

Getting Free Together Ep. 2: Movement Practice– Full Transcript

00:00:00:00 - 00:01:09:16

Brianna

One of the things that feels, really nice about being in this formation of a co-op is seeing, all of our, like, collective wellbeing as bound up in one another's, like, very tangibly through this particular financial and economic, formation.

Leander

You're listening to getting through together with your hosts Leander and Stas. This is a project of the Spring Up Collective. Today we're here with our new co-owner, Brianna. Brianna, thank you for joining us. How are you doing today?

Brianna

Good. Thanks so much for having me.

Stas

In this episode, we explore our embodiment practices, how we navigate risk individually and collectively, what those practices looked like in the Palestinian Solidarity encampments on campus, what the role of therapy is within our society, and how unions and worker ownership show up not only in universities but in reality TV.

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Leander

So we want to start with just, how did we meet each other? What do y'all remember about that?

Brianna

Gosh. I feel like I am maybe not alone in saying that. Like, your reputation precedes you in that I think, we have, like, a couple of sort of, like, interesting crossovers. I think the main one being that we, all attended this really weird, conference for, like, queer undergrads in the Ivy League. And so I think that that was the first space where I got to see both of you in facilitator mode and was like, oh my gosh, Stas and Lea are like, amazing at this. And so I was, you know, like a baby, like 20 or 21 and, then I, I think I'd been following along with work related to, campus sexual violence organizing and, saw that you had come out with a book called Millennial Sex and was very excited about that.

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Brianna

And so just by virtue of, like, staying on your email list, I think, I was like, alerted to the fact that you were looking to grow your team a few years ago, and knew that I needed to apply it happened to, like, also work out really well with the timing of my life. I had been working previously and then decided that I was going to grad school.

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Brianna

And so in the first year of my grad program is when I, like, originally applied for this position, as a team member, it spring up and got a chance to get to know you like properly through that. Very curious about your first impressions.

Leander

Yeah. So it's like a slow burn, right?

Brianna

Exactly.

Stas

I think, you know, it's interesting because there are these moments where you interact with people, but it doesn't totally like digest until you reflect on it later and you're like, oh, yeah, we did meet each other at that. And I definitely remember, I think you brought it up to us, but I, I remember that, Ivy queer conference very clearly, specifically because it was like the year of the whiteout where there was like a blizzard. And so such as, like presenters didn't show up and most of the presenters who were there were white. And there was this commentary that was like, oh, well, the people of color didn't come because of the snow.

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Stas

And that was like such a narrative in those universities at the time of like, the reason why there weren't more professors of color was because they just like, couldn't handle the cold. Which, of course, when you speak to these professors, it's like, yeah, no, it's not the cold, it's the culture that is so icy, let's say. And so I remember that was when we were kind of first connecting, and getting closer with dark matter.

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Stas

Alok and Janani and they wanted to kind of host protest sessions during the sessions that were canceled by the people who weren't there. And it was like, oh, like a track called whiteout that was commenting on on kind of race dynamics in the university system. And we were like, yes, we're going to host these like impromptu sessions.

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Stas

And I feel like I remember you being at one of those sessions, and they were so packed and we were all unpacking our lives and what these dynamics looks like. And I feel like that was really a critical moment, at least in my personal journey as, like popular educator of, like, I know that we had, sent in proposals for, like, you know, approved programing and had things that I had been

preparing for a while to present.

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Stas

And this was just kind of spur of the moment. What do we need to talk about? And it was so much more powerful than what we had prepared in advance. And built really this sense of community across campuses that I think was really cool. For me, the the moment that really clicked when it came to being aware of your work was that we were running a, youth fellowship in Miami a couple of years later.

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Stas

That was about using transformative justice strategies to address, gender based violence in community. And it was a six month program where we went through kind of an analysis of what, you know, what causes violence to occur, how does it show up in the queer community, consent practices and, you know, healing heart response and one of the handouts that we used in the program was a which is apology.

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Stas

And we realized later that it was from your blog, something that you had written that, that we had incorporated into our curriculum and shared the link and everything. We were going back through content at the point at which Briana was on the team, and we were like, oh my gosh, how incredible to see the ways that our paths kind of overlapped over the years.

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Stas

Yeah. So it seems seamless. It makes so much sense. And also it was just so nice.

Leander

I think also it was really nice that after you joined the team three years ago, we were in Chicago. So we're a remote team, so we don't always have, time in person together. But it was pretty soon after you joined that the two of us in sha'ina were in Chicago.

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Leander

And I love those, like liminal conference spaces as a way to connect. But I remember you came over to hang out with us. We, ordered in some food, and we're just hanging out at the pool, and that felt like a really nice way to kind of, Yeah, build a more personal relationship outside of work as well.

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Brianna

I feel like we ended up having a really good conversation about families of origin and like the ways that we're always bringing, like, the context from our even, like, early lives into the work that we're doing now. And yeah, it's nice to feel like I have collaborators who have like, so many overlaps that are kind of unexpected in terms of like just like, yeah, what are what our parents are like and the ways that that shows up in each of us and the ways that we like, you know, as college students develop our own, like, approaches or ways of being in the world that like, obviously still continue to show up in our collaboration.

Stas

Totally. I think kind of speaking of our collaborations since then, since the meet cute for me, one of the kind of core moments that to me embodies what our collaboration looks like is the, Getting Free Together book that we worked on all of last year, and it was incredibly helpful for you to be the editor of the book and kind of keep us on track with drafting and bringing all the pieces together and kind of self-publishing a book can be so anxiety inducing and so like, oh my gosh, what am I putting out there?

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Stas

And the way that you helped us to think through the tone and the consistency and the digestibility just felt like so supportive and so much more of a joyful, collaborative writing experience that I think most people's writing projects are. And I think I've been, you know, following on social media and following on your journey. And I'm always shocked by just how many articles you're publishing and how many things you're putting out there.

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Stas

Just so prolific. And it felt like a real honor to have you support in the collective journey of also putting out, writing and kind of taking some of it out of the academic space and into popular education.

Brianna

Thank you. That's so sweet to hear. I think also, I loved this collaboration. I know I was thinking about it when I was sort of like, yeah, what has my journey bandwidths spring up and like, what are the things that have felt like really standout moments in terms of being a collaborator and like getting to work on a whole book project is, I think, a really unique experience and one that I haven't had despite being like really embedded in academia. I also I'm a former spelling bee kid. And so like, I think that there's just like a part of me that loves, like, copy editing and like, just like really sort of nitpicky tasks that involves like, just like making sure that something reads smoothly. I feel like I have put a lot of energy into trying to develop as, like a writer who writes clearly and, also just love writing.

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Brianna

And so this felt like a really nice way to be like, I have some, like, passions and skills that I feel like have, specific outlet, for at least the next couple of months, which spring up where I also get to like, look at our whole body of work together. I think that was the part that felt really exciting about, like my position in the project was getting to, like, read every team members contributions to the book and think about, like, all of the projects that we've worked on over the years with clients and through public retreats and public programing, like there's so much content that I think has been developed, like largely like

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Brianna

springing out of both of your minds, that I think, like, really like fits well with itself and with, like all of the context that it's been applied to. And so, getting a chance to like, look at it as our whole body of work, while I was editing, felt like a really, like, energizing process to be a part of. And I think that I probably couldn't say that about a lot of other book projects.

Leander

Yeah, I think that it is indicative of sort of how we are as a group getting free together and just approaching work differently because as people are, I was really surprised when we described that we did write a book last year and that it was to some degree fairly painless.

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Leander

I think, was a very ambitious timeline, but, yeah, I think we talked about time Magic a lot and like, kind of spiral time in our previous episode. And I think what we do is like, develop content from what people are asking, from us. And then we workshop that over years with lots of different people to sort of see what what applies more broadly and that sort of coheres into, different, you know, topics and ways of approaching things now anchored in our organization on the accountability wheel.

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Leander

And then it did just sort of come together with your, sort of project management and like how to bring all the pieces together, mindset. That style springs. But yeah, we did literally write a book in three months. And then we, printed it and shared it with our pilot group of 30 students. Got their feedback, and then we'll put out a publicly available version later this year.

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Leander

But yeah, that just isn't how people write books.

Stas

Well, and I think we had been developing those concepts for so many years and had kind of initial texts of some of these ideas that were in some of our, classes already, like the chapter on

consent based decision making. We had frameworks of how consent shows up in organizations already written in some forms, but just having it all kind of click together, I agree, is kind of like a time magic where it's it took us three months to write the book and ten years to write the book.

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Stas

Both of those things are true. But I think I would have questioned how I saw it all fitting together so much more if we didn't have this structure. Amongst the three of us to be talking through, is what I'm thinking through. Makes sense now? This section is so much longer than the other sections. How would I resort things?

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Stas

And I think it also would have been more challenging to meaningfully weave in everyone from the collectives contributions. I think that's one of the things that I'm most proud of in the book is that, even though I kind of bottom lined writing, the majority of the content, that there really is a like, meaningful contribution from everyone on the team about a core tool that they care about, a way that they see that showing up with their clients, a way that they've translated this to the work that they do on a day to day basis.

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Stas

And I personally think that case studies, real world examples, make such a big difference in people's ability to understand kind of abstract concepts in practice.

[Ad: Is your team ready to get free together by implementing liberatory collaboration practices? Our Getting Free Together cohort program friends two times a year and brings together leaders and decision makers from different organizations to learn from, spring up and each other about how to practice sharing power and tackling conflict generativity. All participants also get access to a print copy of the Getting Free Together book. Learn more about the program today at gettingfreetogether.org.]

Leander

So we'd love to talk a little bit about what liberation looks like for us on a daily basis. Something I really admire is your, very active yoga practice. Could you tell us a little bit about how that developed and how that, supports you as a liberation worker?

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Brianna

Yes. I'm so happy you asked about this. I think, for me, as someone who never did team sports as a kid and as been I'm five foot 11, I've been five foot 11 since, like, the sixth grade. And so, like, I think I've just had this, like, sort of like large, somewhat awkward body and have felt for a really long time. Like I haven't fit in like physical spaces. Right. And I think that that's like actually

an experience that like lots of people, I'm in community with have either by virtue of having fat bodies or disabled bodies or like trans bodies. And so I think that, like for all of those reasons, I have this like acute sense of like exercise culture is not for me.

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Brianna

And despite like existing in that space for such a long amount of time, I think that yoga has proven to be this, like, practice. That doesn't have to just be about exercise or fitness, but can be about like safe and healthy body awareness and can be about like noticing pain, and also noticing, like when my body surprises me.

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Brianna

And so I think that, like, part of my sort of journey with yoga over the past, probably like 5 to 10 years has been realizing that for me, part of yoga as gifts to me is giving me like an opportunity to check in with myself every day and also to be fully disconnected from other people and just connected to myself.

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Brianna

Like, it is one of the few times during my day where I'm not multitasking. I think when I was working in New York City or in and around the criminal legal system, I would like visit clients at Rikers Island during the day, and then rush home on the subway to go to a yoga class. And like, it felt like a part of my commute out of a jail system.

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Brianna

Like to have, like, physical transition space for my body to, like, get rid of whatever I had taken on by virtue of being, like, in this jail system during the day. And then I think, you know, coming to Chicago, being a grad student here, spending a lot of time at a computer, you know, I love that a lot of my work involves, like, you know, trans moving across time and space to talk to people and connect with people.

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Brianna

But I feel like doing that in a sort of stationary way has been, like, rough on my body. So I thankfully have an amazing studio that is a block away from where I live. And it's a studio that I think is like very committed to being as much as possible based in the community that it's in.

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Brianna

And so that means that there is like discounted memberships available. And, you know, I think are really, really diverse teacher and student days that feels so different from a lot of other yoga

studios that I have felt alienated from in the past. And I think that there's also a real commitment to, like, living social justice values as a part of yoga practice at the studio.

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Brianna

And, that also feels like a really distinct part of the sort of like practice, for me at least, is thinking about how, like, my practice is not just about what I look like physically or like what is going on in my body, but also what is going on in like, my heart and how I can think about, like this is a practice that, like, preserves my heart just as much as it's preserving like my other muscles.

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Brianna

I think we've had a number of really amazing, like Palestinian solidarity yoga workshops. And, I really appreciate that the studio owner has, like, been willing to sort of handle pushback from people about that and stand by. That is something that's really important, given that there's a lot of other spaces, and especially yoga and fitness more broadly, that have just been silent about, things that have happened in the world that impact especially marginalized practitioners of yoga, for example.

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Brianna

So I'm super grateful that I have a community space to practice in that I love. I got, my teacher training at this studio last year and, I think, you know, being able to teach now, like I teach a basics class and a restorative class, and those are both, like, really nice ways to feel like I'm sort of like, welcoming people into something that matters a lot to me.

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Brianna

So, like, it's the practice of hospitality now to be like, there are a billion ways you can do this pose. And when I'm doing this pose, I don't really, you know, focus on what it looks like. I focus on. Are these muscles engaged or am I paying attention to this thing going on in my body? And so like, helping people to sort of, find whatever works for them feels like, really unique thing about yoga and the way that it can be taught.

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Brianna

That also feels really different from a lot of other movement practices. So, definitely a skill and like a tool that I'm attached to in a daily way. And also something that I think, like, I will absolutely evangelize about to everyone in my life. I think everyone that spring up has like been subjected to hearing me talk about it.

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Brianna

But, yeah, I, I feel like it's a mix of like I'm competitive with myself. I love getting into some of the sort of wonky poses, but I also, if I'm honest with myself, like really see it as like a sort of self preservation practice more than anything else. And, have grown more attached to it, like over the years as the world has gotten more and more intense.

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Leander

Yeah, that sounds really important as a care worker and like making that space for yourself, to regroup. And also, I love the connection to community, as a counterbalance to doing so much digital work. I think that's where we really started to try to get more serious about, body work and for us, more getting outside, hiking, biking.

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Leander

Once we started working full time online, it's important to really intentionally think about how you bring your body into it. And a lesson that I've been hearing more lately is because I have so much intensity in my work, in other aspects of life that I feel like I need a very, very gentle and very subtle embodiment practice.

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Leander

And it's been hard, honestly, for us to find the like. I think not the time, but the physical and emotional capacity to engage in yoga. And that is also kind of, yeah, just a, invitation to create more space, I suppose, to use, yoga framing. But I've started to, explore a qigong practice, and I think how that's specifically focused on grounding.

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Leander

And, I am optimistic that that will create more space for me to do more, meditative, like embodied work.

Stas

Yeah. It's funny, when you were sharing the towards the end, you called it, you know, a movement practice. And I had this moment where I was like, oh, yeah, movement practice, both movement of the body and like, social movements, you know, and I think that's such an interesting framing of movement practice and I think that that need to go inward, I think as people who are so community oriented educators doing work with other people, it can be sometimes a strategy to avoid building a relationship with yourself, being so focused on what can I do for others? How can I show up for other people? That's really sustainable when it's grounded in an intentional relationship with self that's extending outward. And I think when I went through one of my more intense cycles of burnout, I had this moment where I realized that some of my focus on showing up for other people was a strategy of avoiding myself was a strategy of not actually holding space for what was present in my body, in my trauma, in my

history.

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Stas

And inevitably, that was getting in the way of my ability to fully perceive other people. Right? That if you're engaging with others is a way to avoid yourself. You're almost projecting aspects of yourself onto everyone around you, and that prevents you from being able to have a genuine relationship with others. And for me, yeah, I think I did do sports very actively, and I saw so much, physical activity as competitive and as about like kind of mastering the body and control of the body.

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Stas

And so it's been really hard for me to find the right kind of embodiment practice that doesn't feel, competitive or that doesn't feel like it's about controlling my body. And so exploring the outdoors has been such a beautiful gift of living in Colorado around so much incredible outdoor environments. And we kayak quite a bit. And Lea has finally gotten me into backpacking.

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Stas

We've been, you know, going on hikes for many years. No, but I finally, you know, accepted the call to fully be, you know, self-sufficient with your little backpack out in the world. And now I've done relatively difficult backpacking trip. So I hope that I can do slightly easier ones moving forward. But it was less about getting to the destination and more about actually being present with myself and being present with my body and being present with the like great expanse. I think growing up as a city kid, the idea of being outside in nature with nothing around you and no service is something that was really deeply scary to me. And I remember this conversation that Lea and I had that was about who finds it to be really scary in a city at night, and who finds it to be really scary in completely, you know, no service, outdoor environment.

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Stas

And, you know, as a city kid, I find nature a lot scarier. But it's been partially about building a better relationship with myself that has made me able to feel comfortable in that kind of environment, which I think is really interesting.

Brianna

Yes. Yeah. I think, you know, I have a sort of similar, you've I think you've maybe both met my partner. Definitely Lea has met my partner, Sarah. In the process of, I think, like coping with the pandemic and living in New York City at the beginning of the Covid 19 crisis. I think something that's really important was figuring out how to not be surrounded by, like, the sound of sirens, and to feel like going anywhere in the city would potentially expose my whole household to this life threatening illness.

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Brianna

And, the solution to that was like renting a car and going on hikes slightly upstate in New York. And I had never been a hiker, similarly grew up like just not spending time in the country or the woods or nature at all. My mom is also the kind of person who's like, yeah, I could never, ever live in the country like that is terrifying to me.

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Brianna

And I've fully inherited that from her. So, you know, I think, in so many ways it is just about being like, how do I arrive at a place with, like, trusting myself that I know how to manage whatever comes my way in the wilderness? In the same way that I know how to manage whatever comes my way in a city, you know what I mean?

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Brianna

And, like, I think that there's whatever, you know, sort of like, presumptions go into, like, who feels safe where that are, like, obviously racialized and based on a bunch of other power structures in the world. But on another level, I think that hearing from both of you about, like, what is personal about your practices of like, being embodied, also just makes me think about how much like, trust I need to have in my own body.

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Brianna

If I'm out in the woods with my dog and my partner. You know, one of the first hikes we did, like leaving a New York City. We left so late in the day, it was like an icy cold, old winter day. The sun had started setting and we had, like, a bunch of the hike left and had to go down this, like, very rocky slope, without enough light with our dog.

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Brianna

And it was this moment of, like, really foraging, like a massive amount of trust very quickly between the two of us and our dog to be like, what are what are we contingency planning around? Who needs to hold what, who needs to get there, you know, iPhone, flashlight out and then also like, you know, two people behind us with headlamps like showed up and we were like, wow, this is like a great lesson in community care that happens to be happening outside of the city, too, that like two people who we've stumbled across are like here lighting the way for us very literally.

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Brianna

So I feel like those kinds of lessons from the wilderness are, like, so necessary. And, yeah, I feel

like maybe this is a good intention for me as well, to just continue spending time away from my, like, comfort zone of being in, you know, the city of Chicago or the city of New York or any other city...

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Brianna

I feel attached to being in.

Leander

Yeah, I love the, connection to, I think it's not so much self-reliance, but interdependence and the knowledge that things will go wrong and you can handle them. That feels like an important, like liberation practice to me. I know, I think, yeah, I was on your first backpacking trip that, you know, probably my bad. We took a scenic detour. We thought it would be nice. It rained. We got stuck. We wanted to go slower. And so we ended up staying out there another night, which was fine with our schedule. And we were able to tell our friends not to expect us back until the next day. But we ran out of food, and so we were down to eating like the little last scraps of, beef jerky or whatever in our in our bag.

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Leander

And then, all of these beautiful porcini mushrooms had sprung up, and we were right at the altitude where they grow and they're best eaten immediately after they, emerge. And so we literally were like, let's, stop and prepare these. And there's like, like the mushrooms to, like, come up. So plentifully that there really was, like, so much more than we could eat, you know, and we were up there like, telling other hikers we were like, yeah, you know, you can eat this.

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Leander

And they were like, yeah, okay, that looks disgusting. I'm not gonna eat that. But, I think that's where it was also really great that we had, gone on these, we had gone to the Telluride Mushroom Festival and gone on these forays with, amateur mixologists who, again, are self-taught. It's, kind of amateur driven field and passion, and they, you know, show you how to make correct identifications and then also how to prepare and eat them.

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Leander

And, porcini is, yeah, one of the best ones that you can find out there. And so that was like, again, it's such a, roller coaster of like, are we okay? Are we not okay? We've got us there are there are other people out here we could ask for help. We did run out of water.

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Leander

That was an actual problem. But we did. If we did make it back okay.

Stas

That makes it seem like we did not prepared. We did. And the dog never ran out of water. We always had water for him, and we only ran out of water. Crucial. And, but I think something that stands out to me is, you know, I love mushrooms.

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Stas

I think the mycology community is so interesting. And it is, like you said, a community that's driven by amateurs. And and I really learned a lot about that word from the mycology community. That amateur comes out of like love or a more or, you know, this love of something is the drive for it as opposed to the idea of it.

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Stas

And I think that I always associated the label of amateur with kind of a negative association of, oh, well, you don't really know what you're doing. Instead of the idea that your passion comes out of a love for the, you know, the mushroom or whatever it is that you're doing rather than through, just like a formal academic study.

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Stas

And then, you know, specifically in mycology, amateurs have been the driving force for lots of findings within mycology, which I think is really cool. Something that stood out to me from what you shared was that was the connection point of safety planning and risk assessment, which feels like such a important and valuable tool in organizing and doing, you know, direct action and as well as supporting people who are directly impacted by violence, whether that's family violence or, state violence, that that need to figure out what are the actual risks, not so that you can be risk avoided, but so that you can be intentional, navigating the risks that are around you,

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Stas

I think is such a core skill to being an organizer. And I know one of the things that I've been really curious to ask you more about is your work in the encampment and kind of what did that look like? What daily practices were showing up in that environment? How did you, as a care worker show up in that environment?

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Stas

What practices did you hope to see more of, or how could the skills and everyday practices that were existing in the encampment on campus translate into the kind of liberated world that we're trying to move towards?

Brianna

I love this question so much. I think, you know, there's a few things that come to mind. One is that, the encampment at the University of Chicago was relatively short lived.

00:33:15:10 - 00:33:53:20

Brianna

It was, roughly a week. And over that time, I was just constant struck by, like, how much the divide between the university and the, like, rest of the South side of Chicago started to fall away. And I think that that alone is like one of the ways that this, like, logic around risk and managing risk and safety, that is really advanced by the university largely to sort of like continue this divide between people who are affiliated with the university and people who aren't, and it ultimately, like, serves the university's interests.

00:33:53:20 - 00:34:17:20

Brianna

And so I think like that like, veil falling from everyone's eyes was really helpful in the, in the course of the encampment, partially because a ton of community members who weren't affiliated with the university were the ones coming in and giving us, like, street medic trainings and helping us understand, like, how to respond to police violence in particular, like very concrete skills based ways.

00:34:17:20 - 00:34:41:16

Brianna

And so, I think as a care worker, the role that I felt really equipped to play was a role based in, helping people to do some amount of mental and emotional debriefing and peer support. I think that, you know, having a really basic, sort of framework for debriefing. And, you know, I wrote this up on a Google doc that, I'm really happy was shared across other encampments as well.

00:34:42:12 - 00:35:14:09

Brianna

But sort of a broad script of like, here's the basics of how you can check in with one another. Here's the basics of having a safety plan and the value of having it on paper, as opposed to on your phone, which might get taken by the cohorts, you know, and here's strategies that are intended to allow for less of a reliance on one person with a specialized like degree or license and instead on, the idea that we can all cultivate these practices and that no one has to be the only expert in the space.

00:35:14:09 - 00:35:33:01

Brianna

And so, I think that those all felt like really important lessons that, like, we're able to take care of ourselves and we're able to take care of each other, and there's not someone who we have to wait for or ask permission to in order to do that kind of like being responsive to each other's mental and emotional needs.

00:35:33:12 - 00:35:58:20

Brianna

Felt like a really important learning, especially like thinking about all of the different people from different corners of the university who came together in a way that we would not have otherwise. I think, you know, the structure of the university is so based in divisions and hierarchies. You know, like there are literally like divisions, depending on what you study and there are disciplines, you know, and these words like I think hold a lot of other like contextual meanings.

00:35:58:20 - 00:36:32:20

Brianna

Right. But I think in the context of being with people who also were very motivated to challenge this university and its investments and silences, surrounding genocide, felt like this really cool opportunity of being like, we all have this in common. There's probably other things we have in common. We're learning what those things are because we're contending with so many different needs, demands, crises on a daily basis, you know, and being able to coordinate with people who are doing things like food and security and, first aid.

00:36:33:02 - 00:36:59:22

Brianna

And also, you know, one of the most important functions at the camp was having like a welcome tent where people could come and have a conversation and learn what was needed and learn, you know, how to get their own needs met. I think like having that kind of like informal intake set up, in like the least professionalized, least formalized way felt like such an important part of what made the camp grow and what made the camp sustain itself for as long as it did.

00:37:01:02 - 00:37:26:06

Brianna

So I think those are all things that felt really important. I think, you know, we have like things that we certainly could do better. One being that I think, we didn't have a really solid way of developing shared language around risk. And so we had a system of, you know, people who identified as red, yellow or green levels of risk, depending on how comfortable they were, with the possibility for rest at a given moment.

00:37:26:06 - 00:37:47:04

Brianna

And I know that this was a strategy used at other encampments, too. But I think that when you start to sort of drill down on like, what are the gradations, you know, like a ton of people, like suddenly in a moment where there was potentially going to be a raid where like, well, I'm actually somewhere in between, like red and yellow, maybe I'm orange or like, you know, I'm between like, green and yellow.

00:37:47:04 - 00:38:06:12

Brianna

And so, like, I think that one of the things that certainly like coming out of this I've thought a lot about is like, how can we do a better job of communicating specifics around risk and having that, you know, in spring of terms, shared language and framework, to communicate about something that is really subjective and specific.

00:38:06:12 - 00:38:26:17

Brianna

Right. I think that like when I encountered people who were undergraduates, I was thinking about the fact that they maybe are trying to enter the formal, like, work place in the coming years and haven't had that experience and are worried about being shut out from, like, the labor market by virtue of having a diploma withheld or an arrest record.

00:38:26:17 - 00:39:08:00

Brianna

You know, that's a really different positioning than someone who's a grad worker who's, you know, in an employment relationship with the university or an adjunct faculty member who's also probably employed not just by the University of Chicago, but by another university as well. And so I think, like there were so many nuances like that, there was, you know, the added layer of nuance around who is in university housing, who is employed by the university as their primary source of income, who also has immigration consequences to worry about if their student status changes or their arrest, influences the likelihood of being deportable, like all of these kinds of nuances around risk, I think are

00:39:08:00 - 00:39:38:16

Brianna

things that I would love to develop, like a bigger and deeper shared vocabulary around. And so I think, you know, the daily practices of carry that felt useful were debriefs and also building a really strong referral network for, local and Illinois based therapists to plug in and offer low cost or free sessions to students who are really encountering a lot of intense both like direct experiences and also witnessing of, you know, a lot of violence from Zionists and also from police officers on campus.

00:39:39:20 - 00:40:04:11

Brianna

And so lots of successes, but also, as usual, lots of things that I think I'm still thinking about and trying to learn from. And, I feel lucky that there are other people at the university who want to also be thinking and learning around things like risk. I'm teaching a course on risk next quarter here, and I'm really excited that I'll get a chance to dig into it with master's students in social work to be like, what is this concept?

00:40:04:13 - 00:40:46:15

Brianna

Why is it present in our profession, and what do we do to make it less harmful in the way that

we operationalize it?

Leander

Yeah. Thank you for sharing and thank you for doing that work. I think, not being affiliated with any specific campus, it was a really exciting and vibrant movement to witness. It definitely kind of brought me back to Occupy Wall Street and sort of some of that, like campus based, mutual aid and community, like bringing community education into higher education and sort of what feels radically different about that.

00:40:46:17 - 00:41:24:11

Leander

And why do things like that branch off from these really rigid, hierarchical, you know, professionalized, spaces? And I loved the connection you drew. Also, about bringing the community and community education in does break down that binary that the campus has of like, we're all safe, professional intellectuals. The community is why we have campus cops and why we have like, all these, you know, safety warnings and things.

00:41:24:18 - 00:41:58:18

Leander

And like, what does it look like to be in a community first and foremost and then to, have your employment or education, as part of a community and not the other way around, having community stemming from your side of education or employment, like, I think so many of us do. Yeah. I think you also spoke about bringing some of your, practices as a therapist into that space.

00:41:59:15 - 00:42:23:18

Leander

I would love to see more of that. I think that's a conversation we have sometimes with therapists of, outside of the one on one therapy relationship. What does it look like? You know, we have a crisis of people not being able to access therapy or not being able to access the type of therapy or the type of therapist that they're looking for, really long waitlists.

00:42:24:15 - 00:42:53:17

Leander

And then also the limits of the one on one relationship for meeting what can be, you know, needs rooted in a lack of community. And so, yeah, I guess...

Stas

As well as the role of social workers and therapists as an extension of the state when it comes to mandatory reporting and surveillance, and when we position that as the only way to get care and support that seeing kind of agents who are verified by the state as the only way that we can get care and support within our communities.

00:42:53:22 - 00:43:41:23

Stas

I think there's some really big questions and faultlines around the role of therapy within our society, and how it's like a placeholder for something that should be able to exist within our communities.

Leander

Yeah. So, you, you have been a therapist, you teach people who would like to be therapists. What would you say about, sort of like the role of therapy in this moment and like why might sound like I know a conversation that you are having recently is around, this idea that everyone should be in therapy and the idea that some people have this internalized narrative that, oh, I should be working on myself, I should be in therapy.

00:43:42:07 - 00:44:41:08

Leander

But I don't really have a sense of like how different types of therapy can meet different needs. And so or who else they might talk to. Yeah. So yeah, I'd love to hear your thoughts on that. Just like what what role does therapy fill in? In the modern ecosystem of of self-care. Yes.

Brianna

Oh my gosh, great question. I think it's also a super relevant question in the context of, like thinking about, you know, the difference between therapy versus like coaching or any of these other sort of like, resources that I think people have sort of creatively developed, things like peer support relationships or like, peer support groups. Right. And so, I think as someone who's practiced as a clinician, the main concern that I have with the idea that, is advanced of, like, everyone should be in therapy, is that so often I think the thing that we need is, like, not therapy.

00:44:41:08 - 00:45:10:20

Brianna

I think, you know, the word placeholder is a really smart one to label, like what therapy has become when we talk about everyone needing to be in therapy. Because I think that in the context of my own clinical work, when I was a clinician working mostly with people who were mandated by the court to therapy, was the sense that, like, if you at all feel like someone is taking away your choice or coercing you or pushing you or forcing you into doing therapy, therapy immediately becomes like, not effective.

00:45:11:13 - 00:45:32:00

Brianna

I think that that was the role, like professionally, where I felt least effective every day. I had like a handful of clients who were, like, very motivated to pursue this on their own. Most of them were not mandated by anybody to do treatment. And so in those relationships, I felt like I was doing things with people because they wanted to be doing that.

00:45:32:00 - 00:45:55:18

Brianna

But I think in a world where we want to maximize, choice and we want to maximize agency and we want to maximize freedom for people, pushing everyone into therapy feels like a myth. I do think that for people who want access to therapy, there has to be a lot more done to figure out, like, what is therapy mean when you say you want access to it?

00:45:55:19 - 00:46:16:10

Brianna

What is it that you actually want access to? Do you want someone who's going to talk with you once a week? Do you want an opportunity to reflect on the past and the way that it's impacting you in the present? Are you looking for specific skills that help you to sort of plan for a future self that's better equipped to deal with this problem or this problem?

00:46:16:12 - 00:46:45:00

Brianna

And so for me, one of the things that I think stands out as like a more useful intervention or question rather than like, should everyone be in therapy, is like, what are the things that people hope to get out of therapy that could be met through therapy or something else? Right. And I think the answer to that question is sometimes, you know, in lieu of therapy, someone needs, like a physical practice that's going to help them to be grounded in their everyday life.

00:46:45:21 - 00:47:05:07

Brianna

Or in lieu of therapy. People need loving relationships that are based on accountability, right? I think people sometimes look to their therapist as people who help to, like, encourage them to take accountability or support them in taking accountability. I don't feel like that's a role that really needs to be held by like a professional or with a mental health degree.

00:47:05:16 - 00:47:34:05

Brianna

And I think sometimes actually therapists who lack training in conflict or harm, are like not the right people to be the one supporting someone in an accountability based relationship. And so, for me, I think one of the things that really stands out about, the way that therapy has been positioned in our like, wellness ecosystem is that it really starts to become this Band-Aid for, a bunch of problems in the world.

00:47:34:18 - 00:47:58:06

Brianna

And it's a Band-Aid that very much not by accident is individual. Right. And so I think that when we look at, like, liberation psychology or, the work of sort of liberatory education, or liberatory consciousness building, like, or popular education, like, these are all strategies that are based on a collective as opposed to based on the individual.

00:47:58:08 - 00:48:33:11

Brianna

And so it feels like therapy is an outlier for a reason. Often when we think about therapy as something that happens at the individual level, or we think about therapy as something that's intended to promote individual resilience. Yeah. So I think that, you know, like the main thing, about therapy being this sort of individualistic, frame for healing or addressing problems that exists in the way that we relate to one another or the world, often is just missing something about the sort of like communal or collective impact.

00:48:34:14 - 00:49:15:16

Brianna

And I think that so much of therapy is based in this like model of pathology without a lot of attentiveness to the way that like, disability justice like encourages us to think differently about what it is that we're hoping to accomplish in our, like, not only healing but also, our organizing and our accountability. Right. And so, you know, I am really lucky to have worked with a therapist when I lived in Boston who's, coined the model, the Liberation Health Model, which I think does an amazing job of really bringing in, individual organizational, institutional structural dynamics in the way that cases are formulated.

00:49:15:21 - 00:49:43:05

Brianna

And also for that reason, I think prioritizes, interventions that aren't just happening on the individual, like, identified client way. You know, this is a therapist who I would run into at protests or rallies. And so I think, like having that kind of relationship with, caring professional when I was, living there and in my early 20s, felt like a really important model for what therapy could look like outside of the traditional frame.

00:49:43:07 - 00:50:07:00

Brianna

And so I feel like when people say, you know, I need everyone to be in therapy, like, it's worth drilling down into what they mean by therapy. And also for us to all be able to think more expansively about what is therapeutic or what is healing, or what is promoting accountability or what is allowing people to grow in safe and healthy ways.

00:50:07:16 - 00:50:31:11

Brianna

Beyond just the sort of assumption that therapy is the place for all of that has to happen. And therapists are the gatekeepers of that particular kind of work.

Leander

Yeah, I think it's amazing that there's less stigma in talking about mental health, and it's great when anyone is willing to try something new that like, will support their development as a

person.

00:50:32:13 - 00:50:59:18

Leander

But I do think that there is some danger in sort of seeing the therapist as an outside authority who isn't part of your daily life, but would somehow, have like the corrective piece for you, or the idea that their viewpoint is what's correct or supercedes, like you said, the feedback and asks for accountability that you're getting from the people in your daily life.

00:51:02:06 - 00:51:24:19

Leander

And then, I mean, I grew up in a pretty religious environment, and I think that for me, there is also some sort of like spiritual need that can be met by like almost wanting to confess and like, share, like what's been burdening you, but with someone who is under the veil of confidentiality. And so I think, I don't know.

00:51:24:20 - 00:52:08:05

Leander

Yeah. Those are just sort of things that come up for me, with how I've seen people relate to therapy. More recently, now that it has been more normalized. And I definitely agree, I think that I, and I think both of us feel a lot more drawn to group work and, liberation psychology based group work, which can look a lot more like, the sort of community education and, community building and organizing work that we, that we have been talking about, well, again, if you know, I was saying that if something does help you absolutely use it.

00:52:08:05 - 00:52:36:08

Leander

And like, that's amazing. And, I don't want to I'm not questioning any individual. I think that I'm more questioning this trend that I see that it's like more morally virtuous, to be in therapy or that therapy should be an unending process, without like, specific goals or meeting a specific.

Brianna

Yes. Totally. Agreed.

Leander

Is there anything else you'd like to add about this?

00:52:36:08 - 00:53:06:08

Stas

I think there's an infinite number of things that I'd like to add on the topic of therapy, but I feel like we'll continue having these conversation and this is a good foundation. And, I do think that credentials, again, are a placeholder for, an indication of skill and that there are other ways to identify those skills in peers and other people in your network without it being tied to a specific

credential or license.

00:53:06:20 - 00:53:45:02

Stas

And that honestly, sometimes when people hear this person is, you know, a licensed therapist, they don't ask, follow up questions about what is your approach and what you know. How do you think about therapy, what kind of you know, what practice of therapy are you grounded in and that that can actually indicate so many different types of things that again, it becomes a placeholder for something and we don't inquire further into either those who have those credentials or those who don't have those credentials, but might actually be better positioned to help us meet the needs that we're looking for.

00:53:45:04 - 00:54:08:17

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00:54:08:19 - 00:54:34:01

Leander

Okay, so one other thing that we wanted to speak with you about is, you know, it's the it's the year of the co-op. People are really thinking about labor in exciting and different ways. You've been a union organizer. You've been a self-employed contractor. You've, you know, engaged in this sort of labor in lots of different formations.

00:54:34:01 - 00:55:03:11

Leander

And now you are a co-owner of this cooperative. I'd love to hear more about just like I think for us, it feels like a very binary way of relating to labor. But yeah, just like what's shifting for you as you move into this new way of working and I guess. Yeah. How does that feel different than being a grad student or union organizer or contractor?

00:55:03:13 - 00:55:36:00

Brianna

Great questions. I think that for me, part of what, is surprising about this is that I really never would have thought of myself as someone who would own or co-own a business. You know, I think that that is like, part of the sort of surprise of getting more and more involved in spring up is feeling like, oh, yes, like there are people here who have skills related to how this whole thing works under capitalism that feel really important to know, and that I could probably learn a lot from.

00:55:36:00 - 00:55:56:18

Brianna

And so I think, you know, on the first level, like part of what feels true about, being a member owner is that I'm learning a lot and that I really love that, and that I think there's some synchronicity that's possible when you're in a formation of member owners who all know each other well enough and have worked with each other for a while and all have different things we're bringing.

00:55:56:18 - 00:56:25:11

Brianna

Right. Like I feel like, you know, my specific area in being a movement ecologist who works a lot with folks through our blue light platform, is, like, so well-suited to the way that I exist in the world as someone trying to bring people resources and be responsive to specific questions and needs people have. And, also, yeah, like getting to do the back end of, a learning platform as someone who does a lot of teaching and making course websites and my day job feels totally appropriate for me to be working on.

00:56:25:11 - 00:56:57:22

Brianna

And so I think in that regard, one of the things that feels, really nice about being in this formation of a co-op is seeing, all of our, like, collective well-being as bound up in one another's, like, very tangibly through this particular financial and economic, formation. And so I think that that's unique relative to the way that I've existed as a worker in a lot of other contexts, as a grad worker, you know, the University of Chicago would not run without grad work for labor.

00:56:58:06 - 00:57:37:09

Brianna

Grad workers teach, most of the courses at this university. Grad workers also are responsible for managing most of the research projects that bring in revenue for the university. And, you know, I think that in this particular like moment of extended crisis under a Trump administration that's threatened a lot of federal funding for universities doing research, it's even more clear, like where and how grad workers labor is a part of the equation and that and so, you know, I think part of the struggle of union organizing graduate workers was really having to exist in this oppositional relationship with our employer, the university.

00:57:37:22 - 00:58:03:13

Brianna

Partially because the employer that we work for didn't want to recognize us as workers. And so, I think that when you're doing union organizing, there's like a real need to figure out how to organize labor separate from management and how to be in a strategic adversarial relationship there. Because that's the way that you secure protections, that's the way that you secure the rights and benefits and the solid first contract.

00:58:03:15 - 00:58:33:10

Brianna

That's the way that you do negotiation and push your employer, the people with the financial and other resources, to, like, relate to you as someone who's entitled to particular benefits. And so, I think that, like moving outside of that frame and also moving outside of the like flying solo frame of doing independent contract work to be in this relationship of, like mutual recognition of need and strength feels like such an important shift for me.

00:58:34:14 - 00:58:57:05

Brianna

Especially because I think the longer that I've been embedded within academia, the more I've become, like, confident in my intuition that I don't want to devote all of my time or energy to an institution that's based in hierarchy and has to be based on this kind of adversarial relationship. Of me as a worker versus this university infrastructure as my employer.

00:58:58:08 - 00:59:20:17

Brianna

So I'm really grateful for the co-op model that I've learned a lot about. Because I think that, you know, it's hard, like, we all have responsibilities that are sometimes offloaded, right? That's the trade off of being a worker versus, you know, also being someone who has to manage labor and output and resources and think about outcomes and finances.

00:59:21:12 - 01:00:03:01

Brianna

But it's the kind of hard that feels very rewarding, not the kind of heart that feels extractive. I think like existing under capitalism strategically, feels like the way that I would describe where we've all landed, like we've hacked some aspect of this to be at least able to, like, have frank conversations with each other and be responsive to one another in ways that I don't think we would be if we were sort of bound up in a nonprofit structure or a corporation structure, or any other form of like labor and management relationships with one another, that, like, constrained the choices we could make, as collaborators with one another.

01:00:03:15 - 01:00:34:11

Brianna

So I feel really lucky to be in like a co-op model, mainly because I think it, it just implies a huge amount of trust in one another and trust in, the work that we're all doing. Like, I trust our work so much. I trust the things that we're thinking and dreaming. And I also just trust you both and all of the other, like, collaborators in our in our collective, to be honest with each other and to also have really important insights, and things that I haven't thought of that, that we get to sort of share with one another in our spaces together.

01:00:34:17 - 01:01:09:17

Leander

Awesome. Well, we're. Yeah. So excited to have you as a co-owner and, to deepen our collaboration in this way. I think you bring so much, to this collective and to our ecosystem and

to our students, and clients and I think also like, as co-founder, as we've been talking with, we met with, some co-op organizers here in Denver yesterday and we were like, yeah, I feel really unburdened as a founder.

01:01:09:17 - 01:02:00:08

Leander

And hopefully that doesn't come from like having offloaded burdens. But I think something we talk a lot about, a lot is shared labor. And that is so hard to actually feel in a group, especially in a hierarchical workplace, there are inherent adversarial things, as you've described and in a nonprofit that can sometimes look like workers overextending themselves in service of the mission, or metrics that are externally set by funders or board members in a for profit, entity that can look like extracting as much value out of the workers, to benefit shareholders who aren't even involved in management.

01:02:01:06 - 01:02:32:10

Leander

And then management is kind of a buffer in between those, those forces, both of those structures have kind of constant internal conflict as a norm. And so I think so many of us learn this adversarial way of relating to our collaborators and closest, workplace relationships. And I see that carrying over into our ability to organize together and be together, even in friendships and other relationships.

01:02:33:09 - 01:03:02:03

Leander

I think it is a bit underdeveloped as a skill for people to say we want the same things. We have shared values. You're not my opposition. And yet we're going to have different interests. We have different points of view. How can we be collaborative in that and strengthen each other, not be adversarial? And I think that is, something we've worked a lot on building.

01:03:02:12 - 01:03:44:20

Leander

Something that I do feel the presence of now more than ever in the history of spring up. And something we really want to work with other co-ops and, mutual aid structures and organizing formations to realize because, yeah, I just I would love to see, especially in this time. People being more on each other's side and spending a lot of our energy and resources battling our collaborators and comrades and instead, yeah, putting our energy towards achieving the totally we want to see.

01:03:44:22 - 01:04:05:18

Brianna

Yes. It's also just, you know, it's one of those things where, like, being a part of this co-op has also led me to just see co-ops everywhere and also feel like those conversations are like sort of organically starting in other places in my life. You know, you've heard me talk extensively about

this yoga studio, and it's a yoga studio that's managed by someone who has a full time job.

01:04:07:07 - 01:04:44:13

Brianna

And like, has that cushioning. And also, you know, I think in her own sort of assessment of the finances, it's like really invested in saying, like, there are a ton of teachers here who care so much about the work that we're doing and also have past teaching experiences and relevant experiences from our professional lives. And it would be really amazing to formalize a structure that allows for like the decision making and the labor to not just rest with like the one owner, but with multiple owners who are also instructors, who know the needs of our students, who come in with like expertise from other aspects of our lives.

01:04:44:13 - 01:05:09:11

Brianna

Right. And so, I'm really excited at the possibility of like, you know, having multiple cooperative ownership, stakes in my life in the future. Just because I think that it feels like the most rewarding way to be a worker, because of how much I'm recognized as someone who has things to contribute beyond just like labor.

01:05:09:12 - 01:05:34:02

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01:05:35:18 - 01:06:03:14

Stas

So that brings us to the final segment of our show, what you're watching, which is our engagement with media and imagination and how things that we've been engaging with, whether it's, TV shows, movies, books, video games have been inspiring us and challenging us to think more about what's possible and how we translate these daily practices into what we're envisioning, moving towards, or moving away from.

01:06:03:16 - 01:06:37:10

Stas

So I'm curious, what have you been watching?

Brianna

Oh my gosh, you all have heard me talk about this before, but I am obsessed with unrivaled. Unrivaled is a women's basketball league that is running in the WNBA off season. And it is a league that is essentially worker owned. I think that that's like one of the things that obviously like, helps me to think about where and how co-ops are showing up everywhere for me right now is like, oh, wow.

01:06:37:10 - 01:07:02:18

Brianna

Like, this is a league that is doing things really differently than the WNBA. Why is that? Why are they so different? Why does this seem to be so much better for a lot of the players? Oh wow. It was founded by two WNBA players, who are like the two sort of core owners, Breanna Stewart, who is from my hometown, and also Nafisa Collier.

01:07:03:10 - 01:07:25:22

Brianna

So there are two, like, standout WNBA stars. They're both parents. And I think they were both teammates. Maybe, don't quote me on that, but I think, you know, basically out of this sort of like close relationship formation that happens when your coworkers are your teammates and, you know, of course, also a bunch of them, like, date each other.

01:07:26:19 - 01:07:50:21

Brianna

There's just like a lot of, like, cross-pollination of like, oh, you're, you know, having all of these issues in your workplace. What if we, like, eliminated some of those issues, right. And so at the beginning of unrivaled, one of the things that I think, was part of the narrative of how this formed is the fact that WNBA players are so under compensated, especially relative to like, NBA players.

01:07:50:21 - 01:08:12:07

Brianna

I was going to say, NBA, the men's NBA, there's so under compensated that they, for the most part, on their off season, have to travel overseas to play. And I think what that leads to is like time away from families on holidays. I think this is also why Brittney Griner was in Russia and was detained.

01:08:12:21 - 01:08:39:11

Brianna

Like, wouldn't have been in Russia if it weren't for the fact that, she needed more money, on the off season. Right. I think also like the practice, facilities for any of these WNBA teams are really kind of abysmal. Like, the Connecticut Sun has to practice at, like, a community center gym. And their practice like, one day was cut short because the two year old was having a birthday party.

01:08:39:13 - 01:09:07:00

Brianna

And so, like, there are all of these, like, truly abysmal conditions of, like, wow. Like, you really expect professionals who've devoted their entire adult lives to this practice and are so talented and have, like, continued to put in so much work to this, such that they can't hold other forms of

employment. Right. Like maybe they can support themselves with like a little bit of adjunctive coaching for a college team, but like for most of them, this is their career for the time being.

01:09:08:03 - 01:09:38:10

Brianna

The fact that they don't have access to like, their own practice facilities is embarrassing, or the fact that these players have to figure out how to negotiate or arrange their finances so that they can have kids, but then also that they have to juggle childcare responsibilities while they're traveling, or figure out how to manage things with their partners when they get treated from one team to another means that, like all of these strains on who they are as workers are things that, like the WNBA as a league, is not paying attention to.

01:09:38:21 - 01:10:00:03

Brianna

But that unrivaled by virtue of being started by two workers gets to think about, and so, you know, through a bunch of really creative partnerships with, for example, Sephora, which I love, they have access to a glam room so that they, like, have all of their cosmetic needs taken care of before they get to, like, go out on the court.

01:10:00:15 - 01:10:21:05

Brianna

But they also have unlimited access to, like, vetted, childcare, which is such a huge part of what allows all of these players to go to Miami and play. And I think that, you know, when I'm thinking about all of the other ways that they, get to, like, benefit from this new model of working together.

01:10:21:11 - 01:10:41:23

Brianna

The other thing that stands out is just pay, right? Like, I think that the two member owners at the core of this, and if Lisa and Brianna are like both players who've really stood out and been able to make a living for themselves in the W, but they're also so aware of how many young players there are, and players who've been at this for years.

01:10:42:19 - 01:11:15:08

Brianna

And also maybe don't feel like they can retire because this is their like only source of income that they've devoted, like their whole 20s and part of their 30s, too. And so, the I think the minimum contract for any player in this league is something like 200 K. And so the fact that they're able to like, really recoup a lot of the expenses and like, you know, life disruptions that come with being a player who has to uproot your whole life, go overseas, uproot your whole life when you get traded, spend most of a season traveling.

01:11:15:08 - 01:11:36:06

Brianna

Right. Like all of these costs, I think are really accounted for in the way that these players have been hired on to the league. And their facilities are amazing. And, you know, it's very cute. It's very like summer camp vibes. They, have like, you know, cooking TikToks that they'll do together or, they're always in the gym making TikTok dances together.

01:11:37:00 - 01:12:02:08

Brianna

And so it's just like a very wholesome vibe, like, oh, right. Like all of the things that really sucked about our previous employment conditions are things that we directly responded to and found the resources to allocate because like we as workers know what we need best. And we're going to be responsive to the things that we've seen or that we've seen our coworkers have to deal with in the course of this, like, you know, pilot experiment.

01:12:03:20 - 01:12:26:02

Brianna

And so it's gone really well, they're in the middle of a one on one, competition right now. And so there's, like, something magical about seeing all of the world's best women's basketball players, like, in one on one games with each other, just like, duking it out. They're all so talented. And so smart and so just, like, captivating.

01:12:26:02 - 01:12:49:04

Brianna

Like, I feel like for so many of them, like, you get to sort of know them as people and not just as players. And, to know people's backstories and know the benefits that they're getting out of a league that's experimenting with like, a worker owned model is so exciting. And I think also has a ton of radical potential in the in the realm of sports where athletes have not been considered workers for so long.

01:12:50:06 - 01:13:30:18

Leander

Well, I'm, I'm sold as a very, reluctant middle school basketball player. And what you're describing, sounds really, really interesting. And is it like a docu series where they're kind of talking and following them throughout their lives, or is it literally just watching them play basketball?

Brianna

It's watching them play. But then there's also, you know, this whole deal with HBO Max that they were able to get where, a lot of the commentators or commentators who, like, used to be teammates with people on these little teams, I should say also, they play, you know, three versus three instead of full teams.

01:13:30:18 - 01:13:47:04

Brianna

And so there's all of these little mini teams and they all have cute names and logos. And you know that like some of these people have like shown up and, you know, oh, wait, all of a sudden we're in need of a player because these people have injuries. Wait, so-and-so is here with her fiancé, who's also an amazing player.

01:13:47:04 - 01:14:26:19

Brianna

Let's hire her on as a relief player. And so it's this very like sort of reality TV coded experience just by virtue of the players social media presences. But then I think also, like the commentators themselves do such a good job of like really helping everybody who's watching understand these players as like people with lives, which is like the main reason that I watch as someone who also has middle school basketball trauma, I'm like much happier to just be like, you know, a spectator who can appreciate this sport as really challenging, but also who's, like, so invested in all of these people's like, inner inner worlds and lives.

01:14:26:21 - 01:15:04:04

Stas

I love that I think that it's interesting because there's this interesting juxtaposition in what we've been watching recently between reality TV, which feels connected to what you're talking about, where the divide between the personal and work is so, minimized because who you are as a person becomes your job. And even when this season's over, there are all of these podcasts and the social media impacts that we've specifically been watching real Housewives of Salt Lake City, which is a bizarre show, let me say, really very bizarre compared to other, reality TV.

01:15:04:09 - 01:15:33:13

Stas

But the, reunion just came out for the most recent season, and it's so interesting to see just the self-awareness of watching your own life back and seeing moments between your friends when you weren't there, and how that was translated to you in the moment through gossip and kind of the reflection of that is just so fascinating. And then the other show that we've been watching really closely is severance about the, like, really harsh divide between the workplace self and the personal self.

01:15:33:17 - 01:15:52:12

Stas

Oh, so it's almost the opposite of a reality star that like has. Created kind of across their whole life. Yeah. Yeah. And I think what's really interesting about I mean there's a lot of things that are really interesting about severance. I could rant about it forever and I'm sure it'll come up on another episode as well because there's so many interesting connection points.

01:15:52:14 - 01:16:14:16

Stas

But I think this idea that. So in severance, the individual worker has, surgery that, separates all of their memories of the internal self versus the external self, and they call them the mini and the Audi and the any is the work self who doesn't have any memories of their family, where they came from, where they are.

01:16:14:16 - 01:16:52:14

Stas

They just exist in this kind of maze of of underground workplace that has no windows. And then once they go up the elevator, they become their outie, and their outie has no memory of what they spent the day doing. And it's kind of position does this idea of, you know, wouldn't boundaries be better where what if you were it, impacted by all the stress of your daily life, of your, daily work within your personal life, and you could be unburdened in your relationship with your children and all of this stuff and the any wouldn't have to be distracted by all the stressors at home and could just be, you know, doing their

01:16:52:14 - 01:17:36:18

Stas

work effectively. But functionally, the enemy is incarcerated and it has no existence outside of work and has no memory of what the sky is like. And, it's kind of in this childlike position where they don't have kind of the socialization and developmental references to recognize what's harmful either. And it's just a very interesting concept, that I've been returning to a lot around this question of sustainability within work and how much boundaries are as the solution, and that I think it is important to be able to compartmentalize and, kind of have your, your separation, but also to be able to be your whole self across work and personal, but maybe not to

01:17:36:18 - 01:18:24:15

Stas

the point where your personal life is your job of a reality TV show. I think there's a lot there, but maybe we can just like put a pin in that have further conversations. Future. And that's really what I think we've been reflecting on and what we've been watching recently.

Brianna

Yes. Yeah. I think also I, I'm assuming we're all traitors watchers. And I will just say very briefly that I think the one thing about traitors that feels so fascinating to me is that, this is a show of reality stars. It's a show that's based in, like, people who have sort of, by virtue of being some version of themselves, made a career. But then it's also a show that, like, invites everybody to participate in something that's not real.

01:18:25:19 - 01:18:48:21

Brianna

You know, like, and that there's this weird laying on of a very intentionally, like, false pretense of, you know, some of these people are here very actively deceiving you intentionally or very actively manipulating you intentionally. And so, like the fantasy in the real real in quotes like start

to come together in this, in this context.

01:18:48:21 - 01:19:22:23

Brianna

And, you know, I think Alan Cumming does an amazing job of like, really cultivating a fantasy. And also serving looks constantly. But I think one thing that really struck me about a past season of creators, it's just like, how much? Also, in that context, this is, you know, my spring up brain jumping out how much in that context as well, like people's assumptions that are totally byproducts of like, the world as opposed to anything that you're seeing in front of you, start to play into like the way that people make assessments about who's lying and who's not.

01:19:22:23 - 01:19:48:04

Brianna

Right. Like one of the things that felt so important for, I think, peppermint, who's been at RuPaul's Drag Race contestant and is this powerful trans woman, who's done a ton of amazing organizing and activism. She was a competitor. And, there was just a huge amount in, like, the first episode of a past trader season on, like, scrutinizing her behavior.

01:19:49:05 - 01:20:27:22

Brianna

And I think especially at a time where, like, so much of the sort of rhetoric around trans people in the United States is based in, like, deception or this like fear of deception and manipulation, that gets projected onto trans people. Like one of the things that she said following the season, was that so much of what people were scrutinizing could be seen as this very obvious outgrowth of like, you know, once again, the world beyond reality TV creeping in, even in this world that's like a fantasy world where people don't necessarily know each other or their backgrounds or have any context of how people of maybe, you know, existed in the world

01:20:27:22 - 01:20:58:22

Brianna

outside of this game. And it's a game, where people are taking on personas. There's still like this level of carryover that like, people are coming in with transphobic assumptions and people are coming in with like, racist assumptions. And those things clearly play out like every single season of The Traders. There's like some sort of plot line that I can identify as being like, racialized or gendered and, you know, weirdly, this is a show where I'm not deterred by noticing those things.

01:20:58:22 - 01:22:07:03

Brianna

I'm just sort of like, what an interesting portrayal of people's psychologies and what an interesting way of understanding how hard it is to have any of us shake off any of these assumptions. Right? Like they're with us all the time, and being a spectator to some of that is actually, I think a really like, important process is, like noticing those things in myself and the

people around me too, and trying to challenge them. So in that sense, I feel really grateful that this, like particular reality TV outlet like, offers so much like, fuel for critical thinking in a in a weird way.

Leander

Yeah. And I think, you know, spoiler warning. I think that definitely affected by the drag queen on this season as well of people sort of seeing him as a threat or as two outspoken or as like, not fitting in well with the group and, I think that the fear of, was also, I think, part of why Bowen Yang and Matt Rogers, declined to be on the season, which I would have loved to see them on there as a duo.

01:22:07:11 - 01:22:40:16

Stas

And they love the traitors.

Leander

But it's also risky to join as a duo. Of course, because then you're, kind of under suspicion of of. Yes. But yeah, I think it is also like, even if you can't. Yeah. Oh, I didn't realize they had declined. Yeah. Even if you can kind of like, see and notice these patterns, I agree that there is something kind of like cathartic about also being able to, like, follow the person on social media, see the meaning they're making of that.

01:22:40:18 - 01:23:35:20

Leander

You know, and I think that like, we do have yeah, kind of peak information and peak access. And so we can kind of like hear like what was this role? And then how did the actor or, you know, reality performer, feel about playing this role?

Stas

And. Yeah, kind of in a like, yeah, a sense. And then as we close it out, just bringing it one step back of it's so interesting to see the movement to unionize reality TV workers. As something gets really like, pushed by the Real Housewives ladies specifically, and being like, we are workers, this is labor, and we should have unionized rights because they're not allowed to be in the Screen Actors Guild. So just really in conversations all around about the narratives that are in these things, the breakdown of reality and unreality or fiction and the way that that connects to labor and workers rights.

01:23:35:22 - 01:23:55:06

Stas

Love it. Always love chatting with you Brianna, so many interesting threads that we can continue to pull on over, you know, the years that we'll continue working together and coding spring up together. So thank you so much for being on the podcast with us. We really, really appreciated this conversation.

Brianna

Thanks for having me. This was so fun. Oh my gosh. Very grateful to be a podcast guest and to get to think and chat with you.