

Clinical BOPulations Episode 51:

New World by Van Gammon

[00:00:00] **John:** Hey everyone. It's John. The Bop Squad just wanted to let all of you know how much we appreciate you listening to the podcast. Hopefully you are getting a lot of new, intriguing ideas and some inspiration and just good content from our podcast. If you like what you're hearing, please consider supporting us on Patreon.

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I own two of our shirts, and they are my favorite shirts out of my wardrobe. They are so comfortable and soft and stylish, if I do say so myself. So, consider checking out some of our merch. It really is good quality stuff. All right now, on to the show

[00:01:32] **Gabby:** Hello everybody. My name is Gabby.

[00:01:34] **Allyson:** I am Allyson.

[00:01:36] **Grant:** I'm Grant.

[00:01:37] **Gabby:** And welcome to Clinical

[00:01:39] **Everyone:** BOPulations!

[00:01:43] **Allyson:** Introducing music therapists to new bops and new bops to music therapy.

[00:01:48] **Gabby:** And today we have some special collaborators from Black Creative Healing. We have

[00:01:54] **Natasha:** Natasha

[00:01:56] **Adenike:** Adenike

[00:01:58] **Gabby:** And we will be digging into a song called, “New World,” by

[00:02:10] **Van Gammon:** Van Gammon

[00:02:10] **Gabby:** Welcome everybody. We're super excited to have all of you on. Before we get started with the conversation with Van Gammon. Can we have a little insight as to what Black Creative Healing is?

[00:02:25] **Natasha:** Oh, Black Creative Healing is a platform dedicated to radical conversation, mindful collaboration and holistic visioning, centering Black communities. I didn't know I had that memorized. I've typed it so many times. Yeah. That's who we are. We're hosted by the Black Music Therapy Network, Inc., and yeah, that's what we do. We have conversations, and we make weird, beautiful, lovely Black-centered art. Does that sound about right, Adenike?

[00:02:57] **Adenike:** It does! That's exactly what we do.

[00:03:00] **Natasha:** Yeah!

[00:03:01] **Gabby:** That's awesome. That's also very impressive you had that memorized.

[00:03:07] **Natasha:** I mean, y'all had yours memorized too. I was sitting back like,

[00:03:12] **Gabby:** Well, we, we always mess it up when Allyson isn't here though.

[00:03:17] **Grant:** The amount of times I have it, like just ready to read, like on the side of the screen whenever Allyson isn't here is

[00:03:25] **Allyson:** It's okay. Sometimes I have to do it too. There's just some days I need to have the notes on the side.

[00:03:33] **Gabby:** Awesome. Well, glad to be collaborating. This will be a two-part episode. So, the first half lives on Clinical BOPulations, and the second half will be on Black Creative Healing. So be sure to check that out. So, we've

got Van Gammon in the house. Van Gammon, can you introduce yourself to our listeners?

[00:03:56] **Van Gammon:** Yeah. Fo'sho' fo'sho', I'm Van Gammon. I'm an artist music producer, songwriter, designer, you know, from... I'm based out of Dallas, Texas right now. I'm originally from Fayetteville, North Carolina, so that's where I get most of my, my stories that I talk about from and you know, I'm just, I'm just glad to be out and I feel like this is going to be a really great conversation, so, yeah.

[00:04:22] **Gabby:** Yeah. And this is your second time with us. Last time we featured your song... Oh, gosh, it was so long ago.

[00:04:31] **Natasha:** It was 2019

[00:04:34] **Gabby:** You have it off the top of your head already.

[00:04:36] **Natasha:** I don't remember the title of the song from 2019 that you all covered, but I know it was 2019 because I was like, oh, that was like a universe ago. Anything pre 2020 feels like it was like, oh, lifetime.

[00:04:47] **Gabby:** Oh, it was, "Destiny."

[00:04:49] **Van Gammon:** Oh, yes, yes. Okay. Yeah, "Destiny" off of *Destiny Can Wait*. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, a lot, a lot of stuff has definitely

[00:04:59] **Natasha:** Some shit's gone down. I don't know if y'all heard...

[00:05:05] **Van Gammon:** I don't know if you're familiar, but you know, it was this whole gap year of

[00:05:15] **Natasha:** Oh man.

[00:05:16] **Van Gammon:** Yeah. Again, I'm glad to be here, you know, despite, you know, everything because I'm still writing. Still, I'm able to produce music and get it out. And you know, for me, that that's always been therapeutic because my approach to music is always like, I don't, I don't try to force anything anymore.

You know what I mean? Like if I'm not feeling it, I'm not gonna write it. I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna finish it. I'll try to, you know, do things in parts. Like if

I'm, if I'm feeling it, if I get to a stopping point, I leave it there, you know, and then come back to me because a lot of times, because they're just stories, everything's not coming to me all at once. Sometimes it takes a journey for me to go through in order for me to finish a verse sometimes, you know what I mean? I mean, it's like, like sometimes it was verses like five years in the making, you know what I mean? Even though I might have, I wrote it in 20 minutes, but this was, this took, you know, a lifetime for me to have these experiences and be able to formulate these words, articulate it, you know?

So

[00:06:20] **Natasha:** I'm feeling like this is a therapist moment, so stop me if this is not a direction we want to go, but the word *anymore*, like when you were like this isn't how I do it anymore, or this is, you know, I used to do it differently. What was the turning point for you between when you were like, I'm gonna sit down and I'm gonna write this song right now and the moment when you were like, no, this needs to like evolve and breathe?

Like, was it a specific point in time or did it just sort of happen?

[00:06:46] **Van Gammon:** Well, I think, you know, it just came with growth, came with, with learning about the songwriting process and like working with other songwriters and seeing how their approach is and how like, some people like just came in and did not care, like whatever, you know, they felt in like that freedom I was inspired by and like, it made me, you know, reevaluate my approach and like, man, am I, am I doing too much? You know what I mean? Like, you know what I mean, trying to, trying to make sure like, like some people used to ask me like, Hey, this, you know, I, I do rap. So, like, you know, I come from that background and like battle rap and everything. So, so sometimes I'm like really, really heavy with like metaphors and things like that. And like just different poetic devices that I like to like to put in my lyrics for, for listeners. But sometimes that's too much for a listener. You know what I mean? Like somebody just wants to listen and have the easily digestible.

So, some people used to ask me like, "Yo, this bar right here, this is dope. but it took me a while to get it, but why are you saying stuff that nobody's going to get before," you know what I mean? For this long time, like, why aren't you just like trying to grab people like now know what I mean? So, so that really changed my approach 'cause like, yes, it's super dope to be able to rhyme these words and have all these different layers and stuff. But if it's not really, you know, grabbing people, if it's not really affecting people in that moment, then,

you know, it's kinda like, it's kinda like what Erykah Badu, you know, Dallas, Texas native artists says, you know, what good are your words?

No one does. No one understands you. Right. “What good do your words do if no one understands you?” So, you know, I just, that really resonated with me and kinda helped shape my approach now, so that it's maybe not so more simplistic, but at least more approachable type of delivery.

[00:08:49] **Gabby:** Nice!

So, we're gonna dig into one of your songs and get into all that wordplay and rhyming and layers. And this episode with your song, “New World.”

[00:09:03] **Van Gammon:** Yeah.

[00:09:04] **Gabby:** Yeah. Yeah. So, we are going to take a, listen to it and talk about it in a bit. So, everyone, enjoy!

[00:09:25] **Van Gammon's "New World":**

(ver1)

I grew tired of situational violence
If I'ma catch a body, it won't be cuz of the climate
But I might take a life if it's fighting to keep the system
Can't cure the disease if all you treat are the symptoms
Oh that beautiful, pharmaceutical distributor
Money, glory or the girls; which one you living for?
Told to speak the mind but the SRI wants that info
Saw I was protected, now they eye's a pair of emeralds
Put all my shooter in suits just so we can keep it corporate
I heard it's okay to murder people who ain't important
For a plate of prosperity when justice ain't been served
Ya income makes you eligible to purge
School to prison pipeline and my diet all swine
Eating all the failure, what they tell ya? I'ma die tryin'
To be rich, least that I could do is look the part
My aura lookin' dark, my peace been pulled apart,
Convinced that I'm too black for therapy
Racial wealth gap, I learned that from Dairity
Smoke screened inhaled, rap verse like intel
I've been feeling ill but my inkwell
60 thousand plus women went missing and they all black
These cases ain't reported and they rarely get resolved, facts
Aye what you call that?!
Told God "I Hate it Here".....He ain't respond back
Aye what you call that?
What you call that?
Got the youth dem prepared for combat

[Chorus]

Tell me why they diving in the deep
Lucky me survived another week
New world got no more violins
Newborns know one thing: violence

[Hook]

Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
New world got no more violins
Newborns know one thing: violence

(ver2)

Capping and peelin'
Imagine the villains are sipping and mixing up pills
Slim as a bum on the block with a cup
But they pockets is stuffed like they missing no meals
All the ills, screaming for help like they well

Dwelling and failing to feel
Back in the ville
All that I had was this baggage to last me a couple of years
I've been trying to pack but doubt I'll make it back in decent time
This habitat ain't ever have humanity in mind
It's all trap and ain't no answers where all the secrets lie
We just all get amped up, living backwards just to keep from dying

[Chorus]

Tell me why they diving in the deep
Lucky me survived another week
New world got no more violins
Newborns know one thing: violence

[Hook]

Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
New world got no more violins
Newborns know one thing: violence

(Outro)

Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Guess somebody shoulda told 'em this a blood sport
Whoa!

(Yawnyblew)

Violence

[00:12:34] **Gabby:** And that was, “New World,” by Van Gammon. Can you tell us a little bit about it before we go into a discussion?

[00:12:42] **Van Gammon:** Yeah, sure, sure. So, “New World,” the process of on that was just you know, I, I heard I was listening to some, Griselda oh, and another, you know, hip hop group based out of Buffalo and and just, just how they deviated from what's the, what's the now type of sound and just kind of like went back to like this gritty, you know, sample base type of production and rap style. You know what I mean? So, I was listening to them and I was like, you know, I used to, I used to do a lot of stuff like this and I've kind of, you know, moved away from it. But I also wanted to, so I asked my producer, my producer ReezyTunez, who does know a lot of the production for me.

He did production on “Destiny” as well. So, so he handled this one and then we went out to LA and worked with our team out there. Because I wanted, I wanted this song to to have meaning, but I also wanted to have that, that gritty approach to it and stuff. So, so originally Reez, he had sent me over this drum loop and it was just like a four ball drum loop and I just looped it up a bunch of times and I was like, all right, I can actually speak on this. I can actually slow it down and speak what I wanted to one-on-one to say. And because I'm slowing it down, I want to say things that that matter. Right? And this was before, you know, a lot of the, the heat that had like, kind of came to a head after, after the George Floyd incident, the murder, the murder.

So you know, I had that song, but then after that happened, it just seemed like, man this, the timing of this, of these lyrics and what's happening with the world, the climate of the world. It might be time that they would actually pay attention to this. So, so we did a production. I got to, got to Larry Sam, we went out to LA to it's a to cut it in and to get you know, some, some more vocalists on it – just kind of help with, you know, the musicality on it and everything. And then we put it out, you know? So, so at the beginning of the song, you would probably hear like the like there's lot of screaming it is, is actually soundbites from an actual protest that was going on where there's, there's protesters and defenders, you know, law enforcement and they're going at it, you know, at the beginning of it, that wasn't my original intent to have it.

Like I said, like, I, I wrote that before all of that happened. But it's just because I'm listing out in the song, throughout the song, I'm listing to a lot of different just systems that, that are in place. So, it's not like just, just one particular thing.

Like I'm not talking about just, just, you know brutality from a from a law enforcement standpoint, but like different things.

Like there's, there's, there's people that go missing and they don't get the same coverage, you know what I mean? As, as other people, you know what I mean? Or. Or women don't get as much coverage as, as, as men or Black men or Black women don't get as much coverage as, as, as Black men when there's something wrong in that area.

Whereas where it's like this, there's a transgression going on and they're not getting that much attention there. So, I want to bring attention to that. I wanted to bring attention to, you know, these different systems that are in place, but like, it's just, it's just always, because, because it's not all one, it just seems like, oh man, some of this talking about that, some of that, because that's how it, that's how it feels.

That's really the energy that it feels like all these things, but we just got to keep going and approach in our lives. Like, like none of that's happening, like, like to be truly happy, I feel like you got to ignore a lot of, a lot of bad things. You know what I mean? Like to, to have that smile, like you got to pretend like that stuff is not there.

And so, I want to, to expel that out. Not, not, not to be a negative way or positive way, but just a reality way. You know what I mean? Like just living in reality, this is the reality that we're dealing with. So that, that was my writing approach to it. And, you know I'm glad that I was able to, to, to get it out.

You know, it, and ended up getting attention from Pharell and I Am Other, so they put it on their their mixtape that they put out last year. To which, you know, they kind of molded that whole project around the Black experience. Like, so every, every artists on there is talking about some aspect of the Black experience, you know what I mean?

So, it was very much inspired by the things I was talking about. So it was, it was pretty cool 'cause they got artists from everywhere. They got artists from, you know, all across the states that got artist from, from Nigeria. They got this 12-year-old kid from from Atlanta singing, and it's, it's, it's just really good project, the end, it, and my songs just really fit on there.

And I'm really, I'm really appreciative that a song where, where I was intentional about what I wanted to speak about got that type of attention, you know? So

[00:17:37] **Gabby:** That sounds super validating to have that song recognized in that capacity, with those particular producers and artists as well.

Van Gammon: No doubt.

[00:17:51] **Natasha:** Your whole like, process to the way you described how you were trying to, like, bring an intentionality to very specific, like, systems and issues at play. Like the whole time – like every time I've listened to the song, I have this like image in my head... are y'all familiar with Mr. Okra who lived in New Orleans?

No. Okay. So, when I was living in New Orleans, he was still alive, but he's since passed. But Mr. Okra was this lovely older gentleman who would drive around New Orleans in this giant – it was like a purple truck that had like “Mr. Okra” written on the sides, and he had fresh vegetables, and he would like yell out the window of his car with like a bull horn, “I got okra, I got this, I got that.” And like bringing veggies to the, the areas of, of New Orleans, where there was food apartheid happening, you know, also known as food deserts – but I'm trying to shift that language because it has this weird thing with deserts – but yeah, I felt very much a Mr. Okra vibe in this song, like you're just driving down the street like blasting, “Do y'all know that this stuff is happening? Do y'all know?!” Like, and I, it felt so like hearing you say that it was like, even just the musical choices you were making, like, felt like it was not exactly a throwback, but like a zooming out, you know, of looking at all of these issues just really resonated.

[00:19:17] **Van Gammon:** Wow. That's cool. That's cool. I've never heard of Mr. Okra, but I definitely wanna look them up now 'cause I love okra.

[00:19:28] **Natasha:** And also, just what a cool community thing to do, right? Yeah. I have a little like seven-day candle that has Mr. Okra's face on it.

[00:19:38] **Van Gammon:** Oh, wow. So, he's got his own candle? Okay.

[00:19:40] **Natasha:** Right? I don't even know. I bought it at a shop in New Orleans. I don't know where I would find it online. Cause it's starting to run low now, and I looked up how to refill your own seven-day candles, and it's entirely

too complicated of a process for me, but I need another Mr. Okra candle. Listeners, if anyone knows where I can get another Mr. Okra candle...

[00:19:59] **Gabby:** You know it's legit when you have your own candle.

[00:20:00] **Natasha:** You know it's legit, right? Secular Saint right there.

[00:20:09] **Gabby:** Also going with kind of, you were talking about like the zoom out and the throw back the you were talking to, Van Gammon, you were talking about the sampling and how you were kind of incorporating that back in. So, when I first listened to it, so like the first time I realized it, it was just like on my phone.

Right? So, I didn't realize what exactly it was like, what, what, what was like the vocalizations. Like I thought it was like kids playing in a park originally, and then I listened to it again, like with headphones and then also my car and I was like, oh, okay. This is not as innocent and playful. Like, because like hearing the lyrics and then hearing the sample, I originally thought, I was like, wow, this is very like, opposite ends, like dichotomy with like the playfulness and then like the intensity of the lyrics.

And then I realized, no, they actually like, it is, you know, audio from a protest, so it kind of actually supports all the lyrics.

And yeah, I just think that's really cool how the music really supports what you're saying with like the samples of the protest audio, and then also just like the grittiness of the base.

And then just like the instrumentation as well. Like I, I thought that was a really good relationship with the music and lyrics.

Van Gammon: Yeah.

[00:21:37] **Allyson:** So many lines that that stand out and you already kind of mentioned one of the main ones that stood out to me about 60,000 plus women went missing, you know, and their cases never get reported.

And it just makes me think of things that are going on right now in the news and a specific case that has gotten a lot of attention being a white woman, you know? And I think that those were the main lines that really stood out to me.

And I was like, wow, you know, this was released a year ago, but it's still so relevant to everything that's going on.

But what I really appreciated was the build of the structure throughout. It's, it's this intensity that just keeps piling and building on top of each other especially in verse two and then the very end When they're, when they're singing “violence,” it sounds like violins. Like the melody sounds the way that it was created. It sounds like this very sweeping legato, violin sound. And I thought that was really beautiful at the end. So yeah, there's just so many wonderful things in here.

[00:22:40] **Van Gammon:** I appreciate the, that attention to detail on it because that was, that was, you know, even to your point, Gabby, like it, there was this intent to kind of mirror or like put it under a microscope of this, this is dichotomy of, of this, you know, we want this, this innocence, but you know, in this, in this new world or the way that things are, are, are going or presented to us, it's like, you know, in, in, in the hook I said, newborns, know one thing violence, you know. Originally, I was going to call the song “Violence” because I was wanting to, you know, shine light on all the violence that's happening to Black Americans specifically, you know what I mean? So it was supposed to be like, this chain reaction to the things that's going on, but like also wanted to juxtapose that with something that's like considered, you know, lullaby-ish or sweet or, or, or calming, you know what I mean?

Like a violin, you know what I mean? So that's, that's crazy that you got that on there. That's cool.

[00:23:54] **Adenike:** I was thinking when you were talking a little bit earlier about you know, all this is going on and like, in order to be happy, you have to ignore all this stuff. And it made me think of, of how in this society we often compartmentalize things. You know like what happens in my personal life is supposed to be separate from what happens in my work life.

What happens in my body is supposed to be separate from what happens in my mind and all these things. And it seems like a very, for me, it seems like a very unnatural way of being, and I, and I'm thinking about the way you describe your process, you know, like you're, you're taking in what's happening and these things are marinating within you before you put it down and you bring it out.

But I'm wondering if there isn't some act of joy in creating, even if what you are creating speaks to the pain, speaks to the violence. And for me, when I think

about that, I think like that is a holistic way of being like that is that is a necessary way of being, you know?

I process as thoughts occur to me, so forgive me if I sound kind of rambling, but like the role of the creative is so unique, you know, like we are the storytellers and I'm including all of us because we are musicians. We are artists. We are dancers. We are the storytellers and we hold a unique place in the community.

And I know for me, when I create something, whether it's a poem or a song, there's joy in the process, even if like – I, when George Floyd was murdered, I had this burning in my belly and I've learned that when my belly burns, I have to speak whatever my belly is telling me. And I wrote this poem that I post, I put out on Facebook and the act of writing it was cathartic for me.

And I was really pleased to write as painful as it was 'cause I talked about, you know, what happened to him. You know, like this person kneeling on your neck was centuries of oppression, this person, you know, you, you may have thought – I think one of the lines in there is like, maybe you didn't think maybe when you thought the end would come, you'd be in your bed, surrounded by loved ones, holding your hands.

Instead you were on the street and nobody could reach out their hands to save you, you know, is there something like that? And there's pain in it, but, but there's that there was this relief and being able to put my reaction to the pain out there. And I think like listening to this song, like, you know, you've taken in so much of the pain, so much of the, like this is overwhelming, but then the act of creating is beautiful and you put beauty on it, not to say that we, we, we glamorize the pain or we beautified the pain, but there's something so beautiful about the expression that you've done, you know, and as weird as it may be, like, I celebrate that beauty. I find joy in it, in the midst of the pain and it, to me, it just speaks of like, like that is, that is what our life kind of becomes like 'cause you know, when people talk about Black joy is necessary, like in spite of it all, we need to celebrate who we are. We need to, to, to find these moments of, of, of recognition and acknowledgement, and, and yes, just even if we can have a moment to laugh and stuff, because they, you know, when it's – Like, all the things you talk about, try to exterminate Black people, the school to prison pipeline, the missing the murder.

It tries to exterminate Black people. I remember we put our creativity out there. We reaffirm who we are. We reaffirmed that we have not just our right to exist, but we are part of this world, you know, and, and like that is to be celebrated

too. So, I celebrate what you have done. You know, maybe this is a long-winded way to get to say, like, I celebrate what you have done.

And I, and I, and I see like, it's, it's also interconnected the pain and the joy, the beauty and the gritty. Like it's all interconnected and thank you for putting it together. You know, like we don't have to keep it compartmentalized. You've, you've brought it together in a very powerful way. So, thank you for that.

[00:28:38] **Van Gammon:** Yeah that – yeah, no, I'm sorry. I'm, I'm taking it in because it is something that, you know, I got, I had a bunch of songs I write like that to tell the truth, like, and I think what would always really, really pains me is that those songs, like, they stay relevant, you know what I mean? Even, even though like years my past, like, you think about, you know, Marvin Gaye's, “What's Going On,” you know what I mean?

Like and how, like, that song always seems like it's going to be like new almost, you know what I mean? Like it's the things he's talking about, some of the things that still happening now, you know, it's happening his time, it's happening in my time, it's happening in, you know, my nephew and my kids' time. So, like...

So it's, it's like I don't know if you could like, make it a metaphor, like they say it like the double-edged sword or something like that. Where, where it's like, you have this joy of release where like the, the pain was used to produce it. And, you know, I think sometimes it is, it's kind of, I don't know, I get a lot of existential dread over that, but it's like,

you know, like if without it, would I be able to reach people that the way that I'm reaching them, but I had to go through, or we collectively had to go through something in order for us to, to enjoy this release, this, this this expression, you know what I mean? So, you know, when I look at it, I do get sad about that for, for some reasons, you know what I mean? But I mean, you know, th-the song, you know, is, is, is, is the one that I hear from people about the most. And I'm joyful about that. Definitely. Because, like I said earlier, like, you know, it could be, you know, one of my booty-shaking songs, they got popular, you know what I mean?

Like, you know what I mean? Like, and everybody, you know, wants to talk to me about that. And I'm like I moved past that now and stuff, but now, now, you know, but, you know, it's, it's, it's something that's, that's meaningful and has

meaning and, you know, will resonate past time. Could like, like – I wrote, I probably wrote it in 2019, you know what I mean?

Like, before for the pandemic, before, you know, the swell of, of the protests and everything. So, I didn't know, none of that was going to happen. You know, I was speaking about stuff that had already transpired, you know what I mean? That, that I was saying that I didn't see people talking about enough. You know what I mean?

So, I don't mean is, is, is, is, is cool in a way. And then another way is like, man, I wish, you know, somehow, we really shape reality and how we approach things. Like it wouldn't just be a performative thing. You know what I mean? You know, this, this art that we do, like, it's, it's an expression and we can change people's lives from it.

And that's really what I want to manifest with it, know what I mean? Like, do more stuff like that that helps people like spark something in somebody's mind that's in a different position than me. They can actually make that change.

[00:31:54] **Natasha:** Yeah. And that I think of like what you just said, taps into, like, a really important mindset that's community-oriented, right?

Like you're not the sole person making the change in the world. You're shooting up this beacon or this, like, spark that is intended for other people to see and act on, you know, like that, that is such like, there's such importance in that mindset. That, that helps keep us from the existential dread eating us alive.

You know, like when we fall into these like, sort of, for lack of a better word, savior mindsets, right? Like I'm going to be the one that does the thing. And then the world takes a dump on your head. Like it does, you know, like that. It's not going to take you to as dark of a place if you're going, "I'm just one part of this.

Go ahead and crap on me all you want, universe. There are legions of us," you know, like that's, that's big.

[00:33:01] **Adenike:** And I think that kind of reminds me that there is more than one way to have the revolution happen, you know? Like, cause for me, I-I like people, but I don't, I get super nervous in crowds. Like I was watching.

I just saw it when though, cause I'm out in Phoenix, visiting family and I was on the plane watching the movie, *Summer of Soul*, which was super awesome by the way, that Questlove directed. And there's footage of these, you know, this crowd in the park in Harlem and I think Sly and the Family Stone came on, and people swelled forward, and I went, "OH!" My anxiety came up cause I'm like, "oh my God, I couldn't be there right now!" So, I'm not like, I know for me, you won't find me on the street marching. And sometimes I feel guilty about that, but that's just my anxiety and how I am, but where you will find. Is, I'mma write. I'mma read. I'mma talk to you.

And that is validating because like that's when I can share what I can do to let people know what's going on, it's with the hope that something comes up and I'm not speaking in a vacuum, you know? So that's wonderful that what you are doing, Van, is, is, is like you're putting it out there not because it's, it's a vanity thing or a gratifying thing, trying to big up your ego or something like that.

But no, you're, you're you're oh, there's a, there's a, you're like a, a town crier, you know, like alerting people to what's going

Natasha: There's the Mr. Okra reference! The musical Mr. Okra.

Adenike: Yeah. And then, and then like, for those listening to, like – coming back to, like, there's multiple ways to be involved in this. Like, if you are touched by what you heard, you know, explore that. What does that mean for you? Like go find out what's been happening with the school to prison pipeline. Go find out what's been happening with the 60,000 plus women who have not been mentioned, or like, you know, like, if something in the song spoke to you, sit and figure out, "*What does this mean for me?*"

And maybe, maybe it does call you to be in the street. Maybe it does call you to write a letter to your Congress person. Maybe it calls you to be, like, "Look, I need to tell people that this stuff is happening because my friends don't know," you know? So, it doesn't, it doesn't stop, but it just was played on your device.

You know, it doesn't just live in the device. It lives in us and in our actions. So, thank you again. I just have appreciation for you, Van Gammon, today. So, thank you for being the town crier, the musical Mr. Okra.

[00:35:34] **Van Gammon:** Yeah. Thank you. I'm going to roll with that. That's so cool.

[00:35:41] **Grant:** Yeah, no, y'all, I'm vibing with this conversation so much right now. Because I feel like as I was having thoughts and they were formulating and the more that we spoke, like, I feel like you spoke to it beautifully, Adenike, particularly about the fact about experiencing both that complexity of joy and pain.

And I, and it just reminds me how important it is that joy is a form of resistance and a radical act. And. I think it's so important for us to be able to hold that and to actually be able to experience that and know that it's okay to experience joy. And I feel like there's a lot of guilt around that a lot of times, and it's, it was really affirming to have, have this conversation.

And then also to, to just think about the ways in which over this past, whatever year it has been for, it's been a year, and we're still going through, we're not out of the woods yet, like metaphorically speaking just to understand that there are moments that we can celebrate and not feel guilty or shamed about. Like we need to be able to do that. So, I really appreciate that aspect of the conversation.

And I realized we didn't talk about the context of how this collaboration came to be. And the way in which this conversation is going also makes me think about that very – and like, so the context of how this collaboration happened, I don't know if the word “serendipity” is the best way to use it, but I feel like it's, it's the best word that I have to describe it because we were going through the planning stages for the season when we got the song.

And as we were listening through it, and as I had made a playlist for everybody, and I was listening through the songs, I had saw a post on Black Creative Healing's social media, asking about artists and like wanting to feature.

[00:37:31] **Natasha:** That's right!

[00:37:32] **Grant:** Yeah. And I was like, this would be so cool if we could actually do this. Cause I feel like, at that time we were all in a space where like, this was very.

Like we were intentional about how we were engaging and who we were engaging with. And, you know, it's always great to collaborate with your friends when, especially when we're passionate about the same things and passionate at the same platforms. And I was like, this will be a really great collaboration and

it literally just came up, and we were in a season of collaborations and, you know, it lined up to where we could actually make this work out.

And then as we're talking about the themes of the song too, it's, it's one of the things that's also frustrating. And I, I guess you can also say serendipitous, the fact that, like, themes keep being relevant, despite the fact that they necessarily sh- they shouldn't necessarily be relevant.

[00:38:16] **Natasha:** Right.

[00:38:17] **Grant:** And there's a universal experiences that keep happening. And it sucks that like, if we would've recorded this episode, like in 2019, right. It still, would've been very relevant throughout all the 2020. And we're recording it now in 2021. And it's the exact same thing, like, over and over again,

[00:38:33] **Natasha:** Yeah

[00:38:34] **Grant:** And you know that cycle can get to be like, really self-defeating you can keep experiencing it that way.

[00:38:42] **Natasha:** Right.

[00:38:42] **Grant:** Which goes back to the other aspect of like, why it's so important and necessary to experience joy, create art and have that as acts of resistance and have it be radical and know that like we have to be doing that. Like that's a necessary thing it's necessary, even though we are experiencing that pain, it's necessary for us to also experience that joy.

[00:39:01] **Natasha:** Well, and it becomes a form of, like, care for each other to keep naming it, to keep saying, “no, you're not going nuts. This is still happening.” Like, this is still like that's care, you know, like I think of how much and this is just part of like, speaking of like trajectories and stuff too. This has just been part of my personal trajectory and Black Creative Healing's trajectory, too, I think towards this idea of care as something that is community-based and justice as something that is healing and also community-based.

But like, I think about, I have friends who were in Minneapolis and still are in, in the twin cities area around the time that everything with, with George Floyd

happened, and the type of work that they did was the type of work that was like, “If you're trapped downtown, here's my address.

I don't live far. You can walk to my house. I will help keep you safe. I will have food. I will have a place you can rest. I can give you rides. I have cell service,” you know, and, like, all of these things that made me think back to like the, the bus boycott and all – like the freedom riders, how they needed to have communities, pack lunches for them so that they could stay on the bus and not get off in communities where it was unsafe.

Like, the moms, you know, like all of the care that was given for the people in the front lines to be able to keep doing what they're doing. Like, every little bit of work like this, like the town crying, like all of that is care. It's just care, on care, on care, on care and so needed.

[00:40:43] **Adenike:** Yeah. It's because you care, you create, you know? I mean it's because you – I was thinking about the title new world and, and I can see, I see it in two ways. There's a new world where it could just continue – a new world of violence in a way, which, and it's sort of a way it's kind of like the old world ‘cause there was a lot of violence there before, but there's a new world that can come when we recognize what the heck is going on, and we can change it for the newborns.

So, the newborns don't have to stay in the violence, you know, like, like. So, it's, it's like cause you know, a lot of times when you think about terms like the new world order and it has like this very kind of ominous, dystopian future type attached to it, but it doesn't have to be that way. And coming back to this idea of care, like, because you care about what was happening in your community, you put it out there, you sound the alarm, you bring people's attention to it for the purpose of change for the purpose of, of action.

It's not just it's, it's not just static, you know? This is a very dynamic process. And, I was thinking, and for a second, I thought even about like, if you were to take a photograph, is that it that'd be static, but no, you can use a photograph to tell a story that invites change. So, whatever, so like, however you bring awareness to what's happening, the end result is that it's provoking change and you're doing it because you care, you know?

And, and that's so, so vital.

[00:42:23] **Van Gammon:** Yeah. Now it's something that I care about a lot, you know what I mean? Not, not, not just, I mean, not just for me, but like just this, everything that I've seen growing up too. Like, so, Fayetteville, North Carolina is a very military heavy type city. So, a lot of people come there, you know, that got stationed there, but they're all from different places. Nobody's from Fayetteville. And to like, to actually grow up there, but, but everybody's from, you know, cross everywhere. So, lots of different cultures and everything. So yeah, I didn't, I didn't notice the differences until I, you know, grew up for real, you know what I mean? So, and seeing those disparities, like every, every community has their things that they deal with, especially living here in America, like they do.

So, you know, I did want to bring focus to the one that I'm definitely closest with, you know what I mean? Just for the simple fact, but I feel like, yeah, that in itself is, you know, what, whatever happens to, to, to the Black community usually, you know, translates or, or happens in other communities, right? Like they kind of use, you know, movements for, for other minority groups.

And I mean, like, it starts with, you know, the blueprint of, you know, civil rights acts, you know what I mean? Like you kind of have this there and stuff, so it's, it's usually you know, that, that happening for, for the Black community first, you know what I mean? So, so really making, making that change there does help the other communities that might be dealing with things.

So, I mean, cause like we welcome, everybody to tell the truth, you know what I mean, like everybody. So, you know, just as a collective whole, so, and so th-this is what I've seen, like from, from backing out of, of my experience and stuff, just, just as a whole, like, despite everything that's happened, you know what I mean? Just still a caring people.

Just still an inviting people and a joyful people, despite all the pain and, and kind of heaviness that's just this put on them. So, I think that's, that's something that's, that's special and that definitely needs to be shined on more, know what I mean, so I definitely appreciate, you know, everything that you guys are saying about it.

Cause it's, it is reaffirming that, you know, that definitely, you know, it was the right choice to, to make a song like this and put it out the way that we did. You know what I mean? As, as, as an artist aspect of it, you know what I mean? But

then also has as a person who's definitely connected to it on, on, you know, on a, on a personal level, you know what I mean?

It's – there's an emotional, you know, feeling attached to it definitely and stuff, but definitely gratitude and makes you, it makes me want to do it more, you know what I mean? So, yeah, yeah,

[00:45:35] **Natasha:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, now you're into that, like makes me want to phase, which I'm super excited about. Cause that's always like where collaborations come from, but also, I wanted to name what you said about like the blueprint, right, of like black resistance and civil rights movements and stuff like that. Like that I think taps into an important thing that I also want to name about, like why we were down to do this collab because you know, there are obviously non-Black people on this call and Black Creative Healing centers, Black communities, but something that Adenike and I have talked about is how, when you center the most marginalized person in the room, who usually is going to be the darkest, the queerest, the most disabled, like that's going to be the person who, when you center them, everybody else benefits.

And so, I think it's like, this is one of those moments where we're demonstrating the potential for cross movement solidarity. Like we're demonstrating what can happen when a diverse group of people comes together and centers a Black experience in a conversation and how beautifully that is already blooming into all these other areas of our lives.

That we're all going to go out to after this call, like this is, this is the magic. Like this is it.

I don't know if Gabby, if you have more like logistical things to close us, but I'm just really excited about the, what does this make us want to do, right?

[00:47:06] **Gabby:** Yeah. I was just thinking, this whole conversation brings to mind, like in music therapy, like we, we are quote unquote like healthcare field.

But just listening to this discussion and also like looking at the, the lyrics, like there's one line that says, "can't cure the disease if you treat all the symptoms," and so it just brought back, in my mind, to a conversation that I've had previously and kind of having in my head and probably with you guys now is like, what, what is health care?

And like, like, and what is like, should that term shift to just like “care”? Like, for talking about how, as like, as a community, as communities, as a community and communities, like we're caring for each other. And then as like someone who's like writing or producing or recording and releasing a song, like that's care for yourself, but also care for others.

And like, I mean, that's what music therapy is and should be about, you know, just like care, care. Like it's a care field. Care field.

[00:48:22] **Natasha:** So now, now, okay. Cause I'm going to take, I want to take the nugget that you just dropped Gabby, because I feel like the, the, the what if piece in there is like an opportunity for a little bit of like radical imagining.

Like if we were to like sit down and, and this could be done asynchronously, but like build a story of what if Van Gammon's new world played in a very specific place and somebody heard it and that somebody went and did something and that something touched eight other people. And then those eight other people went and did something else.

What is the possible newer world that could emerge? Like, what have we like wrote a piece of like a short story or some junk? I don't, we don't have to do that, but just like, that's the idea that's coming to my mind. And then like we got together again and read it and that was part two.

[00:49:25] **Gabby:** Van, you can, you can use it as another song. You can make another, “newer world.”

[00:49:35] **Natasha:** I got Octavia Butler on the mind I've been, I've been listening to some audio books. I've got I'm in science fiction land.

Gabby: Yeah, that's cool.

Natasha: Okay. So that's a possibility.

[00:49:52] **Adenike:** Yeah. I like the idea of imagining, envisioning possibility from, from this and putting it out there. Cause, cause that's the thing like as, as – I don't want to say fanciful ‘cause that puts it somewhere as like can never happen. But you know, when you put it out there, whether it's on paper or we, or we sing it, we perform it.

We do whatever with it, it lives, and it has the potential to come to be, you know, like, you know, who knows? I like that. Like, I like that idea a lot.

[00:50:27] **Natasha:** Yeah. That's a follow up question to that nugget then. Unless Gabby, did you have another thought? No. Okay. So do we like *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, this thing? Like, is it like, I'm going to write a little bit and then I'm going to pass it to this person and they're going to write a little bit or is it like, we all sit down together and just like dogpile a Google doc. Like what...?

[00:50:50] **Gabby:** I feel like traveling pants is the most feasible.

[00:50:52] **Natasha:** It probably is, yeah... Our lives and schedules. Right. And then it's, like I said, if everybody is able to get together again to read it cool. If not, Adenike and I can just read it, you know, we can record ourselves reading it for part two, but yeah.

[00:51:08] **Gabby:** Yeah, we can, and we can add samples to it too.

[00:51:15] **Natasha:** Yeah. Soundtrack it, soundtrack it. Like we're going to, like, we're going to be creating our own little, like, it's like an audio book episode. Like, there'll be sound effects and junk. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, I'm excited. So, can I, can I start it? Can I set the stage, create I'll lay the groundwork for the world. Who wants to take it next or do I just throw it into an email and whoever wants it?

[00:51:44] **Grant:** Ooh. Like if you did that as like a Google shared doc and just like left it up and the people just came to it as whenever they had ideas and then, you know, cause now I'm thinking like we could do this and just like, cause you never know when inspiration is going to hit, like that's my whole thing.

[00:51:59] **Natasha:** Yeah. Okay. So, it just lives somewhere for X amount of time. Like we say, between now and this date, just check in and add something.

[00:52:09] **Adenike:** I like that.

[00:52:11] **Gabby:** All right. Well, be on the lookout for part two with our story and sound bites. Short story and samples, story – I don't know – on Black Creative Healing.

But I just want to thank everyone for being on here. So, Natasha and Adenike, thank you so much for your presence on this podcast. Yeah. And Van Gammon, thank you so much for what you created and sharing your stories with us.

[00:52:39] **Van Gammon:** Yeah, I'm honored. Thank you.

[00:52:40] **Gabby:** Yeah. Where can, if our listeners want to find you, where can they find you and your music?

And also, do you have any, like, new projects or anything else that you want to plug?

[00:52:51] **Van Gammon:** Yeah. Yeah, sure. I'm on all digital streaming platforms, you know, my website should be up soon, so that'll be at vangammon.com. It's under maintenance right now, but it'll be back up soon. And yeah, I'll put out a new song called, "Neon Dice," very different from "New World," just so you know, but it's, it's a little bit more fun, more and more, more focused on the joy aspect, but still storytelling and, you know, things I'd like to do as an artist, so check that out.

Destiny Can Wait, that was the last project I'll put out in 2018 That you guys covered the last song, "Destiny," on, so definitely go check that out too. And yeah, that that's, that's it for me. Peace to y'all, thank you all so much. Yeah.

[00:53:36] **Gabby:** Great. We'll have all that information in the show notes as well as information for Black Creative Healing on the show notes as well.

And we're going to sign off by listening to "New World" by Van Gammon.

[00:53:48] **Everyone:** Bye!

[00:54:03] **Van Gammon's "New World":**

(ver1)

I grew tired of situational violence
If I'ma catch a body, it won't be cuz of the climate
But I might take a life if it's fighting to keep the system
Can't cure the disease if all you treat are the symptoms
Oh that beautiful, pharmaceutical distributor
Money, glory or the girls; which one you living for?
Told to speak the mind but the SRI wants that info
Saw I was protected, now they eye's a pair of emeralds
Put all my shooter in suits just so we can keep it corporate
I heard it's okay to murder people who ain't important
For a plate of prosperity when justice ain't been served
Ya income makes you eligible to purge
School to prison pipeline and my diet all swine
Eating all the failure, what they tell ya? I'ma die tryin'
To be rich, least that I could do is look the part
My aura lookin' dark, my peace been pulled apart,
Convinced that I'm too black for therapy
Racial wealth gap, I learned that from Dairity
Smoke screened inhaled, rap verse like intel
I've been feeling ill but my inkwell
60 thousand plus women went missing and they all black
These cases ain't reported and they rarely get resolved, facts
Aye what you call that?!
Told God "I Hate it Here".....He ain't respond back
Aye what you call that?
What you call that?
Got the youth dem prepared for combat

[Chorus]

Tell me why they diving in the deep
Lucky me survived another week
New world got no more violins
Newborns know one thing: violence

[Hook]

Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
New world got no more violins
Newborns know one thing: violence

(ver2)

Capping and peelin'
Imagine the villains are sipping and mixing up pills
Slim as a bum on the block with a cup
But they pockets is stuffed like they missing no meals
All the ills, screaming for help like they well

Dwelling and failing to feel
Back in the ville
All that I had was this baggage to last me a couple of years
I've been trying to pack but doubt I'll make it back in decent time
This habitat ain't ever have humanity in mind
It's all trap and ain't no answers where all the secrets lie
We just all get amped up, living backwards just to keep from dying

[Chorus]

Tell me why they diving in the deep
Lucky me survived another week
New world got no more violins
Newborns know one thing: violence

[Hook]

Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
New world got no more violins
Newborns know one thing: violence

(Outro)

Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Put a fork in em
Ya he done for
Guess somebody shoulda told 'em this a blood sport
Whoa!

(Yawnyblew)

Violence