



## Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 31 with Sanyu Estelle

Word Witchery, the Ancestors, & Tarot

October 30, 2018

[0:00:00]

*(Excerpt from today's show by Sanyu)*

*When I work with the unknown, we work with our ancestors first because they're our closest link into the unknown.*

*They were alive. They are our blood. And they crossed over to the other side.*

*So they are literally a direct link, energetically, to that side.*

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

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[Intro]

[0:00:24]

**Amber:** Hey, hey, welcome to Medicine Stories. This is Episode 31, and I'm Amber Magnolia Hill, talking today to Sanyu Estelle.

Sanyu is amazing. We talk about:

- The power of words and knowing the etymology of what you're saying.
- Different ancestral migratory paths that humans took over time. And you know that the DNA testing that can tell you which one's your ancestors took talked about that on that podcast a few times
- The history of the word queer and being multsexual.
- Sanyu's Belizean and Ugandan roots.
- Why to work with our ancestors first and foremost when starting not out on any spiritual path.
- What it looks like when a genealogy/research nerd pieces together an ancestor's life, placing our forebears in the wider socio-historical context of their times.

- Discovering a great grandmother's life through understanding colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade
- The feeling of being the first generation in a new land. I really loved how Sanyu framed this as knowing that she was going to be the first person in her line to be buried in America. Because you know, the land that our dead are in is the land of our ancestral home.
- The ancestors and Tarot being claircognizant.
- When illness is a spiritually-energetic leveling up
- The interweaving of Christianity and spiritualism in Sanyu's family.

This makes me want to jump in real quick and say that “spiritualism”, that word, is different from spirituality. I see people confuse these and misuse the word spiritualism a lot. We all know what spirituality means, although we all define it differently. But spiritualism is like the belief in ghosts, mediumship, the ability to communicate with the dead, basically.

- Working with dreams
- Opening yourself to the wisdom and weirdness of the multiverse.
- Naming things collapses possibilities and other ideas from Taoism.
- And the Plant Alchemy deck that Sanyu is currently working on alongside a friend.

**[0:02:43]**

**Amber:** So I want to just talk really quickly about this podcast and about if you're thinking about writing to suggest yourself as a guest or someone else as a guest.

So here's a little paradox: I'm both not seeking new guests and open to suggestions. I'm not seeking new guests because I already have a list of like 30 or 40 people that I would like to be on the podcast. I probably reached out to three or four of them at this point. And, you know, it's based on people whose work has touched me; mostly people whose books I've read, but not always. People are not always authors, of course, who've been on the show. And so, it's also a really slow turnover time, like, I mean, seriously at this point — and the reason I'm taking a little break from interviewing — is because it's taking like three months to get interviews out, that I've already done. And that just feels like too long of a lag time. You know, I have people write me and be like, “You should interview me this month because this is what's going on this month. And this is my area of expertise. It would be a perfect fit.” And I'm like, “Yeah, that sounds great, except, first of all, our interview would be a few months in the future. And then secondly, when it was released, would even be later than that.”

So it's, you know, I'm just not working in that way. I'm not working in that way because I got kids and I'm running this whole operation, the podcast and the medicine business, mostly on my own. You know, my husband helps enormously with the business, but the podcast is all me, and I just have so little free time to do it. So little. So those are just things to keep in mind.

**[0:04:36]**

**Amber:** And also, though, I have definitely responded to people before who reach out and suggest themselves. Like there's been a few I'm like, “Yes, you're awesome. This was great. It's totally in alignment with what I'm doing.” And you know, it's also random sometimes, like I just don't have time right now to read this whole email, or I just did a very similar interview. So it doesn't really make sense to do this other one, or I would have said “yes” to this six months ago because my life circumstances were different, and now they're not. And it's just like, please like, don't put so much

pressure on me. And so much like, I don't know, like, heaviness and clout on this show. It's really not that big of a deal. I don't get a ton of downloads.

You know, the fans of this show are like mega fans, just wonderful people, and it's so heartening. It's so heartening to be in community with you all. You know, when I read the iTunes reviews, the ratio of reviews to the number of episodes that have been released is like giant, compared to any other show I've ever looked at their reviews, which means that a whole lot of people love this show enough to go write an iTunes review, which is amazing. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!

And I think that gives people, like, this false impression that I have a shit ton of listeners, and I really don't. I really don't. It's like a few thousand, which is great, obviously happy to be speaking to that number of people.

But I think people have this false impression that if they get on this podcast like their, you know, career or whatever they're doing is gonna, like, explode or that's really going to help them, and it's probably really not. Of course it will introduce you to a few thousand new people, and that's great, but it's not like... I just think a lot of people put a lot more on me and on the show than reflects reality.

[0:06:35]

**Amber:** And, you know, whenever like someone comes at me with just this language, where it's like they're just trying to promote themselves, and they think that the show exists just to promote people, that's just a big turn off, even if their work looks cool. You know? That's not how I envisioned this show at all.

I envision it as a way for me to share what's inspiring me and what I think will help other people. That's it. Like, and, of course, that in the, in that process, then whoever I'm interviewed is being, I guess, promoted because they're being introduced to a new audience, but that's not the point of this show. So, you know, if you come at me with that energy, it's just probably going to be a mismatch.

And yeah, you know, I have got that "epic autoresponder" people say to me all the time, where I just have to really put up the boundary that like, I literally, literally can't respond to most people who email me. I just... Time, you know, time and energy, like, those things are both incredibly finite in the universe in my life right now as a mom, and so, I'm doing my best, and it does not mean that I think your work isn't worthwhile. There's a lot that I'm like, "This is so awesome," and it's just not a fit right now. It's just not gonna work.

So please keep that in mind. I'm sorry if you've ever written, and you haven't heard back from me. I also don't almost never check the, you know, the other inbox on Instagram because it's just full of people, I don't know, like wanting things from me and saying weird things to me, like people make crazy requests. So that's that.

I'm not actively looking for guests, and I'm open to them, and if you're going to reach out, you have to do so with an attitude of you know, whatever happens is okay, and this show is not the only way to get your good work out into the world.

[0:08:38]

**Amber:** So I want to tell you about the Patreon offering that Sanyu has given us. It's an audio recording. It's her November Tarot forecast. And you know, I just, as I talked about, I think two episodes ago, number 29 just now really opening to Tarot. I never really vibed with it. And as I've also talked about, just living in a super New Age community here in Northern California, it's just like there's so many people doing it in ways that are a turnoff to me.

But then I got the Wildwood Tarot, and this deck just speaks to my soul; the imagery and the wisdom therein is based on like pre-Christian, Pagan, European symbolism and lifeways. And that's my ancestry, and it just it really speaks to me. And so I've just been opening to it since this interview with Sanyu because, again, it was a couple months ago. And it was really fun for me to listen to this November Tarot forecast where she pulls three cards and talks about their meaning and weaves them all together.

And I just felt really grateful to be able to learn from her because she really strikes me as just a master of this art because she's been doing it for so long. In our interview she says that she practiced on her own for five years. And now she's been giving readings for five years. And what I've come to learn about people who really are in integrity with Tarot and with giving readings is that first of all, their wisdom goes so far beyond just the deck that's in their hands. You know, it really takes a learned, grounded, wise person to sit in front of someone else and do this reading for them and interpret what's happening and help them filter this through their own lives and gather some sort of guidance and help from it.

And this really describes Sanyu. She's just, you know, she's so much bigger than her Tarot reading. Her wisdom is vast, and she's able to interweave all of her other forms of study into the symbols and the words on these cards. So I just really enjoyed listening to this and felt, yeah, like, guided. I felt guided by it.

And I'm just looking forward for myself, for going deeper with my own practice with the Wildwood deck.

**[0:11:16]**

**Amber:** So yeah, Sanyu calls at Tarot-py. If you would like some Tarot-py yourself right now and especially after you listen to the interview and really get into towards the end where we talk about how Sanyu has just opened herself up to this communion with the multiverse. And, you know, it's like, whatever is out there, whatever this intelligence of life is, know she's listening and keeps talking to her.

So it's... totally lost my train of thought right there... just a pleasure to have her give us this half hour November forecast. So check it out [Patreon.com/MedicineStories](https://www.patreon.com/MedicineStories). It's there for two bucks a month or less.

And hey, thank you! Thank you to everyone who bought some medicine from us during the last shop update. It was crazy how many orders we got. It's truly beyond what I imagined. And I was still deep in filling orders. So I got through 100 orders last week, and I still have 150 ahead of me. It's just me doing this. It's just me doing this. We can't afford to pay for help because any tiny little extra money we get pays for child care so that I can fill these orders and make those podcasts. So it's just me, and a lot of the orders contain multiple bottles, so it's much slower going than usual. Most orders are just one bottle.

So if you place an order I hope to get it out this week, the week this podcast is going to come out, Halloween week, but hopefully you saw the shop announcement across the top of every page on the website when you went to place your order which said to please allow up to three weeks for delivery. It will almost certainly be less, and I'm doing my best. But yeah, I'm starting to hear from people who are like, "Where's my order?" and I'm like, "I'm doing my best." I'm really am. I'm doing my best. And thank you so much.

Yeah, this batch of extra potent elderberry elixir was really, really fun to make. And we always love this first release of the season and getting this medicine into people's homes and refrigerators. I know a lot of you wait for it, and there are still a few bottles left. If you're listening, I'm sure there will still be a few left in this release. So that's at mythicmedicine. love.

[0:13:46]

**Amber:** I'm gonna read you Sanyu's bio real quick. And you're probably gonna be like, "Whoa, what does that mean? I want to know more about that word." And the first question I ask is, let's dissect this bio and what all these words mean, and so we do that right away.

So [Sanyu Estelle](#) is:

*Pigmented (78%), womoonist (as constant and faithful as the tides), cissy – that's cissy with a "c"— (femme but hetero-ish), multisexual (it's a spectrum, seems unwise to call it), travel-apt (Earth is a country) and fashion forward (Funk Flag Flyage), SSJW (Sarcastic Social Justice Warrior).*

Yeah, so I mean, how's that for a bio? You know? That's pretty good bio, and we break it apart coming up right about now.

Let's get into this interview with Sanyu Estelle.

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

## [Interview Begins]

[0:14:46]

**Amber:** Okay. Hi Sanyu, welcome to Medicine Stories.

**Sanyu:** Hello Amber. Thank you for having me.

**Amber:** Yeah, so I thought I might do something a little different here because you have provided the best bio that anyone has ever provided. *(both laugh)* And I thought maybe we could kind of break it down a little bit because you're a word nerd, something I really like about you, and your posts in your Word Nerd Wednesday videos is that words are important to you. And looking through your blog, you... you're very creative with your words, you're gonna, like, make words

work for you. And you're going to make sure that you're clear in your communication with people and "This is what I mean by this **word.**"

So I really like those things about you. So do you mind if we do that? If we go piece by piece through this bio, and you can kind of explain what these things mean to you?

**Sanyu:** Yeah, I'm actually happy to do it because I ended up sending you a edited bio. I had had a slightly different version of this before, and then when I started getting asked for it again, I was like, "I need to update this for who I am now." So I did change some words. So yes.

**Amber:** Okay. So, "Pigmented, 78%." (*both laugh*) I'm guessing that's based on a DNA test.

**Sanyu:** It is. I did the Genographic. It's a National Geographic one that one isn't, like, the past 600 or so years, like, 23andme would be. It's more about your ancestral migratory history.

**Amber:** Right. It's not an autosomal DNA test. It's the mitochondrial DNA.

**Sanyu:** Exactly. Yeah.

**Amber:** That's awesome. So what's your haplogroup?

**Sanyu:** Oh, that's such a good question. I am going to have to look that up for you.

**Amber:** Okay.

**Sanyu:** I will have to look it up for you.

**Amber:** That's your pure maternal line. That's your mother's mother's mother's mother, going all the way back to at least the last Ice Age 2000 generations.

**Sanyu:** Yeah.

**Amber:** Yeah, I did the Genographic test, too. I really like what they're doing with that, yeah.

**Sanyu:** Me too. I really just enjoyed the experience of seeing what DNA groups you have familiarity with because obviously, they're limited. Like, not as many people are taking that test as all the other ones, right? Like their data pool is smaller.

So I go back and I check every now and then. And it's actually interesting, because it — I don't know when the last time you checked yours — but they are constantly updating,

**Amber:** Yes. Yeah, I know. I recently had that experience, too. I did mine in 2012. And it had been years since I looked, and when my baby was sick this summer, and she was just nursing to sleep on me constantly. And I was just like, "I guess I'll just look at my phone again," I ended up back at the Genographic project. I couldn't believe how updated it was and how much better the information was about where my ancestors, how they migrated throughout the earth.

**Sanyu:** Agreed.

[0:17:45]

**Amber:** Okay, “womoonist (as constant and faithful as the tides).”

So you're just aligning yourself with the moon as a woman with that word. Yes?

**Sanyu:** Yes, actually, that one is umm... There are a few that would benefit to unpack.

So at first that said “feminice.” So I changed it from saying feminice. Now feminice I used to say, as in “dope”, not necessarily kind. But then I looked up “nice”, and nice basically means stupid in its etymology. And then I was like, “Hmm, I need to...”

And then I looked at “feminine”, actually, as an etymological word. And I just decided that “wom-moon”, the combination of woman and moon, was a better and more accurate depiction of my sort of feminism. It's not that I'm not a feminist. I'm totally a feminist.

**Amber:** Just not a nice one. (*Amber laughs*)

**Sanyu:** Not necessarily. Usually more than more often than not, I'm sarcastic.

**Amber:** Yeah, that's in your bio, too, “sarcastic social justice warrior.” (both laugh)

I like the sissy with a C, femme, but heteroish. But also multi sexual because it's a spectrum, and it seems unwise to call it.

**Sanyu:** Yeah, definitely. I actually had, I was talking to Emily Heather, The Voluptuous Witch. And I was talking to her about the use of the word queer in its etymology, but also in its colloquial and modern use. And essentially, I like the word “queer” because its origin is unknown. (*Sanyu laughs*)

But like from its earliest, they were like “We're pretty sure it means strange or, like, different, but we don't really know what word it came from.” And I thought, isn't that so appropriate? You know, like, what an amazing word, that to the end it's queer. You know, you're not going to pin it down.

**Amber:** Wow. Right.

[0:20:02]

**Sanyu:** But considering the the oppressive history of non-gender conforming, non-gender binary, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, asexual, all the letters that would make up queer, the queer spectrum, she was saying that she didn't really understand why heterosexual people, or at least people who have the tendency to lean towards the “opposite sex”, would use that word.

And so I, you know, I weighed it. I weighed whether that word was the perfect word, or whether I had just not put the time in to really think or create or construct something more appropriate.

And then I was like, “Well, what about,” I was like, “what if instead of queer, those of us who do, like I identify as woman, I have been attracted to men, but I'm not necessarily heteronormative. And I'm not necessarily, like, strictly heterosexual.” It's just that's what it's been so far. I'm not going to call it. (*both laugh*) I haven't met every, every person on earth. So I really couldn't tell you the spectrum of attraction just yet.

So, for that reason, I asked her. I was like, “Well, what about multisexual? And she's like, “See? Look how quickly you came up with something else that you didn't even need queer?” So that's where multisexual comes from.

And cissy is just like a play on words because this gender, it's... I don't know. That definition — I don't know if you identify as that — but when I looked it up at first I was kind of like, this is not an adequate word.

**Amber:** Uh huh. Yeah. There's something about it. That feels, I don't know, cold and...

**Sanyu:** Cynical?

**Amber:** Yeah.

**Sanyu:** Yeah, and cisgender. Yeah, so sissy comes from, you know, feminizing it, I guess.

**Amber:** Yeah. Yeah. That is so interesting. About queer because it's it's very rare that you trace a word back and they're like “we're not really sure.”

**Sanyu:** Yeah, it's actually pretty, pretty unique.

**Amber:** Totally, I don't even remember that ever happening actually and I look up word roots quite a lot.

**[0:22:18]**

**Amber:** Okay: “Travel-apt, (because Earth is a country) and fashion forward.” (*Amber laughs*)

**Sanyu:** Fashion forward. Yes.

**Amber:** Yeah, and you do post some pretty rad photos of yourself in some beautiful clothing.

**Sanyu:** Thank you! Yeah, it's um, it's evolved. It's funny. You know, in high school — and also like, whatever, I'll do some more Throwback Thursdays — but I used to almost exclusively wear sweatpants and fitted caps. And I mean, I guess occasionally I would wear like jeans, or jeans skirt with like some applique or something like that. But I had a very mass “masculinized” wardrobe.

And it wasn't until I got to college all the way across the country, because I only applied to colleges outside of my state, like, youngest of three kids, and I was like, “You know what? I'm just gonna go as far away as possible!” (*Sanyu laughs*)

And so when I arrived in college, that's really when my sense of style, particularly engaging with winter for the first time, began to evolve.

**Amber:** Where did you grew up?

**Sanyu:** I grew up in Santa Monica in Los Angeles. And then I went to school in Saratoga Springs, a half an hour from Albany, in upstate New York.



**Amber:** Okay. And your parents met in New York, right?

**Sanyu:** Yes, my parents. My mother moved... My mother's Belizean, and she's the youngest of, technically, she's the youngest of 10 children, but she's the youngest of nine who lived from infancy, and so she's the baby.

And they moved from Belize I think when she was about 12 to Brooklyn because both of my grandfathers on my mom and my dad side were pastors. And so my grandfather on my mom's side was I think they were a Anglican? Episcopalian? Or Protestant or something. So anyways, they moved to Brooklyn for a preaching assignment. And then my mom lived in New York from that age, but they went back to Belize regularly because not all the kids came over at once. She was just the youngest, so she went.

And then my father is from Uganda. And he both, like, even though Uganda's East Africa and Belize is Central America, they're both colonized by the British, right? So, they have this system of communication in play, and I think that also helped my parents really bond. Basically my dad was going to boarding schools and then Idi Amin happened in Uganda, and he didn't go back because his brother had been locked up and his mom. My grandmother was having had to go to the prison every day to demand that they let my brother free. So it was just a very stressful time.

So he was living in London, and then with his sisters, and then one of his sisters moved to New York, and that he followed her there, and then they met in a club in Harlem that was my mom's cousin. So it's a perfect coming to America story! (both laugh)

[0:25:39]

**Amber:** But you did not... They didn't have their children there in Harlem?

**Sanyu:** No, they moved... Well, the thing is my, I guess my dad, like — it's funny that I would tell this in the story — I guess my dad was like seeing a few people. And my mom didn't know. and then when she found out she was like, "Well, whatever. I'm moving to LA cuz my friends are there. Bye." So she left.

And then, like a few months later, I guess my dad called her on the phone and was like, "Can I come out and see you?" And then the rest is history because all of us were born in LA.

I have two older siblings. My brother is 12 years older than me. My sister is six years older than me. And, I was a surprise. So it's just happenstance that I came in on the six years later, but we all were born in LA, but we did spend a brief time when I was born in Uganda.

[0:26:33]

**Amber:** Oh. So, what's your... Tell me about your name, Sanyu Estelle. They both have meaning.

**Sanyu:** Yeah. So I have four names, three on my birth certificate. And so on my birth certificate. My name is Sanyu Estelle Naganda. And, but because Ugandan tribes, like there are different clans of Uganda. And, and so you also have a clan name.

And so my full name is Sanyu Estelle Nambi Naganda [?], which is explains my Skype name right.

So Sanyu means “joy”. The part of the language can mean joy, happiness, but I prefer joy. And it, like for instance, you would say, [inaudible 0:27:22] which means “It’s a joy to see you.” And I don’t speak Lugandan by the way so anyone Ugandan listening I’m sorry that you’re [inaudible 0:27:31] (*Amber laughs*).

And so, that’s my first name.

Estelle is my mother’s middle name, and it’s her mother’s name. And it means “shooting star”. And so, I really chose like three-fourths of my name are Ugandan and one fourth of my name is Belizean, or you know, from that family.

So I chose Sanyu Estelle for my public persona, because I wanted to honor both sides of the line equally, and so only those two names really do that.

[0:28:12]

**Amber:** Have you spent any time in Uganda or Belize as an adult?

**Sanyu:** Yes, my sister is married to a Rwandan because... so my, my dad’s dad is an Anglican pastor, and he has many honors in Uganda because when the genocide was happening in Rwanda, he took in many people in this village that whatever they kind of ruled over, in a way, because of the British system that was living left in Uganda, it does have a lot of similarities to India in the way that it was colonized.

And so actually, there’s a big Indian population in Uganda as well, including like the director, Mir Niger and stuff. But basically they had I guess you would call them like indentured servants in a way or whatever that system was when you lived on the land of the person who supplied you with like housing and food and whatever,

**Amber:** Kind of feudal almost?

**Sanyu:** Yeah, it’s a little bit feudal. So, he basically had jurisdiction over this town, and he used that jurisdiction to give shelter to people running away from the genocide in Rwanda. So there’s a large population of Rwandan people who also speak Luganda and who mostly grew up in Uganda.

And my sister is married to one of those people. And so she moved to Uganda, I guess, almost five or six years ago now. What is it eight? She got married in ‘12? So yeah, actually, almost like eight years ago, she moved out of America. She just had to get away. And so they rekindled the romance. They started in LA out there, and she ended up living out there and getting married out there. And so we all, the whole family, went out for her wedding because in Ugandan tradition, you have a wedding, and then you have something called a kwanjula.

And a kwanjula is basically like, negotiating the dowry and the bride price type of thing. But in the olden days, it was mostly like an interrogation of the male’s family because the whole family would come, and they would be, you know, walking for miles or whatever, back in the day. And so there was like, the ceremony takes place in the old days, maybe a few days, where people in the family of the bride asks the male’s family all number of questions about how they would handle, or how they think the groom would handle, or how he would handle certain circumstances. And they

would do this so that they felt secure in sending away their child with this family because they probably never see her again. And it was done so basically, they could make a decision as to whether it was a fair exchange. (*Sanyu laughs*)

[0:31:24]

**Sanyu:** So I feel very fortunate that I got to witness it because my sister is probably the most traditional child in the family. My brother has been in a relationship for almost 17 or 18 years, doesn't plan to have kids and doesn't plan to be married, although he might adopt later in life. My sister is married and had a kwanjula and had a wedding, and I went for that.

And then I've been to Belize a few times because it's just so much closer. My mom is building a house there right now. She's there right now, and the last time I was there was in 2015, and I've been there three... Well, I was there as a child, I met my grandmother the same year she died, and that was in Belize, my namesake grandmother. And then I went again when I was 13, again when I graduated college, so I was 21, and then again in 2015, and I'll probably go again next year.

**Amber:** Well, speaking of your maternal grandmother and your sister, I love this blog post of yours that you sent me months ago called "They were here" about your great great grandmother, Virginia. And it's just a beautiful post, and I love watching your, like, your research progress, you know, and everything you did to try to understand this woman and her life better.

And it's so striking how much she looks like your sister.

**Sanyu:** Isn't it?

**Amber:** It's so amazing. So you know, I'll link to your website of course in the show notes and people can find that post.

[0:33:01]

**Amber:** But yeah, will you just tell us about this great great grandmother, and how you sort of pieced what you could have her life together?

**Sanyu:** Yeah, it's, I mean, ancestral work is — to me, anyway — it's really some of the most fascinating work. Because particularly when you don't have a lineage that is unbroken or comes from a long written history, it can be very difficult to know what you feel about it (*Sanyu laughs*)

So I say that because it was a very odd series of events that sort of led to this discovery in the midst of me having dived a little bit more into Ifa, La Kumi, Santeria. I'm not initiated. I've actually been told many by many different kinds of readers I'm not to really belong to any particular tradition because I am a bit like I walk between worlds essentially. I have crow medicine.

And so for that reason, I am friendly with a lot of different practices. And I'm just uninitiated, but I had started seeing this priest, a priestess of Santeria. And she was telling me different things to do to work with the Orisha and to work with my ancestors. Because for her, she said, when I work with the unknown — and this really instructed how I went forward with most of this research — but she's like when I go, when I work with the unknown, we work with our ancestors first because they're our closest link into the unknown.

They were alive. They are blood, and they crossed over to the other side. They are literally a direct link, energetically, to that side. And they are the lowest, like, the lowest realm of the unknown, especially those ancestors who stay working with the families that are still in their corporal bodies.

[0:35:20]

**Sanyu:** So when I started this, I basically started by just getting the pictures that my mother had and her sisters had of our relatives.

Now we have a very fortunate history in Belize. I come from, I have to like acknowledge — although I've had to have many conversations with my parents about this because it didn't feel the same way to them, having moved to America and going through the different forms of class relationship/relations — but I come from two very privileged families of Uganda and Belize. I come from two political families, and that's why I can have a picture of somebody born in the 1800s (*Sanyu laughs*) in my family line because obviously that wasn't cheap to get.

So I... we have a very rich history on the Fairweather side. And I started just by, I pride myself on being sort of a Google research freak. And I really take a lot of pleasure in deep diving into the like the search pages when I come to search something.

So we knew her name was Virginia Clarissa Theus Fairweather. And for some reason, when I had typed in that name, and wrote Belize I was led through some sort of internet vortex to this website, where the Fairweathers had been documented in great detail from the first Fairweather who left basically the lowlands of Scotland and come over to the Caribbean.

And apparently they were maybe brothers who did this, but the particular one of mine that that Fairweather he came to British Honduras at the time. He married a Mosquito woman from that coast that is only on the birth, like, only in these lists as "Sarah". So that's how I know that she's probably an indigenous woman. Because he landed in a place actually called Mosquito Coast because that was the name of the tribe.

**Amber:** Yeah, I had to look that one up.

**Sanyu:** Yeah. And so basically, while all that was happening, and he was creating the Fairweather line, this woman is very possibly, like 100 years later, the result of what I think was probably the American transatlantic enslavement trade. And I only had been led to that because her... I had my so basically, I have my aunts, my aunt and uncles have all married different cultures. So one of them is married to Canadian, one of them married someone from Nassau, and one of them married, you know, a British man, they all, we all spread out.

So when my cousin's father from Nassau passed away, they went there to the island. And this was just basically right around the time that I had found out that this person, Virginia Clarissa Theus, was born in Nassau. So, I asked those cousins while they were there, already doing ancestral work, because they were there spreading the ashes for their father, if they would go around and maybe check out some of the churches because as listeners will see when they look at the picture, she has this big cross on her neck. And if they would go into a few churches and see whether or not they could find someone named Virginia Clarissa Theus, or someone named Virginia Theus, or something of that nature.

[0:39:20]

**Sanyu:** So they went around. And unfortunately, what I didn't realize until I did better research was in British colonized countries before the indigenous governments or the local governments were given jurisdiction over the country, most records were actually kept through the church. And so it's actually very difficult to find birth certificates if you don't know the denomination of the person. And in colonized Americas there are at least, like, 10 denominations, right? And then there are also like hundreds of churches.

So my cousins ended up running around and trying to find this information, then had to get special permission, go back into the records as far as the 1800s, and then ended up finding someone named Virginia. But then there wasn't like a last name, and there weren't documents and they and when they asked for further information, they weren't given it. And basically, the trail kind of went cold.

But what I suspect is that Virginia Clarissa is she was born free. And that is said on her certificate. So she was born free in Nassau in 1838, and there isn't a great amount of information on the Theus family, the Theus family in Nassau, from what I could tell because I've looked a lot online. And so what I suspect because of the way that she looks and because of the Maroon history that has taken place in the Caribbean, because when slavery was abolished in the Caribbean, it was still alive and well in America for decades longer.

So a lot of people in the Americas and North America, a lot of black people, a lot of even indigenous people, mixed people who found out that slavery was illegal in the Caribbean, did escape and then join these Maroon communities such as in Jamaica, where some of these communities go back, all the way back to those days that have been like independent that whole time. Right? So the one in Jamaica, for instance, that Maroon community escaped-would-be-enslaved people have been independent since the time that Jamaica was colonized.

[0:42:05]

**Sanyu:** And so with Nassau in the Bahamas also has this history and also has an extremely crazy history of piracy and all these other things that make it a very fascinating place. But basically it was like this huge, diverse and chaotic marketplace.

And so I guess for whatever reason, her family, her two family members made it to Nassau. Maybe that was the boat they got on, maybe that was the plan. Who could say? And in Nassau, there are Lucayan peoples. And the Lucayan peoples were considered the free African population, the free black population, who mixed with this indigenous group of individuals.

And basically from the look of Virginia, when I look at her, and her hair is plaited, too, in this way, that to me is very reminiscent. Her facial features and her hair look to me almost to be Asian or indigenous. But then obviously she's wearing this ruffled collar and this big cross and this traditional outfit, and she's sitting for this portrait looking very solemn. But because of her look, and because of the history I found out about Nassau and escaped individuals from the Americas, what I learned from "They were here" and why I call it that is because I've always grown up feeling like a first generation person.

And being first generation is a very specific kind of feeling I think.

**Amber:** First generation American.

**Sanyu:** Yeah, but just period. Like, I feel like if you're first generation anywhere you're having an experience that nobody in your family has had. And you're the first of your kind to decide whether that is going to be the ancestral land because my parents aren't going to be buried in America. You know, like, my mom wants us to spread her ashes over the Caribbean Sea. My dad wants his ashes to go over his parents graves in Uganda. So like, if anyone's getting buried here in the family, it's my generation. And that's up to us.

So there's this very satellite type of feeling that I think first generation people have which almost gives them the permission to choose their existence so much more freely, because already it's being made up.

You know, like, I grew up with Uganda, Belize, and America, and California and LA in my home. And that was happening for only me, my brother, and my sister because I've only met, I only know one other family that is Belizean and Ugandan. And I only recently learned about them.

So all that was so built into my identity and Belize had a type of enslavement trade, but it was very different.

**[0:45:17]**

**Sanyu:** Like Belize today is still the least populated country in Central and South America. Its tourism is ecotourism. It's filled with jungles that has, like, 13 kinds of indigenous woods. So Belize has always been pretty wild and natural. It's maintained a lot of its integrity as an environment.

And it did so because there's so many wild animals and so many trees, really, that like they couldn't do a slave trade like America did. They didn't have the luxury of space. And because they had, because logging requires you to be migratory they couldn't create a sedentary routine of oppression.

So oftentimes loggers, whether they were white or Mayan, or whatever, were working with black people, African people, to do the same work because they're the ones who had the tools, right? But then they had these people who helped them through the woods, carry stuff, but like if you need help felling a tree, and there's only three people there, everyone's going to be useful.

So the relationship on the ground in Belize is very different. And why I say that is because, you know, the idea that I actually have American enslaved ancestor is a really... it's an — I was gonna say crazy. It's not crazy — but it's like a really interesting thing, concept, for me to consider with that first generation identity and with that knowledge of the way that colonization had to work in Belize because of the environment. You know? It's such a different mindset.

**[0:47:07]**

**Sanyu:** And I've recently come much more into identifying and embracing all that comes with the idea of "blackness" but — and my parents do consider themselves black, too — but that was never the first identity in the household. You know, like, that to be black is to be descended from African peoples in the Americas and not necessarily know your history. And/or not know not necessarily

like not organically, orally, know your history. Like you would have had those cultures not been molested and oppressed in the ways that they were.

So I didn't grow up in a house like that because my father comes from a family that knows a lot about their history and so does my mom. And the fact that I had to piece the story together, and then I managed to even find things that made sense. And listeners, as you'll know, I know that this was a very loopy, long-winded story, but when you see the story, you'll see all the links that I searched. And I found through — those are literally everything I used to get this information from this article — so that is an extremely long way.

**Amber:** I love that though, that you um, it's, you know, a research tactic can be really useful is looking at the larger historical context of when these people lived and what was happening around them, too. Because so much is lost. So much is lost for all of us, but more more for some people than others.

So, yeah, I just I was really moved by how hard you worked to understand the larger socio historical context of that ancestor and understand what her life was, and you know, to just piece it together, and that you use her photo as part of that, too, and what she looks. You're so lucky to have that photograph of her!

**[0:49:13]**

**Sanyu:** Yeah. And I have others from that generation, like, I have her husband's photo. And that's why I said in the beginning, you know, to be clear, I have had, I am descended from very privileged classes of colonization in the countries that my parents come from. And that has defined a lot about not only their privilege, but my privilege, right?

Like my fascination with the English language is not unrelated to the fact that I am descended and born in the land of three British colonized countries. And that my fascination with English is as much a part of that colonization, as is my ability to, like, have such a broad knowledge of it.

Like, my parents went to private schools and got to fly on planes at very young ages and escape crazy dictators, you know. So there was a lot of agency I feel in my ancestry and that was very much alive when I was writing this article, down to my sister's name being Jjiibbwa. And then there being a tribe called “Ojibwa”, like, all these things showed up to sort of like, lure me in.

**Amber:** Yep, the synchronicities that pop up when we go in search of our ancestors. Yeah, so I also want to ask, because you mentioned very briefly at the beginning of that blog post that her husband was a badass in his own right, what was his story?

**Sanyu:** So, Benjamin II, who was descended from the first Fairweather and the Moskito woman named “Sarah” in the birth certificate (since we don't know her actual name) that they had, I think, three kids and Benjamin was one of them.

And so Benjamin in the 1800s became a lawyer. Basically, he was a lawyer. And he served on this law board with many other white men, mixed men, and some people who were also various kinds of indigenously mixed, the Mayan. There's still a strong Mayan population in Belize, relative to elsewhere. And so they did maintain a lot of their independence, just like the Garifuna people in

Belize, who mostly stayed within the migrated African community. My family is more of a mix of people who came out of those communities.

So we have the Fairweather - the Scottish. We have Ushers in the family - Irish. And then we have and the Usher and the Benjamin people of the Fairweather, this guy that you'll see the picture of when you go into this blog, he served as a lawyer along a man named Usher. We're unclear if his first name was Henry or Charles, because there were two brothers, and we're not sure who is who, but basically, they were, they became the grandfather's of my grandfather. So their children ended up having a child that — these two lawyers who served on the same board — and that child is probably the ancestor that works closest with me.

[0:53:09]

**Sanyu:** So there's like four Benjamins right. In fact, there's five now. (*both laugh*) There's five Benjamins in the family. And so this Benjamin had another Benjamin — this lawyer, Benjamin — had another Benjamin who married the child of this Usher family.

And there's a question there. They're not the Usher people didn't marry. Like the Usher guy didn't marry the woman whose picture we have who had this woman named Ammabelle. But Ammabelle's last name is Usher. So whether or not that white man ended up marrying or I don't know whether that relationship was consensual, what we do know is that he claimed his child, Ammabelle, and she is a very interesting... I got to do a whole post on her because whenever I go to a reading I have people be like, "Is there someone following you around named Ammabelle?" I call her Grandma Belle. And she's a dark-skinned woman.

So it's interesting, especially thinking about the work that I do now with Black Like Monday, and things like that. It's interesting talking about my family ancestry because that has a lot to do, like the family dynamics and the fact that I come from a long history of indigenous African people who have worked either alongside with or in certain certain circumstances against European settlers, I think has given me the strength and sort of like the pension, the inclination, to do that same work.

[0:55:03]

**Amber:** Okay, so that feels like a good segue into I want to ask you about your work with Tarot, and I was specifically really struck by this line when you said that you often find that other people's ancestors work with yours to get their messages across when you are doing a reading for them.

**Sanyu:** Yeah.

**Amber:** Yeah. Tell me about that. And just kind of how you engage them with, like your ancestors as guides, in a broader context.

**Sanyu:** Yeah, well, it's interesting, I recently found out like, in the past year or so. So they're, obviously many, many types of African tribes moved across the Atlantic, one of them primarily being of the region now known as Nigeria, of the region known as, you know, Burkina Faso, but obviously, they also came from Finland.

So I recently found out that in the indigenous traditions of Congo, there is something called "knocks". And a knock in that tradition is something that happens to your body in a distinct way that they relate to a spirit or an ancestor communicating with you.



So, oftentimes when I'm giving readings, I will have certain phenomena happen in my body. So sometimes, if I'm giving a reading, I'll feel like an energy rubbing my back clockwise and making it very hot. This is Grandma Belle. And I know this because over time of experiencing it, I started to ask, and I have a knock that I can ask. I found out through asking that I can ask something, and they will give my head an aggressive "yes" or "no" push. So I'll nod my head, or I'll shake my head in answering my own question through my body, they will give me information (*Sanyu laughs*). So this is the nature of knocks, right?

So other knocks I have is sometimes I'll be talking to someone in a reading, and I will slowly but surely almost bring my entire left ear down into my left shoulder. Like, there's a particular energy that I work with that leans me that way. There's one that leans need to the right. Sometimes there's one that shakes my right leg profusely. And over time — because I've been reading Tarot for 10 years, but I've been reading for other people for five. And by other people, I mean, like, strangers and stuff. I always played around and read for my friends but not in a serious manner until five years — and then so what will happen when I'm giving a reading sometimes is someone will give me a knock. I will know better from that knock who I'm communicating with on my side. But recently because that's how I initiated the work, right? Because just like that priestess of Ifa said, she's like, we always work with our ancestors first, they're the first level, and then they open the gateway to higher or broader spheres of spirit world.

So now what I've been experiencing — and this has been very fascinating to me, because it has happened to me with and without cards, and at random — is I'll be doing something, and I'll start thinking about somebody that I've given a reading to in the past, randomly, you know, like, a day has popped into my head. Usually I don't detect it that soon, it'll be like a half an hour or an hour of me thinking of this person. And then thinking of all these things, I would be telling this person. And then after usually that amount of time, I'm like, "Oh, someone's here. Someone's here to deliver a message."

[0:59:05]

**Sanyu:** So sometimes that happens in real time, like, I've given readings, and certain cards will almost speak in the position that they come up with, or the energy that I get when that card comes up, I'll start asking them about a family member. And they'll tell me about it. And then I'll ask if that family member is alive. And usually the answer will be "no", or I already know ahead of time, because that's the purpose of the reading. And I can talk to them. That's how I know that relative's there because usually, I don't...

I have what I call, or what is called, "claircognizance". It's clear knowing. So I don't see people or energies, and I don't even physically or auditorily hear them. I more get an impression that is a combination of sensory output, and it will translate to me in the way that it needs to. It's very weird to describe because it does come in as words or language, and it can come in as an image, but it's never just that.

And so sometimes in a reading, just getting the impression that I should be asking about someone on the paternal side of the family, "Oh, and do you have an uncle? And did anyone do this kind of work?" And I'll start probing with those questions. And then I know I'm working directly with that ancestor.

And then most recently, and this has been an elevation in my own work that I think has manifested because of all this illness I went through over the past two years, I feel like I was just going through a spiritually energetic leveling up. But now I'll be sitting around minding my own business doing something else, and someone's ancestor or relative will start talking to me about them, and so I'll end up just like texting them.

I texted a friend that I've known since, like sixth or seventh grade, that I don't talk to that often. But I have his number, and I recently messaged him and I was like, "Are you writing? Are you writing because your ancestors — I was like, by the way, this is weird. I know this is weird, but you know I do Tarot. So this happens sometimes. — your ancestors tell me you're not writing, and it's a problem. It's a challenge for you."

And so he texted me back and he's like, "Well, you're correct, because I haven't been writing." And we had this very funny going back and forth for about an hour afterwards. He's like, "This is the cheapest therapy session I've ever had." Go forth. Your ancestors want you to write.

**[1:01:36]**

**Sanyu:** And I what I love about ancestral work, particularly, even if you're clearing aggressive, bad, negative, oppressive ancestral work, you know, any work you do for yourself, you do for your ancestors, both you do for your relatives, those in the ground and those out of the ground.

So, ancestors are typically always wanting the best for us. They are very close to earth, so sometimes their idea of what is best is still connected to who they were when they were alive. Right? Like, I've given readings to somebody with a very, very Catholic grandmother, who wanted to talk to her granddaughter about her sexual promiscuity in her eyes. Really, this woman was just very free and very open. But it was funny because she was getting this very Catholic overtones. So they do have their personalities.

But ultimately, they're advising us for our highest good, our best good and the only thing that can really alter that is that they're doing that in the language that they knew last. So sometimes when your ancestors are coming to you, they can only speak to you with the language that they had. It takes longer sometimes to hear what they're really trying to tell you through the propriety of their time.

Because the language they use is not as direct as the language that we use, particularly those with ancestors who were colonized or who began to speak English. Because English is a bastard language. It doesn't have one Father; it's Greek, Latin, German, proto Indo-European, French, and in some cases, depending on the region, also very influenced by the indigenous languages.

So, English is not one of the most direct or honest languages in and of itself from its history. But the more it incorporates, the more like direct and honest we've been able to become from it.

Wow, I don't know why that Spirit had me go on that really random tangent about...

*(both laugh)*

**[1:04:07]**

**Amber:** I'm just gonna say though I love the way you weave ideas together!

And I'm curious, this claircognizance, this knowing that comes to you. You know, you've mentioned that it's leveled up. And I've known people who have that sort of perception that it does increase over time if they're working with it. But I'm curious if it's always been there for you, like since childhood.

**Sanyu:** I think in a sense, yes. What I will say is I have two parents who were raised by pastors. My dad really didn't... like, I don't know. He didn't like the whole church thing, but he liked the community. So like, my dad will go to church for the community, but he's not like a very religious person. And if anything, he would call himself a skeptic.

My mother on the other hand, loves Jesus. She loves Jesus, which is fine because Jesus is a chill dude. And she also grew up as a Belizean and Belizeans just tend to be particularly spiritualists. Like there were nine of those kids but they grew up seeing ghosts, knowing the future, having premonitions. Like many people in my mom's family had "the gift" and acknowledged having it, and there was an allowance in Belizean Protestantism and Christianity that allowed for the basically, *espiritus*, like for the Spirit. And so there were those influences in my house.

So I went to church, I had to go to church every Sunday until I was 18, unless I was sick. Like that was very obnoxious for me growing up, but it was also very good structurally for me because I had a good church community. But in addition to that, my mother was letting us read Edgar Casey and books about past lives and all these things. And so I had those allowances in my household for philosophy and faith.

**[1:06:11]**

**Sanyu:** And then really though, I think what opened me up is I've always had an extremely vivid dream life. And I started writing down my dreams in elementary school. And that is what opened me up a great deal to everything else that might have seemed strange in the physical world.

Because I would have premonitions, mundane things, like I would walk out of my bedroom when I woke up and go look for my mom and she would be digging out things from the closet, in my dream. And then I'd wake up and that would happen, you know, so they gave it to me. Spirit came to me in a way that was very palatable for that young of a psyche.

I did have a sensitivity at a young age to spirits because we lived in a house with an attic. And I lived in that room, and I remember whenever I got near that attic, I felt very icky. And it didn't matter if it was bright as sun up there not, but I always felt very icky. But I think I asked from a young age to not see like dead people and stuff (both laugh) because of the sensitive dreaming life.

Anytime I've seen a horror movie like I accidentally overwatched, like, I was being babysitted by my sister and her teenage friend, and they were going to watch *The Candy Man*, but they told me to go to my room, which I pretended to do, and then I sabotage myself by watching it through the door.

Like, after I watched *The Candy Man*, I had horrible dreams for like years. After I saw *Jurassic Park*, I had dreams where velociraptors were the dominant being on earth. And humans would run around like a video game until the velociraptors broke their necks, and then you would wake up again, like in a video game and run around until the velociraptors broke your neck.

[1:08:11]

Sanyu: So, I've always been at kind of a weird child (*Sanyu laughs*), and I've always taken an experience in a very strange way.

But the claircognizance, the knowing that is what it was, I only came into that language kind of in the last five years. And I was calling it clairsentience before, but I don't really get it through my senses. I'm not smelling or tasting. I know certain people who do that. They are clairsentience you know, they get a smell of like orange blossom, and then they'll tell you, you know, "Is this something that your mother used to wear?" And you'll be like, "Yeah!" You know, so they do stuff like that.

Or, you know, or people who are clairvoyant, like that priestess of Ifa, like a funny story, tiny little story that she would say that she is a very prominent AA lecturer. She is gay. She's 50. And she sees things, but she's very vocal about her mental health work and going to see counselors. And she said she has had to be extremely discriminating with what kind of psychologists she goes to see because they all have spirits that are in the room with them that she's not necessarily sure whether she can tell them or not.

And she recently, she's like, "You know, I have this really great counselor but there's this elf that sits next to her." (*both laugh*) And she's like, "It's just a waiting game about whether I'm going to tell her or not and what that's gonna do for the counselor." So there's those concepts, right?

[1:09:45]

**Sanyu:** I think from an early age, I knew that visual stimuli had a better possibility of traumatizing me because I do think that there are periods and pockets of real fluidity, where you can sort of negotiate with the spirit team as to how the energy should come in. Just like I think if I was asking for more visual stimuli I would have more.

But it really works for me in the impression kind of way because I think it forces me — I think what's interesting about claircognizance — is that it really forces you to describe something that's very amorphous, and like, not easy to dictate. And that really causes me to have to feel out what comes out of my mouth.

I can't just be like, "I see a woman with green hair and blue eyes." Like it doesn't come in that way. I'll just be like, "Who in the family has this kind of an energy and maybe wears this color?" You know, and I sort of feel it out that way. But dreaming certainly made that a million times easier. And I still have vivid dreams, and I still write them down.

**Amber:** It seems like the multiverse is very receptive to engagement with you, or rather, that you are very receptive to engagement with it.

I mean, I can only compare you to myself, but I was just, like, really struck by how consciously you're engaging with what comes to you. And it makes me, you know, think that that stuff comes to you more frequently and with more clarity, because they're like, "Oh, Sanyu is listening. And she's been really intentional with how she expresses what comes to her."

**Sanyu:** Yeah, actually, it's great that you say that because I think you are correct. And I have had some interesting confirmations and readings where they tell me the kind of energies that I do have working with me. Like, that same priestess told me at one point that there was a — and she always describes things in very funny ways — she's like, "There's this really tall Egyptian man. He's like a pharaoh or something. Like, he's standing, he's been standing here a really long time. So I just need to tell you, he's here because he's annoyed with me." She's like, "He wants you to know he travels with you through the dream realms. And he needs you to get a crystal pyramid that you put somewhere in the house where the sun and the moon hit it."

**[1:12:41]**

**Sanyu:** And for me, I think why I am utilized by the multiverse in the way that I am is because I don't discriminate against the truth. Like, from a young age, I really didn't care where information was coming from if it was applicable.

So if someone tells me to buy a crystal and put it somewhere where the sun and the moon hits it. I'm not going to ask them — well, she told me why she was like this is gonna help him anchor you in your dream world because he's taking you to places that you can't necessarily get back from by yourself, and you need some help. So she explained to me why to do it. But like, I didn't need evidence, I just went and bought the crystal and put it in a place where the sun and moon hit it, and then I experienced and saw what happened as a result.

So I have a real willingness to suspend my disbelief that is created through the invention of humanity, and the conditioning that we're all born into called, this is "definitive existence". I'm suspending that belief all the time to consider what else existence is. And that really allows, on a philosophical, fundamental level, me to be open to a lot of strangeness that is not necessarily inaccurate? I mean, I say weird things to people all the time, but it's helpful. (*Sanyu laughs*)

So in that sense, I think existence shows up for me in that way because I don't necessarily insist on the form of things. If it functions, I use it.

Amber: That reminds me of something I heard Clarissa Pinkola Estes say about wisdom. And this came to her in a dream. She was writing a book on menopause, I believe, and she was thinking about wisdom and was like, "Well, I've got to define this huge concept if I'm going to write about it in my book," but she couldn't come up with a definition of it and then it came to her in a dream:

*Wisdom is whatever works.*

**[1:14:48]**

**Sanyu:** Yes! That is 100% and also it's the way that I think about it, like the sarcastic social justice warrior aspect of me, is what isn't weird, people? You are sentient meat, animated-talking meat, that somehow can birth other sentient meat things that go on to create really cool and atrocious things, and we're all on this really very beautiful rock, this very beneficence and giving rock, floating around a ball of fire in the middle of infinite space.

Like who was taking this for granted? What is normal about this situation?

And on that note, you know normal being like... Actually this is probably like a good place to take where my whole philosophy comes from. Language, like science and like math, is a system of

observation, or like art. And you are thus limited by the number of tools you use in this method of observation.

So, language, in and of itself, is a, it creates access, and it creates restriction because the minute something is defined, this is a very Taoist thing, but like it says, you know, caught up in the manifestations, you only see... Like it says "Caught up in the forms, you only see the manifestations. Enraptured in the functions, you see the mystery."

So, anytime you name something, you limit it. You try and define something that is infinite. And something that is infinite and will infinitely change cannot really have a name that is one name.

And so why I think it's important to say that is that people often use language as if it is all encompassing and true. Like, we have this word named "science", and it does help with a lot of things, but then people act like the word came before the concept of understanding that came to define the word.

And so I always am encouraging people to use language and to bend language and to change language because the word "normal" means "carpenter square". Literally, the word "norma", "normal", and "norm" all come from some carpenter in the middle of proto Indo-Europa, who was measuring with a particular type of square to build a building, but like that was normal in that region, and it certainly wasn't the shape of the carpenter's square even a mile down the road.

So normal is not a constant you know? Language is not constant. We take for granted the things that we say, not knowing, like, as if we didn't make them up to say. And so the way that you define yourself. the way that you decide life is possible, what can be true, what can't be true, what is wise, what is right is limited by your vocabulary. And unless you speak every possible dialect in the universe, you're probably missing out on something. You're probably missing out on a little bit of information.

You can afford to suspend your disbelief and see whether the thing that is coming to you actually has a benefit in its effect, as opposed to trying to intellectualize your way around just acting the way you feel motivated to act. And that's true whether your type of channeling is art, or poultice making, or cooking, or writing strange songs like Weird Al Yankovic, you know?

There's room for everybody. I strongly encourage everybody to be weird. And, you know, accept wisdom in all its manifestations by challenging their belief systems.

**Amber:** Thank you. I love you. I love listening to you talk. (*both laugh*)

**Sanyu:** I was like, I don't know how structured This is, but God bless! (*Sanyu laughs*)

**Amber:** I've got to say, too, I also very much love the Tao Te Ching, and especially the Stephen Mitchell translation that you mentioned, when we were talking before this.

And yeah, I mean, talk about wisdom. You know, I feel like that's the one book I can open and anything I read is going to be true and relevant and helpful.

**[1:19:53]**

**Sanyu:** It's so true. It's just actually, this is a little Tao nerd question for you, though.

I have found... I've been practicing Taoism I suppose, or like I came into the practice of Taoism in I think 2010. So it's been eight years of this, and I never called myself a Taoist in the beginning. But after about six or seven years, I was like, "Oh, I think I can actually like, I can actually defend this title. (*Sanyu laughs*) Like I know enough."

What I'm asking is, is there a particular verse of the Tao Te Ching — Steven Mitchell's, in this case — that you have found grew on you? Or grew in your knowledge of it over the amount of time you've been reading it?

**Amber:** Umm, well, actually, it's the thing you already talked about. It's funny 'cause I was trying to find it when you were talking about that earlier, and I didn't. But I think it might be the first verse which is "That can be named is not the eternal doubt."

**Sanyu:** Yes, I do think that's the first one. Here I have it right in front of me. Let me see here.

And then I'll tell you mine because the one that was for me was so eye opening, I didn't even get it. It was like one of my least favorite ones when I started reading it. And then like years later I was like, "Oh, that's what that means."

Um, yeah, it is the first one. It says, "The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name. The unnameable is the eternally real. Naming is the origin of all particular things. Free from desire, you realize the mystery, caught in desire you see only the manifestations, yet mystery and manifestations arise from the same source. The source is called darkness, darkness within darkness, the gateway to all understanding.

I mean, Lao-Tzu...[inaudible 1:22:04], like, thousands of years ago.

It's just, yeah, it's just poetry in so many ways. That one I definitely chew on. The one that I was referring to is the one that says something to the effect of, like, if you don't want to be involved with evil get out of its way.

I can't even, like, I wish I had looked ahead of time and known which one it was because it says it much better than me. But at first I didn't really understand what that meant. I thought it meant to avoid it. And I was like, "Well, that's not very Taoist." But that was my perspective, right? Like, how do you get out of a way of something that is there.

And I came to. I've only recently been chewing on this, and I'm like, well, the equal opposite reaction to hatred would in physics, or in theory, if it was actually the equal opposite reaction, it would neutralize it. Because that negative with its equal positive, would be neutralizing.

So I've been thinking about in this era of Trump. What is the actual equal opposite reaction to that kind of belligerent rhetoric?

And I haven't found that wisdom yet, but I'll let you know. (*Sanyu laughs*)

Amber: Yeah, do! (*Amber laughs*)

I need to find that verse, too. I'm looking for it online, but I don't see it.

[1:23:47]

**Amber:** And another one that I'm thinking about now, too, that I remember didn't make much sense to me when I was a teenager and first reading about Taoism is like, "You don't even need to leave your home to experience everything." Something along those lines.

I was like, "What? No way, you know, you got to get out and do everything." And the older I get the more I understand what that means.

**Sanyu:** Yeah, and I bet with kids, their imaginal world's so rich and yet their physical worlds are so small.

**Amber:** Right? And it's just I think, too, about, you know, like just expanding your mind and perception and awareness outward from wherever you are. Yeah, and so much can come from that and not from actually physically seeking things.

**Sanyu:** Exactly. Yeah. It's all.... I mean, I say this a lot in Tarot readings, but especially when I pull the suit of Wands, because I call it the "Suit of Mirroring." And I'm like, you know, everything you experience is from your perspective. Like you're sitting across from me in this reading, and I guarantee that you don't see yourself the way that I see you. And I guarantee that I don't see myself the way that you see me, and I literally can't. I cannot occupy the space that you take.

And so I'd like to think of existence — maybe this is a good place to end it — but I like to think of existence as this infinite tapestry that through some mystical means, bang, shout, word, whatever, friction, sort of became charged and broke into a million pieces. And so it became this sort of like puzzle tapestry.

And so I like to think of everybody as having their own piece of that puzzle. And that we're all just sort of navigating where those lines connect between us all. There's no two same pieces in a puzzle. No two pieces can occupy the same space. So to be within existence and integrity you have to be fully and wholly that which you are to yourself, or else you're not taking up the space that is actually yours, unless you are not actually being the puzzle piece of the tapestry that you are.

**Amber:** And therefore you can't really relate properly to the rest of existence

**Sanyu:** No, and then you'll start to feel all the things that make you feel alienated will then be projected onto what you consider the nature of the world because, of course, it's the nature of you, and that is your world. You are your world.

**Amber:** Okay. (*Amber laughs*) I could just keep talking to you forever, but...

**Sanyu:** You've got a life and children!

**Amber:** I got a little one who doesn't sleep anymore, and I got to get back to her. And you're right, that was a good stopping point.



[1:26:50]

**Amber:** But I want to hear about this Plant Alchemy Deck you have coming up, and then like, tell folks about your video series, Plural, and you know your readings and where they can find you and what you offer and all that stuff.

**Sanyu:** Okay, great. Well, I'm so glad that you're mentioned the Plant Alchemy Deck. The Plant Alchemy Deck is a collaboration with Jen Erlys, who's currently now based in New Mexico. I actually just came from New Mexico and seeing her, she creates what she calls "plant arts", and we've come to call it "plant alchemy arts". You might think of it in more traditional sense as a homage to the mandala, but she will harvest and collect various types of plant materials, depending on her her mood or the season, and she will create these elaborate designs, and then she'll take a photo of them, leave it for 24 hours, and then she'll destroy it.

So it does have that mandala-esque quality, but what basically happened was that she was just doing this out of her joy for existence and her love for nature, and she still does it for that reason, and we came to know each other through Alice of Life as Ceremony, that journal, on Instagram at @LifeasCeremony. Jen's Instagram is @HummingbirdRebellion.

And basically between her visuals and my intuition when looking at those visuals, we've created an oracle deck that will have several series. It's called the Plant Alchemy Decks. And our first deck is called *The Origin Series*. It's based loosely on the chakra, chakra series of energy. So there are 21 cards, three for each chakra, and then there's a 22nd card which is a black and white card, which is called "The Decisive Act".

And each card really has a lot of personality, as those of you who work with plants know, they are very communal. And, and Jen's work is such a work of art that it really doesn't even necessitate being used as an oracle deck. You could literally just put a magnet on one of them on your fridge, and it would be perfectly happy to be shared in that way. Plants don't discriminate. So that's the first project.

[1:29:02]

**Sanyu:** The second project is I have a few videos series. I was doing a Word Nerd Wednesday series that's more or less come to a halt right now because now I'm incorporating the word nerdism into basically every aspect of my writing that I can. So if you want to follow that kind of stuff you can find me on Instagram @SanyuEstelle. And it's also Sanyu, in case you're wondering out there, it's pronounced both ways. My parents have different accents.

Or my website which is the same except.com, and there are some old Word Nerd Wednesday videos there. And I'm excited to announce here that I did have a... I had a sort of art project, ongoing art project, going called "Altar Egheaux," altar, as in the altar you worship at, and ego spelled like egheaux, which basically it would be like an ego-heaux.

Um, but she is... she does not speak she communicates through movement, and she makes movement videos, and I had recently thought that she had basically died, and I had incorporated her and so that was the end of her but she has very much come back to tell me that that our time

has not finished, and so I will be creating some more Alter Egheaux content while I'm in Europe this month and next month, and I have some exciting things developing there.

So if you want to find that you can also go to my Instagram @SanyuEstelle. Alter Egheaux also has an Instagram, but I'm not sure if how well that's maintained. So just come to my main page.

And then last but not least, if you would like to have any services from me, I, of course, do multiple kinds of card readings. You can find that on my website or through my Instagram, and I can do audio live or in person.

And then I have two other little projects that I have a lot of pride in that I'd like to share, which is I do "Accountability Allyship". Essentially, I use my macro perspective and my intuition and my word nerdism to communicate with you and ask you questions that then help me understand the way that you use your vocabulary to limit yourself. And I send you materials every week that bring you back to the way that you speak about yourself, your existence, so that you can start utilizing the kind of language that you actually want to be a part of the construction of your life. Because oftentimes, we use words that are very — even in their etymology, even in their origin — like, very negative or hostile or limiting to us, and there's a way to use language like spells, like alchemy, and that's sort of what I do with my particular Accountability Ally clients. You can also find that through my Instagram or through my website.

And last but not least, I have a little service called Sanyu Says. It is a much cheaper monthly service that I basically share Word Nerd Wednesday videos, a little bit of Tarot, and a little bit of writing on the 5th, 14th, and 27th of every month. It goes straight to your inbox with a link. You can click it open it, download things, and that is a monthly subscription service and that is everything.

**Amber:** Wow. I've got to say it's been a really long time since I was interested in anyone's Tarot reading service. I just feel, like, saturated with people in my life who do that now, but I'm definitely gonna do that with you in the future.

**Sanyu:** Oh, I would still look forward to it, especially because we've already talked about your ancestry in just casual passing, and I really feel like that there would be some ancestral things coming up for sure.

**Amber:** Yeah. Okay. Sanyu thank you so much for the enlightenment.

**Sanyu:** Thank you, Amber, for the space and for having me and for listening to me ramble. And thank you for everybody who listens in on this great podcast and opportunity for all kinds of folks to share their gifts.

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

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[*Closing*]

[1:33:30]

**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 my blog, handmade herbal medicines, past podcast episodes, and a lot more at [MythicMedicine.love](http://MythicMedicine.love).

While you're there, I invite you to click the purple banner across the top of the page to take my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Plant Familiar?](#)" It's a fun and lighthearted quiz, but the results are really in depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with the medicine you are in need of.

If you love this show, please consider supporting my work at [Patreon.com/MedicineStories](https://Patreon.com/MedicineStories). There's some killer rewards there: exclusive content, access to online courses, free beautiful downloadable e-books, coupon codes, giveaways, and just amazing gifts provided by past guests of the podcasts. All of that stuff is at the two dollar a month level.

For a little more, you can access my herbal e-book or my small online course, and that's all there as a thank you, a HUGE thank you from me and from my guests for listening, for supporting this work. I love figuring out what I can gift to people on Patreon. It's so fun. And I love that Patreon makes it so that you can contribute for such a small amount each month.

I'm a crazy busy and overwhelmed mom and adding this project into my life has been a questionable move for sure, but I love doing it, and I love the feedback I get from you all. And I just pray that Patreon allows me the financial wiggle room to keep on doing it while giving back to everyone who is listening.

If you're unable to do that, or if you'd like to support further, I would love it if you would subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. And if you would review the podcasts on iTunes, too, it really helps getting it into other ears. It means so much to me when I read those reviews. It's, like, the highlight of my week when I check them and see new ones.

People are amazing. You guys are wonderful. Thank you so much.

The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her song "Wild Eyes." It's one of my favorite songs of all time.

Thank you and I look forward to next time!

**[1:36:19]**