

Transcript of Interview with Deonté Welton By Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Deonté Welton

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 04/15/2023

Location (Interviewee): Chicago

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: Angelica S Ramos

Some of the things we spoke about include:

Housing insecurity while working a 9-5 pre-pandemic. Believing in oneself, self-love, and leaving the corporate world behind. Experiences in the Chicago shelter system: mandatory church sermons and addiction counseling, homophobia/transphobia. Once stably housed, opening up own home to other transgender women; wanting trans women to experience radical hospitality. Prioritizing rest and reconnecting to the body; cultivating a sense of self; resilience and patience. Finding gifts in isolation. Intuition and prophecies. Hearing about the pandemic in Asia, anticipating it being horrible and feeling personally secure. An absence of medical advocacy in Western medicine, especially for Black queer people. Applying for and living off of stimulus checks, taking on low income work in the arts. The legacies of child abuse and trauma; emotional trauma and physical symptoms. Concerns about women's rights; the intersections of the infringement on the rights of cis women and the infringement on the rights of trans women; the relationship between restricted access to abortion and anti-trans legislation. [edit from Deonté Welton: "Annotating the intersections of the infringement of rights for all trans-misogyny-exempt people (not only cisgender women) and the infringement of the rights of trans women best reflects me."] Isolating as a homebody. Having a mild case of COVID late in the pandemic. The future for creatives and nurturing creativity. Turning to ancestors for support and receiving that support. Resistance spaces imitating the problematic structures they ostensibly resist. The pandemic as less important than the contemporaneous shift in consciousness.

Kit Heintzman 00:00

Hi, would you please tell me your name, the date, the time and your location?

Deonté Welton 00:05

My name is Deonté Welton. It is April 15, 2023 is 9:38am and I am in the Chicagoland area.

Kit Heintzman 00:19

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Deonté Welton 00:28

I do.

Kit Heintzman 00:30

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

Deonté Welton 00:41

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Um, my name is Deonté, I am a transgender woman, writer and creator. A lot of my work is spread over journalism. Stories, generally, I am a storyteller, and sort of in a very unorthodox way. And so I like to move toward more creative modes, very non traditional, non academic modes of storytelling. Oops, I'm sorry.

Kit Heintzman 01:26

Would you tell me a story about your life during the pandemic?

Deonté Welton 01:29

Absolutely. Um, it was a, it was a, it was a very magical time in my life. And I guess when I say magical, I mean that in that moment, it was very difficult. But since then, I have learned so much from it. I think a lot of times people ask, Well, how did the pandemic influence your life? And for me, that's not really the case. It almost feels as if I influence the pandemic. Right before the pandemic, in, you know, a sort of an, I guess that was like March of 2019

Kit Heintzman 02:30

2020.

Deonté Welton 02:31

2020. Yeah, right before that time, I was really struggling with, with self. With my experience, mainly, I was really trying to find my place in the world. I did not realize yet that I am a transgender woman. So I was identifying as a queer male. I think the biggest issue in my life was finding a sense of financial stability. I was experiencing housing insecurity. And, although I was experiencing housing insecurity, I was I was working, you know, this traditional nine to five desk jockey job, and it was, it was so hard for me. Earlier in my life, I had made several attempts to you know, do this thing be in the corporate world and climb the corporate ladder. And when I was younger, I had enough energy to have the ego to be in that environment and but throughout my 20s, it feels as if, like, it really broke me down because I, I learned what the world and the corporate world was really, outside of my, you know, a very young 20 something year old mind about, about what market mechanics are, basically. And that's when I realized the difference between like creativity and intellectualism and that our world tends to veer more toward intellectualism, rather than helping creatives cultivate themselves and using creatives in a in a way that's not very abusive. So my last job was working in Ubers corporate office, and it was just one of the most harrowing experiences because I, I was very confident in who I was. And I know the things I was bringing to the table, but I was being completely overlooked and reviled. And that's sort of when everything began to crumble and lead me into housing insecurity. But at the same time, that fall was one of the most pivotal times in my life, I, I just, I what was really happening is I was learning self sufficiency, and self competent because I was choosing myself over what everyone else expected of me. So although I was homeless, I still, I'm still believing in myself. So it was, it was so wild right before March of 2020, I made this commitment, I told myself, no matter what happens, I'm going to continue in the path of working for myself, and, you know, whatever that may be whatever that looked like, I promised myself that I would never go back into the corporate realm. And so that's where I've been since March 2020. And so I always say that the pandemic didn't really influence me, it's like, I already knew what I was capable of. And I and I, again, I started to understand those market mechanics. And I understood that even without knowing exactly the pandemic was, would happen, I felt that some sort of shift take place where everyone starts, starts realizing that the way that we're functioning in society and the way we are doing things, it's

not sustainable at all. I'm just like, you know, something has to change where, or at least for me to change. And so here we are a very, very magical thing that has happened out of all of this sadness and trauma, where the world is completely shifting. And now I feel like, now I feel like I'm leading the herd instead of always feeling like I'm being trampled by it. So it's a very, it's a very magical time in my life.

Kit Heintzman 07:28

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

Deonté Welton 07:32

Um, oh, I will never forget it. Um you can stop me if I become too metaphysical. Geez where do I start? I, I did not start actually studying occultism. And I'm very structured and weighed. I guess it's been on and off for the last decade or so. I really didn't build a structure or a basis for it until about three or four years ago. So, before the pandemic took place, I would sort of do these, you know, I don't know what to call these sort of prophecies or I was, I just had to go, I'm using my intuition. You know, I will talk to family members. And you know, I would, I would ask them why they treated me in a certain way, and why I did feel a motioning emotional reciprocity from them. And so throughout the conversations, I asked them, Okay, what's gonna happen if this happens, and like, you know, and the world gets to a point where things are very chaotic and unstable, and, you know, entire society as a whole and the market shifts in a way where it can't work for the sort of mindset that we're in right now. And I didn't know back then that was talking about pandemic. I think the first time I heard of it, I was kind of just like, yeah, it was very funny. I was kind of, you know, doom scrolling before doom scrolling was a pain because I was already in pandemic mode myself, and everyone thought I was so weird. But I'm just doom scrolling and I started to hear about something some viruses going on in Asia. And my heart just told me I remember that at least saying to myself, that's gonna blow up in a way that we've never seen before. But I also remember saying it sounds so awful. I also remember a voice telling me look, you're going to be good. It's going to that it's going to be tragic, but you're gonna be okay. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 10:23

I'd love to hear more about your spiritual journey and following your intuition.

Deonté Welton 10:30

Yeah, um, like I said, it's definitely been some work that has had been going for a little bit more than a decade now. A friend of mine really pushed me into it, an old roommate. I would say around 2012, 2013, there became this sort of environment or air surrounding occultism, you know, in the media. And I think what was the most powerful for me, what was the Black Lives Matter movement happening at that time. Again, another time where I'm just completely undermined and overlooked. And, and I'm talking to different people and talking to a friend. I remember vividly dating this guy who I was speaking to him about the movement, and he started talking to me about how, as a white guy, he starts talking to me about how affirmative action is, you know, awful for him as a like those little like a white academic and like that as like, I, I these this is the magic though. It's, it's my faith and my confidence in knowing like, okay, this person, like, and I'm a person who empathizes with people, that's where a lot of my spiritual foundation sits. And so often, I will empathize with abuse like that. And it makes me question who I am. But again, that's been the journey up until now, where I'm where I am so much more confident, and can just be alone, self sufficient, independent, and my thoughts and actions, aside from what society is expecting of me. So yeah.

Kit Heintzman 12:44

To the extent that you're comfortable sharing, would you say something about your experiences with health and healthcare infrastructure, pre pandemic?

Deonté Welton 12:53

Re pandemic? Um. I would say that, I would say that I feel that not much has changed. Um, I kind of believe, I do believe that things are changing. But I, I also believe that things will get a lot worse before they get better. And maybe we are in one of those pitfalls. But what I say when I mean, I don't believe that much has changed within health healthcare as a black queer person. And again, it's this thing about our society, shifting its perspective, more toward intellectualism. Rather than creativity and advocacy, I think that's one of the huge pitfalls of what their medicine however, I don't feel that much has changed. And it really sad and tragic to me from before the pandemic to now. I think that the healthcare industry is now just learning. Well, you know what, I'm not sure I'm not gonna say or they are because I'm not a healthcare expert, but I don't know if it's that there is a learning curve to be had or if this is done purposefully, maybe both can be true at the same time. But it does to be seen there seem to be this. This huge lack when it comes to advocacy, and health care for, for black queer people specifically, because that's my experience. I'm not sure, you know, how other demographic reference groups feel about it.

Kit Heintzman 14:55

Could you give an example of one such experience?

Deonté Welton 14:58

Yes, absolutely um.

Deonté Welton 15:10

I am someone who is absolutely affected by childhood abuse and trauma. And so I have tried therapy, and it has never had much of an effect on me. I learn more, and I heal more from my own learning, I honestly find more healing and to learn more lessons from the media to from, from, from academia and from the healthcare industry. And so as someone who is this sort of creative person who sort of needs a hands on experience, when it comes to learning, and this includes healthcare, I really need advocacy when it comes to health care. And so, it's there has never really been that my biggest issue has been this miscommunication between myself and my healthcare provider. And it's often, I guess, you can say no way, a lot of them have taught me grow up. Although it's in a way that I have not really agreed with. Personally, I just think that advocacy would be a much better method than this hard hitting, well, you should know this. And so it has definitely helped helped me mature, especially as a transgender woman. And yes, that's what I mean, I, I I'm waiting for a time where I find a health care provider who, who can be more of an advocate. And just this administrator of medicine to me.

Kit Heintzman 17:42

Pre pandemic, what was your day to day looking like?

Deonté Welton 17:47

Pre pandemic, my day to day was, it's like those. It's almost like film, or you see some character going through this Monday, clock in clock out, just like, not really they're in their body experiencing something very other

worldly. It was a very dystopian sort of feel. And I was trying to really cope with it and make sense of it and make it a reality for me. But it was a completely jarring paradoxical experiment or experience.

Kit Heintzman 18:33

And were you impacted by lockdown?

Deonté Welton 18:38

Like I said, No.

Kit Heintzman 18:39

No [inaudible]

Deonté Welton 18:39

I was. I was already on lockdown. And I think that's what I mean when I say I influenced the pandemic more than it influenced me. I had already made the decision in my life to slow down. And I can go on and on and on about this just really resonates on so many different levels of how I just need rest. And it's so funny that even back then when I sat down with myself, I said, Okay, you need rest way that rest has expanded and has articulated and defined itself since the pandemic started. It just keeps opening up and opening up. I'm like, honestly, sometimes it's exhausting even trying to rest because you're like, wait, I can I can rest even more. There's even more rest for me to have I can my heart take that it's like it's too much love. But yeah, it's this thing of learning, learning how to slow down how to isolate and and learning all of the pleasure and the comfort and gifts that there are in isolation. I'm not saying that it's always great, you know, we all need communication with others. But I do think that one of the keys to life is, is learning that your purpose is to feel good about yourself and feel good about who you are and your identity and, and that takes a lot of rest.

Kit Heintzman 20:24

Are you willing to share more about the housing insecurity?

Deonté Welton 20:28

Yeah, absolutely. Um adventurous. I'm in the Chicagoland area. Again, be be at the height of work at the height. But at the start of my housing insecurity, I didn't quite understand my sexuality other than identify as a queer, male. And so I really did not expect the things that I experienced. But and because I live in Chicago, I did expect something more comfortable, I'm not sure how to explain it. I expected more from the organizations and and advocates where homelessness is concerned, but it was eye opening. The first shelter that I that I was in it was mandatory that you listen to a church sermon before they would feed you. And so that sermon was often time homophobic, xenophobic, I just couldn't believe what I was experiencing. And then this particular shelter there were so many people there. And I think that speaks for the overall experience the fact that the facility used to be a prison, and so that spirit was still very much a part of this homeless shelter.

Deonté Welton 22:38

As a queer person, I, time is very peculiar in this way. Again, I am not identifying as trans at the moment but but queer and so I connect it with other queer people who were in the shelter with me and some of those people were identifying as trans gender women at that time and just witnessing their experience not I didn't also experience a lot of homophobia there but I kind of just I am a little bit thankful that I didn't realize at that time, my transness

because there was so much ridicule and humiliation and ostracizing that that came with that experience for the trans people there. I was, the facility was separated between men and women. And so the trans girls were forced to be on the side with the with the men and so it was a very difficult time for for them but it was a very difficult time for all of us. I found a facility that was a little bit better. And but but still there is still space and air that you need to work for your stay. You need to work your stay and work for your for your food. And so it was I don't know, that also, you know, taught me a lot. I think in an indirect way it taught me how to be more confident in who I am, although I don't agree at all with the way the facility function. I learned a lot that one of the one of the requirements of staying there was that you go through the sort of addiction therapy or addiction treatment programs, although I don't have an experience with addiction, probably then, you know, just dealing with ego. I do think that being in this space with people, I learned so much about addiction as a concept in general, which I think everyone experiences in some way in their life. And so I did learn a lot from people who are more actually experiencing drug addiction. So much so that, that a lot of my experience from that shelter I was able to take with me, and fast forward to a few, a couple of years, maybe like two or three years after that, when I moved into this home, I've had the opportunity to rent this house. And, and it was, it was sort of a big leap for me in my housing security. And so I took it as an opportunity to give back what I kind of expected to see from those organizations and those advocates where housing insecurity was concerned. And so I opened up my home as a shelter to a couple of transgender other transgender women who were also experiencing housing insecurity. And one of them was incarcerated for eight years. And so it was just an incredible experience for us all. And I hope to, you know, continue to do that to offer spaces where my focus is transgender women, a lot of people keep telling me, well, you should have been a halfway house are you and I, no, like, I know my limits. And I totally believe in those programs for people who are experiencing addiction, but my purpose and my main goal is like to provide free like, luxury or like radical hospitality for transgender woman, because I believe that they deserve it.

Kit Heintzman 27:25

Other than COVID-19, what have been some of the social and political issues on your mind and heart 2022 to present?

Deonté Welton 27:38

That's so difficult to answer because I'm so independent at this point in my life. And one of the things that I've been teaching myself is the ways that I have overreacted and over compensated for my identity for who I am. And so that is a little bit of a difficult question to answer. I think that. Yeah, obvious, my biggest concern is, are the rights of, I think the rights of women in general. And this is something that I'm just articulating for myself, not just transgender women, but women in general, because one thing I learned was, how the rights of women in general affect the rights of transgender women, like I never expected, the the laws surrounding abortion, and the repealing of those, I've never expected that to affect trans people. And so that started to really show me you know, more ins and outs of how medicine and healthcare worked and, and I started to realize the ways in which, you know, these sort of political mechanics work and how we can think one thing is happening, but it's an affecting a different, an entirely different group of people. I think that that the repealing of those abortion rights was a gateway for a lot of the anti trans legislation that's taking place today.

Kit Heintzman 29:35

I just want to open some space if there's anything more you'd like to share about that connection.

Deonté Welton 29:43

Um, you know, I would have to say that I have been incredibly lucky in my journey, as a transgender woman and with my journey with hormone replacement therapy. Again, I think my biggest grievance would be advocacy. A lot of the times I discredit myself, but this interview that I'm very thankful for is showing me just how strong that I am. And I don't have a lot of people say that to me, I kind of have my my own faculties and spirits and spirituality, mirror that back to me, and I'm struggling with, like, melding my spirituality with my actual perspective, and believing in who I am. But just, you know, articulating a lot of these things right now is helping me realize just how strong that I am and, and how I'm able to sort of fly above a lot of the a lot of the oppression, a lot of the marginalization that is happening. Again, big grievance would be advocacy that said, I have, because of my patients, and because of my willingness to, to take my time and not rushed, and, you know, I'm not the type of person who feels as if that, oh, I've got to have a job because I gotta get the bills paid. And because I've got to eat, being the creative person that I am, I'm much more willing to not work at all, and just take advantage of content creation of federally funded programs, you know, as there is money there a lot. I feel so bad talking this way. But the pandemic provided me with a lot of the money that I've, you know, had over the past few years. And again, this is a testament to my strength, I don't believe that a lot of people would be willing to live the way I have lived for the past three or four years, but most for a lot of my money has been just those what were they called those, those checks from the government, the pandemic, the stimulus I found myself working within a literary magazine elective for transgender women. And it's been a huge source of income, although it's not, you know, isn't a great paying job. But you know, it gets the job done. And I value my time a lot more than I do money. So I'm willing to struggle in order to find myself. And I think that that's valuable and pays off more in the end. I'm sorry. Did I answer your question?

Deonté Welton 33:04

I kind of lost. Ok.

Kit Heintzman 33:04

You're doing great.

Kit Heintzman 33:07

Anytime you lose a question and go somewhere that's important to you, you've done amazing.

Deonté Welton 33:13

What was the question again?

Kit Heintzman 33:14

The question was, I think it was still about the intersections of the loss of abortion rights, and the impact that that has on trans women. So that brought you to the threat of resilience. That's how we that's that was the frame. Could you tell me about applying for the stimulus money, what was that like?

Deonté Welton 33:43

Um, again, very straightforward thing. At that point in my life, I was all about making sure that my taxes get done, making sure that I do my taxes, even though I was doing my taxes, and I'm like, I'm supposed to be getting money back, why is it so expensive to have my taxes done. And I'm like, I don't make that much money. It's ridiculous how much money I'm spending to get my taxes done, and I don't make that much money. And so, having done those things, and making sure that I, you know, that I take every precaution to make sure that I'm,

you know, legally doing everything that I need to do even though I'm not making any money, why do, why you know, I have to do my taxes and you know, you know, all of those sort of things. I'm just like, I'm making pocket change. Buy that turned out to be a huge help. Because I didn't have to do anything and I've been using this little prepaid bank account for like the last, like last decade, and I can't believe the way that this carried me this little prepaid account that never really sees the money and sort I used for taxes. And so the money just went right into my bank, I think I heard about the stimulus package one week, and maybe one to two weeks after the money was there. And I couldn't say the same thing. A lot of the people that I knew, because they were people who were, you know, taking those steps in their lives, and you know, making sure that their taxes were done and things like that. And so they had a lot of trouble reaching out to the IRS and connecting themselves to, you know, to those checks into that money.

Kit Heintzman 35:50

What does the word health mean to you?

Deonté Welton 35:58

Wow, um.

Deonté Welton 36:08

Right now, it's something that I can not articulate, because if I had to articulate the word health and what it means, to me, it would just mean life. Because I can't separate any part of my own life, from the idea of health. Not right now. It's just like, every single thing that I do today is so much a part of my health that I realized and I've learned that that my emotional trauma has impacted my physical health, which I'm like, is this thing called life? I would just say, are we in some sort of like, movie about, you know, magic and supernatural because I realized that the emotional trauma that I was carrying in my life was actually making me physically sick, like intestinal problems and inability to process my food, you know? That's causing the inability to breathe in general. And so I don't think that I can unmarry help from any aspect of my life.

Kit Heintzman 37:51

I'm curious what does the word safety mean to you?

Deonté Welton 38:02

I'm seeing love, mostly love whether it's self love, or the love of community and that brings me so many emotions it almost makes me sad I want to cry because, because there is so much more to love and safety and security than I ever imagined. I was kind of raised in an environment where I learned that love really didn't exist, despite what I was being told. And so discovering those things for myself today it's It's unexplainable, I could never explain it. It's it's ridiculous.

Kit Heintzman 39:02

Is there anything you are able to share about your own journey with self love?

Deonté Welton 39:08

Yeah. That self love is absolutely the key to security. And it's so hard because I think there's this they're not think i It's a fact that they're the large misconception. And our world, that community automatically means security, and its becoming more apparent that community may be one of the most like irrelevant facts of security because I

learned that in order to even sustain a healthy sense of community. And in order to keep and maintain a relationship, you have to be incredibly secure in who you are as an individual first. And, and, again, goes back into this idea of recognizing that my purpose here is to feel good, physically, emotionally and mentally. So not just not just my body feeling good, and giving myself the thing that my body is asking for. But also, you know, appealing to, again, my emotions, and, and if no one else can reciprocate, reciprocate my, my emotions in my mentality and who I am that have to do that for myself. And it's like, you, there are not many communities where you can cultivate that sort of thing, because I think one of the things that has come out of the pandemic, and and sort of, you know, these sort of resistance movements, don't get me wrong, we absolutely need things like that, you know, in order to make change, but a lot of the times I find that those spaces can become a little bit cult like, so where they're not really close, evading says of self, but sort of mimicking the same thing that they were created to defeat. And so a lot of them are not teaching people to prioritize themselves. And so again, isolation was key for me. So that I continue to cultivate this sense of self. That's the only way that I can give back to others. And that's the most wild part, I think that one of the things that really drives me that I'm most passionate about is serving others I learned that I can't even serve others until I really do it for myself in an incredibly radical way that I can't even articulate today. Because it's so beyond me. But I'm learning and it's a very magical experience.

Kit Heintzman 42:35

Thinking about the sort of narrow biomedical context of safety that dominated a lot of the conversation around COVID and the virus, what are some of the things that you were doing to keep yourself feeling safer?

Deonté Welton 42:53

I took, I took what were we calling it, whatever we're calling this staying at home, there was a word that was very trendy. I get that to another level like. But I mean, that's always me. I'm, I've always been a homebody. And so I can recall a lot of friends and people that I knew every chance that they would get there like, Oh, I gotta go be with this group of people. And I've got to do this. And I will say, I do think a lot fear was attached to it. But I also attribute to the fact that I never contracted COVID until very late, and, and the whole pandemic to the point where it was in breeze for me, it was a little cold. And we had the we had the solutions and the remedy sport, and it was just like, three or four days, coaching that I had. But I took that, that isolation as far as I could take it. And the people around me, thought that I was so strange, and they're like, you don't do anything anymore. You're like, well, there's this pandemic, pandemic thing happening, the sickness is going on. It seems like people are not taking it as seriously as they should. And yeah, I would have to say though, a lot of fear went into that because I have a lot of fear and mistrust. I think that I just didn't trust my external world in general, which gave me this opportunity to isolate even more. I didn't, I didn't get environment, my outside world, because of COVID. And it was like the sort of thing where like, I'm like, Oh, my life, I've been beaten up, and abused, and I will not be beaten up or abused by this thing covid. So it was a lot of standing at home, I don't really have much of an experience outside, there came a time where I was like, working for this temp agency. Where I never felt that masking, you know, help, though, if I went outside, it was in confidence that anything, everything can happen. And, and you know, it was, it was a it was a bit of a hero heroine experience going outside during those times, because I didn't really believe in the safety and the washing of the mask. I'm like these masks arnt doing anything. My best bet is to be at home. In my home alone. So yeah, that was a huge isolate. Isolating was a was a big part of the steps that I took to make sure I was ok.

Kit Heintzman 46:29

Are you still isolating much?

Deonté Welton 46:32

Yeah, I, but not because of COVID. I still do isolate a lot, because because it's it's kind of like I'm reinventing myself. And although I've become a lot more confident in my trans journey. Yeah, it's so strange, because I think at my most vulnerable status, and while I did not feel as confident, I was forcing myself to be outside. And again, this is one of the things I'm learning about that self love to just prioritize myself and simply not put myself not to stay in relationships and not to do jobs simply because it's what society expects of me. And so I used to do more of that when the pandemic started, and there was for this progression and to a stronger sense of my isolation, but it's fluctuated when I last year when, when I was sheltering other transgender women, I would say it was one of the more active years out of the time since COVID, was announced. And I can remember time last year, where it was very apparent that the virus was sort of ramping itself up again, or kind of doing more damage than had done in the prior years. And I tried to take as many precautions as I could as far as cleaning and making sure I could supply masks, not only for myself, but the people who are also here. But it was a lot of times it was a situation where I'm just like, in my mind, like, Oh my God, there's so many people here and like this is just not good. Yeah, I'm sorry, what was the question again?

Kit Heintzman 49:00

Things you had been doing to keep yourself feeling safer.

Deonté Welton 49:04

Feeling safer. Yeah. The reason why I stopped sheltering and sort of put that on a hiatus. I mean, that's kind of happen throughout every other area of my life. So not just where pandemic is concerned, but they go hand in hand. I used to do a lot of community outreach, even when it came to online because of the pandemic, and just because of the anti trans legislation that has taken place, and a lot of the issues with housing insecurity, there's not great infrastructure for that. I did a lot of work creating these programs online where we're mutual aid is concerned, and helping the exchange of money between trans and queer people. But I even pulled back from that so that I can isolate more and learn more about myself. So that I can give back in a better way. Because again, sort of just pushing myself into those environments, I found myself being very desperate, and feeling very undermined, overlooked, and it just it very chaotic. And I realized that, you know, I can't be any help in that situation, if I haven't, prioritize myself first.

Kit Heintzman 50:43

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Deonté Welton 50:48

Stellar. Do you want me to expound on that? Absolutely stellar. And there's this saying that I don't know where I've heard from, but it's sort of just resonates within my consciousness, that when I experience magic, so to speak to believe it, I think I've had this this self prophecy for maybe two or three years now, to where there will come a time for creatives, or the spotlight shines on creatives. And we have a much better sense of stability than we have experienced in the last 30 years or so. The 90s was a great time for me, like as a, like, as a child, I felt very powerful. I felt very magical. And I think that there's this sort of renaissance that was happening in the 90s. That was catering to creativity in that way. And it seems that thing has come around again. And, and so it's, it's sort of incredible to revisit the same energy of the 90s today. And, and I've learned so much, and I've been through so much. And so it's like, Oh, I've been here before. I'm like, no, I remember how I was, I remember how come and I

was in Oh, now I it's like a second chance at life, oh, I can do this as an adult now be who I was as a kid and very inside my imagination, but, you know, make it work for me as an adult to where I can build a home and build a family, you know, based on this nonsensical sense of imagination. And so I'm finding that you know, this is being an adult, it turns out that that imagination that I had as a child is the next need to be a successful adult. So I'm feeling very, very good about the near future.

Kit Heintzman 53:19

What are some of your hopes for longer term future?

Deonté Welton 53:24

Hopes for longer term future are, I don't know how to articulate it. Because it is it's so fluid. I think that if there's a balance because the key to my success is understanding that everything I want, I already have it. And so I think it all just comes down to experience and being able to maintain my sobriety, so to speak, even though I do not, I've never had experienced drug or alcohol addiction, but in the sense of emotional stability, and maturity is sort of maintaining my sobriety. Now if you want me to try and become more specific, I don't really want to bolt down any ideas and get myself excited but I absolutely would just like to build some sort of capsule where other people can experience what I'm experiencing spiritually and emotionally, to be able to articulate that whether it is I mean, the possibilities are endless. I think that this is just something that you experience when you're talking to a creative. It really depends on you know, what their interests are. And most of us, it can be a wide range of movies. series, art installations. I'm huge on. Okay, I'm huge on immersive installation, I would love to do. I think some of my biggest a lot of my excitement comes from amusement entertainment and hospitality. And so I would love to create, just like these environments that are not just luxurious, but like it's difficult to explain because I really want it to mean something and I really want it to be hard hitting but just like this holistic, very, very rich experience. And for it to be affordable. So yeah, how am I materialise that thing. I, who knows where it can go, you know?

Kit Heintzman 56:28

When you've been in need of support over the last few years, have you had anyone to turn to?

Deonté Welton 56:38

um, If I've been in need of support have I had anyone to turn to, I want to be very honest, and not afraid to speak candidly here. The people who I have been able to turn to are ancestors. And I, and I, you know, I hesitate, because there's so much guilt and shame associated with that but it is the truth.

Deonté Welton 57:25

Yeah, I was gonna say something there. Yeah, it is. It is truthfully. My ancestors, one of the sort of things that I realized in my spiritual journey is I'm kind of I'm kind of cultivating this idea that, that if it is a god, it's probably just our past selves. And so yeah, that's been one of the larger struggles is trying to find a sense of support from actual other people. But if I'm honest, the truest sense of support has come from myself, and my spirituality. I think it's also important for me to note that, as much guilt and shame that I have attached to it, I think that it's important to note that I believe that everyone is capable of this. But I also need to recognize what I provide as an individual, and a unique way to the others around me. And one thing that I've learned is to stop questioning why there is no support. And to realize that the reason why there's no support is because generally people will not be able to live up to the way that I live. And so people struggle a lot with being able to support me because I do have

an incredibly strong sense of self and spirituality, and emotional maturity. So it's lonely, but you know, not really lonely. It's kind of like, like, I'm not really alone. But you know, there is no one that I can really call out to whos actually living to say, like, yeah, these people helped me. Because that's not true but what I what I can say is that when you're asked to what do I think about the future? I do think that I have found myself in these sort of non physical realities that are aligning me with people who will change my life in incredible ways, whether that be romantic partners, whether that be new business partners, new friends, even children I believe that right now what I'm doing is cultivating this power within myself for it to exist within my external reality, I'd very much already feel those people coming near me and kind of very, like cerebral or telepathic ways reaching out to me like, where are you in the same way I'm looking for that. So I do I, I strongly believe that that is right around the corner.

Kit Heintzman 1:00:42

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

Deonté Welton 1:00:47

Um, I, I live like, I am a superstar, I I've learned to I have a very specific view of the world of the world. Based off pop culture, things that I have been taught to be afraid of. And so I'm realizing that that there's this very authentic expression of that world that I have to turn to, and sort of undue this negative karma. You know, where there are these voices and these figures in my past who are saying, you know, that there's so much poison to Hollywood into the entertainment industry. There, there's so much evil in those realms. And, and it kind of, there's this resonance that when I go ahead and tap into that energy, any way, I'm able to relax more, and, and just be myself, you know, it's strange, it's like, I used to think of this way that I used to think of Hollywood and famous people, it was something that I thought was so distant from me and something that should be distant from me because it's evil, something that you know, you're only supposed to peer into from behind a screen. But now I'm realizing that these people, they are who they are, because they decided to prioritize themselves over their pain. And notice that a lot of people around me and this is why I don't find a lot of support a lot of people around me they do have these ideas that that you know that people will notoriety and don't experience pain, that they're in this some sort of abusive, cult narcissistic cult, that where they don't experience pain, but the truth is that those resistance spaces are actually don't have space. And an example is yesterday. I well, I have to give some context here, I haven't had the best experience with my neighbors on either side. Now, the the women completely fine, even though I think there's some underlying things there. The women completely fine, you know, we can speak to one another, we see each other, I think is really great you know, even if it's, you know, this false thing, at least they're making some effort to make me feel, you know, as a queer person, as a transgender person that I'm welcome here and this neighborhood and I belong. However, that's not the case for the men. And so, you know, even knowing that even knowing that they are willing to make me feel like an outcast or an outsider, it's sort of this thing like yesterday, I, you know, made my lunch and you know, thrown my music and brought out the lawn chairs and umbrellas outside black thing, you know, my pop music and having my lunch in my backyard. Despite my neighbor, peering into the backyard, like he is disinterested or annoyed by me. And so it's doing those sorts of things for myself. And again, this goes into your question about isolation and I, I show up And I'm very I guess as a transgender woman, especially someone who doesn't pass as a woman, I show up in a very strong, very powerful, feminine way. So where it I know that it makes other people uncomfortable, or it makes them jealous, so to speak. And so it makes me uncomfortable. And I'm just like, why can't you just allow me to blend in here? Like, I know who I am, I know what I look like. But if you're calm, I can also be calm, it's, it's first cultivating this power at home by myself so that I can feel comfortable to do that outside, which gives me a lot of pleasure and peace, comfort.

Kit Heintzman 1:06:02

Do you think of the pandemic as a historic event?

Deonté Welton 1:06:17

A lot of the times, I think that many other things will overshadow the pandemic or COVID itself. I think that I think that the pandemic, even in its prime, I think it was a foundation for something else, as I said, you know, feeling like myself, we as people influence the pandemic more than it influenced us, I think that the pandemic was just sort of a receptacle for a shift needed to happen. And so I, I think that when, if you look at the pandemic years from now, from a historical point, I don't think that it will be so much that, you know, it was a virus that changed our lives, I think we will spend more time discussing, discussing the shift in our consciousness that was taking place at the same time.

Kit Heintzman 1:07:32

Thinking back to your own childhood education, what is it that you wish you had learned more about when you were younger in history?

Deonté Welton 1:07:41

Um, I was just speaking to someone about this yesterday that I have this very vivid memory of like, kindergarten, where where were a teacher gave the class this this coloring page with this one single sweater, very strange, you know, colored, it's just like, you know, get this I'm sure there were some direct things or something at the top of the page, and it's like, color this sweater. And me being who I am. I'm like, what, why simply color it why not, I'm going to draw a person inside this sweater because it seems like the like, most reasonable thing to do here, but of course, those are not the directions and just remember being I guess we're making remember being reprimanded everyone and it being such a big deal that, that I would have the audacity to draw a person in this. And, and the way that grew in my entire school career, my entire academic career is just I always kind of felt like and like I was having an out of body experience when it came to school. Like I wasn't really there. And that followed me into college where there's very lowly part of me, outside of my body, sort of waiting and wanting and wondering when I will take part of this dream that's happening in some part of me that I have ripped from it's actually going on in my external world. And I'm very lucky to be kind of mending that part of me back together right now. But as far as my learning experience throughout my life it's a very, just like if inarticulate as the world is the word, it just have been something that is just not comprehensive. I remember even telling this person that I was talking to you yesterday that you know, even when it came to college, and this is something that I often have tried to explain to my caregivers is that it's almost like I wasn't even a part of the process of me getting ready to go to college and you know, choosing a major and things like that I'm kind of envious of people who have this, who truly have this authentic sense of, this is what I want to be when I grow up and, I'm going to go to college, I didn't have that, because who I wanted to be. And what I wanted to do wasn't very acceptable. And so I was always trying to remedy that with something that is acceptable by my family and by society, me identifying as male at that time, you know, it's got to be something that is, you know, respectful. And you know, it's got to be serious, but to ever consider being an artist or some sort of creative, or some sort of entertainer is it's so strange. It's, I think it's one of the worst forms of abuse, where it's kind of out of the question, it's never really articulated. And so it's the person that the abuse is happening to this live in this world is this sunken world is sunken place where they can never really articulate the abuse that's going on to them and it's happening, and it's like, they can't reach out to anyone else and explain what's happening. Because when you do everybody's like, you're so fortunate. So what, you

know, you have all of this, this and this and you're like, the material things around me mean absolutely nothing. I'm not allowed to do what I wanted to do. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 1:12:17

What do you think scholars in the social sciences and humanities departments like poli sci, literature, sociology, what should we be doing to help us understand the human side of COVID-19?

Deonté Welton 1:12:37

I'm, I'm not at all any sort of anti intellectual. For but for me, learning is made more possible through storytelling, and you the using mythology and fairy tales, and those sort of lures. And if anything, I think that one of one important part that academia misses out on is assessing the people who need a more creative path for learning and those who need a more logistical path. And I think that everyone could benefit from that greatly, If we integrate it creativity into learning, and storytelling, and so the learning has never been one to be able to sit through a lecture and or, or the things that has just made me feel so insecure about my life is even when it comes to dating, like this idea that you have to read so many books in a year. And I feel so bad when I tell people I don't I don't I don't read books, I read magazines like I don't very, like short, I will try and read a book. And I think maybe once or twice I've gotten through like this long academic piece. And usually at the end of it, I'm like, I wasted so much time reading this book. And it's saying the same thing over and over again. And I got so much more from this movie or from this documentary over here that basically said the same thing but way less words. And I think that people just recognize that, that mode of learning where you just spend hours and hours and hours in books, it doesn't necessarily translate to more knowledge or more wisdom absolutely doesn't translate to more friendship and bravery, which I think is the most important thing. In learning it, it's just I think that reading is a sort of mode of creativity. And we should acknowledge it more than you know. However, many books that you read a year again, that doesn't have that shouldn't have to do with how much money you make or how important that you are. But it's just the fact that you just like to read books. And then that's all there is to it.

Kit Heintzman 1:15:54

This is my last question. I'd like you to imagine speaking to a historian in the future someone far enough away, that they have no shared lived experience of this moment. What would you tell them cannot be forgotten about COVID-19?

Deonté Welton 1:16:28

Ok, I think what cant be forgotten about COVID-19, I can't articulate it well, so. It definitely, you know, it's there. We're recording this, because it's one of those things you have to kind of go back and look on. But just like I said about, you know, how reading and literacy, and really, I believe tradition is not necessarily I don't know, what's the word for it. It's not a, it's not certainty, though things are not certain. But I think one of the things that you cannot forget when you speak about COVID Is is all the ways that everyone was proven wrong. It's like, it was one of those things where we try to implement so many ideas about the past. And at the end, when we really none of the ideas that we had worked, and this worked a completely different way. And all of the precautions that we're taking now are things that we realized after the fact. Things that we considered that we shouldn't do. And we didn't do because we thought that it was not logical to do turns out that all those illogical and creative ideas, were the exact remedies that we needed to fix this thing. Summon up, it's kind of like, I think one of the things that you cannot forget about COVID Is was suggested, let everybody have fun, and do what they wanted to do. Like, for instance, no one should have been working there was a lot of people were trying to force people to work, you got

to come into the office, and we've got to keep going and keep doing this. Everyone needed rest most like everyone to take a break. Just sit at home. And I think that was the most beneficial for all of us and for society as a whole.

Kit Heintzman 1:19:05

I want to thank you so much for the generosity of your time and the kind beauty and your answers. Those are all of the questions I know how to ask at the moment. I just want to open some room. If there's anything you'd like to say that my questions haven't made space for. Please take some space.

Deonté Welton 1:19:22

No, there has reached a wide range of topics and questions and I really appreciate it for you probing my mind and making me think about things in new ways so thank you.