

3 Chaotic Queers Episode 3 Transcription

Rabia (she/them)

Sydney (they/her)

Nicole (she/them)

Destiny Pitters (she/her)

Opening Statement (00:00:00 - 00:01:09)

Rabia (she/them): Disability rights and inclusion activist Imani Barbarin, also known as Crutches and Spice, said: “the very first thing that white supremacy robs of you, that you don’t realize, is the ability to imagine a world without it. And once you start making moves that you can, it will become as loud as possible to assert its dominance over you.”

Rabia (she/them): When we talk about imagining or building a better future for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in Ontario, all I can think about is the fact that we won’t be able to do that unless we have restorative justice. When I initially came up with the slogan “burn this capitalist shitshow to the ground” I was joking, but also kinda serious because we can’t get better and build better until we address the broken systems we have in place right now. It’s like how Audre Lorde says, “the masters’ tools will never dismantle the masters’ house”. This capitalist, patriarchal, colonial, white supremacist, ableist, racist system cannot be dismantled with the same violence that created it and the same violence that upholds it. Building a better future involves decolonization, disability justice, accountability, love, and care.

Intro Music (00:01:09 - 00:01:25)

Hello and welcome to your favourite hour of the week with the 3 Chaotic Queers. [Cat meow].

Greetings and Intro (00:01:25 - 00:03:58)

Nicole (she/them): What’s cooking good looking chaotic queers? You’re listening to the 3 Chaotic Queers, a biweekly podcast series where the three of us youngsters can openly discuss what it means to be queer in today’s society and why we’re ready to burn this capitalistic shitshow to the ground.

Sydney (they/her): Hello queerios! I’m Sydney and I’m a mad neuroqueer and I use dual sets of pronouns: they/them and she/her. I’m once again joining in from the original lands of the displaced Huron-Wendat people, adjacent to the Chippewa of Georgina Island.

Rabia (she/them): Hello girls, gays, and theys. My name is Rabia, my pronouns are she/they, and I’m feeling extra chaotic today! I am joining you all from the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe People.

Nicole (she/them): And good morning, good evening, happy 3 am, or whenever you’re tuning in to this podcast. My name is Nicole and my pronouns are she/her and they/them. I’m joining you today from the traditional territory of the Mississauga’s of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat Peoples.

Sydney (they/her): Today we are joined by another featured guest, Destiny Pitters, from LGBT YouthLine staff. Destiny is here to chat with us about some of the current grassroots movements that support disability justice and anti-carceral and abolition work. Destiny, would you mind formally introducing yourself to the crew?

Destiny Pitters (she/her): Absolutely! Hi folks, my name is Destiny, my pronouns are she/her, and I'm a queer, disabled, Black woman. I was born in Tkaronto but raised on the territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Neutral Peoples, in Brantford, which is Haldimand treaty territory. Uhm, and despite being displaced on Turtle Island via slavery, with my ancestors being brought to Xaymaca, which is the original title of Jamaica, I am so privileged to learn and play on this land. Uhm, it has nurtured my life, not only from literally sustaining me, uhm, but also being a huge refuge for my wellness, so, a lot of the work that I try to do pushes back against these colonial systems that try to extinguish not only the lives of Black and Indigenous peoples but the land that we live on. So yeah, that's a little bit about me.

Nicole (she/them): Yeah, thanks so much for introducing yourself, Destiny. Uh, I'll speak for myself and my fellow podcast, uhm, folks, uhm, we're extremely excited to have you on today and to- to chat.

Conversation (00:03:58 - 00:41:03)

Sydney (they/her): We're very, very excited, uhm, with getting to know who you are. Can you tell us a little bit about your involvement in abolition and decarceral work within the community and how did you initially become involved in this type of work?

Destiny Pitters (she/her): Yeah! So, personally, I am ever increasingly interested in abolition and decarceral work because I know firsthand, and through my relations, how carceral systems disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, disabled, queer and trans communities. And when I think about, y'know, so-called Canada where we're at right now, and its institutions and systems, it's like a veneer, right? A layer that has been [clears throat] wrapped onto existing territories and is really underpinned by a lot of violence, right? Genocide and slavery. And so, to me, it is really hard to distance the institutions that we have today, like for example policing, uhm, from their origins in racism and ableism and colonialism. So I was really able to, more formally, act on these beliefs when I started going to university, actually, uhm and volunteered with Laurier's Student Public Interest Research Group, which is a mouthful, you can just say LSPIRG, uhm, and they host and support a lot of anti-oppressive initiatives. So, when I joined, I was exposed to, like, all these amazing, harm reductive, badass groups. Uhm, so yeah, that's kind of like how I got started, uhm, and I'm not sure if you want to hear any more about, like, specific experiences that I had.

Sydney (they/her): If there's any you wouldn't mind sharing I think our audience would be very happy to hear some.

Destiny Pitters (she/her): Yeah, absolutely! Uhm, so one of my favourite experiences was volunteering with an LSPIRG group called Fruits from Fruits. Super gay. It was just a few queers who set up a basic needs distribution site, uhm, outside of the old jail in our downtown, on purpose, and we would hand out food, water, menstrual products, and clothes, and just chat with community members who came by, many of whom were houseless. And it was really important to me because we were offering an alternative to other distros that existed that often had caveats, like, oh, you have to be “clean” to receive support, or you have to convert to this religion to receive support. So our set up was a lot more accessible and affirming and queer friendly. Uhm, and now I mainly do decarceral work with The Disability Justice Network of Ontario and we advocate for, like, widespread reevaluation and/or abolition of carceral systems that, again, disproportionately harm disabled and 2S, QT, BIPOC communities.

Rabia (she/them): Thank you for much for sharing that. It’s really exciting to see how you first got involved in this and how you’re continuing to stay involved in the work that you’re doing with The Disability Justice Network of Ontario. Uhm, and so before I ask the next question I’m actually going to provide a bit of context, uhm, it’s a little blurb, so give me a sec.

Rabia (she/them): Uhm, so a recent article from the Toronto Prisoners Rights Project titled “Where is Sylvia Jones?” explores a plethora of issues relating to criminalization in Ontario. At first when I read this I was not entirely sure who Solicitor General Sylvia Jones was and what she did, so I did some more digging. According to the Ontario Canada website, the Solicitor General ensures “Ontarios communities are supported and protected by law enforcement, and that public safety and correctional systems are safe, effective, efficient, and accountable.” Key words here are safe and accountable because these systems are clearly not. The article also states that 15 out of 25 of the adult jails in Ontario are currently experiencing active outbreaks of Covid 19, which is 60% of these jails in Ontario. Also nearly 30% of Ontario prisoners are in medical isolation. That does not sound safe to me whatsoever. And with that being said, we wanted to how you think the Covid 19 pandemic has compounded issues of criminalization and health that impact queer and racialized youth or communities?

Destiny Pitters (she/her): Ugh, the answer is horrendously, but I’m very glad that you ask. Uhm, cause it’s really important. So I’m going to have to illustrate my point by kind of walking you through it in a funnelled way. Uhm, so when I hear this the first thing that came to my mind was an article written by Nora Loreto, unfortunately, I forget the publisher, but it was shared by the Disability Justice Network. And in it, Loreto articulates how 58% of all Covid deaths in Canada have been people in residential care. And this term residential care includes any institution where individuals are housed: prisons, group homes, shelters, long-term care, etc. And so thinking of the overrepresented demographics in these spaces we know that most Covid 19 deaths in Canada have disproportionately been disabled people, racialized people, right? Those incarcerated who are more likely to be disabled, Black, Indigenous, queer, and trans because we’re more often criminalized. Uhm, and these spaces are overcrowded and often lacking adequate resources, so, to bring it back. If, for example, you are criminalized while houseless or for using drugs, which many 2SQTBIPOC are, you are likely going to be siphoned into one of these carceral spaces that are already horrendous, but also makes transmission of

the virus, like, so easy. Uhm, and as well, people who use drugs or are houseless are more likely to have chronic illnesses that make them susceptible to worse complications should they get Covid 19. So this is why, like, harm reduction strategies are really key to reducing transmission and lessening severity of symptoms, but, the pandemic has also exacerbated overdose deaths in Canada due to lack of access to resources and safe spaces as we continue to, like, open up and shut down on a whim so, yeah, overall it's racialized, queer, and disabled communities facing the brunt of health concerns in this pandemic because these carceral care systems that we have in place are not made to keep us alive or nourish us in a sustainable and community-oriented way.

Rabia (she/them): Thank you for sharing that, that was literally so well said. And I want to touch on something you mentioned in the earlier part of that where you talked about, like, people being transferred into these institutions, uhm. Uhm, so in the article they talk about how transferring prisoners to different institutions to control outbreaks has also resulted in the widespreadness- widespread of Covid 19 to other facilities that might not have had Covid 19 in the beginning. Uhm, and this kind of connects to the issue of social isolation and the fact that those that are being imprisoned are also being strictly isolated and restricted from seeing their families for so long and it's gotten to the point where they're so disconnected from their support systems that it's beginning to impact their mental health and their overall wellbeing because they're experiencing an overload of trauma that is being unaddressed by those in power. [coughs]. Sylvia Jones. Uhm, and so I just wanted to point that out because a lot of the issues that you're talking about are interconnected and interrelated and they're just overall not being addressed because people in our general society don't hear about this on the news. They don't know about this and it's really important to talk about.

Nicole (she/them): Yeah, I totally agree. I think, uhm, those who are in, I guess, state sponsored, uhm, institutions and under their care are almost assumed by the general public to be, uhm, being taken care of and be safe. And you would assume that it would- that they would be taken care, even, I guess, with heavier measures or even more than the general public because they are at such- in such vulnerable situations but that's just not the case. Uhm, and I think, Destiny and Rabia, what you both said is completely true and what I also want to add on is uhm, as we begin to, now, open up and drop all Covid mandates as of, I think, very soon, next week if I'm not mistaken, uhm, the third week of March. It really worries me what is of to come in the future, uhm, for people who are imprisoned currently, uhm, just based on how things were during the height of Covid. The pandemic is not over and it won't be over for awhile and, y'know, as we try to lessen up our restrictions what is going to happen? Yeah, so, I- I think, and others have predicted, that these jails and prisons will continue to be overrun by Covid outbreaks. Uh, Covid outbreaks inside these institutions have spiked to the highest numbers we have seen since the onset of the pandemic, uhm, quite recently, and this is totally unacceptable. And poses not only a health risk and a safety risk to those people who are inside, but also to the general public. So it's going to affect everyone.

Nicole (she/them): Uhm, since the start of the pandemic, 4004 prisoner people and 1115 corrective staff have contracted Covid 19, uhm, in Ontario jails. And I'm sure that number has

gone up since I found this statistic. Uhm, on January 12, 2022, it was reported that 1961 prisoners were in medical isolation. Over the last three weeks, there have been no further reports leaving those outside in the dark. We don't know what's happening, uhm, with these prisoners and, uhm, I also want to point out that after they recover from Covid 19 many people are beginning to experience long Covid and there has been no care in these institutions, let alone outside these institutions, to care for those who are experiencing the varying symptoms that come with long Covid. Uhm, according to the Solicitor General that Rabia was referring to earlier, people inside are being put into medical isolation if they have even suspected to have Covid 19. Uh, we have not heard from community members that medical isolation is no different from solitary confinement, with over 23 hours in cells with no ability to shower and no way to contact loved ones or connect with lawyers. People are left completely in the dark and it's totally unacceptable. Uhm, yeah.

Rabia (she/them): I just want to add on that, uhm, when you talk about long Covid it's really important to acknowledge that long Covid, or long term Covid, I don't know if that's the right one, uhm I'm just going to say long Covid. Uhm, but long Covid, for a lot of people, is disabling. A lot of people aren't able to do what they used to be able to do, uhm, especially because of the fact that there's not a lot of research that's going- being put into this right now and not a lot of good recommendations for them. And so, with that, and the people in prison who are experiencing long Covid, the overall, like, health care that they're being provided is so inadequate and it's so shitty and it makes me so mad. It's literally gotten to the point where people that are in prison are afraid to seek medical attention or even do a Covid 19 test because they don't want to be forced into further isolation. The article that I mentioned in the beginning also ends with a quote that "prisoners should not have to make a choice between their physical health and their mental wellbeing" which I think is so important because we don't have to make that decision so why should they? At the end of the day, they're still people and I'm so tired of our politicians not treating them as such.

Nicole (she/them): Yeah, thank you for adding that Rabia. Uhm, we keep seeing constant mismanagement and undercounting by the Ontario government which leads us to believe that these numbers are even misrepresented in provincial jails. Uh, it is deplorable that there is no reliable public information about Covid 19 testing in positive diagnoses in Ontario jails. This information is vital for the health of all Ontarians, especially Indigenous and Black communities who are targetted by police and overrepresented in the carceral systems, as you spoke about, Destiny, earlier. Uhm, so, there's so much to say regarding this question and I don't know where to leave it off. I- I don't know if there's a hopeful turn, uh, currently there's not much being done, uh, by our government and by our state but I hope they hear our voices and that we can make our voices be heard and hopefully enact those changes going forward. And with that, I would like to ask Destiny the next question and that question is: what are some community organizations, grassroots projects, or individuals you would suggest as a resource for those who would like to learn more but might be overwhelmed or not know where to start?

Destiny Pitters (she/her): Yeah, this is such an excellent question and hopefully I don't, like, ironically overwhelm people with my laundry list of people that I admire. But, ah, there's so many

people doing cool, cool, cool work, uhm, for disability justice and, like, decarceral work. So, uhm, I think I'd just like to start with Skyler Williams and the whole land back team. They managed to thwart development by Foxgate on their territory at 1492 Land Back Lane, uhm, after, like, approximately 500 days of occupation. Uhm, and I'm pretty sure you also talked about 1492 in your first episode, so shouts out to that for anyone listening if you want to go back and learn a little bit more, uhm. But yeah, they, uhm, organize community events and also show solidarity with other land defenders across Turtle Island, so, huge inspiration, uhm, to me. Uhm, I think also Sarah Jama and The Disability Justice Network of Ontario, of course. Uhm, it was co-founded by Sarah to advocate for antiracist, antiableist community action across the province and I'm really glad to have joined their Youth Action Counsel so that we can keep, uhm, highlighting disparities of facing, like, anti-Blackness and ableism in our work. Another group, or a couple of groups, that I think are also really cool is the Prisoner Correspondence Project, which is based out on Montréal, and Black in Pink, which is a US org, and really any other incarcerated penpal projects. Uhm, but these two, in particular, connect LGBTQ+ incarcerated folks to those outside in order to build networks and reduce isolation, and really it's a method of harm reduction, uhm, because unfortunately, it's a statistic that, those who receive mail in prison are less likely to experience violence at the hands of prison staff, uhm, because they're aware that those prisoners have someone on the outside who cares about them and would know if something bad were to happen. So, uhm, really a gross piece of information when I think about it, but I think it's really cool that there are people doing that kind of work to mitigate that violence. Uhm, a few other suggestions, I would say the Hamilton Encampment Support Network, or just anyone doing encampment support, uhm, this is a volunteer-led group on the frontlines who shares news, they organize protests, uhm, and support their houseless neighbours in the face of ongoing police violence in Hamilton. Uhm, two artists who are really important to me are Pree and Harmeet Rehal, they are based in Toronto and they use their work to advocate for disability justice and anti-oppression. And, way back when I was a Youth Ambassador last year, Pree was the first person to teach me about zine history. So that was a huge part of my journey to learn how those tools are grounded in Black, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+ resistance practice. So yeah! Uhm, last I would say the Brantford LSPIRG team, as I talked about before. They were the first people to introduce me to grassroots organizing, uhm, and some initiatives they do are, like, gorilla sex ed workshops in our local library after Doug Ford's, like, really shitty 2020 sex ed curriculum regression, uhm, Fruits From Fruits I talked about, and then we did other things like banner drops in support of Wet'suwet'en, online auctions to fundraise for community members and land back camps, uhm, and just other consent education workshops.

Sydney (they/her): Amazing! I actually remember that banner drop, and it's so cool to know that you were part of that. Uhm, yeah, I also went to school in the Hamilton area and a lot of the people that I went to school with and worked with actually were on the Youth Advisory Council during the first few years. So when I saw that you joined it a few months ago I thought "holy shit, this is great! Destiny is going to be amazing!". Uhm, and Sarah Jama is really cool, uhm, back in the day I had to look for something called Champions of Change and I recommended her but then the campaign never went through. But I really love her and how she mentors younger racialized youth on how to actually start grassroots initiatives because so many people just want to continue building their brand and don't give a fuck about the continuity or, y'know, not

everyone cares about that but sometimes it's how it comes off when you don't take the time to mentor the younger people because, as we've said, like, I saw an article on Buddies in Bad Times being in peril right now because they're not making a smooth transition. Eventually, the youth will take over these spaces so you have to help facilitate a smooth transition. And I also really love Sarah because she was a speaker at the Senate last year when the House was debating if they should expand eligibility criteria for medical assistance and dying, which is MAID for short, I think some people say it MAD, but I'm pretty sure it's MAID? [laughs]. She and other invitees including another really cool person I know named Mads, uhm, they were very critical about how the federal government was so quick to expand the criteria of medical assistance in dying before they were willing to even put legislation down to putting guaranteed universal basic income. There's been an MP that has been campaigning for that for three or four years now, this bill about expanding criteria. And I support everyone's right to choose death at the time that they choose but it is just really sick that our government was quicker to sponsor the death of people who are chronically ill and disabled rather than investing in our actual wellbeing. It was just really disturbing and I really admire that she went there and others went there and they said it to the government. Even though unfortunately it went through, I really admire how they went there and said it straight to their faces, said: "that's dirt on your hands".

Rabia (she/them): Thanks for sharing that, Sydney. I did not know that at all, actually, uhm, but I do have another recommendation for folks if they want to, uhm, check out an individual. I'm pretty sure everyone already knows who I'm going to say but Imani Barbarin, aka Crutches and Spice, uhm I admire her work so much and the way she uses social media, humour, and hashtags to actualize resistance and form and strengthen community. She is the creator of hashtags #patientsarenofaking, #thingsdisabledpeopleknow, #abledsareweird, and many others which allow people to talk about their experiences of ableism, microaggressions, and discrimination which, in turn, starts important conversations that connect disabled people around the world. So if you're looking to get, uhm, started anywhere and have tiktok or Instagram or even just Google or-

[giggles]

Nicole (she/them): This is Juno.

Rabia (she/them): -you can check Crutches and Spice out, uhm, on those different forums. Oh, yeah, she's also on twitter, so...

Nicole (she/them): Thank you for visiting the podcast, Juno, welcome. Six chaotic queers. Is that six? [whispers] One, two, three, four, five... I can't count. Five. Five chaotic queers. Uhm, now that Juno, Rabia's cat, has joined us. Uhm, I love all of your recommendations and, yeah, I'm sure we would love to link them in our show notes if folks want to check them out and learn more about these resources and these grassroots organizations and projects. Uhm, I am going to recommend an Ottawa based resource centre for queer youth, uh, where I personally got started just, uhm, learning about, uhm, everything basically. It's called Kind Space, uh, currently they're offering trans ID clinics, uhm, and they're currently, uhm, doing? Starting? Fundraising

for a paid sick day fund for 2SLGBTQ+ newcomers, immigrants, essential workers, uh, without paid sick leave from their employer and regional- they're also doing regional organization GSV training. Plus they have this awesome queer library, which I loved to access back in my younger youth days. It's one of the biggest queer libraries in the country and it's a great place to start learning about yourself and others identities, share space with other queer folks and give back to the community, uhm, so overall it's a great place to start. Uhm, even if you want to learn about decarceral work and, uh, disability justice, I would highly recommend this as a resource centre and a place to start.

Sydney (they/her): So many great suggestions, so many places for folks to check out. But, with all that said, kinda leads us into what we want to ask you the most when we're thinking about building better futures. What types of movements and/or policies do you hope to see emerge or grow in Ontario over the next five years? And how will this help build a better future for 2SLGBTQI+ youth? And I'm going to say what I said to Fae last week, or two week ago. Make it ten years if that is more attainable to you, but five years if you're feeling like the world's got their shit together.

Destiny Pitters (she/her): Yeah, no, I am so so excited by this question. Uhm, I have three things that I mainly want to see, uhm, forgive me if I go on a tangent, or stop me. But, uhm, I think I'd start with an increased adoption of mutual aid and harm reductive practices. Uhm, for example, Toronto just launched it's first ever Mental Health Response Team which is just comprised of, like, social workers and it's completely absent from police presence which is so important for the safety especially of racialized folks, but also 2SLGBTQ+ folks, disabled folks who, again, we are moe likely to be criminalized. Uhm, so I think that's really cool. And then, like, just other deinstitutional community alternatives to care, like doula work. Uhm, for anyone who doesn't know, a doula is a trained companion who provides support to another person during a significant health related experience in their life. So they're popularly known for, like, birth work but, uhm, I had a really cool opportunity to research death doulas, actually. I was a research assistant under Dr. Rebecca Godderis, super cool, works out of Wilfred Laurier University. Uhm, and I was just, like, gathering research on, uhm, end of life care as facilitated by doulas. So they can offer, like, transportation, emotional and spiritual care, education from the dignity of your own home. So you don't have to worry about being in a carceral care system that might abuse you so I think that is so important.

Destiny Pitters (she/her): The second thing I want to see is an increased support of disability justice. Uhm, DJNO is calling for a raise in ODSP, which is the Ontario Disability Support Program, to, like, \$2500 because right now it is not liveable. I think it's, like, \$1100? Rent is not even \$1100. It's ridiculous. Uhm, so that's something I really really want to see.

Destiny Pitters (she/her): And last, uhm definitely a redistribution of funds from, like, police precincts across Canadian cities to community services. This is a huge harm reductive practice! Because it's a proactive method to curb so-called crime and also just keep marginalized folks out of carceral care systems. So I think overall it contributes a better future for 2SLGBTQ+ youth, uhm, because these steps, little and large, get us closer to a society in which our

identities and expressions and means of survival are not equated with crime. Like, for god's sake, let's get away from crime. So those are the things I am really really eager to see.

Nicole (she/them): I love all of those, Destiny, and, uhm, I for one cannot wait to see, uh, queer racialized disabled youth thriving, uhm, in the future with all of these policies that we're dreaming up. Uhm, personally, uhm, yeah. I- I would love to see all of those and additionally I would love to see further progress within the movement for decriminalizing, uh, drug and substance use. Uh, so, yeah. Most of the crime, fear, and other side effects of, uhm, narcotic use and abuse probably would not exist without the laws that make addiction a crime. Uhm, and, yeah so drug legislation continues to reflect and reinforce these myths about drug use, unfortunately. Uh, the criminalization of specific substances and their labelling their users as dangerous and criminals, uhm, serves several political purposes. It legitimizes the isolation, punishment, involuntary treatment, and imprisonment of people who use drugs, or PWUD, and the eradication of the reasons which our system does not care for those who are criminalized, unfortunately. Uhm, institutionalized racism and social prejudices against the poor minorities ensure that the laws themselves and their enforcement are aimed to control these people. Uhm, yeah, so. While substances associated with politically powerless groups are labelled dangerous, those used and sanctioned by the dominant culture, such as nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, etc, are portrayed as, like, normal in the Western way of life, unfortunately. So I would love to see the expansion of, uhm, suboxone and methadone clinics and pharmacies and, uhm, yeah. Peer and- what's the word I'm looking for, I'm looking for a word- uhm, just, I guess, peer support in leading these people to these resources and, uhm, an increase in accessibility to these resources. Uhm, and also by loosening and decreasing wait time on insurance prior authorization requirements because it is also a barrier that stops people from getting the treatment and the help that they need. Uhm, and makes them wait years and years, which is super unfortunate, and makes them wait without help. So that's what I would love to see. Rabia, what would you like to see for the future?

Rabia (she/them): I just have to say those are all really great ideas and I really hope that those become a reality. I would personally love to see funding being allocated back into communities. Uhm, I also wrote in my notes "give our people some fucking money" because we deserve it and that's how shit can actually be done. Uhm, I recently read an article that, I think it said either 400 million or 400 billion, I don't know if it was billion, actually, I think it was million. But 400 million in government funding that's supposed to go into these different institutions and support systems still hasn't been sent off in 2022. So they're just holding off on the money, they're not actually supporting people, I don't understand what they're doing, uhm, and Juno really wants cuddles right now. So I'm going to make it quick. But our current systems attempt to provide support has become a form of control that continues to retraumatize queer, disabled, and racialized people. Uhm, and so when we talk about different things we want to see in the future we must be intentional in the work that we're doing and the policies that are emerging to not replace one oppressive system with another one. And I believe that we have the power to shift the ways that we engage with people who are experiencing a crisis or need support, and we also have the power to hold space to centre communal care over carceral harm. Uhm, and my ending note is going to actually talk about the Toronto policeless Mental Health Response Team,

but I'm really glad that you brought it up, Destiny. Uhm and I'm going to pass it over to Sydney because I would love to hear your thoughts on this as well.

Sydney (they/her): Okay, so, uhm, one of the things that I definitely want to see is an expansion of those programs. Uhm, I think that part of the issue though is that when you get outside of city centers there isn't accessible peer-led crisis response training or anything like that, like, and what is available is sanctioned- state sanctioned - oh watch me try to pronounce words today - a lot of the state sponsored crisis and mental health training is very repetitive and, honestly I've been to multiple where, literally, it was the same thing and it just ended in "redirect this person to a safe person" and I was like "aren't we the safe person?" Or what if that person that you're telling me to send them to is not safe? I am autistic. If you send me to a crisis centre there is a high chance that I am going to be traumatized. And I've already said this to my family before, never send me unwilling, if it is serious I am willing to go. But if you send me unwilling it's going to be a whole lot of trauma for everybody and I will not be talking to you anymore. But, honest to say, I think that we really need to be training the peers. Peers who use drugs, peers who have crisis, peers who have mood disorders, not just like people who have depression and anxiety. 'Cause, honestly, it is very common and it's very valid but it's just not- when we only look at mental health through an anxiety and a depression lens we miss so much and we start to hurt people, uhm, so I think even that needs to be expanded. And really I just think we need to be providing money for them, but also I am agreeing with Nicole that I think there should be decriminalization of drugs that I, respectfully, disagree in approach only because I find that, like, a lot of the health care workers use a vice model. Which basically just says that if you use drugs you're a bad person. And that's fucking stupid. Not stupid. Stupid is a bad word too. It is just really redundant and it is not fair because we all know that there are CEO's doing coke in the bathroom before a meeting and they are not seen as bad people by many. There's people doing heroin. Heroin is literally invented by buyer to keep the soldiers on the field because morphine was making them too tired to fight. So this is literally drugs that were developed to cause violence or to perpetuate violence in building into this, like, punitive system where, like, we needed to punish somebody for something that they did. And just, like, yeah. I just think that too many of the health care workers view it through that model or they view it through a neurobiology model, which is just, like, all drug use is harmful and not really recognizing that there are many many situations where drug use is what is keeping somebody alive, uhm, especially under the trauma of not living with a home. If you're living unhoused it is totally fair to want to do drugs or to want to smoke a cigarette to stay warm. It's freezing cold outside, like, we've seen people shivering across the street choosing not to wear a coat while waiting for the bar, smoking their cigarettes to stay warm, why are you judging to people across the street? And just yeah. I just don't think in the next 5-10 years it will be safe enough to be sending people into clinics or pharmacies, although I do think it should be available. If they want that kind of care they should be able to get it. But I do really enjoy that Vancouver has started dispensing supplies of opioids, and soon other drugs as well, that they have bought and tested or are pharmaceutical grade and came from a pharmacy, and then they're dispensing them through machines. So in this case you do need a prescription, and obviously I would like to move away from that, but it gives you the benefit that you don't have to interact with a health care worker because not all health care workers receive the same training. And not all of them

receive up to date training or, y'know, it serves a certain purpose. Uhm, and the medical model just doesn't agree with disability or drug use a lot of the time. Yeah. I guess that's how I wanted to wrap that up but does anyone else have any other points to add onto this?

Nicole (she/them): Yeah, Sydney, I completely agree with what you're saying. Uhm, I was seeing it in, like, a totally idealistic world where, uh, the world that we dreamed up in our last episode, uh, talking about health and the health care system was put into place. Uhm, and in that case health care workers would be safe. But unfortunately, as you said, the medical model is not perfect and does not uphold and treat, with dignity, people who are queer, people of colour, and those who are disabled. Uhm, so I really love your alternative that you've- that you've come up with here, that's great.

Sydney (they/her): Definitely decriminalization of all drugs. Because we know prohibition with alcohol didn't work either so it would be silly- prohibition of weed didn't work in Canada! It was- we basically- the only, like, popular thing we ever voted in in the last ten years was weed, I swear, okay. Uhm, yeah.

Outro (00:41:03 - 00:43:14)

Sydney (they/her): But that wraps up all of our formal questions that we had for you today, Destiny. But we would love to let everyone know before we go, where they can find your work online if they want to see some of it?

Destiny Pitters (she/her): Yeah, this has been such an amazing conversation. Uhm, I'm so honoured to have joined your podcast. And if the audience is interested in connecting with me, they can check out my Instagram, it's @_destinyeden. Uhm, I also have a cute little drawing account, so, support an artist! It's @tinderfruit. Uhm, yeah!

Sydney (they/her): Amazing! And honestly love your art account. It is super fucking cute. Uh, everybody go check it out. Thank you so much, Destiny, for coming in on the 3 Chaotic Queers podcast. We really had a great time chatting with you about this and I'm sure that our listeners at home enjoyed it and learned a lot. And if they didn't then they need to go check out those resources because time's up! Go read a book!

Rabia (she/them): Yes, thank you so much Destiny. We loved talking to you. Uhm, and we hope we can connect with you in the future with you again, and we would like to leave you, and also our listeners, with some fuel for your anger and passion for the change you envision. Critical disability and carceral studies researcher Megan Linton said, "under our current carceral system, much of the death and debilitation within these institutions was not preventable because the carceral structure itself is homicidal. Abolitionist future are the only path that will prevent the mass debilitation and death brought forth by capitalism induced crisis."

Nicole (she/them): Thank you everyone for your submissions to the anonymous Vent and Validate form. The form is now closed, unfortunately, but we are very excited to be answering

your questions on our fourth and final episode. So don't forget to come back on April 15th for the riveting, tell all, Q+A session with The 3 Chaotic Queers.

Rabia (she/them): You can find this podcast on any of your favourite streaming platforms and the full episode transcripts will also be available through LGBT YouthLine's link tree, or linked in the show notes. Until next time, take it easy queer kin and chaos lovers.

Outro Music (00:43:14 - 00:44:02)

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