



# Envisioning Queer Justice Podcast:

## *Journalism of Color Workshop*

Queer Narratives & Lives: Ep. 4 | 50:56

Dr. Cirien Saadeh with co-host Teigh McGee

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00:10 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** Hello, everyone! welcome to the Envisioning Queer Justice Podcast. My name is Teigh and I am one of your hosts. I use they/them/theirs pronouns. I'm a writer, performing artist and organizer. I am the creator of the [Black Disability Collective](#), an online platform dedicated to centering and uplifting Black disabled lives. I also work for [Women for Political Change](#) as their Director of Access and Community Engagement. You can find me online @astoldbytaylorj on Instagram, and you can follow @BlackDisability on Twitter to keep up with the [Black Disability Collective](#). Envisioning Queer Justice Podcast is a youth-led podcast where our goal is to transform stagnant ideas of justice into something more real, more tangible, and much more creative. Through conversation with people in the queer community, we seek to use first-hand experience to find new ways to disrupt punitive and exclusionary conceptions of justice, and uplift people in the queer community who envision justice as healing, creation and transformation. Before we introduce our guests, we are going to give a land and enslavement acknowledgement, which has been shaped by many voices but we want to specifically name Dr. Raj Sethuraju.

I want to acknowledge that no matter where most of us are currently located in the United States; we, most of us, spend today and every day on land stolen from Indigenous People, and cultivated by the enslaved community. It is essential to understand the long standing history that has brought us to reside and benefit from this land and to seek to understand our place within the history of genocide, enslavement, settler colonialism, and racism. Land and enslavement acknowledgments do not exist in the past tense or historical context. Settler

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colonialism and white supremacist ideology is a current, ongoing and cultural and systematic knee and we need to build the mindfulness of our present participation and the placement of the knee.

Land acknowledgments are not meaningful without intentional action so learn more about how you can constructively help to disrupt ongoing colonialism. In the show notes, we offer some Indigenous led organizations for you to donate to; including, [Honor the Earth](#), [the NDN Collective](#), and the [Black Hills Bail and Legal Defense Fund](#).

Today, we are in conversation with Cirien Saadeh, who uses she/her pronouns. She is an Arab American community trained journalist and trained community organizer and holds a Ph.D. Today, she is Executive Director of the [UpTake](#), Associate Faculty at [Prescott College](#), and the producer and host of the [Radical News Radio Hour](#), and the developer of [Journalism of Color](#). To ground conversation, I want to share a grounding quote that Cirien selected from [Salt](#) by Nayyirah Waheed, titled "Options". "You do not need to be a fire for every mountain blocking you. You could be a water and soft river your way to freedom too". Take a listen to a brief conversation I had the pleasure of doing with Cirien.

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04:03 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** Okay Cirien, can you tell me a bit about yourself and what life experiences and values led to you doing the work you do now?

04:10 **Dr. Cirien Saadeh (She/her):** All right, well, it was funny, I was speaking about this earlier with a coworker. I am the Executive Director of a really small news nonprofit. I shouldn't say very small, but we're not, we're not the biggest one in town. And I also teach graduate students, undergrad and graduate students in social justice and community organizing. I'm actually sitting in the office of my old community organizing trainer, from 2010. And I'm working for the organization that I was interning with at the time. At the time, I was an intern, and then Community Manager at the same time. So I was going through organizing training in this building and working for the organization that I work for now, at the same time. And for me journalism and community organizing have always been intertwined and it's



because of that experience learning how to be an organizer here, and learning how to be a journalist in the streets, protest [inaudible] and out of the state legislature. I am the daughter of immigrants from Jordan. And I've been really privileged growing up in all the different communities, in the spaces that I have been. And I will say I'm, I'm not out at home, it's just not a safe environment for me. So I try and keep that separate. But I think a lot about the ways in which narrative and storytelling in journalism can be used to build power within social movement. And I commit to that within my own work and that journalistic literacy and teaching people about what journalism is also plays a role in the work we do to build power. And that movement actors within a news organization, we need to understand community dynamics and be literate in community structures and institutions and the ways in which things like gatekeeping may play a role to both keep people out, but also to protect community, at the same time. I worked out of North Minneapolis for [North News](#) for about two years, in what is really the best, best newspaper job I've ever had. And I learned a lot there about the roles that gatekeeping can play in protecting people, but also bringing people in or leaving them out. And it taught me a lot about the ways in which you have to understand your community in order to be able to serve it. And it's work that I try and bring to the work I do with the [UpTake](#) now. At the same time, I'm also a trained organizer, and I teach students as an organizer now. Journalism is the organizing tool that I use. And it's really important with me when I talk with my students to talk about the ways in which like the insider / outsider status of organizers and the role that power plays in our work and the discomfort that so many of us have with building power, or talking about power. And so that's a lot of what's led me to the work I do now.

06:57 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** I really appreciate you telling us about your values and what brought you here. And I definitely feel like through what I've seen in my work, a lot of folks act like there's this huge disconnect between I think journalists, and like organizers, really youth organizers. So I love the way in which you intentionally were able to make those connections. So I really am so appreciative of that and you naming those things. Um, the next question is, what is journalism of color? And how do you see that distinguish from traditional journalism?

07:27 **Dr. Cirien Saadeh (She/her):** All right, [Journalism of Color](#) has a definition and a 411 page dissertation. We've been trying to speak about it off the top of my head,

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which you'd think since I wrote the dissertation, I could [laughs] but I'm just gonna read the executive summary because it's just a, I think, better document. So [Journalism of Color](#) is a resilient, transformative community-based methodology, and a form of resistance writing, framed by the values, narratives and historical context of historically marginalized communities. It emphasizes disrupting traditional narratives about historically marginalized communities, writing for and by these communities, creating journalism, journalism spaces, like a newsroom, and a journalism school, and journalistic tools that are accessible by these communities and practiced. Developing localized journalism structures and processes and community-based journalism and journalistic literacy, building and translating knowledge of justice and outcomes and social movements and how it comes to be while decoding and deconstructing oppression, presenting counter ideologies and challenging existing ideologies. Talking about and being responsive, adaptable, accessible, critically reflective, cooperative, cooperative. And specifically, I'm talking about like cooperative development, like economic development. Prioritize, prioritizing community voices, articulating beauty, building mutual trust, and then linking trust with analyses of justice and power, while centering community vision and community values. So it's this really big idea that says, we can do journalism better in our own communities because we have done, we've already built these structures in our community. We already talked about healing, and mutual trust, and cooperative. I mean, these things have historical roots in immigrant, in BIPOC communities, in queer communities. And it's really important for me to say that [Journalism of Color](#) is its work that came to be because of the work, journalism that I had seen done, but it's also journalism, it's not, this is not a new idea. I mean, the Black Panthers did what I would call now journalism of color. You know, the Black Panther community newspaper was such inspiration for this. There is union newspapers that did this work, all of the zine making, that happens, that is all of this, so much of this work already exists. This is just a way of organizing this idea. For me, I practiced it in a couple of ways at the [UpTake](#), where I'm ED. It's in our content and then it's in our journalism training. So we have another journalism training coming up and more being scheduled. And our writers are, we have ten Black writers on staff, two white writers, eight of our, ten of our writers are women. Eight of our writers are Black women. We've been really intentional in building a freelance staff that looks like our communities. Ten of our staff members are non-trained journalists, they are people who attended trainings, and then we work with, to develop pitches and move them from pitch, all the way to publishing and promote,

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promoting a story. Every single person is paid. I refuse to allow actually for free work at the organization. I also do journalism of color through my radio show on [WFMU](#), which I was literally filming episode eight right before I got on this call, called the [Radical News Radio Hour](#), which is really a community space where we're talking about things like police abolition, and the State, you know what the work of the state legislature is, but from a community perspective. Next week, we're talking about climate change and environmental justice in the local community. Few weeks from now, we're talking about community organizing around the [Upper Harbor Terminal](#). So it's another way for creating that space. But it's really a mixture of the trainings, the equitable pay for our writers, and then providing a platform that's meant to create a bridge across all of our communities here in the Twin Cities, because we have some wonderful, really strong local media ecosystem. We have [Sahan Journal](#), we have [SPNN](#), which is a partner of the [UpTake](#), an organization, I just love. [WFMU](#), the [Media Alliance](#), all these groups. But there's not a single organization right now, that's creating bridges across all of our different under resourced and underrepresented communities in the Twin Cities. The [UpTake](#) is trying to be that bridge. And I should say journalism of color is not just about the bridging organizations. But at the [UpTake](#), that's what it looks like. We're trying to create space across all of our different communities.

12:21 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** Thank you for breaking down this larger idea. Actually something that not a lot of people know about me is that both of my parents' background is in broadcast journalism so I actually grew up around a lot of this stuff. And I feel like I'm learning so much just from listening to you. And it's, it's so invigorating.

12:39 **Dr. Cirien Saadeh (She/her):** I'm glad.

12:41 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** Yeah, I feel like I'm really learning a lot. And I love the way you were able to break down these pieces of your dissertation in a way for listeners here to really get an idea of what you're about and what this journalism of color really means. So I'm really grateful for that. So we're seeing a time where there is a tremendous amount of skepticism towards journalism. Why does storytelling and journalism matter? And what is its role in social change and movement work?



13:08 **Dr. Cirien Saadeh (She/her):** So you're asking me a question that my students ask me all the time, [laughs] because it dedicated, through several quarters of my class, the idea of storytelling and narrative and framing. The first one, in terms of, I want to deal with them differently, because they're both dealt with differently. I mean, I think the idea of storytelling being a tool for narrative change is something that we just see happen all the time. I work with an organization, I partner with an organization called [Voices for Racial Justice](#). My office, that's the space I'm in right now, our kind of satellite news room is out of their building. And we published a magazine together called [The Quilt: Policy, Art & Healing](#). We used the journalism of color methodology, but it also had a lot of poetry, and art, and storytelling and reflection. And for me, that was such an important part of the message because it was about narrative shift, and narrative change, and using kind of our ancestral tools for telling and changing the world around us. And I love the idea of us using words as our hammers in rebuilding and creating a new vision for the world. Journalism is a little different because most of our communities have a really tense and troubled and distrusting relationship with journalism. Rightfully. I'm sure many of the people who are listening are gonna remember [Pointergate](#) a few years ago. Or I believe it was [KSTP](#), just a few weeks ago, that asked a woman wearing a hijab how that was, comparing that to a KKK hood, after she had been chased out of Stillwater by some militia members. We have seen failures, and those are just the really most like extreme examples. We also know what's happening in newsrooms all the time. BIPOC staff in newsrooms are getting chased off. And I'm white passing, and I recognize this. But I also know that I'm the daughter of immigrants. I'm a daughter. I'm a queer daughter of immigrants, that my family for a very long time was, I remember eating ketchup sandwiches, because that's what we could afford when I was a kid. Like, again, I understand the intersectionality of both my privileges and the ways in which I'm underrepresented. But I also know that, and I don't have a degree in journalism. I don't, because it would have required a year long, unpaid internship, or even, or a low paid internship. The internship I ended up having at the [UpTake](#) was basically a full-time volunteer gig, but it wasn't one that would have passed for school credit. Okay, understand that all of these things are happening simultaneously and I think what we're seeing in community is this breakdown that because journalism has failed us, we've said we don't need it anymore, when what we really need to start doing is saying, "okay, we don't need those anymore". We have capacity to build our own organizations like [North News](#) or the [Spokesman](#)

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[Recorder](#). So it's such an incredibly important part of the work that we do in community. We need to be able to invest in the people who are doing that work. I also think, I was at a conference last week called [SourceCon](#). I will say for full transparency, I was paid as a, like a contractor to help with, you know, with some of the communication on [SourceCon](#), but I've been to that conference a few times now. And this was a room full of journalists predominantly, you know, a lot of white journalists, but also a huge number of BIPOC journalists, and mostly women, talking about what it means to fight in the newsroom for equity and for social justice and for healing. And I think we need to recognize that the work for justice around journalism isn't just happening in kind of radical spaces, like the [UpTake](#) newsroom, or even in community spaces across the Twin Cities. It's happening at [NPR](#), at [Star Tribune](#), and with reporters chased out of these spaces, that there's, there are conversations happening, and there's places we can put our support to make things happen. I don't think I answered your question, though.

17:16 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** I love what you had to say, though. And I think that it was very necessary for you to put that out there. And I really appreciate the ways in which you can continue to emphasize the way that we need to bridge these gaps between journalism and between our communities and the communities doing this work. And I think it's very, very necessary for you to continue to reiterate that. So thank you for that. What does the phrase queer justice mean to you? How would you define it?

17:46 **Dr. Cirien Saadeh (She/her):** I guess I'm saying this as the perspective of somebody who's, you know, living in a glass closet half the time, queer justice right now for me means the capacity to be out safely. Like, I think, so in my culture, you really don't move out till you're married. And so I'm older, but I live at home because I'm, I'm unmarried, because I'm not interested in the options for who I can marry I guess. And, and I think about how much I would love to be able to tell my dad, that I'm queer, and to be safe and doing it and know that I'd have someplace to go, I wouldn't get kicked out. I wouldn't lose my family. Like that, for me is like the foundation of what queer justice means, I think. So in terms of the larger movements, queer justice means that I'm thinking about, I've been doing these interviews for a project I've been working on and I can't talk about the project for a number of reasons, we're keeping it on the down low for now. But I've been asking people their pronouns on, for every interview, when I start, that's the first question



just confirming pronouns. And nine out of ten times, everybody's been, eight out of ten times everybody has been great. But I've done dozens of interviews so far and I've definitely had blowback from folk around why I'm asking them, and offended them asking them. And I know that there's a lot to be said around conversion therapy and the continued work to be done on conversion therapy. I know there's a lot of work to be done around queering Disability Justice and wanting to make sure that there's access in all these spaces. But I also know that these simple things like hey, this is why we share our pronouns. That's justice for me and not kind of, getting really angry because I'd be willing to step into those spaces of discomfort. I teach at a school called [Prescott College](#) and on, we've been dealing, [Patrisse Cullors](#), one of the cofounders of [Black Lives Matter](#) works at the college. She's in charge of the Master of Fine Arts program. She's the Program Director, and she has been receiving death threats and threats of lynching from militias in Prescott and the Prescott area community. And as we've been dealing with a community wide response, one of the staff members, a mentor of mine brought up that we really needed to make sure that trans folk and Black trans folk in Prescott had the chance to talk about their, the struggles they've had, because they've had it worse than basically everybody in Prescott. I mean, it's, it's really horrible for them there. And so I think instead of it being this thing that one person remembers to bring in, queer justice looks like for me, like just being a natural part of our conversation when we're talking about justice and social movement. That it's not a thing that somebody remembers to bring to the conversation. It's something we're all equipped to talk about when we're talking about social movement.

20:39 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** I agree, thank you so much. How can people contact you and get involved in your work? And are there any organizations you'd like to shout out for the listeners?

20:50 **Dr. Cirien Saadeh (She/her):** Yes, first shoutout, [Voices for Racial Justice](#). They are our organizing and journalism partners at the [UpTake](#). You can check out the magazine, we co-publish at [thequiltmagazine.com](#). I love Voices. I love the work they do. I love their openness to us. I'm just really obsessed with their work. Also, [OpenNews](#), which is a national organization. They host that conference [SourceCon](#) that I attended, as well as many conferences throughout the year. [OpenNews](#) are kind of my journal, my news nerds. These are people talking equity and accessibility in journalism in ways that I think nobody else is really talking about at that level. I,

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that conference last week was the most invigorating thing I'd ever been to and I'm so grateful for it. Similarly, the [PressOn Foundation](#), which is located out of the southern US, I'd highly recommend it. I mean, take a chance on the [UpTake](#) please. We're really grateful for the work that we've been able to do. We are a growing organization that moved from being a really historically white and white-centered organization to being an organization that is, our freelance staff is predominantly Black, predominantly BIPOC and we're working on rebuilding our board if you're interested in a board position, we're looking for applicants. You can just contact me and you can email me. You can also check out the radio show that I do which is what we're talking about a lot of these so that's [Radical News Radio Hour](#) on Facebook. I did a segment I'm pretty proud of on conversion therapy a few weeks ago that I'm still sharing on St. Paul ban on conversion therapy that I am pretty proud of. For me, you can reach out to me at just [cisaadah@gmail.com](mailto:cisaadah@gmail.com), that's just my personal professional email. You can check out my website at [journalismofcolor.com](http://journalismofcolor.com). And you can follow me on twitter at [@cmiriam](#).

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22:58 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** Who would you like to name as your teachers and mentors?

23:02 **Dr. Cirien Saadeh (She/her):** I have been lucky enough to have some, to have had some amazing teachers over the past, I don't even know how many years. I had a really bad experience in college at my undergrad at St. Kates in St. Paul. But I also had some really wonderful teachers at the Minneapolis campus where I started out. Teachers who really helped, for me, who helped to remain in contact with, who I remain in touch with. And teachers who really taught me what it means to provide equitable accessible education, which, as a teacher, now, I really take with me, teachers who saw me as a full person and not just as a collection of learning disorders. And, you know, and as an organizer, and somebody who was always making a mess and being really loud on campus and trying to call attention to injustice. I had teachers like Betty Burnett, who just paid so much attention to the work that I was doing and, and, and to me and I'm really grateful. I also work right now with three really badass women in my department at [Prescott College](#) in the Social Justice and Community Organizing program; [Anita Fernandez](#), Zoe Hammer, and [Ruth Hoffman](#), who, the fact that I get to even work with them is just the most

mind boggling thing. I just can't believe I get to work with these individuals doing the work that I get to do. I've also had two really amazing mentors. The first was Todd Mireles. [Ernesto \(Todd\) Mireles](#), who was my advisor at [Prescott College](#) and he was the first, but he was the second person actually, second faculty member I'd met at the college and he was the first mentor I had there and he really, it was the first teacher I had after leaving St. Kate's and he was the first teacher I had after leaving St. Kate's. First he tried, it had been years since I'd been in St. Paul, who really, he took time with me and he helped me believe I could be a good student and then a good educator. He, I was his TA for, for a year as well. And then [Ned Moore](#), who was actually my mentor when I was at St. Kate's, who was just one of those people who helped me understand the connections between journalism, community organizing, who helped me understand that I had a role in the world, who gave me so many different opportunities to step into the work. And I didn't always succeed at stepping into the work, but Ned always helped me learn how to be a better organizer, a better journalist, and how to do the work that I get to do now more, more effectively and more equitably. So I've had some really amazing mentors over the past few years. I have had some experiences like, like the one at St. Kate's St. Paul, that shaped me in ways that were a lot, a lot more through a brutal fire than I would have liked. But I've also had some incredible teachers and incredible mentors and advisors that have held my hand. And then, just personally, my grandfather. My grandfather used to call me my teacher, and I used to laugh and say, I never wanted to be a teacher, that he died 12 years ago. And I said at graduation last year that he has to be, he has to be laughing somewhere getting the last laugh because my degree is in education.

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26:22 [Teigh McGee \(Co-Host, They/them/theirs\)](#): Thank you so much Cirien and now stay tuned for a workshop from Cirien about how you can practice and pitch journalism of color.

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26:33 [Dr. Cirien Saadeh \(She/her\)](#): So as I said earlier, in the interview, journalism of color, it's this way of doing journalism, in, in such a way that equity and sustainability are centered in the work. Just to reiterate that definition really quickly. Journalism of color is a resilient, transformative community based methodology. It's a form of



resistance writing that's framed by the values and narratives and contexts, historical contexts of historically marginalized communities. We're talking about disrupting stereotypes, disrupting these kind of narratives about who our communities are, and what they're about, writing for and by our communities, creating journalism in journalistic spaces and journalistic tools that are accessible and practicable. Developing localized journalism structures and processes and journalism literacy, that is specific to our communities, building and translating knowledge of justice and how it comes to be. And being really willing to dive in and talk about what is oppression look like presenting counter ideologies and arguments, challenging existing ideologies, deconstructing the systems of oppression within the reporting, creating journalism that's responsive, adaptable, accessible, critically reflective, cooperative, prioritizing community voices, articulating beauty, developing mutual trust, and then linking that trust with analyses of justice and power, and centering community vision and values in the work, it also looks different. So that's like a really big definition that can be kind of hard to sink your teeth into. But it also looks different when it happens. And I will say, when that, this, this definition was created, it was very much a work in progress. It was just a theory, I hadn't been able to test it in any significant ways. And much of it, like the idea of the journalism cooperative, a journalism of color cooperative, since there is one active journalism cooperative, I believe in Ohio right now. But a journalism of color cooperative remains untested. But in terms of reporting, we've been able to see what that looks like. And it looks different. I've had so many, when I came on board as Executive Director of the [UpTake](#) nineteen months ago now, eighteen months ago now, I'm not quite sure on the math on it right now. I was able to start really building trust with people. And all of my time was just spent in one-to-ones and in trust building meetings. Following that experience, I began hosting community journalism trainings, of which we have four on the horizon and I'll give those dates at the end and some more information on how to contact me about this. Again, hosting these trainings. And from these trainings, we actually brought on several of our freelance writers on staff and most of these individuals have no journalism training at all. They're untrained, non professional reporters. And we've been providing them a journalism of color professional level community journalism training, through that work. And we always start these trainings with a couple of questions. And then we talk about pitching, which is the big thing that I'm going to do today. The first question that we always have our, our community journalism training participants, start with is spend five minutes writing about your community. You pick that community, it can be a



geographic community, could be your block, it could be your neighborhood, it could be your city, it could be your, for me, it could be Jordanian Americans in Minnesota, it could be Jordanian Americans in the US. But we always say pick your city and try and dial it down. Keep it you know, try and keep it local, try and keep it focused, try and keep it centered, because you want to be able to move forward with these questions and just make it easier. So you take five minutes, and you free write it. There are a couple of roles in free writing, as I used to tell my my high school students, when I guest taught at Patrick Henry: your pencil doesn't leave the paper, if you run out of words to say, scribble on the page, write dadadada, whatever you have to do on the page, just keep writing, and the words will come back. And even if they don't, keep writing, you'll get those juices flowing. Write for five minutes, you can time yourself. Five minutes is a really good time, you don't want to go too long. It's easy to get distracted. But you want to have enough time to be able to write down a few thoughts. So you've done those, once you've done those five minutes, you're able to start moving on to the next, you know, next part of the pitching process, which is something that all the participants in our trainings go through. And I think it helps us understand the community, the journalists will cover a little bit better when, when we're thinking about our own communities. And I'm not asking you to pick a different community, we're really asking you to center on your own community in your own work. And that's really, incredibly important to this, to this process. [Pause]. So right now that you've had five minutes or so to write about what your community is, and to get some focus and some centering there, I want you to do five minutes of free writing on this prompt: What are the questions you have about your community? And what are the questions that your community faces? So when I think about Arab Americans and Jordanian Americans in Minnesota, I'm thinking a lot lately, and I've been doing a lot of writing lately around anti-Black racism in Jordanian American communities. And I've been talking a lot about the history of colonization, the impact of colonization, the fact that there are Black Arabs, and what is that really? How is their experience different from other Arabs because of anti-Black racism? What organizing is happening in Arab communities around anti-Black racism? Those are the kind of questions I'm asking about my community. But your questions might be different. If I had picked North Minneapolis where I've worked for ten years, I might ask questions about things like how many grocery stores does North Minneapolis have? Does it have a significant number of them? Or how is North Minneapolis dealing with the aftermath of the riots and the revolution that happened after the killing of George Floyd? These are things that come to mind

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when I think about the communities that I belong to. So in a second, you'll have five minutes, again, to write till your heart's content about the questions you have about the community of choice that you've, that you've picked. Thank you so much for your patience as you do free writing. I know that most podcasts are not experiential, but I was taught to be an experiential educator. And I'm a big fan of throwing people into the writing deepend. It's a problem, you can ask my students about it. So when you're pitching in journalism of color, you're thinking about those two things. And I will say most reporters, don't start, don't start with that sort of, on the back end. Like you start with a question, you start with the community. But you often start with a story idea and move from there. And we're doing it a little differently. And it's something I do with all of my participants, because I want all of you to understand where pitching comes from, and not just start with the pitch. So we're actually starting behind the starting line, which is a little, a little different. For that, you know, then what trained professional journalists might be going through. So a pitch is a journalist description of a potential story for their editor. A pitch would introduce the author, summarize a story that the author intends to write, and explain why that story matters. And a story idea comes from those questions. So if somebody were to say, I want to, George Floyd was killed outside of a grocery store actually owned by Palestinian Americans. Now I want to talk about the role that grocery stores, the role of grocery stores in Minneapolis, in South Minneapolis, in the 38th Street neighborhood are facing after the killing of George Floyd. And what discussions they're having about equity in their communities and how they serve their neighborhood. I've worked out of North Minneapolis for ten years, I used to be on staff at [North News](#), which is a great community paper. And I spent a lot of time. And I will say, I used to be employed by [Pillsbury United](#) when I was with [North News](#), with Jones North Market. But on that 44th and Penn, kind of corridor, just near that corridor, there's two grocery stores, one is owned by a local community member, the other one is owned by Pillsbury. I would really love to have a conversation with the owners of these grocery stores, who are in a really unique position in the community, as well as our customers about the role that food can have in creating spaces for discussion around racial equity in communities like North Minneapolis, which have been historically marginalized, historically undercounted, historically been disinvested from, and really have unique, unique challenges around racial equity and racial injustice and in Minneapolis. I would love to do that story, I would love to talk with young writers from Patrick Henry, which is in that neighborhood, around doing that story. I mean, I can think of really creative ways to have this discussion around

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the intersections of food and, and racial equity. And I can think of doing it in the neighborhood, the 30rd Street neighborhood, or I can think of doing it in the Northside, where my own community, or we're one of the communities I belong to, is from. For me, that's that's a pitch. That's the beginning of a pitch. It's not even a full pitch, but it's somewhere to start. Pitches are meant to prod and provoke interest in a story. And they should, they should, the kind of the six primary questions you're answering are: Why are you interested in or curious about a story? What's new about the story? And who do you want? Who do you want to tell it? So who are you interested in interviewing? Who should be telling that story? Again, when I think about that story in the Northside, I think about some of those young writers that Patrick Henry that I once had a chance to work with, I think they would do a more effective job of telling that story than I ever would, because they, that's their neighborhood, that's their community, you know, their school is right, right up the street. Why will the reader or viewer care about the story? I always think that we need to be talking about racial equity in journalism. And in the reporting we do, I think intersecting that conversation around food is a really effective way to have that discussion. Because A. food stories get readers. And because I think food can open up a door to a discussion on racial equity in a way that many other conversations cannot do so. What is the best way to tell the story? I'm a print reporter by training, but I recently fell in love with radio. So I would love to do a story that maybe has elements of radio, photography and print to it rather than, say, a visual story or a data story, which are less in my wheelhouse. What is the best way to tell the story? And then what questions will you need to ask to understand the story? And who are the sources? Who will help you answer those questions? I'm thinking a lot right now about the owner of North, the CEO of Pillsbury, which owns North Market, the owner of the grocery store across the street, the owner of local businesses, neighborhood folk, just walking in the neighborhood and knocking on people's door and asking them about the presence of the grocery stores. And within the kind of intersection of racial equity and the neighborhood that they live in. Doing door knocking on the north side has always been a favorite reporting process of mine, it's a really good way to get some interesting information. There's also a farmers market in that parking lot that host, that's run by a local community leader, would love to speak with that community leader who's a Black woman who does a lot of health and fitness work in the neighborhood, as well as people who is at the, farmers market or there's a barber shop across the street, there's a library there. There's lots of local businesses to, to head into and talk to folk about. And then what's the development timeline and the

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reporting plan? So as I think about the story, how long do I need to do it? What's the appropriate time to publish it? If I wait too long will it have less meaning? What space do I need for it? What time? What resources? Would I want to ask somebody else to take photos? I mean, what are the different ways that I want to do it? So I'm thinking about that. And often if you're pitching for an organization, like my own, we have editorial timeline that we've worked on. So you'd work with an editor to figure that out. In pitching for journalism of color, we, the one addition we have to all those questions, which is from I should cite that guy, author for those questions, was a guy named [inaudible], published in 2012. So generally we're asking those questions, we have one additional question and it pulls them in a little bit of a different way, is a question on what, what, we ask people to do a power analysis of their pitch. So for example, when you're considering your sources or the best way to tell your story, we want you to think about whose voices are often seen as less credible? What mediums can low income communities and or communities of color, consume news in? So if you're working in a community that has, say, 35%, in home broadband internet access, then does publishing on a website without a really good mobile interface makes sense? Maybe not. Maybe that's where you go print, maybe that's where you go social media, things that are a little bit easier to publish for a more mobile community or a less, in-home community, computer-based community? Is there a language barrier? Is there a way to publish something in a different language in order to have it serve a different community? Or have it serve multiple communities? Do you have trust in the community? I mean, I can do a story on Northside because I have trust in the community because I did work there for a decade because I was on staff for North News for a couple of years, because I did organizing there. So I've trust and I've got relationships I've built there that I can depend on. It would be harder for me to do a story in the 38th Street neighborhood because I don't have trust there. I haven't spent a decade doing that work. So that's what I'm thinking about, like, do you have trust? Do you have relationships? Is there work that needs to be done to build up that trust? And then one of the questions I ask because many of the participants work, aren't professional writers and that's fine, you don't need to be, is, why are you the best person to tell the story? Not, are you? Well, why are you the best person to tell the story? And that's actually our last free writing prompt. So I want you to take a question. And I don't need you to have a pitch yet. I know that you're still working on all of that. But I want you to spend five minutes and answer this prompt. Why are you the best person to tell the stories of my community? Not are you. Five minutes to answer. Why are you the best person



to tell the stories of my community? [Pause]. Thank you for participating in that last pitching exercise. I'm really grateful for always being able to bring new people into the work of journalism of color because I think we have so much work to do about making the work accessible. I do want to show you two examples. And if you're open to a computer, you can go access that. The first is [thequiltmagazine.com](http://thequiltmagazine.com). The Quilt Magazine, the [The Quilt: Policy, Art & Healing](#) is a magazine and actually a podcast, first episode to be recorded in late July and published in August, that was produced in a partnership by the [UpTake](#) where I am, Executive Director, and [Voices for Racial Justice](#), which is a part, organizational partner of ours. I was lucky enough to be trained as an organizer by Organizing Apprenticeship Project, which is the former name for, for Voices. The magazine is a really powerful and always imperfect, as everything is, but a really powerful example of what journalism of color can mean. We were able to bring together funding and non-trained community storytellers and leaders to tell the different stories of different policies out of the state legislature. Local community artists created wonderful art for it, there's a lot of poetry. And it was really our way of trying to do a more creative and powerful story for what the state legislature is and what, why the state legislature matters. And what our responsibility to that storytelling is, it was actually published last October. We're always looking at doing future issues and we're planning for the future. But we're really excited to have been able to bring in everybody from a state representative to a lawyer with legal aid to community members to tell the different stories of everything from Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and unemployment insurance to the role of art and strategy in strategic community organizing, and looking at the history of reparations in in Black and Native communities. I mean, we were able to have these really amazing discussions around the legislature and we were able to do that by training every single person, every single writer in that, in that magazine, went through the journalism of color process in creating those stories. And to be able to use that methodology, it was actually the first place, that journalism of color came to life, in a really real way. It also included a couple of live events. The first was an event on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women at the, I think February 1st, at [Fond du Lac Community and Tribal College](#) in Cloquet, which was just a really great discussion. We had, we were blessed by an Indigenous woman who did a blessing on the space. The panelists were all Indigenous women, the Roma Indigenous women, and we were able to do this discussion and have this conversation around missing and murdered Indigenous women in a way that was really central and locally based and just incredibly powerful. I mean, it was a life changing, changing

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day for me, just to see the work of journalism of color come to light in this way, and to see the power that everybody felt being in the space together. And then the second event was not technically a Quilt event, but we, the [UpTake](#) and Voices were there as representatives of the Quilt. Were part of a coalition called the Racial Equity Enjoy, or I should say, a pre-coalition. And we had held as a group, an event on bonding out of the Oak Park Community Center, also a Pillsbury enterprise in North Minneapolis at the end of February. We were there again, as representatives of the Quilt, we live streamed through the Quilt platforms. And we're really excited to be able to do that event. It was funny because it happened through, in a power outage. So I should say, we recorded through the Quilt platforms, not live-streamed, because we were going to, but there was a massive power outage and we actually did most of the event in a blacked out room. But it was a really great conversation. And again, it's an extension of the quote, which is a journalism color, a magazine that uses the journalism of color methodology. We, of course, had planned for other live events, but then a global pandemic happened and everything changed. There's also a lot of reporting on the [UpTake's](#) website, [theuptake.org](http://theuptake.org). We had a great series from one of our reporters, L Nurr, that came out in, I believe, May, I think, on Muslims during Ramadan, in, in, in Ramadan during COVID-19 that I thought was an incredible series, really just a profile, series of profile pieces and discussion and reflection. But it's, it's maybe the most powerful thing we've reported on since we, we did this, since you know I came on as ED. And I think it's another really powerful example of the work that we can do with at the [UpTake](#), and what journalism of color can do. So we do have some upcoming trainings coming up, I'm not sure when you're going to be listening to this podcast. So rather than provide you those dates, because we do provide those trainings regularly, we usually have one or two a month. And we scheduled them a couple of months out at a time typically. You can look at the [UpTake](#) Facebook page for that information. Our trainings, have been historically free, we are moving to a place where we're asking for donation based trainings, just help us cover the cost. But we always offer a free scholarship offer option for those who can't afford it. Even as we move into having non-free trainings. You can always contact me directly for a one-to-one or virtual one-to-one or virtual coffee, anything or maybe hopefully in person in the future, to talk about journalism of color and this work. And I would love to bring as many people from this community into do reporting for us, I think we need to bring more voices to the table. And I know that as the work of the [UpTake](#) expands and changes and grows, that there's so much more work to do, to be as authentically representative of our community as we can be.

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And our community is people engaged in social movement across the Twin Cities. That's the community we're trying really hard to reach right now. And we're really focused on reaching people in historically marginalized communities. So as people from different communities of color, low income communities, LGBTQIA folk, we want people from as many different communities representative in our organization as board members, as freelancers as we can. So, thank you so much for speaking, speaking with me today or allowing me to speak with you I should say.

**[cool, ambient music fades in and out]**

49:27 **Teigh McGee (Co-Host, They/them/theirs):** You just listened to a workshop by Cirien Saadeh, and a brief conversation between Cirien and myself, Teigh McGee. Thank you so much for Cirien for joining us today on [Envisioning Queer Justice](#). We are grateful for your voices, visions and values. Thank you to the [Hamline University Center for Justice & Law](#) and [PeaceFirst](#) for their fiscal support of this project. The opinions expressed in this podcast solely reflect the individual speaker. The [Envisioning Queer Justice Collaborative](#) is a digital platform that seeks to disrupt punitive and exclusionary conceptions of justice and uplift people in the queer community who envision justice as healing, creation and transformation. Through research, storytelling, and content curation / creation, we offer resources to bring people together for safer, more inclusive and liberated communities. To read our research findings from the LGBTQ+ Youth Justice Circles, Community Toolkit or curated resources, please go to our website, [www.envisioningqueerjustice.org](http://www.envisioningqueerjustice.org) and check us out on social media by searching Envisioning Queer Justice Collaborative. Thank you for joining us.