

75. Creating Inclusive Spaces with Ashley Brooke James and Elizabeth Moore – Transcript

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Elizabeth: We think wellness is like showing up and being like, 'okay, I've no idea what I'm doing. And I'm going to try, because I deserve to do this for myself.

Leah: Welcome to Her Story of Success, a podcast featuring stories from influential women trailblazers and business leaders who have defined & pursued their own versions of success and fulfillment. We hope these stories, lessons learned, and celebrations inspire you to believe in yourself and enjoy your own journey a little more.

Elizabeth: We exist because we want to see more inclusion.

Ashley: We want to create an environment where everyone feels welcome. So we need representation of everyone, you know, so they do feel welcome. We believe that diversity and community matter.

Leah: I'm Leah Glover Hayes, your host and CEO of Her Story of Success Women's Business Collective. On today's show, I'm so excited to be talking to Ashley Brooke James and Elizabeth Moore of TRILUNA Wellness. TRILUNA Wellness is a company that's dedicated to helping communities embrace a more inclusive version of wellness. They focus on movement, cooking and health coaching, and they work with corporate clients to build employee wellness curricula.

Ashley and Elizabeth both left corporate jobs, because they recognized the need for more diverse and inclusive wellness spaces. While building TRILUNA, they've become community leaders, speakers and problem solvers on topics ranging from diversity and inclusion to meditation for stress management.

I'm so inspired by the company Ashley and Elizabeth have built. And I especially love the way they're bringing together wellness and diversity, which are two topics that

are so important in today's workplace. As you're listening to this conversation, I encourage you to share it with a friend or coworker who is looking to improve their own wellness, or someone who's looking for practical ways to be more anti-racist in her daily life.

Well, Ashley Brooke James and Elizabeth Moore of TRILUNA Wellness, Welcome to Her Story of Success. I'm excited to have you girls today.

Ashley: Thank you. Thank you for having us.

Leah: Absolutely. I am just on this mission to talk to people that inspire me. And as soon as I learned about you two, I think it was last year in 2019, I was just like, 'Oh my gosh, I've got to get to know these girls and hear more about their story.' So, share with us a little bit about what is TRILUNA Wellness?

Ashley: Well TRILUNA Wellness is an experiential wellness company. We specialize in three core services: movement – such as yoga – health coaching and cooking classes, which we package up into different things like curriculum, events and retreats for our corporate clients. We also do community, private retreats. So we make things like, everything from lunch and learns, we offer community team builders, we offer supper clubs that really engage a conversation like diversity and inclusion. We have a whole series built on that. So we are in the middle of corporate wellness and community activism, if you want to just like sum it up, but those are our services.

Leah: I love it. And so Elizabeth, share a little bit about what you saw that was missing in this wellness industry that made you decide, you know, I want to do something about that, because you were both making good money, having good jobs. So I'm just kind of like, I'm always interested in like, I mean, I know what made me jump, but what made you to jump out of your jobs to say, this is what I want to do.

Elizabeth: Yeah, I think that's a two part answer. And the first part of that is the wellness part. And the second part is where we were in our careers part. And the wellness part really stems from Ashley and I both not seeing ourselves represented in the wellness space. I come from an eating disorder background, which is how I found my way to wellness in the first place. Through healing my relationship with my body and my self-worth, I found wellness. And so there was a lot about the wellness industry that I felt was incredibly triggering for me and triggering for my eating

disorder. I also didn't see a lot of representation of anyone other than the like tall, thin white woman. And I was neither tall nor thin. And so I wanted to feel like I could find a space where I felt comfortable and wasn't triggered. So I knew I needed to create a different kind of wellness. I needed to create a more accessible wellness. And that was what started me on my wellness journey. And Ashley, similarly, I'll let her tell her own story there, but not dissimilar from that.

And then Ashley and I both were working these like really high stress, corporate jobs that were negatively impacting our health in a lot of ways, a lot of ways. And so we knew that we eventually were going to take the leap, and then Ashley, just was like, 'no, I'm done. I'm out. I'm not doing this anymore.' And then I accidentally quit my job, which is a whole story. We just ended up pursuing our passion rather than doing sales and marketing for other people, which is what we had been doing up until that point. So that's a long answer, but...

Leah: No that's perfect! I think, you know, one of the things that I look at is the why behind what you do, because there's so much competition for everything that all of us are doing right now, like, right? So I think it's really important to be able to say why you started this. I love that just the word inclusion is so much in what you do. And I just feel like this place of belonging and my whole thing too, is like, every person's story matters. And when someone comes to TRILUNA, like it doesn't matter where you come from or where you start, you feel like you belong there. And I think that's, what's powerful and important is that you are very intentional that making people feel like they mattered and that they belong and that there's a place for them. Ashley, share a little bit about your, why? Like, why did you decide to leave your, your corporate role and do this with Elizabeth. And the other piece of that is, why do it together? Why did you not start something yourself?

Ashley: I'm going to say Liz said it best. There was two reasonings why. For me, on the wellness part of it, you know, I got into yoga and I went to every studio in Nashville at the time, and I was the only Black woman there. And it was, I saw very little diversity, not only in the Black community, but just across the Black and Brown community. And so I needed to create a space where people actually saw themselves. So that was a reasoning for me to even get certified and go on this path. And I knew it was more than just yoga, it was full wellbeing, because yoga introduced me to wellness. And so on the corporate side of it, I was in a high sales position. I was traveling a lot,

and I developed really chronic migraines that stayed around for months at a time. And as soon as I tapped into my wellbeing, I found a sense of relief, and that brought me joy. And I knew that this was my passion. And I knew, I knew that I needed to follow that. Also, coming from 10 years of sales and business development, I have a business background, and I knew that if I start a yoga studio, like that's not scalable. So I'm thinking always long term.

And Liz and I met in our yoga teacher training and we connected right away because we both were very business minded in what we wanted to create. And we were actually creating the same company. She was doing health coaching and yoga and cooking, and I was doing health coaching and yoga and making it about a lifestyle. And what we both also saw was collaboration. You know, we could either be competition or we could be really intentional about what we saw that was missing and come together and create this beautiful story where, you know, she felt isolated when she got into wellness, I felt isolated. So why not create this space where people feel welcome? From the moment they step into the space that we created for them.

Leah: I love, love, love that about y'all, that it's about collaboration over competition. And wow, how much more are you able to create coming together then you could have by yourself? Because you're right. Both of you, like you didn't see representation in the Black and Brown community. She didn't see much representation for people that weren't tall, skinny quote, unquote fit body type. I love that together though you have a place that everyone feels welcome. You were so intentional and you used that word from the very, very, very beginning. So I want to talk about that a little bit. On your website, you have your five core values. Talk to me a little bit, and this is something that like every company across the world is talking about, you know, mission, vision, values, and taking care of your people, and, and all of those things. So talk to me about the process of you guys actually coming up with the values that you have put on the website.

Elizabeth: Yeah. I come from an agency background and so, core values were a big part of our strategy as a, as a company in the one I worked for beforehand. And I knew that I want that, that was something that I wanted to carry forward into our company. Obviously we are a values-based company. Like, we exist because we want to see more inclusion because we want everyone to feel welcome. We just like,

kind of by default are a social justice company. And so we knew that we had to have our values front and center and that we had to live by them and abide by them and never stray from them. And so formalizing them meant that we had something to check back to on a regular basis. And so we sat down and talked about the things that were coming up the most for us, and then just wrote them down and formalized them. And they were born very naturally from what we were already doing and what we felt was really important and our personal values.

Leah: I love that. Do you want to run through those really quickly for our listener?

Ashley: Yeah. You know, we want to create an environment where everyone feels welcome. So we need representation of everyone, you know, so they do feel welcome. So that one was the number one is, 'We believe that diversity and community matter.'

Elizabeth: Yeah, that's the foundation of our brand. And then the next logical step in that was that 'We believe in a beginner's mindset.' Because we, when you think of wellness, you often associated with fitness, and then you associate it with a fit body type, and then you associate with athletes and then you associate it with these really strict training regimens. That is not what we think wellness is. We think wellness is like showing up and being like, 'okay, I've no idea what I'm doing. And I'm going to try, because I deserve to do this for myself.' Like, look, if you want to do like super-intense inversions in your yoga class, we're not the people that you should go to. But if you've always been afraid to try it, because you feel like you're not flexible enough, or you've always wanted to get into wellness and you just, weren't sure where to start, we are the company that you should come to. Because we are going to approach all of our classes and workshops with the beginner's mind and then be able to scale up if you want to scale up. So we always start with the beginner's mindset.

Leah: I love that. That's beautiful.

Ashley: And then we also feel like 'Health should support your life and not consume it.' And both Liz and I, when we first got into our wellness journey, I know for me, it was all about, you know, working out every morning, making sure that I'm eating this, you know, I know Liz has her story of her own, but it did consume my life. And our favorite quote that we always say is that, you can eat all the kale in the world, but if you have a ton amount of stress, I mean, that's not going to do anything for you. And so if

you're just showing up every day and just letting this fitness over wellness consume your life, you're really missing the whole point of your overall wellbeing.

Elizabeth: Yeah, and I, I think it's really easy for wellness culture to become dogmatic. And in that we mean that you are following rules for the sake of following rules without actually checking in with your body and how it's making you feel. So we are very anti-dogma at TRILUNA.

The fourth is a pretty natural integration. It's that, 'Health and wellness are a social justice issue.' And that is because we understand that not everyone has the same level of access. And so I think in the wellness and fitness world, the thing that is most triggering for us is the phrase, 'No excuses,' because that is just total BS. There are so many legitimate excuses not to do super hard physical labor. You might be pregnant, you might have depression, you might just not want to that day. And so that's not the best thing for your mental health. Like the idea that there are no excuses is ridiculous. And then you get into the layers of access and education and what people are able to understand. And then you get into what happens with health and wellness when there is poverty? What happens to it when there's disenfranchisement? Like it is not a one size fits all approach, which is actually our last one that I, I just gave away. Sorry, Ashley. But in order for help, it's from wellness to be successful, to be effective, to not actually be harmful in the pursuit of it, you have to understand that not everyone has the same level of access. Not everybody wants to participate in the same way. And so you forcing your version of what you think it is on someone else is harmful, and you're doing the opposite of helping them be more well.

I mean, we believe that wellness is grounded in bio-individuality and intuitive care. And so that idea is that no one knows your body better than you do. So if someone is telling you that you need to drink 10 gallons of water a day and you drink 10 gallons of water a day and you feel like crap, you should probably not be drinking 10 gallons of water a day. Right? That's an extreme example. But you know your body. And it might take some work to like, get into a practice of being able to tap into that. But like, especially, and that's a whole other subject, but especially when you get into the whole healthcare discussion, like it's common for us to just prescribe rather than listen and understand, which is where having someone like a dietician or nutritionist or health coach can help be your advocate for intuitive care.

Leah: Yeah. Let's talk about that. Cause I know you said you did three things and I kind of want to go over them again. So you do like retreats and supper clubs, which we're totally going to talk about, because I'm very excited and I want to go to one. But walk me through what that looks like. So my sister is a mom of three, she and her husband both work. And she's worked out before she's done running, but you know, being a mom and having three kids in your house and working full-time, you know, what are some of the things that you do for people that come to you that are looking for, 'Okay, well, I want to get healthy. Because I want to be in my kids' lives, and I want to be active and I want to be able to be with them longterm.' Right? So I think for her it's more about health and taking care of herself so that she can be a good mom, take care of her kids and have the energy to do all the things that she needs to do.

Elizabeth: Yeah. We actually do not do individual health coaching anymore, because we believe health is best executed in a community setting. Our three words are wellness, community, magic, because it is through community wellness that you can create magic in your own life. So the way that we integrate our health coaching is into all of our workshops and especially into all of our corporate wellness. Ashley can expand on that probably a little more than I can.

Leah: Let's talk about how you came to understand that with community. What is it that you saw that said, you know, I'm going to go away from individual and go into community? What did that why come from?

Ashley: I'm going to say, when it came to the individual approach, we were getting more into that counseling type feeling. And when you're in a community setting, you have other people that are going to hold you accountable, that you can hold accountable. That you can have realistic conversations about. And it's always, when you say, 'I haven't slept for two weeks,' and somebody says, 'Yeah, me too, I'm having dreams about this, or I'm having dreams about this.' Then we can have conversations around that and talk about our habits, our daily habits and things, and really dig down into the surface of that. You know, honestly being a healer, we wanted to show up and really show up for our community. So the best way we could do that is to merge our community into a community. And we set up our curriculum where it is set up to where it's like an individual approach. Like for your sister, we have this wonderful exercise called the Circle of Life, right? When you were talking about your sister, I was thinking, 'Oh, this exercise will be really great for her,' because it,

maps out all of these areas in your life. You know, your financial life, your joy, spiritual, like all these different spots in your life. And the exercise is for you to map out where you are right now and where those levels are. Some are higher than others, like our travel right now, and is very low, whereas like our home projects may be very high. And so where we teach that is, is to really latch on and nourish to those things right now that bring you joy. Like if being outside brings you joy, I would encourage your sister, go outside and play with the kids, go on walks. You know, things that, again, include the family, which is your community, right? And then things she can work on individually where she doesn't have to have the pressure of, I gotta wake up every morning and while this, and, you know, you know, get these many miles in, it comes natural for her to do that. So we've set up this curriculum, yes, it's a community approach, but we really want it to be impactful for the individuals to take away. And we leave them with exercises to hold themselves accountable, to show up for themselves in those areas.

Leah: That is so beautiful. I love that you focus on joy. And that's something that I feel like I'm talking about all the time right now, is we're in, or maybe before the pandemic, I felt like it was such a hustling grind mentality. And if you were going to be a successful entrepreneur, you had to work all the time and not sleep and not hang out with your friends and sacrifice your life to be successful. And I was like, 'F that. I want to, like, I want to love the process and not because I love hashtag hustle and grinding, but because I'm enjoying what I do.' And I love that, that you put even in this wellness, and you think about the circle of life, and I love that you focus on find the things that bring you joy, and do the things that bring you joy. Because your mental health is so important. If you completely ignore that to get fit, you're just doing that opposite of healing yourself mentally, right? And emotionally. And then you're always feeling guilty about what you're not doing and all of that. So if someone wants to like, learn more about getting into your community, cause I'm very interested in this now. Cause I have like 15 people, I want to send this to, including myself, but, so what does that look like? Let's say my sister's like, 'Man, I really want to learn about that.' Can she get into a community or is it, are you only doing thing for corporations right now?

Ashley: So our main focus is corporate right now because you know, this is what we do, but since the pandemic, we opened up the floodgates. We, when we first started

this company, we specialize in in-home wellness parties. And what better way right now, when people aren't really leaving their homes and things like that is to bring that back. So for your sister, I would say for her to get her community, her girls, you know, her girl gang and reach out to us. And we have different ones that range from tarot for self care to back to the basic cooking classes. You know, at this point in our business, our focus as like me and Liz, is marketing and sales. Our focus is corporate, but we have, you know, 18 wonderful contractors that, you know, we're contracting out doing our other services for us right now. So you can find all of that on our website right now, from everything that we do, because we just opened it all up and hoping that something is going to bite.

Leah: I need to take a cooking class. Cause I'm always like, 'Oh, I don't cook and my husband doesn't care,' but now that we're home all the time, it's like, 'Oh God, I really need to start cooking'. But it sucks. And I don't enjoy it, but I'm like, 'Okay, if we did a little class and there's other people in it, that sounds like a lot of fun actually.'

So let's talk about corporates because I do, we, you know, there's a lot of business owners and leaders that listen to this podcast. So what would be the why behind a corporation or a company hiring you? And then what does that look like? What are the things that you provide their group or their employees?

Elizabeth: Yeah, so we are of the belief that corporate wellness has not kept up with the trends in actual wellness, and that it very often only benefits the well. So most corporate programs or corporate wellness programs are going to bring someone in to do yoga. And the people who have never done yoga or feel intimidated by yoga, typically don't participate and then don't get the benefits of that wellness program. If you bring someone like us in, who actually cares about getting to understand your corporate culture, what you need, and then working up to that, you're going to get better results.

So for example, we worked with a female-owned software company that was mostly men, and we knew that we weren't just going to be able to like bust in there and be like, 'Hey, let's do yoga.' They'd be like, 'Absolutely not, that's crazy. Get out of here.' So we started with some like smaller classes about how to manage stress during the holidays, like, tactics for getting around that. And then we moved into like a little bit of meditation and then we moved into a little bit of stretching. And then by the end, we were able to have like this big cooking class so we could understand them a little bit

better and help them just do more cooking at home and do more stretching in the office and do a little bit of breathing to manage stress. So rather than just coming in and being like, 'This is what we do, you're going to abide.' We said, 'Okay, We see what you need. We understand the demographic of your office. Here's what we think is going to work the best.' And it's, it's our job to provide tools and they now know how to use all those tools for self-care.

Leah: That's awesome. Now, are you still doing things for corporations virtually? Maybe what does look like?

Ashley: We've taken everything virtual at this point. I mean from our movement classes, to our cooking classes, to our retreats even. We've executed all of them across the board. But this was something, every year, Liz and I come at the beginning of the year, we revisit our goals and then we map out our next one to three to five year goals. Our three year goal for this year was online curriculum. We knew already that the way for us to scale this business is to create corporate curriculum series. And that is something that is actually scalable. We knew that we would eventually get to the point where we weren't trying to go into the offices and really execute these large events unless they were really, really needed. So our three-year plan just got pushed up to one-year plan, and now we're really mapping that out and really developing a product that we feel like our corporate clients will really latch on to. And that can take our business to the next level.

Leah: I love that. Yeah, there's I mean, my husband's company, they're not going back to the office until January 2021, you know, and before it was like, 'Oh, we're gonna see September will work. And they just announced that it's going to be January of 2021.' I do want to talk about that a little bit. Maybe some of the things that you've seen. This pandemic has affected everyone. It has affected a lot of people differently, right? Like emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and financially, like would their jobs and all of those. What are you seeing with your corporations that you're helping? What is it that you're able to provide that helps people as they're processing some of this? Why is it important?

Elizabeth: Yeah. And this speaks to what Ashley talked about a little bit earlier, but one of our most popular workshops was one that we did around shining a light on mental health. And the anecdote I tell in that workbook, in that workshop is, one day, we were at a protest for women's rights a few years ago. And one of my friends

started talking about this phenomenon he'd had with mental health called intrusive thoughts, where it's like, something will come in that you can't get out of your head. Like, you know, when you're a little, and a teacher would like talk really close to you. I had this recurring fear. Like what if I accidentally spit in her face? And I'm like shunned from everyone forever. No one will ever talk to me ever again, I'll be a social pariah. What if I just did that? What if I lost my mind and I did that? That's an intrusive thought that enters your mind. I didn't know that that was something other people experienced. I definitely didn't know it had a name, and until he started, until he was vulnerable enough to talk about what was experienced did I understand that there was a framework for understanding my own mental health. So that workshop, 'Shining a Light on Mental Health' is a very clear example of that, but in all of our workshops, we don't do PowerPoints. We have workbooks for all of our lunch and there's all of our workshops. There's journaling and discussion, and there is something really incredibly powerful, especially when you're going through something like a global pandemic, to sit down as a group and say, 'I'm experiencing this. Am I alone?' And then having a call and response where people are like, 'Oh my gosh, you're not alone. I'm right there with you.' That's where we're able to, I think make the biggest impact during something like a global pandemic, and in general. Like just in general as a country, we don't spend enough time being vulnerable, being transparent, talking about our health, talking about our mental health especially. And when you can do that, that is the power of community. That is the magic of community right there. That's real wellness.

Ashley: And that's a power towards healing. Just being able to say it.

Leah: Hmm. That's so true. I was having a conversation and I didn't realize that I was harboring so much guilt, and I don't know if shame is the right word, but I didn't realize how much it was affecting me that I felt guilty that I don't have kids and I haven't been financially affected by this. So I was feeling so much, like I cannot complain about anything. Like I wouldn't allow myself to be honest about like how much this has affected me. Like not being able to hug people. I'm an, I'm an extrovert. I am like, I love people. I love crowds. I love events. Like I am one of those weird people, like I like networking things. And so, I didn't realize that because I didn't have some of these, hardships in my life, like I have my own office at my house, you know, I wasn't allowing myself to be honest about my feelings around the pandemic,

because I didn't feel like they were valid, because I didn't have hardships that other people have. Does that make sense?

And so I think it was in, might've been in a conversation with you guys that, that I realized that, but it was like, 'Oh, I still need a safe place. to be honest about my feelings. Even though I'm not in as a dire need as someone else, it doesn't make my feelings of sadness and grief and depression, any less important.' Does that make sense?

Ashley: Absolutely.

Leah: And my husband was, we were talking about that cause he does work for a large company and, and he's been work from home since he started, but they have an office. So it's like, and he's an introvert. So at first he's like, 'Oh yeah, this is cool. Like, I don't care. Like I get a lot more done when I'm here.' But then when they announced that, like they weren't going to have the office back open, it was like, 'Oh, I actually do like to travel and see people, and getting out of that routine of like traveling a lot when you enjoy it was actually hard,' but again, we didn't have all of these hardships. So it was like, he didn't feel like he had a place to like, be honest about that. So I love that in a corporate setting, you're doing that. So now I want to introduce you to his company. Cause I feel like they can use what you guys do.

Elizabeth: Awesome. We'll take it.

Ashley: Please do that. And we have a very similar, when you said that, that made me think of the tornado. Liz and I went through a very similar time during the tornado. We went right into 'how can we help mode.' And we have nothing to like, you know, feel bad for it because our homes wasn't, you know, messed up. We only lost power for a day, and you know. So we weren't, you know, really even like validating our feelings. And then one day we were like, 'We're hurting, man. Like, we need to be able to talk about this. Like we're showing up, but are we there? Are we present?' And we even had to have a heart to heart with each other. Like, 'This is how I feel right now.' And then, this is where I feel safe saying. So it's okay to have those feelings in the fact that you and your husband had conversations around that, that's very healthy.

Leah: Yeah. We do a walk and water almost every day and we did it before. But honestly, now that we're home, we do it a lot more, but it gives us a chance to move, right? Like move your body and be honest about what's going on in the day. If he's got a stress or if I got a stress or we've got something exciting, so we're moving, we're

talking, but then it also connects us because then I know what he's dealing with, outside of me. Do you know what I mean? And so I just think that it's like, we're moving, we're got water, we're outside, we're getting vitamin D and we're able to be honest about what's happening that day. And I think, you know, if you're, obviously we're married, but I do that with my best friend sometimes too. It's like, just having somebody that you can just talk to and say, here's what's going on during the day. I don't know. To me it's, it's kind of a big deal. So even when I worked in an office, I would do that. Like take a lap. No, I work out of Collective615 sometimes, and there's the LNL market and I'll be like, Hey, do you guys want to put our masks on and go for a walk? And you know, just talk about the day and it's so I feel like it's, it's healing, right? Like when you are honest about the things that are going on. So that's super fun. Well, one of the things that I wanted to talk a little bit about is, your number one thing is, is diversity and having a diverse community. And so one of the things that, that we had talked about offline is that how race, and this conversation of race is so important to you. And I actually heard Ashley speak on a panel, and you shared some experiences that you went through that were very hard to hear. and I can't even imagine what it would be like going through, but I want to talk a little bit about, you know, just this thought of, of diversity in your business, but just in your life and why you two were such a good match to be partners together. Because you two are both individually beautiful people. And I don't mean physically, you are both gorgeous, but you're both just such beautiful beings. And there's been a lot of conversation, you both have been on panels and had discussions about race and, and your part in healing our country. But I would just love to know Ashley from, from your point of view, what is it that you really want people to understand and, and feel when they come into your community?

Ashley: The most important thing that I want people to always know and understand about TRILUNA is it does not matter what color, what shape, what size, if you have no legs, no arms, no like anything. We just want your heart and soul just to show up just exactly how you are. Our favorite phrase is 'lived experience.' And we really truly feel like you never get to know other people unless you know their lived experience. And that's putting yourself in positions of diverse communities, both Liz and I have put ourselves where we were the only, you know, to understand, to get better understanding so we can be a better, you know, organization. We never want

anybody to feel left out or not heard or anything. And that's why it starts with Liz and I. We are one of the first, I don't know of any of them Black and a white female coming together and starting an organization, you know, 50, 50. Liz and I know, you know, what we both bring to the table and we have open and honest conversations. Liz was my friend. She was my best friend. And now she's like my bestest friend. And that's because she heard me.

We've had a to have hard conversations about, you know, race. Like Liz has, she's probably one of the most besides myself, she has the most diverse collection of friends. And with us being, starting this organization and we stood on diversity. I really needed her to understand, truly understand the Black community. And so we've had to have really hard conversations that was hard for me to even have, because I've never, ever went there with any of my white friends. She's the first one who's created a space for me to feel comfortable to come to. And that only took one time. I told her this morning, it only took me one time to tell you, and heard me.

Leah: That's powerful. Elizabeth, what about for you? I mean, I know that we talked about, you grew up in a diverse community and I'd really love to understand a little bit about what, what that path has looked like for you and for any of us that, you know, I did this when all, when I think I call it, the world woke up to a lot of things that are going on. I definitely like was blind and, you know, had my head in the sand. But, but you weren't, you weren't blind to it. You've, you've been passionate about this and been in a diverse community for most of your life. What did that look like for you and, and what does being socially aware and helping other people look like for you?

Elizabeth: Yeah. This might be kind of a winding answer because I think it's, it deserves, some weight and gravitas. I grew up in a Montessori school. I went, I started there in third grade and graduated from high school there. So I went to school at the same 15 kids for my entire life. And I had the great fortune of that being a very diverse community, just in, in general. You know, we had Black kids, we had Russian kids, we had, I mean, it was a melting pot. And that didn't make me anti-racist. I just grew up not, thinking that was normal. Right? And I didn't realize until high school, when we started traveling with our basketball team to some of these smaller towns outside of our diverse community, that they were experiencing racism outside of my experience of them. I didn't have any awareness of that until later in high school. I'll never forget one time. there was one Black girl on my team, my basketball team, and we went to

this very small Podunk town and someone calls her a racial slur and it, it like awoke up fury in me that I did not know I was capable of. So I took one of their padlocks and I stole the key and I locked a can of chicken salad in one of their lockers. So that was my first act of anti-racism in my life. I'm not recommending that as a form of dealing with anti-racism now, but I was 17, so, you know.

But even then, it's always been in my periphery. It's always been something that I've cared about. It's always been something that mattered to me. just because my friend group was diverse. And when you see it affects people, you care about you are moved, I think to take action. But I, even after we started this company, it's obviously a foundational piece to who we are, but it didn't become a foundational piece of who I am until Ashley was able to be like, 'Well, you like, you're not doing enough.' And that happened with Ahmaud in March. You know, of course when it happened, I was posting about it and putting it on my Instagram or whatever. But I remember Ashley, when she gets nervous, she gets this like quiver in her voice. That very rarely happens, but I know when I hear that, that like...

Leah: Something's coming

Elizabeth: Something's about to go down. And so I knew, I could tell immediately when I picked up the phone that like, we were about to have a conversation, and I didn't know what it was about, but she basically was just like, 'This is affecting me and my community so deeply. And you aren't doing enough.' And she wasn't aggressive about it. She wasn't unkind about it. She would have had every right to be, but she just was like, 'You love me. You love my Black husband who goes on runs in our neighborhood all the time. Just like Ahmaud did. You aren't doing enough.' And we've described that experience as me being activated by that. It's like, maybe that first activation was my friend being called a racial slur in a basketball gym. And then another one was when this happened with Ahmaud and Ashley called me on my stuff. It has been this series and levels of activation throughout my life that have made me anti-racist, but we all are born with racism and it's like a systemic problem, but it's baked into our understanding of the world. And so just growing up in a diverse community, isn't enough to make you anti-racist. It is an action. It is a devotion. And so that is. Something that I have been working on and will continue to work on for the rest of my life.

Leah: I love it. Are you bringing those conversations into TRILUNA? Is that something that, that you guys are saying, 'Hey, we want to continue.' Because as a white person that grew up in a super, super racist areas, community that still is, there is so much fear of doing the wrong thing and saying the wrong thing. And I look at like, 'Okay, what can I do today. Because I can't make a change that's going to be worth anything if I don't make those changes with myself.' And so what did you then go do different, once she had that conversation with you?

Elizabeth: Yeah, that's a really good question. I think the first thing and most important thing to understand is that you will mess up. Like you will say the wrong thing. You will offend someone at some point, but you cannot grow if you do not put yourself in an uncomfortable position. That is the real work, is getting uncomfortable enough to be activated. If you're looking for some actual framework, you can hire TRILUNA to do your diversity and inclusion training for start, but you could also pick up some literature. There are some really incredible Black women, specifically, there are, I mean, there are Black men and women, but the ones that come to the top of my head are Black women who are creating anti-racism coursework that you can start as an individual and I can, I'll send you those links. Rachel Cargle.

Leah: Yeah, I took hers.

Elizabeth: She's amazing. Yeah. And I was taking that before, but again, like if you're taking these courses and then you're not standing up to racist behavior, then you are allowing it. And so the next step after you learn about what it is, and you can identify it, is to start actively working to dismantle it. And that means dismantling a lot of the own racism that lives in your body that like preconceived notion and then belief systems that have been baked and hardwired into your body have to be unlearned. And that is going to be hard and it's going to be painful and it's going to be ugly, but that is the necessary work that you have to do to get there.

Leah: And lifelong for sure. Ashley, I think you were going to say something.

Ashley: No, I was going to say that absolutely, we bring it into TRILUNA. After Liz and I had this conversation. I mean, it was such a conversation that changed our relationship changed TRILUNA internally. We had to have the same conversation with our team. And we have these same conversations with our team, you know, they're called our Table Talks, and I'll just pop them on everybody's calendar every now and again, you just have the urge to like, it's nothing you just show up if you want to, but

we've created this space where we shared this discussion that we had with our team to create a space for them to feel uncomfortable and start having these conversations. It's important for us to have this internally with our teachers, because we build this community in our events, and they need to feel comfortable having these conversations with the people who come to our events. So not only internally, but, our supper clubs. That's where all of this was stemmed from. We started our supper clubs at the beginning of this year. We wanted to have these dinners where we had uncomfortable conversations about everyday topics. Yeah. I mean, we did a diversity and inclusion back in February before the world got, you know, woke. We were having these conversations. You know, we did our first diversity and inclusion training, like six months into our business for a very large corporation. We were scared to death, but we just showed up and shared our story, and it changed a lot of things. So, so I think for a lot of, what I always say to a lot of companies, 'I'm not trying to tell you how to run your business, but I'm telling you how to run your business.' If leadership is not having these open conversations, literally like open conversations where you look at your team and say, 'Look around. Who are we missing right now?' We don't have anybody Hispanic on our team. We're talking about diversity and inclusion. Like we want everybody to be seen next, you know, steps that we need to make. We look at, you know, weight sizes. We want people to like, who do we have representing the bigger size bodies? You know, we have those conversations. It's not easy to say. But you have to be open to have those conversations to make change.

Leah: I think that might be the, my biggest takeaway is, who are we missing? Who are we missing? Cause I was like, I just thought of my team and I'm like, I'm real white. Real white. And like, That's my that's on me. Right? Like I'm, I'm the CEO, that's on me. So, once the world got woke, I did that. I turned around and was like, 'Okay, there's two people that I need to hire coming up and they need to not look like me.' So what, and so then, you know, and I did want to talk about like, what are some actionable items that someone that's listening to this can be like, this is what I can do. It's even with friend groups, You know, what does your friend group look like? And I don't hope you don't mind that I say, cause this is what I've been doing is, what does your friend group look like? Does it all look like you? Who are people that, you know, that are in your circle that you can start learning from reaching out to take them to coffee or virtual, or virtual coffee. Right? And, you know, who are the next people that you need

to hire in your company? You can be intentional in saying, 'I'm looking for someone that looks like this, that does a great job.' And you know, what's crazy. It was really easy for me to find someone when I asked my network and said, 'Hey, I'm looking for this.' And the people that I have hired have rocked my world. So I think that going back to your word, intentional, when you are intentional about anything, you can make it happen. But I think that, you know, when we talk about diversity and inclusion, and I like the word belonging, I think that they put that in there now. Right? Like, I don't want just a diverse company. I want the people that are not like me to feel like they belong. Right? And so I think being able to have an intentional, intentionality on making sure, 'Okay. Did we get them in the door? Do they feel included and do they feel like they belong and do they feel like they're in a safe place?'

Ashley: Yeah. And I think all of that starts with just having those conversations openly. We want to create this for everyone, you know, and let everyone bring their opinions and thoughts to the table. Like our team tells us all the time, 'This is the first place I've ever worked at that I can openly, candidly say what's on my mind or what I feel about something regarding this, without feeling like I'm going to say the wrong thing.' So I think if you just continue to have those conversations, even I wanted to touch on something that you said, you say, you look at your friends and everybody looks the same, and that's fine. Like Liz has, yeah, she has this big diverse group, but her close friends, most of them are white. But what I love about what she, what I know that they're doing is when they come together, they're having conversations about what's going on in the world, and how they as friends and their circle can be impactful to stuff. Like Liz and her friends, I'll see them doing like her and another really good friend of ours. Like, I didn't even know that they were going to the Black Lives Matter March. Like they had, like, I saw them and I was like, wait, y'all at the march? Like what happened? But these are the conversations that they're having amongst themselves. So whether your friend group looks like you or not, because know that me and my friends we've been having these conversations. Right? So now I'm in a space where now I have a really, really, really close white friend, which I have many white friends, but now one of my white friends is my bestest white friend. And now I feel comfortable. She's created a space for me to feel comfortable to tell her, like, I think you should probably have these conversations. Like, and Liz takes it to the point where she's having these conversations with her parents, with her sister, you know, it

goes beyond her friend circles. So my mom always, my mom said at the beginning of this, make sure that you're having the right conversations with the right people.

Leah: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah. That's something especially important right now. I think as white people, our job is to educate ourselves and not put the burden on BIPOC, and take the initiative ourselves, and then take that back to our white communities. I think something that I've seen a lot, having a Black business partner and best friend is seeing the asks people are putting on her, which have been fairly infuriating for me actually. Like if you're going to ask your Black friend from the office to go get coffee with you, you need to understand that if you're going to talk to them about it, you're making, you're making them relive it. And so be prepared for that. And it's not that you can't ask, but also there are, if you really want to learn more about racism and people's experiences, racism, that exists, right? Before you ask them to coffee, you should do the groundwork yourself.

Leah: One of the things I suggest is grab information in the way that you enjoy it. I like watching movies and shows. I like listening to music. So my husband and I have done this thing where like everything that we consume is by Black artists. Music. We have a, I bought him a record player. Literally, I pulled out all the records and it's like, these are the only records we're gonna listen to for awhile. Right? And I started listening to the words of the songs I've listened to for years. And I was like, 'Wow.' Like it's different when you listen to listen and to hear it's totally different. Shows, I've been watching, like *All American*. We watched *Black AF*, that's hilarious. *Dear White People*, like, it was just like, you know, once I started looking, I was like, 'Wow, there's so much out there.' And it's, you know, when you, when you're able to consume something that is produced by a Black person and it's like about them. It's like, 'Oh wow. That, I can get in and hear those stories from someone that's already created.' And then when I go and ask Ashley for coffee, then I have something to have a conversation with. I'm not asking her to do the work right? Or not that I'm going to do that. But I just think it's important to have, like, you know, I did start reading the *How to Be An Anti-Racist*. I'm not gonna lie. I didn't love it, because it wasn't like he did a lot, but I felt like as far as the book, it was kind of like all over the place. I'm like, I'm not sure what you're asking me to do so. Not everything that you read is going to be perfect and you're not going to love it. Like, I, it feel like I'm going to safe place. I can tell you, like, I didn't like that

book. I like the other lot of the stories, but I was like, I don't understand what you're doing. But then I started reading, *So You Want to Talk About Race*, and I'm completely enjoying that book, like eye opening, her story arc is good, she's an amazing writer. So when you're doing the work and you're reading and listening and watching, you're not going to love everything and not everything's going to relate to you, but it's about continuing and finding the things that you can learn from, in a way that you like to consume information, right?

Ashley: Right. And then everybody's work is going to look different. Like everybody feels like they have to do all the things. And I tell people, 'You can find your place in this.' Like, Liz and I found our place in this very, very early. We knew what we were going to do. We knew what we weren't going to do. We knew who we were going to partner with. And like Liz said, I mean, she gets really, very angry with some of the ask and people don't even know us. Like for you, it was a very easy, yes. Because you knew who we were. Like, we have people coming out of the woodwork just asking me just to be a part of, and they had no idea who TRILUNA was.

Elizabeth: And they're not offering to compensate you, they're asking you to do work for free for them.

Ashley: Right. And I'm like, this is what I do for a living. You understand that? Right. But like, as far as, like I said, people like you, we were building a friendship. You knew about my company, I knew about your company. So those things are effortless for us, but it, you would be surprised, the many of people that are just wanting to all of a sudden have coffee, and people who've known me for a very long time who are now asking me to coffee.

Leah: Like, 'Hmm, what's changed their buddy.'

Ashley: Yeah.

Leah: Well, I do appreciate you, you girls. And like I said, I wanted to talk to you because I'm inspired by you. I think that we could probably talk for about five more hours. But I do want to have some fun, like rapid fire questions, for both of you. So who are your heroes when you think about like, 'Ooh, I'm inspired,' or who's your hero in life and then who is inspiring you right now?

Elizabeth: Forever Michelle Obama. We are super fans.

Leah: How many times have you watched *Becoming*?

Elizabeth: I've read it, I haven't watched it.

Leah: Oh, it's so good.

Ashley: I've read it. I've watched it. I literally, we just had a conversation was it yesterday, that if we ever met her, like, it would be horrible because neither one of us could talk like at all.

Leah: Well you saw in becoming that one girl that just was like crying and couldn't speak. And I was like, I feel like that would be me.

Elizabeth: That would be me.

Ashley: I mean, Michelle Obama is everything. She she's everything, right? I mean, she's absolutely everything, you know, I'm going to always and forever love Oprah. I mean, she was the first. She was the first, she was the first in the Black community, a Black woman of power. Right? You know, I'm not saying that everything that she's ever done in her career, that we all agree with. But she gives us hope, right? She started right here in Nashville, Tennessee, and I got to meet her when I was very, very young when I was like nine years old. I'll be posting about that soon. But I do feel like in my future, like I'm going to have the opportunity to meet her again, because like, she is what I'm striving for that type of greatness, that type of empire.

So like, Michelle and Oprah, and I have to throw in Tracee Ellis Ross, because she is a legend of her own, but those three women are my inspiration. And my mama.

Leah: Oh man. Those are three of the top on my list. I love it. So who else is inspiring you Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: I have a weird answer. In the last few years, we've seen the take down of a lot of the gurus, people we admired, especially in the yoga world. We have seen a lot of people laid bare for who they actually are. And so I'm feeling a little bit of distrust about having role models, because I think we're all imperfect. So I am inspired right now by the pieces of imperfection in all of us that don't add up to poor behavior, right? Like I'm inspired by the everyday person that is surviving right now during quarantine and COVID, when everything is so hard to get through. I'm inspired by my friends that are starting businesses in the middle of COVID. I'm inspired by us for the amount of ass kicking we've had to do in the last few months. So I know that's kind of a pessimistic answer maybe, but that is where I'm feeling right now.

Leah: No, I don't think it's pessimistic at all. Pessimistic is, is negativity without hope. It's my version of pessimistic. And yours is not without hope. You're saying, I don't want to put someone on a pedestal cause that only, that only allows them to, to fall.

Right? Cause to your point, like Oprah, it's not perfect. Right? Michelle Obama is not perfect. Like, you know, Tracee Ellis Ross is amazing. But none of us are perfect. And I love that you're focusing on that, there are imperfections, but we can be human. Right? Like you're inspired by humanity that keeps going and that perseveres, right?

Elizabeth: Yeah. Yeah. That's exactly right. Yeah.

Leah: Ok, favorite television show right now.

Ashley: I don't think I can say my favorite.

Leah: Yes you can!

Ashley: My favorite show on TV right now is actually about strippers. It's called P Valley. It's on, Stars network. And the only reason is because like strippers are so freaking talented, man, but this show is based on the true talent of that. And I think with the world being so crazy, it just gives me an outlet to just be like in this whole like different world and different, like, it brings me pure joy.

Leah: I love it. Hey and that's healthy. I love it. What about you, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: I just finished Grace and Frankie, which is such a like, feel good. It's also like, I know that if somehow at 70 Ashley and I both end up single somehow we could just join together again, start a sex toy company and just like be fine. There is hope. Yeah, we can start over fresh at 70 and we'll be fine. It's so funny. And it's so engaging and like, there is like a one like really hippy dippy, like free love character. And that is totally Ashley. And there's one like straight-laced blazer wearing type A person, something that is totally me. Together they make the perfect team, and that is totally us.

Leah: I love grace and Frankie. I actually just started watching it not very long ago. So it's super fun. Mine has been, has been *All American*, and I knew that I wanted to watch it, but it's about teenagers. And I was like, 'Eh, I don't know. I'm like, going on 40,' but my 16 year old cousin stayed with me for like a month and a half. So we watched it together and then I was finishing it when she left. I was like, 'Oh, this is so fun. And I don't feel weird, like watching a show about 16 year olds.' I will tell you though. I looked it up and most of those people playing the 16 year olds are like almost 30. 'And I was like, okay, I don't feel so bad because he's hot, but he's actually 30.'

So this has been so fun. Last few questions. I want you to share where everyone can find you on the socials and webs, and then I'll give you a chance to think about it, your definition of success right now.

Elizabeth: Okay. You can find us on our website at [TRILUNAwellness.com](https://www.TRILUNAwellness.com), or on Instagram @TRILUNA_wellness.

A note, our name TRILUNA is always in all caps, and our Instagram is basically our blog. So that is where you'll get the most up to date relevant information. And you can please sign up for our newsletter cause I worked very hard on that and I promise you'll enjoy it.

Leah: it is good. Awesome. And then how do you both define success today for yourselves?

Ashley: I think the way that I define success right now in the middle of this pandemic is to keep myself spiritual actually, and physically aware and conscious. Keep myself in a healthy space so I can be creative in my job to keep us afloat. This is our second year in business. And when this all happened, we went into like work mode, and it hit us. very hard. And we had to learn a couple months in that we had to create space for our mental awareness, for us to be creative. So for us to be successful, we have to, like I said, find that spiritual, physical balance. And then we're able to successfully execute our business.

Leah: I love it.

Elizabeth: Yeah. I'd say mine is very much the same. For me right now, it is to be okay with being just okay. There are days that are really bad and there are days that are great and most days, or somewhere in between that, then I am a real Enneagram three. Go-getter, achiever. Like just, most of my identity is wrapped up in that, work in progress. So the inability to move at the pace I want to move at has been very difficult for me. And so I'm, I'm trying to slow down and take stock and be grateful for what I have and where I am. And so I'm trying to be okay with just being okay.

Leah: I love it. Well, it has been an honor to talk to you girls and, I'm so excited about just continuing to help you grow and being a part of your journey and you all being a part of mine, because I'm all about collaboration over competition, for sure.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Ashley: Well, Leah, we thank you so much. Thank you for creating this space. This is great conversation, I enjoyed it.

Leah: Awesome. Thanks.

Since September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, I want to highlight an organization that's fighting to end childhood cancer and other life-threatening diseases. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is working hard to find cures and prevention, and this is so important because cancer is the number one cause of death by disease for children taking over 100,000 children's lives every year.

St. Jude is a leading expert in the field of childhood cancer research, and the treatments they've invented over the past 50 years have helped move the childhood cancer survival rate from 20% to more than 80%. St. Jude also understands how childhood cancer affects the entire family, and they make sure that families never receive a bill for treatment, travel, housing or food. To learn more about the amazing work St. Jude is doing for children and their families, visit www.stjude.org.

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