

# Gregory Han

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## SPEAKERS

Tiffany Puett, Gregory Han

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**T** Tiffany Puett 00:04

This is Tiffany Puett interviewing Gregory Han. It is March 14, 2022, and this is for our Religions Texas project. Hi, Greg.

**G** Gregory Han 00:17

Hi Tiffany, it's good to see you. Thank you for the opportunity.

**T** Tiffany Puett 00:21

Yeah, great to see you as well. As we get started, let's start with that life history question. Can you talk about your story and those formative events in your life that have made you who you are today?

**G** Gregory Han 00:37

Sure. Looking back at where I am right now, I have a shorthand way of introducing myself, and I think each of these pieces speaks to my evolution, especially in a religious engagement. I am a half-Asian, Midwestern-raised, Jesuit-educated, Harvard-trained, Texas-residing Presbyterian minister, and each one of those things, I think, has been important. The first thing is, is that I am a child of two races and two cultures. My father is an immigrant from China and my mother can trace her heritage back to the American Revolution. And so her side of the family has been in America for multiple generations, and my father's first-generation, or really immigrant, which, in some ways, at least, on my father's side, makes me first-generation. And when I was born in 1971, I often think about that in 1968, with the landmark Supreme Court case, Loving v. Virginia, there were still, I think, somewhere around seventeen states with some sort of anti-miscegenation laws still on the books, just three years prior to my birth. Of course, many of those were regarding prohibiting marriages between people who are Black and people who are White, but that is still the milieu out of which I was born.

G

Gregory Han 02:16

And so and I grew up in a medium-sized town in Wisconsin, where there weren't, at least at that point, many Asians running around and far less half-Asians running around. And so whenever I'd look in the mirror, I would see myself, but myself as the amalgamation or the combination of two people, and also two races, two cultures, one that looked a lot like the rest of the people in my part of the world, immigration patterns that deeply reflected German and Polish ancestry. And then another part of me that was literally from the other side of the world. And so a lot of my formative years and my identity is about finding places to fit, and recognizing that I fit most anywhere, and I also fit nowhere. And so I think a lot of the work that I've done, whether it's been in interreligious engagement or not, has been about understanding where boundaries are, and walking those boundaries. And, I don't know, maybe building bridges across boundaries as well. Recognizing that boundaries are important. It's what gives us identity. It's what gives us creativity. It's what gives us meaning and the variety and diversity in life.

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Gregory Han 03:51

As I've often told people, I'm not looking to create some interfaith mass of goo. Interfaith is a verb, and that only happens when people of different faiths get together. If everyone is of the same faith, interreligious engagement doesn't happen, though I would also say, as I'm jumping head thinking about when I was pastoring churches and looking out into the congregation, even though they all would affirm they were Christian, and most of them would affirm they're Presbyterian, there were 300 people in the congregation that's, 300, actually, varieties of Christianity in the end as well. No religion is monolithic, and even within a congregation, it's not monolithic, either.

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Gregory Han 04:38

So growing up biracial and then the first thing I ever wanted to be vocationally probably was an architect. I don't know what six year old wants to be an architect. But then, when I look back, I often tell people that ministry was my first vocational curiosity. I think I remember preaching my first sermon in third grade. It was in Sunday school. There was a low set of shelves that at that point maybe came up to maybe right above my waist, and I backed myself into a corner, and I pulled this shelf in front of me like it was a pulpit. But thinking about ministry as a vocation didn't happen really seriously until maybe late college. But the study of religion is by far my academic love. Theology is my academic love that I fell in love with in college, and I'll get to that in a minute, as I'm moving back and forth, as these stories often do. So I think about my biracial background, I think in some ways that I had sort of a pastoral sensitivity, a listening sensitivity, an emotional sensitivity, as well, to people's stories. I think recognizing that my story was of people from different places, and trying to find places as well. And I think I've also just been very interested in different people. I find people very, very fascinating as well, and and their stories.

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Gregory Han 06:23

I had a pretty typical of childhood and upbringing. Did well in school, thought about different

options, and ended up at Georgetown University, a long way away from northern Wisconsin, because I had shown some facility with languages. I went in as a language major and quickly switched to a liberal arts major. At Georgetown, it's called American Studies. And a lot of that was because of my thesis advisor, a mentor, who taught my first theology class. As a Jesuit university, we had two required theology courses, and everyone takes the theology 101, which at Georgetown is called The Problem of God. And every professor teaches it a little bit differently, and my Problem of God professor, Elizabeth McKeown, who ended up being my thesis advisor—I took every class that I could from her. And for some reason, second semester my freshman year, I fell in love with theology, and the study of religion, and the study of culture, and people, and the forces that shape us, particularly the forces that we sometimes don't recognize. And those are the ones that are often the most powerful.

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Gregory Han 08:00

I still wasn't thinking about work as in religion, work in ministry. And I was thinking about - actually, I wasn't sure what I was thinking about. I was thinking about doctoral work, but in the end, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. And when I graduated, I worked for two years as a legal assistant for a big law firm in DC, quickly thinking about law school, and then I stopped thinking about law school, rather quickly. The law firm asked for about a two year - so about halfway through my second year, I went home to Wisconsin and sat in a particular place at a camp that I went to as a kid. And I prayed, and I said, "I'm not sure what to do." And there was a voice from the great beyond or from the great within, however we often want to talk about this voice, that said, "Don't worry." And there was a little whimsy in it as well, like, "Don't worry, I've got this covered."

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Gregory Han 09:11

When I returned that summer, it was time. If I was going to think about graduate school it was time to apply. And I knew I wanted to do it in religion. I thought I was going to send out a bunch of PhD applications, but I sent out six Master of Divinity applications. And still not quite sure about pursuing ordained ministry, but ended up then, in the fall of 1995, at Harvard Divinity School. And that's where I think I decided at that point to pursue ordained ministry as a Presbyterian minister. And so that was another formative experience of theological training as well as ministerial formation and spiritual formation at a place that is known for its diversity and known more for its academic prowess. But it is the place that I wanted to be.

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Gregory Han 10:18

I guess I'll have to back up a moment as well. I'm sorry this is not going chronologically. So I would say formative moment number one was just the nature of being biracial. Formative moment number two was - and I didn't cover this yet - was the religious community in which I was raised: a very solid Presbyterian congregation in Wisconsin, that had some really smart people in it. And I was very much drawn to these intelligent conversations about religion, even at a young age. My third formative moment [would be at] Georgetown. It's such a different world than Wisconsin, Washington, DC, much more diverse. And that's when I really had the opportunity to engage people from different religions, but also particularly different racial backgrounds, and began to understand the things that I didn't know.

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Gregory Han 11:29

And I'd have to say, one of the formative religious experiences was singing in a gospel choir for a year and a half when I was at Georgetown. I didn't do it because I was trying to get woke. I was just looking for a place to fit in, and I was looking for people to be with, because I was definitely further along on that journey of trying to figure out my own personal identity. Now, especially being older, and also being with more people of Asian descent, but also people from other different backgrounds as well, that I think we're also in their own ways trying to understand and figure out their place in the world and their own personal identities as well. The fourth would be my time at Harvard Divinity School, and continued engagement with people of different religions, which one of the many things I enjoyed about Harvard. Unlike being perhaps a denominational seminary, which would be very much more Christian-oriented. I had not only a very diverse Divinity School, but I had the whole university, and the whole Boston Theological Institute as a laboratory of meeting people and learning more.

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Gregory Han 13:07

When I moved to Houston in 1998, I spent seven years pastoring churches after a year as a hospital chaplain. And then I began this back-and-forth with one foot in the academic community and one foot in the pastoral community. Seven years pastoring churches, six years teaching high school, while also teaching electives in religion and directing a chapel program. And then back into the nonprofit world, seven years doing direct interreligious engagement work. And then back into the teaching realm in January of this year, of 2022, teaching high school again, but teaching humanities classes: economics, a theory of knowledge class, which is part of the International Baccalaureate curriculum, as well as a practical ethics course for ninth and tenth graders. I sometimes try to think of myself as a Swiss army knife when it comes to the humanities, and a poster child as well. Undergraduate degree in American Studies, and a master's in divinity from Harvard, and beginning a Ph. D. program in religion in the fall of 2022.

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Gregory Han 14:23

My work over seven years doing direct interreligious engagement work, I think, is a recapitulation what I've experienced at a young age, which is a person walking boundaries, seeking to understand communities, feeling like I fit in every community, but also feeling like I didn't fit in any community. And I don't want that to sound too melodramatic, because it I don't intend it to be. But it has been, for me, a feeling of walking into any house of worship and feeling like what people are trying to experience here, I get. I remember an experience while I was visiting a Hindu temple. And I listened to one of the priests chanting Sanskrit for forty-five minutes. And my Sanskrit is really rusty, as in it doesn't exist. But I had no idea what he was saying, but at the same time, I knew exactly what he was doing, what he was seeking, what he was trying to articulate and engage, because I had experienced that sort of thing in a Christian congregation. I'd experienced that sort of thing sitting in a mosque for Jum'ah prayer. But also recognizing that those are not my places, as well. So I think the long story short is that my engagement in religion has been built on ministry being my first vocation of curiosity, the studying of religion being my academic obsession, and my own early formative experiences of

being biracial and having a certain empathy to the world, of building relationships and bridges by understanding where boundaries are, and understanding that I fit in a lot of communities, but I also didn't fit in any of those communities.

**T** Tiffany Puett 16:49

Yeah, that's an amazing story. Tell me more about the interfaith work that you have done in Houston, and the organization that you worked with, and what that work looked like.

**G** Gregory Han 17:07

Sure. I never thought I was going to live in Texas, and certainly Houston was not part of the plan. But marriage brought me to Houston, and I have to say that Houston has been a really good city for me and a really good city for me and my family. It is, by many metrics, the most diverse urban region in the country, and has become so, and evolved into that over particularly the last probably since the mid nineties, and it continues to grow. I worked for a nonprofit organization that is primarily known as - Interfaith Ministries kind of does both. I tend to think of interfaith organizations in two ways: Number one, they're interfaith organizations that are direct service, because service is often seen as the highest common denominator. It's something that everyone agrees with, and so it's interfaith direct service work. Then you have your interfaith, either advocacy or education organizations that are also very important, in my experience, much more difficult to fund, because it's difficult to explain to people how something as ethereal or ephemeral as this interreligious understanding is worthy of funding. While it's a lot easier to fund direct service work.

**G** Gregory Han 18:40

Interfaith Ministries does both. It's particularly known because it runs Texas's largest Meals on Wheels program and also does refugee resettlement. I particularly worked out of the Department of Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships. And there was a lot of work that Interfaith Ministries was already doing when I started in 2014. Our dinner dialogues were quite well known, not only locally, but also statewide and had also a national presence, because when they were started in 2008, no one else was really doing them. The dinner dialogues, in particular, we were well known for. And I started to bring my own abilities. With a background in ordained ministry and a background with a certain education pedigree, and also the fact that the way that I look, you can't quite figure out what I am. And actually, that happened often in my mid-twenties. People would come up to me and say, "I don't mean to be rude," which is usually code word as, "I think I'm about to be rude," - "But what are you?" And so I think the fact that I could pass in a variety of ways also helped people feel comfortable with me.

**G** Gregory Han 19:18

The things that I think I was most proud of are I did a lot of teaching. And I think I'm a teacher at heart as much as I'm a pastor at heart. We had a program called Faith in Our City, which we adapted from a program called the Passport Program from Interfaith Action of Central Texas over in the Austin area - big fan of their organization - where I would teach a class, sometimes

in person, during COVID over Zoom. I would teach a class on a particular religion. And then later in that month, and this became not possible during during COVID, we would do a visit to a house of worship in that tradition. So people would get the educational part, and they'd get it from a person who was deeply invested and educated in a particular religion. But if it wasn't Christianity, it was from a person who was an outsider, as well. But then we would do a visit to a house of worship, or to a faith community in that tradition. So people would get both the e academic experience and they'd also get the lived tradition experience. And it worked out really, really well.

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Gregory Han 21:22

I tried to build out our ability to do house of worship experiences for schools. So for example, I would work with a middle school, and they would be doing an elective on usually world cultures, if not world religions. And they would be able to spend a day with me at three houses of worship. And I didn't like calling them tours, because I didn't want people to take on the persona of being a tourist. We'd call them these experiences, and taking ninety fifth and sixth graders to three different houses of worship or faith communities to learn by being in sacred space, to learn from - I think architecture is an amazing pedagogical tool. And then to meet people that I knew well, and that I could work with them beforehand to say, "Okay, we've got ninety sixth graders coming. This is this is how I want the educational, the pedagogical experience to go." And so those day-long two to three site visits were some of the highlights of my year.

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Gregory Han 22:39

And then there would just often be the behind the scenes work, ranging from the, "We are a church in a certain part of town. We really want to get connected with a Muslim community, and do you know who they are?" And then there was an educational opportunity to say, "Yes, there is a mosque half a mile away. But let's talk about what do you mean by 'the Muslim community.'" And that was an educational opportunity to talk about the Muslim community, in this case, just like any other community, is not monolithic. And so there is an incredible variety. I would say whatever faith tradition that you are most familiar with, and all of its variety, it was often Christian. And they would say, "Oh my gosh, yeah, I'm United Methodist, and there's forty different Methodist churches in fifteen different varieties." And I'd say, "It's the same thing in every other religion as well."

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Gregory Han 23:36

All the way to when there was conflict. And often that kind of work, it happens behind the scenes. If there is a sermon preached, or a [message] given that perhaps was a little tone-deaf or out of sync, and would cause conflict, or would be taken - I don't know if "the wrong way" is the way to put it. But then there would be behind the scenes work done to restore relationship, to build conversations, to connect people within two or three communities, to help either build relation, restore relation, to do some conflict resolution, and that required, number one, partnership, and it required trust. And those are the things that were often built long beforehand. In many ways, it was the same sort of model as it was with disaster work. You don't want your first call to be made post-hurricane. Let me try that again. After a hurricane

hits in Houston, and you want faith communities to work together, you don't want that to be the first call, the first contact you want those relationships built before You want that trust built beforehand, so that when the proverbial whatever hits the fan, you have those relationships built.

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Gregory Han 25:12

One of the other things that I really was - if pride is the right word - is shared prayers. Here in the south, we love our invocations at private and public events. And that was always an interesting thought about public invocations and First Amendment. But that's how we do things here in Texas. And often it was a single faith leader. But especially in the Houston area, with incredible religious diversity of leaders, but also the religious diversity in an audience, how do you create an invocation that can reflect that religious diversity? And you can't do that with one person. Yeah, you can do that, perhaps over the course of a year, or a couple of years if it's an annual event. One year, you have one person for one tradition, and the next year, and the next year. But that only becomes effective if the same people come every year, they can say, "Oh, yeah." And then they put in the effort to make the connection, like, "Oh, yeah, there's a rabbi this year. Oh, there was a pastor last year" Most people don't do that. So I created, with these relationships with amazing faith leaders, these shared prayers, where three to four faith leaders would give the invocation, but it wouldn't be one after the other, one after the other, one after the other. They would work with me, and we would create, I guess, a script, where the prayer itself was given as a team. And so people would see three to four faith leaders up on the stage giving a prayer that was together, that meshed together. They would take turns, and that had a common theme, and they would bring the uniqueness of their faith tradition to that particular theme. And I found that to be something that I was really, I guess, proud of.

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Gregory Han 27:17

So teaching, shared prayers, these house of worship experiences, the behind the scenes work, along with our very public programs, our dinner dialogues, our days of service, those sorts of things as well. So a lot of my work involved interreligious engagement, interreligious communication, going out and building relationships, and interfaith education as well. And I think a lot of those I drew upon my own particular background, as well as my educational background, as well as my deep-seated interest, not only in lived religion, but also the academic study of religion.

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Tiffany Puett 28:10

You're talking a lot about the relationship building. Did some of that start when you were pastoring churches in Houston? Or did you not really start that until you started working at an interfaith organization?

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Gregory Han 28:27

It for sure started in earnest when I started in 2014. That is absolutely true. So for me then, it's thinking about what happened between 1998 and 2014, sort of the first part of my professional career. I learned a lot right away, working as a hospital chaplain. And those are incredible skills

to learn as well, because even though you come into a hospital room, ordained or endorsed or accredited in a particular religious tradition, you never know who's going to be in that room. It could be people from a variety of different religions. It could be people with no particular religion. But the skills that you learned as a hospital chaplain, I use to this day. From 2000 to 2007, a little over seven years of ordained ministry in Presbyterian churches, my commitment was very much to building as much as I could a beloved Christian community. But still, it was in some ways still, what was important to me was recognizing the diversity within that community, that they had different understandings of God, different understandings of Jesus.

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Gregory Han 30:02

Those were years as well within my denomination of conflict, particularly over the ordination of, as what we called it, "practicing homosexuals," people in the LGBTQIA community who were seeking ordination. And in turn, then the overall welcome of people in the LGBTQ community. And I'll just use that as a shorthand. Were they welcome even in our church? And many people that were formative mentors in my life, theologically and academically, were either women, or they were gay or lesbian. And so having those sorts of mentors were also very important to me in trying to create an authentic - when I was pastoring churches - an authentic Christian community that had a very capacious understanding of welcome, while not overlooking the deep call that Jesus makes upon each one of us to live these holy, ethical, Christ-centered lives. But for me, that notion of living a Christ-centered life was a call that went out to everyone. And so I think, while it wasn't necessarily - I wouldn't call it interfaith work when I was pastoring churches. But it was still deeply informed by my own experiences of living in different worlds, living on boundaries, crossing boundaries. It just took a different form pastoring churches. I wouldn't call that work. I think in many ways, it was priming the pump for more explicit interfaith work, but I wouldn't necessarily have called that interfaith work at that point.

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Tiffany Puett 32:17

I've heard you talk about a lot of things in terms of strategies and values and motivations in your interfaith work, but tell me more about your vision for community and what inspires you, and this larger vision that perhaps you see yourself working to enact throughout all of your work.

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Gregory Han 32:53

It's interesting, as we talked beforehand about this project, that the term that you used was "interfaith activist." And what's interesting for me is that I rarely describe myself as an activist, and when I do, I usually describe myself as a pretty awful activist. I don't march very comfortably. I don't protest very easily. I think some of that comes from, I don't know, my stoic Midwestern background. I think my general temperament as being an introvert. So my work has not been necessarily as an activist. I really do see myself as a pastor. So I have a pastoral presence, as well as an educator. My work in community has been, and this is in many cases formed by very Christological language and pastoral formation, that a beloved community of memory and hope, of the kingdom of God. In the different parables that Jesus tells about the



invitation to the table, just the invitation that I would give when I would celebrate communion, that this is not my table. This is not this church's table. This is not this denomination's table. It is the table of Jesus Christ, and it is his invitation.

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Gregory Han 34:38

And so I wanted it also to be a community of high standards, understanding that it's not just "Jesus welcomes everybody." Jesus welcomes everybody and asks something very big of everybody: to live lives that are holy and just. When it came to interfaith work, I tended to draw on my hope that ignorance was often based in fear and fear was often based in misunderstanding. And if I could do work to help people better understand their neighbor, recognizing that we are a religiously illiterate society, and that should not come as a surprise since the things that we are taught at a young age, we are taught at a young age not to talk about religion, along with politics and sex. Those are often [thought of as] the unholy trinity of illiteracy. And so I really saw my work as trying to be a religious literacy specialist, which I think has become a real thing. But in 2014, it really wasn't. But I think it has become that. And as I began our conversation as well, I didn't want this to become a religious goo of sameness. I wanted people to practice their faith. I wanted people to be faithful to their call. I wanted people to be Muslim, and Jewish and Sikh and Jain and Zoroastrian. I just wanted them to be the best Hindu and Jain and Buddhist and Sikh and Zoroastrian and Bahá'í and Christian and Muslim, and Jewish as they could.

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Gregory Han 36:39

And I even have a friend - I come out of a tradition where we're in the conversion business, in many cases. We're evangelists. And I have a friend who's from another evangelist tradition, and we sort of joke about wanting to convert each other. But we do that warmly and kind heartedly, because we also don't want to sit there and ignore that elephant in the room. Because as I often tell people, people aren't religious because they're doing it until something better comes along. That's why we call it belief. People believe that because they really believe it's the truth. And it is the way to life, and it is the way to live, and it is the way to believe. And so I like to try to create spaces where we don't ignore that metaphorical elephant in the room, and we're all just trying to be nice to one another. We all, in the end, believe in the exceptionalism of our faith, and that's why we call it a belief, then not just a good idea we're entertaining until something else comes along.

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Gregory Han 37:49

So I think it's been very much about education, understanding, and trying to create - and I know it sounds trite - a sense of authentic community, where people are who they are, and they can be who they are in that room. And we can create opportunities for real conversations about our hopes, about our fears, what we're seeking, and in many cases, we're trying to seek the same things: safe communities, good schools, communities where people aren't going hungry at night. But also those hard conversations as well. Faiths that have historically been at odds, either due to differences in theology or historical animosities. So authentic, beloved communities of service and understanding is what I think I've tried to do my small part in developing.

**T** Tiffany Puett 39:08

Can you talk a little bit about how you think the interfaith work that you've done has been shaped, specifically by the social and political context of Texas, and also how September 11, as an event, has shaped that larger context over the past twenty years?

**G** Gregory Han 39:30

Sure. I think if you look at Houston politically, but from a sociological point of view, and not necessarily ideologically, our urban centers tend to be more blue than red. If you take a look at a voting map, and you look at it county by county, Austin and San Antonio, parts of Dallas and Houston tend to be these little islands of blue in oceans of red. And when I talk to people who aren't from Texas, they have certain stereotypes about Texas. And I tell them, "Come to Houston, and you'll see that that's not the case." And I want to talk about those stereotypes in a minute as well. And so I think interfaith work has been shaped by - is different in urban areas than in non-urban areas. And that's why, as well, I don't think there's any significant national umbrella organization for interfaith work, because it's so contextual. What I can do in Houston, it looks different in Omaha, it looks different in Walla Walla, Washington. So I think things can look a little different in the Houston area, as an example, because it is so diverse. It is a segregated diversity in many cases, but it's still a diversity where - it doesn't take a lot of effort to go to a Hindu temple in Stafford, as an example.

**G** Gregory Han 41:19

But when it comes to, I think, the climate, we do can live in a polarizing climate. And we often do, I think, in Texas, the water in which we all swim religiously is Christianity. And I think, I don't know exactly what the numbers are, but not an insignificant percentage of people who are Christian, and particularly who are Southern Baptists, live in Texas. And so I think that can shape some of our, particularly, our religious rhetoric, and can make it a little more challenging. I do want to say, though, that we have to be careful in saying the idea that it's just the blue region liberals that get it, and that are trying to convince the red region, conservatives. We cannot fall into that, because my experience has been, when I have been in - and again, this is one of the other challenges of interfaith work. We tend to use a metaphor, "preach to the choir."

**G** Gregory Han 42:25

And so the challenge, and it's so rewarding, is when we start to expand the circle, and we welcome people into the circle of understanding. And I've found that people we often would label or stereotype as people who aren't interested or who don't get it, are eager to learn. That has been what is most encouraging. People are eager to learn and to understand. They just haven't had the opportunities. And they've heard a certain message or rhetoric from their context, and they just haven't heard something different. And so I really want to fight against that, the sense of the political divide, and the us versus them, though true in many cases and cannot be overlooked. My experience has been that people are eager to engage, sometimes they just don't know how. And so I think maybe that's perhaps the most helpful response to

that question about how our Texas politics and Texas' historically Christian culture affects interfaith work. It makes it a little more difficult to expand the circle. But when you do, the work is really rewarding because people outside the interfaith circle are eager to learn. They just sometimes haven't had the opportunity.

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Gregory Han 44:07

To go to your second question about 9/11. 9/11, 2001, I was thirty years old. I had been married for three years. I was in the second year of my first pastoral experience. And so when I came to interfaith work influenced by 9/11, I didn't have a lot of it. A lot of it is looking back retrospectively and recognizing that one of the things we learned at 9/11 was particularly when it came to Islam. We didn't know anything about Islam. Either you knew a lot about it, because for some reason you'd studied it, or you didn't know anything about it. And so what happened was we either fell into our stereotypes, or we realized, we have a lot of catch up work to do very quickly. And as I was mentioning to you earlier, the story that I often tell is that I think one of the first hate crimes that happened after 9/11 was a person who thought that he was killing a Muslim. It was in, I think, Mesa, Arizona, but he saw a person wearing a turban, and he ended up murdering a Sikh, which really showed this double layer of bigotry and ignorance that we were all realizing we were fighting against.

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Gregory Han 45:41

And so I think a lot of the work retrospectively over the next ten years, and then what I found when I started doing interfaith work explicitly in 2014, was we were doing a lot of catch up on Islam. But I think what 9/11 also taught us was we were doing a lot of catch up work on religious literacy. And we realized that religious literacy wasn't some sort of soft skill, but religious illiteracy was deadly. I think a lot of us recognized there just was a lot of catch up work, a lot that we needed to do on a lot of religions, and we needed to do quickly. I think we've done a lot of that. A lot of that has happened. Again, I'm skewed because my interfaith work has been in the context of Houston, Texas. But there's so much more to go. And that's one of the reasons I'm finally pursuing doctoral work, because a lot of what I want to do is develop that next layer of skill in the articulation of the religious experience.

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Tiffany Puett 47:06

Thanks, yeah, and that's exciting to hear that you're taking the work to this next phase. Is there anything else that you want to share as you talk about your work in - I mean, it strikes me too, in hearing your story, that you've done all of this work in the interfaith space, but yet, calling you an interfaith activist seems like that's too narrow of a category, that you've really been much more of a relationship builder and community organizer and educator. Is there more that you want to say about this work that you've been doing?

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Gregory Han 47:54

Yes. I have so much valued this experience and the opportunity, and it hasn't ended. But particularly for seven and a half years with a wonderful organization, the opportunity to do it explicitly. I think for me, thinking about your preface to this question, it's also been, I think, just

another evolution of humanities-based pastoral educational work, that I think I've been doing all my life, and particularly all of my professional life. Interfaith work was just another manifestation, I think, for me of work that I've been doing for a long time. And so I think when people say you're leaving interfaith work, I would say no, interfaith work was just how my values and my commitment to moving in the world manifested itself for seven and a half years. My values and my commitment aren't going away. They're just going to manifest themselves in a different way moving forward. And I think the way that it manifested itself, it was for seven and a half years, the manifestation of my commitment to education, to learning, to teaching, to a pastoral presence, and to community building in the world. And so I think the best way, again, to respond to your question was, interfaith work is really important to me. Doing it full time for seven plus years is important to me. But it was more, again, a manifestation of have the kind of work that's been important to me for thirty years.

**T** Tiffany Puett 50:14

Well, thank you so much for sharing your story. This has been wonderful to hear, well, just to hear your background, how you've gotten started in this really rich story that you have of building relationships and learning and educating over all these years. So thank you very much.

**G** Gregory Han 50:44

Tiffany, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity.