



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 75 with Akilah S. Richards

Learning Is Innate: Ancestral Childhood, Unschooling, and Healing

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(Excerpt from today's show by Akilah Richards)

I keep calling it "portal work" or "soul work" because it really has nothing to do with education in the conventional sense, and everything to do with learning and unlearning, unraveling, remembering, connecting, questioning, you know.

Like the things that are inherent in all of the ways we learn and engage naturally, like as part of nature, that you don't have to like simulate or call it "mathematics," you know, like in order for it to exist, in order for it to matter, in order for it to be relevant.

(Intro Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Intro]

[0:00:41]

Amber: Hi friends, and welcome to the Medicine Stories Podcast, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth. I am your host, Amber Magnolia Hill, and this is Episode 75 with Akilah Richards.

If the phrase "school wounds" stirs something inside of you, or the words "crisis schooling" describe your current reality as a parent or caregiver, or if you've just always intuited that there's something not quite right about compulsory schooling, this episode is for you.

So I've been aware of and really fascinated by unschooling and various forms of homeschooling for about 15 years now, but it wasn't until COVID, and really seeing the discussions happening online in mom groups, that I got passionate about doing a podcast about this.

So what I keep seeing over and over again is moms really at a breaking point with trying to navigate distance schooling with their kids. And what I keep thinking when I'm seeing this is how they don't even know that they don't have to do this. It hasn't occurred to them that there's an alternative to this system that we've all bought into. They don't realize that they can free themselves of it, and not in a judgmental or condescending way, but like, they literally don't even know it hasn't occurred to them.

So you know, rather than get into some Facebook comment weirdness with people, I just decided to put an episode out. And around the same time my friend, Dana, clued me in to the work of someone who clued me into the work of Akilah. And it was such a joy and an honor to have her on today.

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Amber: So I'm going to begin with a quote from an article that was published in Psychology Today by Dr. Peter Gray, and I've linked to the whole thing in the show notes.

In the beginning, for hundreds of 1000s of years, children educated themselves through self-directed play and exploration. In relation to the biological history of our species, schools are very recent institutions.

For hundreds of 1000s of years before the advent of agriculture, we lived as hunter-gatherers. Children in hunter gatherer cultures learned what they needed to know to become effective adults through their own play and exploration. The strong drive in children to play and explore presumably came about during our evolution as hunter-gatherers to serve the needs of education.

Adults in hunter-gatherer cultures allowed children almost unlimited freedom to play and explore on their own because they recognize that those activities are children's natural ways of learning.

With the rise of agriculture and later of industry, children became forced laborers, play and exploration were suppressed, willfulness— which had been a virtue— became a vice that had to be beaten out of children.

That passage reminds me, one of the most interesting things I've learned, is that humans are, in relation to all other species, have the longest childhood. We have the longest childhood of any other species, and that's taking lifespan into account.

And the reason is that we are so highly complex and intelligent, and our young need that much time to learn how to be human. And they can learn how to be human, all on their own, just by observation, exploration, and play. They don't need to sit in a classroom for seven hours a day being told how and what to think.

[0:04:37]

Amber: So I'm going to tell you briefly my story with my own kids because I haven't unschooled. I haven't homeschooled. My oldest is 14, and she's been in school the whole time. My little one is four. She's currently in a little preschool, but we will be doing probably some sort of homeschool on school situation with her.

So when I was pregnant with my oldest, we couldn't afford internet, we lived in Sacramento, and I would go down to the learning center there in Oak Park and obsessively research and read about free birth— see the previous episode on that I think is 48— and unschooling, printing out pages and pages of documents on these, being so sure that I was going to do both. I did do the former, and we did not end up unschooling because when we moved up here where we live now in the Grass Valley-Nevada City area of Northern California, there was this lovely little free, charter, Waldorf school.

All of our friends were going there, we loved, you know, the seasonal and natural rhythms, and the good food that the kids ate, and that they participated in the gardening and the making of the food and the handwork and, you know, all the things. I always say Waldorf kindergarten is extremely seductive. The classroom is all sweet and pastel and calming. It just seems like such a great place for kids to be.

But now that she's in eighth grade, I see that, at this point, it's not really different than anything else. She's still in a chair all day being told what to learn seven hours a day, and the social pressures are the same, too. That's probably the biggest challenge.

[0:06:25]

Amber: And I have to say that I, personally, and actually our whole family, have been happier, freer. Like the constraints have been loosened since school has been out for 10 months now, as of this recording in January 2021.

Oh, when I look back on just the daily grind, that just having one kid in school, and like an older kid, too, I was so much more stressed out. All the driving, all the planning, I don't know, I just feel better now. And I know it's really hard for kids, also, to not be in school for a lot of them. And I know that, especially teenagers and adolescents, the social aspect is so important. So I'm not trying to speak for anyone else here, but it's reminded me of what's possible when you step outside the system.

And now that 14 year old, I keep telling her like, “You can drop out. We can unschool, we can try to travel, or like, pursue what you're interested in, start a business.” And she doesn't want to at all. In fact, she really wants to get into the college prep high school. So she's going like full speed, school and schooling, and that's fine. That's great. I'm proud of her. And I'll be there to support her through that.

But I'm definitely interested in taking a different route with my little one who hasn't even, you know, really started school yet. So I think they're gonna have very different paths through their childhood education, and I am curious to see how it unfolds.

And I am in the same place as so many parents where I'm like, I gotta go to work. What am I supposed to do? I can't keep my four year old home all day. I will get nothing done. So we'll see what happens. You know, I know there are a lot of homeschool groups, and like co-ops forming in my area. And I'm interested in that.

[0:08:15]

Amber: Another thought I keep having around all this is that with all of the problems, all of the multifaceted, complex, huge problems facing the world, the human and the earth family today, I

really feel like moving away from compulsory schooling is one huge step towards having people able to think differently and be able to see solutions in all this mess.

Okay, with that, I'm gonna read you a [Akilah's bio](#):

Akilah S. Richards is passionate about mindful partnerships and conscious parenting. She uses audio and written mediums to amplify the ways that unschooling, in particular, is serving as healing grounds and liberation work for Black, Non-Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.

Her celebrated unschooling podcast, Fare of the Free Child, and the numerous workshops and gatherings she has been a part of have garnered the attention of Forbes magazine, The New York Times, Good Morning America, and most importantly, BIPOC families interested or living in more healthy, consent-based, intergenerational relationships. Her recent experiences within the intersection of privilege, parenting, and power are detailed in her latest book, Raising Free People: Unschooling as Liberation and Healing Work.

So guess what the Patreon bonus is for this? Of course, it's a giveaway of Akilah's amazing book, and it's signed as well, and as always, is open to everyone, not just patrons of the podcast. So you can head over to Patreon.com/MedicineStories to enter. The giveaway will close three weeks from whatever day this podcast ends up being released, which I hope is really soon.

Bonus the intro to her book was written by Byo Acomalafe, who Ayana Young and I spoke about when she was on the podcast. And it's like the most amazingly written intro— or not intro, preface— I've ever read to a book. It's spectacular if you're a fan of good writing, yet another reason to get this book.

Akilah was short on time, so we only spoke for a half hour. So this will seem shorter than usual, and it is. And I've got a few other resources in the show notes if you want to know more, especially about the history of compulsory schooling, because it's very interesting. And Akilah does touch on that a little bit towards the end of the interview, which is, you know, how did we get here? Like, it's not normal, what we're doing, and there is a reason that it's like it is.

So okay, without further ado, here's my interview with Akilah Richards.

(Transitional Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Interview Begins]

[0:11:15]

Amber: All right. Hi Akilah. Welcome to Medicine Stories.

Akilah: Thank you, Amber.

Amber: So let's begin with just sort of a big picture, and looking at this cultural moment, it really seems to me, you know, just on social media I posted something about unschooling on Facebook a few days ago, really expecting some blowback, at least from some people.

Absolutely everyone was like, "Yes, I wish I had done this with my kids," or "I'm planning to do this with my kids," or "We're taking ours out of school right now," including people I really wouldn't have thought would be able to do that.

Are you seeing this culture shift happening right now around the idea of schooling?

Akilah: Totally, and I could not be more excited for young people, in particular, and then the rest of us. I have seen it, Amber.

Because what I think is that there is a re-humanizing of our doings that is calling for us to really, like slow down and pay attention to the ways that we have colonized things, like childhood, and just like humanness and how we spend our time and energy.

So I am seeing it, and it makes sense right now, and it's such portal work, right, like such opportunities for us to go into and through certain portals that we definitely need to go through.

Amber: Yes, so what brought you here, you know, so far ahead of everyone else? And sort of placing that in a bigger context as well, so along with hearing your personal story, can you tell us a little bit about the history of schooling and the history of unschooling, and then how you came to it?

Akilah: Yeah, so I can definitely tell you about my history of unschooling, and how we came to it. But as far as the history of schooling, no, and the good news is there's no need for me to do that, because we're around in a time where everybody can get all levels of access online, so the history of it. But I will context it, Amber, I will talk about, like, elements of it that I feel are relevant to my story, because that's where I feel comfortable talking from.

So my daughters, I call them "mine," but they also own themselves. And I say that not to be like, to sound deep or whatever. I say it because I also need to remind myself constantly, because we're steeped in a system that doesn't see children as, like, sovereign. So it's my own practice.

And so Marley and Sage are their own people and my babies, who are now 16 and 14, and they are both. They invited Chris, my partner, their dad, and me to this space of unschooling because they were in conventional education. They were in a public elementary school.

And in the short time they were there, about two and a half years total for Marley, and Sage is a little bit younger, they resisted so much. They pushed back so much, they named so much of why school was an interruption for them, that Chris and I just kind of relented. Like we didn't know what to do, but we knew that what we were doing, which was schooling, wasn't working.

And so we stopped it after a couple years of Marley and Sage protesting, basically. And I have a book out now, called *Raising Free People*, and I talk a lot about that, like the specific ways that Marley and Sage protested.

And Amber, over time, Chris, and I just learned to listen to them, just as simple as that sounds now in my head when I hear it. And the more we listened to them, the more we realized that we didn't actually understand how learning happened, and that we didn't operate as, like, trustworthy adults for Marley and Sage, even though we were like, you know, their adults, but instead we were extensions of the school system, and as it turns out for us, we couldn't do both. We couldn't be trustworthy to them and still have allegiances to what school and school requires.

And so unschooling has really been like our untethering from the idea that Marley and Sage are "owned," over to like what it would mean if they own themselves, and that their consent was a factor in their education and their everything, you know, like how we were participating in their oppression, and then then we learned a bunch of other stuff that we didn't even know we were gonna learn. *(Akilah laughs)*

[0:15:52]

Amber: It really went beyond just unschooling for you. It wasn't just, "Oh, this is a way that we're doing the same thing just at home," but you guys really did some deep work, some mad question-asking, and ended up unschooling yourselves as well.

Can you tell us about that?

Akilah: Yes, yes. And, you know, I love that you said "mad question-asking" right. Like, I love that so much because that's what, for me, I wouldn't say that we went beyond schooling, unschooling. I would say that we understood and still continue to understand unschooling, because all of that beyond is unschooling.

That's what unschooling is: it's not about a different way to do school or a nicer way, or, you know, how children actually learn. That's really, again, that's the portal, you know, the education thing is the portal. But once you get in there, once you up in that piece, then you realize that it's about power and our perception of power, it's about belonging, it's about wounds, you know, harm.

School wounds, in particular, many of us are familiar with ways that we were wounded in school, or as a result of our school identity, you know, our student hood, and how we performed it, or how we didn't perform it. You get to be with those things and recognize how all of those things inform your relationships, and how you view people, and how you weaponize your unprocessed emotions, and how you respond to when people over whom you expect to have power don't agree with that power. You know, like you learn all these things, all of those things are what unschooling that's what comprises unschooling, you know.

Amber: So it sounds to me, from reading your book and listening to your podcast, that it's like a radical presence every day.

Akilah: Love it.

Amber: Yeah. And and, again, the mad question asking, and just deepening into what, like, what has my culture and society done to me? And how can I undo this and make sure that my children don't have it done to them as much as possible?

Akilah: Correct, right, because I would definitely not say “make sure that…” because we can’t. So it’s like, it’s about what we can make sure of though. Hmm. Oh, this is good, Amber. I didn’t even think about this until you said it like that.

[0:18:24]

Akilah: What we can make sure is that we are present with it, right?

And so, that presence— the knowledge of it, the naming, the reality that our culture does do this sort of “othering” that makes belonging and autonomy and consent and these things that we understand, to some extent, and want, to some extent, you know.

The ways that our culture can be contrary to that, so that we can have, I like to call it just “language and practice” for it, so not necessarily that we can always avoid, certainly not, that as parents we need to have it or embody it before our children can get it. That’s foolishness. But more so that we can identify it, and in a moment say, “Oh, I see how I reacted when my daughter basically asked me for, like, some space. And I acted like that was like this big problem. And I get now that that’s because I actually see her body as mine. And I see the ways that I’ve played into that. And I realized that I don’t believe that, but I’m not quite sure how to operate differently, and so here I am.”

And so then that calls for the mad question asking, like what I am gonna do with that feeling? What am I going to do? How am I going to change it? So who can I be around? What am I reading? What’s my environment like? Am I taking care of my plants? Does that make me feel like a better listener sometimes?

Like things you would never even put together when you invite and you’re present, you don’t need to put them together because now you can just kind of hear them and see them, and your kids are one of those things that you hear and see very differently and yourself.

Amber: Wow, yeah. It just sounds like you really have to be in your integrity and in a growth mindset. And one of my friends commented— she’s been unschooling her nine year old since the beginning— and she’s like, “You know, it’s not what most people think it is, you know. The challenges that come up are different than you’re expecting them to be.”

[0:20:16]

Amber: Have your girls been happy with it the whole time now, as teenagers? Are they like, proud of it? Do they ever want something different?

Akilah: Sure, I would say similarly, you know, so they are just like human beings in their teenage years. So just like I was in school, I was very schooled, very conventionally schooled, and I wanted something different sometimes than what I had most times. So yeah, you know, they’re dynamic and interesting and regular, like other kids in that way.

They are not, like, what would I call it, evangelists of unschooling. Like, they don’t see their job as to be the proof point, or to show people that it works. And I’m also really protective of that for them. What I will say is that Marley and Sage are happy people. They’re really sharp. You know, they know how they learn.

I went to college and graduated and all of that, and did great and got lots of scholarships, and I was captain of this and blah, blah, blah, I was a very good student. And yet, Marley and Sage teach me so much and helped me unlearn so much about everything, from like me trying to learn Spanish, which I've been trying to learn, and I've taken classes since I was probably like 10, and still don't know nothing but the curse words and a little bit more. And Marley and Sage since they left school are both multilingual, and they didn't... They did some tutoring from someone who spoke the language, but they really go about it from this very different, like immersive, curiosity-centered, mad question-asking way that I am now using. I'm finally getting better with my language acquisition goals and to like human relationship things. They're just so interesting and dynamic.

And their friends, they have a lot of unschooled friends as well, as well as some friends who are in school, and the differences are so interesting. And they're comfortable with different types of people, because they've never really looked at themselves as like, the children in a room to perform and, you know, be gazed upon because we also travel, you know.

When we broke the girls out of school prison, we also realize that we lived in this neighborhood, as one of few black families in the big house with the this and the that because of school, and that when we release those things, we actually didn't need to have any more money than we had, which wasn't very much, to travel to different parts of the world. And so Marley and Sage grew up with a lot of richness in that way that didn't have to do with money, you know, which then supported our beliefs about trying to sever from capitalism as much as possible and to understand how to sign a lease and how to be in community with somebody and how to, like a life skill ship that they would never be getting in like middle school, or let alone elementary when they left.

[0:23:15]

Amber: Yeah, I love that part of your book of how it really, like, unwound your whole life when you took them out of school. You realized, like, "We don't have to do any of this." (both laugh)

Akilah: It was a portal, Amber. It was a total— I keep calling it portal work or soul work because it really, it has nothing to do with education in the conventional sense, and everything to do with learning and unlearning, unraveling, remembering, connecting, questioning, you know, like the things that are inherent in all of the ways we learn and engage naturally, like as part of nature, that you don't have to like, simulate or call it "mathematics," you know, like, in order for it to exist, in order for it to matter, in order for it to be relevant, unless you want to.

So like in unschooling, it's not... I'd say all the time that I'm anti-school, but unschooling is not anti-school. Unschooling is just anti-school as the focal point, as the haven of learning, because it's not. It's not, and, in some cases, it's actually in the way.

Amber: I want to go back briefly to touch on what you said about "Your girls are not the proof point." I was thinking about this in the bath last night and remembering I read some sort of unschooling memoir when I was pregnant with my oldest 15 years ago, and kind of the whole thrust and point of the book was "And my kids went to college, and they did great, and now they have good jobs and make a lot of money."

And I was realizing in all the ways I've dabbled in homeschooling and unschooling over the years that that's always presented as the ultimate.

Akilah: Yeah, totally, I call that schoolish-ness, you know, like the ways that, well, in this case, the schoolish-ness is kind of literal, because college is school. But that mindset of wrapped up, good story, American Dream-direction thing is the schoolish-ness. And when we do that, so much of the actual human and so much of the actual journey gets lost and minimized, you know.

I liken it often when I'm talking to people in ways that it came up for me, one of which was that if my partner, whose name is Chris, if Chris just constantly was like, "Akilah, like, you're great, man, like, you're awesome and interesting, you're great with hula hoops, because that's your thing. But if you could just get this other degree, and you could just then then fill in the blank, that's when you could totally..." like, if he dealt with me like that, he wouldn't still be my partner, you know. We might not even be like civil together, because you would, it would be so diminishing. But he also would have, I would have the capacity to walk away or to be like, "That's not okay for me."

Whereas with children, you know, like, we take care of them, and yet, we're saying all these things about who they could be, very much looking right past like who they are, and who they are, is how we get to partner with them.

And that's what I'm learning how to do, and that's the big unraveling that it offered in my life, you know, like, that's the way that it's not just about education, or getting to college, or whatever. It's like, do they even need college? Because for some people like me, yes, there were some wonderful sacred experiences, but there was also a bunch of debt that I still navigate, and probably I wouldn't have even gone down that path, you know.

Just to offer the opening for people to design a path that is about learning and rigor and challenge and growth and expansion, with their full consent, that's all it's saying.

[0:27:09]

Amber: It's almost like "schoolish-ness," as you call it— I love that word— is like we're constantly saying to our children, "You're not quite there yet."

Akilah: Exactly. Exactly, which then also reaffirms that we are not quite there yet, because we're the ones who need to get them there. And then the teachers are also the problem, because they can't even get them there either.

What is the problem? Like it's so, every human is the problem, which tells you that the thing that keeps making the humans the problem is the problem. Because if every human, at some level, has an issue with the thing, then it is inhumane. And there are many things that we normalize or have normalized, we didn't do it, but we now perpetuate it.

There's so many things that are normalized, that are inhumane. We have just survived them, or they were the things that we used to survive.

Amber: It makes me want to cry, really, you know.

Akilah: Right?

Amber: Yeah. And that, really, I see like schooling as setting little human beings up for a lifetime of inhumane systems and treatment and acceptance of those systems.

Akilah: And that's where the research should come in, Amber, around the history of school, like, understand that. Gosh, I'm forgetting his name, and he has the same name as this famous Jamaican musician, too. Anyway, look that up, you know, for folks listening, because the history of schooling was very much about the industrial era and revolution, and making sure that adults had a place to keep their children while they were trained, either for the factories, or to keep the children in the places where the factory workers would be. Like, it wasn't about the human and learning; that's the narrative, that's the marketing.

That's also the brilliance of humans: the way that we can take things and compost them and turn it into something good, you know, the way that, like, enslaved folks did with food, you know. We had the worst parts of the food, and then we turned it into soul food that brought joy, even though it didn't have a certain nutritional content, you know.

Different types of people and beings do this over time. Humans do this; it does not mean that the thing is right for us. We do this in our relationships today. It doesn't mean the thing is right for us, let alone best for us, it's just that it's what we know.

And right now, in the middle of this pandemic, and all the crisis schooling, and all the interest in self-directed education, which is beautiful, now we have an opportunity to be like, what might normal mean, if consent was a factor? What might normal mean if my relationship with my child included an observation and an honoring of what they need and how it seems that they learn?

And I'm constantly in curiosity about that, instead of, like, designing curriculum that doesn't actually include them and making them adhere to it. Like those are new normals that we could, like we could be about that together now.

[0:30:15]

Amber: Is that, at least partially, what you mean by consent, is that you are not designing curriculum and telling them where their attention is going to be placed?

Akilah: Mm-hmm. Yes, that's what I mean. And I also mean consent in that sometimes you consent is about a thing that you say yes or no to, like, outright. And then other times, it's your oppression, it's how you get in the way of something.

So when we are in the way with our curricula, and our ideas of what childhood and children should be, and how your particular child should spend their time, based on your observation, which is very much influenced by the marketing around like the whole education complex, when you are in that space, you're in the way of their idea, their capacity to develop consent for themselves.

So like a simple thing, for example, like bedtime: as an unschooling family, our particular unschooling family, we don't do bedtime, and we didn't do, we haven't done it for many, many years. The reason why we phased that out, we went from schoolish to self-directed in that way, is that we realized that if we set a bedtime for Marley and Sage, even when they were just like, I don't know, 11 and nine, it meant that we were in the way of them, recognizing like, what it looked like for them to be super tired, or to push through a thing because something else was really important to them in that moment.

And sleep, like for me, as an entrepreneur, when I decide, “Oh, I want to take this time to look up Amber’s podcast so that, you know, that I want to do that. So I’m not going to take this extra nap or whatever.” Like, I get to do that. And then I know that that means I need to shut down a little bit later today, because if I go past 10, I’m really cranky, and da, da, da.

These are things that I know now in my 40s, as a result of hitting that wall like 50,000 times, and not even recognizing what the hell wall I’m hitting before I could even name it. As such, I’m beating up on myself for not being able to produce another thing, because that’s what society upholds: our capacity to produce, particularly for black people. That’s our history.

So now, for me as a woman, as a human, and as a black woman, raising black women, when I give them that back, when I get out of the way, that is them reconnecting with the bodily autonomy that the people before us who look like us did not have. So like, that’s how it’s also liberation work, and just like re-humanizing of our processes.

Amber: Yeah, you’re teaching them, you’re showing them, you’re giving them space to trust themselves.

Akilah: Yes, I’m not teaching it, I’m not showing it, I’m giving them the space, because much of it is really emergent, and it’s observation, and it’s not like I don’t unschool my children, we unschool. Amber: So you watch me go from schoolish-ness, you know, just in the way...

Akilah: I did! Because that’s the more humane way. That’s what we do. *(Akilah laughs)* Yep.

Amber: Yeah. I love that. I wrote that down from your book that, you know, they’re tuning into their own bodies, rather than being told when to eat and pee. I mean...

Akilah: Yeah! That’s what happens at school. It’s normal. It’s happens in our jobs. Like when I was in corporate America, somebody told me when I could eat and pee, too.

Amber: Yeah.

Akilah: And I was used to it.

[0:33:41]

Amber: Let’s just talk about— I mean, I know people throw so many “what ifs” at you— but the one that that I see come up so often is: how are working parents supposed to do this? And how is anyone who’s not, like, rich and white supposed to do this?

Akilah: Yes, yes. Yes. So that’s, of course, what comes up in the book. I talk so much about that.

One of the things is that my podcast, and I’m so proud of and grateful for it, not from a sense of, because it’s mine, but because of who and what it has brought me, which is community. It’s the same: the who and the what are the same in community.

I’ve found that so much of the myth around who “can” or who “can’t,” is rooted in the myth of white supremacy, like the idea of that, which is also directly connected to capitalism, which is why we think that anything that’s really about like joy and consent and humanizing, you can’t get that until

you're rich, or you can't get that unless you're white or male. So even just the idea of questioning, begins your decolonization. It begins it.

And on my podcast, you meet families who are doing it, you meet single moms with children, with chronic illness, for whom unschooling was actually the solution to a lot of the things that they dealt with— obviously, not the medical issues, but some of them— in terms of therapy and the strain that came with trying to conform a child to schoolish-ness, when a child needed something different, lots of single parents with children, who have the same abilities and no chronic illnesses, but just needed something different.

You see couples who work outside the home full time, who are part of communities that they either created or just, like ,bought into, people with different socioeconomic statuses, who, again, are part of collectives, cooperatives, unschooling schools, the Agile Learning centers, Sudbury schools.

All these different ways that unschooling and other forms of self-directedness are practiced, that's how they do it. They do it in community, because the how it looks for my family, in terms of traveling and in terms of being home-based, in terms of not in a particular place with another group of people, that's one way.

But the configurations— just like human beings and our language and our way— they are endless and dynamic, because they are humane and call for that.

[0:36:09]

Amber: Before we go, I want to read your definition of unschooling to you and just see if anything sparks further comment on your part. I think it's beautiful and important to keep in mind, as I unschool my own mind as “a child trusting, anti-oppressive, liberatory, love-centered approach to parenting and caregiving.”

Akilah: Yes, absolutely. The love-centered part is really important because, again, the decolonizing the work begins the minute you start to question.

Because we, most of us, love our children, right— like except for whoever— we love our children. We love children. Even as society, we say that. We have lots of nonprofits and initiatives around it and all of that. We love children.

But if our definition of love does not include consent, and if the people that we love, you know, if they're loving us back doesn't include us being trustworthy to them, then it gives us an opportunity to evaluate our definition of love and our practice of love, and love is so actionable.

So that part is what sticks out for me right now, as we are crisis schooling and panicking about the different ways that our norm has been torn from under us, even the parts of the norm that we didn't even like. Well, we still didn't expect it to happen like this.

For you to remember, like, what are some of the ways, or to question some of the ways that you can actionize love differently? You know, can your love in action be more consent-based? Can it be more observant and less instructional? Might that even feel better for you to be less of an instructor in everybody's lives?

What might that mean, then, when you have a little bit more space? Like what might love for yourself look like when you're not so caught up in what someone else might need to be, you know? Like, that's that's the rhythm that I would invite around love-centeredness in particular.

Amber: Seems like a pretty juicy portal into self love.

Akilah: Right? You see it. And everything is everything. So like whatever, whenever one shows up all the other ones are present. It's just like, what are we looking at? What are we looking at?

[0:38:35]

Amber: Okay, before we totally for real go, you have an amazing podcast *Fair of the Free child*, your book, *Raising Free People: Unschooling as Liberation and Healing work*, and then you have your online courses, which there are many of them. They all look amazing. So for people who want to go deeper, there's a lot of ways to connect with you.

Akilah: Totally. And I would say RaisingFreePeople.com is a really good starting point because that's, you know, the primary space. I also have a Make It Happen community, Make It Happen family, I call it, which is over on Patreon. And I go... it's not necessarily extra content. I'm just more present there, in terms of just like showing up and sharing things and inviting conversation around episodes of the podcast and that sort of thing. But yeah, so primarily raisingfreepeople.com and also my Make it Happen family over on patreon.com/Akilah.

Amber: Alright, awesome. I'll put those links in the show notes.

And I am extremely grateful for your perspective and how you've already helped me to see things differently. And I'm so happy that you made the time to talk with me today.

Akilah: You are so welcome Amber, I've very much enjoyed our conversation. Thank you for the invitation and for what you are doing as well. Like all of this is portal work, you know.

Amber: Amen.

Akilah: Yes. Yes, yes.

(Exit Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Closing]

[0:40:03]

Amber: Thank you for taking these Medicine Stories in. I hope they inspire you to keep walking the mythic path of your own unfolding self. I love sharing information and will always put any relevant links in the show notes. You can find past episodes, my blog, handmade herbal medicines, and a lot more at MythicMedicine.love. We've got reishi, lion's mane, elderberry, mugwort, yarrow, redwood,

body oils, an amazing sleep medicine, heart medicine, earth essences, so much more. More than I can list there. [MythicMedicine.love](https://www.mythicmedicine.com).

While you're there, check out my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Spirit Medicine?](#)" It's fun and lighthearted, but the results are really in-depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with both the medicine you are in need of and the medicine that you already carry that you can bring to others.

If you love this show, please consider supporting my work at [Patreon.com/MedicineStories](https://www.patreon.com/MedicineStories). It is so worth your while. There are dozens and dozens of killer rewards there, and I've been told by many folks that it's the best Patreon out there. We've got e-books, downloadable PDFs, bonus interviews, guided meditations, giveaways, resource guides, links to online learning, and behind-the-scenes stuff and just so much more. The best of it is available at the two-dollar a month level. Thank you.

And please subscribe in whatever app you use, just click that little subscribe button and review on iTunes. It's so helpful, and if you do that you just may be featured in a listener spotlight in the future.

The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her beautiful song "Wild Eyes." Thank you, Mariee.

And thanks to you all. I look forward to next time!