

Welcome BLACK to Sessions With Symba. This is a melanated podcast where I bring you conversations with Black previously pregnant and birthing people, along with Black birthworkers to share our stories and multi-faceted perspectives towards carrying and giving life to the Black babies that we love and cherish.

I am your host, Symba Luna, a Black nonbinary gender nonconforming prenatal Massage Therapist, and now student birth and postpartum Doula, holding a collective space of peace where Black birthing people can freely tell their birth stories, and share their unique experiences. My pronouns are they/them and g, because I take Chicago with me wherever I go, and in this space we honor all Black birth stories, all Black pregnancy experiences, all Black birthing people, and all Black family types. I am on a journey of learning, as I have newly entered the world of birthwork, and it is my intention to share these stories and information that we learn together, as an attempt to cultivate community awareness that seeks to combat the Black Maternal and Infant Mortality rate. We want to honor the ancestral birth workers that have come before us, and the paths that they have laid out for each and everyone of us individually and collectively as we connect and bring forth this healing and liberation work together. Welcome to the show.

In this last interview episode of Season 1 of Sessions With Symba, I am honored to share today's guest with you all, my new homie, Aye, a Black queer parent, educator, and birthworker uplifting families all across the income scale through teaching, policy work, lactation consulting, birth doula, and abortion doula work, with the Richmond Doula Project and Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project based in Virginia. Join us as we discuss how their lived experiences navigating many systems of oppression brought them on the journey to the community based work that they love and do today. Full disclosure, Aye and I recorded this conversation back in February 2022 during Black History Month, so you will hear references to that time period. It was my intention when recording at that time to have this episode out much sooner, but if you've been following me along my independent podcaster journey then you have heard me in previous episodes mentioning many technical difficulties I was having several episodes in a row. But we made it, and I think this conversation is appropriately coming out as we close out Pride Month 2022, and while our worlds have been having major and necessary conversations around abortion. Towards the end, Aye references a class in March that has already passed, but please don't hesitate to check Aye's calendar for the classes coming up. Thanks for listening, and don't forget to follow along with the conversation using

#SessionsWithSymba or #SWSPod as we learn how to align ourselves even more toward healing and liberation through birth work. I hope that you're comfortable, take a deep breath, and enjoy the conversation.

**SYMBALUNA:**

Welcome, welcome. So we are back again for another episode with Sessions With Symba, and I am so excited to have my guest here with me today. And so I want to start out by asking you, what is your name? How do you identify? What are your pronouns? Where are you from? And where do you live now?

**AYE:**

Hello, good afternoon. My name is Ayé. I identify as a Black, queer, poor parent, and I use they as my pronoun, and also homie is also my preference, also my name. I refer to lots of folks as homies. And I am currently in Tawano, Virginia, which is near Williamsburg. I am sitting at my desk with my patio door open, and I have a patio door in my bedroom. And so, watching the greens and the browns outside, nice sunny day with a breeze, and I'm also a abortion and birth doula, lactation consultant, and teacher. And I think that's it. Did I answer everything?

**SYMBALUNA:**

That was great. (*chuckles*) I appreciate the piece on saying that you are a poor parent. I know that maybe to some that might sound, "ooh like," but I think that's- I didn't receive it that way and so I feel like it was great. I was grateful for it because I think it's important to recognize, especially for Black people and Black people formulating families, how the system has designed Black families to reside a lot of times underneath or at the border of the poverty line. And I know that's not everyone's experience, but especially like to what I spoke to a little bit earlier off air was the- how we are not a monolithic people, you know? And so I appreciate that you would speak to that as your experience because that's important, and for those who may be able to relate to that, yes, you know? So if you could, definitely speak a little more, tell us why you said that?

**AYE:**

Yeah. I've been thinking about a lot of like what identity means cause I've been really in the like, Combahee River Collective statement like past- cause like I said I teach and reproductive justice 101 is one of the things that I teach. And so I've been really heavy into that, and you know, Black History Month, Black Futures, Black Folks Month just passed, and how we get to reproductive justice was like you know, Combahee created the identity politic and group of you know, Black lesbian women. Like people don't name that it was a group of Black lesbian women who made the (**chuckles**) Combahee River Collective and then, you know, and then we have Kimberly Crenshaw who goes a little further and talks about intersectionality of our multitudes of oppressions, right? And in '94, the Black women of African descent created reproductive justice using all of those compounds and building onto that, and so when I think about how I identify, and how my identity is like how I interact with the world, how I show up, and what colors, what creates how- how I show up, like how I'm- my decisions are made. Like I remember being a conversation with coworkers being like, "Oh Ayé, you're really good with those numbers, figuring that out." I was like, "Yeah, I gotta know how to pay my bills. I gotta know how much I got left over. I gotta know." (**chuckles**) Like, you know what I'm saying? I'm- I'm paycheck to paycheck, you know what I'm saying? Or paycheck and a half behind, it's just like these are important parts of my identity, is like being able to make those decisions, where I go to shop, (**chuckles**) where- like how I live my life is really- has a lot to do with being poor. And so that is not a negative connotation, like for sure I don't take that- that's not- it's not my fault (**chuckles**) that I'm poor. It's not a- (**chuckles**) it's not a- yeah it's not- that don't- that don't really got a lot to do with me. It has a lot to do with the systems that I reside in and survive in, right? And so, I'm really starting to get to a place of thriving, but like being poor is how- is what I know, right? So that's- that's part of my identity.

**SYMBALUNA:**

I mean, one, that makes perfect sense. I'm glad you expanded a little more on that, but I can definitely relate to that. Especially also as someone who- some folk may not related this, but I didn't grow up poor in my childhood, and I feel like I experience, and I am poor now in my adulthood. More so to the extent like you said, in a systemic way. Like it has nothing to do with, I did anything wrong or it's my fault, or whatever, but then, you know, I even think, you know, we have just different dynamics in our communities and our families when it comes to money

sometimes, so then it's just- there hasn't really been a lot of- because of the system, there hasn't been any practical ways a lot of times, for our ancestors, elders to hand down wealth. Like it just hasn't- they have not had that to do, and so I think that that's really important to understand especially like you said with intersectionalities, and with reproductive justice, as we understand that we're living in all these systems, poverty is also (**chuckles**) one of those systems that is included. So for sure. I definitely, definitely appreciate you speaking to that. So speaking of families, in my next question I would love for you to tell me about your immediate family structure while you were growing up. Did you grow up with your parents and or siblings? And do you live in close proximity with them now?

**AYE:**

Yeah. Growing up I- I have a pretty close family. My parents were like together when they were in high school, but they married after I was born, I think I have to look, and they had a very tumultuous relationship so I would like- lived in a bunch of places, that we'd live together, they'd break up, (**chuckles**) and we'd moved (**chuckles**) so that was like, you know, my childhood. Before I graduated high school think I have like- I lived in 14 different places, and it wasn't cause we were like getting evicted, but it was just like also the trajectory of their relationship. And my father was an alcoholic, and so very much raised primarily- I wouldn't know if my mom would identify as a single parent, but she was my primary parent for the most part. And, like I said, still very close with my dad, and he would like had custody fights (**chuckles**) and all that kinds of stuff, right? What's the other, he was also an alcoholic, so I have a younger sister. And so it was me and my younger sister, and our dynamic was not stability, in the sense of just having- of our parents, but (um) we had a very strong social network. All of us were, you know, even though my mom was my primary parent, all of us and my cousins would be at my grandma house after school where she'd cook us a meal, and that's the place we'd be until our parents got off work. All through elementary school to high school, so even though cousins lived in different communities, and so like, it was just- she would pick us up, and we all would be at her house, and everybody had a hot meal, until our parents came and picked us up, and that was my childhood. So like primary parent- my parents were very much so hard-working folks, who worked a lot, and I spent the majority time with my grandmother and my cousins.

**SYMBALUNA:**

That's interesting. I'm definitely sure a lot of people can relate to that, especially the grandmother peace, you know, having your grandparents in the mix, because your parents were working. Like- I think a lot of us can definitely relate to that like my mom- both my parents had 9-5's, so that's great. I really appreciate you sharing all this. So you did mention a little bit earlier some of the ways that you serve the birthing community. So I wondered if you could expound a little bit more on that, as well as how long have you been a birth worker? And then how many births have you witnessed or been a part of?

**AYE:**

Yeah I've been doing or have been doing birthwork since 2016. primarily birthwork, lots of different types of birth work, home birth, birth center birth, hospitals that kind of thing. And I got into birth work because of my own family. I have two children, a six-year-old and a eight-year-old, and both of them were born prematurely. So my eight-year-old was born at 32 weeks, and I knew going in that it was high risk because I already had kidney disease. And so like the markers of preeclampsia are my like norm. And so we still wanted to do, like we wanted to take classes, we wanted to get a Doula. And I took the classes, I learned about the Doula, and so when I went to look for a doula, at the time I was living in Petersburg, Virginia. And so Petersburg, Virginia is a majority Black town, definitely below the poverty line, and the closest place that had doulas was about 25-30 minutes away, which is Richmond our capital. And so the closest Black doula I could find, I was on all the like doula websites, was in Alexandria which is near DC, and over a hour away. **(chuckles)** So this is 2013 when I was pregnant with my oldest, and I couldn't find a Black doula. So I was just like, "Whatever, I'll get a white Doula. I just want a doula. I wanna do things- I wanna be, you know, part of my own birthing process. Like we wanted to know what was going on, and everything." And then found some doulas. Oh also, I'm on Medicaid, getting WIC, and so I'm like, "OK my budget is low." And like none of the white doulas was like- "Uh I don't know. We don't- **(chuckles)** I don't do sliding scale." **(laughs)** Not only would they not do sliding scale, it was also like, "You have to come to Richmond." They wasn't coming to Petersburg to like meet me. So we all- we had to drive to Richmond to meet them, and the- we were taking the Bradley course, the natural parenting one with the partner. And so the teacher who was teaching was like, "Oh here are some people who are training to be doulas, and they might do it for, you know, little or nothing or whatever." And so met with a person, we was just like, "Sure. We'll take you. You're cool, and- you know I want a doula." **(chuckles)** Like, you know what I'm saying? Like OK. Then we agreed upon a price or

whatever. And when it came time, I went in for an appointment, for a check in, they was like, "OK you getting admitted." I was like, "OK, at 32 weeks." They was like, "Ok you getting admitted, you bout to have this baby." I had my work uniform and everything. I was working at Comcast, (**chuckles**) and I was like, "Oh but I gotta go to work after this." And they was (**chuckles**) just like, "No, you not going to work, you bout to, you know, have this baby." And I was just like, "What?" And so, we get to the hospital, and I already had wanted to change my OB's because I asked my OB- cause in class they're like, "Talk to your doctor, you know, make sure you guys are on the same page." I was like, "Well how do you feel about natural childbirth?" And the doctor name was Dr. Hyde, and I should've known cause his name was Dr. Hyde, and he was just like, "Everything natural ain't good. If you break your leg, you wouldn't want to get no medicine." He was like, (**chuckles**) literally, and I'm- I'm a pregnant person, and I'm sitting in the office crying, but does he say anything? He was like, "Cancer is natural, that's not a good thing." He was like, "Hurricanes are natural." He literally tells me these things, and I cried, and I didn't- we were looking for other doctors, we had made appointments. Like I said, I had my appointment with my specialist, and that's who admitted me to the hospital. And so we hadn't been able to change doctors yet, and when he came in my doula was like, "You know, just let him know," You know white people, you know white people like, "All you have to do is!" (**chuckles**) White people be like, "All you have to do is, say this, and they would just like-" But you know, I'm Black, but I didn't know that right? I didn't know that. I didn't know that was the case cause also my family was clowning me because, "Why you need to take a childbirth education class? You go to the hospital. You have the baby." So I'm also like dealing with like being someone who's doing something different in my family. And so he's like- we're like, "Okay, we just- we want you to let us know everything you're doing (**chuckles**) to my body, right? So, wild concept. Like we're telling the doctor, "We want you to let us know before you do anything." Cause we stuck with this doctor, right? And the nurse looks at me and say, "He's the doctor." (**chuckles**) And I'm like, "OK, but this my body, right?" When the nurse at- the white nurse looked at me and was like, "He's the doctor like how dare you tell him to- to let you know what he's going to do to your body." And so later he said he was doing some- did the induction, all of that. I wasn't gonna get the epidural. During the induction, he was real pissed, and then he was like, "OK I wanna check and see how the epidural's [**induction**] going, and he broke my waters. And I said, "What was that?" And my partner was like, "I saw him with this thing, but I didn't know what it was." So also 2013, at a shitty hospital, and the hospital policy was that I can only have two people in the room once my induction was started. And so I had to choose between having my partner and my mom, or my partner and the doula, and I chose my mom. So then we

also- this doula that we went- did all this work to do, to have was not able to be with us, while I was being induced in the bed. But my doula did continue to call my partner, gave my partner this book about like Doula- the doula book that they were reading, and they were in constant communication. And they were like, "Oh press on them like this way." And I was like, "Wow, after all that violent shit that happened, and them doing- like the birth part just was crazy all the way. And what I was left understanding was like, having someone who knows what's happening, was super important in that process. And even though the person that was our doula wasn't able to physically be there, having someone who is there just for you, who knew things, still impacted my birth because giving him the book, telling him like different ways to like apply counterpressure. Like that hip squeeze was everything, right? And those were things that they were telling them, as I was laboring. It let me know like just having someone for you who knew things, impacted my birth, and they wasn't even able to be in the room. And so after I had my son, which I didn't have a doula either because I was- had him at 26 weeks, so he was a super tiny baby. And so I hadn't even interviewed doulas by the time I had him. And so, but he was in the h- NICU for four months. And during that time I was out of work again, and so then he came home, he had equipment, like breathing equipment. He was on the machine when he came home. And so I was like, "Okay, I can't put him in childcare with all of this stuff, or don't want him to be around all those germs from kids, and so I guess I'm staying home. Cause also, we always had to make a decision, like we can't afford childcare, and work so it's like, you know, I'm working just to pay childcare, and it didn't make sense. (*chuckles*) So also that's- I became a stay at home parent, because it was like, "OK I can go to work, and we have to pay all this money for childcare, for these two kids now, and potentially risk our very like fragile, newborn, NICU baby, our preemie, or I can stay home, right? And then we have less income still, and so, yeah. That's when I was like, "OK I got this time. I'm gonna go ahead and be a doula since I got time, and I knew that I had resources which was like support, and able to like look for stuff, and the stuff I couldn't find so that's what brought me to- to birthwork is having those really shitty experiences, but also seeing like the impact that someone who is there for you, and knows how things could go, and things that are helpful really impacted, and I was like, "I need to do that. I need to do that for other people. I need to be the Black person who can do it down here for the people who want it." And so here I am.

**SL:**

I love that cause you definitely had a shitty doctor like we can definitely say that. That was gross. That natural hurricane shit that really- **(laughs)** ooh! You know we'll be on the podcast so I know they can't see us, but in my mind I'm like, "Wait, what the fuck? Like ew." Like **(laughs)** That's gross, but I- I do appreciate the story though cause I liked what you said about impact too because although you did definitely have some really shitty experiences, that impact was really helpful for you to get you to the place where you are now. So I'm grateful you had that. I was wondering because you mentioned a little bit earlier with teaching and also do- could you speak a little bit more as well about the abortion doula work that you do? And like I think you also mentioned lactation?

**AYE:**

Yeah so whenever I started doing- the first thing I did was I took like a online class cause that was the one I could afford to cause, you know, you can pay overtime and **(chuckles)** you could take it. So a lots of things are being like impacted by like what- I couldn't afford to pay \$600 for a weekend class **(chuckles)** or more. I just didn't have that type of income. And so I was able to get a scholarship and get a really reduced price for the online class. And then I saw a group on Facebook was like, "We're having a meeting today," and it was for the Richmond Doula Project who provides sliding scale and free support for folks, no matter their income or the outcome of their pregnancy. And so I was like, "OK!" And I didn't want to go, cause it was in Richmond. Then my partner was just like, "Please go. You gonna, you know, you're gonna like it." And so I did go, and it was our very first meeting. So the doula project still exists, and I really learned a lot from folks working the doula project because it really started my reproductive justice journey. Cause we're- we're a movement space, right? It's a collective, and it wasn't really based out of this professionalism. And so like it really opened up for me, the idea that like everybody deserves **(chuckles)** support, right? It shouldn't be this thing that is unattainable or this thing that is reserved for folks who can afford it or deserve it. And so support is just like mm you know peer work. That's how- that's how we take care of each other. That's how we have an equitable liberated world is by caring for each other. And so working with the doula project, it was actually a sibling organization with another organization called the Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project. And so I had never heard of abortion funds before, but the Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project had sponsored the creation of the Richmond Doula project. And so from working with the doula project, I found out about RFP, and I was like, "What is abortion funding? OK now talk to- **(chuckles)** talk to me about this." Like all these things are like being- are like



being brought forth right? And like so, learning about abortion funding, and I was like, “OK we already birth doulas, we can do- (*chuckles*) like folks can do abortion doulaing too. And so like so the doula project started doing that, and so it was really serendipitous. Like everything was just like syncing up in the ways that I had a community of folks who were like minded, and we were like all really pretty much starting at the same time as becoming doulas. A few folks had been doing doula work already. We were intentionally scaling up our sales on things. We had Ancient Song come and do a training for us, and so that was really important. Also seeing it from another community based Doula program, and how they were doing things. And they really situated doula work, and not just like as care work, but also like, “You will be in community with folks from all different backgrounds, and all different stages of life, and like situations like, “Oh this not-” Like birth work isn't just like, “Oh my gosh, so many beautiful babies!” Like, you know, like that's a thing, but also like you are also here to like hold and shepherd, and you know, take care of the folks who are trusting you to be a part of this process with them. And so throughout learning the community that we built with doula product, I just started- we was starting doing births, and I was like, I was feeling like, “Oh I'm really- I'm really having to protect my clients from this violent ass system.” You know what I'm saying? And so I was coming from a place of, “This is what we need to do to defend ourselves,” or like this is what- I was preparing my clients in a way that was much like, we're going to a hostile environment. And it felt really shitty too. Like we have a- we have a learning hospital in Virginia. And (*chuckles*) look, I'm not gonna- We have a learning hospital so people deliver, you know, it's students also, like they're learning on people who are delivering, and so things are not always- first of all stuff is always consensual. It's definitely not always informed consent either. And so being in that space, it really was just making me feel like- like this is not actually the type of work or how I wanna do it. Like I don't wanna be preparing folks to be existing in violent ass systems. I want to be empowering folks with the power, and the stuff that they already have, and the tools that they already have ancestrally and just in their person. Like you already hold, and you already have this capacity to do this, and like my job is to like make sure you do it in the ways that you want to, right? And that you're supported, in all those ways that you wanna do it. Like that's why I say (*chuckles*) I'm the “do you” doula. I don't care what you wanna do. Like you know what I'm saying? Like just tell me, and I'm your cheerleader. You can ask me questions, and I can give you information, but it's not my job to determine like what your birth is. And so like, I- I think I've seen around 22 babies come into the world. My last baby was my best friend's baby in March 2020. That was the last baby I saw born, and my favorite part about being in space with people who are birthing is like when they tell their baby their name. I'm not a baby person so I've rarely held

client's- I hold client baby if like, I'm doing a postpartum checkup and you gonna go to the bathroom or something, but I'm not- I'm not really there for the baby. I'm not a baby person maybe cause both of my kids was preemies, and I got them like a month in. I never really deal with that straight baby phase, and so I'm there for the parents. I'm there for their support people. I'm there to make sure that they feel like superstars, **(chuckles)** you know what I'm saying? Like this is- this is your thing. You want a playlist? We can do that. And so I got into lactation work because that was also a gap. I had to exclusively pump for two months, and then we transitioned to nursing cause he couldn't eat for the first two months. He was in the NICU for four months. And so like I was- and you- when you have a preemie baby, right? And you have a preemie baby, you have a baby in the NICU they tell you like, "Your milk is the best thing for them." Like your milk is the best, and that's like true, yes, but also you- the amount of pressure **(chuckles)** of like keeping this- this little person like alive, alive. Because and you don't even get the- the other parts of taking care of them, and holding them, cause you can only visit them when you- you know you can visit them whenever, but still I have a- a two-year-old at home, and I had to drive 30 minutes to the hospital where he's at. And so, anyway, I was getting some really shitty advice. I was asking the lactation- everybody was telling me the same thing, and I was like, "You not listening to what's happening to me." And so it was just like- I kept getting- no matter who it was, they would give me the same advice, and my supply was like dipping, stress and everything, and got so crazy. Like I would be falling asleep at the pump. I was like on every two hours schedule, and my partner go and switch me out. I would fall asleep, and he would like undoing me- undoing the things like, "Time to go to bed." **(chuckles)** And I was driving myself crazy, and I called- like I did one of those like video doctor things. And this was like 2015. So I was like, it's like Mave And May. I did Mave and May, and I called the video chat, and I got a lactation consultant in Australia. **(chuckles)** Cause it was 2- literally no lie, it was 2 o'clock in the morning, and I was- I was crying, and I called these people, and I was like, "It's my last resort." I got like a free coupon code. I was like, "I'm gonna try anything this- this lactation consultant in Australia picked up, and was just like, "Oh, no." And they was just like, "You are doing ama-," like they started cheering me on like, "You doing amazing. Like that's totally normal, you should try this thing." And I was like, "That's what I needed to hear at that moment." And just like, once again, someone not physically being there, but providing support in a way that touched me. Like was like, "OK." I also- **(chuckles)** I'm like- I didn't have that. I couldn't find the resources. I had to go to a video person in Australia to get the thing that I needed. And so when they had a lactation course come up in Richmond, I saw it, and I was like, "Oh my gosh one of those, \$400." So I open- did a gofundme cause once again, I'm living paycheck **(chuckles)** to

paycheck. I'm a doula who is not- who is doulaing people who also don't have funds, and so I wasn't- I didn't get paid, I don't think for my first, at least 7 to 8 births. I did not get paid. And so one of the reasons why we're in a collective too is because we were raising money to pay ourselves to do it. So that's one of the reasons so when we had the collective. And so those- but none of the clients had paid me, and so like I retroactively got paid for some of the births once we raised enough money. But that's why I became a lactation consultant, and I r- did a gofundme, and I raised the way to go, and I got my certification. So I was really excited. So I created the first genderless lactation course in Virginia, that I know, and I was really excited about that. And I think when it comes to just making stuff, it's just like I had to- every time I- every time I paused and was just like, "Oh is this gonna make someone uncomfortable?" I had to remind myself like, "It don't even matter." Like I'm that- **(chuckles)** Like **(laughs)** it's not like- I'm there for the people who it- who it's for, and if it make you uncomfortable, that's your work to do. So not- like that unlearning of centering whiteness. That unlearning of centering like heteronormaty. Like- And nobody even flinched. I'm teaching the class about chestfeeding. I'm talking about chests. Like one person asked in one of the classes, and I probably taught it over a dozen times. And somebody was like, "Why are you saying a chest?" And I was like, "Everybody got chests, right?" And it was like, "Yes." OK moving on. **(laughs)** Like the class- it was very simple, very easy. So and that was the first class that I actually created. It's called Lactation Happens. And so it's about just learning about how lactation works, but getting the best start off on like the chest feeding journey. I also teach a pumping class, and I've done like consults for folks like who wanna go back to work since I've exclusively pumped, and we actually were able to transition to full nursing. And so did that, and so with the abortion doulaing that I also do, I do more of now cause like I said I haven't attended any births since the pandemic. But with the abortion doulaing, it's a lot of stuff that's really just over the phone, texting people, you like doulaing is emotional, physical, and educational support. So I tell people, "Is this normal?" "Yes, that's normal." "What ways you can do to be more comfortable. Are you taking care of yourself? Is there anything you wanna talk about?" It's really just like checking in to making sure people are good, because no one should have to go through any transitions by themselves, right? So that's what I say doulas are. Doulas are people who support other people in their translations in life. And so yeah that's what- abortion doula is super, super simple. It's not- it's still heavy work. It can be, but it's- it's more, it's a lot of phone support, texting and calling people and stuff like that. Not so much in person. And so I also, along with one of my comrades, teach abortion Doula training course, which we're having one in March. we're having the next one on the 20th, I think of this month. We do it every three months, and so

folks who volunteer with our abortion fund or with the doula project can take it for free. Otherwise it's sliding scale \$25 to \$125. It's just a one day thing.

**SL:**

I like that. I see- I hear- I was- feel like I was hearing like a lot of variety, as well as I feel like other birthworkers have done this as well, where like you become what you needed. Like, you know, and you mentioned that with the doula things as well as with the lactation things. Like I'm so happy that you got that experience of someone who was cheering you on and telling you that you're actually doing a good job, and then you were able to transmute that like "Duh, that's what we needed." Like **(chuckles)** "And duh it's obviously- I'm not the only one who needs it." So I really think that's amazing. I think that's- I'm a very big energy person so that's- to me that's alchemizing and channeling and taking what you have or what you don't have, but what you needed, and even just being able to fit yourself into a space where you're like, "OK I do that now. This is me now." And so then you can really help other folks who, you know, where you were in a space where you didn't have those kinds of resources. You become the resource so shout outs to you. You doing it. You killing it. That's dope. I love it. I definitely- I also asked about the abortion doula things because abortion just as postpartum is a part of the journey of birth, and I- I know that that may be sensitive and conservative for some folks, and that's fine. You know, you gotta take what you- take what's for you and leave the rest, and that's OK, but it's definitely something that still needs to be talked about, and there are people who need the support out there. So it really is, wow giving me some things to think about which I love. I really enjoyed that. So this- this is the space where now it's your turn, we gon pass the mic, and you get a chance to ask me a question. This can be about anything personal or professional. I don't think we got into too many details, but you just take a deep breath, and ask away. **(chuckles)**

**AYE:**

OK. OK. OK. So, I guess what I wanna know is, how has your like vision of what like birth is or like how has Doula work like shifted or like, you know, shifted your- your world like? Or were you like already- "I'm already a caretaker and like this is just another avenue?" Like how has that shifted things for you?

**SL:**

OK. So this is a great question. I like this one. So I would say that what has shifted for me has been mainly that as a massage therapist and then specifically as a prenatal massage therapist the focus is usually just the journey of pregnancy. And so doula work shifted things for me to actually learning about labor and delivery, learning about the things that can happen including C-sections and the transition aspect of it, I would say. And you mentioned that earlier, with transitions. I think that, you know, massage therapy I'm usually- I'm usually the before an incident or after an incident. Whether that's before an injury, or before a marathon, or before birth, you know? It's usually- I'm usually the- you know, preparing, we're gonna, you know, we're gonna do what we can to prepare, talk. I think, you know I feel like I give emotional support in that way or even just giving folks the space to not say anything at least prenatal wise. So doula work definitely shifted, I would say like also mm- I was about to- I think I was about to say who I can help cause I think that- I think that's true though. Because I think it- it also I feel like takes you to a space of also not just people who can afford massages. And so one of the main things, and I think also why I'm glad that we've had this poverty conversation throughout this talk has been that, that was where I was at when I was in massage school. I had never even gotten a massage. Like I went to massage school as a way to try to just get another form of income, you know? So, especially heading into it in that way, and not really looking at what I can use it for, then coming out of it on the other side, and being like, "Oh." Well one of the first things I did notice was, Black people don't be- don't get massages like that. Like that's- we don't be- And it's interesting- interestingly enough I- I feel like it wasn't until I got to massage school or even got out of massage school that I even heard my parents say things like, "Oh I'm gonna get a massage." Like we ain't never do that. That's- I mean that's great. I'm glad, happy for you, but that was definitely a big thing for me in terms of being in school, I was even, you know, looking at how do we get massage to our community, because it also made me realize like, "Oh shit. Like I've never even had one." (**chuckles**) Like I was, you know, my first couple weeks of class is like, "I gotta get one though?" Like that's- I mean I was cool with giving like, (**chuckles**) but you said I gotta receive it too? Like and so learning to receive, that definitely took me into a whole journey in terms of my health and also associating my body with my health. I don't think I had really had been in a space like that before. So all of those different kinds of things, especially thinking about accessibility, and making things more accessible, brought me into understanding that even in birthwork, there's all these layers of things that may or may not be accessible to people, which you have already very much, very well spoken on, you know? So it's, you know, even when I think about, you know, being queer folks and maybe, you know, folks

who may want surrogates, and folks who may want- maybe may not want to carry their own child, like you know, adoption, siblings, like there's all kind of things that I think I just started to realize when it came to, "Oh this is part of birthwork too, like?" And even like you- like we were saying postpartum, abortion. So it definitely opened up I would say my world view in lots of ways that I could- that I feel like you know, massage therapy had started to do, but definitely when it comes to accessibility, you know, massage therapy is kind of a corner of the world that not many- not everyone is exposed to. And even sometimes may only be exposed to, you know, if they're athletic, or if someone gave it to you as a gift, or you know something like that. So definitely I think that was something that shifted for me with doula work was, you know, in massage therapy, I was kind of in a observation space of like, "OK where is the Black people? Where are the Black massage therapists? Where are- where are Black people getting massages at, you know? What does that look like? What makes a massage affordable?" Those are kind of the questions I was asking, and then when I trained to be- when I did my doula training, in addition to, you know, realizing that this was a huge thing. Like this is also a sacred space. Like this is not no little shit like- (*chuckles*) you know I definitely had to- I mean it definitely helped me look at, "OK what are the areas and spaces- where do I wanna be at with this like?" So I definitely think that it's interesting because you know massage therapy has on one end, you know, I have this- I have a certain access to folks who have more resources, and so there's always the easy thought or the easy line of like, "Well I can just help these people give birth." And that may happen, but it's really not what I'm trying to do. So I think that's also why I am definitely been getting into a space where I'm- I'm cool with doing many more trainings, before I'm even technically practicing as a doula. I've actually settled into that really today like. (*chuckles*) But uh, you know, it's- it's been- cause I think there's always like this rush of like when you find something you like to do, now you gotta be successful. You know, or when find something you love, now it's got to make millions, you know? And I definitely don't resonate with that even in massage therapy. So although my journey with massage therapy has been- has helped me gain more income than I've had before, you know, that's not- that was definitely not my really- my prerogative. So or sorry- my prerogative for going to massage school was to get more money, but it was to go back to school, initially, and when I kind of let that go, and was like, "That's not what this is for," or "That's not what- that's not the only thing I can use this for, I can actually use this to help people, and that can be just as fulfilling as a degree, you know?" It was- I feel like that helped. So- so doula work definitely shifted I think even my concept of things taking time, which is interesting cause I mean I spend- I have spent pregnancies with people, and so that- the journey of a pregnancy, you know, when I think about time, and when I think

about things incubating, and then you give birth. You know, like so I feel like that's kind of where I'm at even in my own doula journey is like, I feel like we are in a pregnancy stage of this doula work, you know, and there will come a day when things open up, and things give birth, in a sense that now I'm actually working with Black people, Black people who may not have resources, and as well I would say because my area- I wouldn't say Myrtle Beach is very Black, but there are Black on the outskirts of Myrtle Beach. So I feel like whatever I do here will be able to reach the Black people it needs to, and that's- that's ultimately my goal. So I think it has a lot I do with even shifting my own expectations about my journey, and my success, and what that- what does that mean? And you know, what is success either? And then, you know, especially when I think about like my- my radical and my own experience, my lived experience as a Black queer person, like I'm not trying to be like this system. Like I'm not trying to really fit in the system either, so I have to like really- doula work has helped me get out of like you know, "Well, if you don't give four births in four months, then you can't be certified, and this-" And like it's this pressure even like what you mentioned even with lactation. Like it's just this is pressure to now be the best, or like be the- or have- like I can't have ten years of experience in one, like that doesn't make sense. So **(chuckles)** it's all of- I think it's just been a really- it's been a beautiful thing because I don't think I've even- I didn't even go into it hoping for this, so that- but I'm grateful for it because it's you know I definitely think that, you know, especially living as a Black queer person like there is no- we don't have a timeline that- that makes sense to white supremacy, you know, and the systems, the white supremacist systems that we live. And so I'm grateful for doula work because it's really gotten me to really just looking at my own life, and what's- what is the unique thing that I bring to the world, and so then what would be the unique thing I can bring to clients that yes can afford me, but what if clients can't, you know? And what does "afford" mean? Like there's that too, like you know, so what is- what does that look like to be available, to be accessible, to yes maybe charge depending on what certain services are, but how to make it work for even the person- the pregnant person coming to me. Okay if you need me, we gon figure it out. We gon figure out, you know, I don't know, payment plans or like you were saying. I love how people talk about sliding scales a lot lately. So- it's definitely just- it's definitely been a very interesting journey, at least interesting in this particular space of learning. I feel like I'm definitely learning even a lot about myself, even before I'm even getting to a space where- where I feel like it will be part of the foundation of what helps me feel confident to be able to support someone during this time, so. **(chuckles)**

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This podcast is a free resource for Black pregnant people and birthing families from Journey Spa. As a passion project, I created a learning resource for my community in which I write, edit, produce, and transcribe every episode personally. Now, I'm no celebrity or influencer, and this isn't a podcast with partnerships or sponsorships. I am a Black queer independent podcaster, and I created this platform to be a tool for my community. If you would like to help me fund the production of this podcast, I invite you to do so in a number of ways. The first two ways are monetary. You can become a patron through [patreon.com/symboluna](https://patreon.com/symboluna) and donate as little as 5\$ a month to also receive updates, exclusives, and to stay connected to my other projects. For non commital or one time donations, you may also donate through PayPal using my email [journeyspa12@gmail.com](mailto:journeyspa12@gmail.com) or cashapp or venmo with \$ or @ symboluna. The third way is non monetary and just as important. Follow us at [journeyspa\\_](https://www.instagram.com/journeyspa_) on Instagram and when you're listening to an episode, tag us, and share what you're listening to with the #SessionsWithSymba or #SWSPod on all your social media platforms. The fourth way that you can support this podcast is by sharing Black Birth stories. If you or anyone you know is a Black or Black queer birthing person that has a birth story that you or they want to share, we can be reached by email at [journeyspa12@gmail.com](mailto:journeyspa12@gmail.com). The only two requirements are that they are a Black person and that the birth story that they share is at least 1.5 to 2 years old. We understand that sharing your birth story can hold many things, trauma included, and we honor the postpartum period and would prefer that Black folks who have freshly given birth take their healing time in peace. We are also very interested in hearing birth stories that are as old as we are. We can all benefit from hearing these stories and shared experiences across time and generations, and if you know anyone looking for resources towards starting their family or educating themselves for future healthy pregnancies and births, share this episode with them. The fifth and final way you can support this podcast is by joining our team. If you've been listening to this episode and been feeling that "call" to help Black birthing folks learn and be informed, please hit me up. I am looking for Black experienced transcribers, producers, and editors that we can join heads with to make this show even better in the future. We believe in the power of word of mouth, and we appreciate your help in getting the word out so that we can be of service to Black pregnant and birthing families everywhere.

**BACK TO SHOW:**



**AYE:**

Thank you for sharing that Symba. I will say, I'm about this mindset (**chuckle**) of a- So I- my- my life has been as a like, in the class wise, I'm in poverty level, however I- (**smacks teeth**) people who need taxing, people who can afford to be taxed, get taxed. (**laughs**) For sure. Like, you know, I am not no. No. One of the things that I had to learn too was that I can't just like give, give, give because I don't have nothing left to give, and so also my Black ass deserve rest. I deserve pleasure. I deserve all of that, and like if I gotta tax folks to get it- and plus I just feel like- the thing I asked for when I was doing those free births was just like my manifestation was that, "I want to provide what folks need that I had to give, and I trust that my community will also like provide for me." And so like, I have never like- things have been low, like my bank account been zero or negative, but I haven't been hungry, you know what I'm saying? I have not been houseless. I have not like- I've not lacked. I might not have had, but I have also not lacked, and I think that's really important for me to like to- to situate myself. And- and also, from doing the work, I mean I'm not gon, I mean I'ma be a little conceited, I'm popping. Like (**chuckles**) like I'm poppin now, you know what I'm saying? Like from me doing the work how I said I wanted to do it, which is like, "Fuck professionalism." This is how I show up in all spaces. You ask me to be on your panel, I'm gon say, "Fuck white supremacy." I'm gonna say, "Maternal mortality is not because Black bodies can't birth, it's because of racism. And so it's not a fault of the bodies of Black folks." So like naming those things, and so like that's also affording me a lot of opportunities as well, by like just really being in my truth. And like I'ma definitely tax folks who have to be taxed, and so that's- that's on that. And I know that I am available for the folks who need me, and that's gonna show up in that way, without me having to like dilute myself or for me having to like give what I don't have to give, you know what I'm saying? And so like I know that like I don't have to be like, "Hey, I'm doing this for free." I know the people who need me is gonna show up, and I'm gon be there when they call. And I also know that I'm gon say like, "Listen, I can't do this right now." (**chuckles**) Because we also got bills, you know, and like, "Oh yeah of course I do that, oh but for you, it's this because I know that you have." And so we not gonna- yes. So, I went from that, you know, to like doing free births, and nobody knew me, to like popular doula groups in the state wanting me to be working like I'm they radical person on staff like, "Okay, I'll be that. I'll be there, but also once I'm done with that, moving on." So like yes.

**SL:**

That's the beauty of the journey, even to being able to decide. You know deciding when it's over like, "This has been cool." Or deciding when it's time to move to the next space, so for sure. And I love what you said earlier too about like, you know, the community caring for you. Like you said not being hungry, not being houseless, like that's one thing I do love about this work is I feel like that's- from the you know, outside of the layers of white supremacy, that was the goal, you know? That was what, someone who helped you birth in your community, the community then helped take care of that person. And when we get back to that exchange of energy, that's what's gonna be going to be golden for everybody. So I love that. I love that. Thank you so much for the question, and for sharing yourself with us too. So you did mention that, you haven't taken any births since the pandemic, so I'm curious for you, what does right now look like for you? And where do you see your Doula journey going?

**AYE:**

I've been doing a lot of mentoring, so like new doulas. They have access to me as much as they want either to debrief or to talk through while stuff is happening. So as part- like that's what I offer to the doula project as new doulas come in. So right now I am a staff person for the Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project. I'm the- Community and Volunteer Engagement Accomplish. So I do all the outward facing things. So like that- that's my paid gig. That's what I do. And so in that, I do a lot of policy work, a lot of advocacy work, and so like I bring and do all of that from a reproductive justice lens. And so like where I'm at now, is that- I also like to say that like I got into birthwork and doula work as a reaction, right? As- as a reaction to like not having, and so I- I never saw that as my forever, because like I said I got into it as a reaction cause like there weren't any other Black doulas, and then there are so many Black doulas, I can step back, and do the things that like really call my heart, which is advocacy and teaching. Like I wanna be out here doing the reproductive justice gospel. I'm a be an evangelist, yep, **(chuckles)** for reproductive justice, and I'm about to like- we bout to all get free. Like liberation is the goal, and so doing my part in that way, is where I'm at. I like to say like, if- if the homies like, "I'm- I'm pregnant, can you be my doula?" I'ma be like, **(exhales)** "Aw, sure. Sure just for you." But other than that, I- like I said training and mentoring and still like bringing resources and collaborating is really where I'm at right now, is weaving together networks of folks and uplifting access.

**SL:**

Advocacy and teaching is very important. I love that you've kinda said that how you had a reaction, but then you kind of were able to find your place, or find where you feel more fulfilled at. Cause I wouldn't say- I don't like the way "place" sounds, but (**chuckles**) in terms of like what your lane is, what you desire to do, what it is that you- the work that you wanna do rather than like you said as a reaction. Cause that reaction is not really gonna- the momentum of the reaction is eventually going to die down, especially I would say in terms of- from what I hear of how you went- I mean just everything that happened with the lactation things, with you know the birth things, like all of those things ended up like settling into this space where you're now. Like that's what it sounds like to me. So, I like that though. I think that's the important part of like you were saying, the journey. And it happens differently for everybody. This is your spot, like this is where the things that happened to you brought you to this space, but I definitely- I mean I feel like I've had a similar conversation with folks when they talk about maybe like a loss that brought them to where they are now, you know? So that's- that's a very- parallel I think. I think that makes sense in terms of this career and also for Black people in terms of us getting back into something that we've known how to do already. We haven't needed necessarily the hospital to teach us how to do. So that is really interesting. OK, so could you talk a little bit about policy work. Like as someone who is newly coming into this scene, and like what does policy work look like? (**chuckles**) I know- I know that's kinda broad, I'm sorry. (**laughs**)

**AYE:**

No! What- like for me- like I'll call myself like a organic academic right? Like I did not matriculate in college. I went to like my sophomore year or whatever, but also I'm in the rooms of like executive directors of big ass (**chuckles**) and big ass reproductive justice organizations. And so policy work looks like being in the room for real. It's just like in me asking questions. More than anything I'm like- I had to be like, "Hey, am I the drama?" Yes. I'm- I'm the drama in the spaces. Because (**chuckles**) policy looks like, you know, white women who career has been social justice, right? But as a conversation I was having with multiple colleagues who also operate in the policy spaces that I do, Black femmes, it's just like- but they not- they disembodied, right? Like they don't- they not embodied with the liberation that they actually think they going to seek, right? That's not part of your lived experience, and so because of that disembodiment, they really can't really get there, right? And so like it has looked like, white folks being in silos,

hoarding resources. Like your career is oppression, and my career (**chuckles**) is not oppression like baby. I wanna do love work. I wanna do stuff that's because I fucking like it. Like put me on a farm with some goats and some chickens, I'll be a little herby which lady. Look I will- I want to be- my goal in life is to be the old witch lady down the street. Like people can come to me like, "Ayé, you know, my period ain't come yet." "Huh, take these herbs, get your period on." Or "Ayé, my baby won't stop crying." "Okay, get this. Rub this on your baby back." Like that- that's my goal in life. Not to be fighting oppression. Right? (**chuckles**) Like- And so those are peoples careers though, right? And so like being in policy allows me to see how much of it is really theater. And so I'm a person that's just like, "You can't- like no decisions without me, but also I don't fuck with you. Like I don't trust you. I don't believe that you have my best interests at heart, but also I'm gonna be here because you not finna make no decisions without me being here because that's how we got here right now. (**chuckles**) So like both. I'm really interested in building things outside of the system that we currently have, and also I think it's important that as things are developing that we are also attentive in that way. And that's what like- that's like also the scam of white supremacy and capitalism is that like we gotta be busy doing all this fuck shit of- of (**chuckles**) fighting this system, tryna survive, but also like building care working systems, you know what I'm saying? So, yes it's- it's fucking exhausting, and it's intentional. (**chuckles**) Or it's really intentional how it works, and so I try not to- my policy is like, I don't engage with electeds because they job is to listen, and (**chuckles**) you know, like I'm not one of those people who like, "We gotta make, you know, friends them. Like they job- they got there, they job is to listen and to do what constituents want, and then also like you making policy? OKay, what is the language in your policy? Why? Why we haven't switched to "pregnant people" yet? Y'all. You can't be virtue signaling." Like I said I'm the- I'm the drama in the space. I'm gon ask the question, "OK this bill y'all putting forth, it says "women". You know that language and law can used to be oppressive. Like why can't- if you writing it, why can't we already write it the way that it needs to be?" And so, policy also has a lot of urgency in it, and I'm against urgency (**chuckles**) as well. Grounded urgency, as folks have named yes, because sometimes we have to respond, but tryna keep up with the pace of white supremacy is also not- it's not something I desire. So my policy work looks like being in the rooms. I'm listening. I'm saying, "Okay, wait a minute, what about this thing right here?" I'm holding shit up. I'm asking questions. I'm pissing people off who like, "Oh this how we been doing things." "Okay. Now, but why? That's dumb. (**chuckles**) like why we doing it that way?" (**laughs**) So and yeah. That's- that's policy work looks like right now, here in Virginia we're in session.

**SL:**

That is so important. I felt like- ooof! You touched on so many juicy gems. I'm like this is- this is great. I love- I definitely love what you mentioned earlier about the advocacy gospel. **(chuckles)** I love that, but I definitely feel like- I know- I love that you're in a grounded space of being able to understand like, you know, you working around these white folks and these people who are in these spaces already, you know, and being able to kind of maintain like your mental health, but also be able to uplift, you know, your lived experience in addition to the lived experiences of folks who aren't in that room, you know? So whew. Hm. I love it- but what you said about theater, like white people are dramatics, like of any type of social justice, so that's so interesting that you mentioned that. Like I- I wouldn't even be surprised, like I- cause I couldn't imagine how you not losing your shit every day, like what? Like **(laughs)** So it's so, obviously, you supposed to be there because oooh, ew. Yeah. **(laughs)** Oh my gosh. So **(chuckles)** this has been really great. So I just have one last question for you. So I know that you're doing policy work right now and not so much serving families in the supportive way, but from your experience, I would love to know what advice you would give to families and parents that may not have access to a Doula? Like maybe you did?

**AYE:**

Yeah. My advice is that, in the age of social media it's like plus and minuses. It's like there are lots of resources, there's also a lot of people who say a lot of wrong shit too. And so I would say it's like multiple respected groups. And they don't have to be big groups to be respected. Like you have The Afiya Center, you have Sister Song, you have Black Mamas Matter Alliance. Like those are places you could google, and they have all types of courses for pregnant folks. If you don't have access to Internet or like that's just a hard thing to- to do and other access issues, definitely having a provider you trust is probably the- one of the most important things. And- so asking them questions and noticing red flags. So like if you don't feel comfortable with your provider or- that's the biggest thing. Even if you don't like know if you feel comfortable or not, because like, "Oh you had one OB who do your paps every once in a while," **(chuckles)** you know what I'm saying? And it's just like that's as much as you know about them too. You don't know whether you comfortable. Like you trust them for paps, but you don't know if you trust them to have- to deliver your baby. So that's the questions I would ask people, like on Facebook. Like, "Who have yall delivered with? Who you like?" So like where and who you

deliver with is probably one of the most important decisions to be made. So looking into that, as far as like, what people have said, looking at the reviews, asking around. We don't talk about- we don't talk about our doctors. **(chuckles)** We don't talk about- That's information we should be communally sharing to know like, "Oh no, this person is fucked up, don't go to them," or like, "No, this person is really good, go to them." And so like just having conversations. Yeah, starting conversations, finding out who the good providers are, is a really big step to having out a good birthing experience.

**SL:**

When you said that, it made me think of what you said about your story, the part of your birth story where that nurse was like, "Well, that's the doctor," you know? And it's interesting where it's like word of mouth is kind of a thing in our community, where like if something's good, that's usually how you heard about it, is cause somebody told you. Where it's like, we don't always do the same when it's negative, and when it's in direct opposition to- to- I would say professions that seem like authority like doctors, and police, and things like that. But definitely in terms of doctors, like you know there should definitely be a normalcy within our community where it's like, "Don't go there! Don't go to that doctor! That motherfucker is racist! His nurse is racist too!" Like you know? **(chuckles)** I think that that type of sharing should definitely more normal, more normalized with us especially while we combat with, you know, this- with the infant and maternal mortality rate, which is definitely I would say more like- so right like we do with nail techs and barbers, why not do it with doctors and nurses, when they're the ones who literally hold our life in their hands? But I think- I- I feel like that kinda- you mentioned something earlier too about things being intentional, right? How the systems and certain things are intentional, and so I could see how they've kind of intentionally ingrained that where like, "Am I allowed to say that? Am I allowed to-" you know? Because there's also like the whole patient doctor confidentiality thing, right? So then like, "Is that? Am I sure? Am I supposed to?" No, you should tell somebody if your doctor was fucked up. Like absolutely, and tell another Black person not to go to that. Thank you like so great advice. Like **(chuckles)** I love it. I think that is extremely important, so I'm really glad that you brought that up for sure. Oh man this has been so good, Ayé. Like I am so grateful to be a community with you now, to be able to connect to all this wisdom, and I would love it if you would just share with the audience, how they can find you, where they can take your courses, your classes, where they can get on your dime too? **(chuckles)**

**AYE:**

So you can find me @the\_do\_you\_doula on Insta. It's the \_ do \_ you \_ doula. I mean that- my classes is just like, "Look, I got my calendar up on there. Most that stuff is free. Like I just love talking about RJ, and like sharing information, and I don't think like a lot of stuff is like- should be academic or high-level, shit we should just know about ourselves, our bodies, and our communities like you was saying, Symba. Like we should be- so many like Black birth is full of so much family. Like I've been to a birth where I had to be like, "OK all your siblings have got to go now." (**chuckles**) It's the time. It's the concentrating time. We had a whole room full of people, and then the difference it would make if everybody knew how things worked, right? Which is also intentional, right? We don't know. But like yes, take a class, ask me questions. If I don't teach it, I'll show you somebody who do teach it. But yeah, find me @the\_do\_you\_doula on IG. I'm not on anything else.

**SL:**

I love it. I will have all that information in the show notes for everyone, and we are just so appreciative to you Ayé, for being on with us, and spending your time talking about white people and they crazy fuck shit, and how they tryna keep us from giving birth safely. And (**chuckles**) I appreciate the work that you do, I feel like it's interesting, right? Cause I- I- as your new homie, you know, my hope would be that, you know, you've been able to do the healing for the trauma that may have been caused to you, you know, and also I'm grateful that you were able to take an experience and birth- haha- pun intended, this (**chuckles**) beautiful work that you do, and so I'm grateful. I love- I love the concept of the "do you" doula. I love that you were able to just come into that space. I totally resonate with that, and I'm just so happy to put this conversation out there and connect more with you in the future. It's gonna be great like- (**chuckles**) Thank you so much for your time. Thank you for your wisdom, and we appreciate it so much.

**ACCESSIBILITY MESSAGE:**

Thank you for being on this journey with us. In our effort to build a community that is inclusive and accessible, we pride ourselves on transcribing all of our conversations and captioning every video in order to be able to share what we learn with everyone. As we grow our network, we welcome and ask for feedback to best serve the uniqueness of the differently abled

communities. Right now this podcast is a one person show, but we hope to build a team to increase the production capability of this podcast. We are also interested in connecting with Black and Indigenous individuals who provide ASL and Black ASL for future live events and productions. If you're listening and feel inspired to join our team or share your ideas with us, we would love to be in community with you and hear from you. Please reach out to us at [journeyspa12@gmail.com](mailto:journeyspa12@gmail.com), and we look forward to getting better every day.

### **QUEER DOULA NETWORK:**

The Queer Doula Network believes that every person capable of gestational experiences should feel respected and heard. Finding LGBTQ+ affirming care can often be a struggle, and we seek to make it less cumbersome. The mission of this network is to provide a directory of queer full spectrum providers for queer individuals seeking support during reproductive journeys.

Queerdoulanetwork.com is a website to be used as an informational source, not as a guide for recommendations. The Queer Doula Network does not vet listed service providers. Clients using this website should independently examine and vet any qualification and use their own best judgment before, during, and after the hiring process. The Queer Doula Network is not liable for any services rendered; the quality of said services; and/or the results of interactions between a service provider and a client.

If you are a Black queer birthworker, you can sign up for a birthworker listing at [queerdoulanetwork.com](http://queerdoulanetwork.com). If you are Black queer individual looking for LGBTQ+ affirming care, [queerdoulanetwork.com](http://queerdoulanetwork.com) can be a great place to start and look for individuals.

### **OUTRO:**

Thank you for tuning in to this episode! Before we leave this space, we here at Journey Spa, Sessions With Symba, and I, Symba Luna, want to uplift, honor, and stand in solidarity with Black Trans Women. We pray for the spirits of the lives lost due to senseless violence, and we intend to continue to uplift the lives and activist work that Black Trans Women have done and continue to do for the freedom of all of us. As we hope to contribute to liberation work through healing and birth work, we believe in Protecting Black Trans Youth and Black Trans Women always. We are so excited to have you on this journey with us, and we look forward to being on this journey with you toward having healthy bodies, healthy pregnancies, healthy births, and healthy families. Stay tuned for a new episode coming soon!