00;00;00;00 - 00;00;22;28

Pascale Diverlus

What's up everybody? My name is Pascale Diverlus. I am a writer, educator, founder of Living Practices consulting, and one half of your hosting team for Speak, Unspoken.

00;00;23;00 - 00;00;31;24

Rodney Diverlus

Hello, my name is Rodney Diverlus an artist and changemaker with an interest in the most transformative ideas.

00;00;31;26 - 00;00;33;12

Rodney Diverlus

Okay, Pascale.

00;00;33;15 - 00;00;35;19

Pascale Diverlus

What's up?

00;00;35;21 - 00;00;41;14

Rodney Diverlus

What does community look like in this age of conservatism? Like, what is that even? Is that even a thing anymore?

00;00;41;17 - 00;00;50;05

Pascale Diverlus

I mean, I will say, I have tried to bring back black arts movie names. You definitely bailed, but I did try.

00;00;50;05 - 00;00;53;16

Rodney Diverlus

You did. Okay. What is Black Ass Movie Nights?

00;00;53;18 - 00;01;05;12

Pascale Diverlus

Oh my gosh. Once upon a time, in a different Toronto. In a different kind of setting. We were hosting this initiative, this thing called.

00;01;05;15 - 00;01;09;21

Rodney Diverlus

I wouldn’t call it an initiative. It was absolutely just us wanting to. Kiki.

00;01;09;22 - 00;01;23;10

Pascale Diverlus

It really was. It really was. But we really wanted to, like. I think it was in conversation. We realized that there are some black movies that we just haven't seen, but we were like, oh, we need to watch this. Like, this is a very pivotal. And we were in conversations with some of our friends and we realized like, oh, you haven't seen that.

00;01;23;10 - 00;01;41;13

Pascale Diverlus

Like we definitely need to see that. And we started throwing what was called. We just literally called it Black Ass Movie Night. It was back when you could still make, an event on Facebook. People were still checking it, it would say you. Yes, I am going, so you know how much food to order back in the day.

00;01;41;13 - 00;01;44;00

Pascale Diverlus

And it felt so much simpler to bring people together.

00;01;44;01 - 00;01;49;22

Rodney Diverlus

I feel like we were also like all lost black millennials, coming of age.

00;01;49;22 - 00;01;51;17

Pascale Diverlus

Right.

00;01;51;20 - 00;02;05;13

Rodney Diverlus

Finishing university or college or just about or just starting in the job market. Growing up as third culture kids, you have a and a in a city of the northern majority.

00;02;05;13 - 00;02;06;22

Pascale Diverlus

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

00;02;06;25 - 00;02;13;16

Rodney Diverlus

And sort of realizing that there is a, there's a whole body of work that we all.

00;02;13;17 - 00;02;14;20

Pascale Diverlus

Just missed.

00;02;14;22 - 00;02;23;07

Rodney Diverlus

Missed or wanted to know or wanted to watch or wanted to rewatch. And it was through cinema and through movies and to sharing to each other our favorite movies.

00;02;23;07 - 00;02;45;20

Pascale Diverlus

And what a time. I think also the piece that you said is important. We are either, like immigrants, or first generation. And so, part of the missing of these like, cultural moments were also because it just wasn't in our culture that you're coming from. So, you're like trying to also feel a sense of connection to each other, but also to these, like, very pivotal points of, black cinema.

00;02;45;22 - 00;02;54;12

Pascale Diverlus

And we would honestly get together on like a Thursday, Friday night, order some food, have some Vino and just watch.

00;02;54;14 - 00;02;57;13

Rodney Diverlus

Vine? We were too young for Vino. You know, people were drinking like.

00;02;58;25 - 00;02;59;16

Rodney Diverlus

Like like.

00;02;59;16 - 00;03;00;05

Pascale Diverlus

Moscato.

00;03;00;06 - 00;03;03;14

Rodney Diverlus

For real. People were drinking like juice and Moscato. Let's be for real right now.

00;03;07;09 - 00;03;08;24

Pascale Diverlus

Okay, I still be drinking juice and Moscato. Not too much, not too much Moscato.

00;03;08;26 - 00;03;09;21

Rodney Diverlus

Right.

00;03;09;23 - 00;03;12;22

Pascale Diverlus

Not too much of a Moscato, because it still has a place in my heart.

00;03;12;27 - 00;03;30;12

Rodney Diverlus

But ultimately, I think what comes out of that is if you think about the some of the people that were in, Black Ass Movie Nights, every single one of those folks have gone on to just live their full lives and contribute so much to the zeitgeist in many ways. And it became an or it became an accidental organizing ground.

00;03;30;12 - 00;03;51;06

Rodney Diverlus

It became a space of collective consciousness raising. I think a lot of us learned a lot about and radicalized our sense of blackness and our relations to self and community from that. And I think that that's where we kind of need back in this moment. Yeah, I think that's what we kind of need in this moment, in this age of conservatism.

00;03;51;21 - 00;04;14;16

Pascale Diverlus

I think like, you know, there was so much, there was so much to come out of Black Ass Movie Nights that, like, shaped helped to shape our understanding of that culture, of us of organizing. Like, we there's so much pivotal things that have come out of the people who are there. But honestly, you know, I was probably one of the young bucks there in that room.

00;04;14;18 - 00;04;33;26

Pascale Diverlus

Honestly, for me, it was just a place to be. And so, I think about what is it also mean to create spaces that we may not know are nurturing these things that may become these great, monumental things later on? Bridges, places for people to be, especially places for like young people to be too, because I didn't see that it was going to be a place of organizing, I didn't.

00;04;33;28 - 00;04;41;25

Pascale Diverlus

I didn't, of course not. Right? For me, I was just like this. Like I said, I was one of the young bucks. We were one of the youngest in the room, just being like, oh my god, we're invited. Or drinking our little Moscato and we're eating our pizza.

00;04;44;04 - 00;05;06;03

Pascale Diverlus

And that was that. And like, that is all actually I needed at that time. And so trying to find that kind of middle ground to like, does it these spaces always need to be a place of, conscious raising. Like, does it, does it need to always be that kind of pointed, or can it be these places that we kind of just come together and allow people to just be.

00;05;06;08 - 00;05;10;00

Rodney Diverlus

So that's what we that's what you think we need in the age of conservatism?

00;05;10;03 - 00;05;28;25

Pascale Diverlus

I think it is a thing. I don't think it's like there's a single answer to this. I think it's a formula, and the formula has many different variables in it. Okay. It's one of those math ones. We're looking at a chart with meaning different, many different numbers, letters, all of it are thrown in. I think it's an aspect of it.

00;05;28;29 - 00;05;50;15

Rodney Diverlus

And I think for that what this episode does in many ways is brings together two, emerging, fantastic dynamic, thought leaders, to add to that conversation and imagining, what do we actually need in the age of conservatism?

00;05;50;17 - 00;06;20;09

Pascale Diverlus

One of our speakers powerhouse, honestly, one of the biggest powerhouses that are talking about black youth mental health, and particularly around black womanhood, black queer folks, black trans folks. Tanya Turton. She is the founder and executive director of Adornment Stories Collective, is a grassroots mental health nonprofit that empowers black women, femmes, queer, trans and non-binary communities to share their stories to create of expression while building capacity.

00;06;20;11 - 00;06;35;29

Pascale Diverlus

Tanya is one of those people that have been talking about and doing work for and with black people, black women, black queer, and trans folks far before it hit the common lexicon. She has been doing it for a long, long time.

00;06;36;01 - 00;06;56;28

Rodney Diverlus

And she is in conversation with Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah, who is the co-director of policy and advocacy at Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights. What I loved about Debbie is that she brings that experience, but also, her experience as a community educator, feminist activist and social justice advocate to the conversation.

00;06;57;00 - 00;07;11;11

Pascale Diverlus

This episode and this series, Speak, Unspoken, is created for Across Boundaries a Mental Health Center in Toronto with support from Ontario Health. We hope you enjoyed this episode.

00;07;11;13 - 00;07;12;23

Rodney Diverlus

Thank you both for being here.

00;07;12;28 - 00;07;13;20

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Thank you for having us.

00;07;13;28 - 00;07;15;20

Tanya Turton

Yes, thanks for having us.

00;07;15;22 - 00;07;16;20

Rodney Diverlus

Our pleasure.

00;07;16;23 - 00;07;39;04

Pascale Diverlus

You folks do both really very distinct work, but one of the really crucial similarities that I found is the ways that you both work for and, with similar communities, and that's huge. So, getting us started. Why is that a demographic that is such a special and urgent point of advocacy? Tanya, why don't you get started?

00;07;39;06 - 00;07;58;07

Tanya Turton

I think it's so important that the piece around working with youth, because when I when I think about the work that I do specifically at Adornment Stories, you know, youth are coming with so many stories that have been told to them, about them, about who they are and how they should be, particularly working with young black women and particularly working with queer and trans youth.

00;07;58;11 - 00;08;19;17

Tanya Turton

There are so many narratives that have been, you know, pushed out and given to them. And I think that at that early stage, you know, you know, that the moment that we're becoming, if we all remember what was like to just be trying to figure out and sort of it's so important to be able to, to

support folks at that level for them to build their own stories and build their own narratives and start to know that they actually get to choose, like how they show up in the world and who they want to be.

00;08;19;17 - 00;08;37;07

Tanya Turton

They get to choose. And there are moments where I see that that click for them, where they when they start to realize that they don't have to be who they've been told that they should be. They get to be exactly who they are. And for me, that is the god moment, that spark, that is the joy. And I love to be able to start from that point.

00;08;37;14 - 00;08;44;02

Tanya Turton

And then that becomes the baseline and everything else, like all of that is the plus, all of that is a magic. But that's the baseline.

00;08;44;05 - 00;08;45;21

Pascale Diverlus

That is so lovely.

00;08;45;23 - 00;09;15;04

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Yeah, youth is really important. And I'm not trying not to sound like a policy analyst, but I am. So as a demographic, we know how important youth are in terms of driving societal change. Why? Because they are literally the future. I don't want to sound like an auntie, but they are. And as a result of that, their ideas, their ability to innovate those things are key for how, society can change.

00;09;15;04 - 00;09;40;08

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

But simultaneously, they are an oppressed group because control has historically been something across the political spectrum around youth, like when we think about stereotypes of them being unruly. Needing to be told what to do, that there's an interesting dynamic between they are the future, which is fantastic. And as a result of that, we need to be able to control that in a way.

00;09;40;11 - 00;10;06;28

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And so, for me, working with youth is working with a group of oppressed folks who have a lot of power. And not for me has always been an exciting part of working them with them for my time doing LGBTQ work to even now working in sexual reproductive health. I was literally just speaking at a youth conference talking about decolonizing sexual reproductive health and rights, and to talk to young people and to learn from them has always been an exciting part of this work.

00;10;06;28 - 00;10;12;23

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And so, yeah, crucial demographic to work with for many reasons, mainly because we can learn from them.

00;10;12;26 - 00;10;27;04

Pascale Diverlus

I will also say. I'm so curious about that. Right. The idea of what it is that we are learning from them. Can we share some of the gems that you are hearing? You know, directly from them? What are the things that they are maybe teaching about to yourself, about yourself, rather are about our world right now?

00;10;27;07 - 00;10;53;03

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

So, I know for me, young people have always constantly reminded me and grounded me in trying to be brave. I think the older I gotten like, I literally turned 33 in a couple of days, there's, you're more aware of risks and less likely to want to take particular risks. And I know we're talking about advocacy later and I and I'm going to draw a parallel.

00;10;53;05 - 00;11;15;28

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And they have proven time and time again the need to be brave. And I go back to some of the student activism we've seen recently in relation to Palestine. For me, I didn't even think about it, that that would be an opportunity to remind folks the need to understand what is happening with regards to people who live in Gaza.

00;11;16;01 - 00;11;33;17

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And they have reminded me, someone who's not that much older than them, you need to be brave. Here I, I'm thinking, oh, I can just send an email to the, you know, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and that's. No, no, no, you need to be brave. And I think that's been something that's been a big lesson I've gotten from young folks.

00;11;33;18 - 00;11;40;29

Rodney Diverlus

And also, the vested interest in that courage, too. It's their future, after all. And how about you, Tanya?

00;11;41;01 - 00;12;00;12

Tanya Turton

World building. I deeply believe in, you know, our ability to dream outside of the world that we live in. And I think youth are at the forefront of that. And when I think about it, not just the youth who we work with and, you know, who we services, but the young people or who are doing the work.

00;12;00;12 - 00;12;15;10

Tanya Turton

You know, when I think about how a dormitory particularly has grown over time, it's been folks who have been in the program who've come back and who have been the driving force. And, you know, similar to what you said, that be like, I'm 35, I'm still a young person, right? Like kind of a young person.

00;12;15;12 - 00;12;17;15

Pascale Diverlus

I’m young too.

00;12;17;18 - 00;12;49;03

Tanya Turton

And there are moments like, for real, there are moments where it's the folks who have come back to do the work that they'll say something. And I'm like, oh, and you are not tied to the world we live in. Like, you're so you're so afraid to imagine something outside of what you ever seen. And they are a constant reminder that when we want to see a new world, we have to be willing to dream outside of what we've ever seen before, and that our world building is connected to the ability and to the willingness to do something we've never seen before, and to have, you know, belief and faith in that as

00;12;49;03 - 00;13;01;09

Tanya Turton

possible. And I think, you know, are the driving force. And they you know, insert that energy and then that push for us to be, and I think to your point, to be brave, to be brave enough to do it, even if we never seen it before.

00;13;01;11 - 00;13;22;26

Rodney Diverlus

And I think that that's where the. Yeah, that is a gift for the good and the risk and the courage and I when I think back to some of the things that I've, I've done that I've required the most courage. You're right. There is something about possibility as well that happens with youth. And this brings into the question around the thing that I feel like is the opposite of possibility, conservation and conservatism.

00;13;22;29 - 00;13;44;13

Rodney Diverlus

And with the recent sort of provincial elections have following, they followed a trend that we're seeing globally. The pendulum is sort of swinging towards a sort of new world order. The move to a more conservatism. And yeah, I'm curious, how do you see we can withstand and remain steadfast in the face of this, this new, this new reality.

00;13;44;15 - 00;14;10;22

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

I love this question, something that we talk about every day at work, but also outside of work as a, you know, queer black person who's trying to live something that I'm thinking about every day. And I think it's important to acknowledge that it is scary for a lot of people to see what's happening. Like,

there are some people who saw the recent elections here in Ontario, and we're like, this is horrible for me because it means I will not be able to access certain services.

00;14;10;22 - 00;14;30;23

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

This means that the state of public education will continue to be in shambles. This means that the state of our public health care system is at risk to privatization. Important to acknowledge and you've named that this is a global thing. And I think for us here as black people who are watching the impacts of this in our home countries, I'm from Ghana.

00;14;30;26 - 00;14;57;25

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Seeing that conservative influence in my home country again, backlash against LGBTQ people. I'm like, where am I supposed to go? So, from that perspective, I think it's really important for us to actually monitor how these people are operating. They're all operating from the same playbook. The same playbook that's being used in Europe is the exact same playbook that's being utilized south of the border.

00;14;57;27 - 00;15;18;18

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

It's also being utilized here. Are we actually connecting those dots? Because if we are not building a resistance or a counter movement and not understanding that we're not going to know how to respond. And the key piece of all of this is understanding that they're just really good at marketing shitty shit, shitty shit. And that's essentially what it is.

00;15;18;18 - 00;15;39;16

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

The things that we as progressive people have been advocating are extremely popular. And so, it boils down to messaging and marketing. But I won't go into too much details now, but we just need to understand their playbook, because then we can understand what these patterns are, and we'd be better equipped to respond to them. And so, I'm optimistic that we'll get there.

00;15;39;17 - 00;15;59;16

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Why? History has proven it, but it's just going to require bravery. So again, why young people are crucial in this movement. So, it's going to require bravery and the ability to dream, as Tanya mentioned, to imagine what world we're trying to create to counter this force that is hitting us from so many different angles.

00;15;59;18 - 00;16;21;00

Pascale Diverlus

Yeah. And I think also to, as you were speaking about learning about their playbook across the globe, that means that we also get to learn from the resistance playbook, too. We actually learn from each other as to what it looks like to operate against these forces that are doing very similar things across the globe. Absolutely. How about yourself?

00;16;21;05 - 00;16;39;03

Tanya Turton

You yeah. You touched on exactly what I was watching, saying where I was going to go with this. Is that right after the election happened, I remember that feeling of like, hopelessness coming over me. Something in me was like, you know what? I'm going to do what I do, which is go to a book and go to an ancestor.

00;16;39;05 - 00;17;04;11

Tanya Turton

And I decided to read the last chapter, and Sister Outsider and Audre Lorde was actually talking about American imperialism specifically. And as I read it, I kid you not, she could have written that yesterday, like it was so timely and relevant, and I felt like we were having this conversation across time that it was giving me all of the comfort inside that I needed in that moment.

00;17;04;13 - 00;17;23;29

Tanya Turton

And it reminds me that, like, we've been here, we will be here. We will continue to be here. And to your point, Pascale, we have so many playbooks as well, folks who have, you know, resisted, folks who have dreamed, folks who have, you know, put it into pen to paper for us to have guidance and understanding of what we could do.

00;17;23;29 - 00;17;44;03

Tanya Turton

And so for me, it's about connecting that it's sometimes in this feeling of disparity, it's easy to forget that. Also, you know what we're thinking about critical hope. It's easy to forget that we have a playbook for our critical hope. And when it comes to practical things like for me, that's also important piece is the importance of community.

00;17;44;07 - 00;18;06;11

Tanya Turton

You know, the origins of I think that online spaces are really important. And so, it's not a matter of, you know, in-person versus online as much as it's a matter of being able to pull in close and to lean deeper into our relationships and community. And I remember in 2020 how it felt when y'all know what 2020 was like.

00;18;06;11 - 00;18;32;22

Tanya Turton

It felt so deeply overwhelming. And I remember in the course of a week, you know, we were like, we need to pull a space together for us. And that's when we came up this concept, concept of like black Joy retreat. And I promise you, we did that in the course of a week, and we were like, we're going to get together folks who are already doing this work in community and we're going to open a zoom room from the early morning till night, and we're going to share space with each other.

00;18;32;27 - 00;19;03;26

Tanya Turton

And we had, you know, 60 plus black folks from across the country join us. And so, I should sort of say that what I've seen in community is this possibility and this resilience to and this choice to come together in the moments where folks are intentionally trying to pull us apart. And when we think about how we do, you know, resist in this moment of conservatism, I think we remember that we have always been and I think that we remember that we have each other.

00;19;03;26 - 00;19;15;24

Tanya Turton

And when we come in close and we lock arms, we can do such amazing things. And sometimes locking arms is not only about pushing back, but sometimes locking arms is about hugging each other and holding each other close and giving each other the care we need in this time.

00;19;15;26 - 00;19;40;06

Rodney Diverlus

Yeah, I mean, I think there is there's a way that the other world view that let's imagine that we're on this side of this world you're in. There's another world view. There's a way that they've been able to, like, expand their tent to include youth, like they're not seen as a threat. Like, I mean, I was just watching today, actually, as DOGE is doing their cuts and the people that are literally gutting the United States government right now are like 23-year-olds.

00;19;40;08 - 00;19;56;13

Rodney Diverlus

And so, there's a way that, like folks who are and the sort of far right have actually leaned in to the fact that there are incel cultures that there's all these like online cultures that have been manifesting for like a decade, that have been cultivating their own form of community. While we have been mostly fragmented and mostly split.

00;19;56;13 - 00;20;16;05

Rodney Diverlus

And so, I do think that there is a way amongst progressive spaces that we tell young folks, you know, you're just radical now grow into it. You'll become pragmatic and real later rather than realizing that actually, it's that fire that we need coming from the other generation, from the Zs and the alphas and the worldview that they see, we actually can it can help implement rather than seeing them as a threat.

00;20;16;10 - 00;20;39;14

Pascale Diverlus

If I can also add that to something to that, too, like, I think contextualizing, you know, bringing in what both Debbie and Tanya have said, like contextualizing right now, this moment a week ago, less than a week ago, we just saw a third term from a conservative government get voted in. And so, there's a lot of sometimes it can be easy to kind of like go to the hopelessness place, and it's a natural place to kind of get to.

00;20;39;14 - 00;20;56;22

Pascale Diverlus

But I think the reminder from both of you ought to be like, and we live, and we continue to live and we still deserve to live, and we still have to move forward. And we get to love. We get to have joy and come together and find community or self-worth. That is also such an important piece of what I'm gathering from both of you folks.

00;20;56;25 - 00;21;08;16

Pascale Diverlus

For both of you folks are saying to a moment of frustration and sadness and anger, and the next day when we get together and actually either hold each other or organize against something different.

00;21;08;19 - 00;21;35;28

Tanya Turton

And can I add to what you just said that I think sometimes what can happen is because, you know, the conservative powerhouses, I'm going to just call it that. Y'all, are so good at the marketing that we can actually start believing that we're also not doing the things we're doing. And I think it's important for us to not start to fall into that and to start believing that because I'm like, we also are pouring into our youth.

00;21;35;28 - 00;21;58;25

Tanya Turton

We also are supporting our youth. We also are creating these, you know, meaningful spaces. The fact that we're all sitting here through the powers of technology, having this conversation right now, we're also doing the work. And I think sometimes when we're not feeling like we're winning, we can forget that the fact that things are not even worse than they are today is because of how much work for those who have come before us have done, and how much work we continue to do.

00;21;59;00 - 00;22;10;10

Tanya Turton

And this is not me saying that like our work is done, it's me saying that it's important that as we maintain our momentum and maintain our spirit, that we remember that we're actually doing really good work.

00;22;10;10 - 00;22;12;19

Rodney Diverlus

Good work. Yeah. That's a great reminder.

00;22;12;19 - 00;22;29;24

Pascale Diverlus

I think also framing it around marketing is so, you know, from the comms perspective and me, I'm like, that's like genius actually, because it means and forces us to think about what is our marketing strategy, what does it look like for us to counter the very narratives that they are in? You know, these spaces kind of spreading?

00;22;29;24 - 00;22;51;06

Pascale Diverlus

We get to actually have a counter argument. We also get to have our own strategy as well. And and again, taking it back to what you folks have said, recognize with their patterns or recognize what their strategies are, learn from it, and actually like do things that actually can oppose it, that actually fights against it and not take, you know, not take any of this shit lying down slowly.

00;22;51;12 - 00;22;52;19

Pascale Diverlus

We can’t.

00;22;52;26 - 00;23;14;19

Rodney Diverlus

In a way. I mean, I feel like and this this is one of the most hot button issues. And this is a question for you, Debbie, is, you know, I know a lot of your advocacy right now is centered around sexual rights and reproductive justice. And speaking of regressive movements, we're seeing, a parents choice movement and sort of other regressive movements move rampantly across this entire continent.

00;23;14;26 - 00;23;22;00

Rodney Diverlus

What is at stake and right now, when it comes to that, paints a picture of how urgent these matters are.

00;23;23;05 - 00;23;23;25

Pascale Diverlus

00;23;23;28 - 00;24;02;19

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Excellent question. So, what's at stake? And using the parental rights parental choice example I think is great because it boils down to that marketing piece that I was mentioning. Marketing is about persuasion. You use marketing, in politics and you use marketing to sell toothpaste. And marketing is often driven by emotions. And one way to tap into those emotions is to tap into things like fear and parental choice and parental rights, but specifically how it has been diluted to mean a very specific thing.

00;24;02;19 - 00;24;28;03

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

As part of that marketing strategy. So, if we go way back, not to back, parental choice was used as an argument against desegregating schools in the South. Fast forward to now. It's being utilized around teaching empathy in schools, because that's what it is. When we talk about teaching, about LGBTQ teaching, about black folks talking about residential schools, this is about teaching empathy.

00;24;28;05 - 00;25;01;08

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And so parental rights, parental choice. And I'm not a lawyer, but the real meaning of parental rights is around things like, you know, divorced parents trying to figure out who has access to the rhetoric has been utilized to tap into a particular emotion. That's all centered on bigotry, but it's a distraction, and it's a distraction. In the case of schools right now around the underfunding of the public education system, teachers are overwhelmed, exhausted, and burnt out, and kids are bringing in the realities of the world into the classroom.

00;25;01;10 - 00;25;38;18

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And parental rights is a great distraction away from that which, you know, instills fear in parents, mistrust in parents, and is all centered on like divide and conquer in a very interesting way, while

simultaneously creating alliances with people who would have never stood next to each other. So, we go back to the fall of 2023 during those 1 million marches for children, you had immigrant parents standing next to the most vile white supremacists under this idea of gender ideology being bad, that is the goal, that is a recruitment tactic.

00;25;38;20 - 00;26;07;08

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

With that being said, what is at stake isn't simply, trans youth no longer being safe at school. That's one of them. That's the that's the rallying point. The whole point of all of this is regression on all progressive policies, because as soon as those immigrant parents have been brought in and recruited to hang out with all of these racist folks, in comes everything else that they want to repeal.

00;26;07;08 - 00;26;34;13

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Everything else that our movements have fought for, whether that's reproductive justice, whether that's migrant rights. Yes. The irony. Yes. It also includes migrant rights, housing rights for folks, that is the end goal. All of it is a distraction. It's a recruitment tactic, and it's all meant to repeal all progressive policy. And so, what's at stake is people no longer thinking that a public health care system is actually important in Canada.

00;26;34;13 - 00;26;54;12

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

That's what's at stake. What's at stake is people saying, you know, maybe less people should go to university. Maybe we should cut university, maybe international students. We don't need them, or we do for money, but we don't really need them to actually come to be part of this country anymore. But we can blame them for the housing crisis.

00;26;54;12 - 00;27;24;07

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Like that is what's at stake. So, it is very much so about trans youth and not at the same time. And the main driver of all of this is to recruit people and to build alliances and solidarity in spaces where we would have never imagined it. It is extremely wild, but it is indicative of how insidious the far-right populist playbook is now playing on, you know, the lives of a very marginalized group of people, which is like trans youth.

00;27;24;14 - 00;27;50;15

Pascale Diverlus

I will say to like some of my organizing experience was in defense of, teachers in the province. And so around this time of the parent's choice movement, kind of, you know, gaining so much popularity for lack of better words, what also happened is that it pitted educators and parents against each other, which is like, again, a very historical part of the of the tool book, the toolkit rather.

00;27;50;18 - 00;28;16;08

Pascale Diverlus

And it positioned teachers as the enemy while teachers are dealing with so much issues, dealing with a complex world, dealing with school boards, principals, children that are impacted by so many different kind of things, and now parents that are then telling them that they are part of the problem as to why their children want to learn empathy. And that's what also a great way to kind of like boil it down to what it actually truly is about.

00;28;16;10 - 00;28;39;15

Pascale Diverlus

And so in, in building the kind of solidarity amongst groups that shouldn't be together, it is also building opposition from people that you would think would also be on the same side, the side of of a child in painting that it's a very interesting again, for lack of better words, part of the playbook and it's really disgusting to see in how people who are already vulnerable are being made even more vulnerable.

00;28;39;17 - 00;28;58;21

Pascale Diverlus

Yeah, absolutely. And pivoting to yourself, Tanya, it's similar question to you in your work or the dormitories, what threats either locally, provincially, nationally or even as a society threatened the work you were doing with black, queer and trans youth? Similarly, like paints a picture of what is at stake right now.

00;28;58;23 - 00;29;27;20

Tanya Turton

I think the obvious threat, particularly coming from the nonprofit sector, is what it will do to our funding landscape, what it means for the potential and possibility of programing that will become

available, and I mean really meaningful programing. And I think, you know, to add another layer to this around some of the storytelling that happens, you know, entering this work, something that I often heard was that black folks are not interested in mental health.

00;29;27;22 - 00;29;56;27

Tanya Turton

You know, that's a I've heard it from funders, I've heard it from everyday people that like this topic of mental health is, you know, one that isn't really, for us. Interesting. And when you and you add the intersection of, you know, blackness, queerness and trans experience, we are sometimes written out of the conversation from this place of assuming that we don't want to be at the table where we're not interested in the conversation, not happening at the table.

00;29;57;03 - 00;30;14;17

Tanya Turton

And y'all know what happens when we're not at the table. We're completely forgotten about, and what is created does not have our interests, you know, at in mind at heart. And so, when I, when I think about what's at stake is without the proper support, funding and also culture. So, I think that that's part of it is it's actually a culture that we live in.

00;30;14;20 - 00;30;39;00

Tanya Turton

Because I think to your point, Debbie, what happens is these stories take hold in everyday people, and then you start seeing everyday people reciting some of these deeply problematic and hurtful beliefs. And then what happens? It becomes just part of everyday thinking and becomes part of everyday thinking. It becomes even more difficult to get the kind of supports that that young people need, because it's not assumed to be true.

00;30;39;06 - 00;31;18;09

Tanya Turton

It is not true, but it's assumed to be true because it's become part of our colloquial understanding of something. And so that's really what we're up against, is a shifting culture that sees it as okay and natural. I use huge quotations here, natural for us to not be in these conversations. And it's not true, right? Because we know that because of our lived experiences and because of the, the, the ways in which, particularly black folks, queer folks and trans folks are up against various different systems

of oppression that the need for meaningful, you know, mental health supports is there, but also that when we shift, when we shift our language, when

00;31;18;09 - 00;31;46;15

Tanya Turton

we shift our ways of wanting to, whether it be interventions or support systems, when we actually shift to make it relevant, trauma informed, culturally appropriate, we actually know that folks want programing, folks want services, folks want to be engaged with and it's about having engagement that is relevant to their lived and everyday experiences. And so that cultural pieces are super important when we start to just assume things to be true.

00;31;46;17 - 00;31;59;11

Tanya Turton

You know, Debbie mentioned this. It becomes a slippery slope. Things that we once knew were for our a good, so to speak. We start to think about them differently. We start to question them. Yeah.

00;31;59;14 - 00;32;26;19

Rodney Diverlus

Well and I'm hearing that the cultural shifts, the political shifts, the legislative shifts, I mean, all of this feels like sometimes what we're circling around is talking around institutions as well. And, and, and I know the both of you work within institutions. You work outside of the institutions. And the institutions can be so powerful. They are often, particularly in a, in a culture that is Canada, a number of I think a lot of societies actually held within institutions.

00;32;26;19 - 00;32;48;14

Rodney Diverlus

And I'm curious from your perspective, from both of you actually knowing the limitations that institutions might provide and knowing how little trust there is currently on either side of aisles, no matter which side of worldview you're in, trust in institutions is a really some of the lowest. How do we make sure that our issues are not sidelined, when there is no institutional or monetary will?

00;32;48;14 - 00;33;02;20

Rodney Diverlus

Now that we're in the other side of the pendulum, when funding is drying up, when, will seems to be drying up, what are strategies and how do you think we can continue pushing our issues forward? I'm gonna start with you, Debbie.

00;33;02;23 - 00;33;24;04

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

I Think it’s an excellent question. And I when I think of this question in particular, I think about what we're really good at as people, which is direct action and community organizing. And, and it's the basics. It's not going to happen on the internet. It's not going to happen at the nonprofit. Yes, they pay my bills, but it's not going to happen there.

00;33;24;07 - 00;33;59;04

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

It's actually going to happen from us talking to our neighbors. It's going to happen from things like, do you remember bashment parties? Like I'm thinking, like middle school? I don't remember the last time I was invited to one. And I use it as an example because it's like what happened to building authentic community connection where we aren't seeing each other as adversaries, because all of the institutional distrust and this polarization that we're seeing, it's based on, it's predicated on us, not being connected, as community.

00;33;59;04 - 00;34;19;15

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And so literally going back to the basics, hosting a party, saying hi to your neighbors, going and asking for a cup of sugar like that, that type of stuff, I think is going to be important because it makes it so much easier for us then to talk about what is actually happening in our communities, and starting to think about how we're going to find solutions to address them.

00;34;19;17 - 00;34;53;17

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And I like to tell people this in the context of policymaking, never once has a politician woke up one day and said, yes, we're going to apply intersectionality. No, no, no, no, no. We are the ones who gave them that language, and we forced their hands to do something about it legislatively. So that is what's required. We can go back to the basics, build community, find solutions, and then use community organizing to drive change, especially at a time where people have distress in institutions, which is valid and fair.

00;34;53;17 - 00;35;03;28

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

But the interventions cannot be the ones coming from the right, because that's how we get left out. We're going to need to come up with the solutions and drive that forward.

00;35;04;00 - 00;35;24;03

Rodney Diverlus

Well, in so many ways, the and the anti institutionalist thoughts and the other world views about kiboshing the parts of the institutions that actually go and support some of us at the margins. So it's the piece that's around care, the very limited pieces of institutions that are rooted in care and providing back and making sure that everybody gets to the end of the finish line.

00;35;24;05 - 00;35;45;03

Rodney Diverlus

That's what's the most skeptical pieces, right? When they're rooted in like, greed and when they're rooted and, and acquisition of all things overconsumption of capital, of people, of resources, they're down for it. But it's the ones like health care, like, like Medicare, like all of those pieces. Those are often the ones that are the most threatened. What are you're thinking, Tanya?

00;35;45;05 - 00;36;19;02

Tanya Turton

I'm on the same page around, you know, when we think about when we define this idea of, like, what it means to be a power house, I think sometimes we think about these, these large conglomerates, these, these political movements, but I think is actually about, you know, resituating our mind to consider our aunties, our aunties, our mothers. You know, when I think about how my mother has organized community since I was a wee, I have chills actually just thinking about it because although wee little thing, my mother is a powerhouse.

00;36;19;02 - 00;36;42;23

Tanya Turton

Do not play with that woman and she does it without the means of technology and the internet, and she does it across borders and across seas. And she has figured out how to do that. And so, I really

think it's about us remembering that to reconfigure online to reconsider who we're thinking about, as you know, community leaders and who we can be learning from.

00;36;43;00 - 00;37;00;28

Tanya Turton

And when I think about my mother, something I think about is how she's so committed to care. Her health ethic is one that I often study. And I watch how she moves to community. And when I watch how she moves it, it helps me to build how I'm going to be, how I'm going to show up for people.

00;37;01;01 - 00;37;26;21

Tanya Turton

And, you know Debbie, when you talk about how we come back to like the bashmans, the barbecues, how we come back to each other, I think sometimes what can be a challenge, particularly when I, when I center on, you know, the complexities of like our, our different identities right at different times mean we're all coming with different stuff. So, we can sometimes in all the different things we're coming with, we can sometimes we want to stay in our in our own little bubbles, our own moment.

00;37;26;21 - 00;37;43;06

Tanya Turton

But what about when we come together? When we have this willingness to be together? It also means a willingness to invest in how we will care for each other. I need to figure out how to care for the folks who I'm sharing the kitchen table with. I need to figure out how to care for in a meaningful way.

00;37;43;09 - 00;38;00;13

Tanya Turton

The folks that I'm showing up at the bashment with, the barbecue with, and I think that that is what this time period is calling for us to do, is calling for us to reinvest in what care, what care ethic we want to commit to and practice in our day-to-day life. And when we think about care, I think sometimes we can think we can go academic.

00;38;00;13 - 00;38;25;15

Tanya Turton

We can think about, you know, what's happening in the ivory tower and what I want to encourage us to, to look at is our aunties and our mothers, because they've been practicing care ethic from time. And if we are willing to slow down and pause and notice how they have been caring for our communities, for themselves, for, you know, families, for folks in all extensions of what community means, I think there's so much to learn there.

00;38;25;18 - 00;38;34;21

Tanya Turton

And I think that through that teaching and through that learning, we can actually subvert and move through spaces that we once thought were blocked off to us.

00;38;34;22 - 00;38;56;13

Rodney Diverlus

You know what? I think the point that you said, is it because I think I'm going to say something controversial here, but it's kind of been baffling to me how progressive folks or folks of this world view have become now the, the, the, the new. We need to save all these institutions like it's like wild to me that we are now because usually it's a conservative thing, right, to conserve the status quo.

00;38;56;13 - 00;39;20;00

Rodney Diverlus

And we've been like, whatever, let's try a new experiment or but it seems to have flipped in which folks of this sort of world view have been the ones that are, like now protesting to stop government cuts or to stop. And the piece that you're both we're talking about is this like alternative idea beyond like these, we know that we always say this all the time, that these institutions are white supremacist and they're not built for us, but they're like, really not.

00;39;20;03 - 00;39;40;10

Rodney Diverlus

And so, there's alternative ways of being that. I don't think we've even begun to explore yet. I think about some of the ways that I've been I've come into some of my quote unquote, radical activism and, you know, I think about all the ways that even pre-BLM days and we had this thing called black ass movie nights and Tanya you remember them.

00;39;40;10 - 00;39;49;18

Rodney Diverlus

And Pascale you remember them and Debbie, you remember them as well too. Like how that was honestly just like a bunch of 20-year-olds that would come together and just like watch movies, good movies.

00;39;49;18 - 00;40;13;11

Tanya Turton

And it saved us, like, it saved us. It saved us during a time that we needed it most. It was a space where we can have the conversations that we didn't feel like we can have in a classroom. And many of us where, you know, academics in classrooms, we couldn't have those conversations there. But we can pull up a movie and ask questions that we couldn't ask anywhere else and have folks who, you know, with their hearts on the table will answer those questions, will offer their thoughts.

00;40;13;13 - 00;40;27;07

Tanya Turton

These moments saved us. And because those moments saved us, we're here today to do all the things that we're doing. I think that we can sometimes underestimate the importance of literally pulling up to the couch and being like, I just want to talk about something while we watch this movie.

00;40;27;10 - 00;40;46;20

Pascale Diverlus

And if I can also add that too, it's like it saved us because we were pulling up and watching a movie, but we were bringing food, right? We're making sure we're fan. We we're making sure that we all had what we needed. Like it was it was a way that we were trying to keep these mechanisms, as are we. Are we trying to keep each other alive, but also like meeting each other's needs, right.

00;40;46;20 - 00;41;08;05

Pascale Diverlus

Like kind of bringing both of the pieces that you yourself that we talked about these like social interactions and then bringing in the piece Tanya said of like and these moments that like, we do need sugar, like we do need help bringing our groceries in, like these kinds of ways. That isn't just in not just moments of turmoil, and also not just moments where we're trying to party.

00;41;08;05 - 00;41;23;07

Pascale Diverlus

Like, where are the moments that life is just, you know, in the middle of life? And we just needed a helping hand. We just need someone to sit with us. How do we at how we encourage that? How do we ask for that? Like, these are all, I think, part of what I'm hearing from this conversation as well.

00;41;23;07 - 00;41;42;25

Rodney Diverlus

But I think it's also because I think sometimes, we think of care, the slogan care theoretically, but don't actually think about care in real life. And sometimes that means being with people that like, sometimes will upset us or being with me because, you know, I know that I know myself. I mean, been in spaces sometimes the heartbreaks from the people, from your worldview is significantly worse than that.

00;41;42;25 - 00;42;01;24

Rodney Diverlus

Like, I don't know, that racist professor, like the heartbreak of being like, oh, you're not who I thought I was. And I don't think we've had, particularly in the West, the practice of moving beyond that, of saying, you know what? You might be a little mean, but like, how do I figure out a way to navigate and still be in spaces with you?

00;42;01;27 - 00;42;18;09

Pascale Diverlus

I think I think that's also a generational thing, too, because it's like going back to kind of our aunties and stuff. I think our aunties figured out a lot of ways for them to navigate, whether it's religious buildings, churches, mosques or whatever, being around people that you're like, I don't really mess with that person, but we are here together trying to get what we need to get here.

00;42;18;10 - 00;42;36;29

Pascale Diverlus

And so, I think there's a missing piece of like generationally, we're not asking some of these questions that can help us move to the other side of the conflict that is in between this person that I once loved. I'm trying to figure out how to still love or this this thing that came between us. We don't even know what was said, but we just know we can't be in the same space together.

00;42;36;29 - 00;42;43;27

Pascale Diverlus

No more. Like, we kind of admitted that from the conversations that we need to be having with our aunties to learn how to move past those moments.

00;42;43;27 - 00;42;45;03

Rodney Diverlus

You were going to say something Tanya?

00;42;45;10 - 00;43;02;28

Tanya Turton

Yeah, I was going to say that. And I think part of it is like, this is this is some of the work. I think sometimes when we talk about the work, we talk about the work from the macro, because it's actually easier to do the works on sometimes from this distance place, you know, the macro can be institutional, structural, but there's emotional.

00;43;03;01 - 00;43;26;10

Tanya Turton

I would go as far as to say spiritual distance that can be that work can be done with sometimes. But what we're talking about is actually bringing the work up close right here. It's with me. It's like I'm face to face with it. And then the work becomes, how do I continue to work on this, this micro? How do I work on the parts of me that needs to be present to you, that needs to be able to see you, you know?

00;43;26;10 - 00;43;44;06

Tanya Turton

And so, if I use you, for example, Rodney, so you and I are having a difficult moment, then the work becomes that I need to be able to work through everything inside of me to see your humanity and to be present to you, to listen to you, and to offer you care. Even if we're having a difficult moment.

00;43;44;08 - 00;43;45;04

Pascale Diverlus

Even if you be fine.

00;43;45;07 - 00;44;03;06

Tanya Turton

And then that's a different kind of work. That work cannot be done at arm's length, that work that I need to pull you and close and you pull me in close. And that's a whole different type of work, because then it's not just intellectually being done. It needs to be done with my heart. And I'll go as far as saying for myself personally, be done with my spirit.

00;44;03;08 - 00;44;14;20

Tanya Turton

And so, I cannot be at distance with this work. It is deeply personal. But as I said before, I think that that's the lessons that we get from all of our ancestors who told us from time, this work will be personal.

00;44;14;25 - 00;44;30;26

Rodney Diverlus

Yeah. And I feel like the hard thing is that we don't even do that for ourselves. And so, it becomes we don't extend that same. I think so many of us are holding things. Or, should've, could've, what is, shame, anger, frustration, no matter what about us. And so, we don't even do the work for ourselves.

00;44;30;28 - 00;44;43;07

Rodney Diverlus

So, then we're not extending ourselves that that bad amount of like kind of humanity, but also confronting ourselves and being like, well, I'm here with myself. Even with the mess, it becomes even more difficult to do it.

00;44;43;10 - 00;45;08;18

Pascale Diverlus

What a word. What a word. We went somewhere that I wasn't. Tanya. I'm curious. You know, we talked about talk about our elders. You talked about your mother. I also even bringing yourself into

this. You've been doing work at an advocacy with and for black and queer, trans youth for a time. Time, time far, far before the hashtags, far before the clout, you know, you know what it is.

00;45;08;18 - 00;45;23;00

Pascale Diverlus

And so, I'm curious to hear from you. Like, what trends have you seen in your time far after, when it is no longer advantageous to be pro-black or to say black or so forth? Like, how do we make sure that we can still care for each other?

00;45;23;02 - 00;45;40;04

Tanya Turton

Oh, I think we did answer this question, but I'm gonna reiterate it because I do remember when I started doing this work, you weren't allowed to say black, like when I first started doing this work, y'all, you couldn't say that you were doing an event just for black people. Like, that was so taboo. I was like, wait, how dare you?

00;45;40;04 - 00;45;59;22

Tanya Turton

And I remember having moments of organizing where we had folks like, oh no, you have to change that language. You have to make it more quote unquote inclusive. This can't be just a black women's only space. This can't be a black color, only space. So, the fact that we got to now, I'm so grateful. But to your point, Pascale, I think you bring it up is that that is that speaks to the trans.

00;45;59;22 - 00;46;20;12

Tanya Turton

Right. Like, how do we be willing to, you know, circling back to what we talked about from youth on time, how do we willing to be brave in all of the areas of this work when it's no longer on trend to be able to say black or on trend, to say that you're hosting a space specifically, you know, for queer and trans youth, how do you be able to show up in that way?

00;46;20;12 - 00;46;36;08

Tanya Turton

And so, for me, that's what I think is important, is knowing that I've been doing this work long enough, that I remember all the iterations of how I've had to be creative. And I know that to continue to do this work, I will continue to be creative. And I was creative back when we weren't allowed to say black.

00;46;36;10 - 00;46;52;10

Tanya Turton

I'm creative now. I'll be creative later. And I have complete, you know, space in our ability to be creative, to create exactly what we need in the time point that we need it, because that's of course, ever changing.

00;46;52;12 - 00;46;57;27

Rodney Diverlus

Not that part, that part. Any thoughts? Debbie?

00;46;58;00 - 00;47;04;13

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

No, I think you said it all. Yeah. You said it all.

00;47;05;08 - 00;47;19;23

Rodney Diverlus

The way we adapt, the way we adapt. I mean it's spot on. I think that one of the things that came to mind when the both of you were talking was that all four of us are around the same age. I mean, we're all in our early 30s. We've all just left the period that is youth in theory.

00;47;19;23 - 00;47;25;19

Rodney Diverlus

You know, I still feel quite youthful. I mean, black on crack times four.

00;47;25;23 - 00;47;28;19

Pascale Diverlus

Five? Sorry, I counted wrong.

00;47;28;21 - 00;47;51;08

Rodney Diverlus

It's all good. It's all good. We are math inclusive here. It's times four. And, you know, I think that there's a particular responsibility of us to have recently gone through, and navigated these all of these hurdles, all these things that we talk about, all this creating space when space wasn't created, crafting space, pushing for space, like jamming the space.

00;47;51;10 - 00;48;05;11

Rodney Diverlus

And I feel like, you know, at this phase in my life, in my 30s, things are starting to learn, settle, quote unquote. But I'm curious from the both of you who in what ways do you think we should start show up to our folks that are directly behind us. I'm thinking specifically about the Gen Z ers.

00;48;05;13 - 00;48;29;22

Rodney Diverlus

Gen Alpha feels like it's going to be distant, but the folks that are now, you know, either in university or not in universities and colleges or not, or just doing apprenticeships or just starting up in the job market, are the folks that are starting to sort of take up that mantle and who who themselves might look at the work that we did and say, oh, it needs to be pushed further, who are maybe coming from a place of like, let's make what you did more radical.

00;48;29;24 - 00;48;32;08

Rodney Diverlus

How do we show up? How do we best show up?

00;48;33;00 - 00;49;01;21

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And that's a good question because I've been thinking about this a lot, especially as someone who grew her activist wings in the student movement and have been like, you know, where is it at? And when I do see these, these moments and bright spots and in student organizing, I'm like, I need to

do something. Can I tell them what we did when we and I and I, I sometimes find myself too shy to do that because I don't want them being like, who is this auntie trying to come tell us?

00;49;01;28 - 00;49;23;19

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

About her time in the early 20 tens? But about, you know, organizing that. And so like, I find myself not doing that. But then I remember that even now at almost 33, the aunties who are in the nonprofit sector, they've reached out to me all the time, and all they do is a simple, you're doing great, sweetie.

00;49;25;15 - 00;49;51;28

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

How are you doing? Just checking in. Just that simple thing, and it gives me energy and joy. And there's nothing that stops us from doing that with younger generations, because it creates a pathway for them to then tell us what more we can do. Yeah. Whether it's information that they need, whether it's a history lesson, whether it's a tactics, whether it's just like, you know, letting them know that they're on the right path.

00;49;52;00 - 00;50;14;22

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

If we start with just reassuring them and letting them know that we see them, there's so much opportunity to, you know, show up for them in ways that I'm still receiving now by a generation that's older than me, that I still find great, that I know that when I'm dealing with racist white boards, for example, I could go to the aunties in the sector and they'll be like, don't worry about it.

00;50;14;24 - 00;50;33;05

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Here's what you need to do. And it all starts from them. Just saying, you're doing great, sweetie. We can do the same thing with younger generations. I just think it just is is it opens the door. And so that's the reminder for myself when I feel too shy, I could just tell them that they're doing great, and then they will let me know what else they need for me.

00;50;33;05 - 00;50;42;12

Rodney Diverlus

Yeah. Pouring in. I mean, even as a, as one young person, when an older person says, you're doing great, you're like, oh, thank you. Even when you're like, F the old people, you're still like, oh my gosh, thank you.

00;50;42;13 - 00;50;43;02

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Yes.

00;50;43;02 - 00;50;44;22

Rodney Diverlus

Pouring in.

00;50;44;25 - 00;51;08;02

Tanya Turton

I think for me, something I've learned along the way is that while I do my work in a plethora of different ways, I have learned along the way that the work is actually not just the work that's being done through whatever, organization or like vocation or career or job means. But actually, the work is a, a lifetime commitment.

00;51;08;04 - 00;51;32;11

Tanya Turton

And so, and I'm doing this work, it means I'm doing it in the grocery store. It means I'm doing it when I come across a young person walking down the street, it means that every time I have, whether it be, you know, I will go as far as another millennial, Gen Z Alpha, whoever it be, that when we come across each other in the ways I show up needs to be indicative of that.

00;51;32;11 - 00;51;58;24

Tanya Turton

The support is there consistently. And what I will share stories about myself, like circling back to the mental health piece. I remember being a young person, you know, seeking out mental health services. And my, therapist at the time, I was talking about what it was like I was in the, you know, in the thick of trying to explain to my, family, my very, Jamaican family that I'm queer.

00;51;59;00 - 00;52;20;15

Tanya Turton

It was it was a moment in my life. And I remember what I felt like trying to have those dialogs and conversations. And I went to this therapist, and I talked about it in the language that she used to describe. My siblings at the time was normal, and by calling my siblings normal inadvertently, whether intentionally or unintentionally, she was saying I was abnormal.

00;52;20;21 - 00;52;53;01

Tanya Turton

And I remember how that I felt, how I sat on my chest to have, you know, a mental health professionals speak to me like that. And I share that story in this conversation around young people, because I think that when I, when I, when I talk about this, there's peace around doing the work all the time. My work, my assignment, my commitment is that every time I come across a young person, I'm wanting to validate, witness and affirm for them that there's nothing abnormal about them, about how they show up in all of their multifaceted areas, nuances, complexities, and various identities.

00;52;53;08 - 00;53;12;16

Tanya Turton

There's nothing abnormal about how they are, and I and to me, that is actually an intrinsic part of doing the work. And so, I'm not just doing the work when I'm at work, I'm doing the work when I'm in the grocery store, I'm doing the work when a young person reaches out to me to ask me a question and making it a like for me, a lifelong commitment to show up in that way.

00;53;12;19 - 00;53;36;16

Pascale Diverlus

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And hope that gets you thinking, too, about even how and sometimes advocacy or spaces that are supposed to be for us, how there are still gaps missing, how they could still just not see us. And so, I'm curious from both of your perspectives, whether it's, within the nonprofits, spaces or, and the grassroots spaces that you are organizing.

00;53;36;17 - 00;53;44;06

Pascale Diverlus

Tanya. What even in the advocacy do you see missing for our communities?

00;53;44;08 - 00;54;08;03

Tanya Turton

I'm thinking that, someone shared with me a moment in therapy where their therapist, who is a white woman, said to them that they tell too many stories in their therapy. It's hard to get to the it's hard to get to the point with them because they're trying to do, you know, the therapy work, this modality, this practice that they want to do.

00;54;08;06 - 00;54;39;00

Tanya Turton

But they're the, the person storytelling is interrupting this process is what they were told. And they talk to me about how they changed therapists and was able to find a black woman, a therapist who was like, actually, you know, I love your stories, your story about how I better understand you. And so, when you talk about the gaps, sometimes the gaps is the ability to find, you know, a mental health professional who will understand the ways in which we speak the language you use, the, you know, the energy that that we speak with sometimes that's part of the gap.

00;54;39;02 - 00;55;04;18

Tanya Turton

Also, some of that gap, I think, is trust the ways in which I see, you know, the medical model and like the current mental health construct that's designed, there's a certain level of assuming a distrust of whether it be young people or like folks are different into intersectionality, that there is a level of assuming that they're not telling the truth about their experience, and that the experience has to look a particular way and fit in a very particular box.

00;55;04;18 - 00;55;24;16

Tanya Turton

And if it doesn't, then it's not, in fact, true. And so, I think a huge part of the gap is the need for reorienting. And for instead of trying to fit us into this mold in this model, actually the model needs to be able to cater to how we live each day, you know? And part of how we live is we tell stories.

00;55;24;19 - 00;55;42;20

Tanya Turton

That's how we communicate with each other. Part of how we live is, you know, the, a lot of, what I've come across in, the ways that things are constructed is very individualistic. It's like I'm one who supports you as an individual, and that's what mental health support looks like, or that's what wellness looks like. You and I'm going to support the holistic view.

00;55;42;20 - 00;56;01;03

Tanya Turton

Just a little part of you, just a little a little sliver that I can fragment out. And that will be the part that is addressed. And we need a system that actually can address us holistically, but not just us alone, but recognizing that we come with our care circles, we come as a collective and to care for the wellness of an actual person.

00;56;01;05 - 00;56;20;07

Tanya Turton

You know, when we're thinking about how do we take care of particularly black queer and trans youth, it's about actually taking care of the whole. Yes, there's spaces for the individual to be supporting their unique needs, and it's also so important that the holistic needs of the whole being, as well as the care circled in the collective, is all taken care of.

00;56;20;13 - 00;56;28;20

Tanya Turton

I mean, I can speak to gaps all day. I'm not going to go through that, but I'm going to give Debbie the floor. But we can do this all day.

00;56;28;22 - 00;56;51;16

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Mine is very similar. And that for me, if there's a gap, it's the possibility. Like what? What does advocacy could look like? Because oftentimes we're told it's both to look and sound a particular way. And that's because white people are out here trying to define the things that we're supposed to somehow squeeze ourselves into. And so, kind of what you're saying that, like, things need to be built around us.

00;56;51;18 - 00;57;14;09

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And I think that would then give people the like the, the confidence to know that they could do advocacy however they deem fit for the needs that they have. And so if people know that it's possible that erases the gap, and it will hopefully shift the way we even think about advocacy in this country, whether it's for black people or for other marginalized groups as well.

00;57;14;09 - 00;57;18;03

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Right. So it's the same for.

00;57;18;05 - 00;57;29;16

Rodney Diverlus

Agency, autonomy, power and possibility, expansive, something that's not there that could be there. I mean, it all sounds it could all be so simple.

00;57;31;28 - 00;57;49;21

Pascale Diverlus

Absolutely. Yeah. You've always got me thinking a lot like really dealing with the ways that even the idea of trust and the lack of trust that the sector is like they don't trust in what we're saying. And so internally, I think these are things that are telling us about ourselves. And so, then we start to distrust ourselves.

00;57;49;21 - 00;58;00;28

Pascale Diverlus

We start to where we're doubting ourselves and our experiences as well, based on a therapist telling somebody you tell too many stories like, that's wild. That's like, that is wild.

00;58;00;28 - 00;58;02;29

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

In therapy?

00;58;03;00 - 00;58;14;25

Rodney Diverlus

There like literally a name, the place where one could. But I do have to say I am hella Inspired by young folk. They are particularly the generation, but below us, like, I just like the gall.

00;58;14;27 - 00;58;15;15

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Yeah.

00;58;15;17 - 00;58;18;23

Rodney Diverlus

And you know the sheer.

00;58;18;26 - 00;58;22;28

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

The audacity. They’re so funny. I'm sorry. They’re hilarious.

00;58;23;01 - 00;58;40;07

Rodney Diverlus

And I think social media we always talk about like all the downsides of social media, but we don't talk about though is like we grew up, if you were like a unicorn, you would have been like just you and your school and maybe with three other unicorns in the book. Yeah, I can speak from experience. You know, I was a theater dweeb, we but there was like four of us.

00;58;40;10 - 00;59;04;22

Rodney Diverlus

But now we live in a world in which literally, even if you're a host city or your province doesn't have somebody, you can be connected with somebody from Kazakhstan. That is about this very niche thing. And there's something about like, it's like we all have community, whether or not you have physical community or not. And that shows up in like, you know, in my spaces, creative spaces like labor rights, it's like back in the day we would overwork, no break.

00;59;04;23 - 00;59;23;08

Rodney Diverlus

We would just keep going. You know, our rehearsals would be long, and you just keep going. And now young folk are like, no, you said we're done at four. It's like 3:55. I need to cool down like we need to. And there's something about that that feels like we it's not. It's not just the one way. Like I feel I learned a lot about, like,

00;59;23;10 - 00;59;34;21

Rodney Diverlus

What? I'm old and, like, what? What I need to do for myself based on, like, looking at young folk that I'm like, oh, if you're not, if you're not going to stand out, why am I, why am I older standing that, you know,

00;59;34;23 - 00;59;54;23

Pascale Diverlus

I call them the Teen Vogue generation is like, you know. Yeah. Because in our time, like, how normal teen Vogue 17 magazine like, used to be the places where you get, like, super superficial messaging. And within our lifetime, we're seeing young folk take over a platform that is theirs and has been theirs. And then they're talking about transphobia, right?

00;59;54;23 - 01;00;13;21

Pascale Diverlus

And talking about the far right. They are galvanizing other young people. And it's quite actually, truly, truly beautiful to see. And I think that if we stick to the marketing. Thank you, Debbie, for that. Thank you for that. We speak to the marketing that the right is trying to sell us. We again are ingesting this idea of despair.

01;00;13;21 - 01;00;34;15

Pascale Diverlus

And there's no owl and like kind of like fall on your knees and you know that's it. The world is ending, and we miss out on all of the opportunities. Reiterating what you said Tanya, that we are doing it like we are presently right now, choosing to live and ensuring that our people also live to like, that we're bringing people along with us as well.

01;00;34;16 - 01;00;38;28

Pascale Diverlus

There's so much, so much to learn from them, so much. I started off at youth and we ended up.

01;00;39;02 - 01;00;40;11

Rodney Diverlus

Back it right back.

01;00;40;13 - 01;01;03;20

Tanya Turton

And I tell y'all a random story about these. Tell my niece is, a phenomenal human being. And just recently I was having a conversation with her and thinking about this piece that you're talking about writing about, like, how we learn through the internet, you know, and I was thinking that as you're talking about, like, my day was Tumblr, you know, I get to be, I'm a black queer kid on Tumblr being Tumblr.

01;01;03;27 - 01;01;04;22

Tanya Turton

Yeah.

01;01;04;25 - 01;01;06;07

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Dig Tumblr.

01;01;06;10 - 01;01;28;06

Tanya Turton

You know, to find something. I was like, oh, it's not just me. Like, there's so many of us. And that's so amazing. And I was I'm just thinking about our conversations. I have my niece recently and, she's about to graduate high school and looking into colleges she wants to go to. And I was like, oh, like, have you got on YouTube and started looking at what people's experiences in the dorms are like.

01;01;28;06 - 01;01;28;20

Tanya Turton

And she's like, YouTube? Okay. I was like, oh.

01;01;32;12 - 01;01;33;07

Pascale Diverlus

What?

01;01;33;12 - 01;01;38;17

Tanya Turton

Oh, don't drag me for my age. She was like, no. I went on TikTok and did that. And I was like, oh yeah.

01;01;38;20 - 01;01;39;09

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Where they at?

01;01;39;11 - 01;01;41;12

Tanya Turton

Like, I was like on YouTube.

01;01;41;19 - 01;01;43;24

Rodney Diverlus

YouTube? Yeah.

01;01;45;00 - 01;01;46;17

Rodney Diverlus

She literally went millennial.

01;01;46;20 - 01;01;47;14

Pascale Diverlus

YouTube's not hip no more?

01;01;47;14 - 01;01;48;06

Rodney Diverlus

No, no, no.

01;01;48;13 - 01;02;06;16

Tanya Turton

No YouTube is not hip no more. She literally was like, I went on TikTok and they do dorm, walkthroughs and I've learned so much. And I was like, and I say this, I say that, you know, in our time, we had our moment, and we had our scene and we learned so much. And to your point, like this continues to evolve.

01;02;06;16 - 01;02;21;01

Tanya Turton

And even though she's not on YouTube, she's still finding all the information that she needs to find to make choices in her life in a way that is meaningful, that is comprehensive and consensual for her so she can have her full autonomy. And so that was a moment where I'm like, oh, learning from the young people, like, the kids are all right.

01;02;21;01 - 01;02;22;07

Tanya Turton

The kids are alright.

01;02;22;09 - 01;02;23;10

Rodney Diverlus

Right. Kids be all right.

01;02;23;11 - 01;02;40;21

Pascale Diverlus

And like, just a way to Tumblr to YouTube. That's honestly, I was like, what is after that? I was like, oh yeah, TikTok that they'll always find each other. Who is they always will find each other. They always

help each other and like get there to the other side. Like there's something about that that quite, quite, quite, quite, quite beautiful.

01;02;40;24 - 01;02;42;16

Pascale Diverlus

That wraps up.

01;02;42;19 - 01;02;46;04

Rodney Diverlus

What a conversation. We could chat with y'all forever. Really.

01;02;46;06 - 01;02;48;08

Tanya Turton

I had a great time, y'all. Thank you.

01;02;48;10 - 01;02;53;15

Pascale Diverlus

We've pulled you out of the illness.

01;02;53;18 - 01;03;08;17

Pascale Diverlus

Thank you so much, Tanya and Debbie, for sharing space with us in this conversation today. This was such a beautiful, lovely way to end our evening. Thank you for sharing some gems with us, really giving us some things to kind of really hold with as we venture out into this world. Thanks.

01;03;08;17 - 01;03;09;19

Rodney Diverlus

Where can people find you?

01;03;09;20 - 01;03;10;01

Pascale Diverlus

Yes.

01;03;10;03 - 01;03;14;19

Rodney Diverlus

Tell us Tanya and Debbie.

01;03;14;22 - 01;03;24;29

Tanya Turton

On Instagram, TrapMystic holler at me and on the interwebs up on tanyaturton.com, Tanya Turton .com.

01;03;25;01 - 01;03;29;15

Rodney Diverlus

TrapMystic and TanyaTurton.com. And how about you, Debbie? Where can we find you?

01;03;29;18 - 01;03;50;06

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

LinkedIn. Yeah. Speaking of ashes, I'm thinking of writing. I'm still on the bird app that if we so call it a bird app to tweet until it crumbles. And then I'm on blue sky as an alternative. d_owusuakyeeah! Find me.

01;03;50;08 - 01;03;52;27

Rodney Diverlus

You really holding on to the bird, Abby? Good. You're like. You're like a.

01;03;52;27 - 01;03;57;16

Tanya Turton

I really want to ask, how is Blue Sky? Is it like...

01;03;57;24 - 01;04;06;16

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

That’s why I have both. I have if I want to laugh with black Twitter, I'm on Twitter. But if I want to, like, discuss stuff with progressives.

01;04;06;16 - 01;04;22;03

Rodney Diverlus

What you see, the thing is, I got on Blue Sky. And then the second I got on it, I was like, you know what? I already see the end. I already see it becoming like, it's good now, but I'm like, it's the, it's the, it's the I don't actually I don't actually need to hear your opinion.

01;04;22;06 - 01;04;22;14

Rodney Diverlus

Like I.

01;04;22;14 - 01;04;23;11

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Actually like.

01;04;23;11 - 01;04;25;13

Tanya Turton

Should I just came in. You're basically telling me I.

01;04;25;24 - 01;04;41;16

Rodney Diverlus

I have an account, but I think I realize that Twitter sort of ruined the, for me, it it's like I actually really like when social media is just looking at really nice, funny things. Funny things are mix of thoughts, funny pretty things.

01;04;41;16 - 01;04;49;19

Pascale Diverlus

Yeah. Honestly, I think I'm becoming full anti every social media platform that has come out in the last couple years, I'm like, no, no, I can’t.

01;04;49;20 - 01;04;54;10

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

I know I'll get my TikToks on Instagram Reels mean that's exactly the kind of thing I'll do.

01;04;54;14 - 01;04;59;02

Tanya Turton

I on TikTok, I have a TikTok and every time I get on I'm like.

01;04;59;04 - 01;05;01;16

Rodney Diverlus

Oh, you have an IT. You see, I didn't even download it.

01;05;01;23 - 01;05;02;20

Pascale Diverlus

I tried.

01;05;02;22 - 01;05;04;28

Tanya Turton

I don't think this is I don't think this is something.

01;05;05;01 - 01;05;12;22

Pascale Diverlus

I tried when I was like in the pandemic and I was like, I'm bored, I got nothing to do. And then I was like, wait a second. I spent an hour and a half scrolling. We just I can't wait.

01;05;14;24 - 01;05;16;09

Pascale Diverlus

Wait, wait, wait. Now I need this brain space. Like, come on.

01;05;16;10 - 01;05;26;00

Rodney Diverlus

You see, like cigarettes. I knew that at the same time. The second I have it, I'll get hooked. So I never download it. And I was like, you know, you can't. You can't get hooked. If you don't try it, you know.

01;05;26;00 - 01;05;27;25

Pascale Diverlus

It's like a lot of times it kind of like.

01;05;27;28 - 01;05;29;21

Rodney Diverlus

Deprogram out 100%.

01;05;29;23 - 01;05;43;25

Pascale Diverlus

It also. So, I found that like, my brain couldn't take information longer than like 10s. I was like, damn, this video long. And then I'm like, it's a minute and a half. I was like, so for real, Pascal? Like, be so for real. Like anyways, so that's my anti status right now.

01;05;44;01 - 01;05;52;21

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Remember when I was talking about bashments and dance parties being like, oh yeah, like what was last time I just got an invite for one.

01;05;52;23 - 01;05;59;12

Rodney Diverlus

Heard, you know, I was gonna say Debbie. I was like, we don't do bashments here in Toronto because nobody got nobody got a house.

01;05;59;14 - 01;06;02;18

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And nobody she. This is where you go to Brampton, where I'm from or Mississauga.

01;06;02;21 - 01;06;04;22

Rodney Diverlus

Oh, yes, I'll be.

01;06;04;24 - 01;06;08;24

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

And I was like this. I'm like, I just met in the burbs.

01;06;08;29 - 01;06;10;08

Pascale Diverlus

01;06;10;19 - 01;06;19;20

Rodney Diverlus

I don't know what. Yeah. If we had transit, we could get there. Yeah. Unfortunately, we are the generation with no homes and no access to our no cars and no transit. So, you're.

01;06;19;22 - 01;06;24;22

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Just. You're picking me up. It's like that's where I was like, okay, carpools to Brampton.

01;06;24;24 - 01;06;40;07

Rodney Diverlus

Well, on that note of carpooling, what a lovely conversation. Thank you so much for your time, your energy, your brilliance. Keep up the great work. We are friends, both fans of your work, and we will continue to be fans. And we'll send from the side.

01;06;40;09 - 01;06;41;00

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Thank you.

01;06;41;05 - 01;06;42;23

Pascale Diverlus

Thanks, y’all.

01;06;42;25 - 01;06;43;10

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah

Bye y’all.

01;06;43;13 - 01;06;44;11

Rodney Diverlus

Bye.

01;06;44;13 - 01;07;12;06

Pascale Diverlus

Speak, Unspoken is brought to you by Across Boundaries with support from Ontario Health, produced by Living Practices Consulting, hosted by Pascale Diverlus and Rodney Diverlus. Our list edited and mixed by Angelyn Francis.