

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

The Space of Justice team wants to start this week's episode with a moment of silence, standing in solidarity with the people of Brooklyn Center, Minnesota as they deal with the loss of 20 year old Daunte Wright, as well as Second Lieutenant Caron Nazario who was forcibly pepper-sprayed in Windsor, Virginia, both who are Black and Black Latino men, respectively, at the hands of police.

Michael Betts II ([00:00:38](#)):

Welcome back to Space of Justice. For those of you who are joining us for the first time, I'm your host, Michael Betts II and my pronouns are he, him, his. Today, I'm joined by three brilliant Black Durham based artists, Brittany Barbee, Shay Hendricks and Anthony Patterson.

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

Alums of the now defunct Documentary Diversity Project at Duke's Center for Documentary Studies, which was directed and coordinated by Courtney Reid-Eaton and William Page, Brittany, Shay and Anthony have a storied history with both the university and the city of Durham. In the wake of the murder of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Daniel Prude, and the subsequent uprisings that happened, all three responded to the moment with work in public spaces.

Michael Betts II ([00:01:24](#)):

Today, we discuss that work, the responsibility they feel the university has to the Durham community, most notably with its Durham based artists of color and how their work makes spaces for representations of black and brown people, which societally have been dismissed. Thank you so much for joining me today you three.

Brittany Barbee ([00:01:43](#)):

Thank you.

Michael Betts II ([00:01:45](#)):

Brittany, do you mind getting us started today? Tell us a little bit about yourself, who you are, where you are in relationship to Duke and Durham, your area and mediums of interest, your pronouns and a fact about yourself that you find interesting.

Brittany Barbee ([00:01:59](#)):

Hi everyone. It's so nice to be here today. My pronouns are she, her, hers. I am from Durham, North Carolina. I was born in '93. I'm a '90s baby. And my relationship to Duke... So 2018, I was an emerging documentary artist from 2018 to summer 2019. And now currently, I'm an arts and media intern at Center for Documentary Studies.

Brittany Barbee ([00:02:31](#)):

A little bit about myself, you know, that's a great reflection question that honestly I really haven't gave much thought to. But I am a music head, specifically in the terms of creating music. I love to create music. My mediums of interest would be poetry, photography and music. And one fact that is interesting, I taught myself how to read music. [inaudible 00:03:04].

Michael Betts II ([00:03:04](#)):

Wow, that's very interesting.

Brittany Barbee ([00:03:08](#)):

Yeah, that's an interesting fact.

Michael Betts II ([00:03:09](#)):

How long did that take?

Brittany Barbee ([00:03:13](#)):

I mean, it was a progress thing. So my freshman year in high school was my first time ever taking a music class. And my teacher was like, "What? This your first time? Nobody taught you? I don't have time to teach you. You're going to have to teach yourself." And I really was interested in music and drums, so yeah, I just taught myself how to participate and read.

Michael Betts II ([00:03:38](#)):

How to participate and read. I feel like that's a whole Tony Robbins and his self-help seminar right now. "Teach yourself how to participate and read." That is awesome. I love that. That is fantastic. Oh, well, thank you so much for being here today.

Brittany Barbee ([00:03:58](#)):

Thank you.

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

Shay, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Shay Hendricks ([00:04:03](#)):

Hey, I'm Shay Hendricks. My pronouns are they and she. I am a creator. In relationship to Duke, I was a former EDA or Emerging Documentary Artist under the Documentary Diversity Project at CDS, which is affiliated with Duke. And in relationship to Durham, I guess I could say I was raised here. I was born in Newark. My family is from Newark, but for the better part of my life, half of it really, I've been here.

Michael Betts II ([00:04:50](#)):

And what is a fun fact that you find interesting about yourself?

Shay Hendricks ([00:04:55](#)):

I'm an artist that's not restricted to one particular medium.

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

Okay. Is that an interplay thing or is that, you finish a project and then go to the next thing? How does that work out for you?

Shay Hendricks ([00:05:09](#)):

It really depends on how I'm feeling. I'm definitely interested in multiple things, so I don't really shy away from what I feel like doing or where I feel like my creativity needs to be based on society's linear

definitions of what a person should pursue. Right now, I'm getting back into design and fashion and graphics and stuff like that.

Shay Hendricks ([00:05:47](#)):

And very recently, like previously, I just released an exhibit, which is full of mixed media, works in progress that are meant to become paintings so I do a little bit of everything.

Michael Betts II ([00:06:08](#)):

That's awesome. Thank you so, so much for joining us today.

Shay Hendricks ([00:06:11](#)):

Thank you for having me.

Michael Betts II ([00:06:12](#)):

Anthony.

Anthony Patterson ([00:06:16](#)):

Hey my name is Anthony Patterson, pronouns, he, him and his. My relationship to Duke is I was an Emerging Documentary Artist in the Documentary Diversity Project at CDS. Let's see. Other part of the question was... What was it? Interest? Mediums of interest. I paint. I do analog photography. I do a little bit of everything, curate, teach, story tell/lecture workshop. I love history, particularly community history and particularly more than that is my community history here in Durham, which has a really interesting relationship with Duke.

Anthony Patterson ([00:07:10](#)):

I literally live two blocks away from Duke University Hospital and could probably jog and not break a sweat getting over to West Campus, so I'm pretty close to Duke. A lot of my family members work at Duke in the medical system. And yeah, we walk there and we live close and we have a lot of ties to the area.

Anthony Patterson ([00:07:36](#)):

And what was it? Interesting fact about myself, I love vintage clothes. I have quite a collection of vintage Champion sweatshirts from the '90s. I started collecting things back in high school. My mom introduced thrifting to us as children and ever since then, I've kind of loved being able to find those gems in thrift stores.

Anthony Patterson ([00:08:04](#)):

So I think my most prized possession is I got this red jacket that is a... It's polo jacket from 1992. And Ralph Lauren had reissued some of the things from that collection but not the jacket so I feel really special that I got something officially from '92 that's not back out on the streets.

Michael Betts II ([00:08:30](#)):

And just for the audience sake, you were born in what year?

Anthony Patterson ([00:08:35](#)):

I was born in 1995.

Michael Betts II ([00:08:37](#)):

So that jacket is three years older than you.

Anthony Patterson ([00:08:41](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Definitely.

Michael Betts II ([00:08:44](#)):

That's awesome. That's awesome. Just for the listening audience, I remember, unfortunately after the passing of Kobe, you pulled out some pretty amazing vintage gear. You want to talk about that just a little bit?

Anthony Patterson ([00:09:00](#)):

Which ones were you referring to because I-

Michael Betts II ([00:09:02](#)):

I'm just saying [[crosstalk 00:09:03](#)].

Anthony Patterson ([00:09:03](#)):

Oh. Okay, okay. I have a couple of Lakers t-shirts, one that has Magic, Kareem and James Worthy on the front. And then, I have a throwback t-shirt with the 2009, 2010 Lakers on it with Kobe on there. And I'm glad because I remember watching that finals. It was incredible for me, especially being a Lakers fan and Kobe being my favorite basketball player ever. I tried to fade away like him and everything, so I'm glad I got something to remember him by.

Michael Betts II ([00:09:41](#)):

That's awesome. That's awesome. You said James Worthy so I have to acknowledge my Carolina heritage anytime you acknowledge some of the big ones. So anyway, getting off track, I'm getting off track. I'm getting off track. Well, thank you so much for joining us today. So as we kind of deep dive into this, I'm a big believer that life finds the work that needs your specific hands.

Michael Betts II ([00:10:08](#)):

Given this, how did you all come to the work that you're doing now as makers in Durham and how do you feel that you are enacting change in the world and why is that necessary? You can talk about the kind of work that you're making and what brought you to... What were the motivations for you to start making work?

Michael Betts II ([00:10:27](#)):

I think being an artist sometimes is not necessarily... It's not a linear thing. If you don't have somebody specifically in your life that is coaching you through it, I think sometimes you have to stumble through and find your way into this space that you're making. So how did you come to find, especially as an artist

that's nonrestrictive, how did you find that these mediums are things that needed your hands to be on them? Shay, do you mind kicking us off with that one?

Shay Hendricks ([00:10:56](#)):

I think I first and foremost have to start by addressing the fact that I personally have found [inaudible 00:11:07] like documenting what's going on around me and what is happening within me is something that comes innate. Recently, I've been touching a lot of just the fact that my granddad and my godparents and either my godmom's mother who I refer to as granny, they all have stories about me drawing on [inaudible 00:11:56] paper [inaudible 00:11:58].

Shay Hendricks ([00:12:00](#)):

My granddad in particular has a story about me tagging along with him to community meetings and, of course, as a child, I'm not really having a place [inaudible 00:12:12] so instead decide to just doodle [inaudible 00:12:15] later on, when he looked back to what I draw [inaudible 00:12:20] at the round table with his buddies talking about whatever as it pertained to the community, which had to be [inaudible 00:12:33] or [inaudible 00:12:33] in New Jersey.

Shay Hendricks ([00:12:36](#)):

My godmom has stories about me being frustrated about not having all my colored pencils with me. Little stuff like that makes me realize that I've actually been creating since before I can remember. As far as the different forms that started to show up and I no longer just draw. I'm also painting now. And as I touched on before, more currently, I'm getting back into fashion design and graphic design, which I enjoy a lot.

Shay Hendricks ([00:13:25](#)):

And then, to get into a bit of music production in the future and DJ and stuff like that. All those things kind of just... I don't know. I've never been obedient in that I've never believed that I like needed to get a job or do something in particular that society feels you need to do in order to be successful.

Shay Hendricks ([00:14:04](#)):

I feel like I'm not going to do it if it doesn't feel good to me or feel right. I think a lot of the people closest to me would agree that you have a very hard time trying to get me to do something if I don't actually want to do it. So, yeah, I'm blessed enough to be in the position where I have the access and the opportunity to be able to actually do what I want to do. But I was always going to want to do what I want to do. Yeah, I'm [inaudible 00:14:47] that I'm actually able to do it.

Michael Betts II ([00:14:49](#)):

So, with that in mind, I mean, you have birthed some really engaging things. I mean, if you just talked about your current show. It's set at Golden Belt, correct?

Shay Hendricks ([00:15:00](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Michael Betts II ([00:15:02](#)):

Okay. I mean, that's actively changing the way in which we see certain representations played out. And even you're changing the way in which you went and hung that show. You're changing the form and process of a finalized product, which oftentimes between art consumers and the artist, we don't get a chance to see art in process. We always see a final product.

Michael Betts II ([00:15:31](#)):

So you're even saying like, "I'm going to mess with this." So what about that is, one, motivating to you? And two, what about that do you think actually assists in telling a more holistic view of both your work and the bodies that are in representation in your work?

Shay Hendricks ([00:15:55](#)):

Well, really, the response throughout the process of installing and afterwards, the reception I've been receiving, which has been positive towards what is my work in progress is what has really made me feel good or content about having done it in a way that I did it. Like I said, it was going to get done that way, regardless, just because I wanted it to be done that way. But it's good to know that what I did, other people have been able to understand it. And the way that I do I [inaudible 00:16:40].

Shay Hendricks ([00:16:43](#)):

I think what I decided to do is important. And I don't want to say groundbreaking because that sounds cocky, but I do think what I've done is interesting and different in the way that it-

Michael Betts II ([00:16:59](#)):

It's definitely ahead of the curve.

Shay Hendricks ([00:17:01](#)):

I guess. But I'm hoping that it allows space for a certain freedom to be felt amongst my viewers. I just started thinking about this a few days ago, but I just feel like decorum and the kinds of just linear ways of thinking we have about the way things should be done is such bullshit. I don't know. I feel like in that way, I'm here to lead by example and say that this is not the way something has to be done. This is not the way I'm going to do it. And I feel perfectly fine for not having done this traditional thing in the traditional way.

Shay Hendricks ([00:18:14](#)):

I think my work not being complete, but still I've had comments about people saying the show feels complete. I feel like that's reflective of, I don't know, the power of progress. And another one of the major themes throughout the work is just about trying to sift through and figure out and understand how being human is a complex state of being in itself.

Shay Hendricks ([00:18:47](#)):

It's a never ending state of learning and unlearning. So, I want the feeling of something being undone to be felt, whatever that feeling is because I feel like that's something that can't necessarily be described for certain or put into too many words. But I think that's also the beauty in what I've made. The show is about me trying to figure things out and connect dots and get through the day and win the day that considering that today is a tragic one that we live in, especially if you are of a darker skin.

Shay Hendricks ([00:19:38](#)):

But I think, ultimately, my work, or at least my most recent work is just about the power of acknowledgement. And a lot of times when I'm having a guest in there and I'm talking back and forth with them about the work, I save my own interpretations for myself and let the viewer know like, "Your interpretation of the work is just as important as whatever I was thinking when getting through it and installing it," because I put the emphasis in the power of interpretation of the viewer. That's part of what makes art art is that.

Shay Hendricks ([00:20:26](#)):

I was talking to a local rapper the other day, J. Rashad, about the [inaudible 00:20:30]. As an artist, once the work is done, it's not really yours anymore. It's for the person. So yeah, that was a lot, but I just try to make work that's all encompassing of the emotional experience. Simply put, the emotional experience is kind of impossible to define to me. That's kind of how the work feels. It's impossible to [inaudible 00:20:57].

Michael Betts II ([00:21:00](#)):

Right. Well, thank you. Thank you. Goodness. I feel bad for either of you who's going to follow up with that, just going to say that right now.

Brittany Barbee ([00:21:08](#)):

Anthony, you got it. You got it.

Michael Betts II ([00:21:20](#)):

So how'd you come to the work, Anthony?

Anthony Patterson ([00:21:22](#)):

Ah, okay. Okay. We going to take the joke further. All right. So I come from a creative family. My dad is an artist. Whenever I speak about him, he always wants me to let people know that he graduated from A&T in '79 and he got his art degree.

Michael Betts II ([00:21:45](#)):

[crosstalk 00:21:45].

Anthony Patterson ([00:21:45](#)):

And he wanted me to be an Aggie so bad, but I went to an early college high school at Central. And then I went to Greensboro, but I went to UNCG. So he's like, "Oh, you should have been an Aggie." So my father is an artist. His genes are running all through his children. I, myself is an artist. My mother is also a creative. I used to ask her to draw Spider-Man for me whenever I couldn't get it right and she used to draw Spider-Man for me and it used to be so dope.

Anthony Patterson ([00:22:18](#)):

And then my sisters, my oldest sister is one of the biggest sneaker heads that I know. And she also draws. She's an '80s baby, so she has a lot of fundamental hip hop influences throughout her life no

matter if it's like the way that she writes her name or the colors that she wears and the music that she listens to. It breathes through her and her children.

Anthony Patterson ([00:22:41](#)):

My niece has been inspired to start drawing and taking pictures. I think she caught the photography bug from me from taking all these Polaroid pictures and things. And then the middle child, a sister that I have, her name is Kim and she is an interior designer. So we're just a whole creative bubble.

Anthony Patterson ([00:23:01](#)):

And I remember my mom used to tell me that back in elementary school, she used to get calls from teachers who used to say, "Anthony is, he's drawing all over everything." And she was like, "Well, he's doing that at home too. Just give him some more paper. He'll be okay." And so I just had this itch to create, since a child. But I think the content of my work has grown from just creating to create to mean something more substantial to me through history and through the things that my grandfather has inspired and instilled in me.

Anthony Patterson ([00:23:42](#)):

He was a huge proponent of making sure that we have black history books on our shelves at home and just him being a living legend and being who he is and what he means to the Durham community, just him being alive still is a huge inspiration to me. A lot of people call him a civil rights hero. I look at him as just my grandfather. He does cool stuff, including being a civil rights hero. So he was on the forefront for-

Michael Betts II ([00:24:14](#)):

I like that.

Anthony Patterson ([00:24:15](#)):

Yeah, he was on the forefront for preserving our community, the Crest Street community here in Durham, which is only a few blocks away from Duke. But the land that sits over here has been around since 1863 and black people settled this land. We worked this land and it was a place that was home for us.

Anthony Patterson ([00:24:38](#)):

And as the neighborhood grew and got incorporated into the city, it just created this real family oriented neighborhood where everybody knew each other and there was a support system there. There was a church that, I believe, it's the second oldest Baptist church in Durham. There was a school in the neighborhood and there were clubs in the neighborhood. It was a real live community.

Anthony Patterson ([00:25:02](#)):

Now then you come to the '60s and the '70s during the urban renewal period and the Durham Freeway was threatening our livelihood. And so my grandfather, along with the pastor of the church at the time who was Reverend Reed, they joined forces together along with the rest of the community and fought to preserve the land that we have now and kind of redirect how the Durham Freeway would affect us as a whole.

Anthony Patterson ([00:25:28](#)):

So I'm forever grateful for that. And just looking at my community story as an inspiration, I've been able to look at larger issues outside of the city of Durham and just be able to approach topics like gentrification and red lining and being able to relate to those conversations with my personal connection.

Michael Betts II ([00:25:50](#)):

That's awesome. So basically, this work found you.

Anthony Patterson ([00:25:53](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Definitely. And I don't think I really started diving into history until I probably turned about 18 or 19 because the history was omnipresent. It was always there. I just didn't tap into it. Sometimes I would get haircuts with my granddad and people would be like, "Oh, your granddad is a good person." I'm like, "You should have heard what he told me before he got out the car." He's got some wild stories.

Anthony Patterson ([00:26:20](#)):

But the thing that I noticed when I went to college and then I started coming back home, I started seeing the neighborhood change. And so seeing all of these new people and then seeing the elders of the community say, "These young folks just, they don't know what we had to go through." And I said, "Well, maybe if they knew..." I'm like, "They're from a different side of town. They probably don't know what happened over here."

Anthony Patterson ([00:26:47](#)):

And so with me knowing it, I became more like a local historian and just chopping it up with the new folks and being able to let them know that we cherish this land that we live on. So let's do things a little differently. So yeah, the work definitely found me.

Michael Betts II ([00:27:03](#)):

Do you find that the things you make oscillate very much in part around? I know that the documentary that you did for your certificate at the Center for Documentary Studies... Yes, that's a shameless plug for the fact that you should be a certificate student at Center for Documentary Studies. Anyway, but I know the documentary that you did for the certificate at CDS was about the Crest Street process, specifically your grandfather. So do you find that the rest of your work kind of oscillates in that same space?

Anthony Patterson ([00:27:35](#)):

I think so. I think that a lot of the work that I do has the soul of that project. And it just breathe through other things. I've also did work about the Wilmington coup of 1898 and just the importance of telling history and retelling history and rediscovering it and approaching it from a different lens, I think is something that I put into other avenues in my work.

Anthony Patterson ([00:28:05](#)):

I just like being able to just tell these stories and remember what happened before me. Because I mean, I'm only 26 and I feel like I'm at least double that age, if not more, in soul. So I want my soul and all of that to just live through all of my work.

Michael Betts II ([00:28:26](#)):

So Brittany. I mean, you're also a Durham native.

Brittany Barbee ([00:28:30](#)):

Right.

Michael Betts II ([00:28:31](#)):

You're in the same thing where the work is finding you. Talk about it. You already told us a little bit about having to learn to make your own way, literally learning how to read music. So I would imagine that in that same vein you're taking this self-starter nature into this making that is calling you to it. Tell us about how you got there.

Brittany Barbee ([00:28:52](#)):

Yeah. So similar to Shay and Anthony, for me, I was always writing, always had a pen in my hand to just write, write, write. And as a child, I knew that I enjoyed writing, but I don't know if I reflected on what it actually did to me and for me. I just knew that I enjoyed writing, creating stories, getting stuff out of my head.

Brittany Barbee ([00:29:26](#)):

And as I'm getting older, my writing is getting more vulnerable. It's getting more intimate. It's telling some traumatic stories. It's telling some joyful stories. It's a different picture as I'm getting older. And honestly, I didn't see myself as an artist. Honestly, I did not see myself as an artist until about a couple of years ago when I became an emerging documentary artist.

Brittany Barbee ([00:29:54](#)):

Just being around people who just shared... Being around people who taught me how to look at art and how to look at my relationship with art and how to look at it differently and unlearn what it means to be an artist and what it means to create and produce work. So once I unlearned some things, I'm like, "Wait a minute. I mean, I have been doing this most of my life, so yeah, I am an artist. I am a writer."

Brittany Barbee ([00:30:27](#)):

And once I started acknowledging that, I definitely moved different. But my work is just speaking truth to your past and speaking truth to your past will help you liberate yourself and others. So that's the season that I've been in for myself. And that's so hard for me personally. That's hard for my family because we all... My family has a hard time keeping secrets. They love to keep secrets. Love to keep secrets. It could be something that the whole family, we need to know, why is it a secret?

Brittany Barbee ([00:31:06](#)):

I feel like as a family member, as an artist, it's my responsibility to shine some light on some things, whether it's going to hurt us or not, we just need to shine the light, pull the curtains back. And that way we can be our fullest self. So that's where I'm at with my work.

Michael Betts II ([00:31:28](#)):

Right. No, that's really interesting. I know that a lot of artists experience that, especially when you start to deep dig into your family's past. There's this propensity to kind of shy away from telling that story in that way. And I think in some regards, it's part of the reason why we've ended up with exploitation as a feature. If you've had access to cameras and writing instruments and whatever your entire life, you're like, "I don't want to tell that story because that's going to make Memaw mad. Like whatever. So I'm going to go tell this story across the street because I don't have anything to do with that."

Michael Betts II ([00:32:06](#)):

I think that's part of the reason that we've ended up with exploitative documentary storytelling as a feature. So I would imagine you are constantly in a state of negotiating what you're trying to do within your work, especially when you're talking with your family about that. What are some of the things that you are having to hold as you're working through like, "Okay, I'm going to put this on this page." What's your responsibility to your family when that happens?

Brittany Barbee ([00:32:35](#)):

So before I can even answer that question, I can definitely say that in regards to myself, I feel like I'm still trying to figure that out with myself. I struggle with censoring myself because I've been raised to keep things a secret and keep things covered. And yeah, I'm trying to unlearn that with myself honestly. I'll sit down and my intention is to write a creative piece about whatever and I'm just struggling to get what I want on the paper because of some unknown fear.

Michael Betts II ([00:33:18](#)):

Right, right, right.

Brittany Barbee ([00:33:20](#)):

So I'm still unlearning that and learning that. I'm working through that. Yeah.

Michael Betts II ([00:33:24](#)):

Yeah. That's fair. And I'll be honest with you. I think that all of you are doing work that is refining itself daily, heck, sometimes every hour. You'll be working on something and you'll be like, "Aha, I figured it out." A good 30 minutes, you'll be like, "Wait, wait, wait. Aha. I've figured it out." You're going to keep having that experience.

Michael Betts II ([00:33:47](#)):

To be honest with you, the most compelling and most engaging work is work, which is constantly renewing its definition. And so part of the reason I wanted to talk to all three of you is because I know you're constantly renewing the internal definition of the thing that you're making or the people you're interacting with or the why you came to this thing.

Michael Betts II ([00:34:11](#)):

When we think about something like constant renewal of definitions, we have to think about who's been allowed to define things and who's been included in what that definition is. And I think that it's a really great segue into the purpose of the Just Space committee and what we're trying to kind of get at with relation to Duke and Durham. We're trying to understand what anti-racism looks like in those communities.

Michael Betts II ([00:34:38](#)):

And so how do you define something like anti-racism. And so Anthony, do me a favor. Tell me from a personal and artistic point of view, how you define anti-racism? And how does that work that you make represent and define and live in this definition?

Anthony Patterson ([00:34:56](#)):

Yeah. I believe that anti-racism works in about two ways, at least. One, it's a radical form of resistance and that resistance is to the status quo and to how things have been in the past. And then for us as, as black people or as people of color, people affected by racism and systematic oppression, it's just being, like just leave us alone and just be. So it's a balance between both fighting and being still. There's peace and stillness.

Anthony Patterson ([00:35:33](#)):

And I hope to imagine and I strive to create things that analyze life without restrictions and just really look at what if. I always end up asking myself like, "What if this never happened? What would that be?" I found myself asking that question as I dove into the Wilmington work. For folks that didn't know, prior to 1898, Wilmington was the largest city in North Carolina and it was Black Wall Street before Tulsa.

Anthony Patterson ([00:36:02](#)):

It was that before Durham. Matter of fact, our Black Wall Street got popping in the 1898. So just look at how many things were going on before we even knew what that term meant. So this port city on the eastern side of North Carolina was popping and black people were owning businesses and controlling things.

Anthony Patterson ([00:36:26](#)):

The only person that was handing out loans in the city of Wilmington was a black man named Thomas C. Miller. So this is the kind of city that we're talking about. And then for a white supremacist to be jealous and have so much hatred in their hearts to see black people not only being the majority of the city or having businesses and restaurants, but now getting representation in government, that was the tip of the iceberg for them. They needed to go ahead and just clear everything out. So I wonder, what would have Wilmington been if not for the coup of 1898? So I constantly find myself asking that question.

Michael Betts II ([00:37:07](#)):

No, that's a very fair position. I think this is where we get into the black radical imagination, right? And in some ways, we think about people like Octavia Butler who gave us the ability to think like, "Well, let's speculate. Let's see. What does it look like? What is an Afro-futuristic imagining of Wilmington had, from that moment, the coup never happened. Would we all be living in Wilmington? Would we be seafarers? Would I like the beach, because I don't like the beach?"

Anthony Patterson ([00:37:47](#)):

Right. Especially going out there. It's a little weird out there. And what I discovered is that weirdness in the air, it was honestly just undealt with trauma. From looking at a lot of books about the coup, a lot of authors named this silence about that coup as the riot mentality.

Anthony Patterson ([00:38:10](#)):

Well, a lot of black folks ain't really talk about it and white folks wanted to focus on just building the economy, but how can you build the economy when the economy was built off of a slave economy, especially in the port city. I mean, one of the streets that leads right up to the Cape Fear River is called Market Street. Now what was on the market?

Anthony Patterson ([00:38:32](#)):

So that's something that I always look at and say, "Wow, people really wanted to redirect from this dark past into something that can kind of bring people in like, 'Oh, we got the beach by here. We got the river walk and all of this stuff.'" But, if you're walking down by that river and you hear these stories of what people would say or how people feel about that river, it would drastically change your perception of that city.

Anthony Patterson ([00:39:01](#)):

And I think the anti-racist work needs more of that reckoning. We have to deal with these things and we have to find solutions to be able to go back and fix things and to do it in a way that is very acceptable and that really helps out the people that were affected by these things. So that's how I'm implementing anti-racist work in there and also, just being myself fully in these spaces and trying not to over-complicate things.

Anthony Patterson ([00:39:35](#)):

I remember when I did have a show in Wilmington and a reporter came out just with their sound recorder already on and asked me all of these questions and I quickly shut her down because I'm like, "I'm trying to just absorb the moment and feel the spirit of the magnitude of the work that I was doing." I'm like, "Let me just absorb this right now. Don't talk to me right now."

Anthony Patterson ([00:40:00](#)):

And that is an act of anti-racist work. It's just resisting that pull to want to be seen and being treated as an object and then talk about this artwork as if it's just another object on the wall. So I'm constantly trying to find ways to where I can be myself, I can also feel the work that I'm making. Because most of the times, I'm making the work and I'm feeling it, but it's different when it's done or when it's being presented. So when I'm able to step back from the work and really absorb it, it just, it soaks in me.

Michael Betts II ([00:40:35](#)):

Right. Wow. Yep. Yep. Brittany, how do you define anti-racism artistically, personally?

Brittany Barbee ([00:40:45](#)):

Yeah, so I think, for me, I would definitely define it as acknowledging, one, that racism exists and then dismantling racism and white supremacy in the ways... Dismantling it generally, and in the ways that it show up in us. Yeah.

Brittany Barbee ([00:41:11](#)):

And artistically, I wrote a couple pieces a while back. Yeah. So I think anti-racism, I think it shows up in my work through my poetry. I wish I pulled it out before we started. [inaudible 00:41:32] I have a poem called Dirty White Forces. And it was about this white girl that I had saw rocking some dirty, white

Forces. I'm like, "Bro, come on, man. If you going to have on some white Forces, why they going to be dirty? Come on."

Anthony Patterson ([00:41:52](#)):

They going out sad.

Brittany Barbee ([00:41:57](#)):

Right.

Michael Betts II ([00:41:58](#)):

Y'all ain't never heard of no toothbrush?

Brittany Barbee ([00:42:03](#)):

Okay.

Michael Betts II ([00:42:03](#)):

A little water.

Anthony Patterson ([00:42:03](#)):

A little Dawn dish soap.

Brittany Barbee ([00:42:09](#)):

So that just gave me an idea. Right.

Michael Betts II ([00:42:09](#)):

Palmolive, if you please.

Brittany Barbee ([00:42:12](#)):

Yes. Within that piece, I was just writing about all of the dirty white forces that I, and other black and brown people, have to experience daily. And yeah, that was just a creative spin that I used.

Michael Betts II ([00:42:28](#)):

I mean, sometimes you have to have a vehicle and you got to have something that people can actively see and hold on to, especially in situations where you're having a conversation of things that have been abstracted intentionally to be unseen.

Brittany Barbee ([00:42:46](#)):

Right.

Michael Betts II ([00:42:48](#)):

And so I'm very curious, if you're writing about something that's like that, I feel like a lot of people could just look at you and say, "Well, why are you clowning her for those shoes," rather than, "Well, okay. The thing you're saying is actually deeper than that." I feel like folks could get hung up on the surface.

Brittany Barbee ([00:43:10](#)):

Right.

Michael Betts II ([00:43:11](#)):

How do you keep your audience from being skin deep? How do you get them to go deeper than that?

Brittany Barbee ([00:43:16](#)):

Well, I would say that if you're going to be stuck on her shoes, then most likely it wasn't for you in a sense. Because if you look like me and I tell you a white girl's rocking some dirty, white Forces, you're going to be like, "What? What?" You're going to be like, "What?" You're not going to be too focused on the fact that... If I present to you my actual creative piece, Dirty White Forces, you're not going to be stuck on the fact that she was wearing the dirty Forces.

Brittany Barbee ([00:43:55](#)):

You may be interested in connecting on, "Man, you experience these white dirty forces daily, just like me. We may connect on that level instead of being stuck on the white, dirty Forces. I feel like, yeah, if you can't move past that then it's not for you. If you know, you know. Yeah.

Michael Betts II ([00:44:17](#)):

Yeah. That's a very Toni Morrison approach to your writing. And so I appreciate that. Toni Morrison is quoted saying... When she was talking about Ralph Ellison's, the Invisible Man, she made the statement of, "Invisible to who?" Because that book is about a black man who is not being seen by his white peers. So invisible to who? I appreciate that. I think it's very easy, especially as makers, for folks to [inaudible 00:44:54] onto things that are the obvious things and you're like, "You are missing the meat and potatoes of this meal. You are over here trying to eat the napkin and I'm trying to give you the meat and potatoes of this meal."

Brittany Barbee ([00:45:06](#)):

Right.

Michael Betts II ([00:45:08](#)):

Well, okay.

Brittany Barbee ([00:45:09](#)):

Can I say one more thing?

Michael Betts II ([00:45:11](#)):

Please do. Please do.

Brittany Barbee ([00:45:11](#)):

Yeah, yeah. One thing that I've always really... I really enjoy learning and then sharing what I learn with people who may or may not have access to the same things that I learned and just spinning it in a different way that they would definitely understand.

Brittany Barbee ([00:45:29](#)):

So take my brother, for instance, he may not read some poetry, but if he come across a poem that says Dirty White Forces, just by the title, he may be more interested to read it. And therefore, we are connecting on a deeper level by him reading that poem and because... Yeah.

Michael Betts II ([00:45:48](#)):

Right. I'm sure he's also offended. That's why he read it. He was offended. "How you going to have dirty, white Forces?"

Brittany Barbee ([00:45:55](#)):

Exactly.

Michael Betts II ([00:45:55](#)):

Man, that draws him in, right? It's the hook. It's the hook.

Brittany Barbee ([00:46:00](#)):

Right, right.

Michael Betts II ([00:46:03](#)):

I love it. I love that. I think that that actually speaks to the experience. I mean, kind of what Anthony was talking about, there's a lot of undealt with trauma. And sometimes there's trauma surrounding the medium by which the ingestion needs to happen. So if reading was something that was forced on you, and it wasn't something that you were celebrated in, you're not going to just willfully choose to pick up a book even though that's something that we say, there are jokes about within the black community, if you need to hide money, stick it in your books.

Michael Betts II ([00:46:41](#)):

There are jokes about that because of the stereotypes of non-education and stuff like that, even though some of the most learned people ever have come from black and brown communities. But I think that you're almost choosing to turn that on its head. You're like, "I'm going to use an object that I know you know about, and I'm going to talk about it in a way that is denigrating to draw you in to pay attention to the other side of the conversation that I really want to have."

Brittany Barbee ([00:47:13](#)):

Right.

Michael Betts II ([00:47:16](#)):

So, yeah, that's fantastic. That's the play. When you are a maker, you get to play in space and see how quickly you can get folks to play along with you. Shay, how do you define anti-racism in your work and in your life?

Shay Hendricks ([00:47:38](#)):

Well, I think my existence in and of itself defines anti-racism because I am a being constantly and consistently learning and embracing my own fullness and racism and its purpose in history has tried to erase the fullness and possibility of me and the people that look like me.

Shay Hendricks ([00:48:07](#)):

So artistically, I'm communicating with the world about my own full [inaudible 00:48:14] experiences, which are better and worse because [inaudible 00:48:19] as a black experience simply because I am black. And this will hopefully color and texture not just the black experience but also history in a broader sense. With the work that I'm making, I'm hoping to keep up the work [inaudible 00:48:39] long line of black artists whose work has been about, documented by people as beings and not just things that could be dealt with and dismissed.

Michael Betts II ([00:48:51](#)):

No, that makes sense. That makes sense. And I know you kind of leaned on this a little bit earlier just with relation to the way that you're making your work. You're trying to be, I don't want to say counter-cultural. I think that you're just trying to be free. And freedom is perceived as counter-cultural because we live in constant oppression.

Shay Hendricks ([00:49:15](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Michael Betts II ([00:49:19](#)):

I've just been taking that away from some of the stuff you had said earlier. Is there a lens of liberation that you're constantly thinking about while you're making or do you just make and it happens to exude liberation?

Shay Hendricks ([00:49:39](#)):

I don't know. I think more than anything, subconsciously, I'm always weighed down by the fact that, or thinking of the fact that... I was just thinking about this this morning. Me and my peers, most of us come from parents who have had to survive and know little outside of that. So my goals are always speaking to this hope to one day be a people who don't have to think so much about surviving, but who are more concerned with living and that state of being.

Shay Hendricks ([00:50:35](#)):

So from me to my baby sister [inaudible 00:50:40] my other siblings who grew up like me and hasn't had it as easy or circling back to my mom and other people who I know who haven't had the opportunity to not worry about where the next meal is coming from or if we're going to be able to afford the place that we live in or just things like that. I'm trying the best that I can to open up spaces where the fuller meaning of life can be talked about and thought about and be realized as something that we're worthy of and that's a right and not a luxury because it's not a luxury.

Shay Hendricks ([00:51:39](#)):

I feel like if you're here, then [inaudible 00:51:41] purpose. I think there's too many of us who are here and feel like they have to question why. And I'm almost ashamed that I'm of a tribe of people who were born with the knowledge that to be here in and of itself should mean that you were meant to be here,

but then were stripped of that knowledge and have had to unlearn and relearn things that put that feeling back into place.

Shay Hendricks ([00:52:30](#)):

So our goal is to make people feel like and to reeducate people on the fact that being here is, I don't know, a right. It is something that's a given and it's something that should be acknowledged as being a given.

Michael Betts II ([00:53:01](#)):

Thank you. Thank you. That's a whole word.

Brittany Barbee ([00:53:02](#)):

Right.

Anthony Patterson ([00:53:03](#)):

Amen.

Michael Betts II ([00:53:03](#)):

That's a whole word. In a large part, you all three have kind of touched on this next question, but I don't know if anybody has anything they want to expand on. How do you define just space or spatial justice, artistically? Who's the work that you find yourself making these days hold space for? That's open to anybody who wants to go first?

Anthony Patterson ([00:53:30](#)):

I'll take it first. I think, for me, as being a creative that often exhibits in spaces where a lot of people don't really feel comfortable, for instance, like a gallery, how many times have we walked into a gallery, no matter if it's a normal local art gallery or a high priced museum and you saw people walking around with their hands behind their back or just kind of acting a little persnickety, right?

Anthony Patterson ([00:53:59](#)):

There's a certain expectation to be in this space and you're supposed to feel sophisticated because you're looking at these pieces of work. But then to me, when I look at the work and if it doesn't relate to anything that I might experience, particularly if it's in a really high priced museum, if I don't feel a certain connection to the work other than, "Oh, it's important to art history," then it makes me question a lot of things like what kind of art history and who made this and how much does it cost and why is it in here? And why does the walls all have to be white? And why does the floors have to be white? Why is this space so sterile? It reminds me of a hospital. And it's like, why am I in here? It doesn't really make any sense.

Anthony Patterson ([00:54:49](#)):

So how I approach a lot of the ways that I exist in spaces is the names of my shows and artworks are something that can be pretty relatable. Like, I did a show at the North Carolina School for Science and Math here in Durham. The name of the show was "Have You Heard". I remember the curator was like, "Why are you naming it that?" I was like, "Because that's how normal people speak." And I want people

that looks like me to be able to say, "Oh, I can go into this school that is designed for students that really love science and math, to be able to say, 'Oh, I can go in there and see some of my homie's work.'"

Anthony Patterson ([00:55:28](#)):

And so also with that is [inaudible 00:55:31] looking at the wall text. Again, being in museums and gallery spaces, you have wall text right beside the artwork. And nine times out of ten, that wording on there is going to be super professional to the point where you might not even really understand what is going on. It sounds like it came right out of a textbook rather than, to me, I show that I know what I'm talking about, but it's going to be very concise.

Anthony Patterson ([00:55:56](#)):

And so I blend language so that I don't lose people with language. I like to keep my statements pretty short when it comes to exhibition statements because you'll experience the fullness of the work when you're in the space. I just have to write something that'll get you in there. And it doesn't have to be super like, "Let's try to get you in here. We've got all this food and stuff." Not like I'm trying to promote something that's entertainment but just trying to get to the meat of it. You know what I'm saying?

Anthony Patterson ([00:56:24](#)):

It's like, imagine if you was eating some fried fish and you didn't know it had bones in it. Now, you choking and you need a little something to help you get that bone down a little bit. You know what I'm saying?

Michael Betts II ([00:56:35](#)):

Right.

Anthony Patterson ([00:56:35](#)):

You need a little assistance. So the way that I write my work is trying to make sure that we can get some assistance so that we can be able to comfortably be in these spaces as well as making sure that my work represents people that look like me, using skin tones that look like me, titling the work a certain way, doing programs that make sure that we're able to use art as a medium for larger discussions.

Anthony Patterson ([00:57:04](#)):

Because for me, sometimes I let the artwork stay second in order for the conversation I want to have to be first. And with that approach, I think that a lot of people want to come because artists that [inaudible 00:57:18] medium that you see it and you look at it aesthetically and it's aesthetically pleasing, and then we can go right into the work as a good transition and segue.

Michael Betts II ([00:57:29](#)):

All that makes sense. All that makes sense. I think, especially there's some similarities in kind of the statement of anti-racism that Brittany was talking about and how you're approaching the use of gallery space. How do I signal to you that this is a space for you? You don't have no desire to be here normally. How do I tell you without saying, "This is a space expressly for black and brown folks?" How do I say that to you without saying it to you?

Michael Betts II ([00:57:56](#)):

Because there's so much veiled language that we're constantly coming up against that signals to other folks that it's a space of prestige and it's a space of whatever that means that it's a space that is sans black and brown people or low-income folks or queer folks or whatever. There's a lot of that that exists. So the ability to kind of take that and turn it on its head and engage in the same way, yeah, I definitely see that.

Anthony Patterson ([00:58:23](#)):

Yeah, because the thing is, we know our own experiences and if you grew up around people that you want to be in your show, you know the kind of things that you would want if you weren't the artist in there. You would want to pull in the kind of things that we can look at as being almost inside jokes like what Brittany said, "If you know, you know." And it's a way to resist the polishing and professionalism that ends up being tokenism in the end just to have a black body in the space. So that's an act of resistance right there.

Shay Hendricks ([00:59:02](#)):

Comparison to other spaces that call themselves public, I want the spaces I create to actually feel welcome to the fuller versions of everyone. I think that a lot of spaces in society may say that they are welcome and they're public, but due to things like decorum and stuff like that, a lot of times that's just not true. Even within ourselves, we only, a lot of times, allow a specific version of ourselves to show up.

Shay Hendricks ([00:59:56](#)):

So my goal is to be a part of creating a world where checking in on people, doing everything within your capacity to make sure that people feel seen and heard is the new norm or the new tradition, rather than depending on whatever guidelines and unspoken rules that has been set to define or keep in check the people that you have in a space.

Shay Hendricks ([01:00:39](#)):

I think about that a lot just around this one unspoken rule we have about being quiet in specific spaces like galleries and things like that and the stereotype that black people get about being loud. I even had to, a lot of times, check myself about that, like looking at people differently for being loud. It's weird that that's even a thing.

Shay Hendricks ([01:01:11](#)):

I feel like more spaces need to exist where we just allow people to be and acknowledge the fact that, yes, we as a people want equality, but that doesn't mean that we want our differences to not be acknowledged. So there are different ways that we display excitement and interest and happiness. And so to set a specific rule on how an emotion should be displayed is not realistic and it's not humane, I don't think, because it's not giving a space to the full human range of emotion.

Shay Hendricks ([01:02:07](#)):

So sometimes and especially with my exhibits, [inaudible 01:02:14] I play music, sometimes I don't. I'm not strict about the level of noise in the gallery, even though my studio's [inaudible 01:02:28]. I don't really care. I notice that, by default, a lot of people, when they come into the space, they are quite, and I know that that is due to unspoken rules that have been made.

Shay Hendricks ([01:02:43](#)):

I don't know. That's something that I think about, like moving forward, how do I construct a space where people don't feel like they have to tip toe or feel like the space and what it has meant traditionally is too pristine for them to be in or to feel welcomed in.

Michael Betts II ([01:03:09](#)):

I was about to say, I do... Just as a quick follow up to your particular work, I do remember definitively when you did the walkthrough. I know that we're in COVID times, so my preference would have been to physically be in the room. But when I did do the walkthrough, you had music on and you were like, " It changes. It depends on the mood, kind of deal." What music are you putting into that room? Because even in gallery spaces where there is something playing, oftentimes it's the classics that you're listening to.

Michael Betts II ([01:03:39](#)):

When I say classics, I mean, old, white dead dudes who are playing piano or orchestration of strings of some nature [inaudible 01:03:49], Mozart, Beethoven, [inaudible 01:03:52], those kinds of folks. What are you listening to in your space?

Shay Hendricks ([01:03:55](#)):

In my space or the exhibit?

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

Well, really both, but let's do the exhibit first.

Shay Hendricks ([01:04:07](#)):

I think the last thing I played in the gallery was [inaudible 01:04:09] Control album. I think that's just something that [inaudible 01:04:14] when I came in that day. But yeah, [inaudible 01:04:22] gambit from a playlist I like that my little brother made. My little brother not by blood, but he my little brother. There's a playlist that Anthony made for his show that I played in there. Jay Rock Redemption album, I played in there. Kendrick, I played in there [inaudible 01:04:54].

Shay Hendricks ([01:04:54](#)):

A lot of [inaudible 01:05:04]. House music, a lot of house music, specifically [inaudible 01:05:08]. I've played some Black Milk instrumental albums. I try to play stuff without words just so the viewer isn't distracted too much like when they're trying to think about what the work means and to read the notes [inaudible 01:05:30]. So house music, for that reason, is my go-to.

Shay Hendricks ([01:05:35](#)):

Also, I just like house music. House music is native to Jersey and the culture there and that is [inaudible 01:05:44]. So I'm [inaudible 01:05:49] but yeah, lately, more personally, I've been listening to a lot of Jay Rock. I don't know why, but Redemption was just a really good album. I like it.

Michael Betts II ([01:06:04](#)):

I feel like that's an objective statement. All right. So I want to jump down for a hot second. I do want to talk about the relationship between Duke and Durham just given that you all three are residents and have basically... Almost all three of you are pretty close to native. I know Shay you're from New Jersey originally, but if you're comfortable answering this, in what ways have you experienced harm as a Durham resident from Duke University? I'm going to let everybody think for a second before I just start asking people. And I do want to be mindful of the clock. We got 20 minutes left.

Anthony Patterson ([01:07:13](#)):

I think I can answer that. When I first came into the Center for Documentary Studies, Courtney Reid-Eaton reminded me of something that I hadn't really thought about as much but since I've thought about a lot. And what she said is, she said, "What happened in your community, especially because the community sits so close to Duke West Campus, people are going to want to talk to you about your work and what you do and the history behind it. And it's on you to understand how much or how little you really want to share about that community as a protection of your community, because you grew up there and you know the people there, and it's a part of who you are."

Anthony Patterson ([01:08:07](#)):

So being able to navigate the stories or adjust the fitting on... just sitting on or depending really on what the situation is, is something that I've had to kind of figure out. I think the most recent form that I've had, and it's not necessarily specific to Duke, but it was kind of in conjunction with something that was semi-related.

Anthony Patterson ([01:08:44](#)):

So I was speaking to the city of Durham's equitable engagement team and they had knew that I was a part of Center for Doc Studies and they wanted me to dive into a lot of the history and asking me about how did I find these resources and everything. And one of the things that I did was I did tell them a little bit of history of like one of the structures in the neighborhood. But then I took that opportunity while there were maybe about 80, 90 people on this live Zoom call, to really address the discomfort that I had with having elders from around Durham talk about our communities and our stories.

Anthony Patterson ([01:09:26](#)):

Not all of them having something that can be proud of, but really just relinquishing and hashing out our trauma. I took that opportunity to really address the fact that you cannot fit our history within a 10 minute time block on an hour Zoom call. And I said that I hope that after this, y'all really make some connections to the people in the community and do something truly that would be equitable and not just use equity as a buzzword.

Anthony Patterson ([01:09:54](#)):

So that was probably a moment where I had to kind of look in and think, "Am I a part of something that is being performative or can I use this opportunity to really address what's going on and put them on the hot seat?" And I'm glad I did so because that has been aired on the local Durham TV network. And the people that have saw it has been people from my community. And they said, "You represent us well, and thank you for doing what you did, because I agree exactly 100% with what you said." And so that gives me confirmation and I'm proud to represent where I'm from.

Michael Betts II ([01:10:39](#)):

Anyone else.

Brittany Barbee ([01:10:44](#)):

I won't dig too deep. But the first thought that I had was, I'm from Durham and my relationship to Duke has always... I've always felt excluded from Duke. Even driving around their campus, it's just so private. It's really for, if you know, you know. If you don't know, you ain't supposed to know. And that's how it's always been.

Brittany Barbee ([01:11:20](#)):

Even as a child, we rarely went over to Duke's campus. Didn't feel like I was welcome to go over to Duke's campus. At least I didn't go to any events on Duke's campus. So yeah, I just felt like there was no genuine strong connection with Duke in Durham, at least the black Durham and Duke for me personally growing up.

Brittany Barbee ([01:11:49](#)):

Yeah. And then once I became an emerging documenting artist and I switched from being on the outside of Duke and started being on the inside of Duke, I mean, it just... I don't know. I felt that even more. It didn't change now that I was on the inside. I just felt it even worse being excluded.

Michael Betts II ([01:12:20](#)):

Normally, I would ask more probing questions, but I don't feel comfortable to do that. Unless you give me permission, I'm not going to. Okay. Shay, I'm going to give you a little bit of space. Again, don't feel obligated to say anything if you are not wanting to share.

Shay Hendricks ([01:12:37](#)):

I don't know. I never really had any relationship with Duke directly, so I guess that within itself, you could interpret that as being harmful. But I come from a background that disillusioned me of who I am in the world and specifically in this country very early. And it's a blessing and a curse because I feel like in comparison to my peers, I don't have a lot of shock or expectation around the ways in which white supremacy and whiteness function.

Shay Hendricks ([01:13:50](#)):

So yeah, I also don't hold any expectations or desires about the way that I want white people and their institutions to treat me. I spend a lot, had spent a lot of my life [inaudible 01:14:14] continue to spend a lot of my life avoiding those places and those spaces because I know they aren't for me. Yeah, I guess there's some harm in that, but [inaudible 01:14:27] it's more subconscious than anything because I constantly haven't been allowing and don't plan to allow those places and certain people to imprint onto me.

Michael Betts II ([01:14:51](#)):

Right.

Shay Hendricks ([01:14:52](#)):

And that's all [inaudible 01:14:52] and I've learned to be alert to have that [inaudible 01:14:56] from people like... The first person that comes to mind is my granddad, but yeah.

Michael Betts II ([01:15:03](#)):

That's actually a really good segue into kind of two questions. I'm going to run two questions together and give you an opportunity to answer both accordingly. As black Durham artists of different life experiences, nuanced backgrounds, gender identities, ages, and so much more, how do you find space for yourself to show up in your own work?

Michael Betts II ([01:15:26](#)):

And I know this may be in flux. I think that's one of the things that, as artists, you're always changing what that designation may look like. And then I guess the other thing is, thinking about that, often there's a move towards fetishization of black art. And I'm drawn specifically to the blaxploitation era when talking about much of this. I have found as a black artist myself, that until recently, much of black and brown art has been deemed not valuable white audiences unless it lives in the space of fantastic tragedy.

Michael Betts II ([01:15:59](#)):

What ways have you found your art being co-opted against you and then how do you kind of counteract that narrative? How do you push back against that and confront directly white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and gender norms, especially here in Durham? So I think that those two questions kind of go hand in hand.

Michael Betts II ([01:16:17](#)):

One is how you express yourself and then, in expressing yourself, how you have to push back so that you can allow your expression to be what you want your expression to be rather than what other people should perceive your expression to be or other people want to dictate your expression to be? I think that's a better way to phrase that. Brit, do you mind leading us off on that one?

Brittany Barbee ([01:16:43](#)):

I don't know if this answers your question, but this is what is swirling around in my head so I'm just going to say it. One of the things that I find liberating is driving in my car and listening to music at the loudest volume. And just being in that moment and enjoying it, I don't care who's pulling up to the left and to the right of me. I'm in that moment. This my music. This my car. Leave me alone.

Brittany Barbee ([01:17:13](#)):

And that's just my biggest, biggest joy and form of liberation. And like we were talking about anti-racism and pushing back with white supremacy, and yeah, so that's one of the ways that I show up and say, "I don't care and this is how I'm expressing myself and this is how I'm showing up in this moment."

Brittany Barbee ([01:17:45](#)):

But, yeah, this is a question that I definitely have to think about and dissect because I really... Even though I do a lot of reflecting, I really haven't spent a lot of time reflecting with my creative self, if that makes sense. I feel like in this season, I'm in a space of unlearning and learning who I am as a person. So, yeah. Thank you for the question. I'll definitely be thinking about it.

Michael Betts II ([01:18:20](#)):

Okay. I'm going to come back and ask you that question in a year. I'm going to ask you in a year.

Brittany Barbee ([01:18:27](#)):

Okay. Respect, respect, respect.

Michael Betts II ([01:18:29](#)):

One year. All right. Shay, what you got?

Shay Hendricks ([01:18:37](#)):

I feel like wherever there is a lack of form, I find myself in words. I find myself in music. I find myself in [inaudible 01:18:52] the atmosphere, so I don't really... I don't know. There's a lot of words being thrown around to describe things like gender and sexuality and race and stuff like that. I've never really felt like any of those things could ever really, truly define me.

Shay Hendricks ([01:19:13](#)):

Some of those words, I embrace. Some of those labels, I use and accept those words, many of them, being called them because I know that's how, as people, we're able to understand one another. Someone outside of me needs those words to understand [inaudible 01:19:40]. But I don't use those things to describe myself when I think of myself.

Shay Hendricks ([01:19:51](#)):

So in my work like this latest exhibit, was very word heavy and I was very heavy on technique and just the different things that I was trying, the way I put things together because doing things with my hands is a release for me and I feel like the way that I try to show you how I'm literally piecing things together. In my work, there's a lot of collage, and that's to say that a lot of times that's how I feel. I feel like I'm an amalgamation of so much. I feel like we all, as a people, are an amalgamation of so much, so I try to translate that as best as I can. And a lot of times, that shows up in different patchwork, right? Yeah.

Michael Betts II ([01:20:50](#)):

Different forms of patchwork. I like that.

Anthony Patterson ([01:20:55](#)):

I think my answer is a combination of both Brittany's and Shay's. I think how I show up for myself is I want, in a space, no matter if it is a space that I curate on my own or if it's out in the public, I want my presence and my hands to be felt. So Shay touched on like a playlist and the playlist that I believe Shay might've been referencing... Was it the AP Full Circle one, Shay?

Shay Hendricks ([01:21:30](#)):

Yeah.

Anthony Patterson ([01:21:32](#)):

That one, I took my time and literally wanted to make a story of vibes that take you through a journey between each song. It starts out with songs that address the issue. And by the time you get to the end, you feel better, you feel soulful, you feel much more... You feel like you have a hug around you, at least.

Anthony Patterson ([01:21:58](#)):

And for me, I just want my presence to be felt. You know what? I would say that it would be even art, how I dress. Matter of fact, I pulled up to a screening of a film that was associated with one of my shows in full-blown sweats and a chain, hair looking like it was dope, but I was myself.

Anthony Patterson ([01:22:29](#)):

I had my nice sneakers on. I wanted to feel myself. The first two years that I was doing shows, I would put on my loafers and all of that stuff. And now I'm like, "Uh-uh (negative). I'm pulling up in sweats. That's how I'm feeling." I might even pull up with my hair in two puff balls and paint something. And I might write some rap lyrics on the wall. So I want it to be evident that Anthony was there or as a lot of people call me, AP. I want people to be like, "Oh, that's some AP shit right there. I already know he did that."

Anthony Patterson ([01:23:01](#)):

So that's how I want to show up is so that if I ride by or if I walk by, I know that I did it as well as people that know me know that I did it as well, just unapologetically me, making sure that all of that essence is in there, all of it.

Michael Betts II ([01:23:18](#)):

And I love how, in a large part, you answered the second half of this question, because the way that you all are showing up is pushing back against being fetishized, is pushing back against being co-opted. Yeah. And Shay, you even said it yourself, there are words and labels that some I ascribe to, some I don't. It's just what it is. And I think that that's one of the things that is most telling of the momentum that we've kind of been getting at.

Michael Betts II ([01:23:53](#)):

And Shay, I think you got out a little bit pretty extensively yourself. How do we move ourselves from survival to living? How do we do that? And this is how it happens. It's the giving yourself the ability to drive with your music up as loud as you want and be like, "Bump y'all. This is my jam right now." It's showing up to your own show dressed how you want to be dressed, not dressed to meet and match an expectation of other people.

Michael Betts II ([01:24:26](#)):

And it's being able to realize that I get to be who I want to be. There's nobody who gets to tell me how [inaudible 01:24:34] shows up. I'm the one. So today I might feel like orange. Tomorrow, I might like green but sure, if you need a label, call it colors. That's what it is.

Anthony Patterson ([01:24:50](#)):

Thank you.

Michael Betts II ([01:24:57](#)):

Thank you so much for joining us for this episode of Space of Justice. If you like what you heard today, be sure to stop by sites.duke.edu/justspace for the recordings of this past year's Just Space Week, Duke University's conference centered entirely on the conversation of spatial justice.

Michael Betts II ([01:25:17](#)):

This transcript was exported on Apr 22, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

This year, Just Space was focused on anti-racism, equity and connecting Duke to Durham in meaningful and just collaborations. Head over to sites.duke.edu/justspace/conference to check out the recordings today. A special thanks to Brittany Barbee, Shay Hendricks and Anthony Patterson for talking us through being three black makers and sharing experiences between Duke and Durham to find out more and support today's guests work, please be sure to head over to www.aipatterson.com to catch Anthony and find Shay on the gram at ShayOnDisplay. That's S-H-A-Y OnDisplay.

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

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 pulled double duty this year, Kevin Erixson. Thank you so much.

Michael Betts II ([01:26:33](#)):

Also, a special thanks to Marcy Edenfield's crew for making sure our equipment specs are just right. Just based conference marketing is handled by the alumnus Sarah Neff. Sam Babb's keen eye keeps us all looking perfect and synchronized. Kathryn Lester-Bacon and Victoria Krebs ensure our online learning design is tight.

Michael Betts II ([01:26:52](#)):

As always, 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, [inaudible 01:27:09] is by [Lazana Debeté 01:27:10] and engineering and mix of today's episode is by yours truly.

Michael Betts II ([01:27:15](#)):

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