

Episode 1 Transcription

Welcome to Sessions With Symba, the podcast where I bring you conversations with previously pregnant and birthing people, along with birth workers to share their stories and multifaceted perspectives towards carrying and giving life to the babies that we love. I am your host, Symba Luna, a Black queer individual specifically holding a safe space for individuals and allies of the Black LGBTQIA community to experience. I want to use this platform to take you along with me on my process as a prenatal massage therapist entering the doula and birth worker industry through my business Journey Spa. It is my intention to create dialogues that might not often be mainstream by sharing experiences within our community that can serve as resources to pregnant, birthing people, and their families. Our goal at Journey Spa is to contribute to and learn how we can support the future of the birthing community combating (against) the Black Maternal and Infant Mortality rate. In these sessions we are going to cover topics ranging from life views and experiences, childhood, spirituality, dreams and hopes, blockages, our work, our world contributions, and how all of these elements impact the positive and negative ways that we give birth to our babies. In these sessions we will also feature fellow doulas, midwives, and childbirth educators. With the current state of the world, we seem to need each other even more these days, and we believe that if we can put all of our resources together during this time, we can make sure that we are all well taken care of. These sessions are especially for pregnant people and birthing families that may not have access to prenatal massage therapy and birth doula services that Journey Spa provides in an effort to bring information and education to everyone who may need it. I am so excited to share my journey with you and explore what we can learn together.

Since this is a session, make sure that you have your snacks and plenty of water. Some of my favorite supplies to bring are a cup of tea, a candle to set the mood, and my incense of the day. I encourage everyone listening in to bring something to the session that shows your uniqueness,

and I Invite you to let me know what you brought to the conversation while letting others know what you're listening to with the hashtag #SessionsWithSymba or #SWSPod.

Today's episode, I want to introduce myself, and share some of my background and my experience.

deep breath

Again my name is Symba Luna. My pronouns are they, them, and g, and I identify as a gender nonconforming individual. I am originally from Chicago, Illinois, and I currently live in Atlanta, Georgia. I am the eldest of four children, a brother and two sisters. My siblings and I, along with our parents, lived together in the same house until 8th grade. We moved to the city. the west side of Chicago. Eventually, through my parent's divorce, my mother moved to the north side of Chicago, and my dad stayed on the west side, and my siblings and I stayed together as a unit until I started to go off to college. Currently my dad and my brother still live in Chicago, my sisters live in Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), and my mother lives in Texas and is also thinking of moving again. (***short chuckle***) So we don't live in close proximity anymore, but we do our best to stay in touch, and visit as often as possible.

I am not sure if I want to give birth, but I do believe that I want children as long as I can create the community and the support that I believe would be successful.

If I were to describe myself as a child, I would use the words quiet, imaginative, and responsible. As the eldest daughter, I had the responsibility of keeping an eye on my siblings. I often, more than likely, had my nose in a book, when people were trying to get my attention, and if I wasn't reading, and it was a really nice day outside, I loved to cloud watch. I loved pretending I was a bird and what I could do if I could fly. (***chuckle***) If I got the opportunity to spend an hour

with myself as a child, I think it would be very enlightening and very refreshing. I don't know that I would be the one giving advice. I think I would want to be in the space of observing myself and listening to the things that I used to say, and taking those words as advice for right now.

When I was in high school, I was at a college prep public school in Chicago, and I went to Spelman College as a biochemistry major. Quickly realized that chemistry was not for me. I thought I wanted to be a doctor, but I don't think I ever knew that I didn't have to be a science major to take the MCAT. Nonetheless, I then transitioned to International Studies, which I thoroughly enjoyed, and I almost wish I had finished there, but I had struggled with not really having a lot of (um) people that I could look to in terms of teachers and mentors that I was close to. And the International Studies department, at the time, was really small with one teacher. At the same I was taking an Intro to Anthropology which led me to my love and final major of Sociology and Anthropology.

Unfortunately due to financial reasons, I did not finish Spelman College, and so I am a lovely college dropout. Instead of what would have been my senior year at Spelman College, I ended up going to the International School of Skin, Nail Care, and Massage Therapy, in Atlanta, Georgia under the massage therapy program. That was 2013. I finished my classes and graduated 2014. I financially finished 2015, and then was able to begin the process of studying for my MBLEx, which is also the Georgia State Board Exam. The first time I took the test, I missed it by one point, and then from there have to wait another at least 30 days before you can take it again. Then when I took it the second time, gratefully I passed, and by the end of year I was able to get everything finalized to putting my application in for my state license, and I was officially licensed in January of 2017.

I began working my first spa job in 2017 at a local franchise Massage Envy. I worked there from 2017-2019. In February of 2019, I also started working at a LaVida Massage, also in Georgia, where I ended up transitioning out so that I was done working at Massage Envy I believe in May. So the rest of the year I spent working at LaVida Massage, and in November of 2019, I became attuned in traditional Reiki Level 1 & Level 2. So I began (uh) practicing Reiki through November and December, mostly on myself.

In December of 2019, I- I was preparing to change some of the hours that I did at LaVida, and as I was about to do that (**chuckle**) which is funny because, I also realized that like I was wanting to be self employed at that time. I was wanting to (um) practice that and gain more clientele, but I was also really still hung up with "*Well my job pays me x amount,*" and so I really believe I was about to kick it up a notch, not necessarily make more time to be self employed. And I realize now, that wasn't the direction I should have gone, and I got pretty much a divine intervention where just as I was about to, you know, starting making up and doing more hours for LaVida to try to supplement my income for quote unquote self employment. (**small chuckle**)

In a way that was kinda moving backwards. I ended up (um) really like within my first week of getting settled back in (um) from moving and going back to work, I ended up cutting my finger, my middle finger, my right, on my right hand (um) pretty badly that I needed stitches, and I'm grateful that I didn't need any type of surgery, but I did nick a tendon, and so because of my massage profession, the doctors and my physical therapist wanted me to (um) not work for six weeks. And so that was like the exact opposite of what I was about to do. I had never, I couldn't even imagine not working for six weeks, but I needed to do physical therapy, I needed to rehabilitate, and so that was actually a really good time for me to practice Reiki and incorporate Reiki into Journey Spa. That gave me a lot more time to do that. (**small chuckle**)

(Um) So yes, and then from rehabilitating through with my finger, I was pretty much off for February and March, and then I was finally cleared to work again toward the end of February. I went ahead and got a new job at a Massage Heights in Atlanta. And then I was probably there for maybe, maybe two to three weeks before Georgia had the official lockdown for Covid-19. And so I was back to not working due to quarantine. It was a bit jarring at first, but quarantine and not working a regular job, gave me so much more time to focus on my self employment and actually understanding what that means, from doing more with advertisement, from doing more with marketing, from even understanding who my target audience was. Before with massage therapy, I was- I was popular in a lot of different (um) spaces of modalities, but I hadn't picked a modality as like ok *"these are the people that I wanna work with specifically"*. I was really enjoying being a versatile kind of therapist and so I didn't want to hinder my versatility. However, quarantine really gave me a chance to sit back and really examine the kind of clients that I also enjoy working with, and really looking at what the direction of my business would be going forward if I chose to then (um) specifically work with these people.

So I was drawn to really (um) navigating over like ok which clients do I resonate with? Which clients (um) do I also like, not just do I feel good about the work, but do I actually enjoy doing the work? And throughout the summer, throughout springtime of that year, over and over and over again, I kept being, I kept revisiting all the prenatal clients that I had had from Massage Envy to LaVida, even how toward the end of my time at LaVida I was starting to become the prenatal massage therapist. (*chuckle*)

So this also made me realize that I couldn't ignore certain things like there's just some things that are in your face and they're also there for a reason. And so it's important to pay attention to those things, and not ignore them because you can really miss out on what's specifically for you. So what I decided to do was go ahead and claim the prenatal massage therapist as my- and

prenatal and pregnant people as my target audience. And from there in November of 2020, I trained with the National Black Doula Association to be a Birth Doula, and here we are in 2021, and I am creating packages for pregnant and prenatal people as they also want to choose me to be their doula. And so I'm really excited (*small chuckle*) to, I mean incorporate Reiki as well, but also how everything is just coming together with (um) Journey Spa literally being a journey that I've been on, and the fact that pregnancy is a journey and toward giving life and toward (um) carrying life, and sometimes those journeys have, are very like happy and clear and they make sense, and other times those journeys are full, filled with pain and hardships and unexpected issues, and we all need to be able to feel supported no matter what kind of journey that we are on, (um) and no matter what kind of pregnancy you have, no matter what kind of birth you have. You are deserving of support that sometimes, well, I believe we can see in the statistics of the Black infant- maternal- infant and maternal mortality rate, that that's not always happening. People are not always, people are usually not being supported in the ways that they need to have a healthy birth. And so here at Journey Spa, I want to embody the space of you know giving massages and Reiki even before you're pregnant and before you want to have a family, towards having a healthy body. While you are pregnant, having a healthy pregnancy, (um) and then guiding and informing my clients to a space where they can have a healthy birth, and in turn I believe having healthy births will lead us to continuing to have more healthy families.

In addition to my entrepreneurship lifestyle and being self employed, I think it's very important for me to also focus on hobbies that don't necessarily, or that I'm not necessarily using to make money. (um) Quarantine was really important for me to getting back into things that made me happy- was also fun. (um) The beginning of quarantine I bought a gopro camera. I really just thought back on like being in high school and middle school and always having a camera around, taking pictures (um) making videos or recording videos of my friends, my family and just documenting some of the things that we went through some of the things that we would, where

we would go as well. And so with quarantine having you know having a lot of time during quarantine, I wanted to get back into that. So I started creating my YouTube channel, which (um) included things like just taking walks and enjoying nature with video, in a video element to also creating (um) stretch tutorials (um). Part of Journey Spa is assisted stretching, and one of the big thing I- big things that I learned (um) in my spa spaces were that a lot of times people didn't know how to stretch. and i would tell people "*Ok you need to stretch, you need to stretch*", but I think you know some people you know didn't have those (um) classes you know in school or the physical element in school that taught you your anatomy and taught you what to do. and so i wanted- I went ahead and used the videography hobby of mine to create (um) stretch tutorials that I also have on my youtube channel that i will link below in the show notes. I also just wanted to (um) record like conversations and sometimes me and my friends would have these deep long thought provoking conversations, and I may not ever like share them publicly, but it was really fun to just be able to record that and have those moments, (um) have those moments recorded to share you know for the future.

And I also started to, I was also, I also got back to knitting. I learned how to knit when I was like 8 I think at the YMCA, but like from the drive home, like I would do the knitting class, and then on the drive home to do it when I got home, I would kind of forget. And so, but I went ahead and you know got some yarn got some needles, went back on youtube, and it was almost like riding a bike, which is so funny cause I love bike riding, skating all that stuff too so (*small chuckle*) I also got back into that this year with skating again. But the baby blankets were really cool, the knitting was really cool because I went into making baby blankets for (uh) newborns and babies that were born, two- two specific newborns and babies that I knew of that my friends had (um) in quarantine during you know Covid-19 and everything. I thought- and I was really- thought it was really special because you know just how everything has changed including- that includes like hospital births and the way that people have to give birth now. And I was grateful to be able to

give my friends a little token of good energy (um) for their children (um) moving forward. And so I'm not sure how I'll be able to incorporate the knitting now, but I'm, I'm still thinking about it cause it was still something that was really cute and really fun and so depending on how things go y'all might see some baby blankets again. (*small chuckle*) (um) But yeah so I just thought that was really important to share because even as an entrepreneur (um) rest and fun is a really important thing for me to carve out time for. And especially because I came from, before being an entrepreneur, I came from a space of consistently being a workaholic. And that just did not sustain me at all, it didn't sustain my happiness. it didn't sustain my creativity, and it didn't sustain any type of well "*What's, what else? outside of money, outside of bills, what else is there?*" And there's more to life than just money and bills, and so I'm really grateful because I've just been able to tap into myself again. And I think we, I think a lot of us have, and a lot of us have been able to, and I'm so grateful for that.

(um) The videography was also supposed to be a part of the podcast. I really wanted to do in person interviews and almost, and like create documentaries about people and their stories, and but due to Covid and due to not being able to really be in person in the same way (um) it makes also excited for the (um) the rise of podcasts and podcasting and hearing other people's stories through podcasts. and so maybe for now that won't be, that's not the direction for right now, but I am actually going to make my first documentary as a way to talk to you all and share some of my experiences (um) on the end of 2019 to the beginning to well to quarantine of 2020 when I worked with a mentor named Ash Johns in her Step Into Your Purpose Program. (uh) Man, that mentorship relationship really (um) changed my life in so many amazing ways, and I'm working really hard to get it to you all so I hopefully can share it with you before the end of the year. And I hope that you all know that just as important as work and money might seem, you know the things that speak to your heart are even more so important to incorporate into your life. Another (um) thing that I really enjoy is traveling. (um) But you know of course due to the way that covid

has (um) affected the global world, (um) I know that travel has changed a lot, (um) and it will probably continue to change over the next year or two, but I wanted to just speak on the things I've seen when I've traveled.

My family is, my fathers family is from Belize, and so in Belize there are these Mayan ruins that I have visited a few times. Also think I, I believe I visited them when I went to Guatemala as well. But culturally you know I really respect and admire the (um) the traditions and the philosophies of the Mayan people, and I would say that visiting the Mayans was a very spiritual experience, I'm sorry visiting the Mayan ruins (*small chuckle*) was a very spiritual experience (um) very, very grounding it felt, you know. (um) Especially in the space of a lot of the times when or the two times I visited Belize, I was usually in a space of confusion, and I felt very grounded leaving Belize. And so then my other favorite place was Ecuador. I studied abroad (um) during my time at Spelman College for about a month. and one of my favorite experiences was seeing or visiting the Amazon forest. We hiked through the Amazon, and we ended our hike by going swimming in and under this waterfall. This beautiful spring waterfall that you could drink from. and probably the most cleanest, purest, that water was so good like so, good. (*chuckle*) And (um) I was really upset that I didn't have a bottle to like take some back with me, but that might be a little bit of colonizing so I'm glad I didn't do that. (um) I really just love to even talk about the experience of this day and just being in different cultures and different spaces that are different from the one that I grew up in, really show me how similar that we all are even in, but then some of our differences are even so admirable. I really just love the family structures that I saw in Belize and Ecuador in terms of how you know those cultures really rally among or for the pregnant people in their family. And having a baby or giving life is seen as reverence like the person who's able to carry this baby is almost god-like. And I know that could probably be controversial in some spaces, but I think it's a testament to how we don't have as many healthy

births here in the states because we are not uplifting the pregnant person in the same way as (um) other cultures even on the other side of the world.

One of my favorite videos (um) of a postpartum (uh) culture or the culture surrounding postpartum was a video I saw of families and women in Morocco, and just the way that they care the mother and care for the pregnant person after they've given birth, and how the pregnant person barely has to lift a finger because the people who support them are supporting them not just healing from like the physical things but even the emotional things. Like they, all they have to do is be concerned with (um uh) bonding with the baby or breastfeeding. And I think when we see how you know women and mothers and birthing people here in the states have to immediately go back to work, have to immediately leave their babies (um) may not even have time to learn how to breastfeed, may not have the support in their postpartum work where they have to go right back to cooking and cleaning and tending to a family instead their family being able to tend to them. After, even if it wasn't a traumatizing birth, after a huge experience like that, you should be able to sit down and rest. and it's unfortunate to me that that's not the environment we live in (um) but I believe that we have a little more power sometimes than we might know, and sometimes even just learning and thinking about these things in a new way, we have the opportunity to create a new reality. And so I speak on all these things, and I have this podcast, and I want to share these stories of pregnancy and birthing experiences because I hope that in this space where we might feel a little bit limited, we can create a new way of even dealing with postpartum care, postpartum depression, and all and any other things that may, that may be on a new, on new parents minds and helping them and supporting them in being the best parents that they can be to this new life that they've ushered in.

Accessibility Message

Thank you for being on this journey with us. In our effort to build community that is 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. 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 or anyone you know has any resources, we would love to be in community with you. Please reach out to us at journeyspa12@gmail.com, and we look forward to getting better every day.

Back to the Show

Some of my biggest internal and external struggles that I have dealt with in my early 20s and even a little bit up to recently in the last year, have been (um) my mental health and homelessness. I want to briefly (um) speak on these struggles that I have had, in a way to make space for others who might have also dealt with some of these things. In addition to then now possibly dealing with pregnancy and birth. I have never been clinically diagnosed with anything, but I have been able to do a lot of (um) self examination and self improvement. I also know that some of the struggles that I had, had a lot to do with my environment. And I truly believe that when you can change your environment, you can change your health in a lot of different ways. And so I have dealt with anxiety and depression for a lot of my 20s, and I have dealt with homelessness for a good portion of my 20s. At least in the space that well I would say the anxiety of being homeless. (um) and a lot of times I noticed that my depression was high during spaces where I felt like I had no control of my environment, or no control as to whether I would be homeless or not.

The first time that I was homeless was February of 2014 while I was still in massage therapy school. I did not work while I was in massage therapy school, and so when I had a financial

fallout with my roommate, I could not afford to keep my own apartment. I spent the next few months (um) hopping from different (uh) places to places, couch surfing, I guess is a good way to say, with different friends that opened their homes to me for either two weeks to a month at a time, also while still being in school. By the time May came around I thought I had a little, something a little more stable in place, and then that also fell through. And so I spent a good majority of the summer while trying to finish my classes (um) in high anxiety and concern about the next place that I would live in. I believe that a lot of the anxiety stemmed from the not knowing, especially the not knowing of where I would live and when I would be stable again to provide my own income to support myself. In August of 2014, I had finally secured a good place to live, I had a good job, and I had finally gotten a car which I had spent most of my time in Georgia without one. So then I was able to use income with the car to gain more income. And so that was going really well for the remainder of 2014, and then in January, I got into a car accident where I totaled the car and due to totaling the car lost the income I had had. And so the next couple months of looking for jobs was really filled with a lot of high anxiety. I was very depressed about losing the car (um) especially because it was a gift, and I wasn't paying anything on it, and so it just added to more worry about income, how to get a new car. That also came with like needing more money so (um) 2015 was a lot of high anxiety for me as well. I did find a new job a few months later, but it just wasn't paying as much as my previous job. And so I ended making the decision to go back home to live with my mom that summer, and unfortunately I just, I had also had a lot of high anxiety about living at home again, and at the time I think, I definitely valued my freedom more than wanting to (um) kind of just keep my head down. I feel like through high school I kept my head down, through most of my childhood I kept that, I kept my head down, and although I respected you know, my parents and the home that they had, and the fact they had worked hard to have their homes, I didn't feel like their home was my home, and that made it difficult for me to stay very long. (um) I made the decision to go

back to Atlanta (um) with the, more so with the hope of getting promoted soon with the previous job I had, that I had been working before I left.

This was part of my- the food service industry of my life. Before I was in massage therapy school, I had worked at Wendy's and then while I was working to start my massage therapy career, I started working at Papa Johns as a delivery driver, and then that was the time when I had the car, and then so after the car I transitioned to working at Dominos (um) on a more so inside (um) operations position and so then that would eventually lead me to being able to be promoted to assistant manager which was very helpful in 2016. And so at the end of 2015, I was doing a little bit better, in terms of financially, but then also still trying to get the money to take my state test as well as the money for the fingerprints and the actual license application. So 2016 I was doing really well at that job and then I ended up falling for a popular bank scam that affected some of the money that I already had had in my bank account. That affected my rent which affected being able to stay at the apartment that I was in. And so me and my, me and my roommates at the time were welcomed into a different home. This home was someone who didn't really know me very well, but because I had income they (um) they vouched for me and they also were gracious enough to give me a place to stay for that time. I stayed there for 2 years, and I had hoped that the roommates I went to that place with we were going to try to move out together, but we weren't, we all weren't ready to do that at the same time. So I went ahead and left (um) and got (uh) a different place to live with a coworker (um) at the time when I was working at Massage Envy, and she allowed me to rent out her basement apartment, and that was really really cool for me because that was probably one of the very first times that I was able to kind of move and be on my own, and really outside of like making sure that I was respectful to my roommates, I also had a lot of freedom to just live the way I wanted to.

Closer to the end of 2018 I made a deal with my former roommates about getting a new place together, and we were going to hopefully do that for about a year. (um) In that situation my godchildren lived with me, and I had agreed to that situation due to being able to be close to them and live with them again. And so I had a deal with my roommates, and within about 6-8 months I was starting to understand that the deal wouldn't really go the way I had hoped. Which was a bit unfortunate because, but it taught me a lot about setting boundaries and sticking to my boundaries even when other folks might not stick to their end of agreements and things like that. In October of 2019, I decided to stand up for myself and because my roommates had not (um) held up their end of the bargain for our agreement, I decided to leave. And that was also the space where the first time again I felt like I didn't know where I would go. This was like really upsetting for me because I hadn't really felt these emotions and high anxiety surrounding homelessness or not having a place to live *{in a long time}* but it was also really important for me to get into a space where that also, I could also even see that wasn't the case and that wasn't true, and that I actually believe that making that decision to honor myself and honor my own boundaries allowed for me to find the new home that I was able to (uh) settle into (um) in December.

So when I was growing up, we grew up (um) I'm pretty sure I was born in a Baptist church (um) and I have been, I had been surrounded by Christian influences for my whole life especially or leading up to being 18 and going out on my own. (um) My mother was a devout christian (um) my father was as well, and then I believe when I was 10, he stopped going to church. And I wanted to stop going too, but out of being (um) obedient for my mother, I chose- I kinda- I never spoke up that that's something that I wanted. So I speak to that just being when I got to college, I was able to no longer go to church. Like I didn't have anybody forcing me to go to church, or telling me that I needed to (um). I think the few times that I was allowed not to go to church were usually pretty random and it had more so to do with like if i had- I believe like I didn't go to

church the day after prom because I had had done two proms in a row, and on Sunday I was really tired. (um) That's probably one of the few times I remember not going to church. (***small chuckle***)

(um) So I grew up in a very devout Christian space, but I knew I wasn't a devout christian. So when I got to college I kinda floated here and there in terms of church in terms of like the different campuses had different church services, and I probably went to a few. I sang in the choir still so there was still certain appearances I had to upkeep but then even after my first year of school, I realized I didn't have to sing in the choir because no one was forcing me to do that. So that kind of began my journey of ignoring Christianity and listening or seeing what else I could pick up around spirituality and religion going forward. I would say that for a lot of years it just wasn't something that was on my mind (um) I was- I think I hardly- I think I maybe have been able to visit a few churches during the time of like being homeless and being in school, maybe two to three times. By the time massage therapy school rolled around, and like working, a lot of times I was working on weekends or working on Sundays and it just, that was a good excuse and that was a- the way that was able to tell people that's why I don't go to church is cause I have to work. (um) And then in 2018 I began taking notice of a friend, my beautiful friend Sammy aka Juju Bae, and she was talking a lot about venerating her ancestors and building an altar. And so 2018 was the first time I- I actually felt like something peaked my interest in terms of like "*Oh I think I could try that and maybe that makes more sense*". So I built my first altar for myself in 2018. As I moved it evolved in lots of different ways, but it gave me- it felt- it helped me feel more connected to spirituality than I had felt while growing up in church. I didn't really resonate with Jesus Christ or like that the saving of the world, and I think that was because of just seeing and learning how people suffer so much in the world, and so it just made me feel like it was part of like the lies that capitalism tells you (um) growing up and things like that. And so for myself I just wasn't- I wasn't really feeling that at all. So I began keeping up with

my altar, praying again in terms of this time praying to my lineage and to my ancestors, and I truly believe and I truly understand that a lot of the things that I experienced from 2018 to now have been because of- of me cultivating that relationship with my spirit guides, with my ancestors, with people who have come before me in my lineage. And so I do feel connected to God even more so now than I did when I was growing up. And I think that's because I get to name my connection with God, and I also get to see the real life examples of how my connection to God transformed as well as how it also transformed my life. And it not just changed my outside circumstances, but how it helped me deal with a lot of my internal struggles in order to change my outward circumstances. And so I do believe there is a God. I believe there is a higher power, and I believe that we all have one that resonates with us and that keeps us safe and keeps us in a ritual of **(exhale)** groundedness. I think that's probably the best way to say (um). I truly admire and respect all of the different ways that even religion (um) is associated with culture and how different cultures (um) uplift their religion because it has carried them through so many times. I truly believe that the (um) that my ancestor veneration is rooted in hoodoo, which if you're unfamiliar with hoodoo, hoodoo is, if I could sum up hoodoo I would say hoodoo is making something out of nothing, (um) finding laughter where there's pain, and doing so many things that Black people have been able to do to resist a lot of the systems in place that purposefully try to keep us down. I also feel that it's important for me to (uh) acknowledge but then also express that this is my journey, and this is what has helped me. And I respect that not everyone is on that kind of journey, and that even religiously or spiritually, I may work with people who are in a different space than me, and I'm totally ok with that. I believe what's important is to have something, and for that something to keep you grounded, to keep you looking inward, and not just outward like it's being everyone else's fault, but even understanding the ways that you know you contribute to your pain as well as your joy. And I believe I've been able to do a lot of healing that I've been able to take to my ancestors so that they do healing as well but then we do the healing together. And so that makes me feel connected to something

even bigger than like this- this- these- the mundane day to day or like the “*What is life?*” “*Who is god?*” questions. (*chuckle*)

So yeah I just wanted to share that with you all because I think it was just a really important part of my journey. So one thing that I think is really important in the work that I do and in the type of dynamics and relationships that I have, has been to be my most authentic and my most honest self. I realized that a lot of situations and dynamics I've been in before were not successful a lot of times for multiple reasons, but a big reason being that I had a hard time with being honest with myself and then making those appropriate changes. I've noticed in the past I have been able to (um) sweep things under the rug sometimes and ignore things in hopes they'll get better, but that's not really sustainable, at least not for myself. And so I value being able to be my most authentic self in any environment, in any space. I value being able to speak my truth and be completely honest even if it may come with a little bit of backlash, and I really do my best to not lie, not just to other people but to myself. (um) I really can tell when people are lying to me now, I can tell when I'm being deceived. I'm grateful that my intuition has grown to a space where I may not be able to know all the details, but I can check in with my body and I know when things don't feel right, and I know when something might not be right for me. So through this (um) tone of authenticity and honesty, the one thing I do not tolerate in my dynamics, my relationship dynamics or my partnership dynamics, or my business dynamics is dishonesty. I do not honor inauthenticity, and I don't- I find myself being unable to be in community with people who are hellbent on being untruthful. And I think that's the best way I can say that. For the most part, and I say that in the way because I believe for the most part I can and I love to work with anyone. And I also know that not everyone you know vibes with each other, and some people's spirits aren't supposed to be around each other, and so I'm even learning that some things in every- in every aspect are a lesson even if you don't (um) continue a relationship dynamic with someone. But I think it's important that I also embody this standard with my business because my

business is also me. And this brand that I create also comes from my character and I'm no- I'm in no way a perfect person at all, but even to understand that I'm on this journey of authenticity and honesty, I'm also on this journey of being a massage therapist, a Reiki practitioner, and a Birth Doula, and if I don't acknowledge those different things about myself that can be dishonest or that can be inauthentic, it really affects my work. It affects my work if I don't set the proper boundaries. It affects my work if I don't say no when I feel like saying yes or if I say yes even though I feel like saying no. I think that's the better way to say that. (**chuckle**) But it just- it- it challenges me daily because it also helps me understand that it's just as connected to the people who need me as it is to myself, and I know that I can only show up for people my full and most authentic self.

So here at Journey Spa I support all family types, and for some people that may not be, they may not find that valuable, and I honestly believe that it is. And so when I support all family types I have had to also be honest with myself about my own biases and maybe my own prejudices and discriminations as well. And by being able to do these check ins with myself whether it's my energy, my body, my mind, or even my heart, I find that the people who come to me, and the people who need my services, also need that and maybe I mean who knows if you never receive honesty anywhere else in your life and you get it when you finally go get a massage and when you finally talk to someone about helping you give birth to your child, I would hope that that would give people comfort. and that that would also add to the support that I can give someone. That- that they always knows that my brand and that my business will never lie and will always be honest. and I don't like to say "*never lie*", but I think that's important because sometimes I think that I've- I've lied when I was too quick to answer and when I didn't check in with myself first I gave someone an answer that really wasn't true. And so then I had to go renig on that like "*Yo my bad that's actually, i can't do that*" or I had to suffer through the fact that I need to do it because I agreed to it even when I didn't really want to.

And so here at Journey Spa we- I do set a lot of boundaries (um) in terms of like last minute appointments, and I have to set boundaries about being on call when birth comes into play, but I believe that the way that I'm able to do that from the beginning of my relationship with my clients and with all new clients going forward, that is going to be something that also becomes easier as well as it won't even feel like much of an effort. It'll be so natural and so in tune and aligned with what my clients need from me. So my goals and my hopes for Journey Spa as we combat (um) covid-19, and as we have conversations and hold dialogues to combat the Black Infant and Maternal Mortality rate, is to build of massage therapists, a team of nail techs, estheticians, or any other type of (um) specialities that could go hand in hand with a spa experience. My hope is to be able to travel while my team of massage therapists do operations on the ground. I would be able to go to different places to set up new teams and set up connecting teams of massage therapists, and then that would also give me more time to focus on my own personal clients as well as new birthing doula clients, new reiki clients. And eventually when international travel is feasible again and it's safe for everyone involved including the people who are in these places we would like to travel to, my hope would be to take Journey Spa international and take the idea of healthy body, healthy pregnancy, healthy birth, and healthy family all around the world. Journey Spa offers therapeutic massage, assisted stretching, in person Reiki as well as virtual Reiki for anyone who is not in the same city or place as I am. We also offer free birth doula consultations and have birth doula packages for those who are also interested in prenatal massage therapy throughout the course of their pregnancy. And now we also offer Sessions With Symba, this podcast as a free resource for pregnant and birthing families that may not be able to afford our services at this time.

Donation Message

This podcast is a free resource for pregnant people and birthing families from Journey Spa. As an offering of love for my community, I write, edit, produce, and transcribe every episode personally. If you would like to donate to the upkeep of this podcast, we invite you to do so in a few ways of your choosing. The first two ways are monetary. You can become a patron through patreon.com/symboluna and donate as little as 5\$ a month to also receive updates, follow up exclusives, and to stay connected with my other projects. For non commital or one time donations, you may also donate through PayPal using our email 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. We can all benefit from hearing these stories and shared experiences, 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. We believe in the power of word of mouth, and we appreciate your help so that we can be of service to pregnant and birthing families everywhere.

Outro

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 another episode!