



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 48 with Emilee Saldaya

Matriarchy in Action & Ancestor-Assisted Birth

May 29, 2019

[0:00:00]

(Excerpt from today's show from Emilee Saldaya)

Emilee: *We are afraid of birth because that is, umm, that is everything we are told. Earth has been taken from us, has been stolen from us for a very very long time, and uhh, we have, you know burned, killed and jailed the medicine women you know the witches the midwives, and the herbalists, and the healers and all of the women who supported women, and who held -- the knowers, right? The knowers have been mostly wiped out. It's a real struggle to stay alive if you are a knower who walks with women. So, that was very systemically and successfully done over the past many thousands of years, as I'm sure you know.*

You know we're afraid of birth today because why wouldn't we be? (Emilee laughs). There's nothing injected into our lives as girls that tells us, that normalizes it, that allies us to it.

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

[0:01:04]

Amber: Hello friends! And welcome to Medicine Stories, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth.

I am your host, Amber Magnolia Hill, and this is episode 48.

Today I'm sharing my interview with Emilee Saldaya of the Free Birth Society. I was interviewed on Emilee's [Free Birth Society Podcast](#) a couple months ago. You can listen to it there. I talk about my two daughters, very different birth stories:

The first was a free birth, or as I now conceive of it after listening, after interviewing Emilee, my “ancestor-assisted birth” in 2006. And I mean, it truly was, as I truly believe all of our births are because birth is in your bones, if you are a woman.

And the second birth: a midwife and ancestor-assisted birth in 2016. So one really fell outside the dominant medical paradigm, and one fell under the midwifery model of care. And they were both wonderful, and I love birth and I love birth stories and as I tell Emilee, I can't believe it's actually taken me this long talk about birth because I always intended to.

And as I shared in the very first episode, Episode 1, I had been wanting to start a podcast since 2006 when my oldest was born. And back then it was going to be related to birth, and mothering, breastfeeding, and herbal home care for children. And, umm, I love that it evolved to what is now, but I am also really happy to be returning to my roots and my original vision by talking about birth.

Emilee is wonderful, so whip-smart and really thinks, has thought through things that I have never thought about before. So on that note she will say some things that will be controversial to some, triggering to some people, and as always I invite you to keep going. To sit with it, to hold nuance, to let yourself be challenged. You can hear that she challenges my thinking with something she says. And I welcome that. I love when that happens. When I hear a piece of information that makes me go like, "Brrr!" (*Amber does sound of tires squealing at stop sign*).

(Amber laughs)

It's hard for me to take it in because it totally goes against something that I believe. I soften, and I am open to it, and I give it some time, you know? To really listen to what the person's argument is and what they're saying, and then see where I come out at the end of holding the nuance and holding the space to possibly have my mind changed.

If we are not staying open like that and changing our minds, we are calcifying or solidifying. We're aging too early. We're not evolving and growing. I love that I've attracted an audience who are capable of critical thinking and nuanced thinking. You all are so smart and open. My mind is just blown all the time by posts and comments in the Medicine Stories Facebook and on my Instagram posts. Just thank you so much for being those people in this culture right now. Because (*Amber laughs*) there's not a ton of them and there's not a ton of you, and we really need them. Thank you so much.

The Patreon offerings for this course (there are two of them): one is for Patrons at the two dollar level, and one is for everyone.

So the one that's available for Patrons at patreon.com/medicinstories is a 50 dollar off coupon code for the Free Birth Society's Online Course: [The Complete Guide to Free Birth: A Self-Guided Online Course](#) that will teach you everything you need to know to birth freely and in your power. And they make it clear on the website for this that it's not just for people who are going to have a total free birth, who are going to have no medical assistance or an official, an official of some sort, even a midwife in attendance.

If you're just planning a free birth, or you just want to be more empowered in mammalian birth, I really -- this perspective, this framing of remembering that we are animals, and that we are mammals... We're very specific kind of animal, who has a very specific, umm, cascade of hormones that get released in the birth process for optimal birthing. And that almost EVERYTHING we do today in birth, disrupts the natural cascade of hormones that every mammal has evolved to release to have the best most healthy birth for mother and baby.

[0:06:31]

Amber: So yeah. I just love that phrase. I know it probably doesn't work for everyone, but if you want to know the physiology behind mammalian birth and to empower yourself to have that sort of birth, umm... check out their online course. and the linked will be there in the patreon post.

And the second Patreon post is an audio clip of what Emilee and I talked about after the official interview was over. So in the last minute of this interview she mentions vasectomy, and then we said our goodbyes, and then I was like, "WAIT. Tell me more about vasectomy because Owen and I already had an appointment for him to have one, and he had already gone to the first appointment, like the informational appointment, and this is something that we had gone back and forth forever, trying to figure out if this was right for us."

And you know I was really coming at it from the perspective of like (*laughs*), women take on all the burden when it comes to birth control and childbearing, and can you just do something? Can you just step in and do something for once, you know?

Which is totally valid but it didn't ever really feel totally good for us. And as you'll hear in that clip, we had actually already canceled the appointment, but postponed really in our minds.

I'm not gonna give you the details, but it's a short clip and it's really informative and I just really appreciate what Emilee has to say.

[0:08:06]

Amber: And you know let me say here, too, I just want to make it really clear here that Emilee says here in the interview: We have no judgement around how individual families

and women and female bodied people choose to birth, choose to have vasectomies or not you know (Amber laughs)? But what Emilee's critiquing, and I am aligned with her in this, is the system: the dominant, medical, patriarchal birthing paradigm that is so far removed from our innate physiology. It's absurd and insane.

So keep that in mind. Again, if this is something that might sort of trigger you because you made different choices, it's not on you. It's on the culture that you were born into.

A very quick listener shout out: this is an iTunes Review from Carawit, who wrote:

'I don't know why it's taken me so long to review your podcast, Amber. I've been listening since day one and absorbing each wise rich conversation through my ears and through my skin, feeling so nourished by what comes through. I truly feel the mythic journey of my life, which at times has felt much more subtle or imperceptible has been teased out and made accessible through the beautiful stories shared here.'

I really love that because that is exactly my intention. Keep following the mythic threads of your own unfolding and in sharing people's medicine stories. It's exactly what I hope to inspire.

[0:09:49]

Amber: You'll notice that even when I'm interviewing someone like Emilee when we're really talking about the work that they do and we can get super heady and intellectual with it, we always go into their personal medicine stories. And my favorite in this interview is about the dolphins. I mean, I was crying. I had tears coming out of my eyeballs as Emilee was telling this story. It was so beautiful. So you're in for a real treat in a few minutes here (*Amber laughs*) when you get to listen to the dolphin story.

I really also just loved this idea that Emilee framed for me of "the matriarchal home." And I realize that I do have a matriarchal home. I have a home in which I am centered and my daughters are centered. And it's not in a way that my husband's perspectives or opinions are meaningless. We're a total team. But he, he listens to me. He's not trying to dominate. He's not bringing that toxic, patriarchal, masculine energy to our interactions or our conflicts or our decision-making. And I've been in a relationship like that, and I left that relationship because it was NOT working. It was not working in the home and it was not working for the family. And you know, it's just -- biologically speaking, and of course I'm talking about cis-hetero couples, but looking at the evolution of our species, women and the womb-havers, and the birth givers, we are-- our senses are more attuned, more attuned to our children, and they are more attuned to all humans and to the social unit of the family.

So generally speaking, most of the time, women are going to have the better perspective or idea. I don't even know if better's the right word, just like, more in alignment with the truth of the family unit and the humans in it- the tiny humans in it.

[0:12:05]

Amber: So my relationship now works so much better than my past relationship, and my family works better now because I'm allowed that space. It's hard to talk about, and I don't want to offend anyone, and I really don't think I'm going to offend Owen by talking about this because he's just one of those just amazing men that innately understands this. Like, when women lead it is better for everyone. And of course sometimes he gets frustrated with my opinions (*Amber laughs*) and my desire to, you know, have **my** decision be the one that we make or whatever.

But the conversation also reminded me of something -- I believe I brought this up one time before on the podcast --but of this diagram I saw once in a Taoist medicine book. And so it was a male and female form, it was just like a line drawing, and it was showing how in the Taoist medical belief system how energy runs through male and female bodies. And through the male body it came from outside, through the head, and down and out the penis, so it was very HOOAH (*Amber laughs*) and outward.

And in the female drawing the energy drew up from the earth, up into the vagina, and into the women's center, heart space if I remember correctly. And I remember the text saying, "This is why everyone is attracted to women, not necessarily sexually, but just wants to be around women," you know? This is why mothers you know are revered as they are, why most children at least slightly prefer the mother and the mother energy, why mother's day is just a *little bit* bigger of a deal than Father's day (*Amber whispers*): *No offense, guys.*

But I just, I just always remembered that perspective from Taoist medicine, and I always remembered that diagram. And when Emilee brought up this idea of the matriarchal home that, that's what she's talking about here.

[0:14:07]

Amber: So I just wanted to give a little bit farther perspective and more of my thoughts on this idea because I think anyone who has lived in both homes knows which one works better. And even if you haven't you can immediately INSTINCTIVELY understand what the difference between them might be. And it's just something to like, uphold as a nice way to structure families and homes. I know it's not always easy, especially if you've got one of those toxic patriarchal dudes in your life.

A final thought here is that in the vasectomy talk, if you listen, Emilee briefly talks about vaccines.

I haven't talked about vaccines since Cilla Wittkot (which has been the third most downloaded episode, and people still write me about it to thank me for it all the time): [The Innate Intelligence of the Immune System](#). And I'm not going to talk about them right now, but I have been talking about them a LOT on Instagram and Instagram Stories in light of the TOTALLY insane legislation coming down right now in California with SB-276, and across the nation.

If you're not tuned into it, there are a lot of mandated vaccines bills in a lot of states, and many of them are being defeated. And in one state even religious exceptions were upheld. Here they are trying to completely take away medical exemptions for all intents and purposes. Which means, no matter what your genetic predisposition or if you're four siblings all have severe life-threatening or even life-taking reactions to vaccines you HAVE to get it.

It's crazy, and it's an issue of medical freedom. And so anyway, if you would like a SHIT ton of information, as it's been filtered through my brain, most of it coming from actual books written by actual doctors, you can see the highlights at my instagram profile which is @MythicMedicine.

If you're not on Instagram you can do [instagram.com/mythicmedicine](https://www.instagram.com/mythicmedicine), and you can see the highlights there.

[0:16:22]

Amber: So it does, though, tie into what Emilee is talking about here because it is about medical freedom and bodily sovereignty.

And if you care about what's happening with abortion right now, then you should care about what's happening with mandated vaccines because it's the same thing. It's taking away body sovereignty from women and from parents over their children, and it's CRAZY. Many parents who have vaccinated their kids are still staunchly opposed to this legislation because it's so over the top. Again, not going to go into it. Find it on Instagram.

Thanks for listening and now let's get into this incredible interview with Emilee Saldaya.

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

[0:17:12]

Amber: Hi Emilee, welcome to Medicine Stories!

Emilee: Hi thanks for having me!

Amber: I'm stoked to have you I love this because I was interviewed on your podcast and got to know you through there, got to dive deeper into your work. And I'm so excited because you're -- I'm finally talking about birth on my show.

Emilee: Have you not talked about it?

Amber: No! It's been a year and half, and like, birth is what brought me into the blogosphere 10 years ago, which led directly to this and always from the beginning of starting the show that like, birth would be a component of it.

Emilee: Interesting!

Amber: I know! It hasn't worked out, so it's so great that here you are. Umm, I want to know, because I don't know this, I want to know how you came to be doing what you're doing, which is really holding this like, HUGE space. Like, you use the term "radical birthkeeper" before we started talking, and that really describes you. And I'm thinking about when your daughter was born, and thinking you were into all this before you gave birth...

Emilee: -- Oh yeah --

Amber: ... and before you became a mother, so what brought, what brought you into such a deep interest and desire to inspire around birth?

Emilee: Yeah, well do you want the short answer, or do you want the longer answer?

Amber: I *never* want the short answer.

Emilee: (*Emilee laughs*) Okay! So the longer answer is, umm, you know, I'm one of those women that my whole life I knew that I'd have children. My imaginary friends when I was a kid were my future children.

(*Amber laughs*)

Emilee: You know, I was one of those people, and I had a wonderful mother who spoke -- or rather HAVE, she's still alive -- always spoke so positively about birth, and mothering, and breastfeeding and umm, that was highly impactful as I grew up because I didn't have to process, like many women, any of the trauma coming in with trauma stories at my back.

And so I left High School early. I dropped out quite early. I was 16, and wanted to go to L.A. And my mom, when I sat my parents down and let them know I'd be leaving and withdrawing and it was time for me to start my real life, they said "Okay. Totally. But my

preference would be that you have a plan and that you have an idea of what you're going to do." And I said, "That's completely fair. I'll think about it." (*Emilee laughs*)

Amber: Wait, I have to ask. If you're parents were like, "Cool. You can quit high school."

Emilee: Oh no, I didn't ask their permission.

(*Amber laughs*)

Emilee: I said, "I'm *going* to withdraw from school." (*Emilee laughs*).

Amber: But they were like, okay with it?

Emilee: Yeah, they really were.

Amber: Was that because you were having real problems or just 'cause you've always been like "I'm doing what I'm doing. We just gotta let her."

Emilee: Well both. Both!

Let's see. So I did boarding school for two years, the first two years of high school, and uhh -- this is a whole other side note-- I thought I was going to be a professional soccer player. I was obsessed with soccer. I was really good at it and was going to be going to Shanghai for my junior year to play soccer there. And I was learning Mandarin, and it was this whole funny part of my life.

And then I was injured. I really hurt, I severed my ACL, and needed surgery, and it was a long road to recovery so soccer was out. And fell in love with a boy, came home to Florida, umm attempted (*Emilee laughs*) to do a year at a public high school and never went.

And there was a lot happening in my family that was not working for me. And in my boyfriend at the time's family that was not good. And so, the short version is, we pretty much never went to school but maintained straight A's. We became friends with all the security guards. We worked at Panera Bread together.

(*Amber laughs*)

So we would bring the security guards donuts and bagels everyday and became their friends so they didn't care when we left. And yeah, so we just showed up for the appropriate test and were never really there. And we were just, we were over it. We were like, "This is not life. We're ready."

[0:21:26]

Emilee: We had a couple of thousands of dollars, which is hilarious because we moved to L.A. with 2000 dollars, and when we were 16 we thought that was like, you know, what can't you do?

Amber: We're rich!

Emilee: What can't you do at 16 with 2000 dollars?! Like, the world was ours (*laughs*)!

Anyway, so there were a lot of components to it, but it was largely that I was ready. I was ready to start. I was ready to do things, as was my boyfriend at the time. And my mom had gotten remarried, and it just wasn't like, working for the level of independence I required. Umm, the family dynamic I was in - it wasn't working. And so, yeah. I just kind of claimed it.

You know, and it's funny because two years prior, when I was fourteen in eighth grade I sat my parents down -- so this is the first time I did it -- I sat them down, and I said, "Look this isn't working. I can't be here. I don't want to live with you guys. I don't. This isn't working for me, but let's just be honest. I'm too young to run away. I have no skills."

(Both laugh)

I remember saying that to them, and them being like, "Yeah, no, we know. Yeah you're fourteen."

(Both continue laughing)

Amber: So were you like, "So I found this boarding school..."

Emilee: Yeah! Exactly! I said, "So I found this school where I can start on Varsity with soccer, and you know, would you guys pay for it?" And thankfully, I did grow up in an affluent home where they could finance my request.

So here we are at sixteen, my mom says, "Please just have a plan." And so, why I was telling that story was that it was this very pivotal night for me where I stayed up all night really thinking on it, and really being like, "What matters? Here I am about to embark on my life by myself, with my boyfriend, you know? But by myself as an adult. What matters? What am I going to do when I get there?"

And I remember I just couldn't stop thinking about babies, and I couldn't stop thinking about -- this is a little dark --- but I couldn't stop thinking about a friend of mine in highschool who had just been raped. And I kept thinking about babies, and I kept thinking

about violence, and the cycle of violence, and that violence begets violence, and I just kept going back to this mother-baby circle or cycle in my head.

And I just came to know -- now I've come to know with every cell in my body -- I came to this, you know, realization that if a mother and a baby have a good start, have a healthy attachment, if the mother feels able to mother intuitively and instinctually, and if a baby is respected and umnm, you know growing up in a safe place, how could they rape? That was kind of my -- yeah, a little dark -- but that was my, that was my weird little formula.

Amber: Ahh.

Emilee: That I was just laying there in my bed, I remember exactly the moment, and I was just kinda spinning on this and was like, "Oh my god. I may have just discovered the answer to everything."

(Both laugh)

Emilee: "Oh my God, wait a minute, wait a minute. It's mother-baby. That is everything."

(Amber laughs)

[0:24:52]

Emilee: And so I remember Googling, I remember thinking, "Well, I like babies. I like massage. I wonder if there's anything called baby massage."

So I Googled baby massage, and it turns out that there was a whole thing about it. There was a whole training and certification, and a whole kind of profession around what I then went on to do. So that was my plan.

I emerged from that long night of thinking and told my mom that I was going to teach "baby massage." And she was like, "Uhh okay."

(Both laugh)

So we get to L.A. I take the training, and I start teaching. I start volunteering. And I very quickly wound up with this organization where I was supporting parents whose babies had had open heart surgery and whose babies were in hospital still, or whose babies were in hospice. Which is, about as, about as tragic as it gets.

But there was something about me being so young and so open, you know? Like the world hadn't beaten me down yet *(both laugh)*.

I was **so** able to do it. And actually I think I still would be, but it, you know, it's different in a way now.

Anyway, I was doing a LOT of yoga. I had already found kundalini. I was meditating everyday. I was doing kundalini everyday. I was just like, I was becoming a fucking Jedi.

(*Amber laughs*)

And so I found this thing and realized what was profound about it, which is that when you support a mother to be in her instinct, the mother-baby conversation can happen: the mother baby communication, the mb attachment can happen. And I wasn't really doing anything, like I was just providing, like I wasn't touching the babies, I was just providing a space and encouraging and loving moms (sometimes dads) to be present with their babies. And it was profound. It was highly impactful for me to see how simple it was and to see how transformative it was to love a woman, to love a mother who really was navigating some impossible waters.

[0:27:03]

Emilee: And I was just like, "Okay, yeah. No I was right. This is it. This is where everything is. I found the holy grail. It's mother-baby."

And I took off to India for quite some time and just kind of traveled around and fell in love with India which taught me many, many, many, lessons, that -- stories for another day and very humbling and hugely pivotal time in my life to go to both India and Burning Man in the same year

(*Both laugh*)

Emilee: It was like AHHHHH! Everything was just coming together for me, and I was just so awake and so open and had found some older sisters who were paving the road of consciousness and health in a big way. And yeah, everything was just exploding, and I was so ready for it.

And when I came home, people started asking me to attend their births. And that, the brief version of that was that I first saw a series of home births, they were my family, my father's, it was my father's wife at the time's child, so my half sister in Hawaii. Umm outside, under a mango tree (*laughs*).

Amber: Oh my god.

Emilee: ...on a bay where the spinner dolphins live, where the locals say that -- Yeah. Everybody, her jaw just dropped open.--

(Both laugh)

Emilee: No, it was actually like that. It was one of the most magical things I've ever witnessed, and it was my initiation to birth. And we were on a bay. My father had rented a home on the bay where the locals say that -- it's believed in some Hawaiian mythology -- that dolphins are aliens, and that they are popping in and out of a portal at this bay where my little sister was born.

Emilee: And I gotta say man... I'm convinced.

(Both laugh)

Emilee: I mean, it was magic. And anyway, the dolphins were jumping, and it was a pretty quick birth, and it was just so beautiful and...

[0:29:20]

Amber: -- Can I just say...

Emilee: -- Yeah.

Amber: ... I wonder if this is related, sorry..

Emilee: It's okay.

Amber: My friend gave me a book. She knows I like super, radical, weird 70's books *(laughs)*, and it's called "Dolphins, Telepathy, and Birth."

Emilee: Oooh! I want to see it!

Amber: Yeah it's amazing! And I also think of that film... Is it "Birth into Being" that I watched when I was pregnant with my first? Where there's the women giving birth in the sea in Russia, and they talk about there being dolphins in the water with them?

Emilee: Mhmm... yeah.

Amber: Oh my God!

Emilee: Yeah. That video is awesome.

Amber: Yeah...

Emilee: Yeah, she was on land, but the night prior to -- her waters opened the day prior, and it was a full moon, of course. We went out on a boat under the full moon, and she

didn't get in the water because her waters were open, but my sister and I did (my older sister). And we swam in the moonlight in the full moon with my baby sister on her way with the dolphins everywhere.

Amber: Shut up!

Emilee: I know!

Amber: That's like, **all** I want out of life.

Emilee: I know! (*Emilee laughs*)

And okay, since we're talking about dolphins: I had met this guy who was, like, supposed to be some dolphin psychic. He, like, pretty much was a dolphin as a human being.

(*Amber laughs*)

I mean, seriously, I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't had met him, but like he is a dolphin as a man.

(*Amber continues laughing*)

And so he had taught me how dolphins communicate. Very briefly, he had just said, "You know if you want to call them, you just picture yourself with them, and they work with telepathy, and so you just have to drop into that and umm, you know tell them, like picture yourself with them and tell them what you want to do with them, and it will probably work."

So the first morning I was there -- this is one of my most favorite stories of my entire life that has ever happened to me -- the first morning I arrived, which I think was the day prior to her waters opening, but the day prior my dad had woken me up and threw some fins and a mask at me and said, "Hey the dolphins are out. Go."

And I had never really swam with a pod of dolphins. I grew up in Florida and had been around dolphins quite a bit because we lived on rivers and oceans and stuff, but I had never had anything quite like this. So I put my mask on I put my fins on, and I take off from their backyard. And I'm swimming out to the middle of this bay, and I'm like, my adrenaline, I'm so excited.

And I actually didn't see them yet, and maybe I saw them from a distance. I don't remember. But I'm taking off, I swim, swim, swim, swim, swim, and I swim pretty far out and I kinda realize how far I just swam -- it's not like I'm a swimmer -- and I was a little out of breath and running on adrenaline, and I kind of realized, "Oh shit. I just swam kind of far from my dad's house. Where are the dolphins?" I couldn't find them anywhere -- it's

very deep. They say that they've never found the bottom of the bay, and -- 'cause that's where the portal is --- and had a moment of panic, and was like, "Oh, did I just do something really stupid? Like I grew up in oceans, and I'm pretty smart about how not to do stupid things in the ocean." (*laughs*)

But for a moment I was like, "Oh I think I might have just done something dumb. I'm tired and I'm far away."

[0:32:36]

Emilee: Anyway. So I remembered the guy's advice, and he said you know, "Call them with your mind."

So I picture that I'm in the middle of a family of dolphins, and I'm closing my eyes and have my head in the water, and I'm just like, "Okay, if anyone's out there, come be with me. Come be with me." And I swear. I had my mask on, and I see these two scouter dolphins emerge from deep, deep, deep down. And they come up on either side of me. And then I was like "Oh my God is this really happening? Is this really happening?"

And then an entire family comes up from the bottom, and one of them had a little baby dolphin with her, and they all come up and I was like **GASP**. And I was so in it. Okay let's swim together! And so I just kinda shot that to them like, "Let's go," and we all freaking swam together. And we were swimming and they didn't go that fast like I could totally like--You're like, this is hurting ---

Amber: I'm totally crying.

(*Both laugh*)

Emilee: It was really in the top three highlight, most beautiful, beautiful epic things that's ever happened to me.

I'm literally with a pod of dolphins, trying not to shit myself with excitement, this is like my life's dream (*laughs*).

And we're swimming and I remember everytime -- and I just kinda dropped into it, and I was kinda moving my body like theirs, and I just relaxed -- anytime I needed to come up and take a break, I would just tell them (because we were swimming under the surface)

I would say, "Hey, I need to take a break," and I would picture myself going up there, and the scouter dolphins would come up with me, and then we would go back down so we did this for some period of time.

And again, I had this moment where I was like, "Oh wow. I was not paying attention to where we were going. I'm just in freaking ecstasy. Maybe I just did something stupid." I don't even know where -- if, maybe I was flying, swimming in a different direction. It felt like flying. And I just had this moment of panic like, "Did I just do something stupid again?" And I look up and they had brought me home.

Amber: Oh my God!

Emilee: And they brought me to the jetty where the rocks were, and I was right there! Right when I was starting to be like, "I'm tired."

And that was it, and I realized I was there trying not to cry, feeling like I just had the most spiritual experience of my life; I was 18, and I then I kinda went back to look for them, and they were gone.

Amber: (*Laughing*) Oh my god...

Emilee: Anyway. (*Laughs*) So that was kinda my intro into birth and so here we are.

[0:34:59]

Amber: Ugh! I'm so glad we went there!

Emilee: Ugh, yeah. I haven't thought of that story in a while.

Amber: I think about how, you know, dolphins echo-locate and use sonar to find their way around and to communicate and how there's this idea that I'm wanting to look more into that they literally have a three dimensional pictures in their mind of our bodies and the insides of our bodies.

Emilee: (*agreeing*)

Amber: They just know you at such a deep level because they're like, "This is what's going on. This is where her energy's stuck. This is where..." This dolphin therapy. -- Yes! And so people have had experiences where they're swimming with dolphins, and people have even reported that they like, start clicking at them, clicking at their stomach cancer.

Emilee: Oh yeah! When we swam with them with my sister's mom, they were absolutely talking to the baby. They were jumping out of the water and moving their bodies and putting their little heads at her belly... oh yeah!

And I just heard recently that whales, dolphins, and humans are the only mammals that survive past menopause. That there's a purpose for female mammals in our three species beyond menopause. Every other mammal apparently dies at menopause because they're done breeding. They're done.

Amber: That's what we talked about when you interviewed me!

Emilee: Yeah I totally thought of you when I heard that!

Amber: Ugh! Oh my God! I love it so much.

(Emilee laughs)

Emilee: So basically, to wrap up the beginning part of the birth work, I had a pretty epic entry into birth.

(Both laugh)

Amber: Yeah that's like the multiverse being like "Emilee, welcome to your path! Yes you are on the right path."

Emilee: And, so my first couple births were like that and then one of my best friends gave birth and has a totally orgasmic, ecstatic birth. And my joke with her is, I've actually seen her on a lot of ecstasy in the past.

(Amber laughs)

And never had I seen her so high and in so much ecstasy as in her birth. And so yeah, I had these beautiful initiations into supporting birth and witnessing women give birth. And then I went to my first hospital birth

[0:37:18]

And that was really when I started to align with my dharma because it wasn't until I saw how birth and women were being sabotaged and oppressed and abused, did I realize what was going on. You know? It -- I left that first birth, which was a bullied induction for no medical reasons as there are almost no medical reasons ever for medical induction, and umm, just bullied all the way and ended with this unnecessary c-section.

And I left there after spending a couple days there, and I remember going to the Kaiser parking lot where my car was. I hadn't slept for a couple nights. It was so painful to watch my friend go through this. And I remember getting on my knees, partially because I was so tired (*laughs*) and like, **shaking** from what I had just seen, and just getting on my knees

and looking up at the cloudy L.A. sky and just being like, "FUCK. This is it. I'm in it. I'm in it for life." This is... I had no idea because I had only seen beautiful birth. I had only seen respected birth.

And the spectrum of a birth experience is about as wide as you get. You know, it, like sex, can make or break you. If you are respected, supported, and seen and accepted, umm... wow. you know? It's the most powerful, transformational experience that women have available to them, in my opinion.

And if you are raped of that (and I don't say that lightly), if you're raped of that, it can really, really try to ruin you. It can really break you and leave you feeling beyond a failure. Leave you feeling like your body has betrayed you: you couldn't do what you were created to do, and that has disastrous consequences to you mothering, right? Which, you're now forever a mother.

[0:39:35]

Emilee: So I took a doula training and kind of got wrapped up in the self-importance of the professionalism of doula-doulaing, and created a business and was very quickly busy, and I just kinda went in full throttle.

I started attending a lot of births in the system, and I was still very young, and so I didn't have all the pieces put together of what I was witnessing. And I still believed the lie that if a woman had a vaginal birth or if a woman... sigh. how would I articulate this? I still believed the lie that hospital birth could be okay. That that natural birth was possible leaving your home. Umm.

And a lot of this in retrospect was clouded in my own self-importance, that I, as a young woman had found a career, and was making money and was very important. You know? These women wanted me at their births. These women -- I never felt they **NEEDED** me, but you know, it was complicated as money can be because I realized after a couple of years that I was actually enabling the system that I thought I was fighting against. But I was also sabotaging some women's births on some level because I felt I needed to prove that I was worth being there because they had paid me X amount of dollars.

And so when I was younger, I would approach births like, "Well I can't do NOTHING. I have to show that I deserve to be there."

And I think if doulas are honest many can (and midwives) could admit to that.

[0:41:28]

Emilee: Not understanding physiological birth, not understanding undisturbed births, even though I had touched it. I had witnessed it with these other births. Yeah I had a long road to go.

I hadn't totally aligned with, with my blooming feminism, and I was REALLY young. I was 17, 18, 19 in the beginning of this story and had really started this path very early. And so, basically my 20's was this whole journey of being a very successful doula, and a midwife's assistant, attending a LOT of births, 100s and 100s of births.

Amber: And did you, did you never see a natural birth in the hospital? What you said earlier was kind of like that that's a lie.

Emilee: It is a lie. Absolutely.

Amber: Tell me more about that. Yeah.

Emilee: There's no such thing as a natural birth once you've left your home. So I know that's going to be very triggering for somebody but hear me out. You know, and it's okay. Okay we could easily get into "what's natural" and whatever, but if we are going to talk about physiological birth which is pretty easy to talk about.

Physiological birth follows a certain hormonal sequence that is disrupted once you leave your home. So uh, a natural birth, I would say a "natural birth" is a physiological birth. It is as nature intended. There is a physiological sequence that occurs in all mammals. It's not unique to us: zebras follow it. Dogs follow it. There's a hormonal sequence.

Anyways, so point being, yes you can have a vaginal birth at the hospital but...

Amber: --Drug free.--

Emilee: ... Yes, and you also, for sure, are going to have vaginal exams by strangers. You're going to probably have the gown on, you'll probably have an IV port, the hep-lock. You will have been in a car and had to go through the hormonal disruption of switching into adrenaline -- fight or flight with raised cortisol levels -- once you're in the car.

If you are not in your own environment, your mammalian brain is not registering as safe. This isn't about your neo-cortex and your social cortex saying, "You're safer at a hospital."

Your primal brain doesn't know that.

What your primal brain knows is, "I have left my safe nest..."

Amber: --My den. My cave --

Emilee: ... My den. My cave where it is full of my germs (*laughs*) right? My smells, my fabrics, my food, my people, right? And no other mammal does this right? You don't leave.

Amber: In fact, mammals go deeper into their nest or their cave.

Emilee: Of course!

Amber: Or their den as they go to the darkest corner the safest spot.

Emilee: Right! And if anyone has ever had pets. like cats or dogs, what do they do? they don't go to the middle of the living room and spread their legs for everyone. Absolutely not. They -- You'll find that your cat gave birth in a closet or a drawer.

Amber: They don't seek out the fluorescent lights, the strangers...

Emilee: Right they're going to go to the middle of the road and invite everybody over, you know? Nobody does that.

(Both laugh)

[0:44:40]

Emilee: And so I guess my point is that when we're talking about physiological birth and the intended supportive, necessary hormonal sequence that is required to have an optimal, normal vaginal birth, umm, it doesn't happen once you've left your home.

You've got your car, you've got the strangers, you've the bright lights, you're in a gown, you're being monitored, you're being assessed, you're being asked a million questions... even if you don't get the epidural or the pit -- which is a very, very, very, tiny percent of women that don't get the epidural or pit -- but they exist. I've seen it.

Amber: Pitocin.

Emilee: Right pitocin. I still can't... I still can't capitulate the notion that it is a natural birth. And that is not to shame anybody. That is not to take away from what you feel or think about your own birth.

If you find what I'm saying completely appalling, I'm talking about biology. I'm talking about physiology. I'm talking about the very real fact that we are animals, and that optimal birth for the VAST majority of mothers and babies is to be done at home undisturbed.

So does that kinda answer your question?

Amber: Yeah, the optimal, primal, hormonal unfolding is disrupted...

Emilee: Yes.

Amber: If you leave your den.

Emilee: It just is.

Amber: It is, and -- I think I talked about this on your show -- this exact notion was so inspiring to me when I was first pregnant with my first when I found Sarah Buckley's article, "The Hormonal Blueprint of Birth."

Emilee: Exactly it's a great one.

Amber: And it's just exactly what you're talking about. She made the same point about the mammals, and I was just like, "Oh yeah. Oh yeah, of course. Why would I leave my home to birth my children?"

[0:46:33]

Emilee: Right. I mean, and side note, we don't have to go too far down, but ultrasound technology is an interesting example of this where we detach ourselves from the reality that we're animals. There's all these studies, ample studies done by medicine, by Western medicine that proves repeatedly that ultrasound objectively HARMS fetuses in other animals. And yet there's this willingness, this cognitive dissonance that somehow this doesn't apply to our babies.

(Amber laughs)

Emilee: It makes no fucking sense!

Amber: Well, Emilee, that was me because I knew about those studies. And with my second I just wanted to know **SO BAD** the sex of this baby. So I willfully did not read up on those studies again, even though I thought about it, "Maybe I should check into those," but I didn't, and I had the ultrasound. And it was like, I was so happy, but..

Emilee: Well, what you did was you chose a different priority. Right?

Amber: Mhmm.

Emilee: So if you, if some part of you knew that it's objectively harmful, and it objectively damages healthy tissue. It just does. It's the same technology that breaks up tumors. It's the same technology! It's not different. It's literally the same. But anyway...

(Emilee laughs)

Amber: It was a long time too! I thought it was just like, a little scan and then you know. But it's like an hour where that thing is on your belly.

Emilee: It can be. Yeah.

And then people say, "Oh, my baby didn't like it" or "they were so wiggly." Yeah, because they were being BLASTED. And you know, anyway, if somebody wants to know the sex of the baby, now there's bloodtests. Umm, you know and so you could do that if that was important to you, and you can order it yourself. It's not even a complicated thing.

And there's a whole other, whole, big topic of this concept of peace of mind, and that we have now ritualized ultrasound as the cornerstone of prenatal care in the Western world --really, it's all over, now -- that somehow this blurry, echo image somehow is going to give us peace of mind. Which is not real, and it is, it is like *(Emilee laughs)* the most epic example of spiritual bypass in pregnancy that I can really see right now. Umm. I strongly believe that it is a huge error of our times, and it will not be something that we do to our babies in some time in the future.

[0:49:12]

Amber: So how...

Emilee: --That's another topic though--

Amber: Yeah, it's interesting, though. It really is because it's so, it's so related in the cult of technocratic medicine that we all worship at. And the fear piece, too, you know? I'm sure this is what gets talked about in your group and on your pages, and how do women how do we overcome the fear? How do we weigh the risks? Why are we so afraid of birth?

That's what I'm asking you. What happened to our culture that became so afraid of birth?

Emilee: Maybe you've heard of this word before: "Patriarchy?"

(both laugh)

Does that ring a bell in your head? Yeah, patriarchy is what happened, that's the nutshell right there. We could talk a bit about the history of obstetrics if you wanted.

To bring it to present moment: that we are afraid of birth because that is everything we've been told.

Birth has been taken from us.

It's been stolen from us for a very very long time.

We have burned, killed, and jailed the medicine women, you know? The witches, and the midwives, and the healers and the herbalists and all of the women who supported women. Who held -- the knowers. The knowers have been completely wiped out. It's a real struggle to stay alive if you are a knower that walks with women so that was very systemically and successfully over the past many thousands of years (as I'm sure you know).

You know? We're afraid of birth today because why wouldn't we be? (*Emilee laughs*)

There's nothing injected into our lives as girls that tells us, that normalizes it, that allies us to it, you know?

Emilee: And I wanted to just briefly talk about the fear piece, the overcoming of fear. I don't think fear needs to be overcome. I just think we need to ally to it.

There's nothing wrong with being afraid, but I think working with that fear and identifying, and you know, doing the work on it. So what is the fear? And let's apply inquiry and facts and spiritual, you know, development to that fear.

So you know, if it's that -- 'cause really to get down to the point -- really we're in a culture that's terrified of death, that holds no reverence for entry and exit -- you know? This is super rooted in Christianity, and Christianity being the founding umbrella of our country today. And so you mix Christianity and the reality of patriarchy together: here we are.

Women don't trust themselves. Men don't trust women. Women don't trust themselves. We're all playing out the beautiful formula of patriarchy. It's really that.

It's the decentering of women, the decentering of girls and the compartmentalization of birth. And what's happening now in our society as we know it, birth is this THING that happens to us that sucks that we HAVE to do and so let's bypass it as much as possible by drugging ourselves up as much as possible and we go do it in a little room in this little hospital somewhere in our town and it's completely like separated, segregated from the rest of our lives.

Our children don't come to our births. No one is raised seeing birth. No one is talking about birth unless, of course. It's very negative. And of course in media we all know what we see, which is not... that's not birth. That's not birth at all. You and I both know that.

There's a lot of layers here. It's a huge conversation. But the fear of birth, I think the first step is to say, "Okay, I was trained to be afraid of this, so let's just name that first." Because once we start applying inquiry, we can free ourselves.

So is that fear actually mine?

So what have I been taught to be afraid of? Okay, well that I could die. That my baby could die.

Well let's pause there for a second: Yes, that's true, and do you pack an emergency bag for the ER everytime you go to the grocery store? No. Why is that? Because we have accepted the risks of driving. We've accepted the risks of being outside of our home.

Some people are so paralyzed by that fear that they don't leave their home. But most people do. Most people are taking risk every single day with how they live. And in fact, I could argue everything we do has risk.

Amber: Yeah, We could die at any moment. Having a body and being alive is a death sentence.

Emilee: Eating food: you could choke and die. Don't ever eat by yourself because you could choke and no one could save you!

[0:54:29]

Emilee: Like, the whole thing is do we live in fear or do we live in trust? And how do we pivot from one to another? how do we navigate the two? How do we integrate the two?

How do we identify which fear is ours because not all fear is bad. Some fear is relevant to what is actually happening. But there is present fear, like if we're in the wild and we see a bear, and we get flooded with adrenaline that is that is helpful.

Those hormones make you more alert and then help you come up with a plan of action, right? That's different from "Oh I'm afraid to go hiking because what if there was a bear." Right? It's totally different. So anyway. Yeah, It's a whole big conversation, but identifying---

Amber: ---That critical thinking piece is so important.

Emilee: And girls aren't taught that!

Amber: Yeah, well Americans (*laughs*) aren't taught that. Like most people think they're more likely to die from a terrorist attack than the food they put in their mouth everyday, but it's like EXPONENTIALLY you're more likely to die from that.

Emilee: And it's all curated.

Amber: There's been all sorts of studies on poor risk perception. Yeah. Yeah, exactly it's like manufactured fear.

Emilee: What's helped me fundamentally free myself is identifying the ways that I limit myself are my socialization. They're not me. My essence is divine infinity expansiveness, courage, you know. Blah, blah, blah...

That is my connection to source is to live in light, and trust, and courage, and love and all this stuff. So anything that is not that, it's just become very easy to be like, "Oh let's look at that. Why am I nervous to do this? Why am I afraid to do this? Why am I limiting my expansiveness here or here?" And pretty much all of it comes back to our socialization. (Emilee laughs) "Oh right my socialization. I was a girl. I'm now a woman. No one in my culture wants me to thrive. Everything is against me and let's just name that, and let's delegate my anger appropriately and not take it on."

And so it's been a really awesome liberation tool to accurately identify patriarchy.

Amber: Mhmm.

Emilee: It's been so helpful, and it's not left me feeling paralyzed at all. It's been the opposite. Of course I'm very angered by it, and I'm at the high end of the most epic, privileged of womanhood in the world. I'm white. You know I came from a wealthy family. I'm straight. I have a male partner. Everything that's been organized for me has been the highest privilege in our society. And yet I am a woman living in patriarchy.

[0:57:33]

Emilee: And so yeah, just learning about that and learning about women's oppression around the world has been so significant for me to align with the truth and have the courage to do it and which kinda brings us back to wrapping up how I got into this work.

I saw a lot of abuse. All in my twenties attended birth for a long time, and as I got closer to calling in my first child I really knew that I had to be done with the system. Because I realized that if I wasn't going to birth in the system, or if I wasn't going to birth with licensed midwives, was it really ethical to keep promoting my assistance of those models instead of putting all my energy and focus toward building a paradigm that I wanted to see?

And I had just took a hard look at all of it. And I had always been on this path of midwifery, but everytime I started a school I couldn't stay with it. I just saw licensed

midwife, after licensed midwife, after licensed midwife let women down that I was supporting. Not always, obviously, I saw great births, too.

The parameters that licensure -- what's the right way to say this? -- Licensed midwives are handcuffed. Very significantly. I don't know how much you know about licensing, but it's a very, very successful way to limit the way that women can support women. And so, you know, you can't attend a birth if a woman is going into the labor process before 37 or after 42 weeks, or if it's twins, or if it's breach, la-da-da-da-da or if their waters have been open for a long time, they have to transfer... just so many things that decenter the birthing woman and that prohibit the midwife giving individualized care.

So I take massive offense to that. And I have a lot of issues with that. And that's not to say there aren't wonderful licensed midwives, but they have chosen a very self-protective path that doesn't center women. It actually doesn't serve women. Even if you have been served by wonderful midwives, if they're withholding that service to other women, then they're not serving all women. Does that make sense?

Amber: Yeah, I see. I see what you're saying. The whole paradigm and the whole approach does not center women.

Emilee: And it's a lie that licensed homebirth midwives are not of the medical model. So they're pitched as that, but they're actually not. They're very much of the medical model. And that doesn't mean they can't support a wonderful birth, but there's so many places where it is expected of them or required of them to intervene without giving, without centering the mother, without giving individualized care, without letting the mother lead, without letting the mother make her own choices. It's a whole other conversation.

Amber: Which is probably why you were probably so surprised, and you asked me specifically when I was telling my second daughter's birth story, "So the midwives didn't like (*laughs*) do anything?"

Emilee: -- Ruin it? That's awesome.

Amber: The only thing she did was catch the baby when she came out and encouraged me during the pushing.

Emilee: And you wanted them to catch the baby?

Amber: Uh-huh. Yeah, I was bent forward so my hands were occupied, and my husband was at my hands, basically.

Emilee: That's beautiful. That's beautiful. That's what we need more of.

Amber: And they asked me beforehand, "Do you want me to catch or one of you to catch?"

Emilee: Beautiful. Yeah.

[1:01:32]

Amber: Can I just interject real quick for anyone who's listening who thinks that you are so radical and against any other kinds of birth, you really -- on your podcast -- you hold the space for all kinds of birth experiences. You're not like, shutting down women who have had midwives...

Emilee: --Oh yeah--

Amber: ... or hospital births. Or plan to.

Emilee: Well, this is where it gets -- Sam Harris is kind of an idol of mine because he handles it way better than I can -- We need to be really clear that I'm critiquing an ideology, not the women. I'm critiquing the system, not the women in the system.

It's like surrogacy. I would never blame a woman for being a surrogate, but I fucking for SURE have MAJOR issue as surrogacy as a movement; as a thing happening because of the commodification of our bodies and babies is inherently absolutely disgusting.

Amber: I've never even thought about that

Emilee: Oh yeah, it's a big problem. You know, women cannot be free until women are free. And across the world.

I'll just briefly say, it's hard for Americans to wrap their brains around this, but the truth is across the world the women who are surrogates, which means that people are buying their babies, they're being implanted, potentially, but they're carrying a baby. Their baby, it's grown from their blood, and what they eat, and the air they breathe, and all this stuff, and then they're selling their children.

And those women around the world are some of the poorest women, and they're black and brown. You don't see white, affluent women being surrogates. Except for the very, very, very unicorn story of sisters doing it for each other or something.

Amber: Wow.

Emilee: Anyway. You know? And you would be appalled if I put my baby up for sale on Craigslist, right? This is not any different. It is **THE** commodification of our bodies treating

these women as incubators, literally. And... right? And taking their babies, and then we're surprised that everyone is all fucking traumatized.

[1:03:50]

Emilee: And it gets into the primal womb stuff and that when you separate a mother-baby dynamic, a mother-baby duo, physiologically, biologically, they read the other as dead.

A baby doesn't know that it's going to a family that's going to love them. They just got taken from their mother!

Amber: Oh my God.

Emilee: They don't know that someone else's embryo was implanted or anything like that. They don't know that. It was their mother's body that they grew in.

Amber: Oh my god. I know. I'm actually glad -- I think about this with gay men who -- You know...

Emilee: -- Mhmm, use an incubator. --

Amber: ... I was almost a donor for friends of mine years ago, and then we decided not to do that. And when they went ahead and had their baby with another donor, a surrogate, I was watching them in the hospital, and then the next day they were home.

I was like, "Oh my God. That baby just grew in another woman's body, and now she's just gone."

Emilee: But Amber, she doesn't matter. She is nothing. They used to be called "surrogate mothers", and now they just say "surrogate". Umm it's... anyway, so, I didn't intend to go down this rabbit hole.

[1:05:02]

Amber: And that, the idea -- I just want to go back 'cause that just hooked my attention, too -- "they read the other as dead," I remember reading about this years and years ago with breastfeeding; that women who choose not to nurse, even though they're holding their baby, their body is going, "Your baby died," because their breasts are full of milk, and there's no baby there. And so that could really plummet into a woman into postpartum depression.

Emilee: Of course. Of course, so this is where in a culture that doesn't celebrate critique and inquiry...

Amber: -- And nuance --

Emilee: ... And nuance, it's really hard to have these conversations. Sometimes for some people, because we're... it's ... you have to have the willingness and the ability to separate the person from the system in the concepts we're talking about. So I want to be very, very clear.

Amber: Totally! I've never wanted to talk about that before with the gay men 'cause I'm like, "I love these men, and I'm so happy they have their baby! Everyone got what they wanted!"

Emilee: Did they? The gay men did. They bought a baby.

They bought a baby from an incubator. That's just the truth. Maybe they're great guys, whatever. But they bought a baby, and our society says that that's okay. From an incubator who's a woman. Who's a real woman, you know? Who has a real life and is now a mother to a baby she gave birth to.

Amber: And just to extend the complexity, it is one of their biological children, and they deserve to have a family, too. So I mean it's just, you know.

Emilee: Who?

Amber: The men.

Emilee: Do they?

Amber: Do they not?

Emilee: I don't know. I mean, the whole "deserve" thing. I just really struggle with this concept of deserve, because why? Why does anyone deserve a kid? Is that -- 'cause now we have to get into, like, biology. Right?, do they -- the only way that two gay men can have a baby is to take one from a woman, right? Because there's only one way that babies get here, and it's through a woman.

So that could be --and I'm not saying that all dynamics are bad. Like, absolutely, there are many, many, many babies out there whose mothers, because of -- I would then argue -- patriarchy, because we don't center mothers, because we treat women like shit, because they're at the bottom of the barrel in society can't then have their babies for whatever reason. Many women get pregnant through rape. Many women get pregnant but live in societies where abortion is unavailable or completely off the table for them. So yes, we've created this whole fucking monster of babies coming into the world through women, where women feel for whatever reasons they need to (or cannot) mother those babies.

If we get into adoption, that's a whole other interesting racket that we need to be careful about, but you know, there are some ethical adoption systems, yes. But why would -- if gay men "deserve" (and I would replace that word with "want." They **want** a baby.) -- in my mind there are ethical ways to seek babies who cannot be cared for by mothers for whatever reason, versus creating one through a woman and buying it.

And you have to remember that most of this is happening in poor countries when we look at the numbers of surrogacy.

Anyway it's really painful.

[1:08:40]

Amber: It is! It's hard to talk about! I mean, you're making me think of things I've never thought about before. And yeah, let's just continue holding space for everyone to hold complexity, and nuance, and be open to thinking in a different way.

Emilee: And yeah, even with the -- I'm just going to call out the race card now -- I've never heard a black or brown woman before say, "I deserve a baby." I mean, that doesn't mean that they're not out there, and I am white so I'm in white-dominant spaces, but I've heard a lot of wealthy white women who are rendered infertile or who just don't want to have a baby, they don't want to physically go through it, you know, they still feel entitled to a baby. And so they buy one.

And that doesn't mean there aren't black and brown women doing that. I know the famous woman, what was her name? Gabrielle Union or something? She just used a surrogate, and she's African-American, but she's also crazy, crazy wealthy. So yeah, it's a race thing. It's a class thing.

And the truth is that we are not free as women as a sex of this world until our bodies are no longer being commodified. It's just true. And then the last thing I'll say about it because I think it's an important piece to say now that I've opened this can of worms:

If you are surrogate, or you have been, or you know someone, if you're feeling very triggered by this I just want to leave with that we are taught as women to be selfless. We are taught that the most beautiful gift we can give to another family is a child. We are held, surrogates, surrogates are held in patriarchy as these like saints. They're revered. The way they are treated, oh my God, what you'll hear most of the time that most women say about surrogates is "Oh my God. That's so amazing I could never do that."

Why could you never do it? Because you could never give away your baby? Yeah, that makes sense.

It's really not to blame a woman who's chosen to do this path, it's actually totally in keeping with how we've been raised which is: be selfless and you -- and it's very Christian -- empty your cup, and you will be seen. You will be validated.

And there's also in the studies of surrogacy a crazy alarming -- well, it's not alarming. It's totally understandable -- there's a very high level of regret. There's a lot of depression. But then also, furthermore, there's no space for surrogates to talk about their regret or their depression because their whole society is telling them how brave they are, and they gave this gift of family to another family. All the while many of them are really suffering.

[1:11:32]

Emilee: And then I've worked with a lot of women who go on to have "keeper babies" to replace the baby that they gave away or sold because there's so much pain there. And it's a lot.

And also, by the way, oh my God, when you're a surrogate in America, you waive your human rights, you waive your legal rights and you, actually, under the law, my understanding is that you become a piece of property in that contract.

Amber: Wow.

Emilee: So you have no rights over your own body for as long as you're an incubator. You have no rights or control over your birth, unless you do pre-write them into your contract, but legally you shift from being a person to being property.

Amber: Wow. Geez Emilee! You're just bringing so much to my attention that I was not aware of.

Emilee: Yeah, it's a lot. So, okay should we go back to...

(Both laugh)

[1:12:38]

Amber: Well, yeah, finish, I mean if you have more that you want to finish. I did want to speak really briefly in case any pregnant women are listening, which I'm sure they are, I really liked how you reframed not overcoming fear, and that was something that really came to me during my second pregnancy because I actually wasn't afraid during my first pregnancy, and I was during my second.

'Cause I knew, I knew what I was facing down. You know? And I came to that realization that "Oh yeah, this fear isn't going to disappear. I'm about to do the biggest thing a *human can do*. I just have to (like you said) I just have to align myself with it."

Emilee: And yeah. It's fine! One of my favorite quotes is, oh gosh, it's something like, "I was afraid and I did it anyway." (*laughs*)

Amber: Yeah. "Feel the fear, and do it anyway."

Emilee: Yeah, it's fine!

Amber: That's my life motto with everything. I was afraid to do my podcast, I was afraid of everything.

Emilee: Right, because... and why? it's because stepping into the unknown is scary. Why is it scary? Because we all live under this illusion that we're under control. And when we're faced with the reality that we're not, we have to be met with our out of controlness.

And birth is the most in your face example, other than death, right? Where, oh my God. We are so tiny spinning on this rock in space, and none of it is in our control, and how do we navigate the enormity of scratching that surface of realization?

Birth is really the biggest experience while alive that we can face knowing that we're totally out of control, and the way to navigate it is to just surrender and ride the waves.

Emilee: And oh my gosh, how do we do that when our entire life is about constructing illusions of control at every stage?

(*Amber laughs*)

So, I tell women all the time when they speak about their fears to me so what (*laughs*)? It's going to happen, right? Birth is imminent. You cannot get out of this experience. It's going to happen.

Amber: This force is bigger than you.

Emilee: Right and it is you. It's meeting a part of your divinity, right? Like your connection to source, it is you. Your uterus is going to contract and push your baby out. Your baby is going to wiggle and tuck its little chin, and emerge from your body. Birth is you. Birth is not this outside, crazy, torturous, suffering thing blah blah blah.

We've just gotten so confused about what birth is because the treatment of birth has become so disgusting.

So now women, you know, think birth equals torture. Birth is suffering. Birth is fill in the blank. But the truth is you know, actually, birth? Birth is great. Birth is intense. It can be painful. It can be ecstatic (like we said there's a spectrum), but really it's a spiritual

experience. But how you apply your perspective, what your thoughts are around birth will dictate how your birth goes. And that's the real shit, right?

So if you're in an abusive relationship, and you don't know how you're going to care for this baby, and maybe you didn't even want this baby, and you don't feel safe at home, and you layer on the reality of many women's lives, umm, birth will reflect your life. You know?

[1:16:13]

Emilee: So we birth the way we live. We die the way we live. So it's one giant offering to do the work. I think that women, pregnant women are, Sister Morningstar says, "Pregnant women are the most sacred humans on the planet, and birth is the highest spiritual experience we can have, and we gotta get right with it." (*laughs*) You know?

Amber: And prepare for it ourselves as that, which we don't talk about in this culture. We don't do.

Emilee: And yet, we can, right? So we do talk about it in the spaces I've created, the spaces you've created, even just, umm, the ounce of community, you know? So many women are birthing in power around the world because they're hearing the medicine stories of my podcast of women sharing their birth in power stories.

So it doesn't take much for women who are open and ready because it's in our bones. This is not a, this isn't a foreign concept to our DNA, to our biology, to our ancestry, like, to our karma, you know? We are all descendants of women who've birthed, right?

So there's something really profoundly simple about that, that you don't actually have to do anything. And that was one of my favorite parts of having a wild pregnancy is that I didn't have to do anything.

Amber: Right.

Emilee: That the biology of my body and of my baby's body wants to thrive.

Amber: Right

Emilee: And how cool is that?

Amber: And the spiritual preparation doesn't (*laughs*) doesn't have to be like meditating everyday on your amazing ecstatic birth coming up.

Emilee: No!

Amber: But just knowing that 99.99.....% of your ancestors gave birth naturally at home. Because giving birth at a hospital with a dude there up in your business has only happened for the past few generations, and humans have been walking the earth for eons.

Emilee: A really, really long time. Way longer than we can wrap our heads around.

Amber: This is in you. And this, for anyone listening, I talk about this with my first birth when I was on Emilee's podcast.

[1:18:36]

Emilee: Yeah, and it's interesting, and we cannot ignore the fact that at least the women that I've encountered who have had the luck of witnessing a hospital birth usually don't choose that route. I know so many women who attended a birth or they tried being a doula, or they went to their friends birth and saw what the hospital had to offer and uhh you know, said, "Oh okay. Cool. Now I know what that is, and I'm not interested."

So, like you said, my intention and what I'm doing is I'm carving out a space for women to reclaim their womanhood, and birth is a pretty darn big part of that. And it is not -- and a lot of women misinterpret this because we are in a society of shame, and we're a society of everyone needs to talk really carefully so nobody's feelings get hurt --- that's not my business, that's not my job. I would like to facilitate some energy moving in your body if you're feeling triggered by this. Let's talk about it! Because I love you, and I trust you. And if what I'm saying is confronting to you that just means that there's some work there, right?

Because it wouldn't be confronting if you felt powerful and totally aligned with your truth. Right? Cause then you're like unshakeable.

Part of my platform is to carve out this space for women who want to go there, who want to apply criticism to the systems that oppress them and abuse them and for women who want to birth in power and who want to exit the system and discover and really claim their own self authority in their own instinctual mothering.

[1:20:30]

Emilee: The women in my community don't go to pediatricians for well-baby visits. They're the pediatrician (*laughs*) You know?

Amber: Yeah, I haven't ever done that either.

Emilee: Yeah, me either.

Amber: Before we close, and I ask you to share more about your offerings in this space your holding, I wanted to touch briefly on -- so the reason that birthing and pregnant mothers are oppressed so strongly under this umbrella of patriarchy that we're living under is because birthing women are the most powerful women on the planet. It is the most empowering and powerful experience that one can have. I like, I can't say, I can't say that enough and to see that taken away from women I think is the guiding force behind what you're doing, clearly, and is such an important thing for me, too... I'm here with this podcast and with my herbalism to empower people and really, like, taking birth back into your own hands is really an empowering experience.

Emilee: Right and it's worth saying that there are very, very rare complications where industrialized birth can support, and sometimes save those lives, it goes without saying. And it still remains true that birth is normal. Birth is biologically set up to work and what happens when a woman claims her birth and claims her -- and emerges, I should say -- emerges from her birth feeling powerful, you know, it's a domino effect, right?

So if she's birthing an instinct, and nursing and sleeping with her baby, and she's assessing her baby herself and supported in that post-partum time to follow her instincts, that set-up is completely earth-shattering. That set-up is the destruction of patriarchy. That set-up is matriarchy in action. You know, this is very, very tangible.

[1:22:58]

Emilee: Because, like you just said, Amber, if women, if the vast majority of women (which this is the prayer of my heart, this is what gets me up everyday excited), if the vast majority of women were walking around feeling powerful having birthed in power and mothering in power, umm, everything would change. Women would be recentered. We would require it. Right?

I have a matriarchal household where I am centered. You probably do, too (*laughs*). That doesn't mean that we don't love and appreciate our men, it just means that we are centered, and that I am the kind of life force for our family. And what happens with that is that it helps me feel powerful, it helps me do my work in the world, and I'm changing fucking lives! You know? (*laughs*)

Amber: Yeah.

Emilee: It's just, like, we know how when we study women's oppression around the world and the ways, the quickest ways to change communities is to educate a girl. In poverty-ridden villages umm, it's just incredible studies on this and TED talk and book on this, that if you educate a girl and entire community will grow and an entire community will change.

And, interestingly, we cannot say the same about boys. It's very interesting. So more on that, you could perhaps research that yourself (*laughs*). You could look at things if you're interested in that, if you're listening.

Amber: It just makes sense to center women, in the home, in society. I mean, really, it's just what everyone wants. Even if like, these men in power are acting like they don't, really they just want to go back to their mama or be inside a vagina.

Emilee: Yeah. hmm. Women are where it's at (*both laugh*).

[1:24:49]

Emilee: And I think there's this really massive misunderstanding about matriarchy and patriarchy where women all the time will say, "But I don't want to just replace one with the other and it needs to be balanced!" And ugh, I cannot tell you that it's like nails on a chalkboard to me. It says to me that they, first of all, don't understand the concept of matriarchy, and they have not researched matriarchy in anyway.

And it also sadly says that they are not experiencing matriarchy, because matriarchy is not replacing where women are just in power, and they're just being fucking assholes to everyone like the men are.

Amber: That we're subjecting men to crazy medical procedures

Emilee: .. We're imprisoning... and NO. This is not what this is.

And you can actually research this. You can actually learn about this.

You can see where this happens in a world where women are centered and where women are majority governing and where women are centered in homes, everybody thrives.

Everybody thrives.

It lifts up the entire world because we are women. We are mothers. So, of course, we lift everybody up. It's our whole genius. So I guess I just wanted to tie up and close and maybe it was obvious, but I just feel like it should be said.

[1:26:07]

Emilee: So when I realized that I could not birth in the system, I realized that I could just give birth on my own, which was a huge epiphany to me.

I had been totally brainwashed against that in my birth community and realized that was crazy, and so I decided that I would have a conscious conception with my partner, and that I would have a wild pregnancy, self-managed, and that I would free birth.

And we went to Hawaii, which was my dream. We saved up money and executed my dream perfectly, and I had a beautiful, powerful, freaking crazy free birth... took 52 hours.

Amber: And you told that story on your podcast.

Emilee: Yeah, and you can listen to that. It's a two-part because it was so long

(both laugh)

Emilee: And I knew, I had complete clarity, that in my next stage of work that I needed to free birth, to walk the message so that I could keep doing this. I knew it was, like, the next thing, and so I started the podcast because I wanted to be inundated with birth in power stories, and it is just crazy how it has taken off.

It is just so exciting because it says women are ready.

Amber: Yeah, it's so exciting. And I told you on your show when I birthed my oldest 12 years ago, I was, like, **SCRATCHING** for information on the internet. Found one website. Didn't know ANYONE who had done it, read a few stories on that website, but now on Instagram, I'm constantly seeing them being like, "My baby came and by the way we did a free birth"

Emilee: Yeah! Hashtag #freebirth...

Amber: Even like women, families that I wouldn't think would do that at all, you know, are doing it.

Emilee: Oh yeah, no, it's not all granola, hippie girls. Yeah, absolutely I support a lot of women of color who understand how they are almost guaranteed to be treated in the system and that they have four times as likely mortality rate in the system, which is a freaking massive deal, so they're like, "Of course I'm staying home. Of course I am."

And freebirth, I just want everyone to remember, free birth is just birth. It's like calling organic food it's just food.

Amber: Right

Emilee: It's just birth. It's just that we've gotten so off track with what birth is in our species and the truth of it and the power of it that we have to call it free birth.

So free birth is birth unhindered. It's birth undisturbed. It's birth in the support of loved ones and without engaging in the system.

So yeah. It's definitely gaining speed because I'm in the hurricane of it, and I'm like, "Damn. It seems like everyone is having free births." (*Amber laughs*) But I can't tell because I'm like, a leader of this movement now so I don't know if it's just that or...

[1:29:05]

Amber: Well I just admire you so much, Emilee for holding the space so strongly. And you told me off air last time that you have been majorly attacked online and have had lies told about you.

Emilee: Oh yeah. SO much.

Amber: And you just probably said some things today on this interview that are going to trigger people and probably me, too.

And I have a much harder time (*laughs*) being umm, as radical as I actually am in some ways.

Emilee: But remember that radical -- you're what? Sorry.

Amber: ... I'm afraid of that. Of being attacked and lied about. And it's certainly happened to me but I just hate it. SO much

Emilee: Yeah, well two things I have to say to that: radical's etymology is "back to roots."

Amber: Right.

Emilee: So that always helps guide me when I use the term radical, it's like, "OH back to roots." That is so much of how, that IS who you are. That is how you're living, and that is your platform so embrace that.

Radical means back to roots. The only reason that radical has a negative connotation is -- obviously, we live in a concrete jungle that is the opposite of back to our roots -- you know that always kind of helps me.

Because there's so much charge around the term "radical" but then I remember, "Oh right, it just means 'back to my roots' it means I'm living authentically."

Amber: It's literally the word "root." Radical is our root.

Emilee: And then the other pieces, it helps me to remember we are descendants of witches. I don't know if you identify as that or not, but I definitely do. You know, really kind of "Of **COURSE** you're afraid to be attacked! Who's not? It's scary! It sucks!"

(Laughs)

It's so hard. So hard. And what else are we going to do? Staying fucking silent? Women are ready. I'm ready. And I do it for my daughter and my future daughters. Like, there is no other way.

It's kind of like, DUH, of course I'm going to be attacked. Like, you know? I've had to integrate that experience and accept it, but I'm learning how to not take it personal pretty quickly thankfully.

And I just see it more as the battle of light and dark, and I am for women, and I trust women, and I want to see women centered, and I center women, and like, end of fucking story.

(Amber laughs)

So if that's going to get me attacked -- I mean even the surrogacy thing, is like okay, if you're going to attack me, that I think the commodification of women and babies is bad? Come at me, dude. It's fine. If you can't see that, if you're not ready to see that, you know my entire platform is free the women, trust women, center women. And so, if somebody doesn't get that, I don't really care. It doesn't really land for me.

Because it's not about me, it's about women, right?

Amber: Right.

Emilee: It's about women being free and being supported, Right? So how could that be wrong.

[1:32:20]

Amber: Yeah, well, I just really admire you and hearing this story about you when you as a teenager when you were 14, and then 16, it just makes sense why you're such a bad-ass, go-getter, mover and shaker person who makes things happen because you've just been *Woosh*. Following your instinct since you were very young.

Emilee: Totally.

Amber: Very self-motivated. Very cool.

Emilee: And I was put into private catholic school, so I'm no stranger to having kids hate me and being the witch in these spaces where I was supposed to shut up. I feel like I've been training for this work my whole life. Having to emotionally and socially survive in these really conservative Catholic spaces, it taught me a lot.

Amber: Yeah.

Emilee: Yeah. *(laughs)*

[1:33:11]

Amber: Okay, so tell us about all the things that you offer.

Emilee: Yeah, so my company is called [Free Birth Society](#), and it's an online platform that is both and educational, has an educational branch and also has a community. If you're interested in free birth and the things we've talked about today, we have a HUGE enormous guide, an online course called the Complete Guide to Freebirth, and it's a lot of content. It's awesome. It's video based, but there are transcripts for everything and cute little worksheets, and PDFs and stuff. But it's online based, video-lesson based, and it covers everything that we could think of to discuss and offer perspective on to have a wild pregnancy to deconstruct, umm obstetrical care and to have an ecstatic birth on your own terms.

So that is online. Our website is [freebirthsociety.com](#).

And we also have a community that is quite exclusive and awesome, and if you're interested, if you're a woman, and you're interested in what we've talked about today and you're really resonating with it, then it's probably a space for you. It's an online, proprietary network that you have to be vetted for, and you have to apply, and umm, and sign an NDA, and we take it all very seriously and it's SO amazing.

And it's about as "safe space" as you can get for a radical community of women online because it's super vetted, and that has radical birthkeepers. It has midwives. It has women who have not had children yet. It has women who don't want children. It has mothers, so it's a whole eclectic wonderful group of women, and you can find that on our website as well.

So that's the two main pieces of engagement right now.

We're about to publish our own book this summer by Yolande Clark who wrote The Complete Guide for Free Birth. So you can join our online mailing list for that. And then we do have what I'm most excited about is two things: We have a radical birth keeper course that is coming out next year that we will tour as well, but it will be an online course first. And we also have a retreat in Dominican Republic, with my friend Katya, my friend

Katya who lives there. It's a mother's retreat, so it's a 7 day retreat in paradise. It's so freaking beautiful that is centering the mother.

So you don't have to be a mother to come, but it is a real chance to connect and umm... I'm kind of framing it as we're going to do all the things that have been stolen from us as women. We're going to get back to basics: we're going to sing, we're going to dance, we're going to talk, we're going to share in story medicine, we're going to swim, we're going to see the baby whales, because it's birthing seasons for the humpbacks.

Amber: Shush!!!

Emilee: Oh yeah. We're going to do communal yoni steams at night, I mean, it's gonna be (*whispers*) **really awesome**. And I think we have 3 or 4 spaces left. Oh my God, you should come Amber!

Amber: I well, I don't want to leave Nixie yet, and I don't want to bring her, but I do want to come for the whales and the women some day in the future.

Emilee: And some women are doing (if you're feeling the same way, Amber) -- there are a couple day passes too, where your whole family could come and be nearby, and you come to the retreat and be with the kiddos at night.

Anyway, so everything's on our website. There's a lot of stuff.

Amber: Including your podcast.

Emilee: Oh right. And then the podcast is an awesome free resource where women share their stories of birthing in power outside the system. And we also have educational stuff, like today -- well, it will be not today when you put it out -- but we're doing a whole unpacking of gestational diabetes and GBS and ultrasound and rhogam and the RH factor so it's a like a whole awesome podcast.

Amber: Yeah I'm in the online group, and like, any question that someone could possibly -- You really cover the whole spectrum of pregnancy and birth, and I've seen you on Instagram stories, too, do that "Ask me anything," and you get questions across the spectrum, and you seem to always have an answer. Like, you are super well-educated in all things pregnancy and birth.

Emilee: Thank you, but I've got to give credit to Yolande because I ask her (she's like my mentor), "What do I say to this? How do I feel about vasectomies? (*laughs*) I know I don't like them, and I don't want my partner to get them, and then buh buh buh buh buh buh buh..."

So she assists me a lot in this platform, absolutely.

Umm, yeah, and you can always email me if you want to reach out and connect and you can find all our info on our website.

Amber: Okay, and on Patreon, you will be, we will be giving a coupon code for 50 dollars off that course.

Emilee: Yes, absolutely.

Amber: Thanks so, so much, Emilee. It was so great to talk to you!

Emilee: Yeah! Thanks for having me. It was fun

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

[1:38:19]

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, and past podcast episodes, and a lot more at MythicMedicine.love.

While you're there, I invite you to click the purple banner 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. 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.

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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!