

Liz Wiltsie: Welcome to the quest to become sustainably human at work. I'm Liz Wiltsie and I'll be your curator. My goal with every episode is to share insight from someone I admire. That will help you on your own quest. So I ask you to join me.

Alright everyone, today I get to welcome Jade T. Perry, who is someone whose work I have admired and who has read tarot for me more than once and it's very exciting. And I get to have her on the podcast today so here is a little bit about her and her work. The mission of her work as a whole is to contribute resources, art, narratives, and experiential learning opportunities that aid in the holistic healing processes of Blackfolk, Queer & Trans Black & Indigenous People of Color (QTBIPOC) and disabled and/or chronically ill folks within those communities. Jade seeks to creatively challenge secular and sacred spaces towards greater levels of equity, justice, and spiritual activism. Through individual and organizational consulting, she supports spaces that are moving onward from "diversity and inclusion" into building creative and liberatory praxis at each level. So Jade, I'm excited to talk to you about it today.

Jade T. Perry: Yes. I'm excited to talk to you and to the folks who are listening to the podcast today.

Liz Wiltsie: So the thing that sticks out for me about your work is that all the way around you are building liberatory praxis, and I know not everyone is super familiar, what the word "praxis" actually means.

Jade T. Perry: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Liz Wiltsie: So can you talk a little bit about that?

Jade T. Perry: Yes! So praxis to me is the applied way of doing a thing. A practice is something that you make into a norm, a behavior, a protocol, something that you make into a norm. The praxis is kinda like to me, it's like the meat on the bones, you know, it's the, how we do what it is that we do and how we do what it is that we do with regularity and consistency.

Liz Wiltsie: Yeah. So what does that look like across... You educate, you consult, you read tarot, what does that look like across all of those pieces for you?

Jade T. Perry: Yeah, oh my goodness. There is no checklist to it. I wish that there was, honey, so somebody could give it to me [laughs]. But I will say, for me being a Black Queer Disabled Femme, I have always, whether working in institutions or working for someone else, or working for myself. I've always had to make a way for my body, for my mind, for myself, for my spirit, for my Blackness, for my queerness, for my disability, for my chronic illness, I've always had to self-advocate and self-determine. And so I think that there's two parts that come with that. Number one, having an analysis of what is what [Audre Lorde](#)

calls "the mythical norm" on what is the dominant norm, what is overculture. An overculture says that "Oh our bodies need to be in one place for eight hours to do work."

But my disabled body is not doing that and so I've always had to make a way. Yes, it's true that when you're working for someone else you can get accommodations; however, there are often a lot of bureaucratic processes that you have to go through to get those accommodations. I've done it before and it has been great for my life, but I bring that up only to say that I've always had to make a way. Liberatory praxis is "What if we started from the base belief that not everyone is a cis-gendered, straight, white, Anglo-Saxon, able-bodied man? What if we made a way of living and attaining resources and connecting with each other with that as the reality because it is the reality?" [laughs].

And so I think liberatory praxis is ... It's a myriad of things and it can be expressed in a myriad of ways, but I think any praxis that insists on the rights of those who are marginalized to be centered, not just tolerated or written in and then kind of forgotten about, but to be made central. I think that those are the... that's the seed of liberatory praxis. And also just an ongoing analysis and understanding and critique even, of the methods, the norms, the ways of working, or the ways of being, or the ways of connecting that automatically assume maleness, cis-genderedness, heterosexual. So all of these different kind of pieces that are not the actual norm, they're just the mythical norm. So, thank you Audre Lorde for that term. It's good language [laughs].

Liz Wiltsie: [laughs] Audre Lorde, the poet, right?

Jade T. Perry: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes. Good language.

Liz Wiltsie: Among many other things, but-

Jade T. Perry: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Liz Wiltsie: There's something that comes with Audre Lorde, [Aimé Césaire](#), right? Those people who, poet is sort of their first thing.

Jade T. Perry: Yeah, their first home. Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Liz Wiltsie: Right. I know one of the things I wanted to talk to you about is the way that you've woven some of that just into your own practice-

Jade T. Perry: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Liz Wiltsie: Of the both consulting and some tarot reading work that you do where it's very clear that you state what your boundaries are and that things are fluid. Can you talk to me about what that looks like in your life and maybe lessons for other folks?

Jade T. Perry: Yeah. Okay. Oh my goodness. I would say you don't... Being a solopreneur, it takes...and for me, let me actually go back. I am from, originally from Philadelphia, Southwest Philadelphia and... so to put that in context while I grew up in a beautiful environment and home and culture, my parents always made sure that there was pride and joy and excitement in our culture, in our people, in our family. I did not grow up with that... the habitus that said "And here's how to make a way for yourself in the world as a Black Queer Disabled Femme." I just did not get that coming from Southwest Philadelphia, I just did not get that. There is a poem by--speaking of poets--

Liz Wiltsie: [laughs].

Jade T. Perry: There's a poem by [Lucille Clifton](#), actually, that I would love to, if you will bear with me, I would love to read because I think this is actually important context for the question that you asked me.

Liz Wiltsie: Great. Perfect.

Jade T. Perry: And so it's called, "won't you celebrate with me."

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

And so I love that poem, particularly in answer to this question. Because of this piece, this was written in 1993 I believe. But because of this piece of "what did I see to be except myself?" [laughs]. I think for me the lesson of being a solopreneur has been: sometimes you have to make up the liberation that you need. You can't wait for permission, you can't wait for permission, right? And so, at this point, no one's gonna come and say, Jade, you know, your body allows me to keep moving or honor the rhythms and the cycles of my body. I wish I did that perfectly, but I don't.

But one of the ways I try to do that, that we talked about before the show, was just being clear about number one, the mission of my work, who my work is for primarily, and then

what that means. So those three things. The mission of my work as read it's for BIPOC, first and foremost. And it's for folks who are disabled and chronically ill within those communities and so for me, I have to say, "What would feel honoring to this community that I'm a part of?" [laughs]. What would feel honoring? Things like flexibility, things like "access intimacy" a term coined by disability justice activist [Mia Mingus](#), which really is just about meeting each other. Meeting each other outside of a checklist. "Oh, this is what I need to do to make this accessible, right?"

But meeting each other kind of where we are, and what it means to work with me is to meet me and my Black Queer Disabled Feminist. Which means that in my terms and conditions we will talk about [Spoonie Protocol](#), right? What to do when chronic fatigue has set in. What are the ways that we can be flexible, what should you expect? I've always gotten really positive feedback about it when people have seen it, but doing it from this side of the table it felt very "woo"... revolutionary at a certain level because, again, we're so conditioned because of white supremacy and because of capitalism, to work and work and work.

And that our very bodies are only for production, doubly so as a Black woman, doubly, triply, quadruply so as a woman who, in many institutions, would make cents on the dollar. So I think for me it's moving and shifting in my own thoughts and giving myself permission. So lessons for other people, sometimes you gotta give yourself permission to do what it is that you need to do. Sometimes you will have to make it up [laughs]. Make it up for yourself. I will say, though, that one of the inspirations, particularly around the thought process of being a disabled creative and tarot reader--and this and this and that-- has been informed by [Johanna Hedva](#)'s work in "Sick Woman Theory."

And they also published a disability writer for folks who do speaking, which I am those folks [laughs]. So the folks who do speaking and moving, and there's a beautiful resource . And little things like that always remind me that there is a way that you can insist, that you are, that your body is centered if you're always, always, always on the margins. And so I think it's been healing for me to take up more space in my own kind of business and entrepreneurial life.

Liz Wiltsie: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And like you said, sometimes we have to give ourselves permission but sometimes there's just something that can crack something open for so many to see just an example of it happening in the world. 'Cause like you said, capitalism, white supremacy culture, they're very real, very big, and tell us, "No it's not possible," and lots of things are possible.

Jade T. Perry: Or, like, everything needs to happen now and it's like, no [laughs]. That's just simply not true. It feels like it and we've been socialized into it, but someone else benefits from that. Our bodies don't benefit from that, our souls, our minds don't benefit from that, and so we have to interrogate that.

Liz Wiltsie: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's one of the things that when I first started any kind of tarot practice, which is not a long time, about a year for me. It was a chance to just sit still.

Jade T. Perry: Mm-hmm, yeah [affirmative].

Liz Wiltsie: [laughs]. And think about things in terms of cards and in terms of questions and these sort of big, broad themes. But it was a chance to sit still.

Jade T. Perry: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I love tarot for that reason. I love tarot for that reason. I really hope that we can normalize divinations for work decisions, and pathways, and career, and whatnot. But I love it for that reason. I think a large part of my work is thinking about, talking about, trying to understand, trying to be a good student of Blackfolks' spirituality, and within that spiritual paradigm, time is not even linear, to begin with, right? There are so many different ways of looking at time and tarot often reminds me of, you know, we got the Major Arcana, which is our major time. That's time outside of time and deep time, future possibilities, and whatnot.

And then we got our minors that are here and now. So I really like to escape western colonial time whenever I can, however, I can. I was just gifted a beautiful oracle deck by [Rasheedah Phillips](#) and the [Black Quantum Futurism Collective](#) and it's an oracle deck that's all about time. And healing the relationship, particularly for Black women and femmes around time, around always being rushed or a time being for someone else it's... oh my gosh, it's beautiful. I love the way that it has also enhanced my tarot practice to think about time in different ways.

Liz Wiltsie: Yeah. So, Jade, my last question for you is, what are you grappling with?

Jade T. Perry: Ooh. What am I grappling with? What am I grappling with? Ugh [laughs]. I'm grappling with a world that is slow, slow to embrace disability justice. I'm grappling with the reality that western linear time is how so many of us have been taught to synchronize. And so sometimes, even when you suggest, you know, maybe there's more room for this, maybe there's more time for this, maybe there's more spaciousness. Some people get real scared [laughs]. And real, "Oh my gosh, I don't know how to synchronize with other people outside of it being on a clock, on a deadline, on a timeline with the...." So it's been really, really... That's been something interesting to grapple with as well. Oh my goodness, what am I grappling with?

So many things! So many things! I'm grappling with what it has meant in this pandemic moment to see... Around June and July when the protests began to ramp up again in a new way, in a new way for the movement... liberation for Black lives, I'm grappling with their one-time donations and then radio silence for the rest of the year. What do we make of this? What do we make of folks who, at one point, believed themselves to be allies and are now, after one cycle, fatigued [laughs] of the work of liberatory praxis?

These are the things that I'm grappling with. These are the things we're grappling with in 2020 at the time that we are doing this. I love podcasts 'cause that... I feel like people listening can, like, go in the past and the future. I love podcasts for that reason, but where we're situated right now is in 2020 and is in a global pandemic. And so I'm wrestling with what does it mean to do this work in a global pandemic and in a way that is honoring to my body when overculture is still overworking all of us? And so these are the things I'm grappling with, these are the things I'm grappling with. I hope that other folks are grappling with these things too [laughs].

Liz Wiltsie: I mean, I know I am, right?

Jade T. Perry: Yeah. Mm-hmmm [affirmative].

Liz Wiltsie: I've seen a lot of similar things and it feels like if it's possible that the overwork is even more.

Jade T. Perry: Yeah. I- yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Liz Wiltsie: You would think there would have been some spaciousness somewhere.

Jade T. Perry: Somewhere, yeah. Mm-hmm.

Liz Wiltsie: And I don't think that's real.

Jade T. Perry: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. I think we really have much more political, and spiritual, and personal soul searching to do. Because it's... I think the place where we are is not honoring to our bodies, is not honoring to the bodies of others and it's not sustainable! I'm always trying to think about how do we make these things- How do we make these things sustainable? You know?

Liz Wiltsie: And that is a lovely place to end. Thank you, Jade T. Perry. [laughs].

Jade T. Perry: Thank you! I appreciate this so much. I had a good time [laughs].

Liz Wiltsie: Thank you.

If you've enjoyed this episode, please see the show notes at [4 Needs.work/podcast](https://4Needs.work/podcast) and you can see the rest of the episodes of Sustainably Human at Work.