

All the Fuck In - Episode 40 - Michelle and Tema

Tristan 00:05

penalty. Welcome. This is all the fuck in a podcast from two entrepreneurs about showing up for social justice in your work. This isn't your typical capitalist focused entrepreneurial business podcast. There are already plenty of those. We're here because we've been craving voices rooted in activism, justice and integrity with those values.

Lauren 00:28

These are conversations about all things business and entrepreneurship. But from a radical perspective that says we don't have to choose between social justice values and being successful in our work. This won't be a place where we claim to have all the answers. Our intention is to offer guidance and support while also encouraging our listeners to discover and live into more questions. We believe these conversations require ongoing practice and a consistent dedication to unlearning.

Tristan 00:56

You're ready to go all the fuckin on what matters most while creating an abundant life, you're in the right place.

Lauren 01:03

And a quick note on our content. We believe self care is radical and non negotiable in the work of both Justice and entrepreneurship. So some of these conversations include mention of trauma, both from a systemic and often racialized perspective, and in relationship to experiences like sexual violence. We hope you do what you need to take care of yourself while listening even if that means pausing and returning to an episode at another time or skipping it altogether.

Tristan 01:33

Hi, everyone, welcome back. I feel like my voice hasn't been on the podcast for like episodes now. So it's good to be here back in this virtual space. We have some very exciting guests. exciting for us at least we've been looking forward to this conversation for a while. Would either of you like to go ahead and introduce yourselves names pronouns, any identities you want to share?

01:58

Are you you're you're pointing at me. Okay. First, it's really sweet to be in this space. Thanks for inviting us and China. It's really nice to be in space with you. And this way, I'm excited for the conversation. So my name is Michelle, Cassandra Johnson, my pronouns are she and her. Other aspects of my social location are you Black, I am middle class. I'm a southerner. I live in Winston Salem, which is the ancestral land of the Catawba. This Apone, the chair, chair Wah, with tuteló, the Cherokee and many other tribes, and cisgender, female, heterosexual, have a home and I have a master's degree. And I'm

a citizen, and many other I'm able many other physically able other identities. And often you asked about astrology, I don't know if you want us to share that. Okay, I would love that. I am a Leo sun, a cancer rising and an Aquarius moon and it Scorpio season right now. And my north node is in Scorpio. And my south node is in Taurus. And my Venus is in Virgo, which causes all sorts of stuff for me. And Chiron is in Aries. So that's that's what I know right now about my astrology and I'm happy to be here.

Tristan 03:28

Thanks, Michelle. Michelle, would you also share how you would put her currently describe your work in the world? Oh, yeah,

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that was probably part of this. Um, I am an author of a nother book coming out in April about healing and community. I'm intuitive healer, a space holder, facilitator circle holder, dismantling racism at educator, racial equity trainer, a yoga teacher and practitioner. And I feel like many other things and all of my work as it evolves feels like it's centered on healing the whole the collective.

04:11

Thanks, Michelle. And for our

Tristan 04:13

listeners. We interviewed Michelle I think it was episode three or four. So if you want to go back and listen to that conversation, I'm sure it will inform this one that we're having today as well. Yeah. Emma, take it away.

04:27

Okay. My name is Tim Oaken. And I am I use she her pronouns. I am white, I am old or older or elder. I am wealthy. I am able bodied. Cisgender cisgender female, I have no idea what my sexuality is. I am I have a home. I'm just falling Michelle's model. I'm trying to remember everything she's done. But I have a degree I have a PhD. And I just want to be really clear that anything I know has nothing to do with the fact that I have a PhD. And I am so so clear about that. And it's not again, it's not to dishonor anyone who feels like their PhD does confer wisdom. Let's just I want to be clear that mine. So it's more than it gave me some certification that allowed me to move in spaces that I wouldn't have been able to move in otherwise. What in terms of my work in the world? That's a really good question. I quit teaching, I've been teaching all of my adult life in one form or another either in community community based settings, or in formal classrooms, undergraduate, graduate doctoral classrooms, and I stopped doing, I've taught with faculty at Duke for the last seven years, and I stopped teaching in April. And trying to, as a sort of more efficiently move into elder status, I'm really trying to figure out what my role is now. And if I was to describe, I can describe my vow and my vow in terms of how I'm going to show up these days is that I really want to show up, in and with and from a place of deep and fierce love. And I don't mean that in any kind of pollyannish way, or as my, one of my teachers says, I'm not talking about a Hallmark card marshmallow soft love. I'm talking about I think, I think, I think coming from a place of love is one of the hardest things I've ever done. And I'm trying to learn to ask the question, what does love require? And sometimes it requires, what does love want in the situation? Sometimes it wants boundaries. And sometimes it wants me to be a truth teller in ways that are going to cause people distress and

sometimes, because it calls for deep compassion. So I know how I'm supposed to be I'm not. I'm not at all sure what I'm supposed to be doing as the world is on fire fire. So I'm in a period of discernment. And hoping that some answers will kind of

Lauren 07:12

interesting you sail that timer. Because as Tristan and I were chatting before we jumped on zoom with the two of you, we were like, Yeah, I wonder like at this stage of life for for both of you, you know, what you see as your role moving forward, because I know social change roles evolve as we evolve, and depending on the season of life for in, and I don't mean to start us on a future focused question, but I am kind of curious, because you two have been doing antiracism facilitation for such a long time, way before it was popular and common knowledge that people you know, it's not a term people knew about that much. Let me say white people knew that much until a few years ago. And in the last few years, obviously, things have shifted so much. So I'm curious, what you see is, if not your future in this work, like the future of this work,

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big question. I want you to go.

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Like Michelle.

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Um, I think the first

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thing that came to well comes to mind and heart is that this is work. And it's also a practice and so and it right, it's an ongoing practice, I was reflecting on what you shared Tiller about what you were learning about your, your practice, right, your work, how to show up and your vow seems connected to a practice that you have and a commitment to the collective. Right. And I feel like that orientation is how it resonates to town thinking about my my work, right? Or what it is that I do when I show up in space interpersonally or, or in a group or as I make decisions that affect other people. It's like, this isn't a one time thing. If I'm here for our collective good, then it means that I need to commit to that in some way. And it's going to look different, but in some way each, you know, each moment. It also means I need a practice. I'll say that what I understand about the work to like, or, you know, I'm using work in practice anonymously here, but that I need some practice. I think we need some practice to stay centered as the world is burning and the way Tim I was talking about and that also feels different to me and and, you know, inviting activists into embodied practice. I didn't start hearing about that until a decade ago, 15 years ago, and really in the last five years, right. And so I think, even though I imagined some people were thinking about that and practicing that before, but I think we need to understand this is an ongoing practice and we need something a practice to center and ground us and that Part of what I understand, at this point at age 47, which I didn't understand when I started working with dismantling racism works, or change works was the name of that at that time. And I think finally, what I'll say is there's so much individualism and like ego in this. And I'm not saying I'm not, not included in that. And it it, we're not going to, we're not going to make it as individuals, like, I'm very clear. Like, we will only make it with one

another. And I see some sort of replication of like, the ego and how people are doing this work. And, and it concerns me is what I'll say. I think it's just it's, I'm not saying I know how to do it. Right. Although I do think I, the work that I do, I think I'll do it well. And I'm learning all the time. So when I say that, too, I just feel like there needs to be more focus on removing the ego from it. I don't mean, like, we don't have egos, we do and they help us do stuff. I just mean the like centering, that I see people doing it with themselves as they do this feels like it's kind of toxic. And it feels like such a departure from the way I came into the work, which was to attend a training. Tema was one of the CO facilitators. And Bri Carlson was another facilitator. And we, I was sent there, an organization sent me to this training. And then Tema and I talked and eventually I sort of trained up. And I was part of a collective when I trained up I wasn't like I'm Michelle Johnson doing this, I was part of a big collective of mentors and teachers and comrades and people who knew way more than I did, right. And I just, there's something that feels different about how people are doing this work. Now that feels like it's a departure from how I came into it. And I think we need more of how I came into it, if we're going to make it through this. So that's my, those are my thoughts.

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What Michelle's not saying is that her first training experience with us was when Bree couldn't get to the training, and so we just said, Michelle start training. And she she did was awesome.

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Okay, so

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you know, I've been thinking about this a lot, I, a couple of weekends ago, I am part of a Zen Peacemaker program. And as part of that program, we did a three day street retreat, which is just living on the streets and bearing witness in a very awkward and sort of full of contradictions practice. And one of the things that I came away with, it's something I already knew. And it was just reinforced very deeply, which is that every single institution in this country is so deeply broken. And the people who lead those institutions are so deeply for the most part, so deeply confused, and I can't think of, I can't think of a institution that's actually working for the people that they say they're serving, you know, and I, you know, the evidence of that is everywhere, and, and on the street retreat, the evidence was that, you know, we have a culture that makes people homeless. And then we make it illegal for them to sleep on the street. And so we have hundreds of people who aren't getting enough sleep. And it made me think about how we define mental illness and the people that I met on the street, that those who are generous enough to talk with us would, you know, our institutions would describe them as mentally ill, I would say they're, they're in touch with the reality of their own, while the people who run the assets, the real mental illnesses, Congress, the real mental illnesses, you know, our Supreme Court, the real mental illnesses, the energies that we see, as racialized capitalism keeps undermining any ability, we have to stay in connection with each other. So I completely agree with Michelle, I just think this is the practice that's called for while the world is on fire is what can we do to stay connected to each other, even when we are annoying the crap out of each other, even when those of us who are white are, are out of our conditioning, you know, causing harm, even when any of us all of us, including, including all racialized groups are acting out of trauma? You know, it's like, how do we stay connected, and not allow?

14:43

Allow the culture to

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divide us? And I think about this, I've been thinking a lot about class lately, and I've been thinking about how and this is a huge generalization and has some truth in it, which is that one of the ways that class works within In the white group and across race groups is that those of us who are wealthy or upper middle class are taught that if we're uncomfortable, we walk away. If we don't like something, we just walk away, we'll get we'll quit, we'll get another job, we'll leave our family, we'll do you know, and I'm not taking choice away from working and poor people, but sometimes working poor people don't have that choice. And so they have, again, a huge generalization, but I'm generalizing that working and poor people have greater skill at staying connected across conflict. And so we need that, you know, we just need that. So that's part of the practice and this sort of bow, I talk about the how do I continue to act from a place of love when I see so much harm being done, and, and even the little bit of harm that I experienced from this culture? Now, it's just, yeah, so it's, I think that's the, for me, the future is, I was listening to another podcast, and I need to remember the name of it, but they were talking about the skills that are needed dirt for apocalypse. And the point that this author was making who I'm sorry, I don't remember their name. But they were making the point that that's not that we need people who know, we do need people who know how to farm and grow food and build things. But we also need people who know how to discern who know how to keep people connected, you know, how to lead facilitate groups to make wise decisions, because in Apocalypse, the culture is going to push us to, you know, more hatred and more fear. So, yeah, so I think it's this practice practice that Michelle referenced that we just need to, to deepen our practice. And I completely agree about the ego piece and understand that our ego needs are not actually going to serve us even as they don't serve the collective. So how do we develop a practice of thinking about what's good for the collective, not just what's

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good for us?

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And a lot of that has caught up and there's such a narrative of, if you have caused me harm, I can't be in relationship with you. And that does not. It's such a powerless place to, to, to act from because I'm never going to be able to promise anyone that I'm not going to cause harm. And I think I'm worth being in relationship with regardless. So.

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You know, the both end of that, I guess.

Lauren 17:20

Yeah. Thank you both for that. And I just wanted to say I wonder if the podcast you were referencing is how to survive the end of the world with, yeah, adrienne maree and Autumn Brown. Yeah, we'll link that in the show notes. That's one of my absolute.

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I don't know, if I'll try and find it. Ya know that you know exactly what it was.

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Thank you. I met.

Tristan 17:41

Yeah, Michelle,

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I just wanted to add one thing to what Tema just said a minute with what you shared at the end about harm and relationship. One thing out of many that I really appreciated and loved about our collective, just family, racism works as it different people came in and out and it grew. And we took on different roles. And the work is that I felt like, for the most part, we were committed to each other. And we knew we were going to harm each like, we knew we were going to hurt each other step on each other, sometimes yell at each other, which didn't happen often actually. But like that we were conflict was going to arise and I the devotion, we had to one another felt special in a way that feels tied to the what was Tima was naming about the ego. And part of what I see in collectives were people doing this work is I'm not sure folks are committed to one another, like if they're collaborating like we had real deep, I'm a minute with you. I don't know what, what created that other than time and deepening our relationship and making mistakes. But there was like a commitment to do that. And I think we need more of that, if we're going to and I feel like that wasn't just true to us. I think other collectives who worked in that way, we weren't on social media, like it was different. And so I think there was this way we were able to be in commitment and weren't as distracted by some other things going on. And the way we just did the work and our principles and values we always came back to and I think there's something about the culture and how many distractions are present. Plus the ego that perhaps tests that level of commitment that I feel we have for one another.

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To get there.

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It's also about I think it's sort of living this came to me in a personal situation and then I saw how it applied in the larger situation which is that somebody who had caused me a lot of pain kept saying we're I'm doing the best I can we're doing the best we can and my response was will fuck you the best you can excuse my can I say you're probably fine. Yeah. From you the best you can sucks and it's not you know, and then I started thinking that oh, you know, white people we say a lot. We're doing the best We can, and it's not good enough. And that is the reality that we are all navigating. Right. So and I don't I think it requires a lot that require what it requires of those of us who are white is one thing, but are, you know, we're not all required or need to do the same things. One size does not fit all. And it's just, it's the setup of white supremacy. I think.

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I know. Excellent. A few things. I know that that's one of the setups of white supremacy.

Tristan 20:30

I am curious. I mean, I asked it kind of as a joke, and I'm glad you kept speaking tema and share your thought. But I am curious, like, because to me, I'll speak from my experience part of my own awakening included, if I think of phase, I hope that it's over of like being like, fuck you. Like you're not doing good enough. So like, I don't want to be in relationship with you anymore. Or I don't know how to stay in relationship with you, when you don't care to see. Or to awaken or to talk or to truth towel with me. Right? I and I'm still learning, like, what is it? Where is the line? Like? What really? How do I? How do I stay? Do I stay? What does it look like to stay? I'm curious for both of you to speak to that both like in your own process. And in your relationships? It's kind of a vague question. But I see head nodding. So yeah,

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great. I think it's the quest is one of the questions that I think I'll say a little bit. And then I think that that, first of all, ask the questions that you're asking the questions is that we should be asking those questions, and not just making the decision to walk away. And that we do that in, in collective or in council. It's like, I don't decide that on my own. I'm just walking. It's like, I go to you, I go to Michelle, I go to people, I trust them loves it, here's the situation. And I you know, I have a friend who has been going through a huge discernment process about how to stay in community, across lines of race. And, and they've been, I've just been watching them with off because they have gone to quite a few people to sort of say, and not not in a gossipy way at all, it's sort of like, this is my dilemma, this is the sorts of things I'm trying to figure out helped me to think about this, so that they can act from a place of an of at least more integrity or more. And, and then make the decision like I'm setting a boundary. And that boundary can always come down if and when you you do some things that help to build trust. So I don't, there's not an if I wish there was if I could give you the five things to know, then of course, we would give them to you. But it's sort of like this is a decision that I need to make, I need to make it with help. And then I need to I need to we need to not make a final decision about what's possible. Five years from now I may be able to be in relationship with you. 10 years from now, I may be able to next week, I may be able to things change. So I'm not throwing like a Cynthia Brown. My colleague, our colleague and mentor and wise woman activist said, literally on her deathbed, you know, do not throw anybody away. So I take that very seriously.

23:21

Yeah, I was in a space the other day and called her into it and shared that and bring her into space. It's all the time because such a gift to be offered that medicine and wisdom. And that's how Cynthia showed up in her life, as far as I experienced in witness, like consistently in a culture that throws people away all the time. So it was she was such a teacher for me in that way in many ways. But that like struck me I was like what's going on in your heart over there that you are able to really, you say it, and you actually mean it and you show it? Right. Like that's a that was such a gift? Yeah. And I think, Tristan, I know we've talked some about this like relationship and how to be in relationship across difference or how to be in relationship with people or like you and you think don't get it? Or when do we set boundaries when we're being hurt and experiencing harm? And is that a one time thing when we experience harm? It's an ongoing, is it a family relationship? Is it a friend or romantic? Really? I mean,

it's like, to Tema's point, it depends. It's, it's it's not as I know, I described maybe something that sounded like a utopia around our collective but like, it wasn't always easy. I do want to say that and it took work and I think we were just committed to doing the work. We also had a shared vision, which is not always the case in relationships. We had a shared vision to disrupt racism and to work in community with people and to organize and to work to transform institutions, organizations, and more. But like that, and I think to deepen our own consciousness and understood that we were practicing that with each other because we were working across lines of difference in our collective all the time. And and in so many ways modeling what we were trying to create and inspire people to live into. So that's that feels important and collectives you need to, we need to have a shared vision and like remind ourselves of what that is over and over and have some principles around around that that we can come back to because those things really feel like anchors. And they did in our collective for me, they did, I also feel like in the era of canceled culture. I believed that Tema had something to teach me. And I believe Cynthia had something to teach me and Kenneth had something to teach me and Jess and Jonathan and Yvette. And Keisha had something these are all people were part of a collective over time, something to teach me. I don't always see that in really like this kind of relationship I'm talking about around a collaboration where there's also deep love, and we have shared vision and principles. I don't know that always sort of was reverent about that. But I I, I understood that I valued Tema, I valued all the people I just named and they valued me. And that feels like it's central to a relation. I mean, that's part of centering relationship, right, it's showing that everyone has something to contribute, and I value what that is. And I might have feedback about it. Or maybe we want to do it in a different way. But it was never a question of like a lack of value for my friends and colleagues, which I see a lot of play out in spaces. Like, which really causes a lot of dismay for me. And then I finally I think, in relationship, like the kind of relationships I'm talking about,

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we, I came

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into the work and Tema and Kenneth, and others had created a body of work. I came in and I learned that and, and trained in it. And then over time the curriculum changed and we shared our work freely with people there. And I'm naming this because there was, to me, it feels like a lack of ownership over like, Who created this and you did it. And I mean, we need to honor like where it came from, which is what we always ask people to do. And I'm clear that I didn't create the body of work that I was trained up in, I've just contributed to it over time, because I brought myself into it with guidance and mentorship. And I feel like this lack this ownership piece really trips up people and it also is part of conditioning and whiteness, or, or conditioning. If we're more proximal to power like I created this night, it's likely you didn't actually like someone taught you something, you know, or you went to some extent you experience something and, or you like read and it like transform what you thought, right? It raised your consciousness, there's something in our culture that so like it, maybe it is back to the ego that so like I own I created and I ended I'm the first person who did this. I don't feel like we ever that I remember regarded our work in that way. I just and I feel like it comes up in spaces across difference that comes up in space, that we're spaces where people feel like they're woke and they're performing comes up and like I know better than you. And I just think it's dangerous. So I'm really speaking about the line of like, how do we honor where things come from, but also recognize that it's likely we learn these things

from some other place. And that means we're part of a collective that's doing is doing this, this work and practicing alongside us. And would that orientation support us in staying in, in relationship and valuing people? And not as you know, throwing people away as quickly as I see people do? So that's not a clear answer to your question about like, how do you do this, it's just some things I learned along the way. And a lot from our collective. Just Dr. Works.

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You're reminding me that, almost always, without exception, whenever I had what I felt like an original brainstorm thought, like, Oh, this is so brilliant. I'd be reading something like by James Baldwin, or Dorothy Allison or something, and they would, you know, I would read what I just thought was my original thought, Oh, okay. So, there's that. And I think, along along with what Michelle saying, what I feel like I noticed in space is that there seems to be this expectation that I'm not going to work with you unless you show up perfectly. No, sometimes we wonder why our movement is struggling and I think it's you know, I think about I think the right has a much easier job. It's much easier to organize people around hate and fear. That's very easy to do. And it's for me, it's as simple as remembering how the day that two close friends and I realized that our friendship was really based on how much time we spent talking about how fucked up everybody else was. It was a huge aha moment for me. It's like, oh, my belonging, our belonging to each other is based on how our judgement of everybody else. And we were still friends, because we've worked on shifting that dynamic. And, and I think so on our side, it's like, yes it on those of us who really are committed and believe and need and want, justice, that there's this way in which you can join us. But before you join us, you have to know my pronouns, you have to know the right language to use, you have to know what racialized capitalism is, you have to know all the buzzwords, you have to you have to act in this kind of way, you have to know your place. It's like, it's a miracle. Anybody wants to join us? Right? And again, I'm not saying that pronouns aren't important. I'm not saying that understanding how racialized capitalism isn't important, it's all it's the both end of it, it's like, we deserve to be seen and respected. And, and, and heard, in our full humanity, exactly as we are and as exactly as we claim ourselves to be. And it's going to take practice, for those of us who are still learning what that is, which is most of us, right, it's most of us are not in touch with. Most of us don't have a lot of motional intelligence, almost none of our leaders do. Most of us are not in our bodies, almost none of our leaders are, you know, it's like there's, there's just this, and again, none of this is a mistake to me, sort of white supremacy culture has stripped us all of our innate wisdom and our innate ability to sort of be grounded in who we are. So it's very much a both and I want to know your pronouns, I want to respect your pronouns, I want you to know and respect mine. And if I mess up, I would love some grace around that. And if I mess up, you know, 10 times, I want you to hold my feet to the fire. And then at some point, you do get to set a boundary, but and it's a process, and it's a practice. So I feel like I'm certain that I feel like I may be coming across as trying to tell oppressed people how to behave, which is not what I'm trying to do. I'm, I'm trying to talk about that we need, that we need grace with boundaries, and the boundaries with grace. And, and that I'm never, I'm never going to show up perfectly. And so here's the other part. So I'm on on for me, for someone like me,

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who has a lot of have.

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Culturally, given privileges or advantages. My, one of my deep practices has still not take everything. So personally, don't take anything personally. Like, you're not happy. I'm here because I'm white. Okay. All right. Got it. And it's like, that's, you know, it's like, you don't want to hear what I have to say, because I'm white, and I'm old. Okay. All right. It's like, I don't have to, it's not about me, it's not about me. So there's, you know, there's, there's work, and we all have our work to do. And for those of us in the white group, a lot of that is like, stop taking things. So personally, this isn't about us, you know, let it go. Let it go. You don't, we don't need to be the center. We don't need to be the ones deciding things all the time.

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So there's plenty of work to go around.

Lauren 33:23

This is such a timely reminder for me, I just have to say, like, there's certain relationships, I'm navigating at the moment like, oh, this conversation was right on time. And, you know, I really appreciate what you're both bringing up around boundaries that comes up on this podcast so often, because the boundaries, I think, in a lot of ways are what allow us to give people grace. Because my impression just from conversations and feedback, we've gotten on different episodes before and the types of folks who tend to find trust in work or my work is they really struggle with boundaries and might tend to err, especially the white folks, especially sis folks, because they care about this work, and they're seeking out support in it, tend to maybe err on the side of not having any, or not having strong ones, with folks and then as a result end up burned out and exiting, maybe before the learning has happened. I'll speak personally like, I've allowed resentment to build up in cross racial relationships that would have been prevented with some boundaries, conversations years ago, you know. And so I appreciate the nuance that you're bringing to the conversation around like, harm and that we're all going to cause it no one's perfect, and boundaries are fine. Like oftentimes, boundaries are what allow the relationship to persist, even if temporarily, you're going no contact with someone, for example. So I'm just really grateful. I don't really have a question. I just wanted to say I'm grateful Today. Well,

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thank you, Lauren. I'm glad this feels like it's right on time, I did want to say like some,

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in my experience,

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sometimes it's not always true. But I only learned about what boundaries I need through the process of being in relationship with someone. They're, like, I've learned some things about boundaries. And so I might be able to identify what I need, or I think I need but that could change you based on the conditions in place. And so I just think that's important. What you name made me think about that like, and the grace at times is what allows me to stay in the relationship as I'm learning what boundaries I need to put in place. And just because Tem is a white bodied individual, and I'm Black, doesn't mean I get to like, hurt Tema, I run over Tema's boundaries, not listen to, like, for me, this may not be true for every Black person, because of this, this system to me that you're talking about when you're talking about, don't take it personally, like we're responding to the cultural conditions that are in place in a white

supremacy system. So I'm not saying everyone needs to operate in this way, I'm just, it's just my own learning of like, it doesn't give me a pass to treat people like shit. Because I'm experiencing oppression based on race. It just doesn't like that's not how we're gonna get there. And so that nuance feels important, because I've seen that play out and like, I get to beat you up in the way I've been wounded. And I'm not going to do my own personal work or community work to take care of my, the wounds that I'm healing from and moving through, and I'm gonna, like, throw up on you. And then I'm, like, we're, and then I'm gonna leave or whatever it is, right? It's I've seen it play out in so many ways. And so to me, personal responsibility is really complicated. But I do have some responsibility in my relationships to do my own work. So I'm not showing up in the messy way I just described. And then I'm learning about how to be in relationship and what boundaries I need. And if I can communicate those in some way, because it can't always then I communicate them. And then that person can honor them or not. And I'll learn something through that. So I just wanted to add that to the conversation.

37:16

And then I would say that, on on the white side of things, it's like, when, when and if people come at us in ways that that don't feel grounded, or quote unquote, justified, we have lots of options. And one option is just tell me more? No, we don't, again, this is where we don't have to take it personally. It's like, okay, maybe your anger at this, at this moment isn't really about me, but you're feeling it, maybe I can, you know, I I'm actually not,

37:46

I'm more and more, I feel like

37:53

you're we're all at all of us, all of us, are and such, are, are in varying levels of pain. There's a lot of pain in the world right now. And so some of us know, and some of us don't. And so if we know that we're in pain, we have a little more capacity to hold our own. And each other's because we at least know it, if we're not in pain, we're like, often just acting out of it. But, and if I'm in a place where I, I know I'm in pain, and this is a person in pain, then then I can just, I can witness it. And not and not make it about me. And again, I get to set and this happened the other day, it's happened a couple of weeks ago, when I went to facilitate a workshop about white supremacy culture, and the the the people mostly young there, were not happy with me and how I was showing up. And there were but they weren't going to be happy with me before they even met me. And so. So part of the practice, I think, Michelle, that you talk about, that has been helpful to me is in that moment to go, oh, this group has a lot of holding a lot of stuff that they have not been able to talk about. I'm the catalyst for it. Let me get out of the way and they can do what they need to do. And I didn't I just was it was pretty clear pretty early, like there was not, I was just able to say I'm not who you want or need. That's okay. I didn't apologize. I just said that's okay. And just got out, you know, we all figured out I should get out of the way and that's what happened. And I don't again, I realize sometimes I'm not telling this to to demonstrate how evolved I am. I am saying this to demonstrate that with a lot of practice, I can sometimes get be in that space where I don't take it personally. And I can figure out that people are have something that they need to do and whatever my role is, and sometimes it's getting in the way to facilitate that to happen. Right and so that's kind of part of the Uh, when I hear Michelle talking about ego, it's like this isn't a lot of this is not about us. And when I hear Michelle talk about the power of our group vision is that even when we

didn't get along, we still did the work together. Because that the work was as important as our ability to get along. And I remember Suzanne, one of our collectives when we work when we weren't getting along, I went to her and I said, another white woman. I said, What are we doing? You know, we're say, we're a dismantling racism group, we have all these dynamics. And she said, Well, we could wait until we have it figured out, which means we would never ever do any work ever. Or we could just keep working while we're while we're figuring it out. And that was such deep with I tell that story all the time, because it's such deep wisdom. So yeah. I have,

Tristan 40:52

like we could I hear people on podcasts being like, I could talk to you forever. But could we just spend all day and also, I want to respect your time. And there's so many places we could go. In our remaining time. I do want to hear especially given some of what's been

41:08

raised, like

Tristan 41:11

tama, how do you hold the the crediting of the characteristics of white supremacy culture article, and the fact that it feels like it's, especially in the last two to three years, become more of a popularized resource? Like, how do you hold the nuance of like, your name being on that? And obviously, you know, at the top, there's a whole list of names, including Michelle's including candidates, but like, Yeah, can you speak to that, like the evolution of that, like also hacking?

Lauren 41:41

How did you all do it?

Tristan 41:42

Like, how did you all see like, these are the themes we see playing out? And this is, this is like the last you know,

41:51

why that's explained on the website, too. So that one of the reasons for the website is because the article was being used a lot. It was very old, it needed revision and updating. And so when I, when I started to really sit down and think about it, I realized that at the time that the article was written, I had been working with Kenneth, already for six or seven years. So Kenneth and I are the ones that sort of, kind of have been doing anti racism work out of the peace development fund in the Northeast. And I've been doing it out of Grassroots Leadership in the south, and we got together and put our curriculums together. And he was he was a little bit older. He was definitely my mentor and colleague for 12 years until he died way too soon, in 2004. And so we've been working together for a long time, and I had to the work. We were doing a lot of work on the West Coast. I had gone to people's Institute workshop where Daniel Buford had given an incredible talk about linguistic racism. I've been going to the challenging white supremacy workshops that shed Martinez had was sponsoring in the Bay Area. And my memory is that I went to some kind of meeting where all that dysfunction was happening. And I came home in a rage, and I sat in front of the computer, and it came through me onto the computer. It

was not I didn't research it, I didn't sit down. It just came through me that and that's why I think it's powerful. It's like, it's what Michelle was saying about. There's nothing original on there. It's not. It's not my name is on it mostly. So people can find me if they have something they want to ask where they want it. It's not. I invented what's you know, it's like, there's nothing about that. And Daniel Buford needs to be credited as he is Sharon needs to be credited as she is all those people, everybody. And that's why there's a whole page of all the ways that people are taking it and using it. And again, to Michelle's point, it's not copyrighted, it's that people are free to use it and change it, and people are going to abuse that and people do know, it's a tool like any tool. And so one of the things that needed to be added was a whole section on please don't weaponize this list. And I have a lot of stories I could tell about how people do that. So yeah, I think it's just I was, I was at the computer when spirit or source chose to move through me with the words through me. Sharon's the one who said you can't talk about characteristics without offering antidotes. So I added those. And then over the years as a and then we just put it in our workbook. It just became a tool in our workbook and then then the internet. Al Gore invented the internet. Somebody took it out of the workbook and put it on the internet and started circulating and then when George Floyd was murdered, it got a lot of resurgence. And then I said, I've got to revise it. And, and so again, the point of having my name on it is so that people understand there's a lens through which it's being offered, and then can take or leave it based on that lens, but it's certainly not about when it first got circulated because it came out of the workbook candidate's name was on it. And he got really angry with me. And he said, You need to take my name off of that I had nothing to do with this. And I said, you know, all of our work is collected, I don't care, you take my name off of it, he was he was, and he never gets angry. So he's scared me. And he's my elder. So I, so I took his name off of it, but luckily enough, it was circulating already. So it still has his name on it, which I love. So he has yet limited power in that sense.

Tristan 45:29

Michelle, do you have anything to add about that resource and your relationship to it?

45:35

Um, I

45:37

have nothing other than to say that it is, to your point us so much like I see it everywhere. It comes up in conversations, obviously, he's in my work. And I love how you described about what you described about how it just moved through you like a channel and the clarification around you know, I'm offering this through my lens, I don't I think sometimes with tools or resources or articles, people don't always remember, there's like, someone or a few people who wrote this, and they have social locations that may be different than yours. And they've been conditioned in this way. And that will shape how they talk about a certain thing, or present something. And so that may have felt small to you. And I feel like it's a helpful reminder for people as they're working with it. And the openness with which you're like, you know, people can feel how they want to feel about it. They can work with it, they can leave it, they can, but I know it's informed so many organizations, institutions, communities, who are working to disrupt how white supremacy shows up and the toxicity inherent in it. Any Go ahead. It's just

46:54

one way to give something, language and definition that helps people get one kind of a grasp on it. That's all, you know, it's, again, many, many people have written about white supremacy culture, way before this article ever came out. And so it's just one way one way to sort of like, because it's a list, you know, people like lists

47:15

can be helpful in that way.

Tristan 47:17

Yeah, I worry, even for myself the way in which I relate to it as a as a list and as a list of do not, and therefore put it into very Black and white thinking like I'm getting it quote, right? In my work in. In my practice, if I don't do these things, as if it's that like linear and narrow. And I'm just really, in this moment, reflecting on the question of, of what does it look like to not do that to not? I mean, I hear you use the phrase, weaponize, and I think that can be done in a whole slew of different ways in relationship to this resource in this tool and framework. And I'm also thinking about the way in which I might be using it, and replicating white supremacy culture, while convincing myself that I'm challenging it right through these anti practices. Yeah.

Lauren 48:05

Black and white thinking. Yes, yeah.

48:07

Yeah.

48:09

Yeah. One of the things I like to say, I'm starting to say more and more as the world is on fire is that when I think about whiteness, at all, I don't think whiteness offers anything at all to anybody. Can any of us in the white group it offers some of us, like way more material crapola than any of us should have. So certainly the white group has benefited materially or financially in some kind of way by being white. But the price of that is, is if we are at all in touch with it is not in the least bit worth it. And there's so if I think about these, these characteristics, rather than a list to me, it's sort of like, it's more, these are the ways in which white supremacy gets in my body and gets in my, my way of thinking and disconnects me from myself. And, and so when we say when we say that, that white supremacy and racism harm all of us, I think about as a white person, you know, any kind of when I'm acting out of perfectionism, or when I engage in either or thinking or when I think I know the right way I have, immediately I have, I have started participating in something that takes me away from

49:27

myself. And, and

49:31

keeps me in the word in the language of law. Murad Owens keeps me from being free, I want to be free. I want to be happy and I want to be free. And I can't be happy or free by myself. And so to me being happy or free means that I am I can catch my condition thinking and my conditioned behavior and

do something else. That's what it means. And so that's what this list or this any kind of description is in service of it's like helping me identify some things I can do to be Free. And that's how I tend to think about it.

Tristan 50:09

And that freedom isn't an individual experience. Yeah,

50:13

I can't be free by myself. Yeah. That's not a lot of fun.

50:20

I can't know about my conditioning by myself, either. I think about I've been sitting here thinking about it. It's been a while since Michelle and I worked together on a regular basis. And one of the beautiful things about where he was, Michelle is that she is always she has this gift of clarity about what's going on, either in the dynamic between us either in a group with herself, and I never had to. I never had to second guess what she was getting? Because she would tell me, and, and she can be clear and loving at the same time, which is an income not many people have that gift. That's a very incredible gift to have. So I never felt like she was coming after me. And she was completely clear, like,

51:09

no, or

51:11

Yes, or, you know, whatever it is that she had to share. And I could I could return, I could say, well, actually, I see it this way. So it was a very, Michelle offered the gift of the of being in relationship in a very, equals not the right word, but

51:28

a very

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parallel, I don't know what the word is. Remember, on, we were on the same ground. And, and it's, it's pretty unusual in my experience, either people will concede to me because I'm older, and I've been doing this longer, or they'll be for whatever reason, just, you know, thinking I decided I'm not I don't have anything to offer, because I'm white and older. I mean, can work both ways currently. So you know, but to be to meet someone

51:59

who's going to meet me going to

52:03

offer themselves or show up in a way that doesn't demand that's not the right word, but says, meet me where I am. And then I can meet you where you are. That's a really wonderful thing.

52:17

Thank you, Gemma. I love you. I think that's love is part of that, like how I want to show up in relationship and being a practice of centering love. My mother is probably responsible for the other part of that and her communication raising me and nurturing me and communicating and like steadfastness. Like, my mom loves me so deeply and is clear. And so she just modeled that, which I know everyone doesn't receive that gift. But she modeled that consistently, for a long time. She still does. And that is Yeah, I think that really taught me how to be in relationship and meet people where they are and, and ask that they meet me where where I am and the boundaries and the grace and the practice and being in it together. And detachment, this is my Aquarius, Moon, the like I can say the thing and so love you and I'm not all caught up in it, you know, like that. Feels very Aquarius, like to me, of I'm in relationship with you, and I'm connected. But I'm not like wrapped up in all of the, like, we can move through this, I trust us enough to do this, or I'm not gonna get so wrapped up that I that I can't be in this with you. So alright, thank you for saying.

53:43

The other part of it as thing today, I wrote a letter to some people I've been working with where I spoke some truth that's hard to hear. And I think the other the other thing that those of us in the white group can really work on is, is understanding what a gift truth telling is, you know, even if we don't agree with it, and yet, in the end, each of us gets to decide what we do and don't agree with. But when somebody offers their truth to us, either, you know, whatever their race, to be able to say Oh, and before and to notice if we're defending against it, go on defending against it, can we take a breath? And then go okay, what does this have to offer? What's the gift in this because some of the greatest gifts I've gotten from people are people who had the courage to tell me the truth about how I was showing up. And although I didn't like to hear it at first, I can remember one in particular when my boss gave me some feedback about how I was showing up and I hung up the phone.

54:42

In the end,

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when I really thought about what he said I realized how what he said was so true. So he talked about my critical thinking and that I was all I was doing all I ever did was point out what was wrong. That brought down the morale of a group. I had no idea was doing that. I thought that It's what a person did. I didn't know it was I didn't know what's a skill I could choose to use, I thought it was a way of life, like my job in life is to point out all the things that are wrong. And I started thinking about how I lived in my head were all up my head, all my brain did was notice what was wrong. Oh, what a terrible way to live. You know. So I didn't like hearing it, because I heard it as shaming and blaming me for who I was, which is not what it was. And when I was actually able to take it in, it changed my life. It changed my life. And if somebody had if you hadn't, I was in my 30s, when he told me, you know, what, if I had been in my 60s, when somebody told me that, oh my gosh, so to make some room to actually hear what people are saying, and to consider what might be that there's some truth in it, just this, in the end will really again, be part of what sets us free. And at the end, I get to decide actually, I don't agree with that assessment. So I always decide that but before I decide that, let me consider my picture.

56:07

I think that's one of your gifts you were talking about a gift I have around clarity and meeting folks and one of your many gifts is is receiving or noticing when you're not receiving the feedback and processing that and I need a minute and listening right that feels so there's Jasmine, Jasmine right Park per minute everybody. But I just think that the way one reason I was able to meet you Why was able to meet you is because you were like listening and available to receive the feedback and would speak about when you felt like you were defending or would reflect on that and then come back to me like that feels like how we part of what we need to practice this day in relationship with one another, especially across difference. So there was that sort of openness and they the gifts that we were talking about they feel connected to me in that way. Yeah.

Tristan 57:07

Anything any final like Final What does that even mean final for this conversation in this zoom space. Any final things to say offer ask from either

57:18

of you. This silence is our contemplation

57:28

is I was thinking about love. And we've talked about it a little bit through how we talked about how we how we practice. And when I interviewed you tema on finding refuge, you talked about love, and, and centering love. And you know, when you first started doing this kind of work that wasn't for organizing work, people weren't talking about love. And I would say when I first started doing it, I didn't like the word centering love. And so it just remind people about, like, so much of what we've talked about. And the way we've talked about it here on this podcast is from a place of love and like deep respect for one another. And, and, and like reverence connected to that we get to do this work or be part of a legacy, right of people who've done this kind of disruption for such a long time. So inviting people into that place of love. And Tim, I have a piece of art from you. That's right above my desk that says Remember to love today. It means two different things like remember to love today. Remember to love today, it's a collage you made and it sits there because I want to remember that and want that to be part of how I what informs me around how I show up and and practice with folks. So I invite folks to think about the role of love in this, that it has to be centered. Otherwise, I don't know what we're doing. Actually.

59:00

Before the before we started the podcast, the two of you asked what we think about the future and if we're hopeful or what our feelings are about that and I sort of follow Pema children's model, she's a teacher and she talks about the art of hopelessness because if we're hopeful, then it means we're not able to be present because we're projecting something. But I'm also not hopeless. I am in it. I am in a huge space of not knowing I don't know. And it's very I don't know how we're gonna get out of this mess. We're in a big, big, hot mess. And I don't know how we're gonna get out of it. And that did not that wasn't always true. As a younger activist. I thought I knew how we were gonna get out of it. And I was there was nothing wrong with that either. I was fervent in my beliefs, and I just it was disappointed, as what I was hoping for and fighting for was not coming into fruition. So. So I would say my position these days is that, that we're in a big hot mess, and that we're in a big hot mess because because this

preference of profit over people and land over connection is really messed up the way that we think about things and the way that we operate. And so to me, it's just, in some ways an imperative to love. It's like that. When I, when I meditate, or when I sort of ask, ask the question, because I like to sort of ask my version of God or the energy field, like, what is my role now? What is my role now? And the answer is pretty consistently, like, just like I said, In the beginning, like, just keep showing up in love. And it's because to me, I think that

1:01:08

the world is so

1:01:09

hate filled and fear filled and fear driven right now that the more spaces that we can create, where the grounding is love, I think the more chance we have to move through this together and in some kind of way that's going to bring us bring us out into ways of being that that. I mean, my vision is one where we center caring for each other, or caring for each other is the most important thing caring for each other for the water for the earth that like care is the center, not Capitol care. And, and so, and I think a lot of us want that. I'm not alone that and a lot of us want that. So my mother after she died, she came to me and she gave me four instructions, and one of them was fine, the others and so I feel like that's, like find, find the others find all of us find all the folks who really want to center caring. And there are a lot of us out there, and we're across the globe. And so that's my vision of the future is just to keep looking for people who

1:02:13

want to do that. Thank you both. Thank you.

Lauren 1:02:20

Finally others, that's a good place to leave it. Yeah. Also not to to abruptly depart on what we were just talking about, but I just feel like everyone needs to see it on my desk right now. Patreon folks will be able to see it. But there is a little snuggly Fiona kitty, who I think was getting cold and I also feeling the feeling the feeling of spreading. I'm gonna say I think she probably felt some resonance of of goodness of this conversation. She usually doesn't do this. This is I usually have to force her to let me hold her to pick her up and make her realize it's nice. So now she's getting spicy again. Yeah, I just appreciate you both so much.

Tristan 1:03:10

Yeah. Likewise. Thank you. Thank you for taking the time to share this conversation with us today.

1:03:15

Thanks for inviting us. Yeah, thank you so much.

Tristan 1:03:26

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