

LOVE IN A F*CKED UP WORLD PODCAST
EP03 TOURMALINE AND MORGAN BASSICHIS

Dean: I'm Dean Spade. Welcome to episode three of my new podcast, Love in a F*cked Up World, where we talk about how to build and sustain strong connections with each other because our resistance movements are made of our relationships and are only as strong as they are. I'm excited to share this new episode with you because it's a conversation with two of my close friends and long-term collaborators, Tourmaline and Morgan Bassichis.

Tourmaline, Morgan, and I have been talking to each other about love, self-help, healing, and abolition for over 20 years. As you'll hear in the interview, I consider them both friends and teachers, and many of the topics and tools I touch on in Love in a F*cked Up World are directly inspired by things I've learned with them and from them.

Tourmaline is an artist, filmmaker, and writer. Her new book is *Marsha: The Joy and Defiance of Marsha P. Johnson*, and you should pick it up immediately if you haven't already. Morgan Bassichis is an artist and performer, as well as an anti-Zionist organizer. Their new play, *Can I Be Frank*, opens in July at Soho Playhouse in New York, and you should check the link in the show notes for ticket information because you do not want to miss it.

Welcome to both of you to the podcast. I'm so grateful for you being part of this conversation since you're so deeply a part of everything that has led to this point in my life, and we have all been working together on a variety of things for over 20 years. I literally met Morgan when Morgan was a teenager.

Tourmaline: Yes.

Dean: So it's very special to be back together today. And we have also been talking about sex and love and like, self-help and healing together for a really long time. I should also have said that Morgan is also a generative somatics teacher for a long time, and is a somatics coach, so doing that kind of therapy type of work.

We've all used a lot of different methods to get at these healing questions, and we've used them a lot together. We were just talking about that before we started recording. Welcome to both of you.

Tourmaline: Thank you.

This book is so beautiful. I'm excited to really get into the deep dive and I really love the exercises. Those really spoke to my heart. And my mind. The whole body. I was wondering, your past two books feel distinct, and I feel like if one was at a bookshop or a library or at a friend's house and you saw them, they might be in different

sections.

And I'm curious, how did that pivot arise? Because upon reading it, it's very clear that they're so entwined. They're really speaking to each other and bolstering each other, but I'm, I'm just curious, how did you arrive at this text?

Dean: Yeah, it is interesting. I do feel like we know we like something when it's like genre-defying, right?

What does that person do? How would you, um, I have noticed that about many of people I admire. I'm like, what is that book about? And, but it's also very hard for making things that people are willing to sell and stuff sometimes, like Morgan's gender is, for example.

So I, this book I've been writing for about 10 years. Uh, so it's been going on and then I've been in the background all the time because the whole time that I've been doing all the other political work that we've done together, abolition and mutual aid and whatever, you know, doing this work around my own suffering, healing, being with other people in movements and seeing what comes up for me, what's needed for me to act the way I wanna act.

What happens in conflict in our groups, supporting other people struggling with all of our internalization of the cultures we live in, stuff that's happened to us. And so that work is just happening alongside, and I think it's visible, especially in Mutual Aid. A lot of people have told me that the second half of Mutual Aid feels like a self-help book.

I think this is true of all three of us, we're reading deeply in all of our abolitionist texts, but we're also all reading deeply in all this healing stuff. And...

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Dean: ...doing all of that. And because the way our culture is, those things are often like one's private and one's public. But I think ultimately they are the same questions.

One way I think about, it's like Normal Life is a book about what it means to have a liberation movement in neoliberalism at the very broad scale. What is the nonprofit industrial complex? What is neoliberal economic policy? What is abolition? And then Mutual Aid is like at the next scale of community, like how do we work together in groups, try to support people immediately since we know that like government will never give us what we need?

And this is even a finer tuned, like really, how do we work together in groups and with ourselves? You know, it's just, it's all the same

question about like, how does change happen and what do we need to do together? And it's just a level of like, how intimate is the account. But it does bring us to the self-help section.

And I did try to make this book more like a Cosmo quiz. Like I wanted it to be like skimmable and have that feeling of like, I think 'cause people also come to liberation in lots of ways, but a lot of people come to liberation 'cause they're really uncomfortable with the suffering of the racism and the patriarchy and the ableism on our bodies and the forced productivity. And people come to stuff like astrology or like, they come to like things about fatphobia. Like all these very intimate, like how is, how is am I feeling? How is this touching me? And so I'm hoping people who are entering a radical question through that zone find this book in that section.

Morgan: I mean, that word intimate. It did feel so intimate to read this book. I just wanna say thank you so much for the labor, the grappling, the risk, the vulnerability, like the bravery that is indexed in the book, that makes the book possible. It's like the behind the scenes work. And then the book itself. It just feels like a, a really generous offering and it felt really intimate to read it, both because all three of us have been in this conversation for 20 years about our relationships and about sex and about dating.

Tourmaline: Five years for me, but...

Dean: Right. You weren't even born twenty years ago. Sorry, sorry.

Tourmaline: I don't know what you're talking about.

Morgan: Tourmaline just turned 21. So happy to meet you, Tourmaline. You have a really promising future ahead of you.

Tourmaline: Thank you, I can feel it.

Morgan: You talk a lot about this like, binary between like good people and bad people that we've internalized and that so much of our abolitionist work is to disentangle, and I feel like you drop that down to a much deeper level.

We've all been saying that for many years, no such thing as good and bad people, and you really invite us to have deep compassion with ourselves, and all the parts of ourselves. And I think you did this with your other books too, like you're distilling all the things you've been learning, grappling with and making a meal for us.

So yeah, just wanted to say thank you for that.

Dean: Thanks for saying that. It really means a lot to me. I've been very anxious about this project most of the time I've been working on

it. Like, who am I to, to share any of this kind of stuff? I'm just like, working over here, making mistakes, struggling like everybody.

So it's like scary to put it out there. And it means a lot to me to have people who are literally my central teachers read it.

I guess one thing that I think is just a deep tension in the book and with also our conversations as sex positive, queer radical, anti-violence organizers is like, this feeling like, sex and romance are the most dangerous things in our society.

This is what people kill each other over most. My friend was just doing a poetry workshop in the prisons and talking about how everybody that they're there within the women's prison is like, in prison for love. And when they said that it felt so real to me. And it's really a dangerous terrain that could make us wanna have a really arm's length. And also makes talking about it, like it's scary to talk about it lightly. Like I'm, of course, I'm afraid people will use things in the book to weaponize against each other. Or I'm afraid that the language could be used by people who are actually really abusing and harming each other. Or there was a question that came up with some readers, like when I'm talking about these dynamics between people, when is it abuse? Versus like, how should the book handle the fact that some of this goes to the level of abuse and some of it's just dynamics. Like, heavy stuff is in the room.

And then also, how do we balance that with like, our queer, pro-sex desire is the front edge of creativity and that set of knowledges and wisdoms and technologies from our queer lives?

And I'm just curious to hear you all talk about that, 'cause I think we all three really know both sides of that coin intimately.

Tourmaline: Yeah, I remember right after, we were all doing Critical Resistance 10 in the Bay, I went to SONG's 10 year anniversary, Southerners on New Ground. And they had a bunch of really beautiful workshops and one was about sites of oppression as also being sites of liberation and freedom. It's like the body, our sexuality. And so I feel like one of the things that you do really powerfully in the book is hold both. Maybe it's your Gemini brilliance, but it is your great capacity to say yes, these are places of capture and violence. And also it's chryonic, right? It's like the wound also is the place of teaching and healing.

And so that to me is a major takeaway, that pivot in the book. And one of the exercises that I thought really helped pivot was What Else is True? Because what I feel like a big takeaway from that is that, you're not saying these things aren't happening, right? Your approach and the book's approach to pivoting is to not pretend that this thing that is like, hurtful or deeply upsetting, is not happening. But

you're also supporting the person doing the exercise to also help pivot to like a broader awareness of how this action might be contained in a set of dynamics or how we might not know what's going on for the person.

I think that's a really beautiful offering and a gift. And so I think going back to, so many of us have experienced violence and capture, it's like, your capacity to pivot just like with SONG's to like, yes, it's a place of violence, and how do we pivot to the possibility of freedom in the same topic.

Dean: Yeah. One of the other things that came up with some readers was like, how to write about something like, in the book I'm trying to say like, scarcity is like a mythology that we live under in capitalism and how do we shift our thinking? And also, people were like, yeah, you know what? Like some people don't get as many dates and don't get as much attention. And there's like people whose bodies are considered unvaluable and undesirable in our culture. And how to hold that and hold the part that we all know is true, that it's easy for all of us to think that about ourselves and create a story, especially around romance and sex that is a scarcity story. And also when we're the writer or the facilitator or someone's therapist or whatever, like how do we hold, not be like, that's not happening to you and there's none of that, but also be like, is there any more room? Like any at all? It's a struggle.

Tourmaline: I remember I had a really good conversation in the lead up to Critical Resistance 10 with Kai Lumumba Barrow, who was helping me think through this moment where I was talking a lot about what the police were doing to us, and a deep emphasis on us being the object of someone else's verb, right?

Like, the police are the subject, what they're doing is the verb, and we are the object. And she gently encouraged me to ask the same question. What are we doing? Like, how are we verbing? And even if it's as simple as we are navigating, we are dealing with, we are figuring out how to make away. I think that your book is really doing that as well.

Morgan, I'm curious to hear your thoughts.

Morgan: Well, I'm having all these memories of conversations that I've had with you over the years. And I'm thinking about like, the New Year's Eve party I had in San Francisco so many years ago. And I just remember I was feeling anxious about a person I was dating who was at the party and I was feeling insecure and maybe jealous.

And I remember you wrote down something on a little piece of paper for me of like, I am safe. And it was almost like a spell. It was aspirational. And I can just think of so many moments that are not

major moments. They're just like, normal everyday moments of feelings. And you being, both of you actually being like, let's be with each other and try to have compassion.

Because the first thing that comes up for us is, I'm bad. I'm bad for having these feelings. I'm broken for having these feelings. I'm beyond repair. And the fact that these feelings are in contradiction to my politics means I'm fundamentally worthless, fraudulent. That's what comes up. And we who join social justice movements and resistance movements often will beat the shit out of ourselves with the politics.

Tourmaline: Mm-hmm.

Morgan: And with the aspirations. And we will beat the shit out of ourselves and sometimes each other. And I feel like in this book, you're pointing towards small moments instead of romanticizing and fetishizing the big moments. You're saying, let's actually acknowledge that these skills and these muscles can happen all day long all the time.

And we know this from abolitionist work that like, we have to rebuild the muscles that the state and that the structures of oppression have de-skilled us from. And that means we have to start small. And small is all, as adrienne maree brown says and so many other people, right. And I love this about the book, that there's a kind of humility in saying, I don't actually have all the answers, but here's some things that have provided some relief for me and that have helped me to come back to my values and come back to connection.

And I love that you're constantly going between romantic, friend, and organizing situations. And saying...

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Morgan: ...What happens when someone asks you to do something? Do you feel obligated to do it? Like noticing the small stuff. And I find that to be so empowering and so agency-inducing because you're not having us freeze with the big questions and be like, oh, can you answer all the big questions?

It's like, oh no, I have some of the information, but not all of it. And let's keep building this together one little step at a time. So, yeah, I think that a lot of people I imagine, will take solace that this is not like, I'm trying to cure you or fix you or this is a silver bullet, but no, this is to have in your napsack for when things get rough.

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Dean: It's also for me, a lot about hoping that if enough people read

it in our movement subcultures, then, 'cause the main thing that, the redirect that is always from our friends. It's always, Hey, I don't know if that person's really your enemy or other people help us do the What Else is True? exercise.

You know what? A lot of other people don't think that about you.

Tourmaline: Yes.

Dean: I don't think everyone's saying that. I think just one person in the meeting said that. Just helping us to be like, oh no, I have more support than I think. Less people are mad at me than I think. Or I'm less wronged than I think. Or I'm more loved than I think.

And one of those things is that thing you just said, Morgan, my feelings aren't bad. Morgan and I recently were in the same city when I was having a really hard time with jealousy. And jealousy has so many arrows. There's the initial feeling that I think is like a very young part that's, am I okay? Am I gonna lose a connection that for some reason right now, believe my safety and wellbeing relies on, even though, of course my safety and wellbeing is in a much broader container with many other people. In that moment, it seems really, it narrows down, right? And then there's the, it's so ugly to feel this way and have these unfair thoughts that I know are unfair about somebody else. It's so heartbreaking to feel unkind. And then there's a political level, like, I want this kinds of liberation. I don't wanna be a hypocrite. I also wanna be able to be as promiscuous as I wanna be. So why am I now having all these feelings about somebody else's sexual expression or romantic expression or whatever?

And the kind of like, these feelings aren't okay with who I say I am. And...

Morgan: Yeah.

Dean: ...as usual, Morgan was just loving towards me and seeing me as the whole broader person beyond this one moment of emotional activation in which I'm actually not doing anything wrong. I'm not harming anyone. I'm just feeling bad.

And I think like, with the jealousy, the difference between having a really hard feeling, which could include untrue, unkind thoughts, and throwing your screaming baby at someone else and doing something uncool, like violating their privacy or criticizing them unfairly or something like that. Like noticing, oh look, I didn't do the worst thing I could do with this really hard feeling. This is actually a moment of living my values, not of not living my values, you know?

Anyway, I bring up jealousy also because I've had several experiences lately where people have said to me, we've been in some kind of

conversation about this book, and they've been like, Dean Spade has jealousy? And I was like, I hope it's helpful for people to hear that somebody who'd to write a self-help book has all the same complicated, difficult experiences that many people have. And that it's not about getting rid of feelings, it's about choosing action and like, being forgiving and gentle. It feels like jealousy is one of those ones that we really misunderstand and think is like, has to be eradicated, you know?

Tourmaline: Yeah, and giving yourself a break. Which I thought with the pendulum, like the pendulums were so helpful for me. It's like I had a strong negative feeling, so someone else's bad. I had a strong negative feeling, so I'm bad. I've so often felt that pendulum swing, right? And in my desire to like give myself a break and also be the beneficiary of giving another person a break too, because that always makes me feel better.

I keep coming back to like, the What Else is True?, because that really encourages giving the break, like giving the benefit of the doubt to yourself and other people.

Dean: That pendulum idea comes directly from the hand of Morgan Bassichis.

Tourmaline: No surprise.

Dean: We were at, I think the US Social Forum in Atlanta in 2007, maybe. I think that was where this workshop was. And Morgan was drawing the pendulum. And also Morgan has a beautiful handwriting and a beautiful drawing, so I can literally visualize it in my head. And the pendulum one side was punishment of people we believe who've done something wrong. And the other side was minimization of harm. And in the middle was accountability. And it was like the most visual learning, for me, about this very important abolitionist idea that we're trying to get away from either telling people that nothing happened to them or going out and getting the person who did it and putting them in a cage.

That's obviously the societal piece, that those are the only two places, but also inside ourselves. If the person isn't hunted down, then it must not have happened to me, is the kind of feelingscape.

And anyway, Morgan's just a very brilliant teacher and facilitator and that idea of that pendulum stayed with me forever. And then CUAV where Morgan used to work, Communities United Against Violence, put out these beautiful images that include the pendulums that I still use.

Just the idea of finding a middle place. And when we were designing the book, there was a moment where the designers turned it into a meter. Like if you imagine like an electricity meter or like a meter

on a stereo.

And I was like, no, it is not an arrow that points to one place. Because the feeling is, we're just constantly swinging. I'm the worst person, I'm the best person. The one I've been thinking about a lot lately as the one you were just saying, Tourmaline, it's the same idea, like externalizing it on somebody else. I feel bad I'm reading you. Or I feel bad, I am the worst. Like just being incapable of holding the complexity, which is just, it just feels also like regression. It's just like a, I'm going into the scared little kid place. I'm seeing everything is one way or the other. Binary thinking. But yeah, I thank you Morgan for the pendulum model

Morgan: And totally developed in this collective grappling of all the people who were involved in CUAU at that moment and the abolitionist movement.

And it's about we get to be human. Perfection is a myth. And it's a really damaging myth. It robs us of our lives and it robs us of intimacy with each other. And I even hear it like, oh, I just felt it, but I didn't act it. There's almost a little bit of having to be perfect in that, too. It's like, so you acted from it because you're human being and we act from things and we do things we wish we hadn't done.

And I think what your book is is, is giving us, is like, oh yeah, as we take the air out of the, I'm the only one who does this. We're like, no, this is what we do as human beings. Then we're able to sort of befriend it and it starts to move. And I just feel like we, on the left, we can sometimes take on this kind of perfectionism thing, that really is not the thing.

It's not how we change, it's not how we grow, it's not how we welcome people. It's secretly what we're scared of. You know, like, I don't know who said this years ago, but we talk about the things we need the most work on. We talk most loudly about the things we need the most to work on. And I just feel the moments where you share in this book your own struggles with jealousy and dadadadadadadada, it's like, it's so medicinal. 'Cause it's like, oh my God, okay. Dean's not perfect either. We're all shipwrecked by the same storm here.

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Dean: Shipwrecked is very visceral. We're here in our wreckage and it's beautiful. And you're right, Morgan, about the acting out too, like, repair and apology are almost unimaginable in our culture. So it's really a big deal. So how do we make it more imaginable?

I feel like the relationships where I've made mistakes and have been able to offer a real apology and be heard in it and everybody move on

is so rare. I mean, I wrote about that in the book with my partner who's eventually did deep apologizing for seven years of alcoholic behavior.

And just like, it was my first time in my life that I got to really forgive somebody, truly. Because the people who did all the most wild stuff in my life, of course, never apologize. It's like parents and people, you know, teachers, it's not gonna happen, right? Like they're mostly not gonna have the same emotional capacity to do that or whatever. And I think most of us don't have a lot of experiences of satisfaction with that. So having this experience where there was like, some long-term unpleasant stuff, and really being heard on it. And really hearing, like a genuine apologizing and seeing that. And then really feeling myself let it go was true liberation and true intimacy! We rarely give ourselves that opportunity, like all the vulnerability that requires from both people.

And for me that's useful to then remember, like yeah, I am of course, some of my jealousy, sometimes I do say something that's like, unkind or I like, disappear because I am like, oh my God, I'm not fit for... I often have this feeling like I'm not fit for like, human consumption. Like I shouldn't text 'cause whatever I say will be weird. So now I'm like, not engaging, you know, whatever. It is coming out. Even with my attempts to be tender towards myself. There's sharp edges or my tone is barbed and I didn't want it to be. And like especially if I'm willing to know that happens, that's also less hurtful to people. I think harm is really harmful when it's denied and it's like, a lot less harmful when it's recognized, when it's accompanied.

Tourmaline: Yeah,

Dean: There's so many pieces to that. I've been thinking a lot about like, sexual edge play and like, sexual engagement with people, and how like, when you have a sense of safety in the space, it's okay to go to the edges. Because even if you go a little bit over and find out, oh, that wasn't for me, it's not actually traumatizing. Whereas if you don't, it's not right. Like so what are the conditions I can produce in my life and relationships that make it so that if we do go over an edge and something's a little bit off or harmful, it doesn't leave a super big wound. It's just like, oh, I found out. I'd like to move the barrier here. Fine.

Morgan: This is why I love listening to parenting podcasts. You use that phrase self parenting so many times in the book. I'm not a parent, but my sister is, and very many people close to us are, and the feeling of having to be perfect and having to be a perfect parent, and the inevitability of acting in ways that don't align with your values, with your kid.

But how powerful it is, the repair moment. Just to sit down and be like, I'm sorry I did that. Or, I did that. You know what I mean? And how healing that is. We're healing machines. We're much more resilient than we think we are, and that repair deepens the intimacy. And like, how amazing to have a caregiver or a loved one, how trust-building, who says, You know what? I did that, and I wish I hadn't done that. Like, oh my god.

Tourmaline: Yeah. I'm thinking about, perfection is definitely a big player in my life. But also, like a little less so now, but for a while I was really into having what I call like, purity politics, right? Like, the most abolitionist read or the most succinct take down of the problem.

And whether it was with people who I was aligned with 99.999% of the time, or someone who I identified as like, the foe. And I think underneath that, it's like, if I'm right all the time, then I'm valuable. If I do right all the time, I can't be discounted or not mattered. That kind of like, wanting to feel that I have something that affirms who I am.

And it's interesting to just also, I think I learned this from both of you, just like put your arm around the shoulder of both like the little Tourmaline who's like, I'm right and you're wrong. And also put your arm around that feeling of like, hurt. You know? I think at first it feels counterintuitive. Like, if you give yourself a break or give another person a break, that means that you're saying like, what you did is okay and like, you don't have to ever be accountable for it. But actually it's opposite, at least how I have experienced it, is you are cultivating a capacity to do what you just did Morgan, right?

Demonstrate how wonderful it is to not have to be right all the time. And also to be in that place of repair. How wonderful it is to model that for little ones and also bigger ones.

And I'm curious, Dean, through writing the book, have you found more ways that people are approaching deprogramming that need to go with the pendulum of either I'm the worst in the world or you're the worst in the world?

Dean: Such a good question. This conversation is making me think a lot about this dinner I had last night with somebody involved in a mutual aid project that is a literal life and death mutual aid project. Like they had to stop for a week once and like, multiple people died. Like it's that kind of high stakes. And they're struggling with conflict in their group. And the conflict pattern is very familiar to me. For almost everyone in the group, it's their first time doing organizing. And this is people with their shared identity of a hard life experience. And you come in so hopeful.

It's the romance cycle. It's like, oh my God, I'm gonna find my people here who've been through what I've been through, who understand me. And at first, just like any romance, at first, that's what you see. You know? And then things shift and you're like, oh, well we're not the same in every way. We have some other differences. Or like, you start to feel things you are very accustomed to feeling from your family role. Like, I'm not being listened to. Or there's a clique and I'm left out. Or I need to be right. Or whatever your special history pattern is.

And what I've found is that, in that first era of people engaged in their first time and that romance, it can be a lot more intense. Like, the group wasn't perfect and I have to take it down. And a lot of people, I think the norm in our movements is that most people never go back. I think the vast majority of people who see themselves as political in the United States were involved in something when they were young. Or at some point once. And they still may keep the political identities, but it was really painful or whatever. Some of them have storied careers, writing books about organizing, but they never have done any since that first experience.

Tourmaline: Totally, totally.

Dean: And I love every single one of them. And when I was talking to the, the people from this group, I just was really thinking about that thing of how painful that loss is the first time. I think that perfectionism is in there, and honestly for me, I really see it through the lens of like, I finally found my family or my mommy or daddy. Like, it's really a deep love, like in the same way people do with a romantic partner or sometimes a best friend. And so part of it is really, what's really hard is that's happening a ton because as the conditions sharpen in our lives, more people are getting mobilized. And so there's just a lot of cycles of that happening. And that's really painful 'cause it leaves a lot of wreckage.

And it's natural and understandable and we need more people around those people to bring them back to the group after they've left and tried to dox everybody or whatever's nonsense they've been engaged in. And be like, What would it mean to repair now so you still get to do this work? Are we gonna break this into two or three groups that'll all do this work in different cool ways around the different experiments we each imagine?

I think the level of just really not needing stuff to be perfect, that just comes sometimes with experience. I mean, it's not necessarily that, but it often seems related to just, oh wow, the part two where you join a group and you have that group on a pedestal and you think they should deliver this all correctly. And you're not noticing that they're incredibly scrappy and nobody knows what they're doing and everyone's like, doing this at night and unpaid. And so of course it's

not surprising that they left out a bunch of things or people, or this part was too rushed.

Or it's like people expect, like a concierge experience engaging with this, because of a beautiful hope. You know what I mean? But I think it's also a deep disempowerment. Instead of being like, oh, how can I help make it better? It's like, why wasn't it this way already?

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Dean: I hope the feeling of this book is this sobering like, oh, of course! Of course. It's imperfect. Of course you feel a lot of wild things. Of course, it's hard to have sex and date and have friends join groups. That's not you, that's all of us! Actually, Morgan's best title for this book that got rejected by the publisher was, It's Not You, It's Everybody.

Tourmaline: Yeah, I love that.

Dean: That's what's going on. You know what I mean? I do think that the answer to the perfectionism a little bit is just the, of course. And yet I, I say that and yet I experience internalized perfectionism that constantly rears its head. Maybe over time what happens is I'm better able to like, run it by a friend. You know, when someone says something mean to me online, I'm able to say to a friend like, Ugh, this feels bad. And the friend's like, That does feel bad. And remind me of what else is true, maybe.

Tourmaline: Is the What Else Is True? your go to? What is your go-to exercise that you wrote in the book?

Dean: I mean, the one I think is the most interesting for me is Seven Steps for Deescalating A Crush.

A lot of that comes actually from experience and generative somatics and with Buddhist practice of like, realizing that what I'm doing is a practice. I haven't been struck by Cupid's arrow and there's nothing I can do. And like, you know, this just happens to be the best person who ever lived and we are destined for each other. And sorry for everyone else who I'm about to ignore or run over or reject very quickly or whatever. But instead like, Well, okay, I'm choosing this.

What am I practicing? What songs am I listening to? When am I fantasizing about this person? And if I'm in a situation where it doesn't make sense to pursue this, how do I do that in a gentle and loving way, you know? Was What Else Is True? the one that stood out for you most, Tourmaline.

Tourmaline: I mean, that one just reminded me of thinking about when you are like, head over heels for a new group or a new person, it's

like what you are doing is loving that. What feels really good, in my opinion, is like your valve is wide open, right? It's not necessarily other person. It's like your valve is wide open. And knowing that I think is actually really helpful. And you're so instructive in that.

It's so interesting, like we were all in different ways involved with Critical Resistance. And then I had that, I was a young organizer like 20 years ago, and had a, This is messed up moment, throughout the whole time. And what's actually been really beautiful is like, also now reuniting with a lot of those people who I had assigned blame to, being like we were literally just doing the best we could under some really harsh conditions. And feeling the truth in that and the beauty in that. And just like, how beautiful we all were, whether or not in that moment we were getting along. And how beautiful it is to wanna be creating with each other something that is not modeled.

And I think also if I had this book back then, 'cause I had that feeling with Critical Resistance, I was like, I walked in and I was like, My family! Finally, I'm feeling like I have value 'cause of this thing that I used to be ashamed of. You know? It's like all of that's true. And also, what also felt really good is like, I am valuing myself. Like I am remembering my worthiness or the importance of who I am alongside all the other people. I think that's really a beautiful part of what you're offering, and to have been able to have that back then I think would've been so profound because to have it now is so beautiful.

Morgan: Yeah. I'm so, just inspired and moved by what both of you're saying. And I just wanna be clear. When I was on my phone, it's not to text, but I'm looking at, I screenshotted parts of the of, I just wanna be clear, I'm not a bad person being on my phone. I was looking through a screenshot,

Dean: I'm keeping score. I've got a Google doc open where I'm keeping score about whether you're good or bad.

Tourmaline: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Morgan: No, I know you are, babe. I know you are!

First of all, Dean, like you saying, we do the romance myth with organizations hits me like a ton of bricks.

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Morgan: Of like how many times I see that cycle happening. And also how we use this language, like political home, political family, lifelong commitment.

Tourmaline: Yup.

Morgan: Join, you know, like it's so intense. We're so fucking intense. And sometimes that gives us the courage and container to take risks that we need to take together. This kind of fantasy that we're gonna be in this together forever, you know? And sometimes it's, it lasts, sometimes it doesn't last. But you just saying that somehow feels like you just let us off the hook. You let us off the hook of individualizing all these problems onto ourselves or onto each other and being like, there's no thing that's gonna solve this. There's no one thing that's Ruthie Gilmore's thing, right? There's no, it's changing everything. There's not one thing. And no matter how many times. I don't know about you both, but I get to these moments of where I feel grounded and I feel like I've grown and I'm like, I'll never have to face my humanness again!

And then it's like, there I am knocking on the doors of like gay sex saunas at 10:00 AM being like, let me in! And they're like, No one's here. And I'm like, But maybe, someone will come. But this is not like 10... I'm talking about this past weekend. You know what I mean? Like, like, and so we're gonna be human again before we know it.

And it's gonna, it's gonna, it's the rose gonna get pulled out. And this is Buddhism, this is whatever. There will be groundlessness again, and the fantasy that a person or an organization or a politics or a self-help book is gonna fix us. It's like so much compassion for that, and that robs us of being present.

You know, you talk about chasing highs and numbing. That cycle robs us of the juiciness of what's actually happening, including the disappointments, you know, including the frustrations. It, it robs us. It's not that we're bad by having romance fantasies, it's that we actually get to enjoy this whole thing, including our humanness.

We don't have to wait until we're no longer human to enjoy this.

Dean: Yeah.

Tourmaline: Yeah. That's such a juicy, wonderful part. Anticipating the next human moment and knowing there's a bounce. That it's like, one after the next. I think that's a really beautiful aspect of it.

Dean: What you all were just saying, it really made me think about the idea in Buddhism that nothing will make you permanently happy. And that like, this question I ask myself, Am I looking at something and thinking it will make me permanently happy? That is kind of the addictive mode. And for some people that's, if I could just own a house, if I could just get married, or if I could just have the right partner. It's like those big cultural fantasies.

But sometimes it's just the immediate thing. Like if this person would

text me back, you know? And it goes back to what you were saying, Tourmaline, about like, how when we are in love with a group or with a person, we think that this capacity we're feeling is in them, but it's in us. Like this, oh my god, I suddenly feel so sexual. Or I suddenly feel so creative artistically, or I suddenly feel like the flowers look prettier, or like whatever.

And it's complicated. 'cause of course it's not like there's nothing to do with the other person. And it's beautiful to feel it relationally, but ultimately it is our capacity to be alive.

And I think right now there's just an overall dimmedness to the capacity to be alive. Like people have to numb because the pain is so severe of the kinds of jobs people have, the kinds emotional conditions, the genocidal, unraveling all around us, the feelings we suppress about the ecological crisis, whatever, right? There's like that numbing, and then there's this intense disempowerment of like entertainment and checking out. What do we do together to feel more of our desired direct, directedness through desire? Like I wanna do something, anything, like letting ourselves want. But not the want that's because that thing will make me permanently happy and then I have a crash and have to take it down. But instead the want of like, maybe it's about having a big enough range of wants that it's like, I feel really great about this thing I'm cooking and I also feel really great about seeing my friend later and I also am excited reading this book, you know, so that it's not all in one basket, maybe? I think that that's part of it is that, I think also like exercise regimes, beauty, those are other places where we're like, maybe this will make me permanently happy. Maybe I'll finally be admirable. I think almost everybody I know has a pretty rough experience happening with those that's not talked about enough probably.

Tourmaline: Yeah, I think that's so real.

Morgan: Yeah. I so appreciate that. 'Cause that creeps up on us all the time of, oh, here's a new thing that I think if that can happen, then I'll be happy. If people love this book, right?

Dean: And it'll never be enough. I mean, one of my experiences when I hang out here in LA and people are in the entertainment industry, it feels like they all like, they had, they missed the boat. They had a moment where they were, should've gotten the thing. And I'm like, I think your career looks amazing! Or some people have that about their body or about love or about their home or how they're regarded or enough detention on social media. And it's like, that is so sad 'cause then you miss enjoying what you're having.

Morgan: I think the same thing can happen in organizing where we're like, our work is never enough.

Dean: Oh yeah.

Morgan: And there's some ways in which it's like, we don't wanna be self-aggrandizing or self-gratifying about our work, but like we have to celebrate the work along the way and be like, oh my God, that meeting, that was really enlivening. Oh my God, we really pulled that action off with like such rigor and excellence and beauty.

We can't wait until the next world to feel satisfied in our work. These are long, intergenerational, lifelong fights, and we have to take pleasure and satisfaction and joy and pride and all that stuff in the work right now, in its imperfectness. Which doesn't mean saying it's perfect and we're done, but it does say, oh, we're stronger at that than we were last year.

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Dean: Yes.

Morgan: We didn't know how to do outreach, now we know how to do outreach. Wow! And that builds our self-esteem to be able to then take more risks and develop new muscles instead of constantly being like, you guys, our actions are still too small. You know, it's like, that negative self-talk that you're talking about. It's like we have to self parent our own organizing, too.

Tourmaline: Yeah, I think about that a lot, too. Like, do y'all remember when Major was talking about the cold drink of water?

Morgan: Yeah.

Tourmaline: She's talking about can you find the pleasure, like the physical pleasure in just having like a cold drink of water?

And it did something inside my mind where it is exactly like what you're saying, Morgan, is like, why withhold a feeling of pleasure for another time when X set of circumstances are accomplished, if we can calibrate to it right now? Which also means like, being able to sync up with better timing, which also means being able to like, have some more clarity about what to do next.

And I think that goes right back to the like, how open is my valve and why? You know? The questions that you ask really well, Dean.

Dean: That's so beautiful. Part of me is like, should we have a conversation about where we are each, what is the growing edge of your relationship to pleasure, to acknowledging what is beautiful right now, despite the kind of impossible conditions under which we are operating?

Tourmaline: Yeah, let's do a go around.

Dean: Let's do it.

Tourmaline: Who wants to start?

Dean: Will you start us, Tourmaline?, I think it's you.

Tourmaline: Yeah, sure. Okay. The question is, what is our growing edge around that?

Dean: Or what do you want? What do you want is part of what I want you to ask. I also wanna hear the affirmative of what it's gonna be like next.

Tourmaline: What do I want in the world, or what do I want in my life, or...?

Dean: In terms of your relationship to pleasure and...

Tourmaline: Yeah, totally. Okay. I started developing this practice because of Morgan, of which leads back to you, in the exercise that we're doing. But Morgan sent me this audio, like the five things to do every day, a long time ago. I don't know if you remember that?

Morgan: I think you sent me that.

Tourmaline: No, I sent it to you back. You initially sent it to me, and then I sent it to you back. And you were like, why?

Morgan: This is our three relationship. This is...

Dean: It's someone else's fault!

Tourmaline: Yeah, Literally. It's someone else's... You changed my life for the better. No, you changed my life.

But it was about like, and it's something that I do every day, so it's go outside, not everyone has access to that, but move around in a sense of appreciation. You're my favorite tree. You're my favorite stone. You're my favorite, I say this to Jean all the time, You're my favorite Jean, my cat. And then I do this 15 minutes of just like, listening to Laraaji every day, and trying to like, think as few thoughts as possible, going like very smooth brain.

And that brings me so much pleasure. And it's like, a practice that I started. I don't know who sent who it, but at the end of 2019 I received this YouTube. From someone.

Morgan: Deep state.

Tourmaline: Yeah. And so I've been doing it since 2019, just like listening to different lyricless music that Laraaji made. Laraaji is just this really beautiful musician who also does laughter meditation, and really puts me in such a deep like, receptive, zonked out in a beautiful way state, feeling really good and at ease.

And so that's a practice that I do every day that brings me like immediate pleasure, along with the, you're my favorite. Like, you're my favorite, so and so. You kept me up all night, but you're still my favorite so and so. And really meaning it. It's like not about the words, but it's about cultivating your capacity to find pleasure in the moment is what that practice is about.

So those are two things that I do that bring me immediate pleasure. And also, I think I started doing them because even when I wasn't doing the kind of like, purity politics thing, right? Like you're forgetting about so and so in your critique or in your organizing or whatever, I would still, in a, find myself, like it's a well worn pathway in my mind, an easily accessible radio station, right, to receive of like, critique, right? And like tear down. And this isn't good enough. And I feel like I really get where it comes from, and it's got me very far and really, I benefited from it in so many ways. And at the same time, when that radio station is playing, the pleasurable one isn't.

And it offers me a wonderful reminder of like, why wait for the perfect person or the perfect badadadadadada, in order to allow myself a level of clarity that actually feels really good.

So yeah. Anyway, those are two that are like super pleasure-filled that I do.

Morgan: I love hearing this. And I do feel like that's part of this book and part of what we all do for each other is just remind each other these really basic things over and over again. And just like pass back the same kind of basic wisdom.

What's live for me these days in terms of wanting is a relationship, like a romantic relationship. And I say it just to try to get myself like live, like to the part that's, I don't know, sore or something right now, or aching. Where the ache is now. And there's been times in my life where that ache is more manifest in like work things like, oh my God, why don't I have more? Why aren't I producing more? Having big opportunities to do more? The ache softens over there and then it just reappears somewhere else. And right now that is in the domain of I'm ready for a relationship, I want a relationship. And then, I'm going about it all wrong. I need to forget about it. I need to have a good attitude. I need to, you know, like what's the prescription for myself that is not welcoming it into my life?

And then your book was really helpful to be like, what's the fantasy that I think that will make possible? And in some ways, it's like, somebody will tell me to go to bed early. And like, somebody will tell me how to feed myself.

Dean: You already have me, Morgan. I'm already yours.

Morgan: My story is going to you, Dean. Which is that I'm like, literally, Dean has taught me how to cook. I was even gonna tell you, I was like, I made lentil soup today!

Dean: Beautiful.

Morgan: But the reality is also, I made the lentil soup. You know what I mean?

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Morgan: Like, I did that. And I also... Oh wait, you see this? For the radio listeners, my screen just exploded in fireworks. I don't understand what just happened.

Tourmaline: I think it a gesture, the hand gesture thing.

Morgan: I think it, yeah, I think it's my Judaism. Yeah. I think it's, I think it's somehow...

Dean: That was amazing! Lentil soup!

Morgan: It was serving tennis. I think that's maybe on point too, that the, the miracle. I do still want a relationship. I do still want to like have that intersection of emotional and sexual intimacy, and I don't have to wait to put myself to bed earlier, and I don't have to wait to feed myself. And I don't have to wait to feel loved. I'm incredibly loved. So it's both at the same time.

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Dean: I love that. This conversation also makes me think, I think one of my growing edges around pleasure is that I have actually a very fundamental belief that I'm working on releasing over time that my sexuality harms others. I think that probably a lot of queer people have this. And it comes up where like I'm hypervigilant about whether the ways I'm flirting or going on dates or something is inconveniencing anyone anywhere. And the people who are in the mix with me are like, it's not, it's good. And it's really great 'cause I can just check in, too, and be like, I'll think, have I been sneaky about this thing? And no, we all agreed to that. It was, you know, like I just need to be reminded that I'm not doing something awful

that I'm not doing. So that's probably one of my cutting edges.

And the other thing that your visits to your backyard made me think about was, I'm having an overall experience, especially over the last, I think since 2018 when I started reading this guy Jem Bendell's work on societal collapse. I've been having a really big digestion of, kind of the state that I believe the world is in. And it's a deep contemplation of my own death. And it's also, it has produced like immense appreciation for being alive in a human body.

And one of the ways I experience this actually is I often go on meditation retreats to this place in the desert, and I just will walk around the desert and the sand sparkles, which is just like, so wild. I mean, that is what sand does all over the world. But it's like, why am I in this body that was like made to perceive this beauty? Like I was made, I evolved from the earth and I was like, made to perceive this beauty and I'm perceiving it.

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Dean: And like you said earlier we're healing machines, Morgan. We are also pleasure machines, which is intense in an anti-pleasure culture in which I took in a lot of anti-pleasure messaging to survive.

And I, in my head I sing this like, rock ballad from like maybe the eighties, that's like, not a very good song, but this lyric is, I was made for loving you baby, you were made for loving me. And I'm singing it to the planet, and to the sand, and to the sunset.

As somebody who, a lot of my life, put all my eggs in the basket of sex and romance as a place to feel like Morgan was describing, parented, loved, seen, to deal with my neglect wounds, to be like, oh, I am already being held by like, the most divine lover, parent, whatever. And of course, I'm not always tuned into that, no problem. But if I can tune into it even once in a while, once in a while, it's very robust. And it's here for me all the time, and it's here for me no matter how bad things get, I will still have been alive and been an animal and lived on this planet that I evolved to live in, where the air is perfect for me and the food is available and the water exists, even if there are times when that's not true for everyone as much as we need it to be. That's incredible. And that for me is a kind of pleasure that's about ordinariness, and it's also more neutral than the kinds of pleasure seeking I have when I'm like looking to get high by being like, am I attractive enough? Do people love me enough? Do I have enough attention or money or whatever the things are that we are asked to like, get hooked on.

And that has been very, that's a new experience for me that maybe is a kind of like, self-love that wasn't available before.

Morgan: It reminds me of that Joanna Macy title of her book, World as Lover, World as Self. And you've actually been showing us how to do this for years. I remember you wrote some article like, a million years ago about like, looking at people at the train, like imagining how someone who loves them sees them.

Tourmaline: Yeah, I remember that.

Morgan: From Make zine. What was that from?

Dean: Yeah, that was this article I wrote about polyamory. And it was actually a letter I wrote to a person I was trying to convince to try this with me, that I turned into... you might remember this person, everybody, God bless them. It didn't turn out good.

And then I turned it into an essay and it was actually, it was a big inspiration for this book because it's, even though it's like the only thing I ever wrote like that, that just was kinda like that interpersonal polyamory stuff, it was the most read thing I ever wrote and people translated it to all these other languages, and people like, quote it when they introduce me, even though I think it's from 2004, or something. People really wanted to hear that, I think that piece around fundamentally treating our friends like lovers and our lovers like friends, and that thing about trying to see each other as you would see somebody if you were in love with them or if they were your child. Like we all need to do that in movement conflict so badly.

Morgan: And when you talk to movement elders, I feel like they always ask us, like, they also wanna know, are you dating anybody? They wanna talk about sex, too.

Tourmaline: Yeah.

Morgan: Like I know our JVP elders are like so excited to hear about our sex and dating lives because they matter. Like they really, they matter. They're part of why we're here.

I've heard from none of my movement elders that sex and dating is not important and that pleasure is not important. And I feel like this book is also helping us integrate that this is not just a domain we have to be perfect in or I improve in, but this is a domain we get to have. We get to have this. And we get to grow. And we get to be human.

We get to do this, we don't have to do this.

Dean: Just, there's an entire society designed to try to lock it down. Like we have all these wild, beautiful ways we wanna connect with others. And it's like, get married, other people's sexuality is a threat to you. Do it correctly. A deep internalization of it's wrong the way I wanna do it.

And so it's huge to be like, oh no, this belongs here. And it is wild and unpredictable and interesting and has strong sensations. And I'm not alone for having that. And like, choosing to try to move it away from a locked down approach is a part of my liberation. That's not just like a personal thing. It's like, it's part of our collective liberation.

Tourmaline: Yeah, that's what I was gonna say, because the first question I asked you was like, how does this relate to your other two books? You write about practice, right? It's at the heart of the practice, is this book and how we are relating to ourselves and each other that allows for the scale up to a mutual aid that allows for a scale up to a larger liberation movement.

It's very prefigurative in that way.

Dean: There's a thing where I think it's been pretty normal in our movement spaces that we've three shared for the last 25 years to say like, oh yeah, the meeting should be more fun. We should make this irresistible. Like that's a common thing. But I think the next level of that is like, admitting that we want people to join groups because they will find people to fuck and be friends with and who will visit them in the hospital when they're sick and to talk to when their dog dies and to housesit at their apartment and to give them a ride.

Like people are very fatally alone right now in a lot of ways. Either because they don't have enough connections at all, or because they're connected to people who don't share their views. Like I encounter so many people who don't have a single friend or family member who believes the radical awesome stuff they believe, and that's a not okay kind of loneliness. Like you need the people you fuck to sometimes also be people who share that stuff with you, or people you make art with, or whatever it is. There needs to be more of those overlaps, and people have been convinced they can live without it or that they can't find it. And so it's okay if we join movements to get our personal needs met. Not at the exclusion of everyone else. Not to the point where I'm like, I'm emotionally activated, and everyone in the group has to stop everything.

But there's just that thing of like, people are, I see this all the time, people are so professionalized in their unpaid activism. They're like, oh, this needs to operate like a nonprofit. All that matters is how many meals we got out, or how good our social media looked, or whether we're winning this popularity contest.

And it's like, what goes on in here makes the rest of it. It's all we have. And like if we did the action and at the end, we all hated each other, that's not been liberatory. And if we did the action and it was weird, but we like, learned something and we felt connected, had each

other's backs. Those pivotal moments, I'm sure you've had them, where like, you see someone you love being arrested and you feel this connection. Or you, you are in danger or someone just hit you or arrested you or whatever, and then someone has your back and stays with you or takes you to the emergency room. Like those things change us.

I just think so much about how many people I love were just treated as disposable as children in their families by their parents. And then they grow up and are resilient and alive enough to find people to actually give them the love they deserved. And like every moment where you get that love, like Morgan said, we're healing machines. We are like, oriented towards becoming whole and connected, even if we experienced wild disconnections. And it's okay that our movement groups are the places where that should happen.

Tourmaline: That's right.

Dean: They should, like, we do get to repair our family dynamics, but we can't not know we're working on it, or it just gets like, you know, we just act it out in the like sideways ways.

Morgan: It makes me think of so many people over this past nightmare of a year have taken action, direct action, for the first time, and have talked about how jail support is like one of the things that's like, that's how they know they're gonna do it the next time.

And I just think about this, you talk about the feminist politics of this book of like the kind of the invisibilized or the gendered reproductive labor of movements that often is like totally not seen. Like, we see the person on the mic, or we see the people getting arrested, but we don't see the jail support, and we don't see the people who are doing safety marshaling, and we don't see the people having like, endless amounts of conversation to help people come back when they're feeling activated and to work through conflict.

That's the invisible side of organizing. You know, there's the side you see, but then there's all this invisible side. Just like when you see a kid, there's all this invisible work that went into that kid. All the meals that were prepared, all this invisibilized reproductive work. And I think you're giving us tools for this, the reproductive work of our movements and our communities. And that so much of it falls on who already has the skill, we know why certain people already have the skill. And then that gets habituated into, oh, I'll never know how to do that, because that's your thing. Instead of, no, we can all learn how to relate to feelings openly and with candor and have hard conversations and say what we want. And that can radically expand our sense of hope and our sense of, oh, we're in this together. No matter what they throw at us, we are in this together.

Tourmaline: Yeah, that's right.

Dean: We can all be the facilitator around conflict. I hate this thing where it's like, Oh, things are tense. We gotta get an outside facilitator. There's not enough people, there's not a perfect facilitator. Also people are often thinking the facilitator is gonna be like judge and jury, which is not good. They're gonna find out that I'm right and she's wrong. And then also like...

Morgan: She is wrong. She is wrong.

Dean: Everyone who's wrong to me is wrong. Thank you for having my back.

...which is about vengeance. But that piece around what if 16 steps back when I first found it irritating that you didn't show up to the meeting, or when I first had a hard time that you were late or when I first felt like this group felt a little clique-ish, and I wasn't sure if I was included, if I'd actually talked about it then. And if we created a space where it was normal to talk about dynamics.

I've been having this fantasy, which I haven't done yet, of being like, what would a litany that would come at the beginning of meetings look like, that was about forgiveness? That was about like, we share some values around knowing that we all make mistakes. Naming some of the common cultural mistakes in our group, like we rush each other, or we forget to do things we said we were gonna do, or we pay too much attention to some people who have certain social skills and less to others, or we forget to welcome the newcomer, or whatever. And that we all have an intention here to give direct feedback and to also practice forgiveness. Not that the litany would be in, in lieu of one-on-one opportunities for feedback and forgiveness and apology, but I'm just like, how can we imbue these spaces with those values? Because where have we ever been in a space that had those values? Like never! Not in our family, not at school, not in our job. So I've just been thinking about this.

One thing I'll say that I see sometimes is people saying, Maybe we should have rules in our group that you can't have sex with anybody in the group, or that you have to tell everyone if you're sleeping with someone in the group. Have you seen people talk about this? This is like a, people keep asking me this question.

Tourmaline: Yeah. There are like some spaces where I feel like that was a thing.

Dean: This is like a bad workaround, to me. This is, instead of being like, let's be principled in the inevitable multiple connections, it's let's try to make the connections not happen. You know? And course, like, we know how that one works out.

Morgan: That can be a pendulum, too. That can be its own, like the sort of puritanical don't have sex and then the sort of the fetishization of a kind of...

Dean: Yeah.

Morgan: And I think that's also, we wanna notice that. Yeah, we can all be having all relationships with each other all the time. And it's like, actually we don't need to. We actually don't need to do everything here. Like, it doesn't need to be a one-stop shop for everything. So yes to like, we don't need to make these intense puritanical prohibitions, but also we wanna like, not... It does get hard, it does get hard like, having sex and dating in groups, it's hard. And our work is so precious and we wanna protect the work and we want... So it's that middle ground.

Dean: This came up for me in the part of the book where I write about new relationship energy addiction, which I got from the Polysecure book. And maybe Polywise. Some people come into social circles or groups and start dating people and love that initial escalation. Do escalation, escalation, escalation. And then as soon as things get out of that stage, drop people. And they do it over and over again and they don't know they're doing it, but it can leave this like trail of broken hearts and can be this really disruptive thing in groups. And so I was like, how do I write about this in a way that doesn't make anybody bad? Like, it's not better to stay in relationships longer. It's not better to not have them. But also it is useful to be like, okay, on the one hand, for example, I may be like, the romance myth is bullshit. I reject it. And also, the people I date are likely to have been heavily exposed to it. So I shouldn't pretend that they're gonna have no expectations around me about that. And I don't have to but it may be ethical to operate as if that is in their heads, and just saying once, I'm not looking for this or that, is not gonna be enough. And I might need to really think through like, am I giving a bunch of signals that are contradictory to what I'm saying. That holding, like Morgan, I think you're describing of like, yes, it actually is very sticky. And so it's not just open season, all prohibition is bad and therefore I'm gonna do everything and who cares what the consequences are. And everybody who's, thinks there's a problem is not sex positive enough. That's not balanced, that's not ethical, but more like, ugh, I wanna both reject like, these locked down morals. And I also want to like, be real about how it is right now and what a lot of people's expectations are and what kinds of communication that might require.

Tourmaline: Yeah, I think that's right, Dean.

Dean: I'm curious if you all have any things you wanna make sure we hit before we go?

Tourmaline: I did make a list of questions, so let me look at my list.

Dean: It's so sweet to me that you both read this book and thought about it so carefully.

Tourmaline: This book is brilliant! All of your books, I think in my experience, seek to cultivate new thoughts or old thoughts that form new connections and new insights, and you're not like just imparting wisdom. But there's something about the usability of this book that feels very right for this moment, where it's like, a book to come back to, like to come back and to be used. It's like really of service in that way. And to think through things. Like, I've done the What Else Is True? multiple times already. And I think that's why I come back to it because it's this pivoting to a perspective that I think at the base of it is clarity, right? It's like, yes, and, that is so necessary in this moment when I think a lot of people are feeling really bad because we have conditions that foster that feeling and reinforce that feeling and maybe disallow kind of clarity of the possibility that we, through our thoughts and actions and connections with each other are and can continue to grow something else.

And so it's like a practice. It lends itself to that practice in a way that I feel like, your other two books really changed how I was understanding and seeing and knowing the world. In this book, it's like a culmination, it's like an ongoing culmination to my interior condition, right? Which is why I make art, because I seek to affect my interior condition, like how I feel. And hopefully someone else connects to that. And to me, this book really speaks to me on that level.

Dean: Thank you, Tourmaline

Tourmaline: Yeah. Yeah. No, for real.

Morgan: Yeah. Such a deep yes to everything you just said, Tourmaline. And thank you Dean, for doing this work with and for us.

Can I read you a couple sentences from your conclusion? Because I feel like this is so powerful, what you say. Um, I ask myself how do I want to be in these times? And I think that sentence, it's almost like you can skip over the want and we can think that's how should I be? But you say how do I want to be in these times?

And you say, Again and again, the answer I come to is that I want to face up to these tragedies with an open and loving heart. I want to be part of collective efforts to care for others and stop as much destruction as possible. I want to appreciate every remaining moment of my life, even knowing that much of it is out of my control.

I'll just finish the paragraph 'cause it's so good. You say, I wanna

live according to my principles and priorities, not wasting time on nonsense I've been told is important. I want to be deeply connected to the people I love. I want to find more ways to care for strangers and create survival strategies that are collective and inclusive, not distrustful or insular.

And I just really appreciate you keeping us grounded in that North star or that compass of like, how do I want to be in these hard times? And reminding us that we get to be here and we get to also practice how we want to be here. So yeah, thank you.

Dean: It's very Joanna Macy to me. You know, she's like, we live in a great unraveling and I think that can be an overwhelm for people and it can be maybe an immobilizing overwhelm. 'Cause there's so much grief and letting go of how we thought it might be, or what we were told it was gonna be like to be alive or to grow up or whatever it is we're doing. And now we're here. And it's like, there's a level of awareness that's hard to cultivate, and acceptance. And then this is the life. What do we want it to, you know, what, like how do I want to feel? How do I cultivate that?

You all have been teaching me about that for a good long while. Thank you for helping me survive this long.

Tourmaline: Same.

Morgan: Love you both so much.

Tourmaline: Love you both.

Dean: I love spending time with Tourmaline and Morgan. I'm so grateful that they've been influencing my thinking and action for over 20 years. I rely every day on the things they've taught me about friendship and resistance, and I love seeing their gorgeous work in the world. My highest hope for my work would be that it would help other people build and sustain generous, inspiring, supportive friendships like these.

Thank you for joining me for the third episode of Love in a F*cked Up World.

This podcast is based on my new book of the same name, which is out now from Algonquin Books. I hope you'll pick it up from an independent bookstore in your community, definitely not Amazon or Audible.

You can find a full list of resources mentioned in this episode, including links to Tourmaline and Morgan's latest projects in the show notes.

Love in a F*cked Up World is hosted by me, Dean Spade. It is produced

and edited by Hope Dector. Thank you to Ciro, Eugene, Derekh, Kelsey, Lindsay, Jessica, Raindrop, and everyone else who helps with this podcast. Special thanks to Nicole Georges who encouraged me to make it. Our theme music is I've Been Wondering by The Ballet.

If you found the show useful or you have ideas of things you'd like to hear about, we'd love to hear from you. You can reach us at loveinaf0ckedupworld@gmail.com. The U in fucked is a zero. Or you can leave us comments on Apple Podcast or Spotify. I have an email list where I occasionally share new projects and opportunities to get involved. If you wanna join it, write to us.

We need each other more than ever, and I hope this podcast offers tools and ideas that can help us build and sustain strong relationships and strong movements. I hope you'll keep listening, subscribe and share this episode with the people in your life.