



The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

Announcer: Welcome to the Activist Files, the Center for Constitutional Rights podcast, where we feature the stories of activists, lawyers, and storytellers on the front lines fighting for justice and liberation. If you want to know more about the Center for Constitutional Rights and our work, visit our website at ccrjustice.org. You can sign up for our weekly newsletter, Frontlines of Justice, and we'll keep you up-to-date on important developments and exciting events near you or online. You can also make a donation to help us keep doing the vital work of supporting our partners, movements and communities. As always, don't forget to subscribe to the Activist Files and rate us on iTunes, Spotify, and SoundCloud. And now, here's the Activist Files podcast.

Sunyata Altenor: I want to welcome you, adrienne brown, to the Activist Files. It's really a pleasure to have you here.

adrienne maree brown: Thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here. I love CCR.

Sunyata Altenor: My name is Sunyata and I'm joined by Leah Todd from the Center for Constitutional Rights. Before we start, I wanted to read a brief excerpt from your new book, *Loving Corrections*, in the chapter, *Writing Solidarity*.

I felt like this excerpt really encompassed so much of not only your work, but the themes of this book in particular.

Free Palestine. The grief builds up when it spills over. It touches everyone. Can you imagine, upon hearing this news, that it is not one pain or the other, one grief or the other, one safety or the other, one wound winds through us all, gaping wide, festering, blooming.

Can you not imagine hearing this news with a wide enough heart for the grief of each parent, for the grief of each child? The land grieves too, the whole earth breaks on the shores of Gaza. We must imagine, before the fissure scars, we must all imagine freedom, if we want that future beyond all war.

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

If you can begin just by talking about what inspired you to write this book and why now?

adrienne maree brown: First of all, thank you for reading that. It's always beautiful to hear how it lands in another mouth. I've been writing this book over several years in essays that were being published in different places and what I noticed.

So I worked as a facilitator for a long time doing movement facilitation, which means, you know, groups would come together and my job was to help them find their way through, find their way from chaos to clear action steps, find their way to articulating shared vision and find their way through navigating conflict. And I would often get feedback that people are like, you're a really great facilitator.

And as I grew and was trying to understand what I was doing, I think this, this act of love and correction was really at the essence of what I was able to do in real time, in real life with people hearing that there were multiple points of view, multiple perspectives, hearing when someone had crossed a boundary or crossed a line and we were heading into conflict or disagreement that didn't feel principled and really being able to course correct.

Being able to step in and say, can we speak directly to the harm, directly to what's happening? Can we actually make the requests we need? So then I started writing these essays and they would come out. Usually I write from a place of heartbreak or a place of anger, you know, and I'm trying to process it into what's the world that I want.

So a lot of the first section of it is Ruminations. The second section is Murmurations. A lot of the ruminations are very direct. It's like dear white people, dear men, like, you know, really looking at groups who we now have entire frameworks for how to not have a toxic experience of your humanity.

So. Let's get into it and let's shift our practices. And I wanted to gather all of this in one place because it feels like it's all connected. You know, I really keep feeling like from the interpersonal to the inter community, to the international, to the way we're relating to the earth, it's all the same practice.

We keep wounding without repairing, wounding without repairing, and then letting those wounds become our identities. And my hope is that this has a little something for everyone. And some of it might be very 101, you know, like for people who are like, I'm an anti racist expert. I'm like, okay, "dear white people" is going to be like, girl. Yes. Okay. Like, got it. But I want to, I wanted to have something that people could be like, I'm going to hand this to someone in my life who isn't yet at that 101 place or where whenever we try to talk about this stuff it blows up. And I wanted to give people like, here's something to read together.

Pull together and be in a conversation around and and I wanted to also pull it in as a, I was like, if you see a lot of different examples of it, then you can start to pull out a practice for yourself because it's really not a tone thing. Right? It's not like I'm correcting you nicely. You know, like, it's not about that.

It's about I'm staying connected to your humanity. While we disagree, and while I tell you something that feels, it doesn't feel like an opinion anymore, you know, so that that also felt

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

important to me that I'm like, most of the things in here are places where I feel like humanity has reached a level of collective consciousness around something.

And even if politics want to move us backwards I keep saying that's just a retrograde move, you know, to make it appear that we can move backwards, but actually, we're still moving forward. Tarana Burke has said: So much of the backlash or the, you know, trying to pull us back is because we're winning.

It's because we're changing culture. It's because we're actually liberating people's identities and liberating people's sense of self. I love that and to me this is a book that's like don't go backwards. Like move from here forward. But let this be a starting place and like let's keep growing.

Leah Todd: Thank you so much for that. And I'm, I'm interested in how this kind of book and, and this model that you've been using for so long is, is kind of building on things you've spoken about before, building on this idea of like, it's sort of like the, before we get to, to this cancel culture that we're kind of working against. I say “cancel culture—”

adrienne maree brown: It's a word that's used a lot without full understanding.

Leah Todd: But yeah, I'm just kind of interested in how you kind of place it in the moment, it being in relationship, it being kind of a way to avoid getting to like these more extreme moments of responding to issues as they build and just kind of wanted to hear more about, you know, how you think of using this in that way.

adrienne maree brown: Yeah, I mean, one of my favorite authors is Octavia E. Butler, and she wrote this series, the Patternmaster series. And one of the things I love about it is she wrote it backwards. She wrote the Patternmaster first, and then she was like, well, what would have to happen to get that?

And what would have to happen to get to that? I feel like that's a little bit of how this book came together, because I think I've been writing about, you know, the deepest conflict I've been writing about, like, how do we handle it when we have really broken each other's heart? So we've really caused each other egregious harm that we can't go back from.

And I had this little text called We Will Not Cancel Us that came out a few years ago. And a lot of the thinking, and that was, we're not going to be able and I think it's really important for us to understand that we can't just throw each other away and divide and divide and divide and get smaller and smaller and contend for power and get into right relationship with the earth like there's no way to keep disposing of each other and thinking that we're going to grow movement and grow a future that we can all belong to.

So, for me, I was like, how do we avoid even getting to that stage of conflict or that stage of harm? Like, what are the interventions we can make before we need mediation before we've landed ourselves in a really big pickle, and loving corrections felt like the move. Like, I'm like, Oh!

What I kept seeing happen as a facilitator was something would happen in a room and everyone would give each other the look. Right? Like he did it again. He did the thing, he interrupted her or

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

whatever. And everyone's looking at each other and then they would pull me aside in the hallway, right?

Break time. "I just really don't like the way like dah, dah, dah, dah, dah..."

And just want to tell me about it. Talk to each other about it. We're really good at gossiping. We're really good at developing a shared assessment about somebody, but not actually telling that person, not actually intervening in real time and saying, hold on, pause. That just was really harmful or that just was actually out of alignment with the values that we all say that we're practicing in this movement or in this space, or do we need to articulate values?

Cause sometimes that's also what's happening is someone saying something because they're like, I'm assuming this is an okay thing to say. That's one thing I have found about most people who say harmful, stupid things, like things that I find harmful and stupid as I'm like, that person does not think they're saying a harmful, stupid thing.

That person thinks that they're saying something really valid, something that is part of the culture. Okay. And what we're trying to do is recognize and shift culture. So we're like, oh, what you're saying feels antiquated to me. It actually feels harmful to me. It denies my humanity. And I can actually say that, I can get specific about it.

And I can say that in a way that's like, and I know you don't want to do that. I know that that's not the essence of your soul. That's not the essence of your heart. And relationship is also a big, big part of this, right? That for me, and that's where it's also backwards, you know, I started out writing this book, Emergent Strategy, and so much of it is about getting in right relationship to change and how being in relationship with other humans is about how we navigate change together, because we're both changing in a world that is constantly changing in family and community formations that are constantly changing.

This is also about that, right? Loving Corrections is like, okay, we're in a culture. Okay. Like, all of us were born into a culture where white supremacy is the law of the land, and we're shifting it, right? We're in a culture where patriarchy is the law of the land, and we're changing that. So, for me, this book was like, okay, let me get more precise and specific about this, the things that I want folks to be changing with me.

And in this moment, I'm so excited that this book ended up coming out this year. It wasn't exactly planned to be like, this is going to come out a couple of months before this high stakes election and at this moment in genocide and at this moment in climate catastrophe, there's so much happening right now that I want to be able to speak about.

And so I'm really grateful that the book is out now because yeah, all the conversations, it's like, everyone's really hungry to figure out like, how do we do this differently? How do we change together towards a world that we would want to be a part of and create a compelling future?

So the book is like, here's some ways, I don't know for sure the how, but I, I know that these things will help us get further than, than, than just shutting each other down, cutting each other off, trying to dispose of each other, shaming each other publicly.

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

There's other things that work better than that.

Leah Todd: Thank you so much. And I always appreciate that you're giving us the tools, not just the thinking, but the tools. And I, I really—

adrienne maree brown: I'm a Virgo. I'm like, here is the how.

Leah Todd: Gotta, gotta do that. Gotta get it done. I think we don't always get to the tools. And I think that's what people are craving. So I'm, it's, what a gift to give that to us.

I'm thinking because you mentioned Emergent Strategy, you mentioned Octavia Butler — we love Octavia's Brood — and just kind of thinking about some, you know, I know this is your earlier work, but I think it kind of informs a lot, informs a lot of my thinking and I'm kind of curious.

I know that you're also a fiction writer. So I'm just interested in how are you using fiction as you move into this book to envision the systematic changes and help build those tools, because I think, you know, we're all very grateful for, for those previous gifts and, and for, you know, ancestors like Octavia Butler who have given us that.

adrienne maree brown: Yeah, I mean, Octavia has always been such an inspiration to me because she's so pragmatic and she was like, here's how you pack the actual bag. Here's what you actually need to study. Here's how you would actually have that bite. Here's a, you know, like, here's how it would look if you were trying to form a community that was growing its own food.

Here's how long it would take to be able to do that. Like, so practical. Like, she really was like, "imagine yourself in this scenario." You can tell what could happen and people always called her prophetic, but she's like, I'm just drawing the necessary conclusion from the data that I have and the life that I'm living.

And I feel very much like that's how I'm approaching my fiction as well. It's like, I just have been turning in the final edits on the Grievors trilogy. So I wrote this trilogy that's based in Detroit, and it was sort of my first long form fiction writing to be able to play out "well, what would it look like?"

Now when I started writing this in 2011, it was about Black grief, and it was about what would happen if Black grief became so palpable that people could no longer function. And I was living in Detroit where, on a regular basis, something that we loved would be taken away, a building that we loved, a structure, an area, a neighborhood, something would be taken away with no process, no healing, no way to change that scenario or someone that we loved was dying.

And everyone in the books is based on someone that I lost during the time that I lived there. And so I wanted to write a world in which those people got to live and those places got to live and Detroit got to live and it got to resist gentrification and it got to resist the samification of America, right? Where every city is slowly being made into the exact same place.

And I was just like, no, Detroit is funky. It's different. It's gritty. It's, it's, there's something so beautiful and free and wild about this city and I want to protect it. So the book, that space gave me room to be like, okay, what would the utopia be? And how would you make that? And then I had to really reckon with, well, I don't believe in utopia.

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

Utopia usually necessitates a dystopia. So how do I solve the problem of utopia? And I think that that's, for me, one of the most political stances I can take as a fiction writer is to say, how do I push against, or how do I reckon with utopia? Because I think the problems we're in, in this world, right now are because there are some people, a small elite, who want to live in a utopia, no matter the cost. And no matter how many people have to die, no matter how many people have to suffer in order to experience their privilege and their access and their abundance. It's tempting, you know, capitalism makes it so that you have just enough to think you could have a little bit more and that that little bit more would make you better than others.

You know, I just took a flight and I got bumped up to first class and I was like, this is a thing. This is a whole vibe. It's a whole energy, right? When you move across this little curtain on the plane and your seat is two inches bigger, all of a sudden you're like, you know, and I'm like, wow, that, it happens so fast.

How do we resist that? And it's not just by everyone sitting in the back. This is one of my dreams that I want to seed into the world, is that all first classes should be redesigned so that those seats are given to people with access needs and people who are fat. I just feel like the first class should be the fat class.

And it should just be like, that's who gets to sit in the big seats. Anyway, another podcast, another time, but that's how I've been using my fiction, right. It's really like, what are the new problems that would exist if I was able to solve the problems that we're sitting in now, and then how can I be pragmatic?

So I had to learn a lot. I was like, well, how do you jam and what is the, what, what does grow in Detroit at what times of year for what kinds of harvest and like, how do aquaponics work if a community was trying to survive? And, and, you know, like I was, yeah, and then I, I took an ayahuasca journey in February of this year that really influenced how I wrote the third book of the trilogy, because I was like, oh, like, if people have read it, the second book has this massive magical vine system that comes up to protect the city. And then I did this ayahuasca journey and it's this magic vine. And I was like, oh, interesting. What if we partner with plants a little bit more and plant medicines a little bit more. So I think it's fine.

I think it's interesting. When I feel hopeless, writing fiction gives me some room to return to the part of me that is fundamentally hopeful, fundamentally optimistic about life moving towards life.

Sunyata Altenor: I wanted to pivot to talk a little bit about relationships and practice. So this is one of the things that I think so many of us admire about your work is that when you illuminate and envision the dismantling of these oppressive systems, it is always through the lens of, through each other and with each other, not for and by the system alone.

So the fight and patriarchy is growing and yet, the human need to be in a relationship. And in this instance, I want to talk about romantic relationship — it still remains. Of course, right?

adrienne maree brown: Yeah, those exist.

Sunyata Altenor: It's a thing we love to love.

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

adrienne maree brown: Oh, hold on, we love it.

Sunyata Altenor: It's a thing. For men and masculine-identified people who've benefited from the vestiges of patriarchy, a new opportunity has arisen for us to be and do better in romantic partnerships.

And so in the chapter Relinquishing the Patriarchy, you specifically address men and those who participate in masculinity on many issues. Especially the real emotional, social and personal effects of unseen labor. And one piece that stood out to me was the application of a list of specific tools that can help us to relinquish our own internal patriarchal programming.

Can you talk about that? What some of those steps are and how our communities and relationships may stand to benefit from some of those practices and also what series of conversations and experiences led you to develop those.

adrienne maree brown: Well, I love this one there. It's it's actually one of my favorite pieces that I've gotten to write because I was like, oh, I'm surrounded by women who are in hetero relationships and having children with men, men who I love, men who I see as family, brothers, men who I care about, who are going through a crisis, a middle age crisis, whatever you want to call it, but between the 30s and 50s is usually when I'm seeing it happen, where what they were trained to be, the kind of men that they were still trained to be, were, were in this transitional generation. So it's like men and boys were still trained. Like you're going to be the head of a household. You're going to be an alpha man. You're going to be the boss of something.

You're going to, you're going to be the most important person in a room. Like that's what I'm developing you to be. And to do that, you're not going to cry. You are going to expect other people to do a lot of the things around you. And here's just the expectation. And then even the men who are like, "Okay, but then I came across feminism in college or whatever, and I'm pretty down," but under pressure, that older training comes up to the surface. And so what I kept seeing happen was under pressure where suddenly their wives were outearning them or taken more seriously or given more professional respect or you know, even in the power dynamics of parenting, where the ones who were like, I have a much clearer stance on how I want to do this aspect of parenting, I don't want to just leave it up to your opinion or what you heard on a podcast, like I actually read 14 books about it or whatever, those kinds of things happen, right?

And what I kept seeing was the women in my life being like, even though I made these agreements, and even though we had all these conversations, this person is still defaulting to toxic masculinity under pressure. And what I wanted to do is shine a light on it as an auntie, sister, you know, as a friend, right?

I get to witness this really up close and personal and see it. And at the time I was mostly dating women. So I had a real feeling of like, I'm so sorry for y'all. Like, let me just, let me gather these men together because you know, it doesn't affect me at all, but like, dang, you know, and then I, you know, I've dated more men since then.

And it's been such a, I'm so grateful. I wrote this piece because it's actually been really helpful for me, even in navigating. And one of the things I want to say is that as women have come more into

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

our power, as feminism has really taken root in our systems, we have to be so careful not to have patriarchy and toxic masculinity be the ways that we're practicing power, right?

That we're like, oh, now we're equal. So we're equally going to be toxic masculinity instead of equally being something else, which for me, I'm like, the thing I want to invite people to always is let's be equal in humanity. Humanity has the full range of emotion, the full range of power dynamics, the full range of communication skills, like let's be human together.

And, I've had to really be careful in my own life as my visibility has risen, because basically what happens as you become more successful is you step into a lot of the trappings of manhood and masculinity, which is, oh, now I'm expected to be meaner to people. Now I'm expected to pay less attention to those who are in service of me or helping me in some way.

They're just supposed to do it for me. And I've had to check that in myself and be like, wait a second, like I'm still adrienne. I still deeply want to connect and care about all the people who are working with and for me. I want to make sure their labor is visible to me. I want to make sure I'm not micromanaging people.

I want to make sure that if someone comes and says, hey, you made me feel invisible or you caused me some harm that I'm able to really hear that across the power dynamics. And one of the biggest things now that I'll say is, it's helping people see what they can't see. Like a lot of what a lot of these pieces are, it's like, let me help you see something that you're not seeing.

I think that's one of the most loving things we can do for people, whether it's like there's spinach in your teeth or there's a way that you're showing up in our relationship that I'm in my head judging you, or I'm in my head being hurt by you, or I'm in my head trying to figure out how to survive you.

Like the number of women I talked to, I was like, have you told him? Have you talked to him about this and feeling like there's no way to tell him, there's not, I don't know, how I'm like, oh, okay. Let me just tell them all. Let me tell them all. And, you know, not every man obviously is going to read my book, but for the men who do read the book, I hope that it creates a little spaciousness for them to be in practice differently.

And this essay came out in a blog years before this book. And I've had a lot of people reach back out to me with groups of men who are meeting and working with each other and practicing with each other to show up differently, that always excites me because I'm like being willing to sit with your own crew and really get honest about what are we up to here and what do we want to be up to here?

And like, can we listen to a Black feminist tell us something and like, see what we can do to adapt? Because I really do love men. You know, I really do love them. I love the soft tenderness that I see in so many of the men in my life, I love watching men become vulnerable. Last night I got to do a book event with Matt McGorry and he's an activist who I love, but he's like really vulnerable.

He was talking about having long COVID and just how it's changed his life. His mom was on the call and I was just like, all I want to do is say thank you to his mom. Cause I'm like, thank you for protecting his softness. To me, so much of this essay is like, I want to protect your softness and

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

your humanity. This rigidity and this domination are not getting you any closer to the miracle of your own life, you know? So liberation strategies.

Sunyata Altenor: I hear that. There's some really beautiful through lines in what you just said, and some of the themes that came up in your chapter, Writing Ego. So you mentioned your ayahuasca experience.

And so again, tapping into nature to experience and gain knowledge from plant medicine, groups of men using some of your work to have deeper conversations and them being connected to each other and distantly even connected to you. So in that particular chapter in Writing Ego, you write about lessons from nature, right?

And how humans can reflect equity, justice, abundance and resilience, mostly using the example of mushrooms.

adrienne maree brown: I love mushrooms.

Sunyata Altenor: And interestingly, one of the key tools, right, of imperialism and colonialism is the restriction and separation of people from their own lands and access to natural resources. And in some cases to nature overall. Can you expound on the opportunities we have to learn from nature, especially in our very mostly modern technology-focused world?

adrienne maree brown: Yes. Well, one of my favorite things, my friend misha cárdenas reminded me years ago that humans are nature and that everything we're building is also nature.

Our homes, our structures, our streets, all of it is nature. So that helped me because I was like, oh, no matter where I am, no matter, even if I'm in a cubicle in a box with this headphone on or whatever, I'm still a human. In my anthill, right? I'm still a part of this natural system and all the materials around me have been manipulated from this natural world into something, right?

There's not anything that's actually outside of nature. So that, first of all, always helps me. The second is wherever I am, there's a piece of land near me that needs some love. There's a tree near me that needs some love. There's something near me that actually could use my attention and will give back to me.

So Prentis Hemphill always says that to me, like, go sit outside with a tree. Go sit outside, find an animal, sit outside. And literally put your back on the tree. Put your butt on the ground. Put your feet on the ground. And for a long time, I think I would hear that and be like, yeah, sure.

Theoretically, like, oh, you know, outside but cute, right? And then I started to do it. Like, I was like, oh. No, it really does feel, your day feels fundamentally different if you put your feet barefoot on some dirt or on some grass and your life begins to change if you have a piece of land that you're stewarding or taking care of in some way that you're like, oh, I've got to harvest something here.

Or, I've got to take care of this in some way. I've got a bird feeder right now in the backyard. And so I've got birds and squirrels and these ducks are coming around. There's a heron back there. There was a little thing that I think was a beaver. Anyway, it's like, I'll be watching, it's like a whole

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

ecosystem is built up around this bird feeder because the birds come and they eat and then they drop all this stuff to the ground and everybody else comes and eats.

And it's really fascinating to me to be like, oh, everything moves in a cycle. Everything has power dynamics. Everyone's not just getting along with each other. Nature is actually very communicative. When the birds show up and they're just like, you need to get out of the way. I'm hungry now. You had enough.

They're just, they're not having a big, long debate about it. It's just like, girl, I'm going to push you off the thing. So, I love all that because it just reminds me like nature is doing all the things, inside of that we can select which thing we want to focus on. So, focusing on mushrooms for me has been a way to bring nature inside myself.

And taking mushrooms, doing mushrooms, being on mushroom journeys, has been so healing for me because it feels like literally bringing something from nature that is designed to remove toxins, taking that into myself. And I just feel myself like literally moving the toxins through my system and out of my system.

And by toxins, I mean, old ideas, old thinking, old traumas. Every time I do a journey, I'm like, oh, here's something that happened when I was three and I'm ready to let that go. Here's something that happened when I was 15 and I'm ready to move it through. And I got the wisdom and, oh my gosh, I learned so much.

And also when you take a mushroom journey, one of the fastest things that comes is, oh, it's everything is connected. That's what almost all plant medicine is saying at the end of the day is it's all connected and you're going to feel the profundity of that connection, like every single direction that you can turn there's something that is connected to you and you are connected to it and you can't actually opt out of it.

The idea that you're an individual? That's the greatest myth of our species. That all of us are individuals moving through this. We are having our unique experiences, but even those experiences are experiences of connection, right? So I love all those things about mushrooms and then I also love the aspect of mycelium in mushrooms, which I just have to talk about briefly in this moment because we struggle when something has to be underground.

We are like, we only like stuff that's like above ground, shiny, getting attention, like boom. So mushrooms are the above ground part, right?

That's the fruit, but mycelium is all the threading, all the network underground that is actually connecting and communicating everything. If you go into like a forest, you can actually turn back the soil and you can see the mycelium just like, and I love that idea because it makes me, again, Octavia Butler had this idea of the pattern.

I think of this all the time. I was like, oh, like, how can we visualize how interconnected we actually all are and that there are things that need to happen out of sight so that things that we want to happen in sight can actually grow. And right now we're in one of those moments, like we might have to be underground more, we might have to be whispering, threading it between us.

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

Right? Instead of being bright and shiny and on the news. I think about this often that I'm like, is it still safe for me to speak up? Is it still safe for me to speak up? And do I have a mycelium nature that is fully developed so that I will be comfortable if I need to be out of a spotlight and do my work in other ways?

Right? I think all of us need to have an idea that social media is not promised to us. Having these platforms is not promised to us. That cannot be the way that we're doing the majority of our work on this earth. We have to have other ways and I'm constantly working to make sure that I'm developing skills that are offline skills.

So those are some of the ways I feel like mushrooms have taught me and changed my life. And I really do encourage people to find someone who will guide you in a good plant medicine journey. You don't have to do it alone. And I wouldn't say to do it while you're depressed or by yourself. That's always my guidance as someone who really wants to reduce harm.

Because it is powerful medicine, but with someone who can help you and help say like, oh, that's your shadow. Say, hi shadow. You know, I've done that with I, when I guide people, I'm like, when your shadow comes, you want to say hi, because that's a part of you and you want to get to know it. Imagine if our whole country was in touch with its shadow side and in a healthy way, it was actually looking to repair the wounds in a healthy way.

Yeah, I love that idea.

Sunyata Altenor: I love how we ended up at liberation and psychedelics.

adrienne maree brown: Yes. I mean, listen, this is like one of my zones. And I also feel like I'm excited to see more people talking openly about these things. So I feel like that's also how we shift culture. Tanya Mosley just did a really beautiful episode, in season, I think it's the season before this last one, season five of Truth Be Told is all about psychedelics and particularly like Black and brown people experimenting with psychedelics and what they're learning on those journeys.

So I want to shout that resource out.

Leah Todd: Thank you so much for that. I really appreciate your framing of nature as this thing where there's abundance and community care. And like that, that is what nature shows us because I think people manipulate the idea of nature and only bring it up to say, oh, you know, this is human nature and it's really about competition and dog eat dog.

And it's like, no, that's capitalism. That's not nature. We actually have all these models of, you know, whether it's mycelium, or I always think about like the aspen trees, right? Where they're these whole forests.

adrienne maree brown: Just holding each other.

Yeah. And like moving resources around where it's needed to like hold the whole forest.

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

So, you know, I think we have so many beautiful models like that. I really appreciate you talking about the underground and meeting your own capacity too. It's just reminding us constantly of this abundance and meeting needs. And it also makes me think about Pleasure Activism, right?

Where it's like, what gives us pleasure, but just so that we have enough so that we have what we need. So just kind of wanted to invite you to kind of talk a little bit more as we think about liberation, how do we reframe to abundance and how is that part of correction too?

adrienne maree brown: Well, I had, in Pleasure Activism, I had this whole piece on excess versus abundance, a little piece on it, which matters so much to me because the most miserable people I have met in my life are all the wealthiest people that I have ever met. And I've met a lot of really wealthy people, like people who have some serious resources.

And I really got curious about that. I'm like, why? You know, everyone wants what you have, and we're all told that we want what you have. But you're miserable. You don't feel connected to yourself. You don't trust anyone around you. Like what's happening? And that helped me develop my politic around capitalism and around excess that I was like, oh, when you have too much or an overwhelming amount, like, you, you actually are constantly then defending it.

Right? The more you have, the more you're constantly like, someone's trying to take it from me. It's it's, that's also baked into how capitalism works is if you actually have more than you're supposed to have a rebalancing is constantly necessary. So, it's not like you're making it up that people are trying to take it from you.

It's like you're actually sensing into the fact that redistribution is necessary, but you're receiving that as something to be defensive around. And so that shows up as not trusting. And then there's all just messed up family dynamics that happen in those spaces. So I was really excited when I clicked into that, but I was like, oh, my goal, I don't want to be wealthy.

I really want to lean into the abundance that is of nature and that there is enough for me and that I will be able to find enough in my lifetime that I'll be able to secure enough. And there'll be, in relationship to others. Being around people who grow food really also kind of brought this peace into my system that I was like, oh, if you tend to a garden, you're going to have more than you can eat.

That's how our Earth is designed. It's like, oh, you put that seed in the ground and like right now I live in Durham, North Carolina, and it's such a beautiful thing in the summer because every time anyone comes to my house they're like here's all the extra tomatoes I got, here's a bunch of tons of peaches and here's a huge bag of okra, I mean like tons, you know, I'm like, okay I have to figure out new recipes and new ways to preserve this so that I don't waste it, there's literally so much. So if you hold that in one hand, and then the fact that we have so many people who are hungry and houseless and don't have enough in the other, then you can start to play with what happened, like, where did we lose our way as a species?

And how do we get back into right relationship? And when I say right relationship, it really is a relationship where it feels there's fairness, there's dignity, there's safety, and there's belonging. There's a real sense of like, justice is possible. We don't have that right now in the U.S., we don't experience that most of the time.

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

It feels like justice is out of reach. And even that we're idealistic or silly for wanting it. Part of what I'm saying is no, it's actually the way our world is designed. It's designed to feed us and give us enough. The people who are hoarding the wealth of the Earth are bad for the Earth, and we have to figure out how to detoxify that, right?

I think that there's some really brilliant moves that will happen over the next 20, 30 years. I'm really curious about, I'm excited about an economy that caps what people can earn as individuals and puts any excess back into the communal, communal pot or the collective pot that nourishes all the people.

I'm curious about cooperative economics. I'm curious about experiments in socialism. I'm curious about how we reorient, you know there's a beautiful organization called Movement Generation, and they talk about the management of home. That really, economy just means the management of home. And I think about that a lot.

And I'm like, what would it look like if we all felt co-responsible for the management of home? And it was like, oh, we have abundance and we're all sharing the responsibility for how it gets distributed to each other. I think that's a very different way to live than there's not enough. And I have to fight everyone to get my part of it and then go live behind a fence and be miserable and depressed. That's not what we're supposed to do. I do love boundaries. I do love having my own space. I think there's a balance of a room of one's own, but not a mansion of one's own. You know, hot tubs, but shared hot tubs.

Sunyata Altenor: Thank you so much. To close, I want to read one small excerpt also from the chapter Writing Solidarity and just ask you one final, final question about your vision, your art, your passion, and our, and our collective work. So this is an excerpt from Loving Corrections, The Border is the Wound.

Here is how I practice. In war, I keep the dead unsegregated. Dreaming together their spirits, who know what flesh cannot. I shake off monoliths. I ask, right now, who are the prisoners, and who are their guards? I do not let those at peace with oppression tell me I am heartless. I do not perform my grief. I weep freely at the altar.

I pray up their names. I critique abroad what I critique at home. I know every aspect of my freedom is unexpected here, still precarious. I see all the humanity, the mistakes, the narrow, sharp lives left in the wake of trauma. I know my country well. We always think our motives invisible. We are always naked.

In my hands are thousands of rivers, pain, confusion, misinformation, fury. But the eyes of those children watch me. I start at the freshest cut as the earth whispers, the border is the wound.

And so to close, adrienne, I'd really love to hear how would you like the words and your contribution to this network of fighting for liberation and justice to impact the world? And how do you see the very important work that we are all doing, changing the ecosystem of what it means to be human?

adrienne maree brown: Nothing small in that question. Thank you again for the reading. Those poems are so tender. They were written, like, October of last year, you know? There's a line in

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

there, "the eyes of those children watch me," and it's one of the things that I think has always been true for me is that when I see people suffering, I always feel like they can see me too.

Even if I'm looking through my TV or I'm hearing about it, I'm reading about it, there's a way that I always feel like I can visualize and I can feel the connection that we actually have. And that's one of the things I want for the whole world. I feel like so much healing would happen if people were like, oh, I am connected to the harm that happens in the world.

Just like I'm connected to the beauty that happens in the world. I'm connected to the good. One of my mentors was Grace Lee Boggs who was based in Detroit and part of the Black labor movement. She fell in love with Jimmy Boggs and they did a bunch of thinking and writing together.

But she talked about that idea of communities taking responsibility. And like, what does it mean to take responsibility for the world around you, the people around you? Within capacity, right, but to take responsibility. I think all of my work is an invitation to be able to find something to take responsibility for.

And to move into action around that thing. I see so many people paralyzed in the stance of critique. So just being able to look and say, here's what's wrong. Here's what's wrong. Here's what's wrong. And the more you say it, the more still you get, the more you're just like, it's all wrong. You know, and I, I get that.

Sometimes I look at if I bring my attention up and out, I'm just like, it's all wrong. There's so much that's overwhelming. Part of the responsibility work is like, if I bring my attention back down closer and closer and closer to me, then I'm like, okay, I can't get all the climate catastrophe, but I can take care of this piece of land and I can pour all my heart into it. I can't resolve every conflict that's happening in the world, but I can be really responsible in the conflicts in my own life and let that ripple out. So, people who have been in conflict with me will come back and be like, oh, like that transformed the next time I was in a fight.

I love this idea of rippling. I just got to spend some time in the ocean and, this idea of like, uh, waves come because the wind touches the top of the ocean. It's all these things that feel so light, can have such huge impact. And I think that's also the fundamental aspect of my work.

There's a principle in Emergent Strategy that small is all and everything large is made up of the small. And when I think about that it humbles me and it puts me back in my place in the right way where I'm like, all I can do is my part. But my part is really important and everything big that I'm dreaming is made up of a lot of people like me articulating our dreams and moving towards them.

So yeah, I'm just trying to change the entire world one heart at a time and I really I'm getting less and less ashamed to say that love is the center of my work and learning what love is over and over, you know, but I think it takes a lot to look at the world and love it and to see something broken and imagine its wholeness, imagine its healing, imagine the repair.

So right now I think a lot of us have to do that. You have to all be like, I'm responsible for the repair of this world. Cause I love it. And we only have this one world. Also, the other thing is I'm like this Earth, like until the sun expands and swallows it up, this is our place. We are Earthlings.

The Activist Files Episode-59: Loving Corrections with adrienne maree brown - Transforming a Divided World

And I really think it's such a bomb thing to be an Earthling. Like I really love getting to be an Earthling. And I want a lot more people to get to experience getting to love it.

Sunyata Altenor: We are Earthlings. Thank you.

adrienne maree brown: Earthlings.

Leah Todd: Thank you so much, adrienne. You've really brought us full circle. Beautiful. It's been such a gift to hear all of your thinking. So thank you so much.

Announcer: We hope you enjoyed this episode of the Activist Files, the Center for Constitutional Rights podcast. Just a reminder to subscribe and rate us on iTunes, Spotify, and SoundCloud. And if you wanna find out more about our work, visit our website ccrjustice.org. That's all. Until next time, on the Activist Files.