

## Transcript of Interview with Jeida K Storey By Kit Heintzman

**Interviewee:** Jeida K Storey

**Interviewer:** Kit Heintzman

**Date:** 06/01/2023

**Location (Interviewee):** Charlotte, North Carolina

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcriber:** Angelica S Ramos

### **Some of the things we spoke about include:**

Being born and raised in The South. Living in Dallas, Texas when the pandemic started. Ancestral connections to the land; connecting with nature and Water Spirits. Being three months pregnant at the start of lockdown; daughter's birth in October 2020. Spiritual connection and support while pregnant. Young children's experiences and understandings of the pandemic; watching a 2 year old who just wants to play. Connecting with family hiStorey during the pandemic; great great grandmother's experience of the Spanish Flu & great great grandfather Rev. Oscar C. Green (married to Mariah Green) experiences as a minister in southwest Georgia. Worrying about family dying. People are still dying of COVID, even if the pandemonium has stopped. Comparing three pregnancies: a miscarriage; a difficult pregnancy pre-pandemic - missing milestones due to constant bedrest; missing pregnancy milestones during the pandemic. A toddler's Zoom birthday party. Husband doing most of the out of the home activities. TV programming normalizing the pandemic. Being a child when 9/11 happened; fear. Masking as community care; the cult of individualism. The difficulty of determining what news is accurate and what's sensationalist; getting information from Twitter. What it was like to just move and not know your neighbors in early pandemic; not being able to ask far away family for help. The February 2021 Texas power crisis - having a 2 month old at home; feeling abandoned by the government. Changing safety practices over the course of the pandemic. It being more difficult to find current COVID stats than earlier points in the pandemic. Tabling at first in person event since the pandemic; Tarot readings and ancestral work at Black Healer's Market. Being raised Christian; connecting to Indigenous traditions. Wishing hiStorey had honored the humanity of enslaved Africans. The murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Oluwatoyin Salau. Coming to spirituality in 2020; discovering Womanism and practices that centered Black Women. Reading slave narratives. Time as non-linear. Doing genealogical work during the pandemic - difficulties of geological work as the descendent of enslaved Africans. Toni Cade Bombara's The Salt Eaters (1980) dialogue "Do you want to be well?" The shooting of 14-year-old Cyrus Carmack-Belton on 28 May 2023. Uncle, Michael Porter, dying for a lack of healthcare

**Kit Heintzman 00:00**

Hello, would you please state your name, the date, the time and your location?

**Jeida K Storey 00:05**

Yes. My name is Jeida K Storey Walker. It is June the first, my birthday, is 6:04pm and I am in Charlotte, North Carolina.

**Kit Heintzman 00:16**

And the year is 2023.

**Jeida K Storey 00:18**

Yes, 2023 can't forget that.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:22

And you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

**Jeida K Storey** 00:32

Yes.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:34

Thank you so much for being here. Could you just start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening? What would you want them to know about you?

**Jeida K Storey** 00:42

Yes. I am a down home girl from the south. I know I'm a full adult. But I think of myself as a daughter at the south. I am a mother, I have two children, Josiah, and Zara. And I'm also a diviner I'm a spiritualist. So some of my work includes giving divinations giving readings for people offering spiritual care and support. And there's a big part of my work because it's ancestral for me, I know that I come from preachers who are also raised born and raised in the south. I come from medicine people and midwives, who were also born and raised in the south. And so although I may not be preaching in particular, you know, in the same regard, I don't have a church. Although I may not be birthing babies. I think that my work as a spiritualist is about helping folks birth their own purpose and purposes and like really define and discover their own destinies. And so I do that in a spiritual sense. And that's really important to me. So I'm also a writer. I'm a Storeyteller. And that is also a big part of my work. And so, yeah, that's what I do. I'm a creative. I think what I most want people to know is that it's so important to be in touch with the land to be in touch with the South, my best friend Sarah Mckeeva De says the South is a portal. And so that's why I'm excited about this interview today. Because right now people are listening to us for from many, many worlds away. And this is a little bit of a portal for them to access us through different time and different timelines. And I think that's really cool.

**Kit Heintzman** 02:47

How is the land doing where you are?

**Jeida K Storey** 02:56

That's actually a really beautiful question. I think that that is a big part of my work now. I've just been feeling you know, my I'm originally from the south originally born and raised in, in south of the city of Atlanta in Georgia. And over time, as I grew older, I got married, I moved to Orlando, Florida with my husband, and then we moved to Dallas, Texas. And there was something about us being in Dallas, and we were in Dallas when the COVID 19 pandemic started. And something was calling us home, in the midst of a world where there was just pestilence and disease, and also just confusion and fear and death. The South was calling me home. And so I had never lived in Charlotte or North Carolina. But something felt familiar. And so we started looking for home, looking for peace here in the south. And so I'm still kind of new here. But at the same time, as soon as I got here, I learned that I actually had ancestors who lived here in the Carolinas. And so this is home, a home that I didn't know, was calling to me at the time. But I know that I'm here for a reason. And so I'm actually just now beginning to learn more about the land and the people who lived here. And one of the things that I loved when we first visited to determine

whether or not this is going to be our new home to raise our children. The trees were so loud. When we were just drive down the road. I remember rolling down the window and just like feeling this energy in the air. I was like oh my goodness, the South was alive. And so here, it's like different from Texas. And then I didn't really feel connected to the land and it may be because I didn't have ancestral connections there. But once I came to North Carolina, I said Oh, this feels different. And so I'm actually at a point now where I'm trying to reconnect with nature to make agreements with the land I recently had an opportunity to what's the way to say this. I want it to be a peaceful agreement with the water spirits. And I did this by making offering to the land, blessing the land and asking the land is it okay? If we come here, it's okay, we live here in this space. Do you welcome us because we're intruders in a way. And I think that it's so important to be mindful of Mother Earth, and how she holds us and how all of the elements support us. And so one night, I went out and walked out on the land, where we are raising our family. And I asked if you want us to be here, show me. So I know. And once I left I believe it was one or two days later, walked back out on that same land, and there was a family of ducks on that same spot. And I knew that the water spirits had heard me. And were welcoming me welcoming my family. And that's what's important. We must work with the spirits, the animals, nature that's already here. Connect with them. So that we can begin to heal ourselves. And so the land here has a lot to say. And I am just at the very beginning of listening. So I feel like I can't really answer it totally about how it's doing. But I do know that I was calling here for a reason I plan to participate with the land for sure.

**Kit Heintzman** 07:06

Thank you for going into COVID-19. Tell me, tell me a Storey about a memory that's left an impression for you about the pandemic?

**Jeida K Storey** 07:23

Oh, such a dark time. Such a dark time. I was going on three months pregnant when the world shut down. And we started hearing about this virus. And at that time, no one had answers. We didn't know what was going on what would happen. And at the time, my family and I were just settling into Dallas, Texas, we had just closed on the home about a week before we started hearing about what was going on in Wuhan. And we were like we're at the beginning of our lives. It's our first home, you know, we have a toddler, and I'm pregnant with our second baby. And you know so much hope. And so for this to happen, it was the beginning of uncertain times. What helped what held me and pardon me if I get a little emotional. But what has held me is it was through the fear and the uncertainty of what was happening in the world that my ancestral connections really begin to take root. And I started to talk to my elders because for one, I didn't know how long they will be here. I didn't know if what would happen if I would even see my grandparents again, specifically my grandmother's. Thankfully, they're still here with us. But I just started to have conversations with them. I will call them as frequently as I could tell me about what it was like when you were a child tell me about another time because I just needed to kind of get away from the hard feelings. The hard reality that COVID-19 brought into our world. So I asked them to tell me about different times. And in doing that, I learned so much about our family. And I also learned about survival. And I thought how fitting it was that I was at that time pregnant with my youngest, my daughter and I was talking to my grandmother and she was talking about her mother who was also a pandemic baby. She was born during the flu pandemic or epidemic. Was it 1918, 1919, 1920, around that time. And I was like, Oh, it was just like that small moments, just recognizing that whole, we are not the first to go through something like this, it might not have been on this grand scale. And this is something that we're still going through. But I knew that I had people in my blood and I was the testament of their survival. And that is what kind of helped me go, help me move on helped me progress. And also know this was not the end. It might be very difficult. But it wasn't the end. And so in

October 2020, my daughter was born at home safely. And I remember calling on the power of the ancestors to be with me as I was birthing her and bringing her into this world that was so dark and uncertain, riddled with sickness and disease. And I was asking for them, can you please just hold me as I bring her into this world, you survived before, so show me how to survive and like that really like has stood with me because although, although a lot of people have moved on and gotten back to real life, I still hold the tenderness of the moment, when we first heard about COVID-19. And it che, it changed us at least my family, it changed us and how we move through the world. That little baby at birth is now almost three. And she wears her mask out. And her brother who's almost five, he wears his mask out. And I realized that they don't know any other way. They don't remember a time when, you know, we didn't wear masks, and we were you know, move differently. And so for them, it wasn't a sad time. They were just happy to be loved and cared for. And so that is how my survival Storey or our survival Storey kind of thrive. I was like, Oh, wow. Let me just focus on keeping us safe, and making sure that my children are well, and that I can be well. And so protecting ourselves was more than just about the virus. It was about continuing on the legacy of all those who have survived insurmountable pain and hard days, they could survive then I will to

**Kit Heintzman** 12:45

Do you remember when you first heard about COVID-19?

**Jeida K Storey** 12:51

Yes. I'm grateful. Because like I said, we had just close on a home. And we were unpacking and getting excited about, you know, this beautiful home that we had just purchased. And my mother had come to town, my parents had come to that town, my mother and my father. And I was so excited because I hadn't seen them in a while they had flown in. And it was while my mother was there. My father came for a couple of days and had to go back to work. So he flew back home and my mom was stay for I think a couple of weeks just to come to get us ready. And it was just nice, because I hadn't seen her in a while. And then I remember just watching CNN with her. And we were like, Oh, this is what's going on. I think I had heard whispers but not really understanding the gravity of what was happening. And then we were seeing footage of you know, people lying in hospital beds and we didn't know like how do you catch it, How do you protect yourself and then the pandemonium of folks going and buying masks and not being able to find them and not having toilet paper and I remember right before my mother came to town I woke up out of bed and for some reason I just felt like I should go to the grocery store. And so I went to the grocery store it was like early in the morning and like you know when you're pregnant and kind of uncomfortable is you know you just kind of add up and something just said or I know spirit spirit of saying goes to the grocery store and I remember I just wrapped up I just got all the things that we needed just you know, talking on the phone with my mom because she's an early riser too. And grabbing things and then you know she was coming either that day or the day after. And it was after that that there were the store shelves were empty and I was just like oh my goodness, I went in there and just following inkling that was like just go to the grocery store, just get these things that you need. Because in the coming days, there will be nothing. And we didn't know when we were going to see toilet paper or water again. But I remember when my mom came to town and we were like kind of watching the news, like what is happening, or what is going to happen. And to this day, I remember when she, we were wondering like, do we do we need to like, Should you drive back? Like, is it safe to fly? Are you gonna be okay? It was so hard to find flights at that time, because people who were traveling, were trying to get back home. And it was just like, what happens if you catch the virus while you're flying? It was just, it was just such a scary time. And I remember when she left, probably the longest and the hardest I've ever hugged my mother because I didn't know if I was still here again. I didn't know that was going to be the last time because we

saw just that beginning stage how COVID-19 was taking people out of left and right. And so I was scared because I had a new baby on the way. And I just couldn't believe my eyes. I felt like I was dreaming every day I'll wake up like, Is this really happening? Yeah, hard, hard to believe in heart to face and so hard to kiss my mother goodbye that time. Because you just never know.

**Kit Heintzman** 16:41

What did you notice about the reactions of people around you?

**Jeida K Storey** 16:46

Oh, panic, panic and fear. And I just remember feeling so crushed, because we had just moved into a new place. And I was like, Oh, we're gonna, get to know our neighbors. And well, I made like something sweet to like, pass out to people. And immediately it just everyone had to go into their silos, everyone had to be separated. And I think that as humans, that's the hardest thing when you can't connect to another human being. And so in my brain, I was thinking, Okay, well, we're just gonna shut down and it's not going to be long, we're just going to do what we need to do. And this will be over. I could have never anticipated and 2023 I believe the CDC, either the CDC or WHO said that they are every three to four minutes, someone is still dying from COVID-19. Three years later, we're still dealing with this. And, of course, now the pandemonium and panic has worn off. And now people are feel a little safer. But I'm still very, very present with the fact to the fact that this is a disabling event. So even if those folks who are infected with the disease do not perish. Life is so much harder. So much harder. And so I almost kind of missed the days when folks were a little afraid. Because what I saw that was so beautiful at the beginning of the pandemic was the way that we care for one another. It was the early opening hours for the elderly so that they could go and shop before everyone else. It was the way that we cared about the disabled, and how can we make sure that you get in and out as safely as you can. It's the way that you could go into a medical building and everyone was masked. You don't have to worry about potentially catching the virus by visiting a sick relative. Or for me, I was pregnant at the time. So a mother who's or a parent who's ready to have a child there was something so beautiful about that time. And even though it was inconvenient at times, there would be lines to get to the inside of the grocery store because they only allowed a certain amount of people in at a time but that was also community care. And I missed that. That I do miss

**Kit Heintzman** 19:15

Would you care more about the experience of the pregnancy pre pandemic and then the pregnancy that was in part pre and then mid pandemic?

**Jeida K Storey** 19:26

Oh, so I find for me you might have to ask someone else that question because I have had a bit of an interesting Storey with my my my oldest as well. Although there was no pandemic. There was still a lot of restrictions where I couldn't move around. And that was because I had a short cervix or shortened cervix which means that my cervix was not as long and as thick as it needed to be to support the pregnancy. And so we found out when I was about 20 weeks along with him, and I had to go immediately into emergency surgery to stitch my cervix closed because I was at risk for early time labor, or pre time, I should say. And so he would not have survived without that surgery. And so it was harrowing, because I say that I'm a mother of two. But really, I'm a mother of three. Because our first baby we lost due to early miscarriage. And so I wanted to save my son. So the surgery was nothing right. But it did mean that I was restricted. And so I was on bed rest. And so I was like, you know, for our, for our son, it was like, you know, we've already lost our daughter, Aubrey. And for him, we were like, we

just want to be out, we want to show that one like, Oh, we're having a baby, things are happening, a beautiful baby shower. And none of that happened because I had to go and immediate bed rest. And not only that, but I was hospitalized at one point because I was told that this baby's still trying to come through. But the ancestor said, no, no, he's gonna be fine. And he was. But every week was a struggle. Like with bated breath, we were like, hoping that there was no change in my cervix and that he was still safe. And he ended up being born safely by waterbirth. At 40 weeks, exactly. Beautiful baby. Eight pounds, four ounces. But it was so hard it was it was there was a lot of strain, especially financially because I was essentially living at a hospital. And so it was a lot for us. But we made it through. And so when we tried to get in, got pregnant with my youngest, Zara, we were like, Okay, this is going to be different. We're gonna be able to be out, we're gonna be able to show everybody we're gonna be able to do all the things and it's gonna be so great. And oh my goodness, I just know this is my girl, I can just feel this is my daughter and March in 2020. We found out that no, you will not have a baby shower. No, you will not show the world No, you will not be able to have all have that experience. In fact, you will be surviving a pandemic, there's a deadly virus out. And if you catch it, you are your child is also at risk. And so what a blow to have gone through that to have had, you know, a pregnancy that we lost to have a very difficult pregnancy and then to have gone through a pandemic with a third. So that was like you might have to ask someone else. But I think that it's interesting because each of my birthing stories are so there's there's so there's like a little bit of heartache and bittersweetness pain with each one. But each one was purposeful. Each one taught me something. Each one was almost like an initiation. And I went through each birth even the one that ended up with a baby that wasn't in my arms. I was a different person. So yeah, quite something.

**Kit Heintzman 23:37**

How much do you think your kids understood about what was going on?

**Jeida K Storey 23:43**

Well, my oldest was two at the time that this was starting. Well, no 2018 No, he had not turned to yet. He was turning to he turned to October 3. And then October 8, I had my daughter so they're like two to two years and five days apart. So for him, he didn't know any different. He just knew, Oh, Daddy's home, excuse me, that is home that is working from home. And so I have both my parents here. And so he loves all of the attention. But he's very social. And so when we would go out which was very rare. We would most of the time stay in the car and my son and I and my husband did a lot of the shopping a lot of the weight was on him because he was the one saying you know, I have a pregnant wife. I have a very young son, I have to go out in the world and you know, it was like, every time we went out come home was stripping of the clothes and all the things and getting straight in the shower and wiping out everything from the grocery store. It was quite a time when my child you know child wants to run around. They don't want to be in the hall in the house all day and so eventually We started like taking him to the park and letting him get out. And that's when we had to introduce masking to him because he's a baby, they didn't even really make masks for his size at that time. And, you know, we're having to like get the surgical masks, which we know is not not the best mask to use now, but we were like doubling those masks and trying to fit his little face. And he just wants to run around and play. And so it was really hard when, you know, he will see other people at the park who want to play with them. But we were like, oh, no, let's let those that family have their space. Really hard for two year old and you know, now he's, he'll be five soon. So he's used to masking but I wonder if it has made it would have made them more antisocial. They get really excited, though, when they see people. I wondered at first, Oh, no, I think let me be just like, I don't I don't really like people. No, that's not the case at all. Thankfully. Yeah, he now he's still mad, but we still allow him to play sometimes with others at the park. And we just let him know about personal space that kind of, you know, don't don't go all the way up on

people. There are times though, you will run up to someone and just hug them. And it's, it's, it's the balance of like, not freaking out and like No, don't, you know, and also it's like, oh, he's such a he's a baby, he just wants to love on people. He doesn't know, he doesn't know. And so that's why I just I, it will be so wonderful if we will continue to mask for the kids. Because if we could keep them safe, then they can love on each other. And they wouldn't feel like we're potentially harming another family or where, you know, like, oh, I would just I would just love that for him. And so no, I don't I don't think that he knew. And when he was really young, we just take them out pre pandemic. But, you know, I think that he was so thrilled just to be at home, I have all that attention at the early stages. Now my daughter, she knows no other way. It's always been seeing us with masks on our face faces. She was born into it. And so she still will get tired of it. She's two I get a show rip it off sometimes. But I think that I don't think that they understand. I kind of liked it. They don't fully understand. They will though over time they'll under they'll get to a more you know, my children. They're not in school. They're with me at home. And so it was really nice when programs like Sesame Street showed masking and things like that. And oh, the beginning of the pandemic, My son loved Blue's Clues. And so Blue's Clues had a pandemic and at home episode, and it was just like, it was just so nice. Like for it to be normalized. So the kids didn't feel, you know, so bad, so

**Kit Heintzman 28:06**

I wouldn't I wanted to follow up on sort of what else you noticed about media and representation of the pandemic, and like, how that mattered?

**Jeida K Storey 28:19**

Yeah, I think it was super important, like for the children. Just to see something, something that represented the real world. And at that time, this was the world. And it was done in a way that was like not scary, I would think I remember being I was 11 when Yeah, it was 11, September 11 2001. And the terrorist attack here in America, and that was scary. Very scary time, which was another time that things shifted. For young people and in the world, because before that, you know, you didn't have to do all of the security to get to an air go to an airport, you didn't have to do any of that it was you can go straight up to the gate. And you know, then there were strict restrictions. Now you have to go through TSA and all these things that, you know, kids these days won't even know that there was ever a possibility. You could just walk up to the gate and just like that's it like you could walk the whole. Yeah, the whole family can get the car and see their loved one off different times. Right. But I just remember the media around that time. It was just so scary. I was a child who watched Disney Channel at the time and there was a lot of like patriotic stuff but and like a lot of like, you know, supporting the troops. But it was always like, images of what happened and it was so scary because I didn't know as an 11 year old to contextualize what had happened and if it will happen to me was I also going to lose loved one Was it was very, very just like nerve wracking for me. And so what I loved about the pandemic in the media for children is that it was framed in a way that was like, Oh, we just wear a mask, because we don't want to get anyone sick. And so this is what we do. And we can still play and we can still have a good time, we can still gather as long as you put on your masks, make sure you, you know, wash your hands. And so it was in such a way where I was like, wow, like, I think that this is appropriate. And I know it for some people, it probably made them sad. But for me, it was it really comforted me. It comforted me to see like, Oh, wow. Like, it also helped me to see that I was not living this reality alone. That there were even like companies like Sesame Street company, you know, saying like, no, like, we have to do something for the kids because the kids are at home. And so we need to put forth some type of message. And like I said, as a parent, I received the message, okay, no, we're supported in this. It's very difficult. But others are living in the same reality with me. So I felt really good to be to feel like we're living in the same place. It doesn't feel like that anymore. It just feels like some of us are still masking, like my family, we still mask. I don't, I can't

think of a time where we won't mask. Because Contrary to popular belief, the COVID 19 virus has not gone away. It has only changed form and gotten stronger and more resistant. And so I long for a day, well, we don't have to mask and we can just go out and have fun. I don't know that it's possible right now. But masking is nothing for me. I don't even think about it. It's just normal. Now. It's normal to want to care. For others, it's normal to want to keep others safe. And that's what the early messaging was. It was all about safety. It wasn't political. It wasn't anything other than community care. That's what I'm all about. That's the part of why I do the work that I do is how can we care for one another, as we're going through things as we're all living in whatever is going on in our lives. And so I'm so grateful for that with the kids. There were some some adult programming that I think some people like I don't I think like Grey's Anatomy, people are like, I don't want to see the pandemic. I don't want to see this on my TV, I want to escape. And I get that too, you know, but I also remember reading some books, where some independent authors included as like a plot point because this is historic. And so you know, there was a cute love Storey. I wish I could remember the title. But there's a cute love Storey. These this couple who a young woman goes to visit her mother's on farm mother's associates. And she's going through as a sabbatical, I'm just gonna take some time away. And while she's there, they received the news about the pandemic and there's no travel, there's no none of everything shut down. And during this little this quarantine, they fall in love. And it was just really nice, because I was like, Oh, look at life continuing. Even in the midst of all of this, look at life continuing look at love still blossoming and blooming. Look at how they're caring for one another. They had a scene where they went in the grocery store, and they were wearing masks. And it was just it. It wasn't jarring for me. It was actually really comforting. And so I like to see that. That happened. And some some TV shows decided not to do that. I think there was it was me with a TV show. The Resident, which was another medical show, the resident, they had a couple of episodes where they talked about COVID-19. And then they went over into the future somewhere where COVID-19 had been neutralized. And they were talking about COVID and past tense. And that was comforting, because it was like oh, look at that hope. And while I don't think we're past tense yet. It's nice to visit a reality through that media, where this is something that we've overcome. This is something because and the Storey that they were portraying on that show was we did it by caring for each other. So I would love to get back to that.

**Kit Heintzman** 34:26

Going back to the early days of the pandemic, really before we knew anything, how were you making decisions about health and safety in that period when there was so much uncertainty, how were you, how are you making decisions, how are you, what were you looking at?

**Jeida K Storey** 34:44

I was definitely tuning into the news. So a lot of CNN and it was really hard. It was really hard to decipher what was true what was bogus. What was, you know being sensationalized? You had to really like to figure out like how to use this decipher the truth. And honestly, where I feel I got the most accurate information that's felt right and was like, something that I feel like read research on and feel supported was through Twitter. Twitter gave me so much hope. And there were even people who had contracted or you know, the virus, and was like, chronicling what it was like and what they were going through. And so like those threads like that, and like talking to people and being able to talk to epidemiologists, and like all these people who you could just tweet and say, I have a question about this, and for them to respond, and I send you data that you could like, read and research and then decide for yourself like, those are really the things that really helped me together. Because I was like, Oh my gosh, like, I don't know what's going on the news. I know, there's like a press release and a press conference every day. Who I don't know what to believe. But I got I received a lot of information from Twitter, and also just



checking in with the friends and family that you can talk to, and asking them, What are y'all doing? What are you What is the safe thing to do? We didn't really know what to do in the beginning, and we just had to do everything. So we're like, do we go to the store with gloves? Well can't hurt. Um, do we wear a mask, you know, to mask it can't hurt? Do we have to wipe down everything that we get from come from the store, it can't hurt, we were doing everything. Washing hands, I'm like singing Happy Birthday 10 times while I'm washing. It's just like, you know, at that point, we didn't know how it was contracted, how it was spread. And so we just had to do everything we could it's like, make sure you wash all your clothes, like extra hot, so you can clean all that. We didn't know what was going on. And that was part of the panic. We didn't know what was happening. And so it really is like we kind of had to like, kind of like had to look to your neighbor, which is why community care was so important. You kind of have to look to your neighbor and say, Well, what do we do? Because we can hear things from leaders, we can hear things from politicians, you have to determine whether or not you believe it. But really, truly who is going to as Dayna Lynn Nuckolls, the People's Oracle says a wonderful Siberian astrologer is that we have to share the burden of survival. And that's something that you do on a community level on a family level. And so it's your neighbors, it's those people. And so it was nice when you go out in your driveway, see your neighbor with their masks taking their trash to the to the end of the street. It's like, Hey, how are y'all doing? Everything all right, you got what you need? Something about that, which is really nice. And so then it's like, Hey, you just learn from the people around you, as best you can when you're already kind of secluded.

**Kit Heintzman 37:57**

Can you think of an example of a time where you needed something over the course of the pandemic and asked for that help?

**Jeida K Storey 38:07**

That's the hard thing for me. There wasn't, there wasn't a whole lot of help. And it could have been because we didn't really know the people around us. We had just moved. And our families were so far. My husband's family's in South Carolina, my family's at Atlanta. No one's doing plane rides. And you know, and I had a brand new baby by October 2020. So my husband and I really had to share the burden of survival. It was just me and him for a long time. And like I said, I was pregnant for a good bit of that year. And so it was really him doing a lot. shouldering a lot. I'm trying to think of a time in which it wasn't that I wasn't asking for help. It's just that sometimes help was just not available. It just it wouldn't come it couldn't come. And so I think that was the hardest part. It's like, wow, we really have to, we really have to like grit our teeth and just go through this. Yeah, it's unfortunate that I can't think of a time where I was like, helped by someone outside of, you know, my husband during that time. I feel like a lot of people's hands are tied and we were secluded. And so that was definitely the hardest part of this whole thing was being so far away from help. Where knowing if no one can hear us cry on top of that. We lived in Texas. So that Blizzard, the big power grid. That also happened and my daughter was Two months at the time. And we didn't, you know, many people didn't have heat. People died, people froze to death during that time. And again, it was another reminder of your mortality. It was another reminder, oh, wow, we really out here on our own. And so what a time that was. And I wish I had a Storey where I felt like others could come in and help. But I think that's why I hold that quote. So dear, sharing the burden of survival, because many of us we are, we've been in in indoctrinated into what Dayna Lynn Nuckolls calls the cult of individualism, where it's all about me, me, me, mine, mine, mine, I don't care if I have to push somebody over, I'm going to grab the last jug of water. I don't care who I have to step on, I'm going to make sure that I have the last roll of toilet paper. And we're so much better when we say, Do you have what you need? Not thinking about tomorrow. But today, I want to make sure you can survive today. Because if we all ration this out, and we can all survive today, we're

worried about tomorrow, tomorrow. But if you take all of this thinking about your tomorrow, then we won't even have today. And that's what I would like to see driving more now. But the beginning days of the pandemic really showed me Oh, wow, I need people. I need people more than I thought I did. And then I realized I didn't really have people and the people I did have more miles and miles away and couldn't get to me. And that was really sad. That was a really hard, hard thing to grapple with for sure.

**Kit Heintzman** 41:59

How was your journey with safety and the pandemic changed over time as more knowledge has become available, what's how have your ideas and practices been changing?

**Jeida K Storey** 42:10

Well, as I've said, we do still mask so that's, that's still on the table, we don't necessarily bleach down everything from the grocery store. It was a whole process. That's the whole process. So we don't do those things anymore. I definitely go out more I used to do we still do a lot of you know, drive up grocery pickups, and that's very helpful. But I will now go into the store more. Even though they say that one way masking is not as effective and it's not. I am we are often the only ones in the store wearing masks and that's okay. That's okay. But really, other than that, nothing's really changed for us. We definitely give out we're not executed as we weren't, we do move around more. Especially we in the middle of the pandemic, we moved from Texas all the way to Charlotte, North Carolina, we were going through airports and, and with two small children. And so safety measures and like making sure this like for us spiritual protection and all of those types of things. I just find that it's just a part of life now. It's just a part of life. And so no, I'm not bleaching out all of my groceries, soaking my produce. But I'm definitely making sure that we are staying masked. I still you know, I don't talk very close to people, I still can hold a conversation for some six feet away. We don't do we don't really eat inside restaurants, if we do eat at a restaurant is outdoors. But other than that, like there's still there's still places that I won't go we still haven't really done like large crowds. Especially if there's like a surge I pay attention to what's going on and the numbers even though it's kind of hard to find the numbers now you kind of have to just sometimes it's just like, it's like a gut feeling. There's sometimes I'm like, but yeah, let's go out on this day and other days. It's like maybe not on this day. So some of it is just kind of like navigating what your gut is saying and kind of trusting that that instinct to know whether or not it's safe is to go out at this particular this day or at this time. So but I find that COVID-19 in like staying safe is like the first thing on my mind when I'm making plans to go anywhere or do anything. I want to know what is the COVID protocol. Mostly I want to know are people masking are people testing? Are you required to test before you go to this event? For when people come to visit us, we ask them to test if they had tests now those those are hard to find now, but we ask people to test. Before I visit with folks I test, even though I know I've not been around anyone, but it's about it's about care and integrity. And so I'm gonna, I'm gonna test because I will want you to test for me, especially when I was visiting my grandmother's who are of course, elderly. Yeah, I just want us to be well, and so those are the things that I'm still keeping. Keeping in my, in my little toolkit of things that I do, I have done black healers markets, which is essentially like black healers in the Carolinas coming together. This event is held in Durham, North Carolina. I did it for the first time in December last year, and we're having another one in about a week and a half. And that was my first time doing like, in person events where someone's sitting across the table from me. And I require masks, if you're going to sit down and spend time with me at that close range. I tell people, I have very small children, I want to protect you, I want you to protect me. So if you want to receive this care, the first thing that we do before we can talk about spiritual care is I want to make sure you're well physically, and so that we're protecting each other physically why else we'll be having a healers market, if we're not caring for that, that basic thing. And so I brought extra masks,

because I knew some folks would have them. So if you don't have one, I have plenty, here you go. And people appreciated that I wasn't turning people away. But I was like, I do have a boundary here. And it was a great event. And I look forward to doing it again. And I was grateful because I was able to go out in the world be around folks and come home without having contracted the virus. And so that let me know it's possible if we're intentional. And so yeah, that's what I still have going on.

**Kit Heintzman** 47:04

I'd love to hear anything you're willing to share about that market and the experiences there.

**Jeida K Storey** 47:11

Oh, yeah, it was oh, so fun. So fun. I was conducting readings, I was one of two readers who was who were there. So similar to what I do on YouTube and Storeytelling tarot, I was giving one on one readings, there were there was another medium who was doing mediumship readings. So contacting close ancestors for them, we were in a very cute secluded room. And folks would just come in and we would, you know, sit them down. And like for 20 minutes, we just talk, let's just talk. Let's see what guidance we can give you in this moment. As you're moving through your life, and it was so good. It was like a maybe a six hour event. In the larger space. There were lots of like, there were black folks, black businesses selling things. They were like people were selling plants, people were selling, like jewelry. And just lots of handmade, just really just really cool events. Spiritual items like this is one of my favorites. So Florida Water people were selling like some things that they made from their gardens are just so nice. And there's also like food and food trucks. And it was just such a nice event. It was headed by James Stewart. And he's a well known icon conjure man in the Durham area. And he's the one who said I wanted to create a space for people for all of the black healers in this area to come together and for people to just come to us. And whatever they need. If it's just oh, I just need like something to just like lift the spirits in my home, what can I spray around my home, we have that, oh, I just need someone to like sit with me and like, pull some cards and like give me some like an encouraging word that's there for you too. So I'm excited to do it again. We're doing it again in a couple of weeks. Which, which is probably in the past, by the time this is heard, but it's something that's ongoing. It's in that spiritual care. And so like I said, if I'm going to be involved, then we must ask because we know we're not living in delusion. We're living in reality that says we're still fighting this COVID 19 pandemic, and we can still thrive and gather as long as we care for one another and hold one another. And so yeah, if you're going to come sit with me, you're going to mask.

**Kit Heintzman** 49:43

Would you share a bit about your spiritual journey?

**Jeida K Storey** 49:48

Oh my goodness. I'm a church girl through and through. Church girl, through and through. My parents met at church. My parents met as teenagers at church. And the teenagers, they got married, they have me, I'm the oldest of four girls. And we were all church babies, all of us growing up in the church. And Christianity was all that I knew. And it was in 2020, that things actually shifted for me. And that was during the time, of course, when we started hearing about these back to back killings of black people, Breanna Taylor, Ahmaud, Arbery, and George Floyd. And then there was another Her name was Oluwatoyin Salau. And Toyin was a young activist who was out marching and protesting during all of these, the previous names that I mentioned the African affirmation names Toyin was a voice and trying to lost her life. And all of these were happening back to back in the midst of a pandemic, where, you know, folks are taking to the streets to stand up against racial injustice and police brutality

against black people. And I remember asking myself, well, where's God? Have we have not I, a black person in this country, have we not suffered enough? Where's God? And so those questions is what led me toward womanist theology womanism being a phrase or womanist, a phrase that Alice Walker coined. And it speaks to feminism in a way that is more fuller, more rich. And it's centered, black women, black fans. And I never heard of this. Black women being centered and never heard of this. And so I found pastors and preachers, black women, black theologians, who were speaking about the women in the biblical text, who are usually cast aside. All of a sudden, we're hearing more about Bathsheba instead of David. That's different. And it was intriguing to me. And then, as I started to do a little more digging and asking more questions, all while this is happening, all while I'm pregnant, all while I'm moving through all of this. Something else happened. And I started learning more about ancestral practices, and ancestral veneration. And so I learned, oh, there's a little more for me here. And I think that what I find, as far as my spiritual journey, as I was always growing, it's always evolving but the main thing that I am most excited about. Is, I learned that the ancestors are not just folks in my line and lineage who have died in transition and moved on. But the ancestors are present. The ancestors are spirit. Beings, I believe so. And it wasn't my Christian upbringing. That was like the thread that pulled me through to hope in the midst of this pandemic. Instead, it was learning about my ancestors. It was saying their names out loud. It was learning about their stories. It was discovering that my great great great grandfather, Reverend OC Green was a minister in southwest Georgia during the time of the flu epidemic, that he was living in that time, and was preaching the gospel, even in the even in the the census reports his occupation and started the class that's, those are the people I come from. So for a long time, I had a judgment against God and Christianity and all of that. Because I couldn't figure out couldn't reconcile what was happening in the world and what was happening to marginalize people to the goodness of God. So I'd have, I would have nothing to do with that. But then I found the traditions of old we call it the old slave religion. I found that. And I went back to that. And I said, if I have, if I come from, and I do, I come from folks who were enslaved on this land. And somehow they were able to look to God. I can do, it may not look, the way that it looked before growing up in church where I had like this delusion, about like the world and the way that it worked as a black person, but now it's different. Now. It's, I know, the atrocities of the world. And I know the realness and bigness of God. And I know that the evil that we see and contend with have nothing to do with God. And so it was because of my ancestors, though, that I learned that it is in learning their stories, and then reading slave narratives and watching archives, that I can hear from their voices how they made it. And so while I don't identify as a Christian, I am so much more. Because I know that living today, I am the walking I am like the talking I am the actual flesh and blood of the folks who came before me, who bore my name. The ministers, the midwives, the farmers, the land keepers, the nurses, the teachers, I mean so much in my life, and I carry them with me. And so I did start as just a Christian girl. And now I have evolved into someone who understands that spirit cannot be encapsulated, just like held prisoner by one particular belief, one particular denomination, one faith tradition, I know that I can contact God by going outside and sitting at the foot of a tree. But my great great grandmother, Emery used to do, I know that I can contact God by going and sitting in the grass, and listening to the wind, I can contact God there. And that's what I needed to hear. That's what I needed to know. And so as Alice Walker says, I believe it's in the color purple. God is not in the church, God is in the street. And so that's why I've come quite the journeys. But that's where I am now. I want to be wherever God is in nature and in the streets.

**Kit Heintzman** 58:21

What's it been like doing genealogical research during a pandemic? What's it been like trying to access record, how have How have you been doing it?

**Jeida K Storey 58:34**

So I'm excited now that I'm freer to kind of move around a little bit to like, actually, like go to places like I, I really look forward to, like traveling and like setting my feet on the land where I have I know that I My people have come from I have roots in Alabama roots and the Mississippi Delta, Georgia have already maintained and here in the Carolinas, and pardon me, and in the height of the hype of the pandemic. Oh, it was because I was like, I just wish I could go there. I wish I could just be there. And so especially for like, in Georgia, where I was miles and miles away from Georgia. Oh, my goodness, I started I used ancestry.com to get started and started finding all of these just addresses like I started finding where folks were buried. I started finding missing pieces, missing pieces, even where people worked something about being in the same place even if it's not there anymore. But knowing that there was once a day that my ancestor used to walk the same street and go straight into a building that it's not here anymore, but as I'm standing here now, and so it was I felt like at first it was like easiest, obviously as a as a descendant of enslaved Africans.

**Jeida K Storey 01:00:00**

It's hard when you start trying to go further back. I'm still finding missing pieces all the time. So I think the encouraging part is now there's I've reached a place of security where I feel like I can leave and actually go visit Alabama in the Mississippi Delta and go to these different places. But during the pandemic is hard. I was like, Oh, I wish I could just go like to the library and just sit there and like read the records. You know, the internet always has so much but you know, you just want to like have a hard copy sometimes. So I look forward to doing more of that, because I know there's so much to learn and so many records that like, aren't digitized. And so that's what I hoped for now. Especially because I didn't know that I had ancestry in the Carolinas until after we had moved here. So now I'm interested in who was living here in North and South Carolina. And where can I find them? And then, you know, we're also like, near the coast. And so I think about like, my ancestors who were trafficked here. And so we at some point, all came through here some way and spread out. And so there's so much work that I want to do with the water. There's so much work that I want to do, at the coast in the land. And one of my best friends Sarah Mckeeva De is Gullah Geechee. And so she teaches me a lot about that culture and what, although that's not in my lineage that I know of. There's so much to learn. And so. Oh, yeah, it was I felt restricted at first, but there's a little more levity now. And so I'm grateful. I'm grateful that what I do know, what I have been able to find has really been helping me find myself. Like when I discovered the Reverend in my line, I was like, Oh, my goodness. This is why I speak like this. This is why I communicate like this. This is why even though I'm not reading from my Bible, I might be reading a deck of cards. So people like you speak with such authority. It's because I come from pastors, it's because I come from reverends my dad, who might not be a pastor, my dad is absolutely a minister, my dad comes into the room and you know, he commands that respect. A fun loving guy that folks respect, I get it honest. So, it's interesting, because I realized, the more I learned more about my ancestors, like, oh, we really are family, because I see even the things that they were doing and interested in. I'm like, Oh, I can see how that relates to me. And even the fact of like, with my son, who's born in 2018, I was like, Oh, I think I want a midwife. And before I was thinking about having kids, I was always saying, Nope, take me to the hospital, gave me the epidural, I want, I want it pain free. But something changed when I actually when it was time to actually expand the family. And when I found out later that I was like, yeah, I want a midwife. I want to like a home birth if I can. And so discovering that I had midwives, and that it was my great great grandmother, Mary Belle and her sister Vera, who were known in southwest Georgia as the midwives who would birth babies who would be with the mothers after the children were born. I was like, it had to be my ancestors who were saying, go this direction. Why don't you birth with a midwife? And so I feel like they're with me, even in those decisions that seem random. But as I learn more, I'm like, they weren't random at all. It was always me.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:03:36

What does the word health mean to you?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:03:44

Wow, what a question. I think the word that I most identify with, I think of health, I think of wellness. And there's a quote, I know, I'm going to mess it up. I wish I knew it exactly the way that it's written. But it's by Toni Cade Bambara. She wrote it in the salt eaters. It's a conversation between two folks and it says, Do you want to be well, and the response is, and I'm paraphrasing if you really want to be well. There's a lot of weight when your well. In other words, when it comes to wellness, there's a sense of awareness that you must have and sometimes wellness means that we have to be radically truthful. Which can be hard, which is why ancestor Toni Cade Bambara says there's a lot of weight there. And so at least in the spiritual sense of I think of spiritual health and wellness. In order for you to reach wellness, you have to first acknowledge that there's an ailment. And that's part of the weight is to know something's not quite right. Maybe I have a broken heart. Maybe I've been wounded, maybe they compounded traumas, maybe there's been injustice. But as you begin to heal, and move towards your wellness, you begin to see with different, different insight. And so with my friends, we don't necessarily say, Do you feel healthy? Are you healthy? We ask each other, are you well? Are you well? And I say that in my prayers, I want the people I love to be well, but there is a lot of weight when you well. Because a lot of times when you are well, you can see the maladies around you. You can see the others who aren't well, and who may not even know that they're not well, even as it pertains to COVID-19. And health and wellness. It feels like a lot of people have given up. It feels like a lot of people are saying well, I've had COVID three times I didn't die, so it's okay. The long COVID is real. And people are being becoming disabled every day. And so if you say that you choose wellness. If you choose masking, if you choose safety precautions, you will look a lot differently from others who don't see a lot of weight with that. Also judgments probably on both sides. So I think health, wellness starts for all of us when we can address the maladies of the heart and of the soul. Because even if, as I mentioned earlier the cult of individualism. And I said that we have been indoctrinated. Something happened, something happened to us to believe that we must hoard that we must only look out for ourselves, something happened to us. But as I think especially black, African and indigenous folks, that was not our way, it was always about the collective. So I think all of us if we all go to our indigenous ways, we didn't all just arrive in this land, we all came from someplace, we all have a home. And in those indigenous ways, we were all returned home to ourselves, as we all find the ancestors who were not colonist or colonized, we go far enough back, we will find that community care that we all long for even if we don't have the words to ask for it, or the imagination to dream it is there if we go back far enough. And so some of that malady is some of that disease in the heart comes from that trusting because we've been harmed by others. And so it's hard to want to look out for others when you feel like they're capable of harming me. But if we choose wellness of the heart of the spirit, I find that I think at least maybe it's not a direct correlation and maybe I'm just making this up but I think that we will also choose wellness of the body, we will then we would not skip over or ignore or abandon disabled people, we would push them to the front we would carry them we would not mistreat or abuse children, we would care for them. We will not say that, as my therapist says that motherhood is the performance of suffering, we will not we will not stand for that we will say that no, those who mother you deserve to be honored, you should not have to suffer. We will say to the men, you don't have to uphold patriarchy, you can be soft. And when you're soft, you will be safe. You will not be ridicule, you will not be emasculated, you will be honored for that, if we could get away from all of the modalities, and truly, truly embrace all of our indigenous ways, I really believe that is true wellness. And it will it will be contagious and it will touch every part of our lives. And we will say like as the old gospel song says I need you to survive in

saying not only do I need you to survive and be well, but your wellness is necessary for my wellness. And that's that's kind of where I stand on that.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:11:45

I'm wondering what if, what if anything, have you been learning from the ancestors about the pandemic itself, and about this moment?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:11:57

That we're not listening. That's what I learned from the ancestors. We're not listening. We're not we we start, Oh, my goodness, we started so good. When folks were working from home at the very, very beginning, people started talking about how Wow, there's no more smog In the air, like there was all of a sudden there was like, the air is different like because there's not not as many vehicles going back and forth. We would like care for the land, kind of going back to what you're saying about what's the condition of the land where I am. I think that we would care more for the land, but I would I know, what I'm hearing from the ancestors is we're not connected enough to nature. And you know, I believe that even the trees are our ancestors. They've been here for 1000s of years, some of them. And so what can they tell us? What can they teach us? What can they show us? You know, it's it's unfortunate, when we are facing peril. And instead of changing and making modifications to again, preserve life. We're barreling ahead towards danger. And so I think that the ancestors want to slow down and listen, gain wisdom and know that the way just because you've been moving in a certain way doesn't mean you have to always be that way. There's always a chance to do it differently. But again, it comes to that imagination. Some of us don't have it. It's not again, it's not our fault. It's not a judgment. It's like as [inaudible] says our imaginations have even been colonized. And so that's why I say it's so important for all of us to have ancestral practices, to go back to our roots to find out who are our people, what were their traditions, how did they survive? How do they move through life? How do they love and care for one another? Yeah, I told you are pretty early on, I learned that I needed people. And I know that I need the elements, I need the Earth. Something happens when we connect with the earth intentionally. Something happens when we connect with the water with the trees and I just always feel like it doesn't have to be this way. It doesn't have to be this way. So I think that when travesty like the COVID 19 pandemic happened, I think that is our opportunity. It is a call from the ancestors to say, this is your chance you can do it differently now. What are you going to do with your chance? And I'm doing differently now. I'm hearing them. And I want to do differently.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:15:42

What are things that you noticed about how local government in both places you were responding to what was happening?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:15:52

In Texas, again, at the very beginning, everyone, I think, was very cautious and wearing masks, but I'm not exactly sure. But I think that Texas might have been one of the first states that was like, oh, no, you don't need to wear masks anymore. And that was disheartening. Because I knew that given the chance, or given the permission, given the choice, most people will not want to mask you know, for some people, it's uncomfortable for some people's defiance. Whatever the reason. I was a little scared in Texas, I was actually very glad to leave. I was very glad to leave. Especially because we have been left completely abandoned by the government during that freeze that took so many lives. Not only that, so many people were burdened with, like, just ridiculous rates during that time that they had to pay, and it's like, so many people lost lost so many people lost livelihoods. So many people.

Oh, my gosh, it was like, just the damage and burst pipes. And it was just so much. And it just, it just felt like a complete slap in the face to Texas residents. And so they didn't care about our survival whatsoever. Since I've been here, I've been less engaged, I have stopped looking to the government for assistance or help. They're not coming. I know some people, you know, have faith in the government to do the right thing. I do not have faith in the government to do the right thing. I have faith in us as a community to do the right thing. And so I think that we are each other's answer prayers that we can help each other. It was even during that freeze in Texas, it was those of us who have power or had battery life on our phone, messaging on Facebook, hey, can my family come to your house? If we can make it there with the grounds and the roads being as horrible as they are? Can we come to your home? Can we stay with you? Those were the ways that people were surviving, it was not anything that the Texas government was doing. And they abandoned us in so many families. And so now that I'm here, we're still pretty new to the area. My goal is once we're settled, to find some folk who are near us, and hope that they will share the burden of survival with us that we could run to their house if we needed something that they know they could run to our house if they needed something. Because we truly are all that we have. I can't always wait on the government to I don't know a strike of God to like do the right thing. And then some folks don't think that the right thing that one group of people believe is the right thing for another group of people. And it's just all of that it's just super political. I just want people to be well, I care for we should have basic needs met. And as a black person in this country, our basic needs have come from relying on one another. I know people like to use the troll that black holes are always receiving handouts, but I'll tell you this. It's never been enough for what we have suffered. And so even those who are on any type of assistance, it's not enough and they deserve more. And even with those who have received handouts. And I hate that even to use that it's, it's a little bit of your needs being met just a little bit. Those who have received help, still had to rely on their neighbors to make it through. It was never enough. And so I don't think the government is our Savior, nor was ever designed to be that. But we can be. And we are. And we have been, and we will continue to be. So I can't say what it's like here in North Carolina, because I'm not looking to them. I'm looking to us.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:20:36

What was your experience of the freeze like?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:20:44

Oh, other than it being cold? I was nervous, because by the grace of God, we kept power. But we were conserving because we did not. Like we still kept it very cold in the house, because we want to hold it in hopes that that's the thing like, there are government officials who are not doing anything. And yet there's a family who I had a baby that thankfully, she was still nursing, so I can still keep her to my breasts keep her to my body to keep her warm. But we were trying to conserve as much energy as possible so that hopefully, anyone else in our neighborhood didn't have power. There's with hopefully kick on or there'll be some type of relief for other somewhere. Freeze was we did the best that we could. Like I said, we did not lose power. But I think there was like a couple of times where I went for like an hour. So we were very fortunate because I saw how bad it was. We did have a pipe freeze, but it did not burst. Thanks to the ancestors. But it was just not knowing what was gonna happen at any given day, when is this actually going to be over because it was unsafe to drive. So like, we were running out of food. It was hard for people to get out. And I think that I was sitting in a state of disbelief, because again, it was a reminder of I don't know, the people around me. They don't know me. And so it was hard to know if anybody was okay, if everybody was okay. But looking at the news. And again, looking at Twitter, the people who were in different parts of Texas, people were not okay. People were losing their lives. And it just did not have to be that way.



**Kit Heintzman** 01:22:47

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:22:52

Believe it or not, hopeful. I am quite hopeful. Mostly because I believe that we will, we will stand in the gap for for each other. It may not be on a large scale, it may not make breaking news. But I do believe especially from the people that I'm in community with, and my communities are spread out all over the nation. Thanks to zoom parties and social media. I have people all over. But in our immediate area. I'm hopeful in that people are there are some people who are still COVID conscious, there are some people who still care about standing in the gap and covering each other. And so that that is that keeps me hopeful. I do think that this virus is going to continue to mutate and do what it's been doing since 2020 Or maybe even 2019 before we even knew that what was happening. That part is unfortunate. But I'm still hopeful. I come from people who survived. And so we will, we must. So we just got to find a way like we always have I come from waymakers. And so if the roles are blocked, we open them Yeah. And we do it with each other, not apart from one another. That was key. And so yeah, that gives me some hope about the immediate future.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:24:57

I'd love it if you shared more about how you were staying connected with people through social media through zoom parties. What was, what was that like? How did that change for you?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:25:10

Oh, wow. Yeah, I zoom parties. Zoom parties were a thing. I wish they were tryina come back, today's my actual birthday. And so I tell people, I might do a zoom party. Oh. So people are still waiting on me to kind of organize that. But I love the Zoom parties. Because it was like, Yeah, we're not going to allow this to stop us from reaching one another. And, you know, I'm thankful for technology that we can have moments like this virtually. Yeah. And you know, I was just going through my files the other day, and I found the Zoom party from when my son turned two. And it made me smile, because it was like, look at how little he is. But like, it's a digitized version of, you know, that celebration, I do remember crying after that party was over. Because he was two and he deserved a big party. And, or maybe it was his third birthday. I think it was his third birthday, because I was like, we've been we're still in this house. We're still in the pandemic, he had already had a second birthday in the house. And so I was sad, because his first birthday party was in 2019. So he was able to have a party and people were there and celebrating him and singing to him. But after his third birthday party, I wept. I wept. So I was like, This is so rough. He should be able to be with his grandparents and his cousins. And you know, it should be a big deal, because he's a big deal. You know, it's one of the loves of my life. And so that part was hard. But I'm grateful to for the connection so that grandparents and cousins could still be with him in the way that was, you know, available. It's been great for building community and friendships for me. My husband doesn't really do social media like I do. And so it's been very lonely for him. So he hasn't really had like, Zoom connections with folks. And, you know, so it's been, I think the pandemic was further isolated. For him, it was just kind of like my wife and kids, you know. So he needed more of an outlet. So that part was, you know, I think sad is just I'm grateful on one hand, but also, it's like, I miss being able to gather and not have to worry about, you know, the threat of anything. Yeah, but I am grateful. Like I said, I'm probably having a Zoom party this weekend, so.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:28:13

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:28:28

A world whereby children are safe, from every threat, whether that's gun violence, these viruses, these diseases. I would love that, for by the time that my children are my age, that these things are things of the past. These are issues of the past that we have somehow triumphed over this cult of individualism, that somehow we have decided, no, the only way we make it as if we all get there. I would like for them to live in a world where they don't have to be like, burdened with their bodies being labor, being the source of labor, that they could live in a world where they could create in dream and do what they want to do, and not feel the pressure to perform. Or they could live beyond gender binaries or they could live in a world where queerness is celebrated. Where disabled people have the care they need healthcare and other wise. And it might be as pipe dream but i i I really want that for them. That were my descendants, as they're listening to this right now that they're living that so that the lives that have been lost will not be in vain, that it'll mean something because finally, our children are free. Yeah, that's.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:30:28

How do you think we get there?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:30:34

That's the million dollar question. I think the very, very first step is, like I was saying earlier, we have to recognize that the way we've been living is not sustainable. And I think the acknowledgement is the first step. Living in delusion. And like, Well, this has always been so this is how its got to be if we could expand our imagination and say actually it's like, aren't the kids said I do not dream of labor? And what would it be like? Where we wouldn't dream of labor where there could be playing, like a dream of a world where there's plenty of livestock, and we can grow our own foods again, and there will be fruit trees. I dream of that. And so yeah, I think the first step is saying, like, wow, we have made a lot of progress. And yet, we have so much further to go. And we have to first acknowledge that in the progress that we say we have made, we have to first get rid of this idea that power over another. Is valiant are good. And I say that because if we truly cared about people, and that money we wouldn't have to worry about these mask mandates. We wouldn't have to worry about rushing back to normal life, going back to offices. We would not be we don't have to worry about this writer strike that's going on because people will be paid well for their work. They wouldn't need to strike they would have the health care they deserve, they would have the pay that they deserve. Yeah, there are so many systems of oppression that are working and thriving right now. And until we're honest about that, we won't see that working. So the first step is saying yes. We are thirsty for power. And yes, we will do anything to have it including sacrificing you and your children and your health. If we can't say that, and if we can't acknowledge that it'll be a long time before we see that world I'm dreaming that's the hard reality

**Kit Heintzman** 01:33:55

What does the word safety mean to you?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:34:01

Safety as a black person in these United States not ever having to worry about dying too young. We would all live long lives happy lives. We'll be able to move around the world and not fear. What what happened to us? What could happen which should have never happened, should never happen. When you feel as though You will not be hunted down there was a little boy. In Columbia, South Carolina where my husband was from, where his family

still lives, he was gunned down at a gas station. Because the owner thought that he was stealing a bottle of water. He was not stealing the bottle of water. He didn't steal anything. And the owner of that store, chase that baby across the street, and gunned 14 years old, I have a four year old. So in 10 years. On that trajectory, I would only have 10 more years on my baby. Safety for black people in this country has never been a reality. But that is part of what I dream about. That we can go wherever we want to go. We can live wherever we want to live, we can travel, wherever we want to travel, that we would all see 80, 90 and 100 years old. Because in the world that I see, safety also means good health care, we wouldn't have to worry about dying prematurely. Because we don't have access to health care. My uncle Michael Porter had a heart problem. And the doctors let him die. Because he didn't have health insurance he had not even made it to 40 He should still be here or had he just made it to 40. He might have been his early 40s. But I know he should be here and if he had healthcare he would be but he's not. So safety for us, unfortunately has not been a reality outside of safety with one another community and family. Church houses in praise houses. I feel safe there, I feel safe.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:37:48

I wanted to make some space for Michael if there's anything you'd like, remembered about him and who he was.

**Jeida K Storey** 01:38:04

Oh my goodness, my uncle taught me to drive. Because my mom was scared to get in the car with me. And my dad was busy working. So my uncle's like, I'll take her. And I remember there's like this like wicked curve around my mama's house. And I almost drove us into that ditch. But my uncle was like, turn the wheel turn the wheel. And like I think I turned to a right at the right time. And I remember after though, I slammed on brakes and I looked at him and he was like, sweating a little bit. He was like, Okay, please go home. Drive home, please. He was a quiet man. But when he spoke it was always like something funny and slick. It's like quite the jokester. Quite the jokester. Never in a million years and I think he would have died so young, never know. But I give a light and progress to his Spirit that wherever he is that he knows his love. He leaves behind three boys, Michael Jr, Chris and Zachary. And I'm always praying for his wellness to even now on the other side

**Kit Heintzman** 01:39:49

What are some things you do to take care of yourself?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:39:53

Oh, this lovely question. I love reading I love reading, playing with my kids, like, kind of helps me like decompress and just like enjoy life again finding time to sleep and nap and like just be with myself like alone time especially because, you know, as a mom, you have children who need you all the time. And so, taking care of myself is like having a time that's just for me to do what I need to do. Outside of being a mom, I find that even in my vocation as a diviner, I'm mothering people, people come to me because Oh, Jada, your voice is so soothing. Oh, you know exactly what to say, Oh, you're so wise. And yes, I am. And I do those things. Also, it's so important to another myself into care for myself. And so that's one of the ways it's like, sometimes I just got to sleep child to sleep. I wish that I could, I wish that I had more. But that's actually like a part of my work this year is finding ways to adore myself, and recuperate and refresh and fill my own cup. So that's ongoing work for me. But right now, those are the things that I enjoy.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:41:33

What are some of the things you've noticed about the pandemic's through your, through your clients and divining?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:41:42

Oh, that lot of people are hurting, a lot of people are lonely. Even, you know, so many people have lost loved ones. So many people are in dire straits. And I just find that a lot of people are like, there's like this theme of like loneliness and wanting love and wanting connection. And just as I said, I learned that I needed people, I think that a lot of people learn through this pandemic, oh, I need folks. I need people around me. And as part of the reason why I'm glad that I've shown up to do this type of work with folks, I think that in our exchanges, they realize even for an hour that they're not alone. And life has its ups and downs, and life has its difficulties. But it's easier when we can shoulder it together. And like I say, even if it's just for that hour, that we're connecting, or if they're watching one of my YouTube videos, they feel heard they feel seen. And it just speaks about what I think that humans the human can, like, speak about the human condition and what we need and desire. And that's true connection to feel like, oh, yeah, like, I'm not forgotten. It's like what Sesame Street did for me. Oh, we're living in the same world. And it wasn't, I love that. I love that. And yeah, it feels good. To me. It was like, Oh, yeah. This is purposeful. This is purposeful.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:43:33

Do you think of COVID-19 as a historic event?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:43:37

100% It has changed so much. And as much as we are in a rush to get back to normal, we do have a new normal, because a lot of us have changed. A lot of us have lost loved ones. And that changes us too. And so this virus, this pandemic, it has is really like set us into a new a new reality. As some people say we there was the before times and the after times, and like that's [inaudible] COVID-19 is a lie. It's before COVID And after COVID and we're seeing so much change we're seeing like right now in the news are talking about locust, like fighting back and ships and like there's like this unrest even with nature and the animals. There's things going on with climate which was happening before COVID But now, afterwards, it seems like things have have been the things are being sped up for some reason, like we're in this is June of 2023 last week, it was so cold, we almost turned the heat on. Like, there's so much like there's so much that's going on with the time. So much is going on, I'm not sure what's going to happen, it's hurricane season. But we will survive. I think the COVID-19 is monumental. It didn't just touch. It's not like 911 that, you know, something that happened on American soil, which eventually touched the world. But this search the entire planet COVID-19 shifted everything for everyone. And so, I mean, I think at this point, I can't remember the figure, but something like 7 million people have passed. I don't know if that's accurate. To who does a scary number. It's in the millions of people who have passed from COVID or COVID-19 complications. Worldwide. You don't lose that many people, and may not be historic. We passed the deadliest of wars, death toll a long time ago. This changes us, it is historic. And I want us to meet this historic moment and change and be different. And so as I said, I always said I do not believe that a force outside of us like the government is going to necessarily do the right thing. I believe the government is going to prop up what's already existed, prop up the institution of what about what has already been. So it's up to us as citizens to say, I want better I want different. So how can we join hands and meet each other's needs, so that we can survive this and then move toward our thriving. Survival is great. That's the bare minimum, once we get to a place where we have enough strength to stand up and say, Now, we want better. Our kids deserve better. The future generations deserve better. Because as someone says, We keep saying like, Oh, the Earth is dying. No, the earth will be here and we will be gone. The earth will always be here, and will likely rise again flourish and continue. And so if anyone knows about survival is mother earth. And so that's why we must get back to our indigenous waves

communicating with the elements earth, water, air and fire. And when I think of Earth, I automatically think of us because the Bible says we came from the earth. And so I think about us as humans, how we can come together first and join arms. Like, these arms, these type of arms, how can we really see each other and say, hey, you know, we met this historic moment that was really scary and harrowing for a long time. And we decided we're not going to do things the way that we used to do them before COVID I think it's still possible. We're only three years into this thing. Something could still switch something can still change. So I haven't given up hope yet.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:48:53

Thinking back to your own education growing up. What's something you wish to learn about in hiStorey younger?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:49:08

Oh I wish that I had known the truth about my ancestors who were enslaved here. And the truth of the truth that I'm speaking to is their humanity, their humanity. I've been doing a lot of my own archival work and reading slave narratives, watching interviews listening to their voices. Reading what they say. And although they were absolutely treated as chattel worse than animals they were people They were family members, they were community members. One of my favorite stories that I just read about in the slave narratives in Georgia, I cannot remember the name of the person who was being interviewed. But she spoke about how on the plantations one of her favorite things was how in the as it was starting to get cold, because we would not Georgia does get cold. As it was starting to get cold, they would quilt. And she said that in the evenings after they had come in from the fields and come in from the house, they will go into their own their own cabins, and they will quilt to prepare for the cold weather. And so she said that, what the women would do is they would all gather and go to one person's cabin. And they would all quilt until that entire piece was done so that that family could be warm. And then the next night, they would go to somebody else's cabin. And they would all sit there and they will work on that one piece until it was done. And they will go all the way around until everybody had a complete quilt to keep them their families warm. Now, they probably could have done it on their own each one in their own cabin by themselves. But how much more powerful is it when you open your door and you see a group of women saying we're here to help your family, and then tomorrow night, you can come help my family. And the next night we'll go help her family. And that's what was happening on these plantations. It was. That's why I talk about the indigenous ways because these were Africans, who were brought here kidnapped and brought here and somehow still found. And so we're in horrible situations. And we all deserve to be warm. What do I have to do? How far do I have to walk to make sure that you have what you need, because when you have what you need, then you'll be able to help me get my needs met. And that's exactly where I come from. Those are the enslaved people I come from. And so I wish I had known those stories. I wish I had known about how they helped each other survive something so tragic. And so the good thing though, is that I'm learning it now. And so I don't believe that time is linear. I don't think the time goes in a straight line a-z wants to tear. Natalie days, my best friend's mother says that Tom is more like a spiral. So we're always on this continuum. And I think of it almost like a like a whirlwind or, or tornado. And as the tornadoes kind of stirring around and picking up the things I think about if we were all in this tornado, and if I look across that funnel, and I see an ancestor who has a tool or Storey that I can hold on to well they may be in 1895 and I might be in 2023 but I can reach across that funnel and grab what I need and I have to think that those ancestors who were in 1875 could look across the funnel and see me in 2023. Look at my baby I'm going to survive for her. So wherever my descendants are listening to this now I have already looked across the funnel and seeing them we have survived and they are the testament of that. Yeah, we have survived and I have seen it with my own eyes. Yeah.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:54:31

Thinking of a historian future someone far enough away that they have no shared lived experience of this moment. What would you tell them and not be forgotten about right now?

**Jeida K Storey** 01:54:50

Who I will tell them baby. Don't you ever think for a moment that we stopped fighting. Don't you ever think for a moment that we all do succumbed to the times, don't ever think that we all back down, we resisted. We resisted. Until the death of us we resisted. Because I find that sometimes younger generations, even my own generation, would say about the ancestors, well, they just let it happen, that would have never happened to us, they must have been too submissive and passive. And they just no that's not true. They resisted. They fought they had allies. They were strategic, they were intelligent. They were in touch with nature and with spirit, they were in touch with one another. So no, they didn't want to be in their conditions. But those were the conditions they lived in. And so that's what I want folks to know. Know that these were just the conditions that we lived in, but it did not have to write a narrative about who we are, we are separate from our conditions. And we pushed and pushed and pushed against them as best we could. So that we could break free once and for all. Just because we live in these conditions doesn't mean we're happy with them, and that we settle for them or that we've given up. know, this, we will never stop fighting, fighting until we see true liberation for everybody. We will never stop fighting. And we will know that we've seen it when the children of the enslaved Africans who were kidnapped and brought here, and their bodies were used as labor and capital, when their descendants are finally free. We haven't seen it all the way yet. But you'll know is because we fought and kept fighting and 2023. And we will stop until the last shackle hits the ground.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:57:29

I want to thank you so much for the generosity of your time and the thoughtful beauty in your answers. Those are all of the questions I know how to ask at the moment, I just want to open some room if there's anything you'd like to share, that I haven't made space for please.

**Jeida K Storey** 01:58:13

To anyone listening to this somewhere out there in the future. Know that there are many of us who are already praying for you who are already dreaming about you. And if you're listening to this and watching this right now, you are a part of our survival Storey. We did all this for you. So you keep going, because there are people who will look to you as a beacon of light. You are light and you are worthy. And you are good. Don't let anyone or anything tell you or try to convince you otherwise. You were led to this moment in time for a reason. And you get to decide what you do with it.