

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

AMELIA BONOW:

Hello! Everybody! Hi, Jex!

JEX BLACKMORE:

Hello!

AB:

I'm gonna let everyone arrive before I start doing the spiel.

In the meantime, I would like to introduce you to Bucatini Bonow. He is my new best friend. I was planning to get him after the election, because I didn't want to poison him with my bad vibes, but then I cracked, and I got him right before the election, and it was such a wonderful decision.

He's being squirrely right now, but in general he's like the snuggliest kitten I've ever encountered, and it is making my life better significantly so shout out to pets.

JB:

And mine by proxy of just witnessing this kitten in your life.

AB:

He's so fucking cute.

Okay, I'm going to start saying the spiel and people will just continue to join. Hello and welcome to Abortion Academy, friends and loved ones. My name is Amelia Bonow. I use she/ her pronouns, and I am the executive director of Shout Your Abortion. SYA is a nationwide organization working to normalize abortion and elevate paths to access regardless of legality. We make resources, campaigns and media intended to arm existing activists, create new ones and foster collective participation in abortion access all over the country, which is very much what we'll be talking about today.

Abortion Academy is a monthly webinar Series, where we introduce you to one of our brilliant colleagues, or in this case ourselves, and we hope that Abortion Academy will help you deepen your knowledge and connect some dots between issues you're navigating regionally, and what's happening at the national and international level and ultimately give you fresh ideas to take back into your community.

Audience members will be off camera and muted for security reasons. But you will be able to ask questions in the Q&A feature throughout the session. And we really encourage you to do that. Today's gonna be informal, conversational. We really want to like, try to shape this conversation in a way that you take it where you want it to go, so feel free to...Don't hold your

fire. Go ahead, and just let us know what you're thinking about, what you'd like to talk about in the Q&A. throughout this conversation.

Also, we have live Spanish translations available. Thank you so much to our translators, and you can access that by going to the bottom right and clicking on the globe, the interpretation globe, and then you can set it to listen in English or Spanish.

Yeah. And normally, at this point I would read the bios of our special guests. But in this case, Jex and I are gonna have a conversation and talk about community resilience and building the kind of networks that we need to build in order to survive this future together.

And I think that we are excited to. This is our first Abortion Academy since the election, right? And I very much feel I've been reflecting a lot on the difference between the aftermath of this election in 2016. 2016, I feel like, was just panic. It was panic. And people just like hastily grasping for mobilizations. Political, you know, interventions, whether it's just like you must sign this petition and share this widely or like we're mobilizing here. There was just a lot of just like hasty what felt like a very short term like freaking out. And I think that there's less freaking out this time, even though this time is probably freakier. And I think that I've definitely been noticing the, you know, people and organizations and activists and organizers who I look to have been saying a whole lot of the same things, which is all right, guys, we are responsible for taking care of each other.

And this election, if there was any doubt, you know in your mind that, like politicians, are not coming to save us, that the the courts are not our friends, that we need to look beyond legal and political solutions, and get out of this sort of like rights- obsessed framework of of understanding abortion access as a battle for legal rights, and reorient yourself in the idea that abortion access belongs to us currently and indefinitely. We don't need anyone's permission. We don't need to apologize, and it's also on us to facilitate like we have it, and we can have it forever. But we have to make it happen for ourselves. Nobody's coming to do it for us. That might even mean that a doctor is not going to be able to do it for us.

And also, I'm so ready to just like, really focus on tightening up our relationships and our getting better and smarter at doing this work together. And I believe in us so much. I feel like, I say this every time, and I mean it with my whole fucking chest. I believe in us completely. I don't believe in any of those fucking people. Any of them. But I believe in us, and I also think that we have an incredible amount of work to do in terms of people developing the communities, the networks, the skills in their own sort of hearts and emotional constitutions, and also the practical skills that are necessary to really like, confront this moment, this new administration. And that's what we're going to talk to you about today.

So we wanted to introduce, in lieu of reading our bios, Jex, and I...Jex is SYA's organizing director. And we wanted to sort of start by sharing some of our respective backgrounds and experience in community organizing and helping people to navigate broken systems. Because ultimately, you're all community organizers like we're not experts and there's a quote from a man named Marshall Ganz, who is like a Harvard guy. He's like a community organizing academic,

and he says, "organizing is a practice of leadership whereby we define leadership as enabling others to achieve shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty."

So I think we want to jump off from the point of like we're all experts in different ways. And, Jex and I want to talk to you about where we're coming from. So, Jex, do you want to kick us off?

JB:

Yeah, I think. Like to your point, and thank you for setting it up in that way about us all being organizers. I don't have a background or an academic background in organizing. But I have a lot of experience in getting things done with a group of people who have just come together and decided something's either unjust and unfair. And we are going to do something about it or building a system that doesn't exist yet to take care of one another, and I think a lot of that comes from experiences of injustice and inequity in my own ways. Also, just like in a subculture of youth, and like punks who just kind of figure out how to take care of themselves because things have let them down also or just saying things that exist just aren't doing the work that they claim to do.

And so I've always been really interested in pushing back against certain rules or guidelines to say, like, you have to follow a particular formula or a process for action in order to get things done. And I'm really interested in being creative about the ways in which we approach problems.

I have been organizing with groups for a decade now about everything from anti-racist protests like in Montana to indigenous rights protests also in movement making in New England. Just like protesting outside of planned parenthoods, but then, also like distributing birth control and reproductive care health care supplies, going to workshops on how to take care of people who are experiencing a lack of healthcare within the like sharing medicine and things like that that we can do so just like a whole slew of different kinds of organizing from on the street to like book clubs and problem solving in community spaces.

And I think that's really how I got involved with SYA. And I'm so happy to be here. I was just like doing it. I was just doing the work and being creative about the way that we approach abortion, access and advocacy. And Amelia and I became friends and really started working together and talking through how to approach movement organizing beyond just the protests and beyond just mobilizing people for a short period of time. And it's a complicated problem. And it's something that will require a lifetime of work. But that's really where it's rooted in, just like a group of friends trying things out and figuring it out together.

And I think that's like the core of organizing.

AB:

Yeah, absolutely that. I mean, that's it. I think that it's the opposite of waiting around for political change. It's just a group of people deciding that they want things to be different and making it happen. And it could be the most micro level like, you know, tenants in an apartment coming together to be like they need to fucking...fix the heaters, this is bullshit. Or it could be like

macro level, you know the kind of national organizing that SYA is getting into. But I think that, you know, I really resonate with like a lot...I think that Jex and I have some similar like personal histories of just being like people who are surrounded by like friends and chosen family, who are people who are by choice living at the margins and do not accept like the premise of like rules and authority, and like, as a default, and think that those systems are often put in place in order to, you know, sort of exacerbate existing like systems of oppression, and that they're upheld by just sort of this silent acceptance and participation like in rules, and that like, actually, you cannot do that.

I think that I, in my own personal experience, I think that the two things I, too, have done a lot of just like, you know, really, grassroots like people making stuff happen, friends wanting to make a change. That kind of shit. I also was a bartender and worked in the service industry for a really long time. I am someone who's lived hard my whole life, and has been through a lot like I've been through a lot of difficult things, trauma. I am surrounded by people who have as well and by people who, you know, come from hard shit and shit continues to be hard, and also like, I think, that the reason I brought up the service industry is I just like was thinking about like the organizer mindset as something where you're just like identifying a problem and using critical thinking and people skills to like solve it in a way that's safe. And, you know, working by myself behind a bar like for my entire twenties was full of those situations, and also exposed me to a great many kinds of people, and I think that that was all very positive. Not all very positive. A lot of it was a nightmare, but it made me have a lot of skills.

And the other thing that I think was really formative was that I was a phone worker at a crisis line in the Seattle area. And I, for about two years, had a weekly shift where I would speak to folks who were in crisis that could be anything from someone who is just like having an emotional mental health crisis to someone who is like acutely suicidal to someone who is needing resources and doesn't know where to go. And so, you know, my time talking to folks who need things and then navigating my local sort of like a constellation of resources as well as developing my own ability to emotionally show up for people who are in really tough spots, I think, was informed by that experience, probably more than anything else.

And yeah, I wanna hand it back to Jex to sort of continue to frame us up and get into it.

JB:

Yeah, I think something that speaks to the kind of like I'm not accepting the world in the way that we are taught to, or prime to, because you witnessed it being broken. But that, you know, like participation...this silent participation in the rules that you mentioned is in part, I think, reinforced by an acceptance and an indifference, but also the very reality of state violence in the form of unjust laws or poverty. And I think that that speaks again to the power of community protection and involvement like that we are safer together, actually. And these aren't things that you just have to learn through having a hard life, or whatever subculture you might belong to. It's very much rooted in history like we are not out here on an island, and things have been really bad before, for lots of people and are bad or worse off than we are right now, and things will get worse in the future like these are things that we can be sure of and know. And the work that

we're engaged in is not linear. It is something that is constantly in flux into something that we will be working on for the rest of our lives. And I say that in part I mean, I hope that that is a hopeful feeling, but I know for lots of people it's not. And I think, like you know, there's a sentiment like we were out here on the streets in the seventies, you know. You've seen signs like that about the right to abortion, and things like that. But the thing is like the fight never ended. We've still just been in the fight, and it was going on before then, and it's probably going to be going on in the future. Whenever we have this unequal power dynamic, we're going to have people struggling against it, and we need to do it.

I also want to recognize that not everybody has the capacity to be full time activists, and I don't think that that's what's required. There's a hell of a lot of people in the world and in the movement and in our neighborhoods. And if everyone does like just a little bit, actually, it makes a huge difference. And I know that that's also like, maybe not the sexiest answer for like, how do I get involved? But I just wanna reaffirm that doing something is better than doing nothing. And I don't want to, under emphasize how critical doing just something is to everybody else.

AB:

Yeah, I think that we want that to be one of the main takeaways from today. And I think it's like a very American mindset that is like tied to the idea that like change is a thing that like happens to us, that other people like do for us, and also kind of just this like extreme and binary thinking, like, I feel like people are like in the same way that you know, people might be like fuck, I don't feel good right now in my body. I can't stop just like watching Netflix and ordering Uber Eats, and I feel like shit, and I'm broke. And next month, though I'm gonna only buy like healthy vegetables and cook every meal at home and end up creating a really difficult and like potentially unachievable goal when like in reality, just like when you're feeling fucked up like that just like going outside and going for a 15 min walk will change everything, you know. And that, like the process of feeling better, is just like a bunch of tiny choices to go on a 15 min walk and in the work that we're talking about like, I think that people are in a mindset of like, 'I'm not an activist. I can't. I don't know how to dedicate my life to this.'

And I think that the way that we change, it's like a million tiny choices made by many, many people, and not like a small group of activists who are leading the charge. It's all of us changing the way that we live to whatever degree that we can, and making different choices that are mindful of the interconnectedness of our communities and learning to take care of each other in big and small ways every day.

JB:

Yeah, absolutely. I think, you know, like we could talk for hours. I mean, in fact, we do all the time about how this is like fundamentally tied to these historical precedences, and how fucked we are constantly and will continue to be forever and ever. But how amazing it feels to just like do the work. But I wanna be mindful of our time together and provide some real things that people can do. Some actions, some way of framing the current climate so that people can leave with some ideas. And in part, you know, we were talking about this, you know, we can't talk about it... like this conversation is very intentionally broader than abortion. Right? Like abortion

is connected to everything. Our body autonomy, the concept of body autonomy, is obviously an intersectional issue, and we do know that organizing is fundamentally about building authentic connections and building relationships with people. And I want to talk a lot about how we do that in both a kind of general sense, and then also provide some examples of how to do that within the framework of abortion advocacy.

And I think also just underscoring to that the reason why we have to do this work is that there are institutions that are supposed to occupy spaces that take care of our needs, and they aren't doing that. And so, in order to replace that role, we have to work together. And in order to work together, we have to know each other. We have to understand each other's needs and strengths, and we also have to like, be comfortable with having challenging conversations and working together with people we might not agree with or like [very much]-

AB:

I don't think we have to like each other, even.

JB:

Absolutely. And like that is a big...I mean, I'm sure there's a whole nother conversation we could have about how we are isolated into groups of people we only agree with and are really scared of conflict. And it's actually just super important to have a struggle and be also okay with that, and be able to still fundamentally believe that your neighbor deserves to be taken care of.

I mean, if we, if we really get down to it, most of us want the same thing, and that's really just to be able to feel safe and healthy in our homes and in the way that we live our lives. So, yeah, so, okay, I want to talk a little bit about this concept of building relationships through a landscape assessment.

So, a landscape assessment informs the process of organizing by identifying who to build relationships with, what strengths and gaps exist, and where to focus your energy for impact and to reach your goals. And that really starts with mapping who's involved like who's involved around you. The more academic term is stakeholder, but that feels like kind of awkward and not right to me. For some reason it seems like a corporate term, but it's really just like identifying people, groups and orgs that are already involved or impacted in whatever issue that you're thinking about. So whether or not that's like food security, housing security, mobility access, healthcare access. These kinds of things so generally, that would be getting together. And I recommend doing some of these exercises with a group of friends. But of course you can do it alone, or with your families, but just thinking like, who are my neighbors, what local community groups are working in close proximity to me, or even larger in a larger context, like within the state. If you're going to school like what student groups are interested in this, or maybe even professors or other students who are working on particular issues. And what kind of people around you have skills that are helpful. So like carpenters or educators, or cooks, or mechanics or nurses, like if you have somebody that knows how to fix a car and is willing to trade for that. That can be like a game changing relationship. And think about the things that you need to be safe like if you do need access to medication to live, let's figure out a way that we can ensure

that there's an ongoing access to in case the institution that helps provide it is not there anymore. And what does that look like? And if there's not an option, let's figure out a way to create an option.

I think that in the abortion context looking around and say like, who's the local abortion focused organization? So clinics, advocacy groups, individuals, funds. Anybody that's like within that realm. Providers, doctors who might be friendly, nurses who might be friendly to the issue, attorneys who might be working on this like, who is within proximity to you and your friends and your family, and write them down. Write them down. Be considerate about maybe where you're keeping this information, but labeling them and reaching out and just being like, 'Hey, I want to know, like, are you still working with people who have questions about legality around abortion access?' Or 'are you funding clients who are traveling out of state for abortion care?' Or 'do you provide clinical care up to 15 weeks or more?', or whatever questions you need to ask. Get a list together before you need it, and it's an emergency and start kind of building those relationships with people before it's like a crisis.

Do you want to add to that before I talk about other ways of getting into it, [Amelia]? Cool. Okay,

So in addition to building relationships, which is, of course, like this mapping of core relationships, you want to make sure that also, we are talking about the kind of resources that exist. So not just like who but what exists. So the infrastructure... thinking about what your values are, and what's a value aligned organization. So people who are working on not only abortion, but are also working on justice, advocacy, or abolition work of, you know, people who are criminalized for their pregnancy outcomes. There's like so many intersections with people who are working to eliminate the role of police and like the family policing system and stuff like that. So who's aligned even if they don't like automatically see how issues intersect like we can help people understand that if that is of question. But, like ultimately you are fighting the same fight. So think about who and what other orgs exist.

Also, like what other tools and spaces like, are there friendly spaces that will allow you to host a meeting, or just like get together with people, and do a like exchange of free clothes or something like that? Does your neighborhood have a garden or a park that you can access? Is there a local farmer that's willing to share food, or that works in your neighborhood, and maybe would be open to the idea of like a work trade.

In terms of abortion, like, who's doing transportation? Is there a network of people? Is there just one person doing it like, who is that person? What educational materials exist like your local library very likely doesn't have information about abortion, so can you get books and put them in free libraries? Can you distribute pamphlets? Can you have a conversation with your friends? Like what's existing and what's missing? What are the hotline numbers? What are the mutual aid networks?

This whole kind of first step is really just seeing what abundance already exists, and I promise there is a lot of abundance, and it often just takes a little bit of work to get and name that. And

there's like this final aspect, too, which is just like who has power? So who is most frequently left out of conversations? Who is often not invited because they don't have access to Facebook or something like that, like, what are the groups? Where is their communication falling? If community organization meetings are often held in a church, and a church doesn't feel like a welcoming space for all like name that power dynamic and see if there's a way to work around it.

Yeah. So I have some ideas about how to actually like to do this on the ground. But I'm curious, Amelia, what you think about this, like the the usefulness and fundamental value of doing-

AB:

Powermapping?

JB:

Yeah, and like the landscape assessment generally.

AB:

I think that a landscape analysis is really important in order to not replicate work. Both because that's a waste of energy, and it might be stepping on toes and it's just, you know, it's like...I guess, you know, I think that like a lot of times in these moments when people are freaking out they're like, I want to go. I want to drive. I want to give someone rides to an abortion clinic. And they sort of start hastily trying to organize a driving collective. And Jex and I are not of the mind that people should not organize new driving collectives. But we are of the mind that you should know if one already exists, and you should see if you can support that effort before creating something new, and also that like fundamentally, in order to do this work, I think responsibly like especially considering that abortion work is you're holding...you're potentially interfacing with people who are at a really vulnerable moment in their lives. You're potentially subjecting yourself or other people to, you know, criminalization, and like, in order to enter this work responsibly, you got to just like, know what the fuck is going on out there, and if you rush into it, it's like you're probably motivated by a desire to feel better and like you are doing something, and you should check that and like slow your role a little bit, because you'll do better at like helping people, and you'll do better at like doing this kind of building up of community network in the way that we're talking about if you stop and look at what that network is before you attempt to jump in, you know.

JB:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. We want to increase our power. Not add stress to an already stressed system of people just often donating their time and resources. So if you can join forces with somebody who's already invested and interested, that's ideal.

But of course, like the majority of cities don't have an abortion fund, you know, or, like a majority of cities don't have a resource that will drive people to clinics. So these are things to just assess and then increase and add resources and support to.

I want to just pause really quickly before getting into some actionable ways of conducting these analyses to talk about a couple of the questions in the chat, if that's cool, because I think that it's a good moment right now to talk about it.

And so one of the questions in the chat is from our friends in Texas. And the question generally is, how do we talk about and promote and teach people about self-managed abortion, especially in a hostile state where it's criminalized to talk about those things, or potentially criminalized, that aiding and abetting laws are super confusing on purpose, about like where the lines are drawn. But, you know, I think that there's something that SYA has said before, and I know they're not the only ones, but this idea that laws aren't real, and we're not saying that because laws don't have real consequences, but because they're applied in these really unjust and unclear ways.

So I think, trusting that there is going to be a first amendment or constitutional rights to talk about things is something we should plan to not be the case [and] that we're gonna have crackdowns, no matter what and I just want to underscore that like the more we do have these relationships in our community and networks, or we know that there are people we can trust, the easier we can facilitate this distribution of information and training. Knowing that social media is heavily policed and there's a lot of surveillance going on there, it is really hard to communicate, because we haven't really had a lot of other systems of doing it recently. So being able to know who we can talk to will help us be able to take care of one another in a safe way.

AB:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think, like the more people share information, the safer it is to do so. You know, in the same way. I mean... There's so much riffing that can be done on on the laws aren't real front, but I think that like to Jex's point, they're making this shit up as they go along, and if they want to fuck with us they're going to find a way to do that, and they don't care what the law is.

And so I think that it's important to know what the law says in order to be able to do an accurate risk assessment for yourself or the people that you're communicating with, and also in order to effectively advocate for yourself if you attempt to advocate for yourself, if you get ensnared in some way by you know, like criminalization. But I don't think that we should be looking to...like laws aren't going to protect us. There are structures that are selectively enforced in order to fuck with certain groups of people in order to act as systemic deterrence of people stepping out of line. And they're also like a collective agreement like they are reified by our participation, and they're also not a description of what is possible. In the same way that a speed limit sign says, 60 miles an hour, and everybody knows that your car can go 110, a law that you can't have an abortion in Texas is a fucking suggestion. It's not a description of what you can or can't do. It is something that you should be absolutely aware of in order to try to avoid trouble. And I think that ultimately-

Also shout out to this person in the chat that is in Amarillo. Amarillo just defeated a travel ordinance largely thanks to this amazing group that is called Amarillo Reproductive Freedom Alliance who came together like quickly as a group of like-

Some of whom were not super seasoned. But they saw this problem looming in their community. And we're like fuck this and this group like defeated. Oh, it's time for me to cry. This group defeated the travel ban, you know, and also Texas was just like fuck that we don't want it? But it's really so so this person is asking like: are they gonna come down on us on a first amendment level? And the answer is just like we don't know. And we're gonna have to be nimble and adaptable and change our tactics. But we're not ever gonna stop helping each other. We're just gonna figure out different ways to do it without getting into trouble forever.

JB:

Yeah. And I think that one of the ways that everybody on this call can help do this, especially for people who live in places where they have more restricted speech, is to share information. There's a website: you always have options.com. If someone could put it in the chat if it hasn't been already. But it has, like all of the essential resources to get an abortion, no matter where you live, including traveling out of state if that's what you choose to do or need to do, or getting abortion medication, navigating the legal circumstances where you live and getting medical support. So the core set of resources.

And the more we talk about it, the more we reshare and post it, the more it gets into public consciousness. If you haven't been able to talk to somebody about abortion, or you haven't been able to teach them how to support somebody, it's more likely that someone will at least be able to be like, oh, my friend needs an abortion. And I know that there's this website, and that is huge, that is a life changing resource. And it's so simple. And it is already being censored and monitored by, you know the social media mods or whatever, so the more of us who do it the better it is for everybody. So that's one simple thing that we can do to help each other.

And also this idea of as part of the kind of landscape analysis doing a risk assessment for yourself. So just thinking in advance in the same way you have an emergency preparedness plan, maybe, with your family or friends about where you go. If your cell phones don't work like, do you have a meeting place? Just like, what do you do if you're pregnant and don't want to be? And what would your choices be like? What would you want to do? What kind of scenario would you be most comfortable with? So that if you are in that situation and in crisis, you've already thought it through with a little bit less urgency.

And I think that goes to the question in the chat, too, about if we should have a stockpile, a small amount of plan B and abortion medication. There's a couple different opinions about this, but generally, my take on it is to have one. You should have an advanced provision of abortion medication at home in your medicine cabinet, or wherever it's safe. But I don't believe that you need more than one. In part, because we wanna make sure that the people who need it most have access to it. There is a page about advanced provision where you can kind of learn about the places and resources that provide it. The other thing is they expire within two years. So we

do see people that have kind of had a stockpile, but don't know that many people who need it so they end up going bad. So if you're able to have one, and you meet somebody who needs it, you can share yours and then order another one and have a backup in that way. So I don't know, Amelia, if you have a different take on it, but that's kind of what I've been sharing.

AB:

My take is basically the same. I think that the word stockpile sounds very large to me, and I think that we all need to remember that Mifepristone has about a two to three year shelf life. Misoprostol has about a five year shelf life, and I don't think that anyone should get-

I totally agree that I think it's great to have one set of pills in the house. We should acknowledge that possession of abortion pills has been criminalized in Louisiana as of October 1st. We do not know of any prosecutions for a simple possession at this point. If you have abortion pills in your house, you should have a plan to get them to people who need them before they expire, and do so safely and without a grave sense of urgency, where it's like, 'Oh, shit! I got 10 sets of pills two years ago, and now, I need to like, get them to people'. So I just yeah, I think you should just have a plan for whatever you have.

JB:

Yeah. And for Plan B, it's a four year shelf life. So but I think in the same way to have one or two sets around and then replace it as you use. It is the best move. And, of course, like all of these kinds of assessments, should be redone as things change and shift around you. Our preparedness should be rooted in reality. And right now you can get Plan B, so I think, like being just mindful of what you actually need. And if you really want to make sure people have access to abortion medication and plan B, I highly suggest you send funds and mutual aid groups some money and donate to support because they can distribute materials to people who need it. And there's hundreds that contact them every single day who need things like abortion medication or plan B. And so that's one way you can be assured, if you have the resources, that you can help people immediately who need it on the ground.

AB:

And I would say to just, I mean just Jex has already said this, but this is again, I think a case of like people really want to do something that feels like a dramatic, impactful action, ie. like acquiring a bunch of medications. Before you do that, check yourself. Do you know how to point someone to an abortion right now in your community, no matter where they live, like anywhere in the country? Because information is literal access at this point. There are community networks who are sending many thousands of sets of pills for free to people in red states, and hundreds of thousands of safe abortions have occurred since like SB8, since the fall of Dobbs and since the fall of Roe, because of these community networks. And so it's like, ask yourself before you...you know, we don't need a hero. We need you to. We need everybody to know how to tell everybody how to have an abortion and to make that information public knowledge. So to me, it's like, do you need to get five abortion pills to have at the house, or do you need to go write 'you always have options' in five bathroom stalls. Or maybe it's both. But sharing information is expanding abortion access.

JB:

Yeah, absolutely. And we are so lucky as a movement to have it be such a clear pathway to access, like what we're looking at is a public health crisis and not being able to access things like birth control and abortion care, and also obviously protections and good quality care for pregnant people, and so on and so forth. But what we do know is that so much of the barriers to access are due to lack of information even more than laws. And so if we can make sure that people...and people are entitled to make decisions about their bodies and their lives obviously so, people deserve to know that they can order abortion pills, even if it's illegal. So they can decide whether or not that's a risk they want to take beyond, just like what it's like to take abortion pills, what it feels like, how it is to manage it. There's also the right to know what risks you're taking. And so we need to make sure people have that information. So they do have autonomy over their decisions and their futures.

Moving into like some actions, some things that we can do to kind of create this network. And there's a good question in the chat that I want to get to that's part of this. But I think that there's a lot of different ways that we can go about doing an assessment of what's in our neighborhoods and resources and communities. And I think one of the most important things to do is to really focus locally, really focus on your neighbors and in your own kind of social circles first. You know, I don't want to create these like siloed groups of people that don't talk to one another if they have disagreements, or live in a different part of town. But I think that we have to build strength first in the places that we're [at]. Who goes to your local grocery store most like, who are they? Where do they live? Who are your neighbors, who shares a building with you? Who is what kids are at the bus stop down the street like, where do they live? What's their family like? These are the kinds of things we can do.

And this question in the chat about kind of slowing our role when jumping in and speaking to building trust with BIPOC led community groups as a white person, I think, is fundamentally like, start at home first. Like, get yourself straight and your friends and your family straight, and then, when you are reaching out to be like there are organizations that I want to support, and I want to get plugged into, or I want to put on a list as an asset and a resource like call and ask how to do that. Just ask and show up, and be there, and follow the lead of the people who are doing the work. That is huge and is monumental in the work, and again in expanding power, our collective power. So I think if we start with where we have the firmest roots, then we will grow. Oh, that's a really great metaphor. It's not. I didn't invent it. But the whole root thing makes a lot of sense, you know. Like, if a plant has really strong roots, then it can grow and expand and be healthy and strong. And that's what I really want to encourage people to do. You know, if your family members aren't comfortable talking about abortion, talk to them about it. If your family members are scared right now, figure out what their scares are, what their fears are, and how you can address them. What can you control and what can't you control? Those are really important things to name. So things like hosting a meetup. And I'm not talking about necessarily in person, but online. Maybe a group call, putting a notice on a bulletin board in your apartment building, saying, Hey, does anybody want to get together and talk? Talk about what our needs are? What resources-

AB:

[And we don't] have to have a specific objective or like a project like, we're gonna build a community garden. I think that it's important to just root yourself in building relationships and move at the speed of building relationships. That is like my answer to that question in the chat about like, how do we not fuck it up as white people, you know. I think you have to meet your neighbors, meet the people around you and ask how you can help show up, and move at the speed of relationship.

Sorry, I'm not trying to interrupt you, Jex. But I just when Jex is talking about a community meetup like a lot of people were texting me, of course, like after the election, and being like, What do I do? And like the text message that I was copying and pasting was like some form of what Jex is talking about like what if you just put up a note in your apartment building lobby that's just like, Hey, I'm on the 3rd floor. I am thinking a lot about what the future is going to feel like, and I want to introduce myself, and I want to know who you are, and I want to talk about how we can potentially support each other. But that is a way that we don't. Most people do not move that way, and are not, you know, default doing that kind of thing. And I think that that's like the basis, like you don't have to skip straight to a project. And often like, if you're in a room of people who are just like all there, because they give a fuck and know that things are bad right now, something will happen organically, and you don't have to like plan it in advance.

JB:

Yeah. Oh, I love that. You just said that. I think all of the most impactful, powerful projects that I've ever been involved with have just been because a couple of people decided to keep meeting every week, and like usually there's food. I can't underscore, or like the power of food, or like a potluck of some kind, like low pressure, like literally bringing some chips if that's all you can manage is huge to make sure people are comfortable and well fed and happy to talk.

And you just if you show up consistently like, and whatever that means for you like, let's just meet here at a coffee shop every week, and like maybe some weeks, you're alone. But if you just keep [at it], I promise you that people will come and-

AB:

People will come and things will happen. You will start to build stuff, you know, identify problems. And you'll start to share skills and resources. And you'll start to take care of each other.

JB:

Absolutely. And yeah, and you'll learn things that you didn't know about other people and about problems. And it's like, separately, we don't know a lot. But together we know a ton, you know, and I think that's really important.

I think, like also, when it comes to things we don't know about, or things that we feel vulnerable about, I welcome you to spend time learning also during this period of time where we just feel like we need to do something, but aren't maybe not sure what it is, you know, beyond like the

abortion space. I encourage people to sign up to take training on how to help people have self-managed abortions, and I know we have a link about SASS trainings that I hope we're adding, or somebody will add in a minute, or I will add it later.

But you know, sign up and ask a couple friends to join you and learn how to help people get abortions or have a book club, and it can be about anything. Honestly, it could even just be like a fantasy book club as if maybe you just need to escape. And that is actually super cool and important. You know, host a workshop if you do know how to do something or like, teach people how to do home repairs or fix their cars because we want to avoid interactions with the police, for example. Like these are some really simple things, or like, ask someone to teach you how to change your oil or a light bulb in your car, or whatever else you might need to do. I think consistency is really, really key. But beyond that, taking the pressure off yourself to revolutionize through a huge project like just consistent relationship building is critical.

In addition to those things like educating and building relationships with people, donating which we talked a lot about. You know, being a visible supporter is really key, like we were talking about distributing like putting stickers on bathroom stalls. But use your platform if you have it, to talk to people about these things, to talk to people about abortion. Stigma around abortion is a huge problem. It impacts the quality of care people get. It impacts the way that people view themselves in their abortion experiences because they don't see a lot of unstigmatized conversation, and there's so much misinformation out there. So that's a huge thing that you can do.

AB:

You can also do it very quietly. You know you don't have to be like publicly like with your name on your social media channel like that's not gonna appeal to most people or many people. It's not going to be safe to many people, but there is very likely some way that you can start a conversation with somebody in your life in a way that changes their perspective and just doing that, prioritizing those conversations, even if they're very quiet, that's what culture change looks like at the most granular level, you know.

I also wanted to say one thing about skill sharing which Jex just gave a bunch of really practical examples of things that we can teach each other. And I was just thinking about when I worked at the crisis clinic and talked to many, many suicidal people and like afterwards, I very much like, you know, I think, in my friend group, in my community, I think people know that I'm comfortable in crisis and that I'm comfortable talking about substance abuse, mental illness, suicide, and I sort of like became a person that people would come to if either they or like someone close to them was like feeling suicidal. And you know what I'm just realizing is that a skillshare that I've always been meaning to do at a hyper-local level is like how to talk to your friends and loved ones if you're concerned, that someone is suicidal because it is like a teachable skill set and sort of like a formula, even. It's kind of like a flow chart of a conversation, and I feel the same way about abortion stuff. People would thank me for my work, and it was like, I don't want to be thanked. I want more people to understand how to do this. I want more people to get comfortable talking about talking to their friends about suicide. It would be awesome if we didn't

even need a hotline, because more people were comfortable talking about suicide. And it would be awesome if we didn't need institutions or even activists to guide people to abortion access. Like, you know, if we didn't need a hotline to tell people how to find an abortion fund because people just knew, like more people knew and this wasn't specified knowledge that a couple of people have.

So I'm gonna I'm going to commit right now to that sometime. I'm going to give myself a whole year. Sometime in the next year, I'm going to invite people to my apartment and we're going to talk about how to talk to your friends about suicide.

JB:

That's amazing. And also invite me, please. Because, yeah, I think that that's something that's really important, that all of these things are teachable, and that you know, everybody does have different ways of learning. Everybody's way of acting and moving in the world is different. And that's why we need everybody in on this project, because different types of people can communicate better with each other. And you got to find the people that vibe with you and work through the experiences where you're not feeling like it's working.

In terms of just being burnt out or feeling helpless like, I just wanna just like lift up the idea of just doing one small thing and then moving to the next small thing like take it day by day, because we need everybody in this. We need everybody in this, and if you're exhausted and not taken care of, it hurts us like the community in general. So like, look out for one another and remind your friend who's maybe really good at organizing like, it's okay to take a break or offer to clean their house. If it's somebody that you're like, I don't know how to teach an abortion workshop or a class on mechanics, but like can I do your dishes tonight or make you dinner? Like monumental.

There's a couple of questions in here. But I wanna address this one about this: 'I'm a Cis, white, hetero male in a red state, and very interested in hearing how I can be a strong ally and vocal supporter without being seen as trying to take over the conversation or being perceived as trying to be taking over leadership or in the community.'

I think, like everything that we've been saying up until this point will get you in the right space. Asking how you can help and listening is huge and also education is also huge. And there's another question in here about communication, and I want to get to that, too. But for advocacy organizations and funds and doulas, there's a lot of information to share with people, and it is hugely helpful if you can do some of that work in advance, and if it is like, Hey, can you tell me about like how can I learn about abortion pills, there are tons of things you can read online. There are tons of great videos you can watch on Youtube. There's a lot of people like you can send me an email and I would be happy to walk you through the process or the resources that you need.

AB:

And watch all of the previous Abortion Academies.

JB:

Yeah, exactly.

AB:

[It] covers like so much fucking ground. You will learn a whole lot of stuff.

JB:

Yeah, like, if you show up already knowing the funds, the gestational limits, the legal challenges, and you're like, I know all this, and I'm ready to learn how I can help like I can't even tell you how remarkably helpful that would be. And showing like these are my skills, I'm prepared to help with writing a press release, or like bringing snacks to meetings or like, here's the ways I can help. Does any of this help? If not, where can I learn? And how can you plug in? I think that is..it's like, and I don't even necessarily even see it as like an ally, like we're all in this movement. It's like every single one of us.

AB:

Yes. I think that, like Jex and I are in total agreement, that there are so many points of failure to identify in the mainstream pro-choice movement, and in the way that Democrats advocated for this issue, and why they fucking lost something that should have been impossible to lose. Classic Dems. Just how could you fumble that bag? I don't know. But you did.

I think that it was a real mistake to frame abortion as a gendered issue, an individual issue, a fundamentally private issue. Something that doesn't concern...like it's like a secret thing that you might need sometime, if you're, you know, a woman or a person with a uterus. But it's not something that we talk about or advocate for with our whole chest or or even just see as a community issue, right? And I think that that's like a huge reason why we were unable to build collective power and unable to just like vociferously, like just fucking demand a world where everybody has access to abortion at any time for any reason. Full stop! That's what we demand, and we will stop at nothing else. Like we need dudes in on that fight, you know, like I think that men received a lot of mixed messages where they were like even the good dudes were or men who felt really pro abortion were like, I don't know how to do this without taking up space. I want every man who feels fucked up about this situation to get really comfortable talking about why you refuse to live in a world in a country that does not have full abortion access for all. Just get comfortable with your own voice.

And I totally agree with Jex that a lot of that comes from education, and the more that you engage with shit like this like thank you for being here today, and the more that you engage with stuff like this, the more you'll find like your beat in a way that I think it will feel natural and like the reason it doesn't is because men just like haven't really been participating. They haven't found a lane for themselves. But guess what? It's all hands on deck. It concerns and impacts every single one of us, and there's absolutely like many roles for all kinds of people. You know, there are infinite ways to plug in regardless of identity, access to resources, location, skill set, like ability, any of those things. There's a place for everybody.

JB:

Yeah, absolutely. There's this, like, I love that you just said, there's like infinity ways to get involved because it's true. And there's a ton of men in the movement that are doing amazing critical work. And you know, I think, like the more men that we have, the more likely we are to get more people engaged and involved.

I wanna address this question about communication. So suggestions on security and communication organizing information onboarding helpers or people in need. And this is a really good question. It's something that we talk about a lot, internally. It's a big question that's out there. It's something that I've been thinking a lot about my personal anxieties around this election, and one of the bigger ones for me is how we communicate in a very restrictive environment. And so one thing I want to talk about is just on a basic level to get familiar with encrypted apps. And the Digital Defense Fund is an organization that kind of has a lot of resources about how to communicate and protect yourself in doing work online. But I know that we like to use Signal. So that's an encrypted app. It's free. There's lots of ways of creating groups of people. If people aren't familiar with how to use Signal. I encourage you to learn, and then tell other people how to use it. It's really quite easy, and it's helpful for everybody to kind of protect their communications.

The same with proton. If there's two people who use a proton email address, they can have encrypted communications. So one is just kind of getting your basics down, which is just like, how do you do some basic communications? And the more that you meet with people and trust them the more you're able to talk a little bit more freely on Signal.

The other thing is meeting in person. I just want to say, like again, that this is so critical and important, and something that we don't often do. So if you're able to meet in person or like on a video chat like that's okay. And let's increase the frequency where we're having these like one on one conversations.

Additionally, I think we have to be really careful that we're not doing things on social media. And I want to just underscore that like this is just that we are able to do an assessment of the ways which we do communicate and share information. But there's also a lot of organizations that have information online that we can point people to without being the person that says like, this is how you get abortion pills and being like whoops, did I just aid and abet. Again, you can send people to You Always Have Options, and they can figure that out if they need to. There's also a ton of resources on Shout Your Abortion's website. We are working on a series of toolkits and ways to help people kind of learn, not only like what's the landscape of abortion access to get people up to date this kind of background we're talking about before you maybe are ready to take an action or as you're starting to learn to take action within the movement. But we are trying to facilitate opportunities, and in part because SYA is based in a place that's a blue state. So how can we uplift and use the privilege of not having so much regulation in order to spread information to people that might feel like they don't have safety or ability to. Also stickers. Liike, I said, like stickers with QR codes that talk about You Always Have Options, for example are ways that you can just share information in privacy.

There's also an encrypted document and slide sharing app and I'm spacing on what it's called right now. I don't know if anybody in the chat knows what it is. Crypt Pad, I'm pretty sure, is what it is. So there are some options. And again, if you reach out to anybody at the Digital Defense fund with a question, they will be more than happy to share what they know about how to have webinars, how to have chats, how to plan meetings in a way that's as safe as you possibly can right now.

Amelia, I want to be mindful of our time, and our friends' times that are here with us. What do you have on your mind?

AB:

I think that we've done a solid. I think that it would be good to end with this conclusion in the doc.

JB:

Yeah, I'm really into creating spreadsheets, and that's one of my strengths.

AB:

[unintelligible] in the spreadsheets. You know what I mean, but wild. Not this guy. I'm just like constantly in an infinity Hall of Mirrors of being locked out of passwords.

JB:

See, this is how people support each other, despite our different skill sets.

AB:

Yeah. Totally.

JB:

Yeah, I just want to underscore again that change doesn't happen from a single act, and it is built through relationships that we nurture and the networks that we strengthen and the care we give one another. And ultimately, if we want to talk about the urgency and the urgent actions, it is really figuring out who is around us and how we can take care of one another which is fundamental to any type of work.

And also just a reminder that again, we're not going to fix this in our lifetime. But it is about showing up and moving forward together, and that every action really does build a better world. And we are here because of the work that people have done before us. And we want to create a world that is better than the one we are living in now, and it takes all of us, and it takes small things just over and over again.

And again, like activism isn't one size fits all. We need people to be on the streets organizing. We need people to be behind the scenes like organizing spreadsheets or whatever. We need people to be teaching people carpentry so they can fix their homes or mechanics so they can fix their cars. We need people to be cooking meals or bringing a bag of chips to the meetings, like

every single thing is important. And it's okay if your form of activism is not the same as mine. And I just want to encourage you to take a couple steps.

So before you leave our time together, I would really like you to think about one person or a group that you will reach out to this week. I want you to imagine them, whether or not it's a roommate, or a sister, or a group that we've mentioned here that you're like 'I'm really curious to know about that', and commit to talking to them. I think if you can even just make it on your weekly goal to do that once a week, you're gonna be, in a month or two, like ready to-

AB:

Your life will change.

JB:

Absolutely. I also want to encourage you to make, if you're able, and you feel safe enough to do so and you have social media or a newsletter, or something like that. to share You Always Have Options, the website. And I'm linking right now to the social media page where there's like pre-made images for you to use. But I think the more often we do it, even if one person sees it, [it's a] monumental and life changing social media post. And I say that with all honesty and truth. I have helped people get abortions because they found out about the resource that exists to help them through a social media post.

And then finally, for those that aren't already plugged into an org and you want to and if you're curious about it, sign up to get involved with Shout Your Abortion. I'm scheduling times to have one on one conversations with people to problem solve questions about how do I get involved? How do I communicate safely? Or a billion problems I'm sure have not ever thought about but I'm here to talk it through with you. I'm here to figure out ways to connect people who maybe don't know each other in a certain city or state together so that you people can problem solve and strategize or learn together. And we are here to help support and build networks of people who care.

AB:

Yes. It really means the world to us that you've spent the last hour plus listening today. And I want to underline Jex's urging to orient us in this struggle as existing on a continuum. That like this work existed before us, and we will not fix it.

And you know, I also want to acknowledge that this is such a brutally difficult, grueling time, and it is so scary, and that is so so real. And also the sky is not falling like we are here with each other. And there is, I think, a profound level of narcissism or sort of myopia and definitely privilege in thinking right now what is happening in the United States of America is the worst that the world has ever been. Think about that statement. There are many, many countries on this earth that have been existing under dictatorship for generations, and I think that the American exceptionalism that allowed us to feel like we were different is part of what got us here.

I want to close us out with a quote. I'm like becoming such a quote guy, but I know that this is...I don't know if Jex and I have ever talked about David Graber, but I have no doubt that we both look to this person. He's incredible. He died early on in Covid, I think, of Covid. He was an anarchist thinker and writer who has written a lot of incredible books about organizing and building a better world. And the quote is that "the ultimate hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make, and we could just as easily make it differently."

JB:

That's what it's all about.

AB:

That's what it's all about. And we love you. We hope that you're taking care of yourselves and each other, and we want to make ourselves available to you. Please reach out to us as an organization, you know, and let us know how we can support you doing this work of making a different world. And that's what we're going to do. It's like what the fuck else are you going to do like Netflix and chill? Like you may as well do some shit. It's really fun. I have so much fun all the time, like, you know.

JB:

We have to have it all.

AB:

Yeah, yes, and yes, and totally underlining. Jex's thing about joy like this does not have to be. This does not have to feel like some harsh click where people are getting fucking yelled at for not knowing shit. And it's lame like, you know, room with bad lighting and no music, and everyone's fucking depressed. It's like, put some jams on, get the good chips, and like, be nice to each other, and good things will happen. You know, it doesn't have to suck. It's actually just incredibly joyful work to help each other and to love each other and to learn how to do those things better, and that's what it's all about. And we're going to do it. Join us.

JB:

I'm here with you, Amelia, today.

AB:

Thank you.

JB:

Yeah. And I love you.

AB:

I love you. And I love all of you for watching us here today. We're going to take an Abortion Academy break in January. We encourage you to just go ahead and watch all of the previous ones that you haven't already.

JB:

Invite your family to do so too, if you're with them.

AB:

Yeah, Abortion Academy viewing party. There is so much good. There are so many incredible people, and you can just oh, sorry, Erin, thank you. We're taking a break in December, and we'll be back in January. But, if you go-

Did we put the page in the Abortion Academy page in the chat? I bet we did. But if you just scroll through that list of topics, it's just full of brilliant people breaking it down in ways that will change your brain.

So yeah, everybody take care, and we love and appreciate you, and we'll see you the next time. Okay, thank you. Bye.

JB:

Bye.