

83. Empowering Women to Heal with Becca Stevens – Transcript

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. I'm Leah Glover Hayes, your host and CEO of Her Story of Success Women's Business Collective.

On today's show, I have the honor of speaking with Becca Stevens. Becca is the founder of ten justice enterprises around the world, including Thistle Farms. Thistle Farms began as a community of five women in 1997, and since then it's grown to include a residential program, three social enterprises, and a national network of like-minded organizations. Becca is also a speaker, priest and author, and she's raised \$55 million in funding for her organizations.

Becca has been one of my heroes for a while, because she's doing so much incredible work to help women heal from domestic violence, human trafficking and addiction. As a survivor of abuse herself, Becca also has an amazing personal story of healing, and I'm so inspired by everything that she's created to help women around the world. I especially wanted to talk to her now, because October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and she offered some great encouragement for anyone who's looking to help fight domestic violence but doesn't know where to start.

I'm so excited for you to get to hear Becca's amazing message of hope and healing, and I'd also like to encourage you to share this conversation with a friend or coworker.

Well, welcome my hero and mentor: founder of Thistle Farms, pastor, author, and speaker Becca Stevens.

Becca: Happy to be here. Thank you for having me.

Leah: Absolutely. You are down the street from me, and I'm actually going into your shop the Thistle Stop this week. I love that little place. So we have so much to talk about, because you have an amazing life journey, you have an amazing story about leadership, about helping other people and restoration and all of these beautiful

things that I'm excited to share. So I think most of my audience probably knows who you are, but for those of you that maybe it is their first time meeting you, would you share just a little bit about who you are and what your life kind of looks like today with all the things that you do?

Becca: Sure. I am pretty much from Nashville, Tennessee. It's where the headquarters for Thistle Farms, which is a global movement for women's freedom, is located. And it's a good thing I'm located here, my husband's a country music writer just got inducted this year into the Country Music Writer's Hall of Fame. I have three sons raised here in Nashville, all are artists. Levi Hummon, Caney Hummon, Moses Hummon. Levi, I think just hit the threshold of a hundred thousand followers on Instagram. And our youngest son just is starting SCAD, which is the Savannah College of Art and Design. So in the middle of the pandemic, I have three sons who are all artists.

Leah: That's incredible.

Becca: And they're doing okay. You know, it's an amazing thing, but. Why I think I'm here is that in my life I've known brokenness, I've known abuse, I've known all that stuff. And somehow I was able to transform that into founding a community for five women back in 1997. And I just said, "Come find some sanctuary and some peace. I don't want to start another treatment center, halfway house, shelter, just come find home. Just come be." And five women came in and it started this global movement for what it looks like when women come together and claim freedom and peace. And it's been growing ever since. We started a bath and body care company 20 years ago. And it's the largest justice enterprise run by women survivors in the whole United States. We have 50 sister communities around the U.S. who now represent beds for 360 women, 36 global partners. So it's been this beautiful journey I've been on about what it looks like for women to come together, support each other, and not just heal each other and love each other, but spread that to heal a community.

Leah: Absolutely. I know that's one of the things that you were really passionate about and you are still passionate about. So you did, you created from five women, this beautiful global organization, but I'd love to hear a little bit about when you think about what your passion is and what you're proud of also is, what are some of the changes you've seen in the community about maybe the judgments or how we keep women down? Have you, have you seen some of that growth and people kind of change?

Becca: It's a perfect timing and perfect question, because this is not a conservative or liberal issue, right?

Leah: Right.

Becca: It is an issue around people in power abusing those without power. And that is an old story before any political party was ever freaking invented.

Leah: Exactly.

Becca: And I think that is really important to say is that we can go back through the history and watch how people with power have abused people sexually, who are less powerful. And again, I know that from my own journey and my own experience. And what happens is when you commodify people, when you use people for your own gain, you are traumatizing generations of people. Because all those people bear that on their back, and then they pass that on, and fear and shame, to their children. And I think how we've bought and sold women, how we've abused men and women who are vulnerable and weak, I think it's maybe one of the oldest sins we know in this world. And my job, I believe, as the founder and president of Thistle Farms and with working alongside heroic women survivors, has never been about, look, we have to solve the problem of human trafficking in the world. I believe my job is to say, people don't have to stay in it forever, and we don't have to keep the secrets of abusers so they can abuse another a hundred people.

Leah: Right.

Becca: We don't have to buy into the myths of why women are on the streets. We can live into the truth of how they come off the streets.

Leah: Yes.

Becca: That's my work. And that is my job. So. I am so grateful that I have come I've come this far to see that for us, for Thistle Farms, for 23 years. We have been a part of changing legislation. We have been a part of changing the language. We have been a part of changing the notion that there are 14 year old girls on the street that are just prostitutes. No, they've been trafficked. There's a reason you're 14 years old on the streets. And we have watched all that and been a part of changing all that. So what I love is that five women, close to 23, 24 years ago, have been the leadership that has helped change all of that. And now, it's like we understand that many of the women we've criminalized were victims first.

Leah: Yes. I could get in a whole thing about the criminalization.

Becca: Here's what I'm gonna to say, is that they've become leaders and they are making money and they are homeowners and have their children back when they've

gone back, and they have reminded the world that they are some of the best teachers and preachers about how love heals. Now you go on your rant girl, go.

Leah: Well, I love that. Well, I mean, that's, for years, I've seen that. I remember being a kid and seeing on the news women getting arrested for prostitution. And something in my little head was like, why would she get arrested? And not the person that bought her. Like how, how was what she's doing illegal? Why are we focusing on that? And not the man that's doing this, and I just couldn't wrap my, I just was like, this just doesn't make sense. And then the older that you get, and then you would have women tearing down women, saying like, "Oh, they're making poor choices." And it's like, what do you think happened to get her to make that choice? So I just feel like there's, I mean, there's a whole soap box I could get on with how Christians are judging others. And it's like, I'm so sorry. I remember Jesus telling me to love people. And he's the one that sat with prostitutes and, you know, Mary Magdalene and all that. And I'm like, "Um, I think that we have this backwards."

So I want to talk a little bit about when you got started with those five women. How did it go from, "Hey, come and get community," to, "Wow. Let's create a company and an organization." And how did it start, start to blossom. And what did your role in that look like?

Becca: There's many things that you said, like in your little girl, head in the back of your head. I can't let that go.

Leah: Okay. Let's do that.

Becca: I will talk about what it looks like to walk alongside people and foster leadership and love and community and watch it grow exponentially. But first I want to just celebrate for anyone listening and anybody that remembers that little girl voice, you know, just in the back of your head and that whispering about what love and justice looks like. And there's so much in this world that wants us to shut that voice down. And to say, that's not reasonable. It's not going to make money. It's not going to raise children, whatever. But that you remember that voice in the back of your head makes me love you. And for everybody out there, I pray that you remember that voice in the back of your head when you were a little girl. For me, I have, I have distant memories of that voice. And I think it's what kept me alive and sane through years of sexual abuse, through years of being raised by a single mom of five kids who didn't make enough money to keep us going. And I just think if anything comes out of this podcast, maybe that is the thing, is that we all still can have a distant memory of that voice and to celebrate it. So I just want to honor that before I move on.

And then to move on, I just want to say that really what I believe I've learned over all this time is that, you know, you can rape women. You can addict young girls. You can imprison women. You can use violence against women. You can addict women, all of that stuff. And I've seen it over 23 years with a lot of women, but you cannot kill hope in women. And so when the five women came into Thistle Farms, into this residential community, no authority, free two years. When people came into that community, there was a lot of hope. And it was the women who decided really what the next steps were and what it was going to look like. And that's how we opened the second house and the third house. It was because of that leadership. And I've always believed that the best thing any of us can do is not feel like we have to be these heroes in other people's stories, that we can be the host. We can just provide time, space and resources for people to be the hero of their own story. I mean, you're the hero of your own story.

Leah: Wow. I think I needed to hear that, you know, we are the hero. But to allow people to be the host, I think I suffer from that, that I'm like, I want to be the hero. I want to help save people. But Baca that so beautiful is that it's not our job to be the hero. To host. I think that's a good, maybe like little mind switch of how do I host women to have the space and the safety to realize their own story and to realize their own strengths?

Becca: And the resources

Leah: And resources, yes.

Becca: You have to have, to me, to be a really good host it's time, space, and the last one is resources. Because there's so much violence and vulnerability in poverty. I mean, how many women have made the choice to get in a car because they need a place to stay, they need a drug, they need warmth, they need safety from the other dangerous people on the street. It's like really, really, really bad choices.

Leah: That's beautiful, because going back to what we said, like, "Oh, well, why does she make that choice?" My question for you is, what did you have around you that kept you from going that way? Was it the resources? Did you have around you, the safe things that helped you realize that you had hope?

Becca: So mine is a classic, classic story of, after my father was killed by a drunk driver. When I was five years old, one of his coworkers, my dad was an episcopal priest, and one of the elders in the church was the one who first began to sexually abuse me. And it began in the fellowship hall of the church, and it went on for years. And honestly, it's classic. It's classic because, you just pick on somebody that would

be really open, somebody that would be scared, somebody that probably won't talk, somebody in trauma. Those are, I mean, those are gift. And he was befriending my whole family. So he was, you know, like providing resources to my family, all of that stuff. What saved me? Oh my gosh. That makes me weepy. All the things that were merciful in my life. I think the women's group at my mom's church that kept doing, you know, the bizarre where they were raising money. My mom was the director at a community center and so I was a dancer. I was a young, just beautiful dancer, I will say that because now I'm old enough now that I can recognize myself in my teenage years as beautiful.

Leah: Mm, that's a celebration in itself.

Becca: And I would bring costumes and invite people and come to this community center and we would dress up all the kids in the neighborhood and put on these amazing dance. So it was always about justice and celebration of community for me. I was still pretty messed up. When I was 24, I went to divinity school at Vanderbilt. School was never an issue for me. I was always, you know, summa cum laude, or whatever, you know, top 10 of anything I did academically, but I was still completely not well in relationships and all that stuff. And I met Marcus Hummon. He has taking a class at the Vanderbilt Divinity School, and I met him. We've been married now 31 years.

Leah: I love it.

Becca: And I would say he was one of the most healing men in my whole life. And he, at one point said something like, "You know, a relationship with you is like walking through a minefield. Cause you don't know when you're going to hit a bomb." He would hit it and I'll be just like ready to attack. He took all of that, and he was a creative, beautiful, loving man in my life. And he walked with me through founding of Thistle Farms, through starting another nine organizations that I've started. And he is, I mean, he's makes me weepy. I love him so much. So we've been so close during COVID, you know, I'm not on the road anymore. I'm not doing any gigs, and he's not on the road anymore doing any gigs. And we've been piled on top of each other and I love him more.

Leah: Oh, I love it. That's so great. And Josh and I talk about that, it's like, "Oh my gosh. We're like here all the time," because he travels for work and I would travel, and it's like, "Oh my gosh." So I wanted to talk for a little bit, because you know, our listeners are women mostly, you know, that are probably 30 to 65. And so I think it's important sometimes that we, we do celebrate tough women and strong women. But I think it's important to talk about the people that you have in your life that give you strength or

allow you to do what you do. I call my husband, he's like my springboard. He's the safety that I can go and try and be and do anything because I know that I have him to come back to. So I want to talk about how did he support you or what did he provide you that you needed so that you could be the Becca Stevens that you are today, and lead Thistle Farms while you raise kids. Like not all husbands would be like, "Oh yeah, go do your thing. And we'll figure this out together." So I just kind of wanted to talk a little bit about your relationship and what that looked like, building a family, as you were building these global organizations.

Becca: It wasn't that he allowed me or let me, I never even asked the question. I mean, I wouldn't think of it. I wouldn't ask, he wouldn't ask me if he could write an opera.

Leah: Right.

Becca: That would spring from his soul, and it would rise. And I would respect it. What he did was respect the calling and the work and what that was about. So for all of us, I think the best thing we can do is respect the calling and respect the work and figure out how we're family through it. I mean, we made jokes sometimes that our children were feral, you know, they were making, they were doing their best to try to survive while we were doing this. But I would never have asked him not to honor the music in his spirit that, I mean, he wrote "Bless the Broken Road" and, you know, "Only Love," all these songs about love and beauty and healing. And they've been our soundtrack, but he would never also have asked me, I think we were, I was pregnant with our third son, and I was like, "I think I need to open a cafe as part of the community of Thistle Farms. I want to open a café, and I want to deal just in tea, because tea and human trafficking are linked, and I want to make a case for the justice movement for tea." And he was like, "That's amazing." And there's a lot of people who might've said like, "Are you crazy? This is our third child. We're both really plenty busy. We don't need to start, we don't need to fly to Uganda, start a new tea company and then come back and open a cafe." He said, "That's so beautiful." And you know, we packed up our three kids and we went to Uganda and we started a tea company.

Leah: Oh so he joined you.

Becca: Oh he always has to, especially in the summer, especially with kids. He, you know, and we always try to make it where it's something fun, we'll go on Safari or we can, you know, do a concert in Kampala, Uganda, or go see the chimpanzees, go do something, but then also do work. And that's been true for places all over the globe, he's done that.

Leah: I love that you guys had this trendy, like gig economy where you can work from anywhere, but like you guys were doing that before it was even a thing.

Becca: Oh my gosh. I think so. And I think, I think for both of us, the idea is freedom to really honor what has been planted in your spirit. And we still do it. And I think we do it with our children too. I hope we do it with our children, is to honor what's been birthed in them and say, "It's beautiful because it was birthed by love in your spirit"

Leah: Well I do want to talk a little bit about Thistle Farms. But the other thing I want to chat about is just this, a little bit about domestic violence. And for those of us that are listening, like what are maybe some of the things that we as women, men can do to support other women that have gone through this? And, you know, I always think that one thing is awareness. So what is it that we should do to gain awareness for ourselves and then also to get involved? And I think that'll tie into buying things made by survivors, but just to give a little teaser.

Becca: I mean, there's so much I've learned through the COVID crisis. And one of them is how powerful social media is. I mean, really learning about that. Just in my own Instagram news feed and in my posts, just watching how women are telling the story and trying to connect. You know, and that's what George Floyd taught us all, right? That within 48 hours, the whole country was posting about, "I cannot breathe" and what that looks like. It's a powerful vehicle. And I think for me, at least it's been one of the ways to connect, especially during COVID, is to share stories of good news and also to give people a shot of hope. And to be still in this time, a voice of hope, a voice of reconciliation, a voice of interpretation, all of those things. So people feel safe sharing what's going on in their individual lives. Everybody knows COVID didn't cause any of the injustices, but it sure unearthed all of the shallow burials we've done. So people are really, really aware of what's happening with domestic violence, more than ever before. And people want to talk about it. My advice to people again, in addition to really using your platform in your social media circles, which is such a beautiful gift and a way to connect, is to also think it's not that complicated. You don't have to walk up to somebody and say like, "Are you a victim of domestic violence?" People are going to go, "Are you kidding? I'm a good person, blah, blah, blah." You know, give somebody a basket of food. Homemade brownies, a pineapple, that's the whole universal symbol of welcoming. Write a note and say, "I'm just checking on you happy to hear anything going on in your life." You know, it's, it's simple outreach that can have a dramatic change without trying to be somebody's counselor or somebody's doctor somebody's public defender.

You know, many women that I've worked with off the streets over the years, it was offering a bag of chips and a conversation that led to somebody making life changing decisions. And so every circle I've been in, whether we're creating a craft, that's a justice craft about celebrating women's freedom or a tea, you know, I'm doing a justice tea party to... several of them, but the next one has 1500 women signed up for it.

Leah: Wow.

Becca: There's ways to do it. It's not like you have to drink tea and then go do outreach. You can drink tea as part of your justice life.

Leah: I love it. Let's talk about that a little bit. So with Thistle Farms, I know that you have a lot of products that can be purchased, and what I love as a consumer, so even if I did not know you and wasn't in love with you and your mission. I love that your products are such honestly, incredible good quality, from your candles to your hand, lotions, to your bug spray products. There's so many things. So I want to talk a little bit, or have you share a little bit about, once you all decided we should make products. I'd really like to talk about how you set the intention of the importance of the quality and why that was such a big thing.

Cause I feel like a lot of times when people are trying to help nonprofits, they'll skimp on the quality and be like, "Well, people will buy it because it's for a nonprofit." And it's like, well, But at the end of the day, we want quality too. So I'm interested in that. And then I want to talk a little bit more about how people can buy from you because they should, because it's good stuff.

Becca: Thank you. Uh, you know, for me, um, I've been a priest for 30 years, and it's always made sense to me that we would be about really healing products for the body. And when I talk about healing products for the body, I'm talking about this idea of being intentional about wholeness. And I think that it has to be healing all the way down the market chain. So it has to be healing for the people producing it, it has to be healing for the earth, it has to be healing for the consumer. So if you're cheating on any of those steps, it's not a healing process. You know, the first one is obviously lavender, very healing, universal about peace and love. But it was always around, there's been so much violence against women in their bodies specifically than I wanted to make something that really felt like we remember we're valuable, remember we're beautiful, we remember we're worthy, all of those things. And it has to be something physical. It can't just be that can't be an intellectual conversation. It's like I have to be able to go, "I'm beautiful. I'm worthy. I'm healing."

During COVID, you know, it's been this beautiful journey of remembering how great it can be. Like so many of the women that we work with have been trafficked, they've been abused, raped, and beaten and gagged. And so just wearing a mask is a retraumatization.

Leah: I wouldn't have thought of that. Wow.

Becca: For a lot of folks. And one of the things we learned is like this immunity oil that we make, if you put it on the inside of a mask, it kind of changes the whole idea of this stale, scary, I can't breathe into a spa day. It's beautiful.

Leah: I love that.

Becca: And we do little things like that. It's amazing what small things can do to help heal and transform us. And so I'm a huge believer in like all these oils that we use and sell and do. And especially during this time, I mean, you think about frankincense, it's antiviral. It kills viruses and it's not like the, all those products that are 99% anti-bacterial that kill all the good stuff too and leave us more vulnerable. I just, I love soap. I love anti-viral stuff. I love social distancing and masks, everything good for you. I'm all about it, but I think we can still do it again with this eye for justice, with this heart for justice that we can, it's not separate.

Leah: Right. Well, and I think that's what I love is that, you know, I mean, let's just talk about the reality. Women have control 80% of the spending in the United States of America. We control that. And as we buy products for ourselves, I love candles, I buy candles for myself. I buy them as gifts. I love Thistle Farms, I buy so much from there. We choose where we spend our money. You can go down, buy a \$5 candle at some, you know, dollar store, I'm not saying that's bad or, you know, you can spend a little bit more and get a quality candle. That's literally changing the world. I'm just saying like, all these women were like, "Oh, we want to empower women. And we want to change the world." I'm like, "Buy products made by women that are helping women succeed, grow and thrive."

Becca: I agree. I agree. And I think so many people have said, "I love what you do. It's so inspiring. Thank you so much." And then they go buy their soap at Target.

Leah: What, why?

Becca: Right. That's my question.

Leah: When you did that for yourself, you showed other women, you don't have to choose, I'm going to help someone or I'm going to be able to make a life and a living

for myself. And that's one of the messages that I'm so passionate about spreading is that you can give and do good and make enough money for yourself to have a good life.

Becca: Absolutely. So women who come through Thistle Farms have a lot of struggles. At the beginning, the struggle is about sobriety, the struggle is about courts, it's about, I mean like reconciling with the courts. It's about getting children back, if they have any children, it's about negotiating relationships, where you have some agency and some say. You know, a year or two in, it's the struggle to make sure you have your license back, your car insurance, that you're able to get enough credit to get an apartment or a home. Another couple of years, it's about you think you deserve more money at Thistle Farms, or your 401k is not where you want it to be. There's an evolution. All along the way, people, women are healing communities, they're already reaching back. There's nobody, there's no women that are doing amazing healing work that aren't concerned about their community giving back. But I love watching the evolution of the struggle around financial independence, and beginning to glimpse at what it means to say, "I deserve this. I'm worthy of this. I can do this. And I can, I will always be concerned about my community and giving back. I will always be concerned about the education of children. I will always be concerned about freedom in my religion." Whatever those things are. We're going to be concerned about it.

Leah: I love that. You mentioned earlier that you started this and then nine other, what are your nine other organizations that you started?

Becca: A lot of it is overseas, women that I've worked with that need to start a justice enterprise. And when I say justice enterprise, it's where the workforce is the mission. So that could be around tea could be around, moringa, it's around sewing cooperatives, it's around community setting, around inviting women to come together and community.

One of the ones I love the most was one that we started in a refugee camp in 2017 called Love Welcomes. And it was working with women who had fled Syria. They had been horrible victims of war. They fled with their children boats, and we started weaving, welcome mats from the life vests and the blankets that they received when they got there. And one thing I don't think we've done well as women in this country is really link refugees to human trafficking. I mean, there's more than 12,000 girls missing from those camps.

Leah: Oh my gosh.

Becca: So for us, it was about making a connection and about celebrating the women survivors there. You know, now three years later, there's like 40 women weavers in the camp. It's its own 501(c)3

Leah: Oh, wow.

Becca: I helped start in Tennessee, the first natural burial, it's called Larkspur Conservation. That was one that just started a few years ago too, but I really wanted a way to honor folks who had loved and worked with that didn't have to be embalming, it didn't have to be part of the funeral industry, but a way to honor the land and honor our bodies naturally in death. And that now has 800 acres that have been donated conservation sites and that conserves the land forever. And then he uses a small portion of it to bury people on that land, and the burials pay for more land.

Leah: I love that. So you have lived this full, amazing, big, huge, changed the world life. And I'd like know a little bit about when, when you look at that things that maybe you've like accomplished and done, what do you think that you're most proud of that you have done or decisions you've made or changes that you've made?

Becca: You know, I don't think, I think of, I feel proud of anything. I usually feel relieved. If something good happens, I feel relieved that I didn't mess it up. Does that make sense?

Leah: Yeah, a hundred percent.

Becca: So I have a lot of relief that it didn't go bad, but I would say that you asked me about what I'm the most proud of, for sure it would be my sons. They're these three beautiful men. They're all in their twenties now. And they love and respect women. They're amazing. And I feel like, at least in the beginning I was responsible for their life, getting them food and sleep, you know, shelter, the kind of basic things, birthing them.

Leah: Important.

Becca: So I don't think I have a lot of room to be prideful about anything, but man, I almost can't take it when they're all three in the room and we're all sitting together. It's like, look how beautiful they are. But I don't want anything bad to happen, so I don't want to be prideful about it. I'm grateful for my sons. I'm grateful that so many powerful women have come along through the journey of Thistle Farms and created an amazing company. I'm really so grateful.

Leah: That's a good point though. So a lot of, so you started this, but it took a lot of help and probably people with influence, money, power to help. And when I'm asking this question, I want the listener to think about, "What is it that I have that I could offer?" I mean, the person listening probably is not going to start another Thistle Farms, but maybe there's an organization, maybe it's Thistle Farms, maybe it's an organization in her community trying to make a difference in the lives of others. What are the things that people with influence, power, money, whatever it was that they had that really pushed the needle for you as a leader of this type of organization? What are some of those things that the listener could do that has been done for Thistle Farms?

Becca: So, you know, one thing COVID is teaching us is small has never been so beautiful. I mean all our worlds have shrunk quite a bit. In every way that that word means. And so I think honoring those small and beautiful ways that we're trying to love each other and do things is huge. And I don't want to get too preachy, but I'm remembering that when Amos was quoted as saying, you know, "let the waters roll down, like let justice roll down like a river," that he was in the mountains, tending goats and sheep. And what happens in the mountains, at least all of us in Tennessee remember is that, you know, there's these tiny, tiny bits of water and it filters through limestone that limestone then builds these creeks that come down mountains and then it becomes a river. And then finally it goes out to the ocean and I've been thinking about how really all of our jobs is to be in the mountains with the drops of water, knowing that we are building an ocean.

Leah: Yes.

Becca: And I don't have any problem, everything I've ever done is pretty small. I used to want to let people think I'm bigger than I am. And now I'm fine with a few drops that I've had to do with it. And I hope everybody is. And that if it's donating money, just do it with gratitude. If it's time, talents, treasures, all of it. Just say, like, "I know this is part of an ocean. I get that none of these visions for helping healing are new. These are old visions. We're all feeding into it. It's not that big a deal. It's just how we love each other."

Leah: I love that. I think I needed to hear that. You know, it's easy to be like, "Oh, I want to make a big impact. I want to make a big impact." And my husband has to remind me that all the time he's like "Leah, you don't see the phone calls that you have, that you've changed people's lives. Like your gift is talking to people. And sometimes that's all that you need to do, right?" Like I just think I'm like, "Oh, I have to do this grandiose stuff. And like start a school in Africa." And Josh was like, "You're doing the things that

you need to do. And you're impacting so many people's lives without even realizing it."

Becca: Absolutely.

Leah: So I think that maybe that was for me and, you know, buying Thistle Farms is a little drop that we all can do. It's so fun. Um, well I appreciate your time. We have a few more minutes. I've got just a couple more questions. I usually ask where people can find you?

Becca: Please! I love all my friends on Instagram, Becca Stevens on Instagram is where I spend most of my time on socials.

Perfect.

And Thistle Farms on Instagram is partly how we get our word out and share the message now.

Leah: And y'all ship out all across the U.S.

Becca: Everywhere. We will ship anywhere. Anytime we're ready. We're there 24/7 ready.

Leah: I love it. And so what are these tea ceremonies or the tea parties that you do?

Becca: We call them justice tea parties, and we've had one and we're planning on doing another one. And the idea is that it helps us remember that justice can be a way of life. You know, that we can sip tea and be community and be doing that justice work through both our conversation, and our healing, and what we're drinking, and how we're drinking it. It's about cultivating a palette for healing for women. It is about giving thanks and recognizing all the women who have done amazing work that we are walking on their coattails. And it's also about invitation and hospitality and remembering the more women we bring into our circles, the better we're going to be.

Leah: Well I look forward to attending the justice tea party. Do I need to bring my own tea? I guess that would be the other question. Do I bring mine?

Becca: For sure. You have to bring your own tea. Of course you can order it from Thistle Farms.

Leah: We'll put that link in there. We'll put the link to order Thistle Farms tea, that way, whenever the next one is they'll be ready for it. And then what does success mean for you today?

Becca: You know, for me, success today means that I remember that I'm safe. I remember that I am enough, and I remember that I still have dreams.

Leah: That's beautiful. What is your dream right now? You've done so many things. What are you dreaming of now?

Becca: You know, I'm not a huge dreamer about things that haven't happened. I love when ideas arise and you live into them. Right now what I'm most excited about is I've signed a book deal with Harper Collins.

Leah: That's a big deal!

Becca: It's called *Practically Divine*. And I'm getting to write about all these stories about where you think things are messed up, and then you find this beautiful perfection in the imperfection, the divinity in the ordinary, the pragmatic in the poetic, all of those things. So I'm writing again, which I'm thrilled about.

Leah: I love it. And your other book is *Love Heals*. I'll put the link of that. I love *Love Heals*, because it is a beautiful story of restoration and just learning how — I think everybody gets their own thing out of it, I'll just say that — but for me, it's about learning how to stop and love yourself and to be grateful for yourself in your journey. And there's a lot of poems. Did you write all those poems on the beginning of the chapters?

Becca: Absolutely.

Leah: Oh my gosh. They're beautiful.

Becca: Oh you're so kind

Oh, well, you're amazing. And so it's easy to be kind to someone so amazing. But yeah *Love Heals*, we'll put the, the link to that and then, Oh my gosh, I can't wait for your new book to come out. I have to interview you again when that comes out.

Becca: It'll be 2021 when that comes out. I'll be happy to.

Leah: Perfect. Well, thank you so much, Becca. I hope you have a beautiful day.

Becca: You made my day much better.

Leah: Thank you. You've definitely made my year being on here. So I don't know if I've said this enough times, but you are my hero and someone that I look to that I want to become more like, because you are humble, you are beautiful, and you help people

see the beauty that they have in themselves. So thank you. You've done that for me today.

Becca: Thank you. Thank you. Bye.

Leah: For today's non-profit spotlight, I wanted to provide you with a little more information about Thistle Farms and the incredible products they sell. Like I said during the interview, I love Thistle Farms candles (both as gifts and for myself), and they also sell amazing bath and body products, tea, essential oils, jewelry and more. Better yet, this enterprise is led by women survivors, and in the past year, it provided more than \$2 million in income for survivors around the world. If you're looking for a way to start getting involved in the mission of healing women and their communities, this is a great place to start. You can learn more and make a purchase at www.thistlefarms.org.

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