

The interview with Michael White

Michael White, Chris and Jussey

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Michael: Did someone play a part in introducing you to this trust and this love that you can think of?

Chris: Not really, but I did have a nextdoor neighbour that was nice to me.

Michael: It was a neighbour?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Who was the neighbour? What was, could you say a little bit about the neighbour?

Chris: Um, well I used to get left on my own a lot,

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: and she used to, um,

Michael: It was a woman, yeah?

Chris: mmm, and a man, they were married.

Michael: And a man?

Chris: Yeah.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: And they used to come and get me, and feed me.

Michael: Really.

Chris: Mmm. So that was nice.

Michael: What, do you remember their names?

Chris: No, I can't, I've got a picture, I've got a photograph of them.

Michael: Have you really!

Chris: Well of their legs (laughter)!

Michael: Their legs! So you recall that they would come and get you and they would feed you, and

Chris: And I remember, I remember her sitting me on her lap and just rocking me.

Michael: And she would rock you?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Yeah. So, comforting you?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Wow.

Chris: Yes, that was special.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: And you would have been quite young at the time I guess if you were sitting on her lap and she was rocking you. What's your guess about what that meant to you to be taken in and rocked in the way that you were, and to be fed, I mean.

Chris: Yeah.

Michael: What's your sense of what that would have been like for you?

Chris: That you're worth feeding.

Michael: You're worth feeding? yeah.

Chris: That you're worth something.

Michael: That you're worthwhile?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: And that you're worth feeding. Have you spoken about these two people very much in recent times?

Chris: Er, I tried to to the psychologist but she sort of dismissed it.

Michael: Did she?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Wow.

Chris: So, um,

Michael: Okay.

Chris: But I've spoken to you about it.

Jussey: Yes, she has, mmm.

Michael: So, and they were nextdoor neighbours?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Yeah. And,

Chris: And I also remember, this has just come to me, I remember that the guy talking to my dad and they had a punch-up,

Michael: Really.

Chris: Because I think he was trying to protect me. And then my dad built this huge fence and so I couldn't go around there anymore, mmm.

Michael: Okay. So there were blows exchanged?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: And your father's response was to exclude you from that connection?

Chris: Mmm. Bastard (quietly).

Michael: Say that again.

Chris: Bastard!

Michael: Bastard.

Chris: Mmm, yeah.

Michael: What's your sense of what it was that these two people were really appreciating about you? Obviously you were, you said that you felt special, you were sort of special to them in some way?

Chris: I know that she taught me how to sew.

Michael: She taught you how to sew?

Chris: And I like sewing now, but the voice of abuse doesn't let me do it sometimes, makes my eyesight go and my wrists hurt, but I fight it and I still sew.

Michael: So she taught you how to sew?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: And I'm not too bad at it (laugh). Mmm.

Michael: So she was really interested in your life and in you having skills?

Chris: Yeah.

Michael: Wow.

Chris: Yeah, special lady.

Michael: And you said that it was comforting of you?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: And it gave you a sense of being worth, worthwhile?

Chris: Yep.

Michael: And it was sort of feeding of you in ways?

Chris: Mmm, definitely, you know, I guess I learnt love from them, yeah.

Michael: I was just interested in the history of your, like you were able to connect through these gossamer threads in your life, and I was just wondering about the history of that, you know, how it was that you were available to be in this gossamer connection with Jussey, how it is that you're available to be in gossamer connections with others. And I just wondered about the foundation for that, you know. So, does that make sense?

Chris: Yes.

Michael: I'm just curious about that.

Chris: Yes, that makes sense.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: A lot of sense, yeah. Because you are your experiences to a certain extent

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: And if, I think if you hadn't experienced any,

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: Any connection with any sort of nurturing at all,

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: I think it would be pretty hard to heal.

Michael: Pretty hard to heal? Did you have a sense that those neighbours were really appreciative of that little girl? That they really appreciated that little girl, the one that you've got re-connected with?

Chris: Yes, I guess, well they must have.

Michael: They must have, yeah.

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: I wonder if they knew about your 'soul-light'*, whether that shone through to them or not.

Chris: Oh, maybe, mmm.

Michael: Well, I don't know, it seems that you were special to them in some way,

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Like I hear that this man came to blows with your father over you and, yeah.

Chris: Mmm, mmm. I guess they did. Mmm.

Michael: Because I just wonder whether or not these qualities and skills and abilities have been acknowledged by others at any time in your life? And I have the sense that some of them may have been by your neighbours. I'm just wondering what sustained them that made it possible for you to keep on holding onto them in some way.

Chris: Mmm. I love animals.

Michael: You love animals? Yeah?

Chris: I've always had cats.

Michael: Did the neighbours have, these neighbours have?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: They did have, yeah?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: What did they have?

Chris: Cats.

Michael: They had cats did they?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: I didn't realise this till now (laugh), wow! Yeah.

Michael: Really! Do you remember playing with their cats?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Yeah.

Note:

* This term, 'soul-light', was one that Chris had used about her life earlier in the conversation, before the extract that is included here.

Chris: And I remember, I've got a picture, I picked a photograph of me with a cat and I'd taken my singlet off and put it on the cat and walking around!

Michael: Is that the neighbour's cat? Or,

Chris: Well it could have been mine, see my memories are very,

Michael: Sure, yeah, but you have a sense that, that you,

Chris: Yeah, and I know that I was in my garden a lot and I know that I always have this connection to butterflies,

Michael: Butterflies, yeah,

Chris: And birds and cats,

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Chris: And nature, I guess, that's been my connection

Michael: Were these neighbours appreciative of gardens do you know? Or is that,

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: They were, they had,

Chris: They had a little garden.

Michael: Yeah, but,

Chris: Because in England you don't have a lot of space.

Michael: Okay, but what gives you a sense that they were appreciative of gardens and, you know, I guess the spirit of one's connection with gardens, did you have any sense of that?

Chris: Because they were nice.

Michael: Because they were nice? Yeah, okay. I'm just interested in the things that you treasure and I guess experiences that may have been acknowledging of that. Um, what do you reckon it was like for them to, you know, to have you responding to them in the way that you did, the neighbours, like, what did it mean to them? You joined that neighbour in her interest in sewing, and I just wonder what that meant to her – have you joining with her in that?

Chris: Mmm. Well I enjoy helping other people so I guess she must have got that enjoyment.

Michael: She must have got some enjoyment? Yeah?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Okay. What's your sense of what this contributed to the life of the neighbours to have this connection with Chris? And what's your sense of that, what this meant to them?

Jussey: Um, well I guess in listening to this, you know, what was it like for them to know there was a small child nextdoor who'd been left, and for them to have then, you know, gone to her and welcomed her into their home, and I guess that they obviously spent time with her and, you know, with the sewing and the gardening as well, and, you know, and it doesn't sound like there were other children in their home, so you probably brought some delight into their home as well.

Chris: Mmm mmm.

Jussey: And the fact that,

Chris: Because they were older,

Jussey: Yeah.

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: So you think that part of Chris's contribution to their life was delight?

Jussey: I'd say so, yeah.

Michael: What other guesses do you have, like you know Chris and what was it like for them to have Chris responding to what they had to offer, you know? What was that like for them, or to have Chris join this nextdoor neighbour in sewing, what's your guess about what that was like for her?

Jussey: Yeah, I can imagine it would be a real joy, and um,

Michael: Delight, joy, you think it might have brought joy to her life?

Jussey: Yes, I think so, yeah, to have been able to share with a, you know, a small child, and she obviously would have, well, you know, the tale of being held and rocked, you know.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Jussey: Like they're not things people just do, you know, automatically, so it probably brought love into their lives as well.

Michael: So Chris might have brought love into their life as well? As the other way around, like a,

Jussey: Yes, mmm, and maybe that sense of nurturing as well, you know, so,

Michael: I was wondering about acceptance, whether they felt really accepted by Chris, in the way that she was then. I don't know, it's just, I was just thinking a little bit about, I got to hear quite a bit about what the neighbours had contributed to your life and I'm getting to hear a little bit about what you might have contributed to their life.

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: My guess is that their life was, based on what Jussey is saying, and I don't know if that strikes a chord with you, but if it does,

Chris: It must I suppose.

Michael: Yeah, well, it's just a speculation but my guess is that their life was richer for having you as a ...

Chris: I didn't like it myself then, so I didn't think I was any good for anything, you know.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Chris: I probably didn't see it.

Michael: What's it like to look at it now in this way, to think a little bit about what you gave back or contributed to them?

Chris: Yeah, I guess I did.

Michael: What's it like to look at that, and to think about that?

Chris: It makes me feel good.

Michael: Does it?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Why is that? And to be thinking about what you gave to their life? Why does that make you feel good?

Chris: Because they were so nice to me that I could have given back to them.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Chris: I thought it was a one-way thing but now I realise it was a two-way thing.

Michael: A two-way thing, yeah.

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: What difference does that make to how you see yourself as a child and as a person to,

Chris: Well, I've got even more admiration for them now.

Michael: Have you? Yeah.

Chris: I have a lot but I've got more now.

Michael: (laugh) Even more admiration for that little girl.

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Yeah, okay. I wonder about the link between this and what you're offering to other women now as well, I'm always interested in any links, and – sorry, you were going to say something Jussey?

Jussey: I was just going to say about the role of Ted (teddy bear) I think in this too, you know.

Michael: Ted? Yeah.

Jussey: Like when you talk about gossamer threads and that, that, um, for what you shared, Chris, that Ted had always been there and had played a gigantic role.

Chris: I don't know about Ted (laugh), he's just always there and I sometimes, like, he's just so a part of me that I forget he's there.

Jussey: You know, I think when David (Denborough) came out to meet with us recently I think Ted also had a hard time at the hands of your father too, and there were times when you would have to keep him safe,

Chris: Had to hide him.

Jussey: And had to hide him and things, and, so that there's a long tender history here too, mmm.

Michael: Yeah, yeah. Another treasured, another treasured connection.

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: Yeah. So, I'm hearing about the history of a little girl and a grown woman who has put such a high premium on connections, treasured connections, for such a long, long period of her life, and it's quite evocative of this image of you. And, yeah, I guess, I just wondered what it was like, what's your guess about what it was like for those neighbours when Chris's father built that fence around the house – what's your guess about what that was like for them.

Jussey: Devastating.

Michael: Devastating to them?

Jussey: Mmm, because not only would there,

Michael: I guess there was a great deal of pain and anguish over it?

Jussey: Yes, mmm. Because they would have been the loss of that little girl coming into their lives, and also maybe the knowledge of, well, what's happening on the other side of the fence.

Michael: As well.

Jussey: Mmm, mmm. So, that could have been, yeah.

Michael: So two things – they're missing Chris, really missing her.

Jussey: Mmm, mmm, and they were worried.

Michael: What's it like to think about how they, how much they must have missed you?

Chris: I feel sorry for them.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Chris: I'm a very compassionate person really.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: I feel sad for them.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: And it's my guess, just from what I've heard, they missed you terribly, and also felt really in a difficult space over knowing what you might have been going through and not knowing what to do about that. Is that what you're thinking?

Jussey: Mmm, mmm.

Michael: Yeah.

Jussey: And I guess also the fact that the husband had spoken up on an earlier occasion and that had led to blows, and then this fence coming up – he probably would have felt at a loss to know what to do now, and not wanting to jeopardise Chris further either, because we could predict that he probably had some inkling that, you know, things were not good.

Chris: But there was nowhere to go in those days.

Michael: There wasn't, there wasn't, yeah.

Jussey: No.

Chris: No-where to go, no-one believed you.

Jussey: No.

Michael: Yeah. Do you have other feelings as well to think about how they might have missed you, you feel sad for them – do you have other feelings as well, like, how do you feel about yourself in response to just acknowledging the sadness that they might have gone through at no longer being able to be with you?

Chris: Mmm. I miss them now (laugh)!

Michael: You miss them!

Chris: Yeah, I do.

Michael: Yeah, okay.

Chris: Yeah, I feel sad for them.

Michael: Feel sad for them?

Chris: Mmm.

Michael: I just wondered, this is just pure speculation, I don't know if it's the case or not, and it's just something to think about, in that I get a sense of what you were saying about Chris's work, I had this image of her comforting, almost rocking others – Chris talked about hugging them, but I had a sense of the comfort that she brings them, and these skills in comforting in ways. And I was trying to figure out what was the foundation of these skills, and I just wonder if whether there is a

link between Chris's connection with these neighbours and this woman, and the work that Chris is doing to bring comfort and to find ways of contributing to the healing of other women's lives. And if there is a link, how would this woman feel about how Chris has taken this forward, you know, how would she feel about the fact that there is a bit of a legacy here that comes from her life that Chris is stepping into and extending on. What's your guess about how she would feel about this?

Jussey: Oh, I think she would be probably deeply touched.

Michael: Would she?

Jussey: And I was thinking as you were saying that Michael about like the seeds from her garden, you know, now coming to these gardens and,

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: That's a lovely metaphor.

Jussey: you know, because, as Chris has said, gardening has been a huge thing, and that in the work that Chris does now with the women, yeah, it is like bringing those seeds or ball of threads or whatever, of love, you know, from that history there to now to share with these women,

Chris: I never thought of that before, thank you.

Jussey: Mmm (laugh).

Chris: It's brilliant (laugh)!

Michael: What is it like for you to think that? Is that, you said that you never thought about that before

Chris: No, never, I haven't, no.

Michael: What's that like for you to draw out things like this?

Chris: Well, it makes me feel like I've got some sort of history now, like I've got, not just the nothingness, like I feel like I've only been around for a year!

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: Um, because that's sort of how old, I'm really 49 but I only feel about a year old!

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: Pulling the bits of me together, but now I feel like I've got something way back there somewhere, with a bit of a connection, that's good.

Michael: What's it like to feel that connection way back there?

Chris: Well it makes me feel a bit normal.

Michael: Normal!

Chris: Whatever normal is (laugh)! Because, you know, everyone raves on about their family and, you know, grandma did this – and I haven't got any of that, I have nothing, nothing.

Michael: Yeah, well we're really talking about something, it's not exactly that, but it's something else. Can I ask Jussey another question about – do you remember, you don't remember this woman's name I guess, or could you take, would you like to give her a name?

Chris: Auntie Mary.

Michael: Auntie Mary, okay, Auntie Mary.

Chris: I don't know why that's coming through.

Michael: Okay.

Jussey: Okay.

Michael: So, Auntie Mary, if Auntie Mary could be here and listening to this conversation and she was just hearing a little bit about some of these links and about how Chris has sort of stepped into this and is, you know, taking up some of these skills in her comforting and healing others, and there's a link between that and what Auntie Mary stood for. How do you reckon Auntie Mary would be feeling if she was here? What would she be thinking about, her life, and,

Jussey: Her life, oh, I think she would be deeply touched at maybe the loving and the tenderness that she had shown that little girl who we could predict was probably quite terrified, you know, and that she offered that loving to her and welcome to her, and that to see that little child now as an adult woman doing the same for other very hurt and wounded women. I think that Auntie Mary would be deeply touched by that, mmm.

Michael: Do you reckon she'd think that her life was for something?

Jussey: Oh, absolutely, yes.

Michael: Yeah, even though she got cut off from Chris?

Jussey: Even though the fence got built, yeah.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: This is, oh dear, it's beautiful (teary).

Michael: What's beautiful Chris?

Chris: Oh, to think that I could do something to honour her.

Michael: Yeah.

Jussey: Mmm, mmm.

Chris: Oh wow!

Michael: Your sense is that she'd be, what, how would she be feeling towards Chris over the steps that Chris has taken?

Jussey: Um, well, probably quite tender I think Michael.

Michael: Tender towards her?

Jussey: Yeah, delighted, overwhelmed, probably, know what I mean. Like, because like to see what Chris does with the women, and that these are all women who've been subject to horrific events, and to see the healing that Chris brings into their lives, and so I think Auntie Mary would be blown away by it all! (laughter) And Uncle Jack!

Chris: I just never thought that I was even on the same planet as everyone – I didn't think I could do anything to say thankyou (teary).

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Jussey: What greater thing could you do for them?

Chris: Mmm. Yep.

Jussey: Do you want a tissue too Michael? (laugh)

Michael: I wouldn't mind one actually. Mmm. I was thinking a lot about their sadness over the loss of their connection with Chris and what it would mean to them to know that that wasn't really lost, and that it was some of those gifts that were also now being expressed to other women in Chris's special way of doing that. So, that's what I was thinking about, yeah.

Chris: So that's where the gossamer threads come from? Wow, I never knew.

Michael: Chris are you saying that you feel less alone in a sense, you feel more,

Chris: I feel like a continuum.

Michael: Like a continuum, yeah.

Chris: Mmm, and that will be passed on to my children and to, if they ever have, if I ever be a grandma one day, to bring the children, yeah.

Michael: Or, as you said, that is something big, yeah.

Chris: It's big, it's big. I mean, if you look at history through the years, and the stories that people tell and the connection is vital, and I have never had that.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: I mean, like my mother is still alive but I choose not to see her.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Chris: Through self-care.

Michael: Yeah, wow.

Chris: Mmm, so to have these people that loved me and respected me for me.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: That's big.

Michael: Yeah.

Chris: That's real big. Mmm.

Michael: Their images will stay with me as well. I just have this image of their sadness of losing their connection with you and this image of, you know, their comforting skills and my sense of what you brought to their life, and what Jussey helped draw out. This will stay with me, it's very beautiful.

Chris: Mmm.