

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

I am your host, Symba Luna, a Licensed Massage Therapist, Reiki Practitioner, Birth Doula, and Ordained Minister, holding a collective space of peace. In this space we honor all birth stories, pregnancy experiences, and birthing people.

Today's episode we have a very special guest from my childhood named Angela. Angela and I know each other because our mothers have been best friends since high school, and I'm very excited to introduce you all to a very special love in my life. For the sake of time, the outtakes of Angela's episode will be available when you sign up on patreon.com/symbaluna and join the Sessions With Symba tier for only \$5 a month. As this experience unfolds, I want to also issue a content warning that this story comes with information pertaining to an emergency c-section. If you need to pause and take a breath when you reach that space, I encourage you to do so and take care of yourself before continuing to listen. Welcome to Angela's story.

ANGELACLAY:

We are (um) cousins from the womb.

SL:

(chuckles and laughs) Oh my God.

AC:

(um) I am Angela Clay, I just turned 30. I'm a new mommy. Born and raised in Uptown. Also 64th and Morrisfield. Shout-out to Englewood.

SL:

For- for those who don't know- who live outside of Ch- where is, where is that?

AC:

Oh oh! I'm talking about the CHI-cago, yup. Founded by Du Sable, a Black man.

SL:

Dig dig, Yeah yeah, word word. More, word. *(laughs)*

AC:

Melanin. Ok. (um) Yeah in the territory of Illinois. So.

SL:

Yes yes.

AC:

In the United States of America, you know *America*.

AC:

America. The Republic. *mmhmm*

SL:

Welcome, welcome, welcome to the show, Angela Clay.

AC:

Thank you. Thank you.

SL:

Thanks so much for coming in. Appreciate that. Appreciate you.

AC:

Anytime.

SL:

So (uh) we're gonna take it back a little bit before you ever had a baby. We're gonna go back.

AC:

Fasho. Ok.

SL:

A little bit more to when you were younger.

AC:

Ok.

SL:

And what I want to know is, I want you to tell me a little bit about the family structure that you had growing up. I wanna know did you grow up- well I mean, not me, but we telling, (***chuckles***) we telling the audience a little bit.

AC:

Ok.

SL:

Giving them a little background of like your parents, siblings, do you- do you- did you live with them, do you live in close proximity with them now?

AC:

(Uumm) III (um) have some of the best humans on the planet. (um) My parents

SL:

mhm

AC:

are Angelita James and Antonio Clay, and I was blessed to always have my mom and dad around until I was about ehhe I would say like 16- 15, 16 (um)

SL:

mhm

AC:

And (um) my family structure was really dope. I didn't realize how dope my family structure was

SL:

(small chuckle)

AC:

until I got older. (um) Like the privilege of actually just waking up to your parents or like having a dad who set standards

SL:

Mmhmm

AC:

or you know like these subtle hints that we as women take for granted but attracts us in a man.

SL:

Mmhmm

AC:

Like "Oh yeah, you make pancakes like my daddy."

SL:

(laughs)

AC:

You know like, you know

SL:

Yes

AC:

just that that's your first love. it's not

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

nothing incestal, it's nothing, nothing of any of that nature, but it's

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

characteristics of just good men that stick with you. All of our traits

SL:

Yeah

AC:

come from a **{inaudible}**. So but yeah I'm glad that

SL:

Examples, good examples.

AC:

My dad was, my dad is dope. He's a genius. He's a Taurus. Stubborn.

SL:

(laughs)

AC:

One of the most stubborn humans I've ever met.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

My mom is a Libra, a goddess of balance.

SL:

(Sighs)

AC:

Of- of- everything regal, royalty, fire

SL:

THE, the most

AC:

The most! Whatever you can think of,

SL:

(laughs)

AC:

of the beautifulest

SL:

The ponytail queen, the ponytail queen.

AC:

The ponytail queen. Ok? You ain't never getting a ponytail past her. Baby. Ok.

SL:

Whaat? ***(laughs)***

AC:

(um) yeah they met (um) they met and, pretty young too. As I get older, you start to like learn more about your parents' (uh) stories and yeah they met pretty young, and

SL:

Mhm mhm

AC:

My dad already had (um) children. He actually had three children before he (um) had myself, and I actually have a sister who is 364 days older than me. (um) yup.

SL:

Ok, ok.

AC:

Papa was a rolling stone. Yup. He-

SL:

It be like that sometimes.

AC:

It be like, you know, the south side.

SL:

(chuckle)

AC:

And the light skin from Englewood.

SL:

Oooo

AC:

You know he's top tier. Yeah he's toxic.

SL:

Woohoo

AC:

So..

SL:

The stud! The stud. *(laughs)*

AC:

Yeah yeah yeah (um) so yeah. My- I grew up with both of my parents. I also have two (um) cousins, biologically, but they're actually like my brothers like you can't tell us apart.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

(um) One is older than me, Joshy, and then one is younger than me, his name is Brian. And so we're really close. (um) And you know I've just got an extended like sisterhood

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

that's really dope (um) but like biological. Yeah it's just from my dad and my mom it's just me.

SL:

Yeah that's dope though. That's dope to have the interconnectedness still and be close to your other siblings you know even well. And so (um) are they close to you now? your parents?

AC:

(Um) My parents- my mom is the closest. She (um) is in Indiana. So she's not that far. My dad is the farthest, and he's in Arizona.

SL:

Oh ok.

AC:

And he's been there, man it's going on at least 15 years now. So.

SL:

Ok ok. yeah yeah alright. So (uh) my next question would be, so did you- did you always want children?

AC:

I don't know when always started (uh)

SL:

(laughs) That's a good, that's ok.

AC:

(uh) well I've yeah since- since (um) since like understanding you know the human anatomy and (um) yeah YEAH yeah yeah yeah

SL:

(chuckles)

AC:

especially when I look at you know like baby pictures of my parents oh yeah you always wanna be like "I wonder who my baby's gonna like like. I wonder who my baby's-."

SL:

Mhmm. yeah. ***(laughs)***

AC:

But yeah I think yeah I mean, I don't know about always, but it is something I feel like females have to consider because we're the ones that push them out.

SL:

No that makes sense.

AC:

So, that's the only way humans get here biologically.

SL:

Like yeah it could happen it could happen yeah. it's a 50/50 kinda thing. Like **(small chuckle)** ok so tell us. So for those who don't know **(small chuckle)** beautiful little Saij is your child.

AC:

My little lamb lamb **(laughs)**

SL:

So I know how cute she is, but for those who don't know let's talk about- I wanna talk about what year and city Saij was born in, and how old were you?

AC:

Ok I was 29, I had (um) just turned 29 a month before I had her. And she was born in 2020, and uh **(small chuckle)**

SL:

(laughs) the year!

AC:

April of 2020 so maybe I should just give that a little bit more context.

SL:

Oh yeah, see that was like right when

AC:

Yup.

SL:

lockdown st- kinda had just began in the United States.

AC:

It- it was weird too cause it's like, I remember, being on a plane right? I had a- I had a baby shower in New York. So I was supposed to have a baby shower in New York and Chicago, and it was at least **(small chuckle)** couple hundred people at my baby shower. Ok?

SL:

Mhmm. I saw the pictures, I believe it.

AC:

So the we- it was no- it was no so symptoms, it was no no nothing. Ok? There was nothing about anything about nothing.

SL:

That was not in the air. At all.

AC:

Nothing about whatever. What? I don't even know what you talking about. Ok? Kobe just died.

SL:

(small chuckle) Whoo!

AC:

We are- we are mourning.

SL:

Dude we had other problems!

AC:

We had real problems!

SL:

Like.. yes

AC:

The Black Mamba for God's sake. Yeah so (um) I remember like going from that to having like just a joyous, beautiful, organic like welcoming to the day that we were flying back from the baby shower, we had to wear masks on the plane,

SL:

Mmm.

AC:

And I had coughed like you know cause I been sneezing like

SL:

(chuckles)

AC:

Like I- no I don't even think I coughed, I just sneezed like twice because that's how sneezes come, you're weird if you don't get two sneezes, I'm sorry.

SL:

(chuckles)

AC:

And the whole plane turned around and looked at me g, like I had three necks. Like I said, "Yo I'm sorry I'm just pregnant, I don't think so that's contagious. I think-I think y'all see that."

SL:

(laughs) Wow.

AC:

It was weird going from like literally within hours-

SL:

It was like night and day for sure.

AC:

Literally hours.

SL:

That's a- that's, so you had Saij at a hospital?

AC:

I did. I wound up having Saij at a hospital. Shoutout to all of the ladies that were in the labor and delivery. That's a very-

SL:

So we're just gonna pin that real quick, I just wanted to get a context before we go- I'm gonna add you- cool cool

AC:

Yup I did. Mhm. Context is that. She was there. We was there.

SL:

Ok So then a little bit before- a little before Saij, what (um) what kind of work did you do while you were pregnant? Or were you working? Did you?

AC:

While I was pregnant? Yeah yeah yeah I actually went back to work for my old high school.

SL:

Mhm

AC:

(um) I was really excited because it was a position that was presented to me to be, you know just my own and recruit, and just work on building a brand for the school. (um)

SL:

Ok.

AC:

So yeah I worked. I actually got hired with them in the summer, and I think like six weeks later I was pregnant. So (uh) it was {inaudible}

SL:

Gotcha. gotcha. So how did your job respond? When you?

AC:

Horribly. Horribly.

SL:

(laughs)

AC:

Like everything in corporate America that has nothing to do with they business. Horribly.

SL:

(sigh)

AC:

Yeah attitudes switched up. Cause then it was like, "Aw damn now this bitch is gonna be off at-" You know people already are- it be our own kind. I don't know why they think these Phd's- whatever kinda whatever 3 letters grind your gears, ***(small chuckle)*** it doesn't mean anything in the real world.

SL:

(laughs) Eh your debt's real that's about it.

AC:

It doesn't mean anything in the real world, but in corporate America, that's the only way that you know, people feel like they have a position in life. So yeah it was our own kind, and they definitely was haters about it, but they couldn't really show it. And then yeah I was having deliveries (**chuckles**) like every day with (uh) beautiful gifts cause my **{inaudible}**

SL:

People love you, and your child is blessed, and that's what's supposed to happen.

AC:

Yup. And then they were like "who is this bitch? and why is she even working here?" It was just- yeah so yeah- but yeah- naw they was- they- they definitely- they- they tried to hide it, but they weren't even trying to.

SL:

Mm. It's hard to- it's hard to hide the apparent.

AC:

Oh of course and I didn't tell anyone til I **{inaudible}** (**chuckles**)

SL:

So (um) when did you- say that again, say that again?

AC:

I said that I didn't even indulge you know the thing is we be so excited "Oh my god I'm pregnant, I'm pregnant, I'm pregnant" Uh uh you let them find out.

SL:

Yeah yeah. That's true. That's true.

AC:

As **{inaudible}** no discrimination that's it.

SL:

Oh my gosh that's so crazy to even have to think about.

AC:

Yeah you gonna have to.

SL:

So when did you- when did you stop working until how long it was before you gave birth?

AC:

Baby. I worked up until, the only thing that saved me (*chuckle*) to having any type of normalcy was this pandemic, and that's crazy the fact that

SL:

Mm mm. Wow.

AC:

I was able to stay at home and rest because they wanted me to work until I went into labor.

SL:

Oh!

AC:

Like I remember giving my- my dir- my- my- the person of- the person that had a higher ranking, I don't even like to say my bo- you're not shit.

SL:

I know what you talking about. I don't use that word. No.

AC:

But (uh) on paper- who I report to-

SL:

Your employer, at the time. Your employer at the time

AC:

Yeah. There we go. I remember giving him my- my like maternity leave you know plan, and like "My expected delivery is this, I'll plan on be off this time," and in corporate America they only give you six weeks if you have a baby vaginally, and then they only give you eight weeks if you have a cesarean section. So.

SL:

Interest- Oh ok and then this was, so for those who may not know, Uptown is a high school correct?

AC:

Yup yup yup. I was working there.

SL:

Uptown is a high school in Chicago, and that's a public school I assume? but is- just wanted you to correct me if i'm wrong?

AC:

Yup. Fire.

SL:

Cool cool, alright. So working at a public school

AC:

Mhmm

SL:

In Chicago, this is what happens sometimes when you find out you know

AC:

I didn't- This is my story.

SL:

And you also didn't say, you didn't- you said you didn't tell them., you just let them find out.

AC:

No. Nope. No. I don't know what you talking about. {inaudible} I appreciate uh huh

SL:

Mhmm yeah mhmm yeah no that sounds about right. That sounds about right. So how would you describe your pregnancy? Would you- were you considered low risk or high risk at all?

AC:

(um) I was not considered anything.

SL:

Mhmm.

AC:

I had a very beautiful, healthy, nonchalant pregnancy. (um)

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

(um) I started the journey as- anybody who knows me knows that I'm very into (um) holistic doctors and (um) using techniques that work and (um) just trusting your body and trusting the ancestors to guide you through to medicines, whatever it may be right?

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

So I always wanted to have a home birth. I've been obsessed with home births and water births ever since I actually saw one of my mentors growing up, his wife had a baby at home after she had a baby at the hospital.

SL:

Ok.

AC:

And she was like really dead set on like having this experience because the first one didn't go how she wanted to, and I had never even heard of that option

SL:

Ok.

AC:

to have your baby at home. What?

SL:

Oh that's a thing? Wow. Who knew? You could do that?

AC:

So watching her, I'll send you her Youtube link cause it's still up.

SL:

Please do.

AC:

It's called Moonbeam. And it's very good. it's just so- oh my God it- this is before I even was thinking about procreating. I was like

SL:

Mhmm mhm

AC:

this- this- this is how every- this is how every baby should be brought into this realm.

SL:

(chuckle) That's so great that we even have those examples even if- even if they're still- even if they're not as widely known. You know some of us are still finding out, so we get to share with one another and let everybody know,

AC:

Yeah yup. absolutely.

SL:

you know, what your options are. That's awesome.

AC:

It's possible, and I think that's just what it was for me is that there all- there are alternatives that are possible for us.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

There- we cannot just stop at "oh this is what it is" when it- it ain't that. (***chuckle***)

SL:

Yeah, that makes sense. That makes sense.

AC:

The universe gave me endless bounds. That everything can be done.

SL:

There's so many resources. That's awesome. So did you- did you have the opportunity to receive any prenatal massages while you were pregnant?

AC:

Oh no! No..

SL:

(chuckle)

AC:

And you know what? Another tip, another tip that saved me during my pregnancy (um) 81 milligram- 81 milligram aspirin, they're baby aspirin.

SIL:

Mhmm

AC:

I took one a day since I found out I was pregnant. I got (um) prenatal care early, and I got a very curly light skin cocoa

SIL:

(laughs)

AC:

butter chick that was very bubbly and very down "hey Angela" and I saw her up until I was like man like 6 months pregnant. And then I had to switch over to a different, the place that I was supposed to have her at, which was a birthing center.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

I had to switch over to their care so that they could keep all of my records and you know have their own system to make sure of it.

SL:

Ok.

AC:

But she saved my life yo because she was like "there's a link"

SL:

She was? What was her- what was she again?

AC:

She was (um) an OBYGYN,

SL:

Ok ok, gotcha.

AC:

and she- I was seeing her at first at a local- these local clinics they be best, like I know we be tryna go to these super huge hospitals, but bro the local clinics are the bomb. Ok?

SL:

Yes, that's awesome.

AC:

If you don't have one that you like. Don't stop there, and do not get turned off. Ask them for a list of what you're looking for.

SL:

Mm

AC:

If it's a Latina, if it's a Indian, if it's a Chinese, if- whoever you're looking for, ask them because you want somebody that represents you that can speak your language.

SL:

Mhmm mhmm mhmm

AC:

Ok? We as melanated people don't just speak the English language, we speak energy so you know you to make sure that you're on the same flow as somebody who's going to be hand delivering one of the most **(both chuckle)** precious jewels on the planet. So,

SL:

Absolutely, absolutely

AC:

Oh yeah 81 milligram aspirin baby aspirin. You take one a day. You take one a day your entire pregnancy. One a day.

SL:

What did that help with?

AC:

Uh preventing preeclampsia.

SL:

Oh ok ok that's wonderful. We need all the tips. All the tips and tricks for the peoples.

AC:

{inaudible} I didn't have any swelling until like the last two to three weeks of my pregnancy really and that was just because I was on my feet all day, but other than that,

SL:

Right, right, right

AC:

nothing, no hypertension, none of that.

SL:

That's awesome, that's so great.

AC:

And I'm thick! Th-th-th-th-th-thick!

SL:

(laughs) Th-th-th-th-thick the-the ice cream.

AC:

You're gonna hear this. This is for all the tall ladies out there ok, so I heard they're looking at us like "You can't gain more than 20 lbs" What? (*chuckle*)

SL:

(*laughs*) Ok!

AC:

The way my BP is wagging that's 30 lbs. Oh my God.

SL:

Mhmm. I really appreciate that you spoke to that too cause I know that in addition to all the other things sometimes we face with- with disparities, I know that sometimes bigger people can get all these really whacked out statistics and information that's not really like, that has no base even as well

SL:

Mhmm. But everyone, everyone's body can- and if your body can do it and my body can do it, you need just as well as the care you know and so I appreciate that.

AC:

And there just needs to be averages for different race, you know I mean like you can't compare our weight gain to the Chinese, you know because we're two were physically built-

SL:

Built for sure.

AC:

Physically. You know that has nothing to do with us, and our eating habits.

SL:

Like we just- it's something you can also just plainly see, like that's, mhmm

AC:

Yeah so yeah every, question everything, do not get discouraged by somebody telling you, your baby anybody you know doesn't fit a chart that was made in 1894, and hasn't been updated, and **{inaudible}**.

SL:

Mmm (**chuckle**) (**groans**) (**laughs**) Hasn't been updated, keyword.

AC:

Has not, will not

SL:

Has not, will not be updated. Whoo! How important, thank you so much for sharing. Thank you, thank you. So we gonna (um) take a quick little- a little side break, and this will be the part of the show where if you want to, you have an opportunity to ask me anything. Since I know, I know we get to kick it, and we gon kee kee of course when I come home, but you know if you would like to, you can (um) (**laughs**)

AC:

Ok, ok, ok, ok I really wanna know what intrigued your f- I don't wanna say feminism cause you've always been a bad bitch, but I feel like

SL:

(**laughs**)

AC:

you've tapped into just an inner, and you want to now outwardly just tap into it. So I wanna know, like what brought you here?

SL:

Oh ok like to this? even formulating this space?

AC:

Yeah yeah

SL:

Yeah ok. (um) so I think I might've- so (um) I would say, ok when into massage therapy school and everything like when I started working (um) like actually working and doing massages, I was probably- well I consider myself to be a very versatile type of therapist. (um) I think I've always resonated with prenatal even in school, (um) but I didn't ever wanna necessarily pick like one target audience. That's just because I was really in love with the versatility. (um) but when I basically- I- I did two years at Massage Envy, and I did about a year at LaVida, or almost a year at LaVida, and at both locations I like naturally became the prenatal massage therapist. Like it wasn't really intended, I didn't- there was never any like (uh) advertisement (**chuckle**) or anything like that, but in both locations that seemed to be the audience that was drawn to me.

AC:

Mmm

SL:

And so I had to start paying attention- So then when Covid hit and I couldn't work at all, it was like well let's sit back and think and like let's do some- it gave me time to really do some serious like rebranding and like "what do I wanna put out into the world?" and I feel like a lot of the things I kept starting and stopping didn't really have like a - somewhere that was taking me all the way like "ok that's cool that's good, but that's not- that's not IT, like what's" So I just had to keep going and then (um) I think I'm tryna remember (um) I'm not sure if it was like a specific moment I think- I think the entire year of 2020 has just been a big realization- or realization after realization.

AC:

Yup.

SL:

So I ended up (um) I had always wanted to do a little bit more, and so when I trained to be a doula in November it was kind of like- i went out- i went out in a limb to take the class because it was kind of a little more expensive than I was really hoping for.

AC:

Ok. Yup. Those are the limbs that we gotta step out on, uh uh

SL:

Like i was like ok, You know I was like alright, but Ima try this and see, and then it was just like how it was when I was in massage therapy school where it was like "ok Im supposed to be here"

like when I was in massage- the first day I got to massage school like I was like- I was you know broke and homeless almost, and I was like “oh ok but this is it, like this is for me you know”

AC:

Right right right

SL:

And so (um) from there it became like it almost became that like the doula part kind of completed everything where it was like well if I'm- well also too Journey Spa has been- I've been doing Journey Spa since 2018 technically like as official, but I had started Journey Spa when I was in massage school. And so it kinda just gave me this like the journey of me going to massage school, getting my license, that whole ordeal, some of the things and the challenges I experienced while I was dealing with massage school and then the journey of understanding pregnancy and giving life and that being a journey in and of itself. And so it seemed like my journey and that journey were kinda just- it kept crossing lines and crossing paths and I'm not like- I noticed so I had to really like sit down and think about like so even though I was versatile, what do- what do I- what do I actually resonate with? you know? like the versatility is great you know, but what do I actually enjoy, you know?

AC:

Right

SL:

And I had to look back on like those sessions I was doing and realize that what I- what really made me feel fulfilled was that relief that I could give a pregnant person.

AC:

mhmm

SL:

Like for the most part I mean I just- I didn't really have many complaints anyway, but- but even just knowing for sure that was like the one thing, well I won't say the one thing, but that was a really big- my reviews in those categories were always like, the feedback was always like “I needed that” and I think when it comes to like massage therapy taught me a lot about the connectedness of the body and that helped me understand the connectedness of people including my own community and my family and things like that. And so I felt very like- it- it always just came into this space where like I felt like I was needed,

AC:

Mhmm

SL:

In this space like in this time like there are people that be going through stuff and dealing with all these different emotions and hormones, and I've- I don't think I've always thought I knew what to say, but it was like- it seemed like in those moments and they could just like bear everything on this table, and even if they just go to sleep, and I don't talk to them for the whole session,

AC:

Right

SL:

You know when they got up, it was like the support I gave them also helped me. And so I think it was just uh, I don't know it just fit. Like it's just always been. So then it just I- I've just been continuing to be on this journey, and I feel like as I continue to challenge myself like this is kind of a way, I'm a little bit also putting myself out there. I've been kind of hidden for a few years, you know so. (*chuckle*)

AC:

Hibernating, hibernating

SL:

You know (um) I've been in my cocoon you know i've been transforming and also figuring things out so it's been a lot in terms of like just the journey of my self employment, my entrepreneurship lifestyle, and then just that seems to resonate with also who I want to be in the community because I- I feel very strongly about from my massage therapy background, if we can work on having healthy bodies, we can have healthy pregnancies and then we have healthy births, and that to me makes me feel- makes me truly believe that we can have healthy families.

AC:

Mhmm, mhm

SL:

And not that we don't, but when I understand that the people who have been- who have slipped through the cracks of the system, and their people have died, and their people have- their

children have died, and their- their loved one has died, that contributes to the trauma that sometimes we also begin to experience from the moment we're born, as melanated people, brown people, Black people, you know?

AC:

Yup.

SL:

So it's been, it's-I think it's part of the process of my journey, so that's where- that's where we are now. (*chuckles*)

AC:

I love it. I'm here for it all.

BREAK

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

SL:

Alright so let's get back into it (um) I wanna know uh did you, well I have a two part question so I guess, what would you say was your biggest or external struggle during your pregnancy?

AC:

(Uuumm) Sleep Jesus

SL:

Mmm mm

AC:

From the moment I found out I was pregnant, and I'm usu- I'm, I'm a napper ok? don't get me wrong I don't know what a nap is right now, but napping to me is like, it's up there ok?

SL:

(chuckle) Mhmm mhmm

AC:

It's like we- we don't give ourselves enough time to reboot and I know people who be- who GO. you know, my partner, he can go off of no sleep, and he knows if i don't get any sleep it's gonna be a two headed dragon because

SL:

(chuckles)

AC:

I have to, my mind has to rest.

SL:

Yeah especially when your body is going into overdrive, working for another being. How can you not sleep?

AC:

So now I have to **(sighs)** I gotta create a mind, I have to create a mind, think about that.

SL:

Man, some ears, some nose- a nose, a couple toes. **(chuckle)** mhmm

AC:

I have to create a mind like, and there's no respect in that. it's like "oh you're just growing a baby like"

SL:

Uh uh, no.

AC:

Ok so yeah I was exhausted (um) I was in a long distance relationship.

SL:

Mm mhmm

AC:

I was actually, I was actually (um) , I was in a great environment, but I didn't want to be there because I- I just felt like I shouldn't be there. Like at the stage in my life I had just (um) ran for alderman, and

SL:

Mhm mhm mhm

AC:

I had ran for alderman actually of my ward that I grew up in. I had this grassroots campaign, I'm a DePaul grad, I've been- like I just had all of this you know what we think is acclamations, and I was not on my shit.

SL:

Yeah

AC:

And I was irritated at myself and and yeah so I was- I was in a long distance relationship, not in a position that I really wanted to be and I was exhausted, and I was working at a place that was toxic that was based off of egos and relationships and when you have that it's just- it'll never work.

SL:

Whew, that's a lot.

AC:

Especially in a professional sense like there has to be a boundary of like ok- anyway

SL:

No.

AC:

(um) and yeah I was and trying to convince everyone around me the standards that I was already setting for my child's life.

SL:

Whew, whew (***chuckle***)

AC:

Cause if you know me you know it's not just, go with the flow, it is what it is, take it and leave it. I don't know what that means. (***both laugh***) Who? Who? Take what? Ok we're gonna, this is a negotiation. Life is about contracts, no. You don't you don't- let's- lets write this out.

SL:

For this baby, for this baby.

AC:

Yeah yeah yeah yeah for these, for these

SL:

For this life.

AC:

But my partner is dope. So yeah it was (um) he always like, he was just super supportive, he never missed a (uh) doctor's appointment. if he couldn't be there like he was on facetime (um)

SL:

That's beautiful.

AC:

Yeah

SL:

I'm so glad you had that. I love that for you. I love you that for you. Seriously. You deserve.

AC:

Thank you. thank you ok? Cause you gotta go through a lot.

SL:

You deserve, everyone deserves.

AC:

Everybody deserves yeah

SL:

Everyone who decides to give birth deserves something like that.

AC:

You do, you definitely need a partner. You need a partner. you can't man- I give single moms the highest honor like man y'all brain. The brain that y'all have. Psh

SL:

Mm mhm Wait til you hear my single mom episode like. (***chuckle***)

AC:

CEO Ok? Ceo Top flight top top top top for sure

SL:

Top flight security of the world Craig

AC:

Of the world Craig y'all raise the leaders bro. i'm telling and don't let you have more than one child Oh my God I don't know ooo

SL:

Power. Hats. Prayers. (*chuckle*)

AC:

Hats off. I pray for y'all everyday for real. Yeah you gotta have a partner, and it makes you look at- it just makes you analyze so much so differently so yeah those- those are kinda those are- that was really that was really it, but other than that my pregnancy was, it was beautiful, it was love.

SL:

Did you (um) take any childbirth education classes?

AC:

Yup I had to, I actually took my mom. My doula went with us a few times. (um)

SL:

Nice.

AC:

Me and my partner had to take a class with my doula. We had to do like- it was love yeah we were really tryna learn what there was to be learned because you can't really learn it but

SL:

You can do your- you can prepare as much as you can. That's- that's the point too.

AC:

Yeah and you want your parent to be open minded. Like I said I was supposed to have her at a birthing center which kind of mimics (um) that effe- kind being at home ish. so yeah it was- it was love I did.

SL:

How would you describe, your your birth, your labor and delivery.

AC:

Sure my birth, my labor *{inaudible}* horrible

SL:

What was the- real quick- what was- why did you not have a birth at a birth center?

AC:

I hated it. I hated it chile. I hated it, I hated it. I'm trying to still get over it. I've- I've come to peace with it because I feel like everything in my life I've kinda been like a little sacrificial lamb because if it happens to me i'm like "oh hell naw like this shouldn't be happening it all. What is going on here? I really don't understand what the problem is" but (um) so yeah so I was supposed to have her at a birthing center. Mind you there are only two in the state of Illinois, I believe right. 2.

SL:

Woow. I did not know that.

AC:

Not even in the city of Chicago, not even in the city of Chicago right? So I had to actually go out to the suburbs, the west suburbs (um) to this birthing center right?

SL:

Mmm

AC:

So this birthing center is not in Chicago. You gotta get on the expressway during rush hour to get to this place (um) it's some place that you know is just tucked in it's not like i don't know it's just like it's-it's in your normal hot doctors office setting and then on one side it's like the birthing center in the back and then the rest is still like you know them coming in and accepting patients and things like that so. (um) I transferred to them when I was like I said like 6 months and that was because they were like "look you gotta- if you're gonna have her here, you gotta have her here." I wanted to do it at home ok?

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

Did y'all hear me when we first started talking about this? I wanted to do this shit in my bathtub. I didn't even care ok? I had we we had just you know moved to our- our- our spot that we was just cocooning in, I had boxes everywhere. I I wanted to like really just like get my tribe together and everybody you know you know like start trickling their way in, but like gimme my mama, gimme my man, you know gimme my godmom. I'm pretty sure that we could figure this out.

SL:

Mhmm... Yeah

AC:

So (um) the headaleadaland hit and (uh) end of March ish middle of March right , so I had my baby shower the beginning of March, March 1st actually.

SL:

Mhm mhm

AC:

Middle or March two weeks later everything is starting to shut down. I can't find anywhere in the city of Chicago to even have my baby shower here, for the city. I'm calling everywhere everywhere

SL:

I remember that.

AC:

"awe are shut down we are this we are that" ok like what they said they're closed cause of? they said they're closed cause of what? what? like what? Nobody was thinking about that! What are you talking about? That's-

SL:

What is a pandemic? (*laughs*) What do you mean shut down? Lock down? (*groans*) (*laughs*)

AC:

What do you mean? Like come on. Y'all just had a 300+, **(scoffs)** what are you talking about? What are y'all doing over here? ok! so boom. So (um) so that happened, so then things just started getting really weird, right? My- my partner wasn't able to come to doctors appointments. We had to facetime from the car (um). You're not really getting touched. The first time y'all, the first time that we went ok? This is a true story, I wish he was here to talk about this. We gonna have to do this together one day cause I would love to hear him.

SL:

(laughs) Mhmm mhmm mhmm

AC:

The first time we went to our check up after all of this started happening right? because he got here just in the nick of time because remember they wasn't letting people fly, they wasn't letting nothing.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

He got here the day before flights and stuff started getting canceled.

SL:

Wow. Timing.

AC:

So we go to the doctor, we there, we got these dumb ass things on our face. **(both laugh)** We walk in they like this way you gotta go this way. So we like ok, so we get in, and they spray us right? like oh you gotta do- Ok cool, whatever whatever whatever. This is weird but whatever.

AC:

They sent us to a different clinic, a clinic that we had never been to a doctor that we had never seen, all within the same network of where I'm supposed to be giving birth in this birthing center, but the lady comes in there they they made us wait in the room y'all no no bullshit like 45

minutes, a hour before anybody even came in there and like talked to us and this was a normal check up for just weight belly rub check you, then

SL:

(chuckle) How many, how many weeks were you at the time?

AC:

Yeah baby I was up there. I was 8 months pregnant so I was at least like 35 36 weeks

SL:

Yeah Wow

AC:

yeah I was- I was- I was close. I wound up going over. (um) so yeah all of my doctors appointments after that was whack. Nobody really touched you, nobody really wanted to talk to you. Nobody really, the personable you're about to bring life into this, that was out the window. It was just all about bitch don't you sneeze

SL:

Get in, get out and don't touch, don't cough, don't sneeze.

AC:

I swear, I swear. **(chuckle)** So (um) so yeah so boom so I wind up going over. So my last you know the last month they have you keep coming in once a week because they wanna make sure the baby's good. Well my last couple of check ins was by a doctor that I don't think really particularly cared for me as much as she perceived you know in her hippiness and her, i don't you know it just wasn't it wasn't there. Now the facility that I went to didn't have any- i'm not gonna say it didn't have any, I was looking for the (um) women that looked like me, and they were in different locations or they only worked certain days or yeah it was just so yeah so yeah. Faced with that

SL:

mhmm.. And she was the only one available?

AC:

Yup so faced with that my doula (um) was always on deck, but you know now she couldn't come with me to these appointments.

SL:

So you also had a doula? i think I forgot to-

AC:

I did yup I had a doula she was a lifesaver literally, (um) in this whole entire story. So I wound up having an ultrasound (um) because I went over by a week. So Friday I get an ultrasound boom and they're like "ok yeah everything looks good, you're not leaking any fluids as long as you're good." cause you- i asked the technician "everything look good? you know she just don't wanna move." Like She cool. She chillin. I went over, my moms went a like ok

SL:

went over is normal

AC:

I mean again these standards of life right is just like come on now **(scoffs)** I just let the baby be. So I am driving home and the doctor who doesn't particularly care for me calls me. sHe's like "yeah i'm calling to tell you, you know about just calling to discuss your **(sighs)** your (um) you know results or whatever" i'm like "yeah how'd everything look?" and she's like "well the baby's head is measuring small so we're going- you know because you're a week over you know they don't think that the baby will like you know grow within that week because it's a steady growth and you know but yeah it's just measuring small so we're not gonna be able to deliver you here. we're actually setting you up with the emergency (um) you're gonna get induced yeah so we're gonna see you know get induced. and I'm like "excuse me? say what now?" **(chuckles)**

SL:

(chuckles) aroo?

AC:

Wh-what do you mean like and so I got her on speaker, i'm driving. my mom is looking at me like "what do you mean head is small? what do you mean inducing?" And I'm like "So there's no way that you can deliver me?" "No, because you know we wanna make sure everything goes according to plan and we just wanna make sure that you know you and the baby are ok so no we're not going to be able to deliver you."

SL:

Mm

AC:

I'm done for ok? because I'm irritated.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

I'm already fighting to have this baby at a birthing center and not the hospital right. So I've had to compromise from having her at home to just having her- we just ok having her at a birthing center with a doula with a midwife with my mama because then it got cut down to you know who could be there with you when you delivered right?

SL:

Right right

AC:

Everything changed by the day, who could be there with you. Could it be one person? Could they stay all day? Did they have to leave? If you there, you there, if you can't come back like all of that right? Every thing. So I come home I just go sit in the tub. I'm bawling. I'm talking to my stomach. I'm so- I'm like- I can't believe like these niggas got me. Like yo, me of all people? Like what do you mean my baby's head is measuring small? You niggas ain't said nothing about this in not nan appointment okay, like what?? so But in that moment you're not thinking, you got, you know outside influences who are just like, "Well we just need to make sure the baby's good." Like you know you're like, "I know my baby's good." (*chuckles*) Like come on *{inaudible}*

SL:

Mhmm mhmm

AC:

I'm upset. I'm thoroughly upset. My partners just like "come on now you know like it's gonna be good we gon like it's gonna rock." and i can't even have my mom there like what? you can only have one person there. you can only have one person. they can't switch out. Of course my man has to be there, but my mom? like I what

SL:

That's your ma! She's supposed to be there!

AC:

Now I gotta now Look ok (um)

SL:

(groans) (laughs) Not a hospital

AC:

Yeah g, yeah g, yeah and not my mama g. like i damn near would've picked my mama if this wasn't our first baby.

SL:

you know *(laughs)* right! you know and even then like *(scoffs)*

AC:

He was like "do you wanna go?" and i'm like- my mama like "no you have to be there like" so

SL:

Like dang it! That's such an awful decision to have to make. when your support is supposed to be ALL of the people who would make you feel supported in that moment which yes of course your man, your partner he gon do what he's gon do, but your mother has another form of support that she can bring to the space that he may be cannot.

AC:

but it's energy it's energy. you love your mother to death. where else would you feel more comfortable than the arms of your mother?

SL:

We supposed to have all of those things at once like wow ok hm ok ok

AC:

Man.. So i pack my bag, i'm just grumpy that i'm wide and my nose stuffy

SL:

(*chuckle*) aww

AC:

Get in the car there's nothing open to eat right

SL:

Over with (*chuckle*)

AC:

Nothing I had to eat- I can't even say it but y'all know what I had to stop. I don't eat nothing but the fish ok? (*sighs*) scarf that down because of course they give you this time to be there like

SL:

For the induction?

AC:

For the induction.

SL:

Ok

AC:

Now I had watched all of the videos about what I wanted to do, had a birthing plan typed up written up right? I did not want pitosin. i'm say

SL:

Why was that?

AC:

I did not want pitosin because pitosin is a artificial (um) enhancer that basically sends fake contractions to your body. So it basically makes your body contract instead of your body contracting on its own.

SL:

Mmk

AC:

So that your body can then try to ok

SL:

Mimic the contraction and maybe get it rolling.

AC:

Ok. I didn't want it because what it does is it also impacts the baby. because this is a very strong drug to mimic contracting of your uterus to push a baby out.

SL:

Mmm mmk

AC:

So I done had people- I done had "you- you better watch this video, you better talk about this. we done went through these birthing classes, they talk about all these levels. you know and the birthing classes that I had at the birthing center were really good, you know shout out to Mary I believe was her name. (um) haven't talked to her since I had this baby, but her classes were very informative were she was trying to encourage women and their partners to like speak up on their behalf (um) like really just you know be there and cause we're not in our right frame of mind we need people to watch out for these signs and ok ok

SL:

mhmm Advocate yeah advocate for you

AC:

Advocate, that's the keyword. (um) We basically get dropped off. My mom drops us off, my mom and my niece drop us off. We go in through the emergency room, they take our temperature, they you know expecting us. We gotta wear a mask. There's nobody in the hospital.

SL:

Oh wow

AC:

The most eeriest like

SL:

(chuckles) ghost town?

AC:

Real ghost town. We are told "ok you gotta walk this way, go this way, take these elevators up here, and then somebody will meet you up there. so we just walking you know tryna find our way

SL:

In a maze it seems

AC:

We get up there, they greet us, they do the same temperature check that we just had downstairs. We give them the paperwork that we're sent upstairs with. So baby, nobody in the hallway wanted to even like greet us ***(chuckle)*** it was again like this weird- like even if you talk right cause it's airborne apparently supposedly whatever that you know a magical fairy dust will land you will just become

SL:

and this is April if 2020 for remembering context for people like just-United States just figured out what. the people, sorry not the government but the people of the united states just learned or are still learning what's going on.

AC:

February Kobe dead. March 1st I have this massive 300+ baby shower. Mid March everything was shut down, my mom has it.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

April i'm just here going to the freaking grocery store every day tryna get the bare minimum that's still left on the shelf cause what

SL:

Mm right! cause there was nothing (*chuckle*)

AC:

Do you have toilet paper, ok? Wow cause what are you gonna shit if you don't have anything to eat? but that's another story for another conversation that's the paid.

SL:

Yup Yup. man (*chuckles*)

AC:

And uh um yeah so we get to our room and we're just in there again for a minute again like nothing beautiful about not like in- in the aesthetic way. It's just all white, all hospital, it's all monitors. it's all bright ass lights. it's all everything that I really was not interested in right, but I have to dig deep and we here right? like ok

SL:

Mhm mhm mhmm... mhm mhm mhmm

AC:

So our nurse comes in, she's super quirky, she was cool "yeah ok great alright mhmm" and the saving grace was the (um) midwife that was there right because they change shifts right so this is key too. Every 8 hours there's a new shift that comes in right.

SL:

Mm.. ok

AC:

There's a new shift of doctors, there's a new of nurses, there's new shift of midwives on call. So I'm there Friday night and they come in the room, and it's a sister. it's a sister with locs, a chocolate brown skinned sister like ahhhh

SL:

(chuckles) aahhhh

AC:

You came!

SL:

You heard my prayers.

AC:

Oh my God this ok ok ok! So my man looking at me like Ok? and I'm looking at him like Ok

SL:

So we can do this! ok oh ok

AC:

Ok ok cause he been tryna calm me down, and I'm like yo we could be at home!

SL:

(laughs)

AC:

So So she comes in, she's so friendly so, she nice she so like "ok yup ok" (um) I told her like I don't want pitosin. I wanna do- try everything natural that you have up in here. I wanna sit in the tub if you have it. Of course their water birthing center or tub you couldn't use, but you know like I had a bathroom with a tub in it like i said before i couldn't i was like let me get in the tub. I want to get in the tub before I'm not able to.

SL:

Mhm mhm..

AC:

So she let me do that, (um) and she actually knew my doula, so it was even more like ahhh

SL:

How lovely, whew whew

AC:

She's like "see?" you know cause I done cried to my doula I done basically like "yo psh i don't even know what's goi in right now. This is not what we had in mind. This not anything and nothing that we ever, you never said this like."

SL:

We never discussed any of this.

AC:

It was out of everybody's control so they actually allowed my doula to come. She was actually allowed to be there for my birthing because she's a certified doula right. so when you go in to these places those- those little stamps that you gotta pay extra for or that get you in the room that people nod their head at, ok just pay it. cause it'll pay off. and you'll actually be able to- it's not worth the money, it's just worth, people underestimate you right cause they say "oh yeah you gotta doula oh yeah uh huh yeah ok" and then you're like no i want her to be here

SL:

They think that's a fluffy word like what is a doula?

AC:

Yeah then you're like no I wanted her to be here. you need to be looked at like a medical provider too cause you are.

SL:

Mhm.. yeah yes.

AC:

I don't know, you know different standards of course right so. She's there, but if you know anything about (um) the beautiful fasting of Ramadan,

SL:

(gasp)

AC:

Uh they are just starting it right? So my doula practices the muslim faith and she was actually fasting right?

SL:

Mmm

AC:

So this is- so peep this right so my-my partner is vegetarian, we didn't know how long we were gon be there so of course we didn't bring no food. they told us that you couldn't bring no food of course so we just got snacks and stuff. We have horrible hospital food. We get there there's like nothing like

SL:

Ewww

AC:

He's a vegetarian, right. I don't eat pork I don't eat meat like that

SL:

You can't, no there's no hospital food for y'all.

AC:

So it was a wrap. My doula had to actually like bring us food she saved our life, but she couldn't eat because she was fasting right

SL:

Oh wow

AC:

So I'm birthing. We started off with this balloon that they put inside you right so they put a balloon in you to basically like expand your cervix right so

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

{inaudible} it in and do all this when it (um) drops out or comes out it's basically like you know there's some room to- for your cervix to start growing. Ok so did that, but I got a hangry man cause he ain't ate, and the food that was provided thank- shout out to my doula right she saved me, but it wasn't it's not sustainable right it's just for tonight. So then I have a doula who's fasting, who was fire, who was everything, and I have me right so we're in this room. We can't leave the room. We can't leave the room so we're just in this space. I am confined basically to a hospital bed. Now I told y'all again not only am I thick, but I'm tall. I'm I- they say i'm 5'9" my mama swear i'm like 5'11" but I'm in that range right so.

SL:

You up there

AC:

These- these beds are horrible g like what? why don't have **(inaudible)** in here yet for the ladies g?

SL:

I can only imagine

AC:

For the women, for the queens yall got us on these. This is two partner cot like this is the stretcher bed that they carry you on if you ever been in the back of an ambulance god forbid, that's the stretcher bed. You ever been in a hospital bed for too long? that's- that's horrible bro

SL

That's why they be taking about those bed sores **(chuckles)**

AC:

I'm in a hospital bed , the bottom part comes out right cause then that's for you to push if you want to but it slides if you're not using if- if you're just laying in it free. so it was horrible, so the bed was uncomfortable, I had these pillows everywhere I'm I'm in this room, my contractions is started and they're like we have to, so they do the balloon method, it comes out but I guess I wasn't dilated enough. and they like "ok we have to put this monitor on your baby's head" so

they go up boot put this monitor inside of me on my baby's head right. and then they put this monitor around my stomach. ok i'm tryna you know weather the storm, and every time I move to try to even get comfortable in this bed somethings moving somethings coming down they can't get a reading blah blah blah blah. So I got nurses coming in you know can't really sleep, can't really get no rest like that. Alright, contractions is coming heavy. now we in Saturday. (um) I'm going through the motions. I can't eat (**chuckles**) I got a doula that's fasting and this hospital food is not for my man so I literally labored probably until the middle of the day right on my own, and but every 8 hours there's a new group. so my sister that started off with us, when I went sleep, and woke up it was a new staff.

SL:

so you was there for more than one shift change?

AC:

Yes Absolutely multiple shit changes right? and that's what was

SL:

Wow

AC:

So you know in this I'm dealing with new people, new ways of doing things . I am in pain because birthing is painful, and I'm not really able to move around. I'm not able to get up I'm not, I'm able to stand, but I have this thing coming out of me so if I have to go to the bathroom I have to move it to the side, might pee on it cause it's in me so like

SL:

(**chuckles**) hello

AC:

I'm in a hospital gown just ugly, ok probably stank, but I can't really do anything and i'm in pain so they come in and they're like "yeah you should be dilated more right now. we're gonna start you on pitosin."

SL:

and so may I ask also (um) were you also against an epidural?

AC:

Absolutely. I was horrified to get an epidural because I know so many women who have back problems after they have that. closest thing to a spinal tap. so you know you have to just like yeah it's yeah no i was-i was not

SL:

Mm mhmm mhm no i understand. uh huh i gotchu go ahead continue

AC:

So.. so saturday midday and they like "yup you know you are not dilated enough you have to start on pitosin" so my doula is looking at me, i'm looking at my doula, but again I'm in this state of "i have this screen next to my bed where you can literally see your contractions. that's the worst how is it you're gonna see when you're about to receive pain? like i wouldn't wish that on nobody

SL:

Oh no

AC:

Cause I'm a Aries and we over think we're analytical we're the hair and body and you can't do that to me cause i'm gonna try to fight and the more that you fight it and tense up it is way worse ugh bro

SL:

yeah You gotta relax , oh my baby

AC:

Right and I'm in this bed and so the pitosin starts and the contractions start to get harder and harder and I got a man who's hungry. His friend had actually just passed away from it {covid} like two days or a day before we went into the hospital.

SL:

wow

AC:

one of his A 1 day one he's in a whole different state right he has never been to Chicago before I brought him to Chicago. and one of his homies you know passes away from this and we like what like? so he's dealing with that in the delivery room.

SL:

(chuckle) oh my gosh

AC:

I'm dealing with this. my doula is just bomb, like she's rubbing me she's talking to me she's here she's whatever I need whatever. Whatever I need she was right- she was- that was man. so **(chuckle)** we get to Sunday morning, and I'm just tired. ok I'm telling- when I say tired baby this pitosin done wore me out because it's no sleep it's just you just riding it right you just like

SL:

Wow

AC:

And I'm tired and they still telling me like I'm only like 4 cm dilated or like 6 cm like I'm not far enough and I should be far enough and again I have to deal with another shift change. right so the final shift I have my baby at 10:57 in the morning, I say 10:56 I could've sworn it but 10:57 am and I knew these women for all of 30 minutes maybe before we had to go and start making decisions.

Sunday morning rolls around. We all exhausted right. My man exhausted cause he done been sleeping on the **(smacks teeth)** chair, I don't even know what he was in. I think they finally like rolled him a bed in there or something. My doula is fasting and birthing with me and not getting no sleep with me and just here being everything that she is. I'm tapped out of it my mom is like she's like what can she do through facetime right so she's **(inaudible)** so. They come in the room and it's a Black nurse and a Black doctor- female doctor and I'm like "ok now y'all playing with me" **(laughs)** "like what's going on universe? like talk to me like. and they like "ok like miss clay you dah dah dah" and "yeah like ok you know like I don't been through this all before now what's going on?" and they're like "well we actually are gonna stop you on the pitosin because we can't get a stable heart rate on your baby."

SL:

Say what

AC:

Now if you have been listening to this story line we already knew the ending when we started this you know like we have a- we have a weird way of like tryna change the ending you know even though we know sometimes like yo I said this right ?

SL:

Mm.. mmhmm pshh

AC:

so ok cool so we here alright so we're gonna stop you ok? so now you know if you're not really dilating and you know this is putting some distress on the baby then we're gonna have to think about having an emergency c section. **(pause)** Emergency what now what? you what- what are you talking about?

So I'm really like? Are you kidding me right now like

SL:

Yes

AC:

But I'm in pain and I'm riding through it, and I'm tired and I'm- I'm tapped out of it. My brain is like tapped out of it, and there's no way that I can physically push myself you know like

SL:

Mhmm mhmm

AC:

Into this point of like whoo baby now you're telling me what? so we get into mode. My doula is like "we need the floor, y'all gotta leave, we gotta have a conference" like we gotta have a meeting.

SL:

(laughs)

AC:

she literally- she literally closed up shop like "nope yup out"

SL:

Everyone out.

AC:

Yup literally she called the floor because she knew I couldn't. and she got my mom on facetime cause now i'm going into like semi panic mode because you know it's nothing wrong with your baby but you know that you didn't get this far for something to happen to your baby so you're in this space of like, it's not selfishness but it's like your first reality of like selflessness. of you just being like it's not about what i want right now it's literally about the safety of somebody else.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

So we get on the phone. My guy is like "i just want both of y'all to be safe. you know like **(sighs)** i know you tired, you know i know you tapped out don't think you know like too much into it everything's gonna be good." my doula is like "we don't have to do none of this!"

SL:

(laughs)

AC:

"Like we can still- like you can take a break we can you know" and i'm like "yeah let's just take a break and like lemme breathe and like make sure the baby is good." and she's like "alright let's talk about this because i know that we've talked about this but like let's talk about this"

SL:

mmhmm Yeah

AC:

(chuckles) And so everybody was just like "I'm down for whatever is in the best interest of the baby." you know what I'm saying like everybody is just looking to me cause they know how much this- this moment means to me but it's like yo it is- like we good. like just let us breathe, let's make sure the baby's good

SL:

Whew yes

AC:

Reset. So they give us like 20 minutes, they come back in the room, they're like "yo your baby's heart rate is dropping. we have to do an emergency c section." "Then where's the papers?"
(chuckles) like

SL:

(inaudible) So they Have to..

AC:

So they come in, they bum rush you these niggas is outside the door already waiting. It's already yeah it's already "they like don't worry we got you." and again i'm like all i do- all i remember is I looked at both of them like "yo do not mess this up."

SL:

(chuckles)

AC:

Like I emphatically remember like "g if y'all don't know nothing else that's going on like you two? that's in the room yeah i need you- i yeah STAT. "got you" and it was like they really got me. they bum rushed the room, they push these waiver forms that you don't have no time to read through. none. sign here here x y z yup ok, you could be signing over

contracts is real, and in that moment all of your energy is in survival. that's uh energy portal and I had to get a spinal tap. i didn't get an epidural, but I did get like a it was it was almost like a spinal tap it was just- it wasn't as- it wasn't supposed to be like the big needle, but I got a needle in my back and it numbed me from the waist down and (uh) I was in the wheelchair getting wheeled down the hallway like this, and I was on the operating table, and yeah it was just very surreal cause you know that worked every angle that you possibly could not to be here and you're here. and you're trying not to freak out cause you're telling me again that there's something wrong with my child.

SL:

Mmm

AC:

so you're there and they come in and you know it's just business as usual. And I'm supposed to have this clear sheet in front of me so that I can see what's going with my body cause i'm still woke. So if you've ever gotten work done on you and you know you be wondering what's going on, and you don't really feel it, but you're there to see it, it's a different type of like ok. So I have this blue sheet, I can't tell what's going on. they just down there talking, they could be talking about coffee, they could be talking about carrot cake.

SL:

(laughs)

AC:

they could be talking about anything, i don't know cause they just gib gabbing

SL:

What do you wanna eat after this?

AC:

I got a man behind me that's on his phone. My guy is right here you know taking pictures and making sure I'm good and yeah. and so when my baby came out, I didn't even hear her because i didn't- i don't think that she knew that she was out because that is a lot of cesarean babies have problems with cause they're so comfortable in there and it's a shock to their system.

SL:

Mhmm.. mhmm

AC:

If you don't go through the canal. you know if you go through the canal it's kind of like a wake up call. it's just different you know. so they coming out of a womb and a sac and a warm place and just floating you know. so i didn't hear her so i'm looking at my guy like ***(small chuckle)*** "what's going on" he's looking at the people who got the baby cause they just rush her to the you know the cleaning station and start and finally like heard her like cry and like breathe and like and again i'm just here right on this operating table. So they bring her over, you get to kiss her and smell her and touch her and then they whisk her away again. Now i was supposed to have delayed cord cutting, didn't happen.

SL:

Mhm mm

AC:

I was supposed to well i didn't i meant, she didn't have that so they get to take her. So my- my husband has to go with the baby cause i'm like "ay you follow that" (**chuckles**)

SL:

Eyes on

AC:

I'm supposed to take my placenta home as well because I wanted to encapsulate it, I wanted to do what I wanted to do. A lot of us don't understand that the placenta is just as important as the child because that is really what has sustained it and grown with it the entire life span, that is the chord of life. so you know there are- it's some sacredness to it and I wanted to- that's mines period I don't care what I wanted to do with it it's mines, just like that baby. So they took my placenta, they took the baby, my husband follows the baby and I'm just here getting sewed up shaking at this point because it's cold in the OR rooms right, it's cold it's freezing. not only is it cold, I haven't been able to eat anything since friday night so i'm probably dehydrated, tired and a little anemic, and i'm shaking yall. Aw i mean like i've never shook like this in my life, and we live in chicago.

SL:

(**chuckle**)

AC:

It felt like I was standing in the middle of Lake Michigan. and all i remember is my teeth chattering, and I'm looking over at the anesthesiologist next to me, and he's just scrolling on his phone, and i'm like " Am i supposed to be this cold?" You know and he was like, "hold on ima get you some blankets." so by that time, they had sewn me up, the doctor came to me and she was like, "everything went well. your organs look great. Do not let anybody ever tell you that you cannot have a baby vaginally." I remember her telling me this. And I'm like, "ok thank you. So they come back, he gives me some layers of blankets, and i'm just staring right? So my baby is gone from me for at least like 30 minutes now. And of course if you know anything, it's about skin to skin and latching and making sure the baby smells you. So I'm in the recovery room, and finally the baby comes and you know my guy is all geeked. He done called half of the world for me ok?

SL:

(chuckles, laughs)

AC:

Everybody's geeked- my moms you know i don't have- I don't get that moment with my mom, I don't get you know, I don't get that of like "oooh the baby's arrived." So (um) they- she latches perfectly, right? cause I wanted to breastfeed so she was already hungry like yup where- She latches perfectly.

SL:

(chuckles) Lehgo.

AC:

I'm looking for my doula, right? cause i left her in the room. She-she couldn't come in the OR cause it was just my husband been allowed, and they told her that she had to leave.

SL:

Ok.

AC:

So we come to the room, and i'm expecting her you know cause I got my baby now

SL:

Mmhmm

AC:

And they like "yeah your doula had to go." ***(chuckles)*** and I'm like "oh... ok" yeah cause we're moving to a different part of the same floor but now that you've delivered you're over here ok.

SL:

My goodness.

AC:

So now we're in another room. Smaller of course, horrible bed, little baby little roly bassinet (um) and they immediately come with like paperwork and like sign this and do this and x this,

and it was just like “no, like i’m finna have this moment bro. y’all are cool on that. you have all of the vitals that you have ok, i’ll fill out everything that I need later.”

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

(um) The doctor came in there and she was just like, “it was perfect like you know you did a great job, you know.”

SL:

You did (*claps*)

AC:

“Did a did- did a nice stitch for you.” So right cool aight cool appreciate. But now I have to stay in the hospital for at least 3 days because I had this cesarean.

SL:

Mhm mhm surgery yeah

AC:

Major surgery yo. Nobody even tells you this that you’ve had one of the most major surgeries that they even have in the history of surgeries bro. It has to go through all of the layers of your fat and skin. so like

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

it’s a lot of muscle, that’s a lot of- that’s a lot- right? in the middle of your body, of your being. And you have to maneuver after that, right?

SL:

Mhmm mhmm

AC:

So im **(inaudible)** i'm breastfeeding and i have this whack hospital food. i'm drinking out of a straw. If you know me, I love apple juice. i haven't eaten, and i'm just like "I'll eat whatever whatever is on this like" super whack hospital food.

SL:

(chuckles)

AC:

Well when you drink out of a straw, it causes gas, and it's the worst thing that you can do after having a surgery one, it's the worst thing you can do after having a major surgery that requires you to move your bowels after. So I passed the test cause again I have a catheter in me right?

SL:

Mhm mhm

AC:

What is going on? What? God! We didn't talk about all of this ok?

SL:

Wow **(chuckles)**

AC:

Now i have to pass my bowels, I pass my- my bowels or I fart- ok cool we in there boom. take the catheter out. So Day 2 arrives (um) you know every 8 hours shift change or whatever cool. (um) we walking around, but we can't leave, we can't order food. My husband done basically cussed out everybody in the kitchen. **(both laugh)** It's a wrap for them- they- they- not- he's- no. So he's- he's irritated cause he ain't got no sleep and they wanna you know really get together like that. The food is horrible. The- He can't sleep anywhere. the baby- we- we still tryna get acclimated with this baby. What does that cry mean? What does this cry mean? We can't leave the r- floor, and

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

I start to get this pain in my stomach that I have known all too well. so before I got pregnant I used to have really horrible menstrual cramps (um)

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

And the last two years before I had my baby, I was actually in the hospital with gastritis like almost every month

SL:

Mm (*gasps*)

AC:

Like almost every other month I was in the ER for gastritis because I would get this pain in my stomach. I would throw up for days I would be so dehydrated. I couldn't eat anything, I couldn't do anything I couldn't like- it was the worst bro. I could just sit in the tub right?

so i'm like yes and then I feel this pain day 2 and i'm like

SL:

Oh no

AC:

can't be, can't be i swear to God. I swear to God yo i can't be, and sure enough

SL:

Not day 2

AC:

i'm feeling this nausea, i'm feeling this nausea, i'm feeling this- i'm just feeling it i'm feeling it, and i tell the nurse. I got this horrible IV. My hand is swole. I got a horrible IV in me. first i have to get her to check it she didn't want to check it. another dude came in there and checked it and was like "yeah this is horrible, let me fix this for you." so my hand is swollen, i'm feeling this nausea, i got this baby. i'm trying to tiptoe around, I have this major incision in me, and i have to

go to the bathroom and (um) have to get in the shower i have to just not think about it pray to God it'll go away. (um) I call my nurse in there. I'm like "Look I'm feeling nauseous, I done had this feeling before and this is what I usually take, this is usually what helps me. the girl is like "i'm gonna go get you some crackers."

(pause)

Sister too. cause i been talking about the ethnicities and all- all of my people right? Sister t, young sister, cute little sister, but

SL:

Oh that's it? Did you hear me?

AC:

She was never on time when I pressed my call button, she was never you know like when you're in these positions you're only in these positions for timeframes. For mothers like this is do or die, this is second by second because our clock has restarted.

SL:

Mhmm

AC:

So ten fifteen minutes to you bitch feels like eternity to me because I called you already. What's going on? This is your job. I don't care how many people is on this floor. you're supposed to get through your- time management.

SL:

Yeah

AC:

So I'm in the bathroom like throwing up before we leave and I'm holding my stitches. I got this baby, still breastfeeding. Ain't nothing finna go down my throat because i'm not feeling too good. My man is ready to blow this popsicle stand.

SL:

(chuckles)

AC:

So we get ready to go, and I just remember just like being there, it was like one of the most out of body experiences i've ever experienced in my life because i- i just remembered being there like i wasn't there i was just there- i was just doing what- the motions of just like sit in the- the chair and like you'll be ok and get the baby and we'll leave the hospital.

SL:

Mmm

AC:

I remember being on the elevator like this, like slumped with my baby and just getting wheeled out. And my godmom was picking us up to take us home, and when i got to the car and started getting in the car she's like "why are you going home like this?" and i'm just like "nah i gotta go. these people" because nobody took what was going on like serious at all like nobody.

SL:

mm

AC:

So i remember just being there like riding in the car like, everybody's you know having great conversations and so excited about the baby, and i (um) i didn't get to indulge in none of that. i was just ready to get home to my bed. i got home, had to walk up like 20- 20 steps. (um) i just remember laying down, and it was a beautiful spring day the weather was perfect when we came home, but i wanted to just like sit in the living room and like show my baby off cause my uncles welcome me home, my brother, like everybody rushed to the house to make sure that we was good. And I basically lived in that state for like 3 weeks going on 4 weeks of not eating, throwing up or dry heaving, breastfeeding exclusively (um) and no sleep for 3 weeks.

SL:

mmm... congratulations you're alive!

AC:

Yeah yeah thank you yeah so

SL:

Wow... Congratulations on your birth. I know that's rough, that was a- that's not how you wanted things to go and quite rough, and I feel for you that they- (*sighs*) how they don't listen you know? But you- you did make it.

AC:

I did bro oh yeah!

SL:

Like I'm- I'm grateful.

AC:

I had to, they ain't have no choice. The universe wasn't gonna do me like that. But what they-what they fucked up was, is they did it to me.

SL:

Yeah.. yeah.. it's yeah oh my goodness ok.

AC:

it's when you do it to me, now it's fair game. cause i'm coming at you. I don't want no sister to go through this. Let's talk about it.

SL:

Nothing.

AC:

Yeah so

SL:

And I- So i feel like you already answered my next question, I was ask you what have- what would you have liked to know about you birth before? and I wonder like i bet with the c section i think anything like the after effects i feel you talked and mentioning that, but if there's anything else please

AC:

Whoa yeah I just- yup yup yup (um) it is the after effects it is the attention to the mother. You know a lot of attention is put on the baby but a lot more needs to be put on the mother because giving birth is so vital. you have a major organ. however you do it,

SL:

Mhm

AC:

you are literally opening your entire body up. and what happened was i wound up- finally my mom came to my house one day and found me on the floor cause I had been sleeping on the floor

SL:

Mhm

AC:

you know since the night and she was like "ok i'm taking you to the ER like something- we gotta figure out what's wrong." cause of course i been in what?

SL:

You also (um) didn't have your doula with you postpartum right? after the birth

AC:

I didn't i didn't no i didn't even see my doula after i had my baby y'all until psh (um) months but

SL:

the the yeah and so that i would say that i would- I would think even as just newly trained, i would think that has a lot to do with even your condition leaving the hospital

AC:

Yup for sure

SL:

beCause then she was not able to advocate for you like "why does she look like this? what's? checking her vitals? this iV?"

AC:

Yup yup yup.. yup yup yup for sure. Cause you don't know it, and you don't know it- nobody knows when shit hits the fan until shit hits the fan and then it's like "oh well we could've avoided this if we just woulda did" you know like i told you which tool works for me. I know my body, I know these symptoms, I know me bro like. take my word for this, i'm not in here on no drug chasing for no toradol or nothing like that. i just need some pepsi for my stomach, i need some IV for this fluids and i need like this is this is where we're at

SL:

(*chuckles*) yeah

AC:

(um) Definitely I- i love my doula, and it was so hard to like not have her around me or my baby or like my family (um). She was dope she dropped off stuff at the door like (um) you know just couldn't physically have her around

SL:

yeah yeah yeah

AC:

yeah so i'm when my mom took me to the emergency room i actually wound up having a horrible kidney infection.

SL:

mm mhmm

AC:

my urine was like orange juice like i- you know how you do the little urine sample. i have never seen my urine like that ever right

SL:

Yeah (*chuckles*)

AC:

So (um) yeah it's like- and i brought this up to all of my providers- i brought this up after my-?the 3 day check up that you go to with your baby, i told the doctor then. i told my doula as soon as you know- i told the midwife that first greeted us cause we got her contact at the hospital. My husband got in contact with them like "yo why is she feeling like this, yo what's going on?" i got in contact with my original midwife you know the one that i was talking about then that didn't particularly care for me

SL:

Mhmm mhmm

AC:

That didn't really do anything so it's like. i reached out to every network of providers that i had, and couldn't nobody give me no answer, couldn't nobody give me no answer until i actually went into the Er and found out so

SL:

Mmm

AC:

I wish I would've known like what- just what are the risks? and what do women need to look out for after giving life?

SL:

Mhmm.. yeah yeah yeah I appreciate that that's good. Oh this has been like amazing. So I have one more question before we get out of here.

AC:

Ok ok ok ok ok

SL:

(um) i would say- and i so think i do think you may have talked about this a little but too, but i would ask you, what advice would you give to help people like myself who are new to birthworker industry or even veterans in the birthworker industry that have been doing birth for a long time, like what would say as someone who has given birth- gave birth in a very interesting wasn't really what you had initially liked, due to lots of different circumstances that you couldn't couldn't that no one could control, what would you- i feel like you are in a space- i feel like birthing people are in a space to give advice to people like myself who want to also help other

people help this- like you said not help this not happen again or you know. So what would you- what advice would you give?

AC:

I think you have to listen. i think that was really like my number- my biggest either plus or minus was it was like it was you could tell who listened and you could tell who didn't.

SL:

Mhm mhm

AC:

And again when you are working in this space of sacredness you know time is really of the essence so you don't want to necessarily do something that someone else did if it's not gonna be beneficial or actually work. yeah take the chances and go with what spirit leads you to but also learn. like bro the ancestors left behind so much and the more that you absorb and the more that you are present and the more that you get around people who really wanna do this work, you're gonna get all of the answers that you need hum just surround yourself,

SL:

Ase (*chuckles*)

AC:

Surround yourself with the flow. You know like everybody that was a part of my birth story was supposed to be there (um) after I had my baby my best friend showed up her mom showed up first like that's my love. she showed up ready you know cause my mom couldn't really be the chase she had to work.

SL:

Mhmm. Yess

SL:

So she came and stayed with me for a week, nursed me, cooked for me, cleaned for me, you know like did everything that she could in her power, she flew up here. So then after that my sister came down from Milwaukee and she took care of me and the baby. it was- it was all love like you need a tribe. The birth work doesn't just stop when the baby gets here. The real work starts when the baby gets here. like that's when women really need the most support and love and affirmation and yeah like you gotta be there. that tribe you just can't break that out cause

that's what the tribe is there for. so listen, learn build your tribe up and don't be afraid to be like
be in this space cause it's it's a sacred space and it's very heavy like

SL:

I'm excited for my first birth

AC:

Life and death is in the is is there in those tiny seconds and tiny moments they all matter so just
be there no matter how slow it goes no matter how fast it goes just be there and everything will
be dope

SL:

That's awesome thank you so much (*chuckles*)

AC:

You gon be fine you gotta go through the ring of fire it's fun though it's fun like once you make it
over the hump you gonna be like "Angela Clay let me tell you ok"

SL:

Yes! let me tell about my fun. i can't wait to tell you about my first birth that's gonna be like this
the call this is it i'm so excited

AC:

I can't wait- i can't i'm here for it for sure you gon be perfect

SL:

Thank you so much for coming on i really appreciate you so much

AC:

oh You are so welcome, you are very welcome

SL:

i love you so much i love you love you love you

AC:

I love you too

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Outro:

Thanks for tuning in to this episode! 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 next Thursday!

