line that she was saying: instead of thinking what everybody would think about you when you do

certain things, right? Because interestingly, everybody is just in your head. What does - like what will everybody think? Who is everybody?

KA: Sure.

JL: But what if, what if you think about “everybody” as “people who want to see you win.” And that really hit home for me because of the way that I grew up. My parents were never supportive. It’s like, there was this time where I was like “Oh I want to be a model!” and my mom was like, “Your nose is too big. You can’t be a model.” Yeah. Right? Or yeah - it’s like stuff like that. Or “You eat too much,” or “You’ve got such a - you’re so flat chested.” Or like all of that kind of judgment. And so like, okay - my “everybody” was really just my mom! And she’s not here. It was like, what is “everybody” here? Everybody that’s around me, my friends who are always supporting me, who are always cheering for me, and all of these networking female - I have this networking groups of female entrepreneurs and they’re amazing women who are always cheering each other, and I’m like, in the middle of that! I’m like “Yeah! Everybody around me actually wants to see me win!” And I can see it because I was so attached to, you know, my past “everybody” which is my mother, right? And so that was my biggest learning moment, I was able to detach that the “negative everybody” into this like “Oh no, I’m actually in an environment where everybody wants to see me win!” And so that was an emotional time for me, but yeah I thought that that might be something I can share and I hope that people let go of the idea of “What will everybody think?” What if everybody wants to see you win?

KA: Right. What if everybody wants to see you win? Oh that’s so good. I also love your question of like, “Who is everybody?” Or one of my friends has a variation of that question if I like, I’m saying something that’s not positive of myself she’s like, “Who told you that?” and I’m like, “Oh. Who did tell me that?” And sometimes it’s exact words that I recognize from somebody negative, but sometimes it’s just words that I have put on myself. And so taking that moment to go, “Who did tell me that? And what is actually true?”

JL: Oh, I love it. Yeah. “Is that true.” Byron Katie, if you’re familiar with her, so whatever thought that you have that is self-defeating, ask yourself, “Is that true? Is it absolutely, really, really true?” [Jenny laughs.] And then when you ask that thought, it’s like “Oh, suddenly it’s invalidated.” And it’s not so bad anymore.

KA: Right! It doesn’t have any power anymore.

JL: Exactly.

KA: That’s so good. Well Jenny, thank you so much for your time today. Thank you for trusting us with your abortion story, and your life experiences. Thank you for educating us and inspiring us. I know I’ve got things that I want to go sit and process after our conversation, so thank you so much.

JL: Well thank you so much for having me and allowing me to share this with you. It’s always good to talk to now a fellow podcaster! I’m actually going to have a podcast myself.

KA: Tell me about that!

JL: Oh sure. So it’s about I love storytelling and what really inspires me is generational and

ancestral stories of how we get where we are. And I was always fascinated by the story of how my grandparents got to Indonesia.

KA: Oh sure.

JL: They escaped famine and then they went through some like revol- some civil war and revolution you know, like in Indonesia and then they came out victorious anyway. So that was amazing. And I have heard of other stories, immigration stories of my friends who are Polish, who are Irish, and wow they're all so fascinating. And that's so - I don't actually know what the theme is supposed to be but I just want that to be like stories of humans, really, and how how life becomes, that I think the first episodes, the first few episodes I'm going to focus on immigration stories, of like okay so - Russian and Irish, okay, what's the background? How did the Russian predecessors or ancestors come about? How did they meet? And I think that would be so fascinating right? It's like all the ups and downs that they've gone through and where they are and honestly another thing to learn is okay, there have been a lot of trauma. And that is also like what I want to express in the podcast. I've gone through a lot of trauma from my upbringing but my parents did not know better because they were raised that way too. And the previous generation too because there was like so much pressure and so much trauma from politically right? And there was famine and all this kind of stuff. But the idea is that with them, coming over to a better place, to a better environment for the next generation, is so that we could live life that they dream of. Right? And we are the evolved version of the previous generation.

KA: Yeah.

JL: And there's this thing about forgiving and forgiving - but you know what? Maybe there's nothing to forgive. Because we're living right now, we're living the life that they manifested for us. Right? And so that's the message of the podcast, and I think the story, you know from the different parts of the world, would be so fascinating to learn. So yeah that's what it's going to be about.

KA: Does it exist yet?

JL: I'm going to actually have my first guest next week! I'm just starting recording.

KA: Awesome! Well when it exists, you better send me a link 'cause I want to listen to it.

JL: I will, absolutely! [Katie and Jenny laugh.]

KA: Awesome.

JL: Thank you for your curiosity!

KA: Yeah absolutely. Anything else you want to say before I stop the recording?

JL: No, not really unless you have any other questions.

KA: I don't - I mean I'm sure we can ask questions all day, but I think we've covered it.

JL: Yeah we've covered a lot haven't we? [Jenny and Katie laugh.]

KA: We have! Awesome. As always, a big thanks for listening. I hope there was something in

hearing Jenny's story that made you think. Maybe you felt challenged. Maybe you heard something you never thought about before. Maybe you're a little bit different because you've heard her perspective. That's what Have Hope; Will Travel is all about: to hear different perspectives, to grow, to change, to better understand how others see the world. We are closing in on a hundred episodes. I cannot believe that! How do you think we should celebrate? Let me know your thoughts - send them to me on Instagram at @KatieAxelson or send me an email at Katie@KatieAxelson.com. Until then my friend, know that you are loved, know that you are cherished, know that you are valuable, know that your story matters. We will see you again soon. Have a great day, bye.

[Katie stops speaking and the theme music: upbeat electronica plays before fading out.]