

Michael Betts II ([00:00:02](#)):

Welcome to The Space of Justice, a podcast from the Duke University Student Affairs Committee on Just Space. I'm your host, Michael Betts II and my pronouns are he/him/his. This season, The Space of Justice is aiming to ask two big questions of its guests. What does it mean to be anti-racist and how do you define just space? Before we get too deep into the weeds on all the different ways to define anti-racism spatially, we need to stop and gain some operating definitions of what those two terms of anti-racism and just space mean. We need someone steeped in it to help up define it, and that's where our season's first guest comes in in a big way. Today I'm joined by Biwa Emergent Equities, a racial equity firm that uses racial equity in organizational leadership development to transform organizational cultures that's based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. In studio with me are founding partner Tina Vasquez and firm partner Itai Jeffries.

Michael Betts II ([00:01:04](#)):

To be honest with you all listening out there, knowing to call the BEE team was the easiest part of getting this season's podcast going. Welcome and thank you so much for joining me today, Tina and Itai.

Itai Jeffries ([00:01:16](#)):

Thank you, Michael.

Tina Vasquez ([00:01:17](#)):

Thanks for having us.

Michael Betts II ([00:01:20](#)):

So before we get started today, the world outside needs to know a little bit about you two. So could you do me a favor and introduce yourselves? Who you are and where you are in relationship to Duke and Durham? Some of your areas of interest, your pronouns, and a fact about yourself that you find interesting. Tina, could you start us off?

Tina Vasquez ([00:01:40](#)):

Sure. So yeah, I'm Tina Vasquez, my pronouns are she/hers. I'm originally from New York, born and raised New Yorker. I'm first generation American, Puerto Rican, Jamaican and Cuban parents. Moved to North Carolina about four years ago now. I live in Chapel Hill, and I think a fact about me that is interesting is that I used to be a professional dancer. My love and passion is all things art. One of my things that I do on the side is I teach dance at Empower Dance Studio located in Durham. It's an amazing place and I really love Nicole Oxendine's vision because it's very much aligned with what our firm is about. I send my kids there, they dance there. I teach there and I just love that I can continue to explore my dance love as part of Durham. Even though I live in Chapel Hill, that's probably my deepest, closest connection to Durham, is that dance studio. So, a little bit about me.

Michael Betts II ([00:02:48](#)):

Thank you. Itai.

Itai Jeffries ([00:02:51](#)):

Yeah, hi. I'm Itai Jeffries. My English pronouns are they and them. I am born of Southern poor white people in rural Person County, just north of Durham, and I'm a child of Occaneechi people, meaning my

dad was Occaneechi. I lost him last May. I am a sociologist. I do public health research for the Two Spirit community. I currently live on the West Coast and I work through the Northwest Portland area Indian Health Board, in addition to working with the BEE Team.

Itai Jeffries ([00:03:29](#)):

Just a little bit about me. I really just love to give back to community, and so here in the Seattle area I'm part of a local Two Spirit drum group. I work with several local youth groups, including a Two Spirit youth group that meets out of the Na'ah Illahee Fund. I really like Korean dramas too, so that's just a little factoid.

Michael Betts II ([00:03:56](#)):

I love that. I love that. I love that. Well, thank you so much both of you. Welcome, welcome and welcome. I always like to start by kind of centering our guests and centering myself just surrounding the idea of how the work comes to you specifically that you do. I'm a big believer that this particular work needs your specific hands. Given this, I'm always interested in how you all came to the work that you're doing, specifically with Biwa Emergent Equities and how you feel that you're enacting change within the Duke and Durham area. Can you talk to us a little bit about that?

Tina Vasquez ([00:04:37](#)):

It's such a big question, right? It's kind of like it almost feel like my whole life has led me to this moment. What part of it do you want? But I try to pick on threads. The thread is very intertwined with how the firm even began in the first place. So maybe to just be somewhat succinct about it. I was living in New York, left the art world. It traumatized me, it was hard. I think working as an artist in our culture and in our society is really difficult when you're also trying to survive, and especially when you come to it from a perspective of community and not necessarily as an intellectual pursuit or as a commodity. So it's hard to figure out how to survive on that because then the only alternative sometimes is teaching, and that's beautiful, but as an artist there's lots of stigma about oh, if you're teaching that means you couldn't hack it, right? Not necessarily had a choice.

Tina Vasquez ([00:05:55](#)):

Then in addition to that being an artist, being an Afro-Latina, working with other black and brown women trying to understand where they belong in the art space, in a heavily white supremacist culture where ... The arts are a funny thing because artists are some of the most profound critiquers of our system but we are also subject to its capitalist intrigues and goals, and at the same time we can also sometimes escape the critique of white supremacy also because we get to say it's creative choice. So there's all of these interesting nexuses of places where we can hide or cause trauma, or experience trauma. I think I in my 20s was really grappling with all of that and didn't know how to be what I felt was intrinsic to my soul about being an artist is about being a part of a community, and there's a healthy way to do that. I didn't find healthy ways to do that.

Tina Vasquez ([00:07:14](#)):

So I left the art world and I was like, "Forget that, I want to understand how we build institutions." Because in my mind at the time that was the problem. Artists don't know how to build institutions, so that's the struggle. So I ended up going to grad school and really focused on organizational development, nonprofit management, and spent a good amount of time focused on that. Then as I was doing that what continued to emerge is this thread of focus in racial equity. So even when I was dancing

and doing art all of my artist endeavors were in the spirit of what does it mean to be in community, what does it mean to be discussing racial equity but also practicing it. Then even in my nonprofit management spaces I still was doing that too. It was something I never could get away from and probably because it was tied to my own self-preservation and salvation.

Tina Vasquez ([00:08:22](#)):

When my family decided to move to North Carolina I was going to be leaving that whole career path behind. I had no contacts here in North Carolina and it felt like it was an opportunity for me to get real clear about what I actually wanted. I didn't want to go back into another organization trying to make it understand racial equity from the inside because that was very traumatizing in and of itself.

Tina Vasquez ([00:08:50](#)):

So I was like well, what would it look like if I just focused on that and used my outside perspective to support organizations based on what I've learned along the way? And that is how I ended up finding Vivette at a jacked up event that neither of us wanted to be at, neither of us wanted to stay at, but we stayed. I went up to her at the end of the event and I was like, "Where are all the people of color?" She's like, "Where are you living?" And I was like, "White Cross." She's like, "Oh." I was like, "Oh?" We found out at that time that we had applied to the same organization for our contract, we responded to the same RFP.

Tina Vasquez ([00:09:38](#)):

We didn't know at the time, but the organization actually wanted both of us but they could only hire one of us. I didn't want to work by myself and I felt like I was also new at this, so I asked Vivette if she could take me under her wing and if I could just resend my application and join her team, and that's what we did. That's all history wrote, then it just became ... Then we just realized that we had a chemistry together, like between it's intergenerational, it's varied in perspective in terms of culture, different cultures but our cultures are symbiotic in a lot of ways, and we just were able to show up fully for each other and being able to just hold each other in our respective gifts and medicines seem to be really helpful to other people in our facilitation.

Tina Vasquez ([00:10:33](#)):

Then it became what it has now become, and I think we both struggled to really make sense of it without each other, and then when we found each other we're like, "Oh, we are the parts that could actually make this thing really work for us and for the communities we're trying to serve." And since then we brought in other folks who have the things that we don't have to further make that possible. So anyway, I tried to be succinct but that wasn't so succinct. Sorry.

Michael Betts II ([00:11:09](#)):

Quick follow-up for our listeners. Who is Vivette?

Tina Vasquez ([00:11:14](#)):

Vivette Jeffries-Logan. I mean, I don't think there's a soul in North Carolina that doesn't know Vivette.

Michael Betts II ([00:11:24](#)):

I would agree with that.

Tina Vasquez ([00:11:24](#)):

I mean, Itai also needs to answer this question, but I'll answer it from my perspective who Vivette is to me. Vivette is my co-founding partner. Vivette is also my mentor, she's one of my elders, and she is a power to behold, and I'll let Itai share the rest of who she is, when the time comes.

Itai Jeffries ([00:11:50](#)):

Yeah. So Vivette is an auntie of mine and she is one of the first people, literally, to see me in all my capacities. We grew up together in this work because as Vivette was getting introduced to this work she kind of took me under her wing as well, which I think is something she does when she loves and cares for somebody. She saw me and started just I think training me to see myself, it's really the way I see that. So like I said, we've been walking this road together for 18 going on 20, sometimes going on 70 years it feels like. We're close and she's the grandma in this work. Everybody you know, I met people out here on the West Coast who are like, "Oh, you know Vivette." I'm like, "Yeah, I do."

Michael Betts II ([00:12:50](#)):

That's awesome.

Itai Jeffries ([00:12:51](#)):

So yeah, that's who Vivette is, and that and so much more. I think among our Occaneechi people too she's just a warrior. Back in years ago when she founded the Occaneechi Health Circle she invited me to sit at that table, and that's really where that work began because she taught me that healing has to be paired with culture and how we have to love in a collective and not as individuals. It was important for me to learn that loving and forgiving my family, loving my community is all part of loving myself, how it's all swirl up together. I see that every time she walks into a place. Now, she's not going to stay in a place where she's disrespected, and you will learn that, but as long as she's being respected she loves and cares for everybody in the room.

Itai Jeffries ([00:13:45](#)):

When we're working with folks, she really cares that people get it, and she leads from that place of walking through this whatever you call it. We don't really call it anti-racism work, but we call it confronting white supremacy, which we also call humanizing ourselves. So if people are willing to love and respect themselves, to make themselves vulnerable, to hold themselves in the work, she's going to continue to be there with them and show that love. So I really appreciate that. She's taught me a lot about what it means to love myself.

Michael Betts II ([00:14:16](#)):

That's awesome, that's awesome. With relation to loving yourself, how did you, Itai, come to this work? It sounds like Vivette was a pivotal partner in that, but what brought you to Vivette?

Itai Jeffries ([00:14:31](#)):

Yeah. So I mean, we've been doing stuff together for years. I was working a job out here on the West Coast and in a partnership, in a relationship that brought me out here. It just so happened that a little over a year ago I left job and a partner all at the same time, kind of took a different control of my life. Not going to get into all of those specific details, but I was at a moment where I was a little bit flailing, but it seemed that that aligned with the moment that Vivette and Tina really started to reimagine what

their capacity could be, and came together, and were going to grow this into the firm that it is today, and it just so happened that the stars aligned that that meant that I could come and join on this team.

Itai Jeffries ([00:15:25](#)):

I play, in my mind at least, I don't know, you have to ask Tina about this, but I play an interesting role because it's a movable and it's a kind of role where I transform, depending on what's needed. So sometimes what's needed, and this is often the case especially when we think about caucuses and stuff in the work, is that you need a person who ... I identify as white seeming. I am Occaneechi person who is white seeming. So sometimes since that means that I'm the whitest person on the group I have to be there to really I think set an example and humanize what it looks like to be vulnerable in that and that it's not that scary to talk about how that shows up in different spaces. That you're not going to have a nuclear meltdown if you admit that you show up white in certain places, and that's a hard thing for people to get.

Itai Jeffries ([00:16:23](#)):

So sometimes that's what it looks like, and other times it looks like being another voice in the space to make sure that indigenous people aren't erased. Sometimes it means I need to show up in my PhD role and tell a board member from a certain organization how it really looks and what's going down, right? So sometimes I have to pull out that skillset. Vivette and I do healing work together, and so sometimes just dropping people down and talking about emotions. So I'm all over the map, but I think that all of us at BEE have a really versatile skillset. So I feel like that's not unique to me, but that I fit in in a team where we understand that a corporate model for approaching this stuff, a little can that says anti-racism work is not going to work, right?

Itai Jeffries ([00:17:10](#)):

So we're always moving, and shifting and adapting depending on ... I mean, we have the way that we work, but we have a lot of diverse skillsets that need to be pulled on because really what I said earlier is that this is about humanization. The dismantling of white supremacy is about having everybody in that room understand that they are human and in order to be fully human they got to sit with themselves, and that's the hardest part really, is to learn to sit with yourself through this.

Michael Betts II ([00:17:39](#)):

Yeah, I can one, attest to that, given that through the Center for Documentary Studies your firm, the BEE team is actively in the process of doing that transformational cultural shift, and on that effect I can also attest to the fact that a lot of it is sitting with ourselves and being present really so that we can hear each other and be in space to be open to actually be about the work of the change, so [crosstalk 00:18:12].

Itai Jeffries ([00:18:11](#)):

And not thinking you need to always get it right. That's another big thing too.

Michael Betts II ([00:18:16](#)):

Yes, yes. Yes, I think that's a hard thing, especially in the work of anti-racism, or equity, or in those developing spaces I feel like there is a total push to be 100% correct all the time, and that there is no grace for missteps. So I guess this kind of rolls into the next question. I think before we even get into the

conversation and missteps and misguidance, how do you define anti-racism both as a firm and then internally for yourselves? And then how do you help folks to see that grace, and love and relationship are kind of the most important parts of moving forward in this work? Itai, can you lead us off on that one?

Itai Jeffries ([00:19:07](#)):

Yeah. First of all, I don't really use the language of anti-racism, but I appreciate the idea of it. We really believe in dismantling either/or thinking, and the word anti means that there is something that is the opposite of racism. So we do talk a lot about dismantling white supremacy, about humanizing oneself and others, and really about getting in right relationship with yourself so that you can show up in an authentic way with others in all of the spaces that you live in. So when I think about what that looks like on the ground it's really having everybody understand on a real level that they can share with others and be in community around with what is your stake in dismantling white supremacy.

Itai Jeffries ([00:20:04](#)):

Sometimes we get in a space where BIPOC folks, what we're talking about is dismantling white supremacy is about survival and the goal is to have people understand it's not just survival, it's about finding a way to thrive, right? But for white folks specifically it's having folks understand that you're not out here trying to dismantle white supremacy on somebody else's behalf, but that you have also been dehumanized by the process of being raised in a culture that is white supremacist. So I think that's the way that I'd really define it as well, and yeah. Tina, what you got?

Tina Vasquez ([00:20:46](#)):

I mean, that was beautiful. I don't know that I necessarily have much to add to that because that's 100% on point. I think as you were talking, Itai, I think maybe what I can add is the next layer to that, is we support and facilitate a cultivation of relating to oneself, having a relationship to yourself and to your role within your institution. Then the next level is just understanding how relationships are the vehicle for all of this work. I really love the way Itai referred to that because it is true. If you looked at our website, if you hear us talk about the work, we never use the word anti-racism, it just dawned on me that that's true. We just don't talk about it that way. It is confronting white supremacy.

Tina Vasquez ([00:21:42](#)):

When we think about equity there's a lot that we could say about that in terms of our cultural grounding and foundations in relationship to that, but one of the pieces I like draw out is that for us equity is about interdependence. White supremacy I think oftentimes creates relationships where there's unhealthy co-dependence. What we try to foster is a healthy sense of interdependence and that the relationships that you have with each other on just the most micro level are reflective throughout. When you think about when Adrienne Maree Brown talks about the small is the large, the large is the small, you think about how especially in her book in emergent equity talking about mycelial networks and things in nature reflect bigger ideas.

Tina Vasquez ([00:22:53](#)):

That feels really true for us, that we oftentimes find ourselves with prospective clients trying to explain what it is that we do and people are often looking for that box, that can that Itai was talking about. That can training, that can workshop, that magic bullet. We have seen and now have been able to say with confidence, because we've watched it happen, is that when you are clear in your approach but that

approach gives you a level of flexibility to be responsive and use relationships as the vehicle to drive the work, transformation is possible, and it's possible quickly.

Tina Vasquez ([00:23:39](#)):

I think people go into it thinking, "Oh my god, you want me to form relationships with people. This is like we're talking 10 years." We've seen transformation on boards in six sessions, which is the equivalent of 12 hours over a six month period because we use relationships as a way to understand how are they approaching their understanding of themselves, their roles, and then how is that understanding impacting the way they're strategizing together and creating services and programming for the communities that they're trying to serve, that it's all reflective throughout every level and layer of the work. So, I think I would just add that.

Itai Jeffries ([00:24:25](#)):

That's right, that's right. One thing to add too for me is that we could easily, if we're thinking of anti-racist strategy, you could come up with a policy for an organization that basically prevents on paper some type of hiring discrimination, right? Which a lot of times anti-racism work comes in and builds these beautiful little strategies, and policies, protocols, procedures, you could come in and do that but the culture doesn't shift and that stuff continues to happen. We know that, just look at Civil Rights Act, right? So we know that people and cultures find a way to shift around using that white supremacy as a lens and does what it does.

Itai Jeffries ([00:25:03](#)):

So when you look at the relationships that build the culture and you confront it there first rather than putting some policy or protocol on paper, then people learn to move differently and then they can create something that actually just reflects the way that they show up together, and we find that that direction is much more powerful.

Michael Betts II ([00:25:22](#)):

Yeah, I can definitely get a sense of that. You talk about the relational aspects of things being that which leads, and often if we can step back for two seconds and kind of think about even what this committee is doing at Duke, the Just Space Committee is trying to find a relational way to link in with people to be able to have a conversation about what something like spatial justice even looks like. So kind of thinking about what we've just talked about between you two as far as kind of the dismantling and confronting of white supremacy, how do you define something like a just space or spatial justice, Tina?

Tina Vasquez ([00:26:13](#)):

Well, actually I'm going to slow my way into that question, if that's okay because-

Michael Betts II ([00:26:19](#)):

Okay. That's fine.

Tina Vasquez ([00:26:21](#)):

... I want to bring a Vivetteism into this.

Michael Betts II ([00:26:25](#)):



Please do.

Tina Vasquez ([00:26:26](#)):

She often talks about rugged individualism and how rugged individualism got us out here. Acting like we're by ourselves and we got to do all this work by ourselves. Itai said this once in a session that was really beautiful, which was that you can't be anti-racist by yourself. There's no such thing as a sole loner anti-racist, right?

Michael Betts II ([00:27:05](#)):

Right.

Tina Vasquez ([00:27:07](#)):

Ask me your question again now that I've framed that.

Michael Betts II ([00:27:12](#)):

No, that's fantastic. That's fantastic. In guess in the purpose of the committee that is formed on Just Space is to be able to come into spaces and alongside people with that relational aspect, to be able to talk about whether or not a space is a just space or spatially just. We have a lot of different working definitions that we use, but I'm very curious from your perspective, how would you define something that sounds simple like just space?

Tina Vasquez ([00:27:52](#)):

I would say that you're moving from a rugged sense of individualism to a rugged sense of honesty. That a just space is when people can show up fully. I think that in and of itself needs unpacking. We just had a session yesterday with a client where we gave an example about showing up, speaking your truth, being honest about where you're at, and people often interpret this stuff as you want me to tell my personal details of my life, or you think I got to be best friends with everybody, or I got to trust people, and we're actually not saying any of that.

Tina Vasquez ([00:28:33](#)):

What we're talking about is can you be honest in the moment when your heart is pounding and you know you're supposed to say something and you don't. Can you be clear about your own boundaries and what you need so that in the taking care of yourself that people understand how to also take care of themselves, so you all understand how to take care of each other? Can you respect the fact that you're going to make a lot of assumptions about what's going on in people's lives and you can own up to the fact that you're making assumptions and then go ahead and unearth them by asking questions and being curious, and showing up to relationships from a place of curiosity? Can you do all of that? Is there space for that?

Tina Vasquez ([00:29:27](#)):

With regards to institutions and organizations, we have effectively policed and procedured our way out of authentic relationships for the sake of liability. We do not want to be liable. We do not want a discrimination suit, we do not want fill in the blank. So we've carved out these ways in which we've operationalized "effective," efficient, professional ways of relating to one another that are all [inaudible 00:30:05] to white supremacy and that disconnect us from ourselves, from our true soul's work, to our



real voice, and so to have a just space is when all of that is coming to bear in a very real way. People are showing up honestly to interrogate that and they're showing up honestly with where they are at, that you might not actually be in a good place or in a good space, and that is more healthy to acknowledge than to act like oh, you got it when you don't, because our sense of self-worth and value is dependent on our ability to produce.

Michael Betts II ([00:30:48](#)):

Right, right.

Tina Vasquez ([00:30:50](#)):

And I could say much more, but I'm curious about how Itai would answer this question, so.

Itai Jeffries ([00:30:55](#)):

Yeah, I think a lot like you, Tina. I want to back into it because it's easy for me to say what it's not first. So what a just space is not is that it's not performative, right? We do see people trying to perform. I think this is across the spectrum, trying to perform what it looks like to be a good white ally, or a good accomplice, and BIPOC folks who need to show up in a very particular way because this is the only way that they've been allowed in corporate spaces or professional spaces because we know that that comes with a whole set of expectations, right? So we kind of have to teach ourselves across the board how to be in those spaces, and then it's not as well like this space where oh okay, we need to tokenize and elevate certain voices just because. It's not deferential, right? It's real, and when it comes to white folks in those spaces it's not a self-flogging or this guilt-ridden space either. That is not anybody's expectation. Nobody wants to work with the sad guilty white person either.

Itai Jeffries ([00:32:02](#)):

So it's not a space where people tiptoe, right? It's where folks learn how to say the things, and because of that I think once you can kind of get some of that awkwardness and some of the shame out of the space and you can speak more freely it becomes a space where you can actually dream together, right? It's a dreaming space. I think about as an organization what isn't here that could be. Once you remove some of those layers that prevents people from being able to access themselves you start to imagine what some of those things might be, but in addition to that we talk about people's medicines and their gifts that they have. So in addition that what isn't here, what is here that we could lean further into? And we find that people have a lot of gifts that simply weren't accessed in some cases because people were never given a voice.

Itai Jeffries ([00:32:56](#)):

We look at, we have examples of people that we work with who are older BIPOC folks who've been working for the same organization, white organizations for 20, 30, sometimes 40 years and they had learned to be silent, and you shift a few things in that with everybody in that space and suddenly you realize you have this really powerful medicine and voice there and everything shifts.

Itai Jeffries ([00:33:20](#)):

People from the kinda, lowest levels of an organization all the way up to the top respond to that, right? So I think about that just space is just, just like Tina said, this space of rawness and realness.

Tina Vasquez ([00:33:32](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). I might add one thing that comes up a lot recently, which is just going back to relationships and that friend, people assuming when we say relationships we mean to be friends or be best friends, right? Which has people engaging in toxic positivity and over-politeness and all of that. We're like, "No, no, no. When we say relationships we're talking about clarity of communication and intent, and we're also talking about when we're saying trust ... " So this is something else we borrow from Adrienne Maree Brown, moving at the speed of trust, that you don't have to wait for people to be 100% trusting of one another to do work. What you do need though is people's willingness to extend the opportunity for someone to demonstrate trustworthiness, that they're going to have faith in the people they're walking alongside, that they're going to mess up but the intentions are there that they're going to mess up and learn from it and grow.

Tina Vasquez ([00:34:40](#)):

When you have that kind of trust in the space, where it's like you know, I don't know fully trust you but I have faith that if we keep going down this road you're going to demonstrate that you are going to be trustworthy in a way that I need you to be. That is so powerful and that is a place where we can start actually building. When that's not present that doesn't mean you can't start, it just means that you have to even start way further back.

Tina Vasquez ([00:35:08](#)):

We have quite a few clients where we'll go in and they'll say, "Let's develop a racial equity team which is a mixed identity group." They are a cross section of race, ethnicity, organizational function, hierarchy and position, they span the gamut. We get there and it's like whoa, whoa, we can't start there. There's too much trauma here, we need a backup, because there isn't that faith in extending that opportunity for trust building. So we start even a few further steps back, which is where the caucuses come in. So we helped develop those relationships within affinity spaces and get people at least trusting within their own affinity spaces and developing the resolve and the resilience to engage in the spaces that feel less safe. I mean, we don't really use the word safe anyway, but spaces that feel extremely harmful that at least out there there's a space that they could go to to be able to recover from that. The transformation is unbelievable when people are able to build with that understanding of relationship and trust.

Michael Betts II ([00:36:29](#)):

Yeah, yeah. So, I mean, Itai, I know you're West Coast but you're tied into this group, so you are implicated in the Duke and Durham sphere. As we're having these conversations, and right now with COVID everybody is everywhere, so we get to be kind of pan whatever, Pan-American, Pan-European, Pan-African. Everybody gets to be all over the place because it's a click of a button. So what do you see as the role of a space like the university in creating these spaces of justice?

Itai Jeffries ([00:37:15](#)):

Right, right, right. Well, Durham is part of my people's original hunting grounds, and I have never heard the university itself acknowledge that. I think that UNC does because of their American Indian Center and they have that relationship, but I've never really heard Duke acknowledge that at all. But one thing I'll say about COVID in this time is that COVID in some ways brought a blessing to me personally because I'm able to engage in that work in North Carolina. My heart is always there with my people and with the land that I grew up on.

Itai Jeffries ([00:37:57](#)):

When I think about Duke though, I'm grateful to Duke. Duke paid part of my tuition for undergrad because my mom works there. She's in the Office of Research Integrity. So she's been at Duke for 20 plus years and I'm grateful for Duke, but one of the things is I don't think that when you ask that question, like what is Duke's role, no, for me it is what is Duke's responsibility. Duke has a responsibility because a lot of the dynamics we're out here working on they were kind of forerunners in it. The Duke family, the families that led up to the creation of the university. We're talking about indigenous removal, genocide, slavery, all of that, right? Tobacco. So when I look at Duke and other settler institutions, and not just universities but settler institutions in the state of North Carolina, in the South more broadly, they have a responsibility to not only throw money but to throw heart, to throw responsibility, to throw relationship and to be in this work, right? It really shouldn't just be offshoot centers, it shouldn't be staff who are working on this, it should be all the way up to the levels of the chancellors, and the provosts, and the deans, and the presidents. They need to be in this work too, and I want to see that they can be in a space that is a just space like what we defined earlier.

Michael Betts II ([00:39:29](#)):

You talk about the presidents, and chancellors, and provosts and all these folks being involved, and I think oftentimes when we have conversations, and you've teased this out a little bit, but I want it to be explicitly stated. When we talk about who needs the support and help of defining what just space looks like or being able to point out white supremacy, I think there is a feeling that only privileged communities, white, wealthy, cisgendered, hetero, able-body, Christian, et cetera communities need to be about the work of anti-racism or pointing out white supremacy and spatial justice. Is that true? If so, why, and if not, why not?

Tina Vasquez ([00:40:15](#)):

It's everybody's responsibility, everybody's responsible. White supremacy has all of us spinning. No one's exempt. Biwa Emergent Equity is not exempt. We're socialized in this too. When it's relegated to people who have power, and access, and privilege paternalism is off the chain and they're disconnected, right? But if it's just the people who are impacted, people who are impacted are spinning and are dealing with trauma and survival in a different way. So it's not any one person's responsibility, it's all of our responsibilities.

Tina Vasquez ([00:41:07](#)):

I love the way Vivette also talks about this. She talks about this work in terms of waves, and that everyone has a different role to play in waves. She often uses indigenous frameworks to talk about this, and she'll use the references of what people's roles are and where and how they related to the collective health of the community. That for us not everyone could be out in the streets protesting because who is going to get them out of jail, or who is going to be the therapist that they go to when they need to work through the trauma of that work, right? Not all of us can be behind the scenes because then who is going to be the face, right?

Tina Vasquez ([00:42:04](#)):

So everyone has a role, and folks with a lot of institutional power, folks with a lot of access, folks with a lot of resources they certainly do have a role to play and it's not just being dictated to.

Michael Betts II ([00:42:25](#)):

Tease that out a little bit.

Tina Vasquez ([00:42:27](#)):

Yeah, I'm going to tease it out because I don't want people to take that and run. When I say it's not just to be dictated to, they have to come to this space in terms of what Itai said earlier about coming to the space with the goal of their own salvation too. If they're coming to this work with I need to save my own soul too, right? That stakes are different. We often say this, you don't do equity work on behalf of people of color. That's ridiculous, because that's assuming that people of color are the only ones that are impacted. If we're all impacted and we're all implicated, then how are we all participating in the direction and the strategy and the ways to move forward?

Tina Vasquez ([00:43:22](#)):

So some of our best accomplices who are white, they're not people who come to us saying, "Tell me what to do." They're people who we process with and they put their stuff out on the table, we put our stuff out on the table and we figure out okay, what is all of this? Where does things begin and end, what overlaps, and how do we all want to move together? Then we collectively decide on how we're going to move together because if I don't have access, I don't know what that side looks like. So how am I going to tell you what to do? I don't know what you're going to do because I don't know what you see on your side, nor do you see what's happening on my side when I'm working with my community and we're trying to do what we need to do.

Tina Vasquez ([00:44:10](#)):

So when that bridge that we try to facilitate and help build is a coming together of... I'm pulling the curtain back on what's happening on my side so that your outside perspective can help me understand what I'm dealing with better and that we can then say like, "Okay, this is how I need to move." Versus oh, just tell me what to do. That's not a conversation. So, Itai.

Itai Jeffries ([00:44:41](#)):

And the way you frame that, Michael, it makes me think about the earlier question about how we define anti-racism, and I think it made me remember one of my other resistances to that term is that we're not just dealing with race. We are also understanding the ways that all of these systems interconnected are affecting us in a real way, and organizations kind of being sort of the harbingers of that or what holds it in place in many ways, but attached to this colonialist impulse of race we got to look at Dr. Pat Hill Collins and matrix of domination and look at how patriarchy and cis hetero patriarchy, right? We got to look at how all of these systems come into place to create this social order. When we think about just not the people who are white or are most privileged and wealthy and so on and so forth doing this work, I think about my story.

Itai Jeffries ([00:45:38](#)):

I'm a mixed race transgender indigenous person, right? But even in my own healing, right? Part of humanizing myself over the last few years is I've been doing work around the way that I internalized femmephobia, how I'm afraid of my own feminine attributes, much less other folks who are assigned male at birth, right? So breaking that down is very similar in many ways to breaking down the messages that I consume, that I ate and that ate me around whiteness, right?

Michael Betts II ([00:46:09](#)):

Right.

Itai Jeffries ([00:46:09](#)):

And so all of it is so intertwined, and we often find when we're working in spaces that, especially where race and gender meet, is that there are just layers of invisibilization, there's layers of power and privilege that move through those spaces. When we look at some of the voices that really are repressed the most within organizations you're talking about women of color, right? You're talking about genderqueer folks of color, and so I think that brought to mind that piece as well, but no, it's everybody's work. I don't know if you've seen, of course you have, the movie Get Out, right?

Michael Betts II ([00:46:50](#)):

Yes.

Itai Jeffries ([00:46:51](#)):

I articulated something the other day that just really makes me think about your question, which is that white supremacy and all these other isms that are connected to this matrix of domination, not only does it cause people to slide down into the sunken place, right?

Michael Betts II ([00:47:08](#)):

Right.

Itai Jeffries ([00:47:08](#)):

But to the extent that white folks don't even have to stir the cup because we're trained to stir our own. That's how sick white supremacy is.

Michael Betts II ([00:47:19](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. That's a whole different conversation too, because the way in which we see, it just kind of goes back to some of the tokenism that you talked about. Where organizations, especially when they're instituting policies, oftentimes love to tokenize whoever the other is and elevate them to a place where they are becoming the arbiter of whatever the thing is, right? And they're doing it with rugged individualism oftentimes because of all of the subsets and isms that live inside of them that they're trying to, this is part of the conversation, and I don't have this out in the open and wide space because I know we're going to have a lot of different listeners, this is where we end up with color wars effectively, where black and brown people can't be seeing each other as doing the same work. It's well, you can't go ahead of me because I've been here doing this work longer, or you have different identity groups all kind of fighting for the same scraps rather than realizing that if we were working in tandem and in a relationship with one another we could imagine ... It's that conversation that you guys were talking about. What's not here that should be here? What medicine exists in this room that we're suppressing because we feel like another medicine needs to be heard over another one?

Michael Betts II ([00:48:49](#)):

It's so twisted in that way, and I feel like when you ... The sunken place is a perfect metaphor in and of itself because effectively we do stir our own cups and we relegate each other to that space. Then whoever has assigned us the job of figuring this out kind of looks and goes, "Look, this is why X group of people can't be trusted to do X thing." Because you can't figure out how to get your way out of it.

Itai Jeffries ([00:49:16](#)):

Right, right. Some of the successes that people find, you have to unpack the layers of some of what has caused you to have success in your life is things that are maladaptive, right? They're maladaptive.

Michael Betts II ([00:49:30](#)):

Exactly.

Itai Jeffries ([00:49:32](#)):

Probably chances are they didn't feel good when you were doing it, right?

Michael Betts II ([00:49:36](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Itai Jeffries ([00:49:36](#)):

Put they pay off. I don't know, I barely survived graduate school, and having that gets you this title that you can use to get you these letters behind your name, but unpacking what happened during that process, right? In what ways was I separated from my humanity?

Michael Betts II ([00:49:53](#)):

Yeah.

Itai Jeffries ([00:49:53](#)):

And that's just, it's just real, and it all comes up. When you start having these conversations in spaces, it all comes up, and it's hard work.

Michael Betts II ([00:50:02](#)):

Yeah.

Tina Vasquez ([00:50:03](#)):

The other thing about what's so caustic about the way white supremacy works in relationship to what you were talking about, like the tokenism and the fighting for scraps. We were actually a part of another conversation that was facilitated, people were asking us. So the question that we got was around gender and sexuality, and it was really beautiful the way I heard Itai describe this, and it also rang true for me too. That because the way white supremacy works is so finite, and definitive, and angular, right? And siloed that even our own identities have become that, that we cannot be expansive beings. So if you show up in the system in one way, the other ways that you are get canceled out. So for example, I'm married to a cisgendered man, so the fact that I'm queer gets canceled out. I can't be both in our society. There's lots of real implication reasons and then there's also just ridiculous reasons. The real implications of that is because I am married to a cisgendered man and white man at that there are privileges off of that type of relationship, a type of relationship, and I'm married, right? So that type of relationship is privileged in this protestant-based, Christian-based white supremacy system, right?

Tina Vasquez ([00:51:47](#)):

So I don't ever get asked how I identify, it's just assumed. But if someone were to ask me and really wanted to know, then I'd be like, "Actually I'm queer. This was just a choice that I made because I happened to fall in love with this person. They happened to be a man, but that doesn't mean I haven't been in love with women before, that doesn't mean I haven't been in love with other types of people before." But we only get to show up in a certain way because the system only allows us to see things in a certain way. Vivette often talks about I'm not going to allow this system to force me to shave the curves of my circle to fit in its square box. Right? Or when Itai talks about queerness is not an othering or an alternative, it's an expansiveness and it's the full spectrum of way of being, right?

Michael Betts II ([00:52:46](#)):

Right, right.

Tina Vasquez ([00:52:46](#)):

It's the kind of retort that people make around feminism. It's like oh, feminism, that's for women. When it's like a true feminist knows that feminism is about equity for all, right?

Michael Betts II ([00:52:56](#)):

Right.

Tina Vasquez ([00:52:57](#)):

It's those kinds of ways in which we get into these traps because white supremacy has a siloed in just our thinking about who we are, let alone how we operate as who we are, and that's a key element of this too. So when we're talking about a relationship to self, how deeply do you know yourself outside of this white supremacy lens, and can you take that risk to get to know yourself, and once you find out who you are, are you willing to take the risk to be that self in this white supremacy system that does not want you to be that self? That is huge. That is hard, and we're asking people to show up in that way every day when we show up to our clients and our meetings because our salvation is dependent upon that if we actually want to dismantle this system, because it is the key to what we're building on the other end of it.

Itai Jeffries ([00:53:53](#)):

That is the work. For me I had to recognize as well that I have a complicated ancestry since I come from both indigenous people and the settlers and the colonizers, right? Part of me at first was this self-hatred around that, but I came to understand that if any one of my ancestors made a different choice, I wouldn't be here today. So I kind of have to hold and acknowledge that, regardless of all of what their intentions were, some of them probably good and some of them not, right? That I have to hold that space for myself but the real recognition comes in as like balancing that with also recognizing what they left me with that I didn't ask for, that I have to be responsible for, I have to reckon with, and again, going back to the beginning, it's not that scary once you just start to do it. You just have to have that conversation with yourself, but I think the harder people want to resistant that conversation, the more it's going to hurt when you first get there, but once that Band-Aid is ripped then you find people really starting to open up and express in a different way.

Michael Betts II ([00:54:52](#)):



So when folks are in that place, okay, in this work thinking about my own salvation, I finally got to an understanding of it is about us but it's also about me in is, so that I can actually be my full self. I bump up against something that I myself have not really reconciled with, because I would imagine that happens often within these conversations. How do you hold space for that person as they are figuring this thing out and sometimes probably rejecting the realization that they are coming to about themselves?

Tina Vasquez ([00:55:36](#)):

Oh my god. Yo. Michael, what you're describing ... It feels like I literally just had this experience because one, you don't ever just come ... It's not like you arrive at oh, I understand what my salvation is. It's an evolutionary process.

Michael Betts II ([00:56:02](#)):

Right, right.

Tina Vasquez ([00:56:02](#)):

It's ongoing and I was saying the BEE team isn't exempt of it. I'll share this, but I'm curious of what Itai thinks, I'm always sharing my stuff after I've come to some realization because it feels like oh, if this is useful for someone else, but in what you're just talking about, for me 2020, I treated 2020 like all of my experiences around trauma and abuse in my life, which for me is hunker down and take care of everything. Very much doing the power hoarding, I'm the only one, rugged individualism, totally playing up all of those things. My team watched me spin, watched me spin out and held space for me to spin. It took me maybe up until two weeks ago to realize that that's what I was doing.

Tina Vasquez ([00:57:07](#)):

It came down to a conversation during a team meeting where I was asking permission to share what was on my heart, and Vivette is like, "Why are you asking for permission? Say what you have to say." And earlier what I talked about that rugged honesty, I'm a consultant doing this work and it's hard for me. I know what I'm asking people to do because we try to practice what we preach, and it doesn't make it any easier just because we've committed to that, and it took some coaxing, and it was really hard to say what I had to say, and it was hurtful, painful experience, but what it allowed us to do was to just get it out on the table so that we can figure out what's the way forward.

Tina Vasquez ([00:57:55](#)):

So to answer your question, how do you hold space for people, part of it is holding space for yourself. So on the other end, when Vivette and I talked a little bit about this experience, how she was holding space for herself watching me but then also ... The thing that we don't talk about and oftentimes our clients will say, "Oh good god, this feels like therapy." Is that we trigger each other. In social work they call it transference and countertransference. So you have this experience of what's going on with someone else is starting to trigger your own coping mechanisms and memories, and so then you start doing those things. Then you start responding to one another from these other places and what's actually in the room. Part of our jobs, we're not social workers, but we understand that from our cultural context.

Tina Vasquez ([00:58:55](#)):

So part of how we hold space for that is sometimes it's through our ceremonies from our traditions. Sometimes we've had to pull that out for clients because it's gotten that real. Sometimes it's

acknowledging where a person is at and making it clear that people get to choose every day if they want to continue to walk together, and that doesn't discount this person as not valuable or not worthy, it just means that wherever you are in your process it's not in a place that people can continue to walk with you. It doesn't mean you might not meet up later.

Tina Vasquez ([00:59:39](#)):

So sometimes we're coaching people out of organizations. Sometimes we're coaching people into a different role within the organization. Sometimes we're providing coaching and sometimes we even recommend that they get therapy because of what the process is bringing up. So there are a lot of ways in which we hold the space to do that because it's not, again, because it's interdependent you can't save yourself, but you're responsible for allowing yourself to be a part of a process where there's collective salvation occurring, but you got to show up fully to that. That's where that vulnerability comes in. So I don't know, Itai, what do you think?

Itai Jeffries ([01:00:22](#)):

Yeah, and where that salvation work takes place really depends on who it is and what level of caretaking they require. If it's somebody who requires a lot of caretaking around that, just not intentionally but unintentionally, then we might pull them aside for coaching. They might need to do some of that work in their caucus, but some folks are able to name it and it actually be the thing that is needed in that space to move the whole group forward. So it shows up differently every time, and we have to be really adaptive. I think adaptive is one of our mantras for our work.

Tina Vasquez ([01:00:55](#)):

Yeah.

Itai Jeffries ([01:00:56](#)):

Is that we have to be adaptive to respond to how is it showing up, how does it move through the group. Sometimes it is that really effective ripple that allows that work to grow, and other times it's something that we got to pull a folk aside because it's not, especially if we think about women and queer folk of color, it's not a responsibility to have to hold that space for you, so it depends, but it's always powerful regardless of where it takes place.

Michael Betts II ([01:01:22](#)):

Okay. I'm going to be using some of the language that we've redefined here in this space right now in this next question. What are some of the ways the language of fighting for anti-racism, or as you all talk about it, dismantling white supremacy or confronting white supremacy, liberation equity and freedom, what are some of those ways that that language has become co-opted and now shows up as oppression? What temperature checks should the Duke community be employing to hold fast to the accepted community definitions of these terms?

Itai Jeffries ([01:02:05](#)):

I don't know if you can see over here, for the listeners, we are laughing because we have confronted this and we just kept getting run over by this one particular phenomenon, to the extent that we decided to name and define it. So the concept that we have defined for our firm is called white anti-racist counter-strategizing. Okay, let me break it down for you. So we find this very particular thing that happens in

these spaces, these anti-racist or confronting white supremacy spaces where white folks will learn some of the language, and I'm going to say white folks because this is a very specific phenomenon that we're talking about, will learn the language around anti-racism, will learn the language of white supremacy, can name the values, and will then use it to publicly spank BIPOC folks for not being onboard, right? For not doing enough, and it becomes this really counterproductive thing. So we have to then be like, "Wait a minute. What you're doing is actually using this language to reinforce the power structure that we're here to confront." And it happens a lot.

Itai Jeffries ([01:03:27](#)):

So then there's a reset of okay, this is what has shown up in this space and this is what we're not going to do, right? But we do see it a lot. And so defining it has given us the ability to catch it in the moment, cut people off, and to reorient because it can be really toxic when it does come up.

Tina Vasquez ([01:03:46](#)):

Yep, and how that's impacted our approach that people will often, especially prospective clients, they'll be like, "Oh well, we have this book club and we're reading this book, and that and the third." And our response to that is well, cease and desist. Your book club is not where it's at, because if you're coming to us and you have a book club, it's counterproductive. People are like, "What do you mean? What do we do?" I love the question of, oh, so you have any resources? And my response to that, yeah, yourself. That's my resource for you, and your colleague. People are like, "What in the world?" But the reality is that we get so ... Another one of the white supremacy values, and we keep referring to this but this an article written by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, widely available, but one of them is worship of the written word.

Tina Vasquez ([01:04:50](#)):

If you work with us, people who know us, you don't get agendas. You don't know what's happening in the meeting before the meeting is occurring. Now, that doesn't mean we don't have a plan, but we don't need people hiding behind what's the next item we're going to get to. What we need people to do is show up and be really present to themselves and to their colleagues, be really paying attention to how they're feeling and how that's preventing them from participating in an authentic way. We don't practice that.

Tina Vasquez ([01:05:23](#)):

So we have a cohort of organizations we work with and we do learning labs for them. One of the learning lab assignments was pick a meeting in the next month and make it agendaless. Go into the meeting, scrap your agenda and go in with just one or two questions instead.

Michael Betts II ([01:05:45](#)):

Wow.

Tina Vasquez ([01:05:47](#)):

Hands down every single organization that did it, and all of them did, said that not only were they able to achieve everything that they would have put on an agenda but they were also able to have more generative conversations about the concepts and ideas surrounding the agenda items. They were able to hit it all, and that is because ideas connect in all of these really interesting ways that are not

necessarily linear. So when you free yourself of the time constraint of we're going to talk about this thing for this amount of time and this thing for that amount of time you're able to see how the ideas are interconnected and how one thing is impacting another thing. So you may toggle between two or three or four ideas even and as you're moving through that you're able to distill and land okay, what are the action items, what are the conceptual pieces that we're still grappling with and how do we then move this forward and what do we need to continue to reflect on? And Michael, you've experienced it in our sessions that you don't get agendas.

Michael Betts II ([01:06:56](#)):

No.

Tina Vasquez ([01:06:57](#)):

And we spend two hours plus in those conversations, and I think that's the other thing. People are like, "What are we going to talk about for two hours? You're going to ask me one question and we're going to have a conversation about that?" Yes, we are. We're going to listen to each other intently and get into our reactions and our feelings about what we're hearing and how that's preventing us from having the real conversations we need to be having.

Michael Betts II ([01:07:23](#)):

Right.

Itai Jeffries ([01:07:24](#)):

And when it comes to co-optation, we see that a lot of folks, and universities especially doing really what is quantitative based equality work rather than equity work, have ham sandwiched equity into their divisions, diversity equity and inclusion and all of this, and are doing the same old stuff, right? In turn just kind of replicating some of those systems, you think about people saying, "Oh, well, we'll just openly share everybody's pay and then we're going to do this idea that everybody who is at the same level is just going to get the same type of pay." And they don't worry about how relationships might be affected by this big reveal, they're not in communication or conversation with people, they're releasing people's information without really doing the other work first to have it be a collective strategy. But we see that kind of thing everywhere and it's when it's not done from a place of relationship it has the potential to just not only further replicate the types of power and control that we see, but also just the emotional harm, the harm in a relationship.

Michael Betts II ([01:08:33](#)):

Because I live in this space of kind of straddling the fence myself and learning what it truly means to confront white supremacy, what it truly means to be in a space of equity, what it truly means to confront my own internalized oppressions and things of that nature, there are certain features of professionalism that have been built into me at this point. They've been trained and conditioned into me. So the next question spurs from that, because the question I'm going to ask are what are resources and ways that people can further acknowledge regarding anti-racism and spatial justice? And then you just spent the last hour and 15 minutes effectively saying none of that.

Michael Betts II ([01:09:26](#)):

So you are saying part of the problem here is the way in which we structured it. So maybe the better question is, is what are ways that departments can begin the work of relationship to better tease out this salvation that the collective group has from white supremacy?

Itai Jeffries ([01:09:52](#)):

Well, from my perspective one of the biggest things that we see that is kind of a turning point from a group just talking about white supremacy to actually move into that place that you're talking about is just naming the reasons why people in the space don't trust one another. Get into that place, that is almost always the turning point. So whatever you got to do to deal with the shit that has gone down before you try to have this generative space, right? And whatever else is in the room you got to deal with that.

Tina Vasquez ([01:10:25](#)):

Hands down, 100%. That's exactly it. If you can't get to that point, everything else is just fluff. How you get to that point, this is critical, how you get to that point is by being really, really, really, really, really willing to put your stuff on the table as is. So one of the ways that we do that, and this happens with all of our clients, this is just part of our approach, we use that white supremacy values article and then we go over it, we ask people what they think about it, how they feel about it, what resonates with them, but then everyone's responsible for giving specific examples of how they play them out in their daily life. It's in those conversations where people start to name things for themselves, which then gives people permission to talk about how they've been impacted by the things that people are naming for themselves. Which then now that it's out on the table, now we've shifted it from this place of being out in the ether, right? Conceptual, policy procedures, ideation type thing, to now we're talking about us and me and how I'm showing up in the system and in the organization specifically. So because I've named it no one can use it against me and no one can accuse me because I have already accused myself.

Itai Jeffries ([01:12:07](#)):

Right.

Tina Vasquez ([01:12:07](#)):

So that part that Itai talked about earlier about getting the shame out of the space, that's one of the ways we do it. We help people facilitate out of their own shame by allowing them to own up to their own ways of their socialization in white supremacy without judgment, right? When I say without judgment people judge people all the time, but it's not our job to pass that judgment. We'll often facilitate a conversation and [Colleen 01:12:38], one of our other consultants, will say like, "I'm actually not interested in whether you're a good person or not. I'm not here for that. What I'm here for is to facilitate a dialogue about how white supremacy has got you doing whatever you're doing and what you're interested in doing differently about it or in relationship to it." It's not for us to decide whether people are good or not, and that sometimes helps take the heat out of the space because people are showing up trying to look good, trying to save face, trying to make sure that people understand that they're a good person and really focus on intent and not impact.

Tina Vasquez ([01:13:17](#)):

We're like, "Intentions are important, impact is more important." And really it has nothing to do with whether you're good or not. It has everything to do with do you want to stay in this system or not, and if you don't then yeah, there are choices available to you if you allow yourself the opportunity to avail

yourselves of them. So allowing people to name things for themselves and then have discussions about how everyone has been impacted by the choices we've made to survive this system gives us the opportunity to talk about okay, how does that impact how we trust each other and how we don't trust each other? Then there's something else on the other side of that because in the practice of it we've been building vulnerability and trust. So even when we're upset with each other, we have never had a meeting where someone has left the room.

Tina Vasquez ([01:14:15](#)):

So Vivette and I specifically have been doing this work for going on four years now, with the team it's been about a year and a half. We facilitate two to three meetings almost every day across maybe 27 organizations. Not a single person from a single organization has ever clicked off or left the room out of anger in these conversations, and they have been hard. People have cried, people have been upset, people have been frustrated, but they stayed in the room, and that you can't do equity if people aren't willing to stay in the room.

Itai Jeffries ([01:15:00](#)):

Right, right.

Michael Betts II ([01:15:01](#)):

Right,

Itai Jeffries ([01:15:02](#)):

But if folks do want to buy a book, Michael-

Michael Betts II ([01:15:04](#)):

Go for it.

Itai Jeffries ([01:15:05](#)):

... buy a journal. Buy a journal, that's your book, because guess what? We are all experts in white supremacy.

Tina Vasquez ([01:15:12](#)):

That's right.

Itai Jeffries ([01:15:12](#)):

There is not a person among us who is not because it is everything we've ever learned since we took our first breath, probably before. So we're all experts, buy a journal.

Tina Vasquez ([01:15:23](#)):

That's right.

Michael Betts II ([01:15:24](#)):

Okay. I like that. That's a very functionally formative. Then we can get into the details of which journal is better. Ooh, I like this one, this got a leather binding.

Itai Jeffries ([01:15:36](#)):

No lines, no lines.

Michael Betts II ([01:15:38](#)):

No lines. No, you need freedom on the page. So no, I definitely get a defined sense and I'm realizing our time is what it is now, but I definitely am giving this a defined sense. When you all are talking about that so many people love to show up and love to express their intent of things rather than see the impact of something. I definitely get a defined sense that that is the station that's positioned that we all want to be in. We want to be seen as having made the effort, even if the effort doesn't necessarily transmute in the way that we meant it to. But I have known zero prisoners who the intent of freedom was good enough.

Itai Jeffries ([01:16:26](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tina Vasquez ([01:16:29](#)):

There it is.

Michael Betts II ([01:16:30](#)):

All right. Is there anything you two would like to add to this discussion?

Itai Jeffries ([01:16:38](#)):

I would just say regardless of who you are, you, your family, your chosen family, your ancestors, those who will come after you, all your kin are worth the investment and courage.

Michael Betts II ([01:17:04](#)):

I like that.

Tina Vasquez ([01:17:07](#)):

And I will add that our collective salvation is dependent upon it.

Itai Jeffries ([01:17:15](#)):

Boom.

Michael Betts II ([01:17:17](#)):

Tina, Itai, thank you so much for joining us today.

Itai Jeffries ([01:17:22](#)):

Thank you Michael.

Tina Vasquez ([01:17:24](#)):

Thank you for having us.



Michael Betts II ([01:17:30](#)):

Thank you so much for joining us for this episode of Space of Justice. If you like what you heard today be sure to register for Just Space Week, Duke University's conference centered entirely on the conversation of spatial justice. This year, as you may have gathered from our first episode with the BEE team, is focused on anti-racism, equity and connecting Duke to Durham in meaningful and just collaborations. Head over to [sites.duke.edu/justspace/conference](https://sites.duke.edu/justspace/conference) to sign up today.

Michael Betts II ([01:18:01](#)):

A special thanks to Tina Vasquez and Itai Jeffries of Biwa Emergent Equity for making time to get us ready to embark on a journey through confronting white supremacy and understanding how to implement equity in all spaces this season. If you'd like to connect with them or find out more about what they do and what they can do for your campus department head on over to [www.BIWA-emergentequity.com](https://www.BIWA-emergentequity.com) to fill out the form under the contact tab to get your first conversation with the BEE team started. Again, that's [www.BIWA-emergentequity.com](https://www.BIWA-emergentequity.com).

Michael Betts II ([01:18:42](#)):

Today's episode was logistically possible because of the brilliance of Elmer Orellana, Paige Vinson, and Lindsey Miller Furiness. Our web presence is possible only because Tara Carty makes it so. Francesqa Santos and Matt Starke are the genius minds behind our assessments and analytics. To the fearless podcast team of editors and collaborators that consist of Samaiyah Faison, Ling Jin, Esra Uzun Mason, Brian Lackman, as well as the Just Space conference chair who is pulling double duty, Kevin Erixson. Thanks to Marcy Edenfield's crew for making sure our equipment specs are just right. Just Space conference marketing is handled by the illuminous Sarah Neff. Sam Babb's keen eye keeps us all looking perfect and synchronized, and Kathryn Lester-Bacon and Victoria Krebs ensure our online learning design is tight. Jeff Nelson and Jeanna McCullers are the tireless captain and first mate of the Just Space committee. Tasha Curry-Corcoran is kind enough to ensure that the Office of Student Affairs at Duke University keeps us going one more turn around the sun. Our theme song, [Ureba 01:19:47], is by Lassana Diabaté. Engineering and mix of today's episode is by yours truly.

Michael Betts II ([01:19:53](#)):

Be sure to check back every Tuesday for the next episode. A special non-sponsored shout-out to Zencast for making it possible for our team to do remote recording sessions safely while in an international health crisis. Please remember to continue to wear a mask and wash your hands, and although the vaccines are here, we're not quite at the finish line. Also, be sure to get all your questions answered so when it's your time to get the shot, you can. It's been a pleasure to spend some time with you today and I can't wait to see you next week. As always, I'm Michael Betts II and this has been Space of Justice.