



## YUSEF SEEVERS

### Transcript: The Birthright of Breath, Body, and Joy

**Sarah Greenman:**

Hello and welcome to Collaborative Alchemy. My name is Sarah Greenman and I'm a creative alchemist, artist, storyteller, writer, and facilitator. I believe that your creativity is a gift meant to be wielded with great love and joy. It is a bone deep tool for justice, healing, and revelatory collective liberation. Collaborative Alchemy is a series of conversations with artists, thought leaders, activists, farmers, educators, creatives and other polymaths where we tell our stories, expand our histories, and hold space for new ways of being.

Friends, I am so excited about our guest today. Yusef Seevers, a Detroit native, Yusef is a multidisciplinary artist, a polymath, currently working as a resident artist at PCPA Theater Fest in Santa Maria, California. He is also the founder of BAEI, which stands for Body Awareness and Emotional Intelligence. Now this is a company that works to increase emotional flexibility, responsibility, and stability in educational and work environments.

Yusef recently facilitated a virtual four week Black Theater For Professionals series walking artists through the essentials of self-care and active advocacy. He is a wellness coach, a leader in global partnership with Arbonne International, and advocates for health access and entrepreneurial community. As an actor, Yusef has brought countless narratives to life. Some of his favorite roles include Will Shakespeare in Shakespeare in Love, Algernon in the Importance of Being Ernest, Frederick Douglass in the Agitators, Sebastian in the Little Mermaid, Belize in Angels in America, and Toby Belch in my favorite Shakespeare story 12th Night.

Y'all, the list goes on and on. Yusef has worked professionally in West African dance for the last 20 years and teaches movement and acting to youth shelters and to at-risk communities all over the country. For those of you who want access to Yusef's offerings, please do find him on Instagram at Black Bass Clef and, also, on Facebook. I'm really excited because Yusef will be launching his full website, Yusef Seevers.com in the spring of 2021.

Yusef, I'm so excited to talk to you today. Thank you for being with me.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Absolutely. I'm so glad to be here.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yusef, I wanted to talk to somebody today who emits luminosity in everything that they do and in everything that they endeavor to do. You were the first and only person that came to mind as that human. That's how I experience you. Light, luminous, illumination, these are the kinds of words that people use to describe you and that's bigger than just your work, right? It's bigger than just ... It's your beingness. When you hear that, I want to hear from you, what does a being of light mean? To be someone who emits light. What do you hear when you hear that?

**Yusef Seevers:**

Well, it's so fun because I'm in a season of really practicing deliberate receiving and when I think about what that means, the first word that comes to my mind is sort of an inner silence. Really, I find myself when I feel my most luminous, truthfully, there aren't many words. That's the thing that I really appreciate about my personal practice and also what I am beginning to understand about it is that when you step back and step back and step back and step back, the words begin to be minuscule in trying to evaluate the depth of what you are feeling. You know? As it should. Words can only do so much. I feel like I get to this wordless space. I was meditating this morning, tuning up for this, and you get to this place where it's just vast and empty.

**Sarah Greenman:**

The words that you're using right now, I know you're saying it's a wordless space but you are using the words of the physical, of the sensual. There's a kind of embodiment that I hear you pointing at.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I know as a dancer, and as a choreographer, and as somebody who is also a voice teacher, and somebody who uses their body to communicate story, I would love to hear about ways in which you make that light energy, that silence, embodied. You just spoke to meditation a minute ago. I know you're a consummate meditator.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Devout, baby. Okay? *Devout*. Like if I can help it, and I can, there will never be a day where I blunder into this world and not meditate. I am that committed to it. You know what I mean? If somebody calls me before I meditate, there's a slim chance I won't answer.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Well, we feel that. I mean, I feel your meditation. That is something I've never thought ... I've always thought of meditation as something I do purely for myself, that is felt inwardly, but what I see happening with you is this sort of alchemical effect of it moving out of your body and affecting the quality of your days, not only that but the quality of the interaction and the people that you interact with feel it in their own embodied way. It has this miraculous ripple effect. I think that may be too why people consider you a being of light. You know? That there's this wave, right? A light ray is a wave and that it moves through us.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Well, back to your question about the body, the way that I think about it and feel through it, which is really a pleasure to describe because I've been out of practice, quite frankly, what I do, what I've begun

to do is I find pleasurable ways to move. I try to slow down as much as I can. I try not to look at clocks. I just started utilizing this thing called a wellbeing timer on my phone, which is great but it shuts my phone off at 10 and it doesn't turn back on until 8:30 and I'm up at seven usually so I'm up and I have to catch myself before I go scrolling. You know? I just try to move. Every day. It doesn't work, every day. Sometimes me and the cat is all scrolling in bed before anything gets done and that's a sense of pleasure so I'm okay with it. You know what I mean? I'm okay with that kind of stuff.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Right. How is all of this tied to radical self-love for you? Because radical self-love is a huge piece of I think being a being of light and it's a big part of my work ... You speak of pleasure too. It's this idea of pleasure activism. I was just reading adrienne maree brown's *Pleasure Activism*.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Amen.

**Sarah Greenman:**

That pleasure is a joy and joy as an act of resistance to the status quo, to the constant barrage of oppressive systems. I'm digesting all of that work, but also been reading *The Body is Not An Apology* by Sonya Renee Taylor and I know you've been reading it too.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Absolutely.

**Sarah Greenman:**

This idea of radical self-love is embodied in both of those books, right?

**Yusef Seevers:**

Right.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I wonder how is this meditation practice, this devout presence, that you aspire to and communicate in your everyday life, how is that tied to radical self-love for you?

**Yusef Seevers:**

It's so good because it is love. I think about Marianne Williamson's *Return to Love*. I think about all books that are ever talking about the self. It's all returning to this place of infinite love. I think that the feeling that a lot of people have or the resistance to it is that it feels too simple. Nothing we ever do in this country, this world, especially this new world, nothing we do is simple as love.

Most of these books are just massaging out the domestication beliefs that make us think that it's not love or that it has to be all other versions of fear, which are irrelevant in relationship to love. This is something I learned from acting that I appreciated about my graduate acting experience and even my undergraduate working with Jon Jory, Jack Greenman, Blake Hackler, Bernard, Rhonda, all of those people, they lead you to the precipice and you discover the jump. You discover the jump.

In all things that I do, in all things that I teach, in all things that I am living, I'm pointing to that love within one's self. I can only assume that's why a lot of people like it because I'm pointing to you. You know? You know what I mean? I'm pointing to you as the one that can do it, as the one who is able, as the one who *is* love. You know? When I think about radical self-love, it's magnificent in its ability to heal our domesticated perception. It's brilliant. It's a brilliant tool and through that space, we're able to discover

all of the bad programming and all of the things that no longer serve us. You know? You know what I mean?

Then all of a sudden, that takes a grieving process and if we are not demonizing grief and finding love in grief, all of a sudden, letting go of things becomes a piece that you're willing to respectfully hold and honor the fact that you're in that space.

In West African culture, there is a dance called Moribayassa is also what I think would be a western equivalent as a midlife crisis, like when you have a big question or a big problem or a big, "What am I going to do with my life?" Then Moribayassa this individual goes off into the bush, stays, sleeps, eats, and doesn't come out until they find the answer. Everybody doesn't go bother them. They don't go say, "Hey, how you doing?" They don't go, "Hey, I got an answer for you. I read this article." They don't go, "Look, this book helped me, this book might help you." They don't go, "Look, girl. Try this cream and I swear it's going to get you ..." You know what I mean? They don't do none of that shit. You know? They leave you there.

Then when that person finds the answer, because it is expected that they will, but once they find the answer, they come back into the village, they burn their clothes in the middle of the village and they dance Moribayassa and it is a celebrated process.

I think about what our culture would look like if people could respect that internal inquiry and not make it minuscule, put it on a calendar time frame, put it in relationship to any external state of value but to respect that internal inquiry to say what do I want to be in this world?

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Yusef Seevers:**

And to stay there, not what do I want to be? All right. Let me go make dinner. But what do I want to be? Let the answer fall in. You know?

**Sarah Greenman:**

I love that nobody bothers them. That's a big piece of it. We love bothering people.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Oh my gosh. It's such a big piece. It's such a big piece because people are trying to get people to latch onto their light. You know, rather than illuminating the light in them. It's there discovery. If they don't discover it, they can't own it.

**Sarah Greenman:**

If they aren't the ones who express it for themselves, they can't own it. Even if they know it.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Absolutely. That was my problem.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I was just ... In the Sonya Renee Taylor's *The Body Is Not An Apology*, she says that radical self-love is not a destination you're trying to get to, it's who you already are, and it is already working tirelessly to guide your life.

I usually get to the place where I'm like, yes, I am light, I am love, I am ... You know? I got that part. But I loved her addition of that fact that it's already working tirelessly to guide your life, which means that I'm not listening probably if it's tirelessly working in my life.

**Yusef Seevers:**

That's the part.

**Sarah Greenman:**

When I think about the ways in which we trust our gut to guide us and trust what we know to guide us, that's where our culture really loves the shame game.

**Yusef Seevers:**

We love the 'shame game'. We love the 'when I was your age' game. We love the 'do it my way' game. We love all of those things, simply because it ... Sonya talks about this when she talks about the Three Peaces in that book.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yes.

**Yusef Seevers:**

I get why people like it. I get why people like it because it's known. It's known. You can predict it. You can plan it. You can sort of secure people won't be as hurt as you think they might be if they did it your way. There are so many secure-based things in doing it that way. But there is so much less freedom in doing it that way. You know what I mean? We're not here to duplicate. We're not here to play it safe. We're here to be a variety.

When she talks about the Three Peaces, for those of you that haven't read the book, hopefully, by now, by the end of this, you will read the book, shout out, Sonya Renee Taylor, the Three Peaces are peace with not knowing, peace with difference, and peace with yourself. When you think about your work, your life, your day, peace with not knowing what you're going to do today ... Me, myself, included. I get stressed.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Oh, yeah.

**Yusef Seevers:**

I think I'm supposed to do something.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Well, and I'm a recovering perfectionist so I'm all about 'what is the plan'?

**Yusef Seevers:**

All day. And I have the nerve to have my fingers in several different pots so I do have meetings. I work for school, I have my own business, I have my own practice, and I'm also a musician. I got stuff that technically fits well on a calendar. You know what I mean? But there's one thing of feeling guilty and being addicted to having to live your life that way and doing it because it's useful to the structure of your day. There's a different feeling between the two of those things. You know?

Like you were saying, the light is working tirelessly on our behalf all day every day. When I say that our dreams, our desires, our biggest and broadest selves are beating down the door to get us to come, they're beating down the door to say, "Don't care what anybody thinks. Go do the thing you want to do." You know what I mean?

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yes.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Our minds are so quick to ... This is why I love Fitzmaurice and breath and somatic and holistic work in general because it interrupts that pattern, because it's just a pattern. It's what we've learned to think like and because it's so tight ... You know what I mean? You got 30 minutes before you feel like you're supposed to be doing something. You know? But it's like if you leave that space, you can run into a conversation that might give you a book, that might give you a life-changing revelation that you wouldn't have run into otherwise, had you tried to fill your time.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I respect circuitous pathways. When people say, "Well, I didn't do it the traditional way", I'm like tell me more, I want to know all of it.

Let's talk about this idea of each individual human on this earth has some special medicine they offer. There's something they do that is completely unique. I mean, I have ideas about what I think your special medicine is. I feel it. I've experienced it. How would you describe the unique medicine that you offer this world right now? Especially that it's a world in chaos.

**Yusef Seevers:**

That it's a connection between the breath, the body, and being. As an individual, I do private practice with people, I do meditations, I do health coaching, I do all kinds of work when it comes to honing in on the self and honing in on a full person. I hadn't conceptualized it as a medicine, per se. You know? I conceptualized it as like a tool belt, facets of what I do, facets of who I am but not as an innate intelligent medicine that wouldn't be on my heart unless it was necessary.

About a month and a half ago, I was teaching a training for a team in Canada and my wellness industry and I was talking about the past seven months in terms of civil unrest, in terms of upheaval of all kinds. You know? They were like, "Yo, how do you stay in business, bro? How do you continue to get up and feel like you have something to offer?" I was like, "Sometimes you don't, fam. Sometimes you don't" but it's where you look to regardless of if you do or don't.

That's when I said sometimes I get up and I have a bunch of stuff that I'm scheduled to do, that I want to do, that I feel eager about doing and then some days I'm just glad I got out of bed. You know what I mean? Or I'm glad I'm out of bed and breathing. You know? And providing practices that stimulate the breath, providing practices that stimulate the body, to encourage a sense of being really is something that I think this whole planet kind of needs, really needs. You know? It's clear in my heart.

When I teach this way and after I started examining those three things, I was like, "Yeah, no. That's me." You know? If there's nothing I'm going to do ... If I don't do anything else, I am always going to engage in my breathing, I am always going to engage in my body in some capacity, and I'm going to engage in some beingness and that's the three steps to start my day. You know what I mean? Or to really acknowledge this body and this being person, this light that we're talking about.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Yusef Seevers:**

That doesn't rely on people agreeing, that doesn't rely on assignments, that doesn't even rely on external evidence.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Permission at all.

**Yusef Seevers:**

At all. You know what I mean? You don't need money in your bank to enjoy your breath. You don't need a lucrative business in order to enjoy your being and your body. It's better said that you get those things first anyway. In my perspective, that's primary. You know?

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah. Prioritizing those first.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Because you get there and you don't have those things and then you're flailing in the wind.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah. Well, I mean, what I hear you pointing at is ... What I see you do is that you model embodied resilience in this way, not only as an act of radical self-love and self-care but as an act of activist resistance, like active hope and resistance in the face of an entirely unknown future right now. You just mentioned the racial reckoning that our country has just been through and I went back to this post that you wrote in the middle of the month that ... Not only was it just beautiful written and blew my mind but it had some nuggets in it but I just went and wrote it down and like, "I need that on my quote board."

**Yusef Seevers:**

Oh my gosh.

**Sarah Greenman:**

It started "Black and queer."

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yes.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Two things you said: that I feared and struggled with most of my life, these labels, right? That in this country equal a target, right? That equal a target for you. And you talk about that and about the ways your Blackness and your queerness show up in this because it's all integrated. You know, we're not separate of our identities and we all have intersecting identities that affect the other. I would love for you to expand a little bit on that post because you spoke about your light.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yeah. It's so lovely and I say that because my Blackness and my queerness have been things that are innately mine and yet I've been taught that they are a problem. You know? I've been taught and learned and whether we like it or not, domestication works. You know what I mean? Training works. It's not our fault that when someone says don't go in that corner, 2700 times, you eventually don't go in that corner. You know? That's just how we are as adapting beings.

My Blackness and my queerness have really shook my life up in varying levels because in my world, in my ecosystem, they have different treatment. You know what I mean? My Blackness is more accepted than my queerness. My queerness is more accepted by non-Black than it is by Black. I've never in my life when

I was growing up seen, knew about, a Black queer person that was happy, that was not a narrative that I was exposed to, and that's the thing that becomes a part of it, a collective. You know? It's not only on the individual who is experiencing the growth to introduce them to ways in which their growth can be successful. That's what we call education and mentorship. You know what I mean? That's a part of pedagogy, learning, absorbing, experiencing. Modeling is a part of that. Children deserve to see models of success in their life and love. They do. It's not their job to find it. It's not their job to find it. They just got here. I never had that.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Yusef Seevers:**

I didn't have that. I was raised to treat my Blackness like it was, A, going to be a problem but also my greatest source of joy, conflict, and then my queerness just wasn't talked about. You know? I had a conversation with my cousin the other day and because I made that post and my auntie texted me and was like, "Hey, I'm your auntie and I love you." I thought and I said, "Huh, I wonder if they've ever talked about my queerness ever. Has that ever come up with my cousin?" She was like, "Yeah. We talked about it. I think we knew" and all that kind of stuff. I was like, "I wonder about your dad." I'm interested in where that exists in the timeline, not because I need them to answer me and give me a feeling of justification but I'm curious, as I'm exploring all of this stuff within myself and others, it's good to know what environment it existed in. You know? How did my queerness show up?

**Sarah Greenman:**

As you said in your post, you're tired of that being disconnected from the you that they know and that they feel comfortable addressing. They're addressing a part of you and in doing that, bifurcating your identity without knowing. You know what I mean?

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yeah. Absolutely.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I mean, I think they're sort of unconscious about it but it's I think so important to address the whole person.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Greenman:**

That's what I hear you saying here. It's like - are they addressing the whole person?

**Yusef Seevers:**

I love that ... The whole person, and I'll tell you, the whole person came from me and my craft. My acceptance of my queerness, that's a gift from Belize.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Talk about Belize.



**Yusef Seevers:**

Belize is a character in *Angels In America* by Tony Kushner and it was the first play I can say that I did that really let me know that I was going to do this for the rest of my life because of what it did to my being, not because of the people that came to see it, because of the lines or the people that were in it, but because after that was over, I felt different.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Yusef Seevers:**

About who I was in this world and who I was able to be in this world. You know?

**Sarah Greenman:**

I do.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Then you look out and you go, "Oh my gosh. This is all different. If I'm holding this truth, all of this changes." It's a beautiful thing that it changes. You know? I think change is one of those things that we as humans have fought against for so long because we lose our adaptability skills. We don't know how to surf no more so any time the waters start moving, we're like, "No, stop the water, please." You know? Life is the ocean. We're out here on the water.

My craft has given me such an ability to ... For those of you listening who can't see me, I'm weeping right now. I'm trying to clean my face and not make a sound in the microphone.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I love that you're stealthily wiping tears from your face as to not make sound on the mic.

**Yusef Seevers:**

They don't hear my tears.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I love you.

**Yusef Seevers:**

I love you too. That was one of those moments where I was stumbling over my own acceptance of that queerness that I did not get in this world, in this country, in this domestication process because I can't blame anybody really of the last four, five generations. We did not build this. We are a byproduct of the perpetuation of it and the non-disruption of it. That's what this is a by-product of so ain't nobody going like, "How could you?" But at the same time, in order to break and change and disrupt and move those things, I have to put my finger in that wound and move it around a little bit with a smile on my face and love in my heart, not to make it bigger but to truly understand what it means to heal that and to heal it, you've got to hold it.

That is its own process in itself and I didn't hold my queerness until I took on Belize and I really didn't share and own it really until I was in my twenties. I told my parents when I was maybe 21, 22, after we had met. I was in Dallas by that time. It was because I was in a relationship and I was like I can't be 27, 28 and not ... You know what I mean? That's not going to be my story. I said it to myself just like that too. That was one of those hurdles that life presented, that made my light more visible and visceral to me. I started to feel more. My Blackness is an obstacle course in itself as it relates to this country, that you're

either taught to get good at bum rushing or you're taught to delicately tango around it so that it serves you and not really rock the boat or poke the bear or make waves.

But that's a protection program. That's not really in service of love and light I don't believe. I think it's a survival tactic and I know it's a survival tactic. I know that where we are in the continuum of all of this stuff in terms of humanness, beingness, race, sexuality, all of those things, where we are in that continuum, we're making quantum leaps, y'all. This pandemic and quarantine I truly believe has saved us 10 years of lingering discoveries. I feel that so deeply because if we had had not this time, if this didn't happen, these programs and perpetuations would go on for another decade before something big enough would disturb us to make us go, "Huh, what am I doing?"

**Sarah Greenman:**

I think because the revolution was televised, as they say, the revolution is going to be televised, and we were home to watch it.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yeah. Couldn't go nowhere.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah. We weren't going to work, and so many people took to the streets that I think were first timers in terms of protest as act of hope. It was fascinating to watch, what you're saying, that open space create an opportunity for catalytic change. My hope and my fear is ... well my hope is that we continue it. My fear is that there will be some sort of backsliding, back treading. I want us to keep pushing forward. You said something in this post too, you said ... And I wrote it down because it's in my quote book now. "There's nothing you can say or do that will change the limits of my light. In everything I do and touch, light comes and adorns those moments." I love that you've got not only light as a source inside of you, that you're modeling of this embodied resilience, bringing your Blackness, your queerness to everything you do, that that integration and that modeling of that integration, it means that light adorns everything that you do and we see that and it's palpable.

That's the kind of change that I think is revolutionary, when we see people tell stories that we see ourselves in, like when you played Belize. I also hear you pointing at too, that art form, the performance of it, became an alchemical transformation tool.

**Yusef Seevers:**

It dragged me through it.

**Sarah Greenman:**

You woke up to yourself and you know I'm all about using art as an alchemy, as a way of alchemizing despair and invisibility into visibility and joy.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yes. That is a part of our natural right in this world, to stumble over those discoveries, and to make a life full of them. We live in a world where we decide to protect ourselves from things that will disturb our fear. If it makes me feel scared, I can't do it, I got to keep this thing tight, I got to keep this thing in a nice, secure space so nothing disturb it and if I'm pursuing anything that makes this feel wobbly, it's its problem. My craft demands that that be eradicated.

**Sarah Greenman:**

And constantly disturbed.

**Yusef Seevers:**

All day. It makes our being more visceral and our being more accessible and then as we soften in, all of a sudden, I believe you get brighter.

**Sarah Greenman:**

That's where I think magic makers, shape shifters, magicians, all the woo woo technicians out there, they're living in that liminal fluid space of possibility and that's what makes them magic.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Right. They do that because they focus there, not because they got a secret book. You know what I mean?

**Sarah Greenman:**

We're all capable of it. You're right.

**Yusef Seevers:**

But they just hone in on that. That's what makes them legends is they have a good consistent focus. With a little bit of focus, anything is possible. That's why I love the breath, the body, and beingness because it only takes a little bit of focus to notice what's happening in your body. It only takes a little bit of focus to take a full breath. That was delicious. In that, there's a sort of resignation to your natural intelligence. I think that that translates into such a consistent form of light.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I'm so interested in art being, like I said, an alchemical tool for exploring what we think are the boundaries of our talents and our work is. We're so much more expansive and wide reaching than we can possibly imagine.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Truly limitless. Like truly limitless, y'all. Like truly, truly limitless. As we shift these belief systems around what we think we're supposed to do and what we think we're supposed to be, and really, really move into that heart space, that gut space of what aligns with your powerful now, what are you now, who do you want to be now, and giving us and those dreams, an opportunity to expand on us. You know, before we kill it with practicality.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Or kill it with our own hiding.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yes. Killing it by not telling nobody.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Right. When you say, when you open up a social media post with Black and queer, it's like I am showing up right now. Yeah. Knock, knock, who is there? It's Yusef.

**Yusef Seevers:**

It's me. That intimacy is so families, siblings, cousins. You know, what it is to sit at the table and this is awkward for Black folks. I'm going to tell you the truth. There are few, far, and between families that I

know of that sit at the table and say, "What do y'all want to be? How's your heart? What are things that bring you joy right now? What are things that are making you sad right now?" Doing it ... Like that level of intimacy is truly revolutionary. My goodness, if we just knew how connected we all were.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah. When you get close to somebody ... Like you say, if you're at the table with somebody, just the proximal energy of two people at a table means it's going to have a level of intimacy. I always say this but I'm going to say it again because I just love it, once you have intimacy you start caring about each other and once you start caring about each other, you'll take risks for each other, once you start taking risks for each other then you're in a space of co-conspiracy and you're actually working together for each other.

**Yusef Seevers:**

It's beautiful. It's really beautiful. I think this whole eight months, it's given a form of intimacy that we've never had before and it's forced the care to be the next logical step. You know? It's so lovely. It relates back to when I was talking about the plantation, that mass experience by people of color welded intimacy and care into everything that they did so that you could drop your child off at their house or their shack and say, "I won't be back" and you'll know that they'll be taken care of. That's the kind of intimacy that Sonya Renee Taylor is talking about, that's the kind of Black love and outside of the white supremacist understanding that we have lived for the past 120 years or 230 years, that that's what we want to create in our own ecosystems.

**Sarah Greenman:**

That piece of it, when I see Black communities that are organizing, I see that DNA laced into their organizational power. People tell me, they're like, "When did you first come to social activism?" I'm like, "It's Black queer women at Mills College who are like ..." Everything good I learned about activism and organizing is straight from them. It's so immensely powerful and communities that have been marginalized over the centuries have practice in it. White folk don't have practice in it.

**Yusef Seevers:**

I had this thought the other day when I was roaming and ranting around my house about how good life was and what we all ... I was thinking about these systems that we're building and this business and all of the projects and the creative things that we're doing that if we don't ... If we build this or if we don't build it from an anti-racist and dismantling lens, then we are enabling the supremacy that has got us this far.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Absolutely.

**Yusef Seevers:**

If it's not anti-racist, it's probably inherently racist.

**Sarah Greenman:**

Yeah.

**Yusef Seevers:**

You know what I mean? I know people are like, "My book club is not inherently racist." You go, "...yeah." But if it's not to be anti-racist, it's probably racist.

**Sarah Greenman:**

This idea that if it's not actively anti-racist, it's going to inhabit ... Well, really, it's the habit energy of white supremacy that is in everything, that is in all systems, and I see that infiltrate my relationships. I see that infiltrate my parenting when I'm not vigilant. But when I see those supremacy structures in play, I mean, they're insidious. That's their nature.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Greenman:**

That kind of vigilance is called for now. I think that can be joyful work and should be joyful work.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Oh, yeah. Joy is the ... That is the anti. You know what I mean? It's really just letting that true love that we all want to have for life ... When we see it on movies, we're like, "Ugh, that bitch is living a full life, that bitch is running through the streets." You know what I'm saying? She don't give a fuck about nobody. Then we turn our lives off and just ... You know? That's us. We are that revolution in how we live and how we converse. Conversations like these, amplifying conversations like these, and allowing space for people to build new systems.

You know, when I tell my wellness industry that I'm building an anti-racist organization, they can't teach me how to do that. When I accept that, I go, "Oh, that's why I shouldn't be looking for you, motherfuckers. That's why. Because you can't give me the rubric for what I'm trying to build." Now that's why this is frustrating. That's why this is frustrating.

**Sarah Greenman:**

How are you building it?

**Yusef Seevers:**

Well, there's a couple different things that I'm doing. I'm in partnership with a global organization called Arbonne, which has really been a pivotal wellness arena and also business arena that lacks diversity, that lacks many, many things but will gain many, many things by building organizations that are globally expansive with this company.

I'm also building a brand that's about the breath, body, being and still molding into place but it's a brand that offers the educational programming about body awareness and emotional intelligence and how that shows up in educational programming and in the rooms that we're all in.

I'm feeling for that sweet spot where I can actually sing joy into the revolution and sing joy into that same disruption of the structure. Those are the areas in which it shows up the most and my global wellness industry, my educational environment, body awareness organization, and figuring out my music. As I build this brand, all of those branches will get bigger. I'm planting my own seeds and tilling my own soil without looking for people to say, "Hey, can you come water this?" "Hey, can you tell me this is a good seed?" You know? People can't do that for you. Your love can, your light can, that non-physical stuff that makes you get goosebumps, that'll tell you but if you're looking for people, we got faulty programming, y'all.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I love your work in terms of body awareness and emotional intelligence because that innate knowing, that innate creativity, that comes from within is going to be everybody's greatest teacher in this new year ahead of us.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yes.

**Sarah Greenman:**

That somatic knowing.

**Yusef Seevers:**

Yes. I tell people all the time, it happens between your ears and between your armpits.

**Sarah Greenman:**

I love it. Head and heart. Yusef, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

**Yusef Seevers:**

That's *gooooood*. That's *so, so good*. ... I love good conversation.

**Sarah Greenman:**

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