

Finding Our Way Podcast

hosted by Prentis Hemphill
with guest Patrisse Cullors
Transcript



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Legend:

[actions]

mhhmm other speaker talking at the same time.

[intro music]

Prentis: Black Lives Matter. It's a standalone statement. And one that if you let it, moves through our very cores illuminating our historical and present predicament and disturbing out complacencies. It's a simple statement with earth shifting impact, it's revealed the dissonance and denial of our culture. And in that, it's asked us all to choose. Do we organize ourselves to deny reality or do we work to change it. Many have chosen the ladder and the founders, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and today's guest Patrisse Cullors have sparked the most powerful movement in human history. Patrisse is the Co-founder of Black Lives Matter, the author of the bestselling book "When They Call You a Terrorist" and an artist who continually tells us the stories of those most overlooked. For those who know me, you know, that this interview is deeply personal. I came up as a practitioner through BLM, where I worked as the Healing Justice Director. In that I witnessed and explored the costs and necessity of leadership and the love it takes to reimagine the world. This conversation is about that. And it's also a peek into the tender side of leadership and the spiritual practice of creation. Patrisse asks us through her own commitment to artistic expression -"What is it that we each are called to create? What is your contribution? How will you tell a hard truth and set us all more free?" This conversation is a reminder

that in this moment, leadership is not easy, but it is both necessary and worth it. We hope you enjoy the conversation.

Prentis: Patrisse, I am so happy to be in conversation with you. I really, I really am really excited to talk to you because you are one of my favorite people. One of my dearest friends and a person that I just look to so much to guide the way in this moment, I'm really grateful. You said yes to being on this podcast. And I'm really excited to be talking to you

Patrisse: Prentis. First of all, I am so excited that you have a fucking podcast and so excited that we can take the conversations that we've had in my living room, in your living room on planes and text messages on Google chats here to the, to the podcast world, to gift to thousands of people who are listening. Like, honestly, when you told me you're going to have a podcast, I was like, "Oh my God, can I be on it?" And then you asked me to be a guest. I was like, this is a priority, but listen, I'm feeling honored and, and like giddy and open. And I do so many interviews that I don't, I wish I wasn't doing [laughing] *mhmm* this interview. I'm like, yes, I'm so grateful for this one.

Prentis: That makes me feel so good. And I, I feel so lucky that you feel that way about me because I, you know, I just love you. And I feel like there's so much brilliance inside of you. And I, I hope that this conversation can help us all just revel in that and reveal so much of that brilliance that you have. So I'm grateful to you, the premise of this podcast, and what we're trying to do with this project is talk to people who we feel like offer some clarity about what comes next, where we're headed. You know, the podcast is called Finding Our Way. So our hope is that these conversations help kind of alumnate elements of the path forward. The folks that we're talking to are bringing such clarity around vision, and you are one of those people that I feel like has such powerful vision and clarity that is easy to organize around and behind. So that's kind of what we're doing here in that vein. My first question to you is if you were to describe where we are right now, what this moment is made of both the possibilities and the challenges of this moment, how would you describe where we are?

Patrisse: I feel like we're in so many different moments at once, this moment feels like both like fertile ground. And it also feels like, um, destruction. And it also feels like big, big vision and a deep reckoning and healing. If I were to compare this moment to like art materials, I would say that we're all like holding a palette. We're all like recognizing the differences of that pallet and what the possibility is of the palette can have to canvas. And I feel like this moment is really handing every single one of us, like a paintbrush and a palette and a canvas. And it's like, "okay, here you go. Are you ready for this? Like, are you ready for the responsibility of like creating the vision for all of us?" *mmhmm* And that's, it's also very, very exciting. I've not been in a moment like this. I think in my

lifetime where I feel a tremendous amount of hope and excitement while also like deep, deep fear. And [laughing] what's, what's going to what's what's next.

Prentis: That vision of all of us having kind of pallettes and the ability to paint something new, or be engaged with a canvas and creating something, that's a really kind of powerful image that we're all engaged in this moment. And we all have something to offer it. My question here is like, what, what do you think could get in the way of each of us being able to paint those pictures? What are some of the challenges you see?

Patrisse: Oh my goodness. So many things not realize we have a brush in our hand, not realizing what the colors mean, not realizing that the canvas in front of us is for us. Um, I think that part of the getting in the way is just not realizing, not realizing what potential exists, not having the faith, the hope and the language, right? Like how many times have you been given a set of tools? You know, you and I have talked about this, like ending up in these white spaces of education where it's like, *mmhmm* all these tools exist, but we didn't have the cultural understanding. There was no prepping around, okay. When you get here and you see these things, this is what these things mean. *mmhmm* And this is how you can get to the goals you want or the vision that you want. And so part of it is like a lack of understanding, a lack of realization. You don't know what you don't know, and it makes it harder for us to develop a vision, let alone protect the vision.

Prentis: How did you know that you had that paint brush in your hand? Like when did you know that? How did you know that?

Patrisse: Oh, well, okay. So I feel like, I don't know when I knew, but when I knew I was already doing it, [laughing]

Prentis: I can see that.

Patrisse: There's a blessing and there's a, there's a curse in that. Um, and I think the blessing in it is that it made, it has made me historically be really bold and courageous, but also I think the curse in that is like, when you don't realize what you're creating, like the, the fullness of what you're creating really can end up being done in a clumsy way. So part of like my journey and I may be stepping ahead, I don't know.

Prentis: You're doing great. Yeah.

Patrisse: Oh, thanks. Okay. Um, part of my journey has been like, okay, I have these things. Someone's providing me this thing. Or I've, I've stepped into this thing. Now, let me actually go figure out what it means. And that has meant taking time and, and, and being more careful and being

more mindful and, um, giving myself the spaciousness to study, what the hell is the brush? What is a canvas? What's a paint? And not feeling the urgency, not feeling like I have to respond to all the urgency and all the emergency of a moment. Um, that's sometimes sitting and witnessing and holding space and allowing for like the answers to well up instead of like rushing to it by like, "okay, I got the papers, I got the canvas. I'm gonna make it happen." [laughing] And like more often than not something dope happens from that, you know, from the like rush and the urgency, because that's a kind of energy. Um, but I've been really working on my 'maybes' and my 'nos' and my, "give me a moment" so that I can actually understand the full potential because what I do that I recognized, I get to see so much more. And the vision

Prentis: As a friend, I feel really excited about that because you are, [both laughing] you're one of these people that it's like, I think it aligns with what you're saying, that your vision and your, I don't, I don't even know what it is, but as soon as you say it, it's already in motion. And I haven't seen that in too many people the way I see it in you. And so to hear you saying, "Oh, now I'm practicing with moving at this different pace." I'm like "Oh, the way that, your power can get organized in that kind of pace", I'm like, "watch out" the things you're going to be able to make happen. The things you've already made happen. It just, it's, there's just so much power in that.

Patrisse: [big exhale] Uh, yeah. Um, um, it's hard. It's very hard for me. I'm, I, I like the energy of urgent and emergency. Like I like the urgency emergency feelings. Um, it's a very comforting feeling for me, so to sit and spend more time in the sitting and the listening, sometimes it feels like inaction. *mmhmm* Um, and I really have been like allowing myself to have a different conversation about what sitting and listening means.

Prentis: Yeah. It's, I've done some teaching in the past few years about what an adrenalized body provides for us, and it's really important, in a lot of ways to be able to feel a sense of urgency, take immediate action, that there's something so powerful in that, and that it's not about it being a bad thing or not a thing that we want. It's just not the only thing that we want. We want to be able to do the things that you're talking about too, because being in that state, you know, can drain us.

Patrisse: Yeah. Yeah. It's, it's, it's, it's a manic state and, uh, mania only lasts for so long. *mmh agreement* And then on the other side of mania is like a deep, deep crash. And so both those states very familiar to me and to my body and to my, to my, like, to my Soma. *mmh agreement* And I feel like probably recently, obviously during, well, maybe not obviously, but during this COVID-19 moment where the world has had to slow down, like those first, that first month, I was like the most anxious I've ever felt probably in my entire life, like could barely breathe. Was really considering going on, like anti-anxiety meds. Like I, my body was like so

resistant to the slowdown and it was a really important, it was important. It's been important. And it was really important. And I had this conversation with my therapist, you know, probably week four, week three. And I was like, "I don't, I don't know how I was doing what I was doing." And I think like, I would have died early if like, this moment didn't happen. Like there's no way at the rate that I was going, that I could have lived a long life. Like that was actually, and I didn't understand that doing what I was doing, but having all this time to sit, like I was sick pretty much every four weeks. Like I had a cold I had because I was traveling, blah, blah, blah. I was doing all these things. And so having the slowdown happen and then looking at my life, I'm like, "what the fuck?" Yeah. "What, how is that even possible?" So, yeah, I'm basically telling you all the things like we're not on a podcast and 50 million people are going to hear this [laughing] it's cause it's you!

Prentis: And we need to know this and we need to know this. I mean, I feel like that's part of it too, is that so many of us are rightfully activated in this moment and committing our lives to making significant change for our people, all people. And I think these are some of the lessons that are just really critical for us to know, to know that this is part of it that when we talk about, I know you and I have had a lot of conversations about Healing Justice and healing inside of movements and, and what kind of culture supports that? This is part of what we mean too, is that how do we remain intact as we do significant work, but it's not either/or, but what will it take? What's the pace, what's the rhythm, what's the kind of care around us? What's the care for ourselves? That allow us to do the work that we're here to do without taking such a significant toll on our bodies and our spirits. It's so great learning, I think.

Patrisse: Yeah. Thank you.

Prentis: Thank you for sharing it with [laughing]. I know it's a hard, a hard learned lesson too. I know that. Can you tell me about the role of your creative practice in that kind of exploration of your pace and contribution? And also if you can talk some about what that creative energy offers for your capacity to, to vision in this moment?

Patrisse: Yeah. Wheooooo.

Prentis: I love the sound effects.

Patrisse: [laughing] I have been saying that my creativity and my art are an extension of my political values. And so I really take the time. And my it's so interesting because if you see my art or my performance work, it's almost like opposite of my pre-COVID body. It's almost like my art actually pushes me to slow down. And so a lot of my art is like very slow, very like intentional. Um, it's like the place where I get to practice, what kind of world I want to live in, the kind of healing that I, that I desire and

I deserve. Um, and that, and that I believe Black people and our bodies desire and deserve. And so, um, my creativity is really an extension of that. Uh, my, my performance at our practice feels like a critical part of my being. Um, you know, I always say that I was, I was politicized. I mean, I was an artist before I was politicized and the world of art has really shaped how I understand politics because I spent, you know, my childhood, um, dancing and being a trained dancer. And then as I became politicized, realized like, you know, all these industries being steeped in white supremacy and patriarchy and sexism and ableism. And as I was like developing my own consciousness around how I wanted to be in the world, I was like "the world of art that I'm in right now doesn't actually doesn't mirror what I believe it." And so I went on a, a deep journey and I'm still, I'm still on a journey around my art practice, but I think that I spent, you know, a good decade just experimenting with my art practice and experimenting with form and reflection and was so blessed to get my MFA. These last year spent, two years MFA program. And I feel like I really honed in like my own theory around what I was doing and my art. Um, and then also like what it means to be the kind of artist that I am, as also being like an activist and organizer.

Prentis: Do you have any kind of broader, almost like philosophy about how creativity can support each of us in this moment or how we might each engage in the creative process in this moment, in this political moment? What could we do? How could we engage our creativity for the sake of, uh, of liberation?

Patrisse: You know, I feel like this vision that we've been inside of, and these last few months, the vision of like, what does it mean to defund the police? What does it mean to challenge policing in our own communities? Like what does it mean to listen to Black organizers as they chant about divestment and reinvestment? I feel like that's a part of needing to be creative. I feel like part of what a creative practice looks right now for all of us, like not quote 'artist', but every single human being is the opportunity to vision something different.

Patrisse: And this is my first time, uh, in my lifetime where I've heard things like the abolition of the police or the defunding of the police be seen as something practical, uh, seen as an alternative to the world that we currently live in. And so much, you know, so many of us as abolitionists, TJ practitioners, healing justice practitioners have said like, all it takes as imagination. That's literally what we're asking for people to do is just to be in their creative minds and imagine a different kind of world and what the possibilities are. And so that practice, you know, um, really does look like spending time, whether it's writing journaling, daydreaming, um, talking to other people about like, "okay, we live in this community, what would it look like if there were no police here? And there were other things like jobs and housing and, uh, an

abundance of, you know, human services, what would our world look like?" And I think that's been such a powerful, creative practice that I've seen happening at like a popular level.

Prentis: Mmhmm, that's right. It feels sometimes like imagination is such a risky thing. I mean, in many ways, I think I said this on the top of the podcast, but I wanted to talk to you because of the way it feels like as your friend and as someone on the outside of you, that you trust in what you can imagine. And I think for many of us, it's like, "Oh, I can imagine a lot of things," but there's a way that oppression and trauma and all these things can produce this habit of doubt or this habit of, yeah, just second guessing myself or ourselves that get in the way of us realizing what happens inside of our imaginations. But you, I almost, I wonder if you, if you know the mechanics of it, but it feels like there's a trusting in your imagination. I think you mentioned the word faith earlier, maybe it's faith too, that feels like you just have, you're well-practiced in.

Patrisse: Hmm. That's a nice reflection.

Prentis: [laughing] I be seeing you.

Patrisse: [laughing] That's a really nice reflection. Um, you know, what I, what I can agree with in that P is that I have been practicing imagination for a long time. It's probably like the longest set of practices of all of my practices, um, both imagining and then, you know, creating. And I remember being like a young girl, like laying on my back in my room and just looking up at the ceiling, imagining my community experiencing something different than what they experienced. Like, I would, I would imagine like a world where like a community that had like an abundance of food, I'd imagine like my mother being happier, I'd imagine like being able to spend more consistent time with my father. I would like imagine all of these, really, the things that I longed for, you know, the things that I desired as a child, like I would imagine it, um, and spend a lot of time thinking about how to will it into being. And so that became really important for me as a tool to really cope and survive the conditions that I was in. It was like, that was my time to like, be like, "Ooh, this world that, if I could live in that world, like, I would feel all of these yummy feelings inside," you know? Um, and I didn't have all the language and I didn't fully even understand that I was using my imagination, but I definitely, you know, started practicing that at a very young age.

Prentis: I tell the story sometimes when I'm interviewed about, uh, the first meeting of Black Lives Matter in, at Saint Elmos in the art studio. And, you remember that?

Patrisse: Yeah. [laughing]

Prentis: You do.

Patrisse: I sure do.

Prentis: And, um, I remember I walked up to you cause I, this moment is just kind of etched in my mind. And I said, like, "I think I've been waiting on this moment, my whole life. I didn't even know it." And in my memory you said something like, "Absolutely. So what are we going to do? What happens now?" [both laughing] And, you know, I know that you've probably in a lot of places reflected on, uh, that formation. And I just wonder if there are moments where you're like, "I did not imagine" what that, or maybe you did what that would be. And then just, how do you think about the relationship to this now moment and that moment of the kind of emergence of Black Lives Matter and all that happened. Yeah. Did you imagine that moment? And could you have imagined this moment when we were there in that room?

Patrisse: Ey ey eyyy. Um, you know, I say this to everybody because I did imagine it and I put it in, I put, I put my breath into it and put it out into the universe because on July 15th of 2013, I wrote a post on Facebook and I said, "Hey world, guess what? Alicia Garza and I have created this thing called Black Lives Matter. And I hope it gets bigger than we can ever imagine." Oh yeah, yeah. I definitely want this. I wanted this for us so badly. I wanted, I wanted a way out. I wanted a new path. I wanted something different than, you know, our beloved NAACP and that and Urban League while I, while I appreciate our legacy institutions, I wanted something that was fresh and new, and I wanted, you know, Black people around the globe to be excited about it and to lean into it. Um, so yes, I imagined all the bigness and fullness of it.

Patrisse: Let me tell you what I did not imagine. I did not imagine being, uh, being attacked by white supremacists, I did not imagine the level of pain and suffering inside our community that would really impact our ability to, to be in it together in a way that felt good for all of us. I did not imagine that. Um, and I didn't imagine that I would create a thing and help be a part of a thing that also I felt so much love for and a lot of, um, hard feelings for, I didn't imagine that. *agreement And, and that to me is the real life hum*an shit around what we've created. I think it's only until this moment where I've been like more accepting of the hard stuff. I, I, I've also learned during Covid that I have a low tolerance for hard shit, even though I will stay in it, my, my body really does check out. *mhhmm* And so I've been trying to *mmhmm* dig into the hard shit, and I'm not as a way of martyrdom, but as a way of like, perspective, okay. Like this is hard. What does this mean? Okay, this is hard. It's kind of normal. You know, I talked to a set of colleagues, the other day who are like, Oh yeah, everything y'all are going through normal. That happens all the time. Whaaat?! Oh, that's helpful. That helps when you,

when you normalize, like doesn't mean it's okay. *yeah* But what it means is that there's a way forward because there's precedent for it.

Prentis: That's right. That's right. Thank you for just sharing and revealing that. Yeah. [Patrisse takes a deep inhale]. That breath, that breath. Um, there's just so much there. I, uh, there's so much there. I think there's so much there that you hold and have experienced. I think there's so much there that we've experienced and other folks have experienced. It's like, it's a very complex and deep history and I'm grateful that you feel like it's possible to feel some of those edges a little bit more, and that there's a way forward inside of them. Um, I think I wasn't, I had, obviously we had talked about healing for a long time and Healing Justice for a while. And we were practicing kind of in different ways in that vein. And I think, I didn't realize when I got in, there was, uh, a way that I felt really flooded by how much pain is in our communities. How much trauma, how much is historical. You know, I knew, and I felt to a degree, but I feel like inside of that moment and in that work, I felt, I felt it so significantly. It felt like a flood in a way. And I'm still kind of wrapping my heart, my body and my soul around that, which I don't really talk about either. So there we go. Here we go revealing.

Patrisse: [laughing] Ooh. Yes. That's use that's what you said at the top of this podcast we are doing is REVEALING and HEALING! [laughing].

Prentis: I guess we gotta tell the truth, *sorry Eddie, you'll have to edit out all this screaming.*

Patrisse: Yeah. You got to tell the whole truth though. Yeah. The whole truth, is very, very hard. It's hard to become a leader, you know, like it's hard to become [inaudible] to end up in a leadership position when you've never been expected to be, never taught you're going to be, and never given the tools around, "okay, you're a leader. Now, this is what it looks like. This is what accountability looks like. This is what support looks like. This is what boundaries look like." *yeah* "This is what you should, this is what you should consume. And this is what you should have consumed." Like I've had, I've had a very serious trial of last seven years in particular, you know, around like, Oh, okay. Like this is normal, but there was no roadmap. Um, and I think that's the case for many Black people. Like I've talked to so many Black folks in leadership who are in every sector, you know, where they're like, yeah, I just I'm "I'm here because of like exceptionalism really. And because I was plucked out or because I was pulled in, but I don't have a lick of tools to deal with it. *right*I may have a tool to deal with like technically how to get this thing done, but I don't have the tools to deal with the emotional impact. This is having on other people and me and, and the, the messages that are sent back and forth because of that." And that is kind *ooof* of a mind fuck cause it's not things we talk about. We rarely talk about it

cause there's a lot of shame in that and we rarely talk about it because you know, we're taught not to talk about a lot of shit.

Prentis: That piece is so critical. I mean, in part it's why I wanted to create this space, cause I'm like, there are emotional tools that we need, we need them. And we also need to take these risks and we also need to lead. We also need to win. And there's all this stuff that comes with that. There's all these feelings that come with that, all these emotions we have to process and we don't get the training to do that. You really don't. What's that?

Speaker 2: [Patrisse exhales].

Prentis: What's that?

Patrisse: Nah, just listening to this conversation. It's, it's important. I think the other thing, the other reason why we don't talk about this as there's not enough safe spaces to do it.

Prentis: Yeah, yeah.

Patrisse: You know, there's not enough. We haven't created enough space and enough of a container. Let me say it this way. I'm not going on a podcast for the person on the other end to be like, okay, tell me about like the feelings you have about this moment and the impact. No one wants to hear, not, that's not true that I think a lot of people want to hear about it, but that's not actually what's requested, you know what I mean? *mmhmm* So I'm thinking about that as you're talking and we're talking

Prentis: Actually say more about that, if you can, you're willing to.

Patrisse: Yeah. I'm just, I'm, I'm, I'm in it right now. So it's, it's like real thoughts in real time. But if you're, if you're being requested of, if you're a person in the world, that's in leadership and you're going to be interviewed by people, talking to people and there's only like a sliver of a request they have for you, you practice that request and you build that muscle pretty intensely. So I know how to talk about anti-black racism. I know how to, you know, I've processed a bunch of stuff around, uh, the, the rise of Black Lives Matter, but there are, I am not sitting in interviews where people have a healing justice framework, a TJ framework and they're asking me questions about like me and my relationship to this moment and the feelings that come up and what we're missing and what we, what we need, not, not legislatively, you know, not, not demands, but like what do we need spiritually and emotionally? So that is like a it's stuff that I talk about, like, you know, with you and in my brain, but it's not fully processed. And so I'm just thinking about how much gets

sacrificed, if you are showing up over and over again, to only have a sliver of a conversation about a thing that you've produced or created or developed in the world. And so that's just very interesting to me.

Prentis: Yeah. Yeah. Part of what what's resonating for me is that all of this work, so much of this work is so deeply intimate and so many ways there's so much care in it. There's so much of my life, there is so much of my family's lives, so much of my people, my, my ancestors and in it, to be narrowed, to be legible, to be palatable, all these things. So just the toll that that can take when there's actually so much involved in each of these things we're talking about, there's so much of ourselves that gets changed and impacted. And part of it for me is that, you know, I think about this moment and these moments of the past seven years in a lot of ways where more and more people are getting activated and the things that stand in their way of leading contributing, offering risking are many things. I mean, there's many, many barriers, many structural barriers, everything, but there's also, we don't know what to do with these feelings. We don't know what to do when we come face to face with this level of trauma or this level of pain, or we don't know how to activate our, our joy and our clarity and our vision, our creativity. It actually feels like something in our body that is more or less tolerable. Do you know what I'm saying? And how do we actually contend with all that it activates and offer and move forward and vision. And we're learning, we're learning through conversations like these and we're learning through just your willingness to offer and be as transparent as I often see you being.

Patrisse: Oooo-eee. Yeah, yeah. [laughing] Um, this is important.

Prentis: Yeah. You know, it has me thinking some on like how that narrowing of questions, narrowing of people's willingness to engage. All of that is about reinforcing a certain reality and you're contending with other people's emotional tolerance, what they can or cannot engage with. And that's why it's just so important to have spaces that I feel like you create through your art or spaces, like we're trying to create here where it's like, we get to actually break out of that and have a fuller range of emotionality as Black people in particular, we get to feel more, you know what I'm saying?

Patrisse: I sure as hell do. I sure as hell do. I think there's a way in which under the white gaze, um, and, and fear of the white gaze and sort of literally spending most of our lives, having to think, breathe, negotiate, respond to activate around the white gaze that we forget about what we think, and what we want to feel and how we want to position our bodies and our, and our minds and ourselves. And, um, yeah, I think this moment has also done a lot of upending of that. Like *yes*, um, has like pushed us even further around what we, how we understand our Blackness. Um, not just in relationship to this country and oppression and trauma,

but like yeah. How we understand our Blackness and relationship to our resilience and our love and our desires and our longing, um, you know, you and I have talked about that. Um, you know, I don't know how, how about how often I've made choices out of like, "this is, I'm doing this because I feel like I have to do" it versus "I'm doing this because this is my longing *that's right* and this is my desire." Um, and I think it's so important that we, there are some things I believe that we do have to do, you know, *yeah*, and that are important as part of our duty. But if we only do things because of duty, we lose so much of ourselves, *mmhmm* you know, we lose so much of what makes us who we are. And so I think that has been a true, you know, new shape for me and this time, um, that's where our always comes in for me, like what I'm neglecting my art practice. I know that I'm actually impacting my ability to be fully embodied. A'nd that, that's like a big moment of like, okay, come back, Patrisse, come back to your full self. Like you're only doing this one thing. You're only focusing on this. One thing that you've done, you're really good at." It makes sense. Like it's easy to go back to, you know, parts of myself, um, especially in moments of like crisis. Uh, it's easy for me to sort of lean on the parts of myself that I know very well because it's safe. Um, but if I'm not my full self, not giving myself the opportunity to feel into all the other ways that I am me, then I really do lose. I lose a lot, you know, and the people around me lose a lot too.

Prentis: That's so real. That's so real. Um, [Patrisse laughing] I was just filling that personal level. Um, so it sounds like this, this moment of leadership feels different from you. You're, you're not, how do I say this? You're making a significant impact in this moment. I see you doing all kinds of things and, uh, shaping so much, and it feels like you're in a different phase of your leadership. I'm interested in kind of what it feels like in this moment. And, um, what are the things you're committed to creating or doors are committed to opening in this moment.

Prentis: For myself, I'm very interested in like storytelling and like taking my art and creativity to spaces that I can like take the storytelling to scale. I'm really interested in like, how do we take what we've been doing in these last few decades around abolition and TJ and Healing Justice and like get lots of people to learn about it and start practicing it. Um, so I'm very interested in that, like the practicing of, of new ways and the visioning of new ways. Um, that's both for myself and the world. I think I am also like, this is super simple, but I am probably my best self if I'm spending a significant amount of time in nature. *mmhmm*Um, and while I grew up in the city, like the cityscape is not like, that's not my jam. It's not like where I feel my most generative self it's when I'm in the woods or when I go to the ocean, I look out and I'm like, "Oh my God, this is so humbling. Look how big this environment is. Like, look how far and vast." And when I feel like I can put into perspective, like who I am as a human being in this bigger picture. Um, and, um, you know, and that, I think like being, being able to just like, feel small and not in the

emotional way, but like, you know, like we're tiny bitty specks in relationship to the entire universe that is so grounding for me, it's a really grounding, it feels very, um, promising. It feels very, like, I don't know. I can't even explain it cause I just feel it in my chest and my gut, like I feel warm and like, uh, ease. Um,

Patrisse: and it also helps me feel like, like we're doing great work, all of us, like, I'm so proud of my peer group. I'm so proud of like, you know, what we've created into the world. And then it also like, it's really like, "you're not that special" and not in a bad way. Like I'm not trying to, I'm not trying to like denigrate, but I'm like, this is not that serious. Like when we take ourselves too seriously, we really, we really do create a container of anxiety and a container of like, "I got to get it right right now, or everything is going to be, you know, go to shit." And it's like, no, that's actually not how that works. Like you have control over what you have control over. And then the rest of the ship is up to everybody [laughing] else can do what you could do. Um, but like let's not, let's not be a martyr, let's not, let's not glorify the martyr. And I think that is what nature really provides for me. Makes me pause and remind myself like what this all is.

Prentis: So beautiful.

Patrisse: Well, thank you.

Prentis: It's so beautiful.

Prentis: You mentioned earlier this moment we're in and these calls for defunding the police and I wonder if you can just paint a bit of a picture about the possibility inside of an abolitionists call - cause I feel like for so many people, it might be the first time they've heard of that possibility or engaged in that idea. But I wonder if you're willing to talk a bit about what's possible when we allow ourselves to imagine that.

Patrisse: Absolutely gladly, um, I'll start with, I'll start with what we, what we currently exist in which is, um, we currently live in a city, county, or state and a country that has prioritized not just the police, um, not just, uh, a government agency, um, but we've prioritized punishment. We've prioritized humiliation. We've prioritize public shaming and um, most egregiously we've prioritized the torture and the killing of Black people, and poor Black people specifically. And so with that, um, with those priorities, we've actually created an entire agency, which is the Police force, Sheriff's department, you know, Highway Patrol, I.C.E., correctional officers who are invested in those things. Um, those agencies are not actually invested in life, but not invested in care. They're not invested in dignity. And so if we just take a moment to understand that that's what we've collectively invested in and, the death of Black people. Then I think we can have a different conversation about what it would look like

if we were to invest in Black life. If we were to invest in Black people, thriving. Um, if we were to invest in Black people, having access to adequate housing and education, Black people, having access to healthy food, uh, Black people, having access to loving, caring environments. Then we have to critically look at our police agencies and the role that they have played and impacting every single Black person's life and their ability to actually live a full thriving life. And so that to me is a conversation about abolition. *mm* Um, that to me is a conversation about Healing Justice and Transformative Justice, because we're asking, um, for a new vision of Black people and we already know this, but if Black people have a new vision, uh, if there's a realized new vision for Black people that actually creates all the healing and the care and the dignity for everybody else in this country. *mmhmm* If we realized the vision of, you know, life for Black folks thriving, Black folks, um, black folks who are receiving the dignity and care that they deserve, we actually create an environment for everybody else in this country to live and their full dignity as well. And I think the, one of the first places that our movement is, is calling us to question is the police. Uh, the, one of the first places this movement is calling us to question is the role of prisons.

Patrisse: And to me, it's very simple. Um, it's very simple. If we were to have someone from the future, like say 200 years from now, say we've fought, you know, we got abolition and we have like implemented all this amazing visionary shit that we've been calling for a week. And we brought someone from 200 years ago to this time, they would look at us like we were the most sadistic, barbaric, human beings ever. They'd be like, wait a second, "Wait, what do you, what did you do to that child? You put them in a cement box for their entire life?" Like, "Wait, what did you, what did you, what happened on the street? Like someone was going to the grocery store and then they came out and then they got there. They got a boot on their neck and then died?" Like, it's so crazy-making that, but it's so normalized for us. But I always try to put it in perspective. Like if we were to pull someone from a totally different universe to come and see what we do here as a way to 'hold people accountable', and I'm putting that in quotes, we would, that, that person would be so disgusted at how we, what we've called accountability.

Prentis: Hmm. I know you got to go and I feel so stirred up. So I'm trying to feel my way through this. [Patrisse laughing] Can you, can you leave us with one note? You're saying one, one sentence or two sentences about what it, what it takes from us right now. What's the commitment we need to be in.

Patrisse: Mm. Yeah. Um, now is the time and opportunity of deep, deep listening to each other and to a new vision. The new vision is already making itself seen and known. And it's our time to listen to it, to respond to it, to hold it, to hug it, to ask for patients to be honored by it. Um, to be grateful for it. Like we are in such a profoundly amazing opening. This is an opening right now and we have, we have it all in our hands. We have the paintbrush. We have, we have the palette, we have the canvas. We can make this happen right now. It's I believe that so deeply. I, I see it. I smell it. I'm watching it happen in front of my eyes. And, um, I think that everybody else has the opportunity to do that too.

Prentis: Full circle. Pick up your paintbrush. Thank you, Patrisse. I really appreciate you so much.

Patrisse: Thank you. Thank you, Prentis.

Prentis: Thank you, Eddie. I feel so grateful. I'm going to go. Thank you so much. Finding our way is co-produced and edited by Eddie Hemphill, co-production and visual design by devon de Leña. Please make sure to rate, subscribe, and review wherever it is you listen to this podcast. You can also follow us on Instagram @findingourwaypodcast or email us with questions, suggestions, or feedback @findingourwaypod@gmail.com. You can also help sustain the podcast by becoming one of our Patreon subscribers. You can find us on Patreon at finding our way podcast. Thank you for listening to finding our way

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