

Nourishing Our Roots Episode 2 - First Cut Transcription

Grace

Ashiana

Jam Bridgett (they/them)

Intro music (00:00:00 - 00:00:18)

[drums, strings, and birds play in the background]

Opening Statement (00:00:18 - 00:00:57)

Grace: Hello and welcome to Nourishing Our Roots podcast, where we bring you practices and conversations around wellness from a decolonized perspective and help you dig into your roots and find wellness from within.

Ashiana: We have four episodes in this season, released biweekly, and each episode features a new guest as well as a new theme like spirituality, art, and body practices, and sexual health and positivity. So we believe wellness should be approached in a holistic manner and can not only include physical and mental but also spiritual and emotional wellness.

Grace: This podcast is supported by LGBT YouthLine's Provincial Youth Ambassador Program.

Greetings and Intro (00:00:57 - 00:03:07)

Grace: My name is Grace and I'm one of your cohosts for this podcast. I'm recording from Guelph, located on the ancestral lands of the Attawandaron People and the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Ashiana: Hi, my name is Ashiana, the other cohost of this podcast. I am currently located in what is colonially known as Thunder Bay in so-called Ontario and I acknowledge that this is the traditional territory of the Anishinabek, mainly the Ojibwe of Fort William First Nations, and I also acknowledge the various contributions made to this land by the Metis People.

Grace: As we engage in this discussion on decolonizing wellness, remember that our liberation and resistance is connected in creating futures centred around wellbeing, joy, and community.

Ashiana: So, welcome to another episode of Nourishing Our Roots. Today we are talking about creativity and artistic expression. Creativity, for me, is a means to disconnect with this world as it is and to bring out something entirely new from within. It is thinking outside the box and not caring about what the norms are or what other people think and just letting your energy flow freely. So today, we will discuss some practices that will help us creatively unwind and express ourselves outside the colonial views of artistry.

Grace: Today we are very excited to invite Jam Bridgett to the podcast!

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Hey y'all, thanks for having me.

Grace: Whoo, Jam!

Ashiana: Welcome!

Grace: [Laughs]. Jam Bridgett is a Black queer visual artist, writer, and aspiring author located on the land of Mississaugas of Scugog Lake outside of Toronto. Their writing has been featured in independent publications like the 1990 magazine, Subvert magazine, Enby magazine, and Rose Quartz magazine. They spend their time writing, cooking, reading tarot cards, and freedom dreaming with their chosen family. Their handle is @yikesjamaica across all social media platforms. So welcome to Nourishing Our Roots, Jam!

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Thank you! I'm so excited to talk with y'all.

Grace: We're excited to speak with you and have this conversation!

Conversation (00:03:07 - 00:38:02)

Grace: So, first thing's first, we want to ask you our theme question, which is: what does the phrase "decolonize wellness" mean to you and what imagery does it invoke?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Ooh. I think, for me, decolonize wellness invokes uhm, ideas that, like, sometimes I'm more have questions than I have answers. Like, what are solutions that we're not seeing? Or, what are the ways that what is colonially or capitalist-ly prescribed, how is that failing us? And so if we can kind of understand some of the systemic issues that contribute to our illness and if we can look to resist the ways that capitalism constantly frames our attempt at wellness then maybe if we fill in the cracks, that's kind of us decolonizing wellness. Y'know, if we decentre whiteness, decentre capitalism, centre the margins, create community, always resist that isolation and that loneliness that capitalism, y'know, kinda infuses in this society, I think that's decolonizing wellness.

Ashiana: Yeah, well said. Yeah, individualism is a great part of capitalism and that's what, y'know, that's exactly the opposite of community and community is an integral part of wellness. And so, yeah, well said Jam. Thank you so much!

Grace: Yeah! And I also want to mention, y'know, the first thing you said around, like, decolonizing wellness means, like, asking questions. Like, questioning. And I think that's a huge part, it's like saying "why is this like this?", "why do I have to conform to this when it doesn't feel natural to me when it's degrading my mental health and my spiritual health and all these things?". So I love- I remember I was listening to a podcast that, like, there was this- there was this woman speaking about decolonizing gender and one of the first questions was, like, what does decolonizing gender mean to you? And, I forgot the name of this person, but one of the first things she said was, like, questions. Questioning. And, so, yeah, absolutely thank you for bringing all that to us.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yes, absolutely. [Chuckles]

Ashiana: Yes. So now we would like to know a bit more about you. So can you tell us your story so far, Jam? Like, who are you? And what was your journey to becoming the person you are today?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Uhm, who am I? That's a huge question. Uhm, I'm a Jamaican, I'm a queer, I'm a friend, uhm, I'm an artist, I'm a writer, but more than that I'm a dreamer, I'm like, constantly poking holes, asking critical questions, trying to pull up the roots on the flowers that the people around me or the society around me is claiming is capital T, Truth. I'm always trying to understand, like, where does truth come from? What is truth? What is my truth? Uhm, and I get here because my grandparents and parents immigrated from Jamaica, uhm, I am here and I am the person I am because they named me Jamaica. And so I feel like I'm always trying to live my life in a way that is in reflection of my ancestors hard work and is contributing to my ancestors hard work. So whether that means working at the library with kids, whether that means working in service of queer and trans people, whether that means protesting with my Black Citizens Alliance at university, uhm, back in my day, uhm, that's the kind of things that make up who I am. I'm always trying to ask myself, like, like, what am I actually being told and what can I deconstruct from that? What do I think about what I'm being told? What do I do with this energy that is sometimes confused, always queer, always Black, always wondering, and always trying to reconnect with my soul family? [Moment of silence]. That's me. That was a lot. [Giggles].

Grace: No it was- oh my gosh. [Giggles]. Thank you. Thank you, and I love what you mentioned around, like, ancestors hard work. Like, and like, growing on that. On that being a continuum. I, like, there was a point when, I think this was last year, when, like, I just started thinking- because I feel like going back to this idea of we're made to feel so individual in wellness and, and that, it's like this, individual thing, that our lives are individual, even, like, as Black folks we're told that our past doesn't matter [laughs] and that our ancestors don't matter and things like that.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Mhmm

Grace: Uhm, and so, but this thing that I saw was just like, that I'm a continuation of my ancestors and so I don't have to do everything in this life, y'know? Like, my ancestors contributed to my healing and I'll contribute to the healing of my descendants and it's alive and it's a community and so I love that you mentioned that. Uhm, yeah.

Ashiana: Yeah, so thank you so much for sharing, uhm, and to elaborate a little bit more on your journey, I remember in our preinterview you talked about getting through your high school and having that self-discovery and having that means of self-expression through art. So how did you come into writing or artistry? What was your journey?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I have always been writing. My mom loves to tell me stories of the first day she brought me home from the hospital she was trying to teach me the alphabet and I was walking around with a pen and pencil in my hand before I was two. So when I was seven and writing my first story, in grade ten and trying to write my first novel, and now I'm working on the sixth iteration of one story that is trying to become a novel now, uhm, I've just always found that if I can't get it out verbally, if I can't get it out to other people, uhm, I can find a means to communicate it to myself through writing. So that's just what I do and I try to kind of write queer stories, write Black stories, or whether it's articles write about these subject matters that they interest me, they impact me, they shake me as a person.

Ashiana: Wonderful, wow. Yeah, you are definitely a writer. I can see from your beautiful words that you just make me feel like stutter- stuttering. So thank you so much for those words. And Grace, did you have any follow-up?

Grace: Oh yeah! Could you tell us around your journey, uhm, like, I think you mentioned community being a big aspect of your journey as a young person as you moved through high school to university to now so yeah, so maybe, like, if you could, like, yeah, expand a bit more on that and what that journey was like?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah, I really feel like, y'know, we're social creatures so it's hard to understand self if you don't understand others and if you're not around others. And so getting to high school and kind of like, whether it was like, seeing, uhm, older heads or meeting other Black people and kind of always, no matter what, creating this communion with Black people and then coming out as queer, as one of the first among my friends, okay, I feel like that deserves a little bit of honour, and then having all these other queers kind of gravitate towards each other and then having that communion. And then having, like, my sister-friend guide me when it comes to, like, understanding what pronouns I want to use or what gender expression or what words I want to use to describe myself. Or having gone to work at a queer camp and having, like, such a beautiful person guide me through wearing my first binder. Or speaking to somebody who- I actually don't remember how I met this person, maybe it was at pride or through university or through a mutual friend - and they helped guide me through the process of getting the- the- the process of getting top surgery. Like without all these people that help inform who I am, or how I think, or just give me the strength to be who I am and stand behind how I think, I wouldn't be who I am. So I'm always, like, always going to say these are my people, this is my community, these are my chosen family because, like, it's a staircase. Life is a staircase and, like, people are here building and helping me build my own stairs so I always have to, like, dig that up because that's a huge part of the process.

Grace: Thank you so much for sharing that, Jam. Uhm, and so my next question for you is what was the first thing, uhm, you remember writing? Because you mentioned, oh, that beautiful story of you coming home and your mother teaching you the alphabet. So what is the first thing you remember writing that made you feel well or euphoric?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Okay, well or euphoric, that's a really good qualifier. Uhm, oh my gosh I don't feel like I can remember one thing specifically, maybe it's like a journal entry where it's, like, I admit a difficult truth to myself or, uhm, in articles- like one of the first articles I got published about being queer and I felt like so proud and like, okay, maybe there are other people out there who, I know I'm not alone in this queerness, but who specifically relate to what I'm going through and that feeling of not being alone, that feeling of having my art validated by other queer people, that's probably one of the most euphoric moments.

Grace: Uhm, thank you so much for sharing that and that just makes me think of, y'know, I- I also, at a time in my life of writing, I really loved writing growing up, and- and reading is a huge part of writing, so I'm just wondering if there's something that you read that just really inspired you, like, in the early days of becoming Jam?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Uhm, wow, I feel like that is hard because, like, I was a voracious reader. My library is, like, ten minutes from my house, you couldn't keep me out of that bitch. I was always in the library, and there were like summers where I was only trying to read books by queer authors or about queer characters. Uhm, but I feel like I remember one in particular about an asexual person and I just feel like that was the first time in my whole life that I ever saw any asexual representation on the whole planet, other than, like, in those tumblr days. Uhm, and that was just beautiful because I'm, yes I love to read Black stories and queer stories that relate to who I am but I'm also always trying to learn the world, so to read other perspectives is also so, like, magical.

Grace: Yeah, that's amazing. Do you remember what the book is called by any chance? If not, no worries, but-

Jam Bridgett (they/them): No. So sorry, no.

Grace: Yeah, no- no worries. I remember I read this book in- I mean, I was also a voracious reader and I read this book in seventh grade called Parrot Fish and it was-

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I read that!

Grace: Yeah! It was, it was like, books! I think it was the first, maybe the first queer trans I read but, uhm, yeah, it was amazing because it was assigned to us in class and yeah, so, it was really cool.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): That's amazing.

Ashiana: Yeah, that's cool. I'm feeling jealous actually because I have not read much literature on, y'know, queer people or by queer people or about queer people much. Uh, so I'll have to catch up on that. So please be sure to send me a list like how you sent me those podcast lists [laughs] send me one's for books as well. I mean I've read- I've read a lot since I was a kid and, like, once I moved out of India it has gone considerably low but I'm trying to bring my reading

habit back so this will be something interesting to get back to, that would be great to read some of that literature.

Grace: Reading is such an amazing way of learning other people's stories and validating your own so I think it's really beautiful. Uhm, and so, we asked you, I said at first writing, uhm, you're also an artist. So what was the first drawing you remember making that made you feel euphoric or well? [laughs].

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Uh that is also very hard. I've always been creating and so I feel like there's not a first, but if I could give you one in particular. Before I had top surgery I painted what I would look like, uhm, post-surgery and that was very euphoric and even now looking at it, it makes me smile so it's not the first but it's a good one.

Ashiana: Yes, definitely. I was going to ask something along the same lines. Like, when was the first time you drew something that may be queer? When did you realize, y'know, did you realize it, at a young age did you doodle? Uhh, yeah.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Uhh, I feel like I realized at 12 but I didn't realize. Then I realized at 15, you know like it goes dormant?

[laughs]

Grace: Like a gene that's gone dormant?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah! Then at 15 it was like I couldn't, like, what's the words for it, deny it? And then so whether it was creating uhm, art of just my name in hearts with y'know, other people or, uhm, I don't know. Y'know like, draw me like one of your french girls, y'know? Like drawing [collective laughs], drawing female anatomy. And then, kinda being like, mmmm. Y'know, you like this a little bit too much. [laughs].

Grace: Oh my gosh, I remember, once again in seventh grade, my teacher in seventh grade was great. But he was like an artist from, like, Paris, uhm, and- and one of the things he would like- we would draw, like, naked people as an art practice. And it was, like, only ever men. And I would just always draw women. And I was like a little, a little too obsessed with that. Like what's... what's going on here? But yeah. Thanks. Uhm, and, so, I'm wondering how writing and art and creative practices serve you now? How do you use them now?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I feel like, uhm, especially painting is very much an intuitive and spiritual, energetic practice where, like, I can shut off certain parts of my brain that are always thinking or that are thinking cyclical thoughts or that are thinking thoughts that don't benefit me then I can just be with my body, I can just be with my spirit, be with creative energy. And then when it comes to writing, it's again just, like, expressing myself in ways that I might not consciously feel like I can do in a verbal sense with other people, uhm, or just expressing my innermost thoughts in pretty ways that feel good, that feel euphoric, that feel like I'm really

getting to the depth of how I feel. I'm a Scorpio, so I'm always, like, let's go deeper. Let's go deeper. Let's go deeper. And I feel like writing, and sometimes painting, sometimes drawing, allows me to get as deep and as sticky as I actually want to get.

Grace: That's amazing. And, uhm, I also love that you mentioned of like taking feelings and turning them into like pretty poetry or like writing or things like that. Uhm, especially, I know for me, when it comes to bad feelings one of the best things about bad feelings for me is being able to write about them. Write a song about it, write poetry about it, cause I'm like this is so pretty!

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah, absolutely.

Ashiana: Yeah, that's a great outlet and I want to get into more drawing again. Like, I doodle but I never considered myself an artist, uhm, because, y'know, it's just doodles. Just, like, wiggly lines, squiggly lines, that don't make any sense. I think I talked about this during our preinterview, Jam, and then I saw your Instagram and some of your doodles are very similar to mine with your squiggly-wiggly lines! [laughs]. And I'm like "oh, okay... so if they can call it art I can call mine art, too".

Jam Bridgett (they/them): It absolutely is art! I feel like if you're creating, it's art. Just- that's me. If it comes from somewhere human, if it comes from somewhere with feeling, it's art. It doesn't have to be pretty, it doesn't have to be really high skilled or very detailed, like, you took something out of your heart. You made something. You're a parent, you know? It's art. You're a creative. Yeah, give yourself that props.

Ashiana: Thank you. Thank you for that. Okay, so, yeah so we talked about how these creative practices serve you, so, but how do you use these creative practices to connect with your community?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I feel like, especially in my works that are published, uhm, whether that's online or in print, when I write about especially queer topics, uhm, people feel that. People relate to that, people connect to that, they say wow you put in words what I never knew how to put in words. Or even, like, I have a sister-friend who showed, uhm, an article I wrote about being nonbinary to their mom and their mom was like "I get it now". So in some small ways, y'know, maybe someone reads my article and they're educated. In some small ways someone's heart is warmed, or someone realizes that, like, they can pursue their art, they can pursue themselves and their truth and hopefully that connects with people. I mean, I did have a reader in Barbados and I mean that's pretty cool. I hope it gets to people and I hope that people feel, like, the love in it.

Ashiana: Yeah, definitely. Like I said myself [laughs] like, how I mentioned, I saw your artistry and I'm, like, this, I felt more confident about my artistry. So, that's- that's great.

Grace: Uhm, yeah, and, uhm, around, like, we did a program, together, before, with Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, which is called BlackCAP, and we were Community Youth

Facilitators and, yeah, it was very cute, loved it! At the end of it we created a zine, uhm, and, oh my gosh, like, your poetry, your writing in that zine is so, like, is so, so, so beautiful. It's so amazing. It's going to be available online at some point so we will link that in at some point or share that. But, uhm, I run discussion with, like, my university for queer and trans folks and, like, during our trans student discussions I'm, like, I'm bringing out your writing and I'm like "Y'ALL! This is what they wrote!" [claps].

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Oh, my heart, wow.

Grace: Yeah, it's so beautiful, and like, I'm like tearing up that's so beautiful so thank you. Thank you for sharing your experience so that we can feel seen together and feel and be community so yeah.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Oh my god, that's what it's all about! You're going to make me blush. Wow, that's amazing, thank you for even telling me that.

Grace: So, we talked about wellness, about creative practice, so- I feel like there's an obvious connection here but if you would like to expand more on how you incorporate your creative practices into wellness?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I feel like to a certain extent, for me, to try to be well in and of itself is a creative practice. I'm trying to create habits or I'm trying to create new thoughts or I'm trying to create more internal patterns or I'm trying to create this life for myself that holistically feeds every part of myself. So, caring for my community, caring for my heart, caring for my mental health, caring for my emotional health, caring for my physical health, caring for myself as a chronically ill person, like, I don't feel like my creativity, whether that's I'm cheffing it up for myself and for my kin or whether that's I'm doing research because somebody is ill, whether that's I'm driving over and I'm going to bring somebody else food, like, all these small things that even if we don't necessarily always think about them as creative, they're creative. And they create community, they create connection and that also contributes to my wellness. I feel good when I care for people and I care for people in creative ways. SOmetimes it is writing a love letter to my homie, y'know, or like I said driving over with food, or just checking up on people, or making them a piece of art, or putting my art on a sweater for them. Whatever it is there's lots of different ways to incorporate creativity or even just look at care and wellness as a creative act.

Grace: Honey! You are blessing us!

[laughs]

Jam Bridgett (they/them): These are good questions.

Grace: That's, yeah, uhm, y'know, that just- that just even like, y'know, there's all these beautiful aspects of it, but even being, uhh, a Black, like for me, a Black queer, like, neurodivergent person in the world, like, learning and like doing things that are best for myself and learning how

to navigate, like, neurotypical spaces and like cishet spaces and like white- predominantly white spaces, that takes a lot of creativity.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): It does.

Grace: Some of it is taxing and some of it is stuff that, like, feels like you're creating a better space for yourself and for your kin and for your community. So, yeah, thank you for that insight, it was beautiful.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah, thank you.

Grace: Uhm, so, my next question is how do you use your creative practices, specifically writing and visual art, to decolonize wellness in your everyday life?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): That's a good question. Uhm, I don't know if I have an answer for it.

Grace: That's okay! [laughs] Or you could just- uhm, do you have any thoughts on how you decolonize wellness in your everyday life?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah! I feel like on sure-fire way to decolonize wellness is, like, get the fuck up off Instagram. Like, stop listening especially to those - I'm so sorry - white cishet women trying to tell me, as a Black queer person, as a child of immigrants, as a chronically ill person, how to be well. Like, it doesn't work. So maybe sometimes for me on the daily, it's like, checking in, like, who's this source? And is this source reliable? And what are they really trying to tell me, what are they covering up? I feel like a lot of wellness blogs, gurus, or just even perspectives in the mainstream wellness world is really just trying to get you to, like, kick systematic oppression under the rug. And that's not going to work. So in my daily life, like, I'm honest with myself, I'm honest with what I'm seeing and I'm analyzing what I'm seeing so I'm not just eating it like a sheep, y'know? And just listening to other people sometimes, like, contributing to your wellness means listening to yourself, right? And not even going to external sources, y'know, validate yourself. Or just, like, Dr. Phil has nothing useful to provide and all those people in that kind of mainstream wellness industry, who are they really speaking to? And if you take it in, if you're a marginalized person in one way shape or the other, probably not talking to you so don't even try to apply what they're teaching onto your own life, like, find your own root. And I feel like that's what I'm doing. I'm trying to find my own root.

Ashiana: That's beautiful. Finding your own root and nourishing it is what we are here for! Yay! [laughs]. So if you can maybe, then just, uhh, tell us about some or any of your current art projects or even writing projects that you're currently working on? If you want to share?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah! Right now I'm really giving my all to this novel that I'm writing. Uhm, [brushes lips], I had to scrap, like, 50 000 words last month and I'm at almost 50 000 words so that's really where my heart is right now. And, to tell you a little bit about it, it's a story about chosen family. It's a story about cheating and lies and secrets because I feel like that is

actually at the root of family, whether it's found or biological or chosen and like the difficulty, the chaos, like the real work that we have to put in to create harmony in our families. So that's kinda where my mind is at right now. I haven't painted, haven't drawn, haven't written an article, it's all about this novel right now.

Grace: That's amazing. Focus. Focus can be such a powerful thing.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah.

Grace: So, I'm wondering if you would be willing to share a piece of your written work for us? A private reading, if you will. Smile.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Okay, question. Uhm, what kind of my written work? Do you want a piece of an article, do you want a piece of a poem, do you want a piece of the novel? What do you want?

Grace: I love- I love how you're just willing to give. Whatever resonates with you in the moment. Whatever you feel [laughs] the community wants to hear.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Okay, then I know what I'm going to read. I'm going to read a snippet of my poem that is featured in this here anthology, uhm, Behind Shut Eyes. And it's just works by queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour all about dreams. It's all about dreams. I don't know why this is picking up but it's what I'm picking up. Yeah! My piece in this anthology is a poem called The Fish, The Dream, And The Ocean. Uhm, I'm not going to preface it, I'm just going to read.

Ashiana: I'm already hooked.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): So, it says: in my dreams, I'm already every single person. In my dreams, I'm a future me. A me I recognize but cannot touch. In my dreams, there is a bright light where your mouths should be. In my dreams, there is music where words should be. There is life free of explanation. In my dreams, it is a reality. A long time ago I dreamt to myself this old. The only wisdom is to close my eyes. Tonight I will dream of a scarred self, tonight I will dream of a healed self, tonight I will dream of a self that does not exist. In my dreams, there is no border to separate self from love. And that's what I'm sharing.

[snaps]

Ashiana: Oh. That was- that was

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Thanks for listening. Thanks for the snaps.

Grace: [snapping] All the snaps. All the snaps!

Grace: Yeah, thank you for sharing that with us.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Why not? Absolutely. [Giggles]

Grace: I do want to ask if you do want to give context, if you don't no worries, but if you want to give context to it where are you when you wrote this? What- yeah.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Uhm, I just remember seeing the prompt on, uhm, Instagram because somebody that I follow and adore, Coyote Park, kind of put this anthology together. And they were like, it's all about dreams or memories or ancestors and I literally sat up in bed and wrote this, like, at the speed of light and was like, okay, it's good, and I sent it off. Uhm, but, to give context it's kind of- it's kind of about, like, all the realities that we get to inhabit in our dreams but we don't get to inhabit in reality and so, in a way, this was me writing about, uhm, like, the future self that had top surgery in a wa, uhm, if you read the whole poem, I'm also talking about, like, a self that gets to be welcomed and loved everywhere I go and in all family spaces and so it's freedom dreaming just as much as it was literally just writing about actual dreams that I'd had.

Grace: Thank you, that's amazing. I feel like freedom dreaming is so beautiful and important in our communities. And, yeah. Yeah. Do you want to tell us a bit more about- you mentioned you enjoy freedom dreaming, can you tell us more about that? And what that means to you and all that?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah! I feel like freedom dreaming is, like, any imaginative or intellectual or creative work or even conversations whereby you're imagining freedom. Whether that's, like, for the collective, whether that's in the individual sense, like, what does it look like for us to live in a world where we don't call 911? Where maybe we call 411 for a team of mental health clinicians to come through. Or maybe we call 511 for the EMT's and we call 611 for the firefighters. Or what does a world look like with no children are abandoned by their parents? And what work do we have to do in the now to get to these freedom dreams that we want to see actualized? So I'm always talking about these kinds of things whether it's about healing, whether it's about decolonized wellness, whether it's about reconnecting to the inner child, whether it's about toppling our oppressors, these are kinds of conversations that I want to be having and that I do have with my chosen family.

Grace: And that within itself is a creative practice so yeah. What, I'm just curious, like what has been- what have been your specific freedom dreams within, like, 2022?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Like what are my dreams for 2022?

Grace: Yeah! Or like dreams that you have for the future or for your future or communities futures recently in general.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Wow. That is big. Uhm, I really, like, I think about hunger a lot and I don't understand how, like, so many people come to this country and they- they say and they believe they're chasing a dream, they're chasing better opportunities and yet we have, like, excruciatingly high rates of hunger and rate of poverty in this county. And like the amount of money that's invested into food banks as opposed to, like, feeding people and not wasting food and, uhm, like creating programs that- that are always in the community. That are not just like one-stop shops of canned goods, so I guess my freedom dream is like that I create programs where I feed people. That we all create programs where we feed people. Or that we, as a collective, kind of prioritize the material of, like, people need to eat, people need to sleep somewhere, people need warmth, and then they can freedom dream. You know what I mean? It's a privilege for me to sit here and imagine this future when, y'know, people need their needs met before they can do that work, you know what I mean?

Grace: Yes, absolutely. Yeah, food justice has been something that's been, uhm, on my mind around community and whatnot for- for the last little while as well so yeah.

Ashiana: And- And I also- I always dream of cooking. I love cooking just for myself and for my friends. I'll always try to feed if people are all coming over. My friends, I always try to feed them. So I love cooking and I always dream of cooking, like, I want to try cooking in, like, these big vessels like back home. There's like a wedding or something, we'll cook rice and meat and biryani in, like, these big vessels. So I do have this, I'm going to go to your words, a freedom dream, I have this freedom dream of cooking in these big vessels so that I can feed the community so, yeah, it's one of my dreams as well.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I love that.

Grace: Thank you so much. So much! And, sorry, this is something I wanted to bring up earlier, because, I don't know if this is going to make it, but, uhm, the notion around, like, listening to self. Uhm, and- and I think this is around the question of, like, decolonizing wellness in your everyday life, and- and so I just wanted to mention around that. I think that is so important and I love that you mentioned that because I think everything around wellness and like health and- and all these different industries, they tell us not to listen to ourselves. They tell us to listen to what the- what this- this practitioner says we should eat. And- and these, these standards they create that aren't specific to different kinds of bodies of what we should eat and how much exercise we should have and all these different things, uhm, and it's- and it's so, I see it as so, uhm, like, it removes you from your body and from listening to your body. Uhm, and your body has so much intuition on what it needs when it comes to, like, sleep, y'know? I think about, like, hormones levels for folks who menstruate and even for folks who, who don't menstruate, like your hormone levels change and so you need different amounts of sleep at different times and you won't be able to know that if you're listening to the standard of, like, sleep 7 or 8 hours every night. Uhm, sometimes you might need 10 and you might actually need that, and sometimes you might be able to need less. And so things like that, I think listening to your body when it comes to- when it comes to physical wellness or when it comes to spiritual wellness or

emotional wellness is so important and it's definitely- it's something that needs to be decolonized. Uhm, because we're very divorced from our bodies through colonization.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah, I feel like that could be a whole other podcast.

Grace: [laughs] Yes!

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Think of it folks!

Ashiana: So, if we are ready to close..? [moment of silence] Yes? So Jam-

Grace: Oh, wait wait wait! [laughs] I was just wondering, Jam, do you have any, before we do close, do you have any final thoughts or anything you really want to put out into this space? Anything else you want to preach to us to that we can be blessed?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Uhm, okay, I'll just give a- I'll give a summary of all my thoughts. If you really want to decolonize wellness look at every single lesson that capitalism, and that colonialism, and that white supremacy try to teach you. Resist them. In your everyday life, with your people, in the way you think, in the way you go about your day and hopefully that'll lead to some wellness because these people are feeding us lies. Thank you for listening.

[snaps]

Outro (00:38:02 - 00:38:33)

Ashiana: Alright! Thank you so much Jam for those words of wisdom, your beautiful poetry, and I want to read more of that definitely. So, please let us know, where we can find you, your work, go ahead and plug it in.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Uhm, yeah, you can find it where you find me online at the link in my bio, @yikesjamaica, or at genderfail.com if you want this anthology Behind Shut Eyes, uhm, support independent press! Support independent queer artists.

Outro Music (00:38:33 - 00:39:06)

Strings, vocals and birds play in the background.

Ashiana: And so that concludes our discussion on [unknown] this episode!

Grace: We'll be back with our practice segment where Jam will share a creative practice with us!

Practice Segment - Creative Practice (00:39:06 - 00:56:45)

Ashiana: And we're back with Jam Bridgett for the practice segment of the podcast today. Thank you so much Jam for sharing your story and your experiences with us. I'm sure all of our listeners, and us, can glean nuggets of wisdom from your experiences and on this podcast, we believe stories are sacred so we thank you deeply for being here and sharing with us and

co-creating this space that will help to amplify the voices of our fellow 2SLGBTQ+ youth. So now we are moving into the practice segment. So Jam, please tell us what our creative practice are you going to share with us today?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): So today we are going to be drawing portraits of our inner children. Uhm, so it might be helpful to have a picture from your younger days, uhm, if not just, y'know, bring your inner child into your mind's eye and imagine them as much as you can. You're going to need some paper, a pencil, an eraser and anything of colour: crayons, pencil crayons, markers, whatever floats your boat.

Ashiana: Yeah, I'm just going to go on my Instagram because recently it was my birthday and my mom made a collage of my childhood pictures. They're so cute, just if I can say so myself. [laughs].

Grace: I have myself in my mind's eye. And I have my- I have coloured pens with me. And blank paper.

Ashiana: I like- I like- I like to look at my childhood pictures now because I kind of hated myself and how I looked when I was a child, y'know, then. But now I look back and I'm like "I was cute! Why was I talking bad?"

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah, there can be so much healing found in, like, looking back at those pictures of your childhood, uhm, kind of recapturing happy moments or just spending time with your inner child and infusing love into those parts and those places and those times where that wasn't what you were experiencing from self or from others, y'know?

Ashiana: Alright! So are we ready?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yes, absolutely! Uhm, so, when I draw portraits because I'm not a portraitesque- potraiture- I'm really not, I'm really, honestly, if I were honest, I'm a cartoonist but, uhm, if you're not the best at drawing, uhm, people I start with shapes, right? So like for instance, my head shape in this big picture I have here is giving square. It's giving square. So I'm starting with a square and I might just have to round my edges for my chin, round my edges for my cheeks, that kind of thing. And I always do a sketch. I don't draw because - I don't know - I find that sketching allows me to find the shapes when I need to, find the softness of the lines.

Ashiana: Can I ask a noob question? What's the difference between drawing and sketching?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I- Okay, that's a great question! To me, drawing is if you were to put your pencil or pen onto the page and just draw one line. Another line, and another line, and another line. And now it's a rectangle. A sketch is like I'm lifting the pencil off the page and I'm doing small marks to create the lines of my rectangle, for instance. And now I'm bringing it all together.

Ashiana: Okay. I get it.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah. So yeah, I'm just sketching, like, I said a kind of square heart-shaped thing for my head. I'm drawing some rectangles- some long rectangles with some roundness for my legs. Some weird kind of rectangle triangular things for my feet. But this practice for me is not even so much all about drawing me as a child in and of myself, it's not so much about getting it right or drawing this body the way that I see it in the picture. So once I move on from drawing myself in whatever lines, whatever shapes kind of make sense, then that's when I move to colour and I use the colour to try and kind of capture the energy of the picture or the energy of the time. The energy of that childhood self with shapes, with squiggly-wiggly lines, with colour. So that's what I'm all about. So I've drawn this gigantic child. Not big, but not great proportions. And then I'm like, trying to like- some people can see the auras, y'know, I just feel like I try to capture the energy. So if I'm looking very open or playful I might go with yellows, greens, colours of spring for some reason. If I'm upset in the picture I might go for some red. If I'm sad I might go for some blue. Sometimes I take it really literally and sometimes I'm just trying to create colour and fill up space with energy, in a visual sense. So me, I'm using crayons. And I'm trying to fill up the space around this little baby me using some oranges, some yellows, some purples because I look very inquisitive in this picture. So yellow and orange feels inquisitive to me. And circles feel inquisitive to me. And anything like a curved line that might mock the shape of a question mark feels inquisitive to me. So I'm very much into the symbols and the colours, the shapes and movement of my picture. A little bit more than I am about the portrait.

Grace: So as we're continuing this, I'm wondering when did you, like, start this creative practice? When did you first do it and what was that like?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Uhm, I feel like there were a couple of months throughout this last summer where I was really getting very deep into inner child work and, like, reading a lot about it and trying to connect more deeply with my inner child. And so that's when I kind of began, not just drawing my inner child, but like speaking to my inner child in the mirror and trying to feel more of a tangible connection to that child as opposed to just having an abstract thought about who this child might be in my mind.

Grace: Yeah and- and, uhm, for folks who are not familiar with inner child work and what that means, I am one of them, what does that mean?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I feel like a lot of people can define it differently but for me, it means, like I say reconnecting with my childhood. And whether that means looking at it through a different lens or trying to process what I experienced, trying to learn from some of my traumatic experiences, or just having that child feel like they're with me and have more of a say in my life. Maybe it's, uhm, acting in more of a child-like way to take care of this child. Because basically, the idea is that even though we grow up, we age, those inner children are still with us. So that three-year-old is still inside me, that seven-year-old is still inside me, that fourteen-year-old is still inside me, and if I don't address these children inside me they'll be pulling the strings of my

life. So if I go and speak to them, do this work, let them know they're acknowledged and I still know they're here, then we can have more of a harmonious relationship. And then maybe I can heal some of those inner wounds that that inner child had to endure. That's what inner child work is for me.

Ashiana: Yeah that is- yeah that is beautiful because I can relate with that. You know, sometimes I think about something that have happened when I was a child and I'm like, then I think to myself, y'know, why am I still caught on on that? I was small. I was like this much years old. I was five, six, whatever. And that is- that is kind of the opposite of what you said. I'm not acknowledging it I'm just, like, again, suppressing it. So I think I need to do what you just said. I think I need to acknowledge them and y'know, that inner child is still a person. Even if they're only five years old, I know people treated them like a child, but, y'know, treat them like a person now. Thank you so much for that.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Mhmm, absolutely, yeah.

Grace: Something I like to do is, uhm, like- I like to, to, to look back in the places where, in my past, as a child, as a growing person, I was hurting. And I'll think back to that memory and I'll lie in bed and I'll pretend that I'm like, I'm an older, like an older version of myself, like a much older version than myself, is like calming myself and being like "it's okay and I know, like, you weren't held at this time of your life but I'm holding you now". Uhm, and I feel like that's always been very healing to me. So yeah, that sounds amazing.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah, so you do know inner child work because you practice it. Even if you don't look at it like that.

Grace: Yeah.

Ashiana: I want to use all the colours!

[Giggles]

Grace: Yes! Yes! Sorry!

[Giggles]

Grace: It's alive!

Ashiana: Grace is having too much fun!

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah, and even, y'know, I feel like sometimes just doing the things that you liked to do as a child and like, having that freedom and not censoring yourself the way you might have been censored as a child, that's doing inner child work as well, y'know. Build up

that fort, baby! Eat with your hands! Y'know, listen to KidzBop, do what you wanna do. Watch Arthur on Saturday mornings, y'know? That can be healing as well.

Grace: Yes. One thing I remember I did when I hit university was I got so much pink because as, as a kid, like, in my, in my family- you know how pink is associated with femininity? And it was just so frowned upon. Like anything feminine was like "ah! It's shit! It's weak!". And, so like, and so also what we think in society, I'm trying to be cool like "ooh, my favourite colour is green" [laughs] which it was, I did like green. All colours are great. But, uhm, I feel like I really suppressed any desire to have anything that was pink. Uhm, because I'm like that's gross. And so, when I hit first year university, I got so much pink. And it was so- like now I'm like ugh but like at the time it was so liberating! I feel like that was an important step in my continual journey of, like, I suppress this part of myself so much. And this is the way I'm going to express it and let myself live out that.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Absolutely. No more suppression. Only expression. Right?

Ashiana: Yes.

Grace: Yes.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Love it.

Grace: Well, uhm, are you, is everyone, like, sorta done with their drawings? So do you want to like-

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Show and tell?

Grace: Yes, show and tell! Okay, I'll give a little disclaimer. So there is a video component to this podcast. Uhm, if you would like to see it, it should be available sometime soon and an update will be put on LGBT YouthLine's Instagram when that's up. And you'll be able to see our drawings! So, uhm, who wants to share theirs first?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Okay, I'll go. Uhm, so, I'm going to make sure that, going to getting in my YouTuber bag here and make sure that you can see properly. So I chose to draw this picture of very baby me. I don't think I was two yet. Look at those arms, absolutely get that early life work in. And this is what I created. Got some blue, got some yellow and orange, green, cause again I'm trying to go for that kind of inquisitive, open, curious look.

Ashiana: Yes

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Let's get the light right. That's it.

Ashiana: Well done

Grace: That's beautiful

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Thank you.

Grace: I can go next. So I did not, like, I had a picture in my mind's eye, I didn't even draw that picture. I think I drew its aura. So it's me and it's in this- I'm literally like I'm a baby and I'm in a wedding dress. Like, for some reason, my parents were like, ooh we're taking photos let's put you into, like, I had a little white bonnet and this wedding dress. And, so, but, this is, this is what I got for the aura-

Ashiana: Ahhhhh.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): That is so adorable

Ashiana: I love that fluorescent light.

Grace: So that's my drawing.

Ashiana: Okay, so I cannot show the original because I'll have to screen share to do that. So you guys can have a glimpse of it. Can you see anything?

Grace: Yes we can see your screen.

Ashiana: So I drew this tiny me. Do you see in the corner? [laughs]. I also think I was, like, around two or something there.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): That is so cute! And accurate!

Grace: That is so cute!

Ashiana: So yeah. For the background colours I went with all colours because I always like all the colours. I cannot pick, basically. I like all the colours most of the time. Like my most favourite is purple, but for art and stuff, I can never pick. So I always want all colours, I was like "oh no, this colour is going to feel bad, I didn't include it!".

[Laughs]

Jam Bridgett (they/them): That's so sweet.

Grace: Love purple

Ashiana: Yes, it was so fun. Purple is my favourite

Grace: Yeah, so, any final tips around, like, maybe mental space around being in this practice or any final tips about the practice you want to, to- for us folks to keep in mind as they're doing it?

Jam Bridgett (they/them): Yeah, I mean, if you're not into the visual art you can always just write a letter to your inner child. You can speak a letter to your inner child if you are not, like, into the writing component of it. You can just know that you can do inner child work, know you can speak to your inner child all the time and if you honestly allow the space your inner child will answer you. Those are my tips.

Grace: Wow. So beautiful.

Ashiana: Awesome.

Grace: I was listening to, what podcast was I listening to, I listen to way too many podcasts. I was listening to I Weigh podcast with Jameela Jamil and, uhm, they, uhm, she had a guest and they were talking about, like, also like your older self and talking to your older self as well. And I'm like this is like, this is so beautiful. This idea that, like, all of your ages sort of exist within you and you can communicate to them and they can give you wisdom or you can support yourself, your younger self, or like things like that. So I think it's so beautiful and so important so thank you, thank you, thank you for sharing it and thank you for this offering that you so graciously gave to us.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): It was a pleasure. It was so fun, it was such a good conversation. So thank y'all for having me! Thank you for considering me!

Grace: Oh, of course! Coolest person! Coolest! [Giggles] And, yeah, so I'm excited to continue this practice and actually, maybe, actually have a photo in front of me when I do it. Uhm, yeah, I'm so excited and, uhm, I'm also really excited to check out all your work. I'm going to, like, tear up because I am so excited for your book. Like I am so fucking excited. I can't even.

Jam Bridgett (they/them): I better write it then! Thank you, thank you.

Outro Music (00:55:39 - 00:56:45)

Vocals, strings, and nature sounds play in the background.

Ashiana: This podcast was created by Ashiana Ismil and Grace Guillaume with the support of Destiny, Kumari, and the PYAP Team. This episode was edited by Umang with music created by Grace, and the art for the podcast logo was created by Kamina Jeaase. You can find this podcast wherever you listen to podcasts and all the episodes, along with their transcripts, are available at youthline.ca.

Grace: See you next time, and until then drink water and keep nourishing your roots.

