



Envisioning Queer Justice Podcast:

Suicide Prevention & Restorative Justice

Healing & Liberation Series: Ep. 4 | 1:24:48

With Guest Co-Hosts Dorothy Jiang (They/She) & Conner Suddick (He/him)

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[cool, ambient music fades in]

00:34 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Greetings folks! Welcome to Envisioning Queer Justice Podcast, and today the Research and Resources Team of the Envisioning Queer Justice Collaborative will be in conversation today. Who does that comprise of? *[Laughs]* Well, I am your guest host Conner, I use he/him and they/them pronouns, I'm a restorative justice practitioner, an aspiring researcher, a graduate student at the [Center for Justice and Peacebuilding](#), a student of abolition, and I'm really into the Great Lakes, trying not to kill houseplants, and I love the flavor combination of coconut and lime. *[Laughs]*

01:09 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Yes. Yes. I'm your other guests host Dorothy and I use both of they/them and she/her pronouns. I'm in suicide prevention work. I'm an abolitionist and I'm an Asian American against [Boba liberalism](#). I'm trying to do good and disrupt where I can but mostly I'm just trying to make it through and urge folks to action, urge other folks to rest. 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 experiences 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. *[affirmation]*

01:57 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Yes! Before our conversation, we are going to give a land and enslavement acknowledgement, which has been shaped by many



different voices in this version of it and I want to specifically name Dr. Raj Sethuraju, one of my teachers who wrote this.

So it goes, 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. And so for me, I'm currently on the land of the Peoria, the Kickapoo and the Sioux here in Northern Illinois. And so it's essential for us to understand the long standing history that 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 colonialism and white supremacist ideology is a current, ongoing and cultural and systemic knee, and we need to build the mindfulness of our present participation in the placement of that knee. I also name this as a white person who has descended, and is a product of settler colonialism and has come to this land as a result of colonization. Land acknowledgments are not meaningful without intentional action. So learn more about how you can constructively help to disrupt ongoing colonization. In the show notes we offer some indigenous led organizations for you to donate to or uplift. That includes [Honor the Earth](#), led by Winona LaDuke, the [NDN Collective](#), and the [Black Hills Bail and Legal Defense Fund](#).

[music fades in and out]

03:43 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** To ground the conversation. I want to share a grounding piece from Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, It's part of her book [Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice](#) and it's in the "Protect Your Heart" essay in it.

"I believe that if I prove myself to be indispensable, to be useful, I would not be thrown away. I would have a place, I would be useful and thus loved or something like loved, because my inside parts were not lovable, but my usefulness was. I built a writing career partly out of these underpinnings, I became a community based writer who was writing for my community and also for myself. I embraced the ideas of community-based poet as people's newspaper, journalist, tool crafter as someone who worked and wrote for the people, so the people were my boss. I don't have a family so I was committed in a really intense - my life depends on it. Orphan-freak way to be loved by

community. For my writing to be a career, for me to feel any value or use, that's very common, it's also dangerous. No one told me I can have a filter. No one told me that it was impossible to be liked by everyone. No one told me that it was okay to have a private life, or to say no to some requests for information. No one told me I could write for the community but also write for my own sense of what I wanted and needed to write, and that I could tell the community to fuck off sometimes. No one told me I didn't have to take every critique or comment at 100% face value. No one warned me that some folks would just lash out because of jealousy or being triggered or rage. No one told me I wasn't a bad person if I couldn't answer every single email or message telling me I was fucked up. No one told me that if a stranger or a semi-stranger attacked me, I could protect myself, I didn't have to answer, I could have a limit. I didn't have to offer them my throat. No one told me I can make art and do work but also be loved and valued on my own terms, not just for being useful, for doing labor, for being in leadership. This is my story but it's so many other people's stories."

05:45 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Wow, thank you so much for sharing that. I love, but also just leads into such a conversation of not only disposability but also just that if we're in a movement, we have to completely work ourselves into the ground. Reminds me a lot about Adrienne Maree Brown [Pleasure Activism](#) too. Also I want to name that person and a touchstone in the space too. *[affirmation]* And last thing before we get started is I want to offer a content warning, as we are in conversation with Dorothy and they will likely talk about suicide as that's part of their work. And so if you're not in the headspace to hear that, check out another episode and come back when you are in a different headspace to be in that conversation. And so with that, Dorothy, ahhh I'm so happy today to talk with you today! Also you should check out a part time job is reading books on tape.

06:37 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Oh, thank you. Yes, my side dream gig is to be a voice actor. So is this audition one? *[laughter]*

06:47 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Yeah. As a kid, one of my dream jobs was truly to ask riddles, under a bridge and be like a troll. *[laughter]* Ask people riddles in order to cross the bridge. I knew exactly what bridge: the Leo Frigo Bridge in Green Bay. Shout out to Northeast Wisconsin!

07:03 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** That is exactly the kind of gatekeeping we need. *[laughter]*

07:09 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** But I just want to even though we know each other, we've been in relationship for two years? Two years now. *[crosstalk]*

Dorothy: Yeah, two years... over two years now.

Conner Suddick: And so I just want other people to get the chance to get to know you a little more. So could you take a moment to introduce yourself and what values and life experience called you to the work, and your interests now.

07:34 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Totally, yeah, I am super excited to be here. I am so grateful for your work, always Conner and who you are and the light and love that you always bring. Um, I'm Dorothy, I mentioned that earlier, I also go by DJ. I ... what values and life experiences? I think right now I'm at a particular moment where values of anti-racism, but specifically, intersectionality in an antiracist way is what I'm trying to hold at the forefront of my mind kind-of at all times. And I feel I've been asked the question like, 'oh, when were you radicalized?' or something that, a good number of times I never really know how to answer it.

But, I think, I mean just kind of jumping into it I started volunteering for a suicide hotline in Seattle, which is where I'm from umm, when I was in high school. And I think that was a key radicalization moment for me just from that education and it was very comprehensive, the training for that and learning about various social issues and that kind of thing gave me language to talk about what other people were facing and what I was beginning to face too. Yeah, I think, obviously, I guess my own lived experience as a second gen Chinese immigrant, meaning my parents immigrated from China but I was born in the US, an Asian-American femme Queer person but also, I... sometimes people laugh when I say this but a pretty straight, cis-passing-person but then people are like 'oh, but your hair also the way you do'. Also all these other things about me like okay maybe not.

I think my most salient identity is still my racial identity because it's something that like, it's in my name, it's on my face, no one will ever be confused

that I'm an Asian person. But yeah, I was rambling a lot, but I think those personal identities, but also just the kind of path that I leaned into as an adolescent and then now have pursued more academics and work.

10:09 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Can I ask you a quick clarifying question?.

Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her): Yeah

10:11 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** I don't know if you remember why but I'm curious if you could speak to, I don't think I've ever asked you this, why as a teenager, were you like, 'yes, of all the places I could volunteer: suicide hotline.' Could you speak to that a little bit.

10:25 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** I understand how that is an atypical after school activity to be involved in. Yeah, I, so I've dealt with mental health, mental illness stuff for a long time obviously, or maybe not obviously, hopefully not obviously actually. But for me, obviously like unnamed, untalked about, unaddressed. And I used to be a competitive gymnast when I was younger and I had a coach who killed himself. And after that, I was like, I am unable to process what's going on. So let me just not process this.

And then my, it was actually my mom, who her friend's son, volunteered for this hotline and my mom knew I was at least vaguely interested in psychology related things and she was like 'oh do you want to sign up and see what happens.' And I was like, 'Yeah, sure.' And so that's how I ended up there but, I mean so many, especially teenagers, go through immense amounts of trauma, and just shit, day to day. And so I kind of always found myself in a role of... even people I wasn't really close friends with would confide in me about things that we're going through. And I was like, 'this is really heavy.' And I think I perhaps have a natural proclivity towards listening and just holding space. So then I started doing the thing at the hotline, and I have not stopped.

12:09 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Thank you for sharing that. And I just want to affirm and lift up, so everyone knows who hasn't had the chance to be listened to by Dorothy, that if everyone listened like Dorothy the world would feel so heard. [laughter & gratitude]



I just want to be like... if you ever have the chance to have Dorothy listen to you, like, boy ohh boy!

12:29 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** I'm here. Send me your thoughts *[laughter]*

What about you, Conner, what are you up to right now? How do you feel the kind of topics you're engaged in now relate to things you've experienced?

12:55 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Yeah. So right now in the time of COVID, which is when we recorded this, so the past year. I have been working as a restorative justice practitioner. Which involved working with youth, and I worked a lot with specifically LGBTQ youth, and I facilitated community peacebuilding circles. And so a lot of my job was, how do we address conflict before it gets to the boiling point by building community and strengthening relationships?

Now, as we'll talk about doing that and inside of the inherent violence that is our current education system, presented a lot of challenges, but it's been a really beautiful experience of learning how to, first of all, honoring the Indigenous and African roots of restorative justice, my ancestry displaced that and so I need to name that, but also envisioning justice beyond this notion and the symbols of - I see justice circles now, and I see justice as growth and building, as opposed to probably two years ago, I saw justice a statute books, saw justice as a gavel, and saw justice as blind, blind justice. Which to me is just a complete misnomer at this point.

Then, I've also been part of how we're connected on this work together by working with LGBTQ+ youth by facilitating circles to have conversations about 'what does justice and safety mean to you? Are punishment and accountability the same thing?' and having conversations about not only social change but deeply questioning what justice looks like, because I think we say the words like justice for x and question sometimes... what does that look like, or don't have the space or chance to... especially before we're 18. We both had the privilege of going to college where otherwise I would not be critically thinking about these things without that opportunity and gift.

And so going into more background, I am deeply, painfully from the Northern Midwest. And truly never saw an ocean until I was 19, very that kind of Midwest. And so, I grew up in Northeast Wisconsin, specifically in the Green Bay Metro. My family is mostly from downriver Michigan in the Detroit area, and grew up there, so all of my family is there, and we grew up about nine hours away. And I say that because it is a big significant part of my life was driving those nine to ten hour trips once a year to see the family for a week. So grew up a very rural Queer kid.

15:46 And so, identity salience, the most salient identity to me, I didn't know. And so that really shaped a lot of confusion masked as anger and resentment, frustration, and really manifested and not constructive ways to build relationships. Which I think is why being in a relationship-based profession means a lot to me. I was really involved, not shocking, in theater and choir. So choir was really a big part of my life. My first theatrical role was Lumiere in Beauty and the Beast Jr. *[laughter]*

Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her): I love that.

Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him): And I think I only got it because I was the only person who could do some sort of a French accent, which is a skill I don't have anymore.

I think the values that led me to also do this work and I think Queerness as well, is these values of expression, creativity and imagination. A large part of my childhood is literally walking around the woods in my backyard with my neighbor and childhood friend inventing stories together. And then I would go write them all down and I have a document I think in my Dad's computer just all the stories you'd come up with and write down. I think that expression and imagination, really, I think, is where I've got through the worst part of myself... and also where I like talking about with you is that I've also gone through, an unnamed... it actually have not really done a lot of unpacking of the mental health stuff that I went through. And you are a big support when I had a huge relapse incident last summer, and was very grateful to be in relationship with you, and this is why these skills matter with people, and why we need to build these skills, and it shouldn't just be Dorothy supporting everyone in a five mile radius.



17:46 So I'll pause, pause there but basically, for me it was a lot of creativity, imagination that helped me cope. But where I think what restorative justice is, is grounding me in me, and not grounding myself in this imaginary version of me that I created to survive. And in the circumstances that I grew up in. But I had very loving family but you know just growing up where you can't connect with other folks or feeling that, 'oh I'm always the other' but not knowing why. I also want a name that I also was very lucky in the sense of the community I grew up in with the resources I had, so I don't want to over dramatize, like I hear a lot of fellow Queer folk, like white Queer folks do, but I also just wanted to name that and be transparent.

Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her): That's real, wow.

Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him): Yeah. And so, talking about mental, but also wellness, is you've done a lot of really cool work on something called intersectional suicide prevention, and that's a term I never heard of till you, but it makes so much sense when you hear it that of course we need that, and so I'm wondering could you speak to what is intersectional suicide prevention, and what does that look like in practice?

19:01 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Yeah, absolutely. I, first of all, thanks for, just being you and sharing what you shared Conner, especially justice, as a circle, I feel like you've talked to me about the restorative justice circles that you've facilitated but actually envisioning the concept of justice as a literal circle image. I think it's really powerful and interesting, especially when justice is never pictured that way. And it truly is always pictured as the scales or the gavel or whatever thing but ...

19:39 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** I really encourage all of you to think, especially for Queer folks that are listening, if you're an artist, create new symbols of justice. That is the one thing I want to see us get away from, we don't see the carceral state as justice anymore even in our symbols that we think of. So, nice, thank you, yes, back to you, intersectional-suicide prevention.

20:00 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Yes. What's that about? Yeah intersectional suicide prevention. So a little context, my undergrad degree was in

suicide or *[cuts off]* intersectional mental health, which is a degree that I created. And so for my senior capstone thing, I designed a training manual... program... guideline-type thing around intersectional suicide prevention. And so I'm not sure if it's a term, it probably is just because, why wouldn't it be? I'm not sure if it's a term that exists in the world outside of that specific thing that I was doing but the essence of it is suicide prevention as *[pause]* everything. Or suicide prevention as being really interconnected and very much outside of just mental health professionals checking in on you. You calling 911 on your friend who expresses suicidal ideation and then being like, 'hey, do you have a therapist?'. Not to say that if you have experienced those things and felt good about them that that isn't real, because that is the current system that's in place, and if you had a good experience with something like that then I'm very glad you did. But that is certainly not the ideal suicide prevention that I would want for myself, and many people.

And so intersectional suicide prevention is like looking at intersectionality a term coined by [Kimberlé Crenshaw](#) who currently teaches at Columbia Law School, I think, but she's a Black feminist legal scholar, and she like published this term in this paper. Yeah, in a law review in 1989 and it was essentially around Black women falling through the cracks. So when people when.... what do they call people who hire people like jobs.. hire people ... when hiring? Oh, yeah! Recruiters are like filling a quota, something like that, I'm obviously butchering this a lot. I'm sorry.

22:38 When people want to fill a quota, and they're like, 'Okay, cool let's hire some women,' they would only think to hire white women. And then when people are like, 'Oh, let me hire some Black folks,' they would only hire Black men. And so then where do Black women fall in that? But also in general, who are we overlooking in these kind of identity lanes? If you look at them as lanes versus axes? Or, intersecting lines or just overlapping circles or something. Yeah. And so, taking intersectional suicide prevention tries to take that really complicated, but also not that complicated, because, we all have intersectional identities, and we all just kind of live.

So we've all heard kind of the basics I think of suicide risk factors. And a lot of those are first of all kind of difficult to decipher sometimes if you don't know someone very well like sleep habits, eating habits, mood changes, stuff like that. But also they can be really culturally dependent, and we live in a society where White,

White knowledge is prioritized over other types of knowledge, where institutions are built off White Supremacy, and fund research that they deem to prioritize on that kind of thing, the whole chain. Anyway, we can't take all risk factors at face value. So, it's important to kind of boil those risk factors down into the core of what they are and so research, but research that has been done around this and kind of what I personally agree with, is there two main risk factors that people have for suicide and that's perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness. I feel those are kind of strange words but in essence, I think that's around community building and feeling like you're part of a community. And so, as a part of intersectional suicide prevention but also just in general, like if I think about what communities I'm a part of, and I think about what communities, I feel like I'm on the margin of or if I think about the communities where I feel centered in, and then I think about the people who are marginalized in those communities, then it's like... how do I, what makes it so that I feel like I'm a part of a community? What makes it so someone feels like they don't belong in the community? And so those are the perceived burdensomeness... "I don't deserve to be in this community," and also thwarted belongingness of "I don't belong in this community." Those are the primary risk factors, and so in intersectional suicide prevention, I think the prevention efforts to directly respond to those risk factors are around community building and making sure people feel valued and feel like they belong in communities.

26:06 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him)**: I love that. So... I'm just thinking. So, because when I hear intersectional suicide prevention, what I really appreciate is you, I think some people get really frustrated when, when people are like, it's everything. Everything goes back to capitalism, but I think
[cross talk] **Dorothy**: It does

It does exactly do that. And so, what I'm hearing is just what intersectional suicide and intersectional mental health... [cuts off] which is so cool that you build your own major. It's the conditions in which the ideation occurs. So, suicide prevention isn't just the individual act, but also, how do I address the things that are making people feel isolated, or cut off and that relates to racism, homophobia, transphobia, lack of housing? Literally, I don't feel part of the community because I do not have anywhere to live.



Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her): Seriously, all those things. Yeah, and it's

[cross talk] **Conner:** self determination, sorry!

27:06 Yeah, If, if you don't see yourself represented in the spaces that you're in, then it's really hard to feel like you belong. If there's homophobic everything everywhere, and your Queer, how, literally, how are you supposed to feel like you belong? When every single message around you is 'hey you super do not belong.' And so then, how can we, you can't just intervene and save one person at the moment. They're about to end their life like this is such a systemic issue where you have to go to the roots of things to make a sustainable intersectional difference I think.

27:52 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Well, It is, it is a quick, really quick story, I just want to share it reminds me of a really powerful example that comes to mind when you just said that last piece. So I went to a 99% white high school, I don't know if that's the exact demographic, but definitely over 95%. And I remember one of my teachers, who was one of my favorite teachers, had a very well meaning activity, but what it was, was there was eight pieces of paper around the classroom and everyone had to go and fill out all of the stereotypes associated with x identities. So there was, I think it was Native American, Gay, Black, Mexican, it was a weird arrangement, and so all the stereotypes I remember, I don't think there's any people of color in a classroom, so imagine a bunch of white folks literally writing down little really racist things. And in addition, I remember sitting down at the gay one and just reading it. And I was just... I needed to cry because I was just really like... wow, this is what you all think. Hmm. And I just remember that was just the worst, I just never felt so not part of the community in such a passive way it was just words on a piece of paper, but... this is what you all think.

29:05 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** And that is so devastating.

29:08 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** So if you're an inspiring teacher don't do that activity, about stereotypes. It's a concrete takeaway.

[music fades in and out]

29:23 **Sam Koltes (Segment Host, She/her & They/them):**

Hi everybody, I'm Sam Koltes , and I'm your host for the honoring your mentors segment. This is inspired by the podcast irresistible formerly known as healing justice podcast where instead of breaking for messages from sponsors. They give guests an opportunity to shout out projects and related work within the community. Our segment is slightly different. In restorative justice spaces, you'll often hear folks name mentors elders and communities who helped form our voices and when we bring with us. This bit is just an opportunity to pause and have guests and bring those voices in. So who are our guests who mentored you and are with us here today?

30:11 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Yeah, I think... [*pause for thought*] Every person who has seen me as inherently valuable before I prove myself to be a value, is a person who I would name as a mentor who shaped how I engage with the world. Yeah, I was a personal kind of thing. But, I mean, reading the book *Care Work* that I read earlier in this podcast. Leah Lakshmi, her. Just, if you haven't read that book, it is so amazing and it just, I kind of opened it being like, 'Oh, this is gonna be kind of a non-fictiony, textbooky, kind of like 'what is Disability Justice?' but it was so just like real. It was so person-centric and it was so valuable and I think, as my most recent. That's the thing that comes to mind as like a very recent like teacher, or just like reminder that like Disability Justice is literally every single thing. And like how dare we forget that, how dare we discount that in ourselves too. (**Conner:** Right.) How about you?

31:48 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** I would say, Well, I have different sectors, but I would say, the people who I want to name are the first Queer adult role model is [Dr. Mael Sheridan Embser-Herbert](#)... I always am just like God so many names. But being a first Queer adult ever had in my life, and just really helping me survive college, and doing research with me, and being a really good mentor. My restorative justice mentors: so, Sam Koltes, [Raj Sethuraju](#) and [Chris Mendez](#). Who shaped the emerging facilitator, that I have so much to learn, but very great to have them at the beginning of my journey. And then also just like my interpersonal teachers like I would name. Honestly you, Raie, my partner, my mom, as people who, my mom and my dad and my siblings, all those people who have taught me a lot, even what I don't think they realize they've been teachers. And then also just like... abolitionists who I've never met who have shaped so much of my worldview. I spoke a little bit

earlier but [Mariame Kaba](#), [Angela](#) and [Fania Davis](#), [Mia Mingus](#) are also folks that have truly transformed the way I think, and it's crazy to think how much of an impact that their words have had that I've never met. So just, shout out into the world for them... [Dean Spade](#) as well, as folks who have all really shaped.

[music fades in]

33:35 **Sam Koltes (Segment Host, She/her & They/them):** Thank you for bringing your mentors into the space with us. Now let's go back to our previous conversation and continue.

[music fades in and out]

33:49 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Another part where we you talked about relationship building, I thought about this before, and I think we've talked about this, but just even thinking about the role of, I'm just thinking a lot of my background in RJ, to of have relationship building, what would a suicide prevention circle or session look like? And what are the daily practices that we can do for people to feel deeply connected to one another? And that doesn't mean we all agree to sit around and love each other but at least feel like they have a stake or a place in the conversation and that their voices and values matter, and should be at the center of things. And so I really love thinking about it and we're just a whole other conversation about how would, like... what is the relationship between suicide prevention paired with robust community based relationship building in restorative/transformational justice lens? I think... I would love to see, does that actually work in some cases to reduce those types of ideation? I don't know how to measure the gap, but just an idea I'm thinking about the way ...

35:08 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** What do you feel that would look like? Some sort of, I guess, yeah i mean you obviously know much more about restorative circles than I do...

35:22 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Yeah, I guess to me, what that looks like is, I think in part of it is being able to bring *[cuts off]* It's similar to the work with students where they would only use their, or the name that they want in circles. So I work with trans students where they are in their classroom, they would if it was, it



was outside a circle, they would not want to go by their legal name, they would not know anything else but their legal name. But in circle, they're like 'Actually, my name is _____, and we honored their pronouns.'

And so, to me, I think part of it is, I know that I can't speak for that youth, but I felt them be a different presence, or at least just like less burden, I mean they're still really chaotic in circle in a very chaotic presence, but what I really admired about the folks that did that is, to me, it's just, how are folks able to bring their whole selves into a circle, in an unapologetic way we're actually acknowledging differences? Not only acknowledging differences, but deeply grounding our understanding of how does, how do our identities relate? And doing identity development together instead of how we usually do it... this individual, individualized experience, and I'm speaking broadly just because I want to reflect on this more, because I also think with doing any circle based practice, we, it's going to be contextualized to community who are immediately in the circle. So, what might work for a bunch of Queer kids in northern Minnesota, might not work for folks in Seattle. I also think that's part of the intersection, intersectional pieces... everyone brings their own different needs. And so how are we responding to harms and needs in a way that does not involve the carceral state? To my next question.

[Cross talk] **Dorothy:** Nice transition!

Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him): So as an adult, you are an abolitionist, and so what does suicide prevention look like without the carceral state? And how is policing embedded in a lot of these forms of social work? And I guess also to answer that question, maybe for folks who don't know or don't do this work is like. How are police, how's the carceral state involved in suicide? And then, what would it look like without it? So folks understand that there's police doing this work.

37:44 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Very Yes, very good question. So, yes, without going into too much detail about the specific place I work at, but how suicide, or how the carceral state is involved with suicide prevention as it exists in a mainstream way is, I mean, I'm sure folks have heard of 'oh, if your friend is dealing with a mental health crisis or is feeling suicidal, blah, blah, like you can call the police and they will do a wellness check' or they will come, or either way, even if you don't know what will happen after you call the police. The step is you call the police and then at least, you are absolved of guilt or responsibility for the situation

because you're like, 'I don't know what to do. Police probably know what to do,' which they don't, obviously. But you call them anyway because what else it's better than doing nothing right? And that is a very real thing to feel, because it's really scary to be in a situation where you're not comfortable in general but especially a situation where you feel someone else's life could be at risk. And then it's like, 'I really need to do something like anything in my power to make this okay.'

So, at this point, if you, for example, if someone calls into a suicide hotline. And they express a certain amount of acuity, of high suicide risk, and so they have the suicidal thoughts, they have a plan, they have access to the means to carry out their plan, and they have a timeframe for that plan. And that timeframe is imminent, then that person has an imminent risk. And then, if the caller, whoever is not willing to de-escalate then sometimes, depends on the hotlines policy, but oftentimes the hotline will do an active rescue, or some process where the police is called on the individual who called originally, and the police intervene in whatever way they see fit, which is usually not the best way to de-escalate and actually care for a person who's in a suicidal crisis. Yeah. And so what would.. also, before we move on to what this would look without the carceral state. I mean psychiatric incarceration is also real and like...I see you nodding Conner, please say, What are you thinking?

40:36 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** So just very, very quickly, So, one of my one of my friends, even in experiences in my network and myself, where one of the biggest motivating factors that I've seen and one of my friends said this, and I won't share their name just because I don't have their consent for that, but the most powerful thing is *'the thing that kept me out of a psychiatric ward wasn't my health, it was that it was a fear based adherence to healing.'*

And so what she meant by that is, 'I was so afraid of going back to psychiatric care that I have forced myself to give better instead of genuinely centering what their healing needs are.' That's why I'm nodding is that it was using fear, control, punishment, and sanctions to address deep harm and suicidal ideation. And so I just wanted to speak more to that, but that's the example that I'm thinking about, or even in my own experience where I was getting yelled at because I was not.... I was so like not comfortable in the hospital. And so that's what that's just what I'm centering right now is using punishment and fear when someone is in crisis and

how that escalated and prolonged so long. So if you could say more on psychiatric incarceration.

41:54 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Totally, yeah, that's such a good way to put it too framing as fear, as the motivation or that's the thing that's supposed to make you want to heal? Where it's like, well, wait, what? That actually makes zero sense at all. In what world is healing, genuine healing, promoted by fear. That makes no sense. Anyway, um, yeah psychiatric incarceration, I mean, people, mentally ill people are criminalized. Right? There were asylums and there were institutions, and then it's like 'cool let's do institutionalized,' which is very good, to be clear, but then community mental health centers are not adequately funded, they don't actually work. So then it's like, 'oh, where do we put these mentally ill people?' Because our society cannot accommodate mentally ill people, and our society makes no effort to actually accommodate folks, so it's like 'okay well guess we'll incarcerate them.' As if that has anything to do with healing, or care or mental wellness, or anything like that. It's just a way for ableist, white supremacist, capitalist societies is to shuttle these people out of mainstream view for their own convenience, right?

43:27 And so, yes, mental health care or how we all deal with mental health is so deeply tied with the carceral state, and just, especially when you consider and live in intersectionality. Who is going to be incarcerated more? Obviously Black folks, obviously by BIPOC folks, this is just factual information. If you do not have a home, you don't have a place to sleep, which is... how... yeah. Anyway, we don't have to get into all that but it's just so each factor compounds upon itself, and then the carceral system just swoops everybody and just punishes them and it's to what end, do we punish people for what purpose? Who needs that? Who does it serve? All of those things.

44:28 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** What does it look like, in speaking and you spoke to this a little bit, so I think the obvious answer could be none of that. But I'm just, could you speak a little bit to how you would like to envision your work done in a way, without utilizing, police, and also policing?

Because I heard you really powerfully speaking that policing is not exclusive to the police. So, social workers and care professionals can also embody our notions of policing, and by that I mean, using social control, punishment, and discretion in



order to “help.” What does that look like in a community based way without relying on policing?

45:19 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Yeah, yeah. And that I feel like that's the question. Always but especially... the question of the moment of, what does care look like without police if we have not allowed ourselves to imagine a world without police? Prior to this moment which is certainly not true of everybody but seems to be more mainstream, or abolition seems to be more widely adopted at this particular moment.

But, I mean, this is a practical takeaway, don't call the police on your friends who may be suicidal, just don't do it. If it's an actual like very much imminent life and death and you can't be with them, you don't know anybody else who can be with them, they are not offering anything then like... maybe? but that situation is so so so unlikely. Because, if you can physically be there with them, but you're at least someone who found themselves in that situation and maybe have a tie to them, something. But how I at least in intersectional suicide prevention as I was looking at it a couple years ago. I think it really depends on what systems of care and trust, especially already exists in communities. So if we're tying it back to intersectional suicide prevention being about community building and feeling more included, who are trusted people, trusted organizations, trusted networks, anybody in a community? And so, is that a religious institution, is that a community center? Is it your tennis club, is it the basketball court, is it whatever thing, you know?

And so how do we complicate the immediate desire to find a therapist and find a social workers something because those people absolutely have the capacity to do important and good work. Right? But then it's like, when social workers are carrying out a carceral agenda, that's when we have to step back and say who has been historically afforded the privilege of trusting social workers? Trusting therapists? And so, I'm Asian American. Asian American mental health is such a thing but a non-thing of 'oh, that doesn't apply to us, like white people going to therapists, like we don't need that.' But also it's like depression isn't real. Like just do the thing and it's like... Ah, no!

But also it's clearly we have our own care networks, and intergenerational trauma, but also intergenerational resilience, and those strategies of resilience that



we have relied on forever. Right? And that's not to say that everybody has the tools they need within themselves to drive, it's we all need each other and we all need to learn from each other to survive and heal. But we can find those things not from the state. We can find those things within each other, and who in our community has the capacity to be trusted? And so, I have these little resource cards that I made. As part of this intersectional

[crosstalk] 48:57 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** We'll post the PDF in the show notes for groups. So if you want to walk them through it, they'll have access to it.

49:04 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Totally, yeah, yeah. So, yes, the bottom of one of the sides of the card. It says resources, and these are wallet size foldable cards. And it's empty. It's an empty card, because I'm not going to give you resources, I'm not going to put the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline on there, because it depends, so much on the conversation that you're having with the person who may be suicidal who is just having a tough time. And going through those steps of those like, who is in a safety plan? Not an official safety plan, but when you feel this way, who do you turn to? Or what's the thing that you've always wanted to try that you haven't tried before to like, cool down or something like that? And each of those avenues for healing and people to turn to for care it's so contexts and individually dependent that you take work right to like and care for each other. There's no like.... and ask these things, and then data, and like boom! You are official, you have officially been taken care of.

Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him): Right you are now intersectional preventing suicide. I really love what you're saying and I think this reminds me of so much of the work that [Mimi Kim](#), [Shira Hassa](#), [Mariame Kaba](#)... transformative justice practitioners, is where we have to build a lot of this stuff, and we talked about this little bit what works for Dorothy in Seattle will look very different than Conner in rural, Northern Illinois at this moment.

And so how are we, instead of step by step, I appreciate what you're asking, 'what questions do we need to ask' and 'what can we build ourselves, and not think about the community as thousands, but [Mia Mingus talks about pod work](#), who is in your pod and how is your pod going to support each other? How are the two to three people you turn to in times of crisis, how can you all build your own infrastructure to turn each other? And so with that, that takes a lot of knowledge



and awareness and you, and you have such a rich wealth of knowledge, I'm wondering, could you speak to, if folks really want to know better how to show up or they have all the intentions, they want to listen, but they just don't feel like they are prepared, can you offer what sort of training skills, workshops people should seek out?

51:50 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** That's a good question, I think, training and skills, I think I personally have the privilege of having gone through so many different trainings of different hotlines, and different safe talk, and assist and all of these kind of national trainings that it's... oh they all kind of say the same thing.

But I feel genuinely, the truth is, with the people you care about, you will never feel ready to talk to someone and until you do it 1000 times. You will never feel ready and equipped because we are never fully equipped to do anything that we haven't already done. I think, right? So then, how can you trust yourself but also trust the people around you to have forgiveness for you and give grace? And oftentimes, this is not true of hotline workers, but oftentimes, if you're having a conversation around suicide, or around a mental health crisis, you know them, probably pretty well, otherwise you might not know, or the might not be in that conversation in the first place. And so, how can you take the existing knowledge that you have in that relationship to just sit with them?

And so, I don't have a training necessarily that comes to mind, but my own couple tidbits that are also in the little pamphlet thing are just mostly just listen, and I think radical empathy and radical listening were my core values for a long time, because it is really radical to just hold space for someone. And just listen, and not say, 'oh, but have you thought about it this way?' or 'you have so much to be happy about or something that is like, it may be true, but even so, it is not true for them in that moment, and therefore it is pretty irrelevant, and is super invalidating and very dismissive of the current experience that they're having.

So, this is the training: Be silent. Say mmhmm. Ask follow up questions. That's it. That's the tweet like... just listen in the moment and be really, really present with them, and try to see who they trust, how they trust them and just like have that conversation I think.

54:33 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Yeah, literally, I love that, affirm the person and what they're sharing, pause, and then ask follow up. APA? I was trying to see if I could come up with an acronym thing that so many books do.

But I really appreciate that because I think a lot of times when you think about abolition and think about transformative justice *[cuts off]* I just finished reading [Beyond Survival](#), which is edited by Leah Lakshmi, you talk to who wrote *Dreaming Care Work* and that also you mentioned. And what I loved about that is just we are truly experimenting, and Mariame Kaba says “#TryEverything2020,” I think is their [Twitter account](#). Yeah. I love that because this is literally what that is. when we're talking about building alternative structures of care. It is truly, how are you showing up for folks that matter and how are we collectively, building the skills? Because sometimes the skills aren't always at a 100,000, like conflict, if we're talking about an XY axis sometimes, everything's not up in the top right quadrant, building skills like empathy, curiosity, embodying curiosity, listening, knowing how to apologize, knowing how to self regulate, it's all these skills that I wish we were taught, so bad in ways that are beyond once you're a half an adult, that you teach these ways in very toxic manner.

And so I appreciate you just sharing some examples about, when we're talking about abolition prevention. It comes down to how you are showing up and building those little skills that may seem insignificant but in a moment of crisis as we've shared can completely transform the experience and doesn't involve adding the trauma of the police state.

56:31 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Totally Yes, the key is not adding the trauma of the police state.

56:36 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** That's the training.

56:39 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** I feel like you have so much experience with RJ circles and does any conversational technique or something like that ring to be really, really important in those circles that is also tied to this kind of activist thing?

Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him): Yeah, I mean, I would say. So I just need to be very clear I was, I've been trained and mentored in circle less than a year, so I'm not very experienced, I don't think I'm experienced, but I just wanted to be candid about that, but I have done a few like quite a few circles in my day. Yeah.

But that said, Well, I have a couple of different approaches that I would say listening to people all day taught me how bad of a listener I was. And so, I think it's when we say being a good listener is so hard because it means turning off the judgment. And instead of when someone's talking, one skill that I found really helpful is when they someone says something, this white supremacist adherence to perfection mindset came on where I'm like, 'Oh, they said something in a politically incorrect time for me to provide a responsible way to respond.' And I would stop listening to them, and then by the time it got to me, I was so focused on myself and my own thoughts that I didn't, I missed the nuance of the circle. And I missed the nuance of other people participating. And so once you shut off the judgment voice in your head, you are able to engage so much deeper, because instead of trying to figure out what they're saying, I can just ask better follow up questions.

So if two students are in front of me talking about their friend group drama, instead of me thinking, 'oh this is completely stupid you both just need to figure it out and ascribe solutions to them.' Just ask better follow up questions like, what do you need? What do you need in order to heal from this and move forward? What does that look like for you? Just the power of open ended questions is what I would say.

It's turning off the internal dialogue with your head. I see that, as someone with 18,000 tabs in their head, but learning to mute that if you are truly willing to show up for someone, because that will impede you from actually being present. And I'm practicing that every day, I am by no means here talking about this as if I have mastered this. Those are the two things that come to mind when it comes to specifically, just how to better show up for people is once I learned the power of pause, not assuming people are done talking and starting to talk when there's silence, because we have a weird thing about silence in white culture. Yeah. I think generally it's just really hard to sit with silence and sit with that but not in a judgmental way and staring at you to talk way but, 'Hey, I have some crayons, want to color together?' and just offer some way to channel that doesn't necessarily need

to be me talking to you, if someone doesn't have the words... then it's like, you want to draw you feel,? They were like no, I don't want to do that. *[Laughs]*

1:00:10 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Offer is what counts, you know.

1:00:13 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** And then the final practice is that, that I will have used in conferences more than circle because I also do restorative justice conferencing, which is like mediation but meant for repair, and not necessarily resolution, because conflict doesn't resolve, it just transforms. It's an ever present emotion, it's the energy, or ever present energy, it's the emotions we throw into it, is what shapes conflict.

And so, what I mean by that is a practice I've been trying to do specifically around, when we say 'I'm here for you let me know what you need!' If you think about that, while that is a really helpful question, I've learned how unhelpful that is when people offer that to me. And so I think about summer of 2019 was a really tough time everyone kept throwing at me, 'let me know if you need anything'. And what I realized is... this is actually not helpful because I don't know what I need. But, now I try to go, 'Is there anything you need? I can offer you money for Uber, I can send you some money to buy yourself dinner,' Right. And I'm like, 'call your doctor for you, or schedule an appointment for you.' And so, offering here are the things within my capacity now, because, if they say let me know if you need anything, and they're like, 'actually I need someone to talk to me for three hours,' and I'm not in my capacity to do that. But if you're proactively offering the things that you can do in that moment, you also are like the person might be like, 'oh I actually do need to eat like I'd be super helpful.' 'Yeah, I actually don't want to call my dentist for the appointment tomorrow, that would be so cool if you could do that for me.' So those are the things that I'm thinking about and restorative impulse is just embodying curiosity and proactively offering. And just, just practicing listening in a deeper sense than we're taught.

1:02:17 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Mm hmm. I like this a lot. I like this a lot, especially the 'ask follow up questions, It's like, yeah, absolutely. Ask follow up questions, and I feel like it's so easy to be like 'oh my gosh I have to figure it out. I have to like decipher what they mean. Otherwise they're gonna think I'm not

listening.' Asking follow up questions just shows that you're listening, it shows that you actually want to understand what's going on.

1:02:43 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Another quick tip of follow up questions. Don't assume everyone's operating from the same definition as you this would have prevented so much conflict for me, [Erricka Bridgeford](#) taught me this, it's, if, if someone says, 'I'm trying to think of a good example off the top of my head. If someone is like, 'I don't believe in racism'. This is something in a conversation. Ask them, 'tell me what you mean?' 'May you explain to me what racism is to you?' Because I've used this with fellow white folks, where they think racism is a Nazi or KKK.

And so, 'I'm not racist' and yeah by that definition, they might not be outward white supremacist, but as we know racism is not an act, it is a system.

[Reflects to self] "Because as we know" that sounds really condescending

Racism is a force, where even if we took out every racist person, we'd still have racist results. In a way that we can have more constructive dialogue is, if someone is saying something really problematic, ask how they define something, because then in their view that might be it. We can't assume that everyone's approaching things with same definition. That's why I believe in constructing values or common understandings because if we're operating from two very different places. And it's something as crucial to talk about is race which is present in every single conversation. If we don't have, if we don't have a common understanding, we're not gonna be able to get anywhere, because in how I see race, all it's not a matter of *if* fellow White folks are racist, it's *how* you are, and *how* racial bias manifests within you. But that is not everyone is not at that understanding, and I really, really encourage fellow white folks to please take time to engage in that dialogue and ask folks and just ask open ended questions if you have the capacity and a strong relationship or an emerging relationship with someone. That was kind of a longer tangent, but that is another great deep listening tactic: ask for clarification, if something seems problematic, ask why, ask what their thoughts are and not as what do you mean? But however, may you talk more about what this means to you?

[Cross talk] **Dorothy:** Yeah.



Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him): So, because “what” triggers that defense. If you are like, what do you mean by that? And this is where sometimes it can be burdensome, but that's why in this example of race, fellow white folks, step up so someone else doesn't have to do that. You can, you can do that. It's practice, it's never going to be perfect. Perfection is part of [white supremacy culture](#), if we have a perfect we won't try and experiment things. All we can do is just be better. And, try, maybe something didn't go perfectly but know that like ‘okay I just have to adapt that thing next time and it'll go better’, and maybe it doesn't. And then you just keep trying, because we're all really making it up as we go. *[affirmation]*

So a quick question I have for you, Dorothy, before because I'm just being cognizant of time but, we both work in the non-profit sector in the United States. And so I'm wondering, could you speak a little bit to the challenges of having abolitionist values and identity in the nonprofit sector?

1:06:14 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Yeah. Fantastic Question. I think, yeah, I mean, specifically for me because I work at a suicide hotline that does active rescues that does engage the police. If, quote unquote, necessary. It's tough having abolitionist values because I feel I'm always kind of pushing back on a policy or an orientation that will never change on their end, right? And so that doesn't mean that we shouldn't try. It doesn't mean that at all. It means we should evangelize. If nothing else, but implement abolitionist tendencies in our other communications and our other projects and that kind of thing, but it's really tough. I mean, I said in a meeting one time they were like, ‘oh, we're all anti racist’ and first of all, not true, and second of all, we're different. I'm an abolitionist. I want the police to not exist anymore, I don't want prisons to exist anymore, literally at all. We do not believe the same things. I want to say that's okay but you should also be an abolitionist. But, working in a space where you know that other people are not coming from the same political, moral... whatever orientation is interesting because that's how mainstream society is not abolitionists, right? It's kind of, especially in the nonprofit sector, where I know I enter and am still in it and probably still be in it for a long time. I entered because this is the better option or I feel like I'm doing something meaningful, which I still think I am, but knowing that something can be meaningful but at the same time, far from perfect. I think it's like my current struggle, but I know you have a lot of experiences and thoughts on this Conner .



1:08:28 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Yeah, but I'll keep it brief. One thing I'd love people to check out and I'll link it in the show notes, I seem to name it because I won't summarize it with justice but it's this event put on it by, it's on the [Barnard Center for Research on Women YouTube Channel](#) , but it's this panel about [Queer Dreams and Nonprofit Blues](#). And so it's this little video series of Queer people talking about organizing, or not accepting donations from foundations, which have a lot of strings attached, or how do we build movements where people can be compensated for work? Actually I won't go and expand, check that out please just incredible.

But I would say having abolitionist values... so, restorative justice as a profession and transformative... *[cuts off]* I feel like I actually inhabit, I want to be in the transformative justice space, but currently I live in restorative justice. And so just to distinguish that for folks what that looks like for me is that I've worked with organizations and. A lot of referrals come from the court and the police. And so, a lot of folks in my profession are like, 'well, it's better for them to go to us then to the courts and police.' However, what's unfortunate about that is how people come to us is through the police and courts. So no matter how well intentioned we are to a lot of folks, we look like another arm of the punishment system. Because how they come to us isn't organically in the community, although sometimes it is, and I'm talking broadly, not talking about a specific organization, but a lot of times if a lot of referrals come from the system, that means they had to be arrested, kicked out of school, there's so much trauma that happened, that if people can directly to organizations, then would be mitigated.

So all that's to say, and the challenges that I see a lot of having abolitionist identity, is that that means we have to have a really strong relationship with the state in order to get access. And so that means it's strategically embedding ourselves within systems. And that means our funding sources often come from state spaces, and as we know about the nonprofit industrial complex... it regulates, and expedites, the process because we have to make sure we're doing enough processes in order to show that we are doing the work and deserve funding but putting restorative justice in this inherently violent space and transforming to practice like restorative justice is not about a quick fix. I don't think restorative justice also should be used for every single thing, because no one can be forced to be restored and no one can be coerced into accountability. *[Dorothy affirms]*

You know? Our system is all about... *[cuts off]* Well, I literally had a student. It's like, well you can get expelled, or you can do the restorative conference. So what are they gonna pick? Even if they don't want to do it, and so I'm sitting with someone who's so uninvested because they're dealt two dumb options. Or, I would work with students who came in after they were expelled. So the school to prison pipeline was already initiated. And then they would meet with me, and they'd be like, 'why are we still talking about this? I was punished already'. And so it's like this norm of repairing after harm occurred, but there's already a sanction attached to it. So, that's not to say being an abolitionist and restorative justice are separate, I think restorative justice lends itself very naturally to abolition and transformative justice, where both are about, interpersonal, and social transformation properly understood.

However, how RJ (restorative justice) is often embedded into systems or prevents restoration because it is being co-opted by the very paradigm we seek to displace. It is being about adhering specific to a process, it is about, maybe every process looks very similar. And this is not every single RJ organization, and I'm not saying RJ should be canceled. I'm just saying... It's very hard to displace... it's very hard to have two systems, to have punitive carceral justice, and I don't even call that justice, a punitive carceral legal system, exists alongside restorative justice because as long as the more punitive one exists, Mariame Kaba talks about how the punishment system will always be deferred to... *[pause]* because it is quicker And because it does not involve the deep work of being accountable. So, that's like where I struggle in the abolitionist/justice space. We already have the understanding that the punitive criminal injustice system and the criminal punishment system doesn't work. So, I'm always just like... why can't we push that further?

But, I also understand that... I'm also not trying to claim that... *[cuts off]* I'm still learning a lot about RJ, and how it's existed and I think it is important and I think it matters. Yeah, I really struggle with embedding ourselves. My end goal with restorative justice is that we build so many alternative things beyond accountability processes because those aren't going to fit every social issue. Not everyone wants that process to exist and I don't think we should try to make restorative justice the catch all solution to everything. Isn't that we literally did with the prison system? *[Cross talk]* **Dorothy:** Oh, yeah.

Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him) So, I think restorative justice was very essential, it's a social movement, a practice, and tools, all in one. It is not just tools, it involves impulse. And so, I'm hopeful that we can come to a place where we understand what are all the other things we have to build. Because RJ and transformative justice, outside of the state are going to require so much other experimentation and building. I don't have concrete answers of what that looks like. But that's the hope I have, but it's like... if we don't at least start, be able to understand that the state impedes the justice we seek - We aren't even going to be able to have those conversations and we can't plant the seeds. And Mia Mingus has a really amazing essay called "[Small Seeds](#)", we can't even plant those seeds, if we can't even get to an understanding that we need to start cultivating them. That is a little long winded.

1:15:19 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):**
I learned so much from you every time Connor. I really do.

1:15:23 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** And I just name that so much of my, I would if I did not listen to Mariame Kaba religiously, I don't know her personally. If [Amanda Lawson](#), who's a mutual friend of ours did not send me all those resources, I don't know where I'd be. If I didn't engage in abolitionist content every single day outside of my job, I would literally know nothing. So, I need to name those informal teachers of constantly making me apply and be critical, because it's not just about them, they are not the only thinkers, it's just the ones that have come up to me, most quickly, in the context of this discussion.

But do you have anything you want to add around abolition, nonprofits, before I ask the last question for you? Anything you want to add or in the whole context of this conversation?

1:16:13 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** I think, I mean, we covered it we... we've been talking.

1:16:21 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** So, Dorothy Could you speak to what does the phrase Queer justice mean to you? And what do you want Queer justice to look like?



1:16:32 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Yeah, yeah. Queer justice, I think, as I'm kind of thinking about this question more, Queer justice is if we take a look at the word, or the concept of Queerness of just changing things. or refusing to box things into a binary. or to something that shouldn't be boxed, then that is that same thing applies to justice. So I mean, you were just speaking to this about like different, we should be looking to build a world in which restorative justice is not one of two options. The other option being expulsion, or incarceration. or something so that it's like, 'Okay, well, what am I going to choose from these two options.' So, Queer justice is like having the ability to choose genuinely, actually having agency, about what justice looks like to you. Yeah, I think I'll leave it at that. Yeah.

1:17:43 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Then, just to, that was beautiful, and I really love that you also brought in choosing and I think with Queerness it also comes like choosing, chosen families really matter. And so I also really love you evoking that other part of the Queer identity of just your... you have your biological family and that's a messy topic for a lot of folks but you also are your chosen family, and building new things comes with that you're building your networks, translating that to how we understand justice.

Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her): Yeah. What about you?

Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him): This question... yeah I was just saying, I think I've asked so many people this question, and I've never answered it.

1:18:23 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** But people want to know.

1:18:25 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** [Sarcastically] Yeah, we really need to uplift more white Queer people. Yeah, that's really the perspective we need to uplift.

But anyway, let's say... well, to me, I sometimes struggle with conflating justice as liberation, but to me. Queer justice is the actualization of imagination. And what I mean by that is, justice, to me, is not only dreaming, and being in conversation collectively about the world we want to be in, but actively creating it. And for opportunities for harm to be addressed, for trauma to be transformed, and for violence, to not exist in our community, so that folks can approach the world in the spirit of the Queer ethos. To me, which is in a creative way with authenticity, and



being able to experiment, not only with how you present yourself to the world, but also experimentation in prefiguring the world in which we want to be in. So that's that's a big definition of what Queer Justice is to me, but it's building the world which we can respond to, address, and transform harm, so that we can have that healing. Yeah.

1:20:02 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her)**: I like that a lot. Yeah, I like Queerness as creativity too. Just like make things .

Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him): Creative justice as we talk about this in our project that we're working on, and I want to quickly shout that out. So, Dorothy and I both are on the Research & Resources Team, and we're on a curation/creation project of creating an Envisioning Queer Justice Toolkit, and I don't know if there's anything you want to specifically our toolkit.

1:20:34 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her)**: Yes. Yes. *[laughter]*

1:20:37 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him)**: Do you want to say about that or parts that you are excited about as we're in the creation stage of it right now, so it'll be out by the time this episode is released.

1:20:49 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her)**: Scary, we have a lot to do. But I'm, yeah, I think I'm just excited for this to exist because I think it is, it's absolutely not in any sense a catch-all resource at all, it's me and Conner talking about things and trying to be informative, and linking people to other resources that are more comprehensive. So I'm excited for that to exist just because it's always interesting to see how different ideas connect together.

And how both of our experiences have shaped the way that we've processed what Queer justices is and how this toolkit, zine, thing will actually look like. But yeah, I mean, I feel we cover a lot of ground from restorative justice, transformative justice, to health equity, intersectional suicide prevention, to capitalism. So there's a lot in, there in digestible chunks, is the end goal. Yeah, but what are you excited about?



1:22:02 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** I'm excited just because I feel I'm gonna write this 8000 times in the thing. We are not claiming that this is a roadmap to Queer justice. It is frameworks and skills that I wish I didn't have to learn in 8000 different spaces, exclusively connected to Queerness. And Queerness grounded in the intersectional framework in the Queer community there's so many unique modes of discrimination that need to be attended to. So, how are we building a world that attends to all of that?

So it's a lot of bringing up amazing work brought by folks who are not often sung in their mainstream. So, I think just offering little, little practices or activities you can do. I envision people doing it with their chosen families, it's kind of my hope for it. But also, even if one person's like I learned one thing, I think it's a job well done. So I'm super excited for working on it, I think the biggest joy has been it's just been able to work with you, beyond just being in relation with you, but actually collab.

1:23:16 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** Yeah, collab. It's... yeah, we're in the thick of it but it's been such a joy and just, *[back and forth crosstalk]* I feel like we always have such good conversations and your ideas are so important.

1:23:34 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** Yes, and we just need more Dorothy's in the world. But also we need people not like Dorothy because it'd be all Dorothy's and all Conner's and they would have all of our flaws.

1:23:45 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her):** That's true. That's true, that's true yeah no we, for sure.

[music fades in and out]

1:24:00 **Conner Suddick (Co-Host, He/him):** You just listen to a conversation between Dorothy and myself, Connor, who are members of the Envisioning Queer Justice Collaboratives research and resources team. Thank you to the [Hamline University Center for Justice and Law](#) and [Peace First](#) for their fiscal support of this project, the opinions expressed in this podcast solely reflect the individual speaker and non affiliations named.



1:24:24 **Dorothy Jiang (Co-Host, They/them & She/her): [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 and 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 and check us out on social media by searching Envisioning Queer Justice Collaborative. Thank you for joining us.

[music fades in and out]